KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF ARTS

THE AB'ATALACHONI THEATRE: ITS AESTHETICS AND
SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ARTS IN PART
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF
ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE.

BY

KARANI, SOLOMON KAKAI, M.
NAIROBI

DECLARATION

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

KARANI, S.K.
C50/7735/88

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors.

MR. AUSTIN BUKENYA

DR. MUIGAI WA GACHANJA
To all those who toil quietly but surely.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many minds and institutions have contributed towards the successful completion of this study. Grateful acknowledgements go to Kenyatta University for awarding me a scholarship without which this study would have been hard to accomplish. I am particularly grateful to the Literature Department and the Chairman Dr. Nana Wilson-Tagoe who nominated me for the scholarship.

We have toiled and suffered together with my two supervisors, Mr. Austin Bukenya and Dr. Mungai Wa Gachanja. They have been patient, understanding and productively suggestive in their supervision. Where they thought I had rioted, they honestly said so, and where they thought I was making a valid point they again said so. Their insights have not only sharpened my understanding of the subject, but have also had a devastating effect on my scholarly discipline.

I am also grateful to other members of the Literature Department for their concern and help. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Nana Wilson-Tagoe, who sacrificed a great deal of her time for our benefit, us postgraduate students. To other tutors on the postgraduate programme, Dr. Chesaina and Mrs. Mpesha, I say grateful thanks. Also to be mentioned is Mr. Matuku Oloo of the Literature Department who often acted as an echo-wall to some of my wild ideas. I am also grateful to my only classmate, Ako, with whom we shared the joys and frustrations of a Masters Programme. I am appreciative of the help I have received from friends, both material and moral, particularly from Ngari, Wafula, Mu'Makokha, Onyango, Kyallo, Egara and Alembi.

Grateful thanks also to Dorothy and Judy for their touching concern and unlimited laughter. I am in great debt to Juma and Wangeci for meticulously helping in proof-reading this work. Otherwise to you all who contributed, I am sincerely appreciative.
Lastly, I am most grateful to Mary Khaemba for ploughing through my sometimes 'illegible scribblings' to make them, at least, accessible in typed form.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE ................................................................. 1
INTRODUCTION
PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY ...................................... 1

1.1. Problem of the study ............................................... 1
1.2. Thesis and Justification .......................................... 1
1.3. Theoretical Framework ......................................... 3
1.4. Definitions ................................................................ 13
1.5. Scope and method of the study .................................. 17

CHAPTER TWO .................................................................. 20
THE AB’ATACHONI
SOCIAL AND AESTHETIC BACKGROUND ................................ 20

2.1. Introduction ............................................................ 20
2.2. The people and their land ................................………... 20
2.3. Social Organization ............................................... 22
2.4. Material Culture and Occupations ............................. 25
2.5. Beliefs and Practices ............................................. 28
2.6. Language and Creative Expression ............................ 28
2.7. Conclusion .............................................................. 29

CHAPTER THREE ........................................................... 30
RITUAL THEATRE
OKHUSENA OMUSE .......................................................... 30

3.1. Introduction ............................................................ 30
3.2. Background ............................................................ 30
3.3. Conventions of the Omuse ....................................... 31
3.4. The Performance: An example of the Walking Type .. 34
3.5. The Performance: An example of the Standing Type. 37
3.6. The Omuse Ritual: A Theatrical Interpretation .......... 40
3.7 Conclusion ............................................................... 45
ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate the nature and character of the Ab’atachoni indigenous theatre forms as they are seen and observed today. At the core of this study is the search for viable definitions of the concepts of drama, theatre and performance. This study is further prompted by critical assumptions which confine the concepts of drama and theatre to things like “script” and “a raised stage”. The exploration of the Ab’atachoni theatre forms is an attempt to widen and deepen an awareness of the concepts of drama, theatre and performance beyond their “Tachonic” context. In other words, it is one of the key premises of this study that a good theory of art should have the potential of transcending its local or ethno-centric derivation.

The central thesis of this study defines drama as a universal (abstract) human ability having a culture-specific elaboration. This central thesis, informed by a theatrical-linguistic model, also incorporates semiotic principles to study its object.

This study is a product of observation and participation in actual performing situations. The study is structured as follows:

Chapter One outlines the purpose and scope of the study.

Chapter Two describes the social and aesthetic background of the Aba’tachoni community.

Chapter Three examines the ritual-drama of okhusena omuse (herein referred to as omuse). This ritual-drama is analyzed as one of the genres of the Ab’atachoni theatre. In this performance, a ceremonial performer is invited to perform at the funeral ceremony of a Mutachoni elder on the second day after burial.

Chapter Four describes and examines the dance-theatre of okhuyu. This dance-theatre is performed in honour of a Mutachoni elder on the first day after burial.
Chapter Five describes and examines the narrative performance (olukano). A specific performance observed by this researcher is given to demonstrate how a performer selects from the narrative-matrix and gives the selected narrative theatrical uniqueness and liveliness.

Chapter Six brings together the major arguments in this study. A link is established between the central thesis and the method of investigation.

Three Appendices are provided.

The First Appendix gives three narratives used as a part of the performances presented in Chapter Three (Omuse).

The Second Appendix has two parts, the first part gives a sample of songs from the okhuuya ceremony referred to in Chapter Four and the second part has a selection of photographs taken at the okhuuya dance-theatre, performed in honour of Khisa King'asisa of Tongaren Division, Bungoma District. These reinforce specific points made in reference to this occasion in Chapter Four.

The Third Appendix presents the narrative used as the basis for Chapter Five.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

1.1. Problem of the study

This study proposes to investigate the concepts of drama, theatre and performance as seen and observed among the Ab'atachoni of Bungoma District today. The Aba'tachoni have a distinctive and recognizable concept of drama. Three aspects of the Ab'atachoni theatre are analyzed: its ritual, dance and narrative variants. This triad provides a basis for appreciating the diversity, specific nature and character of Ab'atachoni theatre.

By implication also, this study is a response to those critical attitudes that confine and limit the concept of theatre to things like "script", "play" or "a raised stage" (see Etherton, 1980:23). This study is an attempt to lay a conceptual framework that will account for the diverse nature of theatrical performances founded in the human ability for dramatization.

1.2. Thesis and Justification

It is assumed in this study that drama is a universal human ability with a culture-specific elaboration. The Ab’atachoni theatre forms, for instance, are a distinctive and recognizable realization of this inherent human ability. It is also a key premise that the study of the concept "drama" is an investigation of its specific emergence in concrete cultural contexts. Equally significant, the phenomenon of performance is a realization of the human capacity and need for dramatic and creative communication.

A corollary to the above thesis is that the concept of drama as it emerges from live performances transcends
conventional western concepts like "script", "play" or "a raised stage". Thus, a wider and more genuine awareness of the experience and nature of African theatre requires a theatrical model that accounts for the variety and specific emergence of the concept of drama, both in its abstract and its observable mode. The central thesis in this study, arising from a descriptive theatrical-linguistic theoretical framework, corresponds to the concepts of langage (Drama), langue (Theatre) and parole (Performance). Within the logical structure of this model, drama is the basic intellectual framework that enables the emergence of the langue (theatre), and parole (performance). As it will become clear in the course of this chapter, models that confuse the three different levels as outlined here, end up confining and confusing the abstract intellectual concept, drama, and its tangible, conventional realization— theatre and performance.

Deborah Forster (1977: 1-2) has used a similar linguistic model in analyzing the narrative performance. She makes a conceptual analogy between de Saussure's concepts of langage, langue and parole to indicate the abstract aspect of narration, its specific realization in a community and its actual performance by individual artists. The central thesis, arising from this conceptual model, corresponds to the one adopted by Forster because the artistic concept is examined in the context of a specific culture. In the context of this study, the narrative performance is a genre of Ab'atachoni theatre that reflects this community's ability to dramatize aspects of reality through narration. Deborah Forster's conceptual model is also significant in terms of a viable approach to the subject of study. The concrete performance is the target object of meaningful investigation.
It is therefore another key argument of this study that dramatic criticism cannot proceed from an evolutionary framework that sees theatrical phenomena developing from primitive to ideal forms. This study argues for an awareness of each cultural environment as a unique social environment generating its own theatrical structures and aesthetic tools of evaluation.

The rationale for this study is a need for a systematic awareness — within a coherent dramatic-critical theoretical framework — of aspects of African theatre as seen and observed in a specific community. This arises from the belief that the study of African drama is an investigation of the diverse theatrical-langues and paroles. This project is a contribution to dramatic theory and criticism elaborated and examplified by a specific African community, the Ab’atachoni of the Bungoma District of Kenya.

1.3. Theoretical Framework

The guiding analytical framework is a theatrical-linguistic model, adopted from Ferdinand de Saussure’s concepts of langage, langue and parole. These three concepts lay a background against which drama, theatre and performance are defined respectively. Deborah Forster (1977: 1-2) has for instance, applied a similar analytical model to the narrative process. This model recognizes that the culture-specific elaboration of the concept of drama is founded in the universal human ability for dramatization. In de Saussure’s tripartite concept of language, langage is the “capacity inherent in human beings for the development and use of language” (Forster, 1977: 1-2). The conventional aspect of langage is langue. It is, as Sunday Anozie says “... an autonomous social institution, a collective contract which constitutes a system of values” (Anozie, 1981: 195).
Langue is a language of a specific society and which "has a grammar and a vocabulary and is used in common by a number of people" (Forster, 1977:2).

The actual use of language creatively in human interaction is parole. This individual speech act, that is parole "is essentially an act of individual selection" (Anozie, 1981: 195).

There is therefore, a reciprocal relationship between the parole and the langue. Parole exists within the context of langue yet langue "has no concrete existence of its own, except in the piecemeal manifestations that speech affords" (Hawkes, 1977:21).

To study a langue it is necessary to examine the "piecemeal manifestations" (paroles). Such a study reveals a set of linguistic rules which define the creative emergence of parole and the basic relationships between the two levels. Langage is harder to study because of its abstract nature. However, the study of both the paroles and langue may give an idea about the nature of langage.

In this study, it is assumed that man is endowed with an inherent ability for dramatization. This will be termed as man's drama-langage. This universal human ability emerges in different human cultures uniquely and variously. In the current example, this study aims to study an example of such a realization from the drama-langage. This second level is referred to here as theatre (the theatre-langue). The actual realization from the theatre-langue in live situations is the performance (theatre-parole).

Drama is a concept of art while theatre is the social and conventional elaboration of this concept. Theatre is also the potential repertoire of dramatic forms in
a concrete social environment. Drama implies a specific concept of an art where man utilizes his capability for dramatization in acts of role-playing. Drama is, therefore, the intellectual and creative ability to conceptualise social phenomena through role-playing (action) in concrete performance. Significantly, it is the ability to examine intellectually this very process itself. A dramatic frame implies specific expectations: individuals except to experience certain emotions, to participate in or/and watch certain events and actions. The world of drama has its own internal logic with specific expression in individual genres and situations.

Against this theoretical framework it is possible to appreciate the critical confusion that surrounds the criticism of drama, theatre and performance. Keir Elam (1980:2), for instance, confuses the abstract intellectual process, drama, with its specific realization in a specific context. Elam defines theatre as:

the complex of phenomena associated with the performer-audience transaction. That is, with the production and communication of meaning in the performance itself and with the systems underlying it (Elam, 1980:2).

This definition veers uneasily between the abstract concept, drama, and its actual realization in performance (of the theatre-parole). Moreover, this definition is an example of a distorting abstraction: the universalization of a concept that confines the larger process that it is meant to abstract. Elam's concept of an audience, for instance, is not universally valid in the sense implied by his definition of drama. This is valid in a context of a relatively passive audience, as in a play production.
That is why Elam defines drama as: "that mode of fiction designed for stage representation and constructed according to particular ('dramatic') conventions" (Elam, 1980:2). The concept of "fiction" in the above definition ties down unfairly the concept of drama to a scripted text. Again, there is an implied concept of a spectacle performed before a relatively passive audience. The central thesis of this study states that drama is a mode of art based on man's inherent ability to represent modes of reality and experience theatrically. It is obvious from Elam's definitions of theatre and drama that he has in mind particular types of theatrical performances specific to certain cultural contexts. According to the key premises of this study, these definitions represent a specific theatre-langue and its paroles rather than a coherent abstract of the concept of drama itself.

However, Elam's definitions are significant, first as attempts to comprehend a specific realization of the concept of drama and, secondly, in so far as they recognize the performance as a rule-governed ('conventions') phenomenon capable of transformation.

The transformations in any theatrical culture imply that dramatic forms change, borrow or even discard some aspects of their form. Yet this does not admit the idea of ritual drama as a pre-form to true drama, as Graham-White's (1974:17) analysis suggests. It will be necessary to clarify a key aspect of the thesis and theoretical framework about the universal abstract ability of man for dramatization and its culture-specific elaboration, to give Graham-White's ideas some detailed attention. Graham-White's book, The Drama of Black Africa, is significant for two main reasons. First, it contributes to an increased awareness of certain types and forms of African
theatre. Secondly, and negatively, it betrays an ambivalent attitude towards narrative theatre so that the analysis of the transformations of African theatre are done against an underlying confined concept of drama. The main aim of Graham-White's book is set out in the introduction:

to survey the main types of drama, to indicate the scope of each, to discuss common themes and their development, and to indicate briefly what may be the directions in which African drama is moving. (Graham-White, 1974:1).

In this book, Graham-White identifies three main types of drama. These he terms "traditional drama", "literary drama" and "popular drama" (Graham - White, 1974:2). He defines "traditional drama" as the form of drama "performed before the colonial era, and which in many cases is still being performed" (Graham-White, 1974:2). This mode of drama, according to Graham-White is also performed in "vernacular" and is not "written down". He rightly notes that this mode of drama should not be called "folk drama" because the term "folk" robs "traditional drama" of the element of inventiveness. It must be pointed out, however, that his own term "traditional" does not fully redeem this mode of performance from the stifling stigma of a rigid and static phenomenon.

Set against "traditional drama" is "literary drama". This, Graham-White says, is European-inspired drama, and is first scripted and then performed. He says it would have been natural to set "traditional drama" against "modern drama", yet he indicates this would have implied that the "traditional" mode is no longer there.
However, Graham-White’s point about “literary drama” as a mode inspired by writing may not be necessarily true. At the East African coast, the writing tradition precedes European colonial penetration. The tradition of epic performances to audiences is also recorded. There is evidence to show “interfluence” (Bukenya, 1976) between the written text and its performance in a theatrical context. What Graham-White implies is merely a particular literary development influenced by a specific form of Western drama, especially those forms that have an Aristotelian beginning, middle and ending. That is, the problem with Graham-White’s perception is more one of a confined and limiting conceptual framework than one of mere ignorance.

The third category that Graham-White identifies is “popular drama”. This form, he says, is aimed and targeted towards a mass, unsophisticated audience. It is mostly associated with the growth of urbanization. It shares with “traditional” drama the element of interaction between spectators and performance.

Graham-White also discusses the origins of drama in Africa. He links closely the origin of drama to ritual and sees ritual as a necessary pre-form to the development of drama proper. He says that some rituals come closer to drama than others. For him, the question of whether a certain performance is drama or not is a question of ethnic consciousness and specifically, how the performance defines the aesthetic distance. Graham-White says:

The actual context of the performance and the way in which it conditions the participants (both performers and spectators) is the most important factor of all in determining whether the ritual is drama or not.

(Graham-White, 1974:16).
The stress is on the attitudes of the participants. He also uses the premises of attitudes to fault research into the area of 'traditional drama'. Often, he says, research does not assess the role of context and attitudes. This is a significant insight, which, ironically, Graham-White does not pursue to its logical conclusion. Had he done this, he would have discovered ritual experiences that are really theatrical, where the aesthetic element that he privileges intermingles productively with the religious context. This study shares with Graham-White the point that not all ritual is strictly drama, but it substantially, and fundamentally, differs with him on his concept of all ritual as a pre-form to drama.

Graham-White argues that the attitudes of participants in any performance are basic to making distinctions between a genuine dramatic experience and a ritual performance. A ritual, in Graham-White's terms, is different from drama because it is expected to have "consequences beyond itself" (Graham-White, 1974:17). Proceeding from the central thesis of this dramatic theory, Graham-White sees ritual performances as functional because they are "expected to produce results in the future" (Graham-White 1974:17).

In a true dramatic experience, according to Graham-White, expectations stop with the performance. A play, for instance, is not expected to cause direct reform. According to Graham-White, "in drama, cause and effect are only linked within the performance; in ritual the performance is the cause of an effect to take place outside it" (1974:17)
Drama begins when a performance is merely a context for aesthetic experience. The problem here is a definition of a "pure aesthetic" experience, a question Graham-White does not answer clear. The main shortcomings with Graham-White's otherwise brilliant and significant points is their rigidity and unnecessarily evolutionary premises.

In the criticism of drama, and its development in time, this study rejects a unilinear progressive scheme that embodies a development from "primitive" forms to ultimate forms. This study suggests that the development of theatre is best appreciated in the specific social contexts of performance. Each situation, each historical period, develops its own unique and distinctive theatre language. Change within the language of these structures is normally a response to changing environmental conditions between periods and whether conditions in a later phase are better than in a former phase is beyond the question of simple linearity.

In a ritual, like okhusena omuse studied as part of this project, the community holds the view that the performance is both a tool for aesthetic experience and, also, a tool in their religious definition. Both are basic to the definition of its ritual context. In this performance, it is elusive, and even counterproductive, to draw rigid lines between "function beyond itself" and "aesthetics". In the analysis of the ritual-drama of Ab'atachoni, a linear model that tends towards an abstract ideal is not valid. In any case, the development of European theatre itself invalidates this claim. What can be said of the emerging concept of Theatre-in-Education (TIE) where the dramatic experience is as central as the effect it is meant to achieve? In the drama of okhusena omuse (Chapter Three), the religious view is
important in framing the serious view that the community brings to bear on the occasion of its performance. In the dance-drama of okhuuya (Chapter Four), the ritual function, and the expected good will that participants hope to derive from it, help to enhance the intensity of the dramatic moment. These, are the underlying “dramatic elements” that define these dramas at this specific historical time.

Similarly, Michael Echeruo’s (1979) analytical framework on drama and ritual is unacceptable for its rigid insistence on an evolutionary progression that sees ritual as a primitive form of drama. According to this argument, ritual develops into drama when:

the structure of action is fully divorced from religious and priestly to the the secular plane.

(Echeruo, 1979:75)

On this basis, he sees the Igbo ritual as limited in its form and content. The Igbo ritual cannot stand on its own outside the explanation of older men. The dramatic content, as he argues, is ‘buried in the ritual purity of the festival’, (Echeruo, 1976:82). His general conclusion is that ritual is, and has always been, a dead end:

it cannot grow. It only shrinks steadily into inevitably inaccessible though powerful symbolism.

(Echeruo, 1976:82)

The principle that Echeruo uses is based on a performance structure where there is a definite hiatus between the audience and the performance. This performance must also have a story line that is accessible to the audience. It has been indicated that the relationship that a specific performance occasion demands from its participants (whether they are mere
spectators or performers), is largely defined by the specific context and the social realities at the historical moment. It is true that a ritual performance communicates at different levels (just like any other performance). Yet, there is always an underlying logic and experience that cuts across, and just as in the 'literary tradition' of drama, it takes a trained critic to point out the inner structures of form and meaning.

Viable definitions of drama should not be unfairly pegged to models of drama that deny man the creative ability to develop dramatic forms specific to his social situation. The context, this study argues, should be basic to a concept of drama, and theatre. Every context demands a prior 'competence' as a necessary pre-condition to theatrical re-codification. That is why Soyinka (1976) aptly argues that divergences between African theatre and Western theatre are not merely found in concepts like creative individualism and communal creativity, nor in divergences between audience and performance. The differences are fundamentally in the world view. In ritual theatre, Soyinka argues, the participants expect to engage unseen metaphysical forces. If a critic cannot identify this, it is not so much the fact that the ritual performance is not drama, as it is his ignorance of the context. Thus, the ritual-theatre:

would be no-existent except within and against the symbolic representation of earth and cosmos, except within this communal compact whose choric essence supplies the collective energy

(Soyinka, 1976:174)

Soyinka's comment is significant in terms of Echeruo's views about the limitations of ritual as drama.
Echeruo superimposes an external criterion, an extra-contextual tenet, applicable maybe, to a ‘literary version’ of an Aristotelian theatre. This study has argued that any performance is always oriented towards a specific target context. This is true of ritual, the play or even an opera. Is it true to say that, because Echeruo understands Soyinka’s *The Road*, this play will communicate in any social context? The best Echeruo can do in such a case is to indicate why it does communicate in certain cases as a genuine theatrical experience while it may not in others. But to use the criterion of “inaccessible in certain contexts” and thus brand certain theatrical experiences as ritual and others as drama is an act of arbitrary categorisation. Despite these observations about Graham-White and Michael Echeruo, both these scholars make an important contribution to the criticism of African theatre. Their critical standpoints raise questions about the problem of dramatic definitions and distinctions. The response to Graham-White and Echeruo should also set a framework within which the critical attitudes of other scholars on this subject may be related to the central thesis and theoretical framework of this study (see for instance, Lo Liyong, 1969; Finnengan, 1974; Clark, 1973; Owomoyela, 1977).

1.4. Definitions

In this study, a dramatic performance is differentiated from any other mode of performance by two basic elements, aesthetics and role-playing. Whether a performance may be described as religious or ritual or even musical, a genuine dramatic performance is one in which the element of role-playing and aesthetics are central and integral both to the survival and execution of its internal interest. Aesthetics in performance refers to the aspect of creative and imaginative communication (through the presentation of images) by the use of sound and
gesture. The Beni Ngoma (Ranger, 1975), for instance, is dance-theatre that emerged around Lamu as a dramatic response to an historical experience. This dance-theatre emerged as creative attempt to comprehend an aspect of colonial culture, the military parade march. The aesthetic element (dance, music, movement) and its aspects of creative imitation (military march) were organic to its social purpose and identity.

The organic relationship between art and social purpose is again true of the narrative genre. A skilled performer will always move the narrative moment to a genuine dramatic experience. On the narrative, this thesis concurs generally with Okpewho (1983) and Scheub (1970, 1972, 1976/77) about the aesthetic quality of performance. It is also a major argument that the narrative can be studied as a genre of theatre. In this genre, aesthetics and role-playing define the basic narrative experience.

The semiotic assumptions in the theoretical framework stem from the belief that a culture is a dynamic system of meanings. Culture is the tool by which a

a particular human group maintains its cohesiveness (its values and identity and its interaction with the world).
(Seboeok, 1986:166)

Keir Elam has defined semiotics as:

a science dedicated to the study of the production of meaning in society. As such it is equally concerned with the processes of signification and with those of communication, i.e. the means whereby meanings are both generated and exchanged. Its objects are thus at once the different sign-
systems and codes at work in society and the actual messages and texts produced thereby. (Elam, 1980:2).

In a theatrical context, a semiotic enterprise seeks answers to the what, how and why performances communicate (See Schipper, 1985:2). For sunday Anozie (1982:252), a leading African structuralist, a semiotic insight should provide a viable analytical framework for the systematization of the rules of formation and transformation in the narrative process. This process, Anozie argues, is basic to an investigation of continuities between the oral and written mediums of African art. In the context of Ab'atachoni theatre symbols will be taken to have cultural-semiotic significance. Aesthetics as a result will be examined as it relates to its social context.

The performance in Ab'atachoni theatre is the target of meaningful investigation. This performance (parole) is a contexture defined by three basic energies. The first is the energy of the theatrical culture. This refers to the general socio-cultural matrix within which performances and genres are generated. The second refers to the energy of the genre of specific performance. Each genre, whether of a ritual, dance or narrative forms, sets a certain presumption, a set of performance expectations within which performers mould a performance. The third is the energy exerted by the creative artist(s). The involvement of certain individuals is recognised as having considerable influence on the nature of the performance.

It will be necessary to comprehend the three main genres selected for analysis in this study to define the concept of genre.
The concept of a genre can be approached from two axes. First, a genre is a reality within a paradigm relation, a relation on a vertical scale. This means that a genre is mutually exclusive from other genres that emerge in different contexts and are perceived differently but within the same cultural context and tradition. At the vertical level, this study is a triad of the ritual-theatre (omuse), dance-theatre (okhuuya), and narrative-theatre (olukano). The second axis is the syntagmatic relation. This is the relationship between different performances of the same genre, like omuse. Each performance of omuse is both a re-creation and a distinction of its counterparts. Against this background it may be said that a genre is a type of performance, defining a 'coherent' set of relationships to the langue and the paroles of the genre.

The concept of genre has two basic implications for this study. The first implication relates to the performer. The genre provides a framework for the performer to situate his creativity. The second implication relates to the participants. The concept of a genre offers a norm or bracket to guide the participants in their creative encounter with the performance (See, e.g., Culler, 1975:136). In the performance of omuse, for instance, participants anticipate certain idiosyncratic strategies of communication associated with this genre. Performers often utilize deep metaphors in their communication of certain aspects as a deliberate device to keep out certain sections of the participants. When this happens, those who are unable to decode the intended meanings reconcile themselves to their ignorance.

In the context of this study, ritual-theatre is defined as that mode of performance in which the action is central to the religious and aesthetic
wholeness of the community that practises it. That is, the aesthetic and religious elements are organic and essential to the ritual’s communication and larger meaning. Ritual-theatre differs from dance-theatre principally on the incorporation of music and dance. In a dance-theatre, music and dance are key features of the creative communication process. Thus, both dance-theatre and ritual-theatre may utilize music and dance, yet these musical or dance aspects will not feature as basic to the ritual’s religious and aesthetic wholeness. This is true, for instance, in terms of the differences between the ritual-theatre of *okhusena omuse* (Chapter Three) and the dance-theatre of *okhuuya* (Chapter Four). A ritual-theatre has also an appreciable strict adherence to procedures and processes in terms of their sequence and mode of execution. The element of strictness is seen as an essential aspect of the projected force of the ritual.

The narrative mode of theatre is defined as the performance in which the element of verbal expression (narration, linguistic expression) is central and complementary to the preter-linguistic aspects like gesture, movement, voice variation and pause. Since the guiding theoretical framework is a generative one, these definitions are not meant to be timeless absolutes. The transformational and dynamic nature of theatre always embodies new possibilities not just of transformed meanings but also of different genres.

1.5. Scope and method of the study

This is a study of the theatre genres of ritual, dance and narrative. This is not a historical study of the theatre of Ab’atachoni, for such a study would require a longer period of examination of performances in live situations.
The theatre forms of the Ab’atachoni examined here are not necessarily exhaustive of the actual or potential repertoire. The three broad categories suggested here subsume a potentially dynamic and larger phenomenon than maybe implied by ritual, dance and narrative theatre. The mode of investigation was based on the premise that live performance is the target object of meaningful investigation of theatre and drama. Method of study unites both the actual techniques and procedures used to gather relevant data and the “theoretical bases through which this field technique is oriented”. (Merriam, 1967:39). In this context, the theoretical base is the assumption that the live performance, (the parole), is the target object of meaningful investigation.

Several techniques were used. First there was actual participation and observation. Performances of ritual, dance and narrative theatre were observed and, where possible, actual participation was undertaken. In the case of the ritual-theatre, performed in honour of a Mutachoni elder on the second day after burial, it requires a specific seating arrangement based on age, sex and social position. The approach in this ceremony was to sit at the appropriate place as one of the mourners.

The second technique was note-taking and tape-recording. A miniature cassette tape recorder was used to minimize the effects of a conspicuous electronic apparatus. The narratives for instance, were taped without necessarily the performer’s knowledge. Soon after the performance, unique aspects of performance were recorded in a notebook.

In the dance-drama of okhuuya, the procedure varied between actual participation and recording. Recording was done on both cassette tapes and on paper. Certain
performance sequences or symbols were clarified by the participants. The interpretation of symbols was guided by both the local interpretation and the researcher's own academic insights as suggested by Turner (1967:50).

According to Turner's framework, symbols may be analyzed at three levels. The first level considers what the owners of the performance think of the specific symbol. The second level examines the relationship of the symbol to other symbols in performance and the cultural context. At the third level, the researcher makes an interpretation deriving from partly his own intellectual academic background and partly from the observations and interviews.

The procedure of recording was supplemented by photography. Key performance moments were captured on still-film to preserve some visual evidence. This was particularly useful in capturing visual elements like costume and specific dance-actions.

The analysis of the field experience is presented in three basic chapters. In chapter three, the ritual-theatre of *omuse* is described in theatrical terms. Examples from two performance occasions are used to describe the theatrical levels of this ceremony. The dance-theatre of *okhuuya* is examined in chapter four. The analysis in this chapter is based on a specific instance from the *theatre-langue*. In chapter five, an instance of a 'parole' from the narrative-matrix of Ab'atachoni is outlined. The first two chapters are devoted to giving a general theoretical and social background to the study and the community studied. In the last chapter, a general theoretical conclusion is
CHAPTER TWO

THE AB'ATACHONI: SOCIAL AND AESTHETIC BACKGROUND

2.1. Introduction

This chapter sets out to introduce the Ab'atachoni community, their social and geographical setting outlining at the same time the basic contexts of their creative expression. This introduction is meant to set a social background within which the Ab'atachoni theatre is realised as tangible performance.

2.2. The people and their land

The Ab'atachoni live in the Eastern sections of Bungoma District and particularly around Ndivisi, Misemwa, Lugulu, Miu, Makunga and Kib'isi, all these of Webuye and Tongaren Divisions of Bungoma District. Bungoma District, together with Kakamega and Busia Districts, form the Western Province of Western Kenya.

Bungoma District lies on the southern slopes of Mt. Elgon. The Mt. Elgon slopes and the lowlands are the basic land forms of Bungoma District (Ministry of Planning and National Development Report, Bungoma District, 1989-93). The Ab'atachoni are to be found mostly on the Bungoma lowlands. In the southern parts of the District the mean annual temperatures range between 21°C and 20°C while the areas closer to Mt. Elgon have temperature ranges of between 50°C and 10°C.

There are two main rainfall seasons, the short rainfall season and the long rainfall season. The long rains normally begin in March and continue into June or July while the short rains start around August and continue into October. The rainfall range falls between 1,250mm. and over 1,800mm. per annum. The
major planting season comes at the start of the main rains round March and April.

The rainfall pattern explains the timing of certain cultural practices, like the circumcision ceremony. The ceremony is performed in two sessions, the first one in August and the second one in December. This timing, apart from taking care of the school system, also comes when there is relatively plenty of food. The main cashcrops grown are maize, beans sunflower, coffee, sugar-cane, bananas and to some extent millet.

Livestock, and especially cattle, plays a significant role in the economy of the District. It provides milk both for home consumption and the market. It also used for ploughing and weeding especially for maize.

In ceremonies, cattle provide meat and it is the basic form for the payment of dowry.

Bungoma District has a wide range of soil types. They are basically varieties of clay and volcanic soils with a fair drainage capacity. These soils, together with the gentle terrain, make this District productive agriculturally. Most people are small-scale farmers with an average acreage of about eight hectares.

The Ab’atachoni are, as is to be expected, culturally influenced by their neighbours, especially the B’ab’ukusu and the Kalenjin (especially of the Bongomek group). Indeed, it is claimed that most of the Ab’atachoni clans have a Bongomek origin (Wandibba, 1985:27). In their oral traditions, three common places are mentioned as constituting their original homeland before they moved to where they live now. These are Silikwa, Sengeli and Mbai. The three places are probably situated in the current West Pokot and Trans Nzoia Districts. The Kalenjin factor in the
cultural universe of Ab’atachoni is largely reflected in certain rituals, particularly the circumcision ceremony. The roots of key lexical items used in the poetry of this ceremony and certain dance movements reflect a Kalenjin origin. The post-circumcision initiation ceremony called okhulichana has a strong Kalejin factor and it would be impossible to re-codify the semantic load of certain linguistic choices unless one traces them back to their Kalejin origin. The okhulichana ceremony is one of the key cultural aspects that Ab’atachoni consider a unifying and an identifying element.

In terms of the Ab’tachoni links with the Ba’b’ukusu, their languages are very close and the few lexical and phonological differences do not affect mutual intelligibility. The practice of the performance of omuse is, for instance, interchangeable. It must be pointed out, however, that the historical past of Ab’atachoni is still a matter that requires further research.

2.3. Social Organization

The current social and political order among Ab’atachoni is both a reflection of current national trends and the indigenous local structures that have had a longer historical existence. Before the coming of colonialism to Tachoni land, socio-political organization was centred around fenced-in villages, chingob’a (singular olukob’a). There was a head of each olukob’a who ruled assisted by a council of elders normally of his age-set. A lukob’a comprised members of one clan or a number of families from one clan.

The Chetambe fort, for instance, one of the most famous fenced-in villages of Ab’atachoni, consisted of members of the Ab’angachi clan. This fort was
destroyed by British colonial forces around 1895 (Wandibba, 1985:30). While these fenced-in villages are no longer a reality, three aspects from the earlier structure of social and political organization have significance to this day. These are the age-set system, the clan and family organizations.

The age-set system is based on the circumcision tradition. A man acquires an age-set after undergoing the rigours of circumcision while a woman may identify herself by the age-set of her husband. The age-set is cyclic and was probably borrowed from the Kalenjin (Wandibba, 1985:32). One age-cycle runs for about ninety-six years. There are eight age-sets; each age-set is divided into six sub-age groups. The current age-set, for instance, began around 1900 and is moving towards its last stages. The eight age-sets are listed below:

1. Kolongolo
2. Kikwameti
3. Kananchi
4. Kinyikeu
5. Nyange
6. Maina
7. Chuma
8. Sawa


Since circumcision is carried out each even-numbered year, one age-set comprises twelve years. The basic social significance of the age-set is its utilization in assigning specific functions to individuals. It may be decided in a ceremony like circumcision that certain duties will be performed by members of a certain age-set. In arbitration of civil disputes, it is normal for a member who belongs to an earlier age-set than the rest to be asked to act as an arbitrator.
The family is another structural unit that has been carried over to the present times. The family here is larger than the conventional definitions of a man, a wife and their children. The family, in the eyes of Ab’atachoni, includes those members of Ab’atachoni who share a grandfather and generally recognize one of the members of the family as their head. The head of the family has both judicial and religious responsibilities leading the rest in important family functions and ceremonies.

The family system links closely with the clan system. The Ab’atachoni are also identified by their clans which number about thirty-eight in all. Several families comprise a clan and they recognize one or several members as heads of the clan. These clan leaders represent their clan in important cultural practices like okhulichana that involve larger numbers of clans. Currently, for instance, the Ab’atachoni have recognised representatives from the different thirty-eight clans that decide on the nature and timing of ceremonies like okhulichana. This association of representatives decides key policy issues relating to specific cultural behaviour. The clan, the family, and age-set structure as units of administrative and religious significance are exploited by the national administrative structure. Either a chief, for instance, is chosen from a recognised ruling clan, or administrators or the courts seek the aid of elders from the community along the lines of family or clanheads to help in the arbitration of disputes or in the clarification of customary legal tenets.

The system of inheritance among Ab’atachoni is a patrilineal one although maternal relations are also respected. Many ceremonies and rituals require the active participation of maternal relations, especially
the uncles. The case of the circumcision ceremony, described later in this chapter, demonstrates this maternal link.

2.4. Material Culture and Occupations

Most Ab'atachoni are small-scale farmers and most aspects of their material culture reflect this reality. In this sub-section, the aim is to demonstrate through a few selected examples of items of material culture, the close relationship between the utility of the items and art. That is, the observation of items of material culture of these people indicates a realization of a technical ability to fashion items to perform specific functions and yet also serve the inherent human capability for aesthetic expression and appreciation.

Most items of material culture are known by the materials from which they are made or the uses to which these materials are put. About eight classes of material culture may be identified within this community (Wafula and Mutoro, 1985:5). These fall within the classes of calabashes, metals, beads, wood carvings, baskets and weaves, ceramics and pots, skins and hides and horns. Examples from within the classes of calabashes, metals and pots will indicate, although briefly, the mutual relationship between art and practical utility. The activities of most people in the community are agricultural or related to agriculture. Livestock farming, for instance, is taken for granted. A lot of material items have therefore emerged to store milk, to process butter and fat and preserve it as sour milk. Different types of calabashes are used for this purpose. Calabashes are picked from a calabash plant and grow into different sizes. The gourds that are plucked when they are ripe The calabash plant grows near the fertile soils of cattle shelters (Wafula and Mutoro 1985:6). The ripe
calabash may be cut open at the mouth and used for storing milk. This one is referred to as esimuka. This type of gourd is long, slightly about a half meter. A strap is made to facilitate easy transportation from one point to another and this strap is usually decorated with beads. The lid for this gourd is also decorated with beads and both the strap and lid are made from animal hides. This type of gourd is also decorated all round using smoke from namatikiyi (a type of lamp whose flame is not covered with glass).

Another type of gourd is called injisachilo used for churning fat or making butter. This type is shorter than esimuka for storing milk. It has a wide base. It also has a strap and lid made from animal hides. Like esimuka, it may also be decorated with V-shaped smoke patterns. Calabashes are also used for other purposes other than storing milk or making butter and fat. A calabash may be cut open to make bowls for drinking porridge (esisanda: singular) or for drawing water (omwendo: singular). These two types are decorated with v-shaped smoke patterns. This variety of uses to which the calabash is put have created a professional-commercial class of people in this community who make and sell these items.

A variety of metal items are made. Smithery is a skill confined to a small class who often inherit the skill and this technology. Moreover, large-scale production of industrial goods has had a negative and stifling effect on local technologies and industries. The skill of metal-making is still confined to those items that are largely used for ritual practice or their use is likely to have a very limited clientele. The jingle bells (chinyimba) used in circumcision ceremonies by the initiates to play and give rhythm to the song performance, are made by specific professionals. They are made by burning special kinds of stone to smelt
them and make *chinyimba* and other items. The metal rings worn around the wrists by the initiates to give sound when the *chinyimba* are played (*eb’itili*) are also made by smelting special stones. The weeding implement for millet, *esisili* (singular), is also made by this process. *Esisili* is a slender metal hoe suitable for weeding millet which is closely planted. The implement for harvesting millet is also made by this process. This implement (*injeso*: singular), is sickle-shaped and is an aspect of the iron-smithing culture of the Ab’atachoni.

Pottery is also an exclusive skill exploiting received technologies and skills. It has also defined a special class of professionals who make pots and sell them. Pots are made from a variety of clay soils and are used for a variety of purposes. The variety of purpose also dictates the physical shape and size of the pot. The one referred to as *isiongo*, for example, is capable of carrying water of about sixteen litres and is made with a big wide cylindrical base and a slender neck and a slightly wide mouth. The body of the pot is smoothened while the neck is decorated with a band of plaited grass or rope while the soil is still wet. This type of pot is used both for fetching water and storing it. A smaller type but made with the same pattern like *isiongo* is *iningilo*. This one is used for cooking. A bigger one than *isiongo* is the *indeMO* used for brewing beer. Many other types are available but what is significant to note is that members of this community recognize the different shapes of pots as suitable for the different specific purposes.

In sum, the Ab’atachoni like any other Kenyan community, are undergoing rapid socio-economic transformation. The process of urbanization, for instance, is making lasting effect on the occupational patterns of this community. Many more people are
moving into commerce and the agricultural patterns are becoming more and more mechanized and the indigenous technologies are increasingly becoming marginalised.

2.5. Beliefs and Practices

Religious belief centres on Wele (God). God is the all-powerful being who works through his recognised intermediaries. Ancestors, for instance, are believed to have the ability to communicate God’s wishes. They may do this directly or through ritual-performers of omuse, for instance.

The worship of God is executed through various contexts. In the post-circumcision ceremony of okhulichana, for example, the community exteriorizes its belief in Wele. An appointed ritual-leader for this occasion makes specific wishes of the community known to Wele. The burial ceremonies of omuse and okhuuya are as much religious contexts. Individuals may also make personal prayers to God at special places. One such sacred place is under a fig tree (omutoto), a tree much revered by Ab’atachoni.

External religious belief systems, particularly Christianity and to a lesser degree Islam, have had an influence on the Ab’atachoni concept of God. On the whole however, most members combine the indigenous and the external in a process of adaptive contextualization.

2.6. Language and Creative Expression

Ab’atachoni speak Olutachoni, a dialect of Oluluhya, a Bantu language, and like all Bantu languages, this language is distinctively defined by a concordial character dictated by the noun class system. Like all orate societies, the Ab’atachoni put language to a wide variety of functional and creative use.
The creative expressive culture of Ab’atachoni may be broadly examined as falling into two categories. The first category refers to those creative contexts that have a bias towards performance. The second category refers to those contexts that focus more towards the linguistic component in the expression itself. The theatre forms of the Ab’atachoni, studied as part of the subject of this project, fall within the former category while conversational modes like the proverb and the saying, belong to the latter category. Performance contexts may be sub-divided into three further sub-categories (see e.g. Agovi, 1985:2). The first mode within the performance category focuses attention on the individual artist as the central aesthetic force. The narrative performance (chapter five) is an example of this creative context. The second mode, the festival context, is defined by communal participation in the execution of the performance. In this sub-category, the focus does not fall necessarily on any one specific artistic although exceptional artists often gain prominence, so that their mere presence becomes a foregrounded feature. The circumcision festival is one such example where activities run for a number of days involving a number of artists and many participants. The third mode is one in which there is a communal aspect but the focus is relatively on one single individual performer. The ritual performance of omuse is such an example (chapter three).

2.7. Conclusion

The experience of Ab’atachoni demonstrates the organic relationship between art and social life. Art is an active element of social process, participating in the shaping of social life as well as its comprehension.
3.1. Introduction

In this chapter a description and analysis of Omuse as a specific concept of drama is given. Two specific performances on two different occasions are presented to demonstrate how performers—operating within the system of omuse—give each occasion of omuse uniqueness and distinction.

3.2. Background

The performance of omuse is founded on the human abstract ability for dramatisation (i.e., the human drama-langage) and especially the human capacity for ritual dramatization. The ritual of omuse is an aspect of the religious culture of the Ab'atachoni. The omuse ceremony, part of a network of activities carried out for burial, is perceived as necessary for the successful transformation of an individual from a mortal to an immortal state. On the occasion of an omuse-performance, a ceremonial performer (also referred to in this chapter as a ritual-performer) is invited by relatives of the deceased to the home of the deceased. The ceremonial performer re-enacts significant historical events in the context of the local community (who will be mostly the Ab'atachoni and the B'ab'ukusu). He also re-enacts myths, legends and relates them to the specific context of performance. Moreover, the performer has access to a vast repertoire of resources, including song, proverb, riddle, narrative and oratory, to make comments on the social and spiritual issues. The occasion of omuse is not confined to mourning. It encompasses larger social concerns and the performer often stresses this. In any case, certain forms of mourning, like wailing or
crying, are not allowed on this occasion. The enactment of historical events, myths and legends functions as a means of making connections between the dead and the living, the past and present.

3.3. Conventions of the Omuse

There are three types of omuse: the sitting (omuse kwo okhwikhala), the standing (omuse kwo okhusinjila), and the walking (omuse kwo okhukenda). Each type of omuse is appropriate to the status of the deceased. The first type, the sitting omuse, is performed in honour of grandmotherly married woman. In this type of omuse, the performer will accomplish his task while seated down strategically among his audience (See illustration on page 32). The second type, the standing omuse, is performed in honour of a grandfatherly man with a living elder brother. The deceased must also be a member of the ritual cult of okhulicana. The third type, the walking type, is performed in honour of the eldest grandfatherly son or a grandfatherly man whose elder brothers are already dead. He must also be an initiate of okhulichana. In this chapter, only examples from the standing and walking types are given. In the research period no live performance of the sitting type was observed.

When a Mutachoni elder dies and he belongs to the categories mentioned above, a ritual-performer (omuseni-omuse) is informed normally a day or two before the actual performance. The performance of omuse is carried out on the second day after burial. It is crucial that the performer is informed early enough because the night prior to any performance of omuse, he should not see the bed of his wife (personal conversation with Walucho Buria, 27th February, 1990). This, as Walucho informed me is believed to bring bad luck and may interfere with the ritual duty.
In the morning on his way to the funeral ceremony, the performer does not acknowledge any greetings “even if they were coming from the District Commissioner” (Wanjala, 1985:8). The performer does not approach the performance area until it is ready. The audience should be seated in their places. The seating arrangement should be ready by about nine in the morning.

A spacious area, capable of accommodating all the participants, is chosen. The congregation would normally sit within an arrangement of about two to three lines on either side of an “empty” space in the middle about five metres in width. The length of this seating arrangement is about fifteen to twenty metres. This length will depend, however, on the number of participants. The “empty” space, approximating five metres, is not blocked on either side because the performer enters and exits through these openings.

In the first third of the empty space from the women’s side (See illustration page 32) the immediate family of the deceased sit. The two or three lines on either side of the empty space mentioned above constitute what may be referred to as the core participants, as they include elders and other prominent men in society, never the women. The two or three lines are demarcated by stools, chairs or benches on which these core participants sit. All women must sit down on the ground at one end of the length with legs outstretched. The diagram below attempts a visual impression of the seating arrangement:

![Diagram of seating arrangement]

A visual representation of Omuse
A - the physical acting area for the ritual-performer. This is an example of the 'walking type'. If it were the 'standing type' he would merely stand at a strategic spot slightly on the side of the performing area.

In the 'sitting type' he would sit on one of the sides around the 'C' area.

B - Marks the sitting area of the immediate family (wife/wives and children).

C - The core participants mostly elders.

D - Women

E - Other people especially those who arrive late sit around the C 'area'.

When the setting is ready as outlined above, the ceremonial performer now approaches from the eastern side and the setting is organized in anticipation of this fact. The performer reaches the eastern end and marks a spot and moves steadily between his audience and makes another spot at the western end. The two spots that the performer marks demarcate his horizontal eastern and western limits for his walking action. Moreover, the performer must describe, by the end of the performance, a straight visible path. This however, is restricted to the 'walking type' of omuse. The ending of omuse is strictly uniform for the three types. The performer gives a signal verbally and jumps out of the ritual-path or arena and everybody stands up at the same time. Anyone left seating while the performer has jumped out of the performance area is believed to suffer bad luck.
3.4. The Performance: An example of the Walking Type

In this subsection, an example of the walking type of omuse as observed at the funeral ceremony of Khisa King’asia of Tongaren Division on the 26 February 1990 is described. Later in the chapter, a theatrical interpretation of this performance is presented. The ritual-performer on the occasion was Walucho B’uria of Ndivisi Location.

When the seating arrangement was ready, Walucho B’uria, who had been waiting a few metres from the home, approached the performance area from the eastern side (yi’kwe). He was clad in a colobus monkey skin (likutu), he had an ivory armlet (injaba’si), his ritual hat firmly held on his head (ekofio ya chisimbi) and a ritual stick made from a rhinoceros horn (esikong’o sya Kiveu). Walucho marked a spot with one of his rubber shoes at the eastern end of the length and moved quickly towards the western end and marked another spot. These two spots made the end-spots for the length of his performance path. When Walucho reached the eastern side, he uttered a single sound ‘eeh!’ and proceeded back to the western side, invoking his God to guide his performance. He philosophized about the reality of death since time immemorial: “This death has been with us for long. We have not learned about the process of death today. We die from the early days. ("Lifwa lino, lyarula khale. Efwe sekhwakyeyika lifwa lino b’ulano tawe. Khufwichanga okhurula khale").

On these words, he completed his return journey from his original starting point. This was the path that he meticulously followed for the rest of the time, three and a half hours. The emphasis of Walucho’s performance centred on tracing the historical movements of the Ab’atachoni, especially of the Ab’angachi clan (the clan of the deceased), pausing
significantly, to underscore specific points about the implications of some of the historical events. What is of interest to the study, and especially this chapter, is not the historical veracity of the accounts but the awareness that the frame established in omuse allows a productive interflow of fact and fancy as dictated by the practical realities of the context. This emphasis on "history" was interspersed with a reminder to the audience of basic customs and traditions which hold the community together.

The attempt to re-create the nature and mood of past historical periods was closely aided by the use of myth and legend. Past historical figures and events were mythicised as a way of relating the past to the present. Walucho's presentation of the historical movement of the Ab'atachoni took him from Jordan, through the Nile to the Rift Valley at Naivasha, Nakuru, the Uasin Gishu Plateau around what are referred to by the Ab'atachoni as Silikwa and Mbai, and up to Chitale (present day Kitale), Mt. Elgon slopes and back eastwards towards Alego. It is, according to Walucho, at Alego that both the Ab'atachoni and the B'ab'ukusu, for a time, lost the practice of circumcision and the mythic-legend (Okpewho's word, 1983) of Mango tells of how this practice was restored. This specific mythic-legend borrowed from the B'ab'ukusu and incorporated into an omuse of a Mutachoni elder, has a specific pragmatic intention. This pragmatic intention will be indicated later in the chapter. A full account of this mythic-legend is reproduced in Appendix One.

It is Mango, in Walucho's terms, who restored the practice of circumcision by his courageous act of killing a dangerous serpent called Yab'eb'e. Yab'eb'e was reportedly causing a lot of suffering by killing human beings and livestock alike. He described how on
the actual day of confrontation, Mango went into the serpent’s cave and hid himself in a strategic corner and how the serpent entered, coiling itself into a bundle, whereby Mango brought his sword firmly onto the neck and the head fell several meters away. After this courageous act Walucho demonstrated how Mango triumphantly shouted with joy.

“I have killed it! I have finished it!”

It was after this courageous and extra-ordinary act, Walucho explained, that the community decided to have Mango circumcised. This then, according to Walucho, was the precedent to the restoration of the circumcision tradition among the Ab’atachoni and the B’ab’ukusu. Soon after this, Walucho re-enacted aspects of the wrangles within the Christian Church. He particularly singled out the Quakers, popularly known as the ‘Friends’.

The Friends Church, especially in Western Province, has split up into two main factions: The Elgon Friends’ and the Kaimosi Friends’. In Bungoma District the B’ab’ukusu would generally identify with the Elgon Friends’ while the Kaimosi Friends’ would generally comprise the Ab’atachoni, the Kabras and the Maragoli ethnic groups. With this split, one major problem has emerged; that of sharing the common property owned by the mother Church. The process of sharing has not at all been a ‘Friendly’ one. Physical confrontations have often resulted on church premises. Walucho ridiculed this violence in a ‘Friendly’ Church:

“They sing, ‘follow Jesus’ with big stones in their pockets! What are those big stones for?”

After bêlabouring the need for unity among the various ethnic communities in Bungoma District, Walucho asked
whether anybody had something to say about the deceased. One man stood up and said that he was owed five thousand shillings by the deceased. The relatives accepted to repay the money. This was necessary, because as Walucho explained, the deceased could not 'travel' safely to the next world unless he is free of any financial obligations he may not have fulfilled. At this point, the performance was nearing fulfillment and everybody was alert. As soon as the performer gave the signal for everybody to stand, he jumped out of the ritual-path and everybody left the ritual arena.

3.2. The Performance: An example of the Standing Type

In the following case study, John Manguriechi of Kib'ingei, Kimilili Division, Bungoma District performed at the omuse of Charles Wasike of Chesamisi of Kimilili Division on the 9th February, 1990. Manguriechi is a Mub'ukusu performer whose bias at this occasion was not so much an emphasis of the historical aspects of the community's past as it was a philosophical re-interpretation of social experience and death through the technique of narrative.

The performance began at about ten in the morning. There was a slight delay because the performer found the site of performance unacceptable since it was far too near one of the houses of the sons of the deceased relative to the father's house. Again, before the performance there was a man with a mental case who tried to address the audience. At first no one paid him any attention. When this particular mad man, however, wanted to move over to the open ritual space reserved for the ceremonial performer, he was restrained. After these initial obstacles were overcome, the performer took a strategic place almost at the middle of the 'empty space' reserved for him. His choice of a place to stand was deliberate and strategic to allow him turn his head to give attention
to all sections of his audience without necessarily turning his body or making any walking movement. He began, unlike Walucho in the previous case, by asking various people to say something about the deceased. Apparently, the deceased had no debts and most of what was said about him by various people was in praise of him. The performer, after about twenty minutes of listening to what other people had said, took over the performance. He narrated briefly his relationship with deceased, how the deceased was the first man in the area to attain a degree from Makerere. He however, made the point that while the death of Wasike was a loss, the occasion must significantly be seen as a moment of a celebration of an achievement: Here was a man who had excelled academically. His children too had attained university education. The community and especially his immediate family must not feel too sad. This message was delivered ingeniously through the use of direct oratory and a number of narratives. An example of two narratives are given below to demonstrate their incorporation on this occasion. These two stories are reproduced as performed by Mangureichi in Appendix One. In this chapter, only a synopsis of each is given.

The first of these stories is about a white ant called Wanakatawa. The story of Wanakatawa tells how three Wanakatawa’s met different fates. The story tells of a woman who went to harvest these white ants. The first of the Wanakatawa’s to come out of the ground fell into the trap-hole (mufub’o) and was eaten by wo/man. The second Wanakatawa flew away and was eaten by a bird, while the third Wanakatawa that remained underground was eaten by safari ants (Walunab’e). Because of this Wanakatawa said:

In the trap-hole, I am eaten
up in the air, I am eaten
underground, I am eaten.

In the second story, Manguriechi told of Namukholondo (a black insect that exudes a bad smell when touched) and Liliachichi (a black, fatty insect eaten by Ab'atachoni). These two insects lived together. Namukholondo once asked Liliachichi why she (Liliachichi) had a thin waist-line. Liliachichi told Namukholondo that she had a thin waist-line because of her people's death.

"Why", she said
"My people died, my uncles died so I took a rope and thinned myself".

Liliachichi also asked Namukholondo to explain her bad smell. Namukholondo also told of how her people died, how her grandmother died, how her grandfather died, how her mother died and in weeping and crying, she fell on them and so the smell caught up with her.

Manguriechi ended up his performance by arguing strongly for school education. This, as he explained in proverbial language, was the basis for taking on responsibility in the future. Those communities in Kenya that neglect this fact will never rule others. He cautioned that no one people can hope to dominate others for ever (an apparent reference to ethnic-centred politics in Africa) and the sooner black people realized this the better. In a crisp proverb, he summarized this as follows:

When the cock grabs,
the hen grumbles,
When the hen grabs,
the cock grumbles.

(Oli nyo kutwaya kwatila,
kusenyep kwakhorakhora
Oli nyo kusenye kwatila, 
kutwaya kwakhorakhora).

This was a strong plea for human co-existence because as he argued, circumstances are often interchangeable.

This specific performance lasted for about three hours and it centred on philosophising about death, its universal nature, the need for social cohesion and the significance of one's cultural heritage. All these were mentioned alongside practical everyday happenings. At around one p.m., the performer alerted his audience and jumped out of the arena. Everybody stood up at once and dispersed.

3.6. The Omuse Ritual: A Theatrical Interpretation

It is argued in this subsection that the burial ceremony of omuse is realized as a theatrical act and the performance of omuse is a parole defined by creative role-playing. To elaborate the above premise, an examination of the opening formula, the use of the narrative mode as a context for conceptual recodification, the use of space and attire, and generally the performer's use of body and the incorporation of other genres of art, like the proverb, to realise specific contextual aims will be examined. The observation of the two performances described in this chapter reveal that omuse is a conventional mode with 'rules' familiar to the participants. This means that both the performer and his audience share a frame of reference, a certain competence which helps them to differentiate between the omuse-parole and other cultural activities. In other words:

"Theatrical events are distinguished from other events according to certain organizational and cognitive
principles which, like all cultural rules, have to be learned”.
(Elam, 1980:87)

At the omuse performed for Charles Wasike, for instance, the community knew the acceptable extents to which 'out-of-frame' activity may be accepted and when it should be stopped. In this sense, the opening formula described in the 'walking' type above is a transforming device, effectively shifting the frame from a mere social context into a ritual-theatrical space, filling it with religious and aesthetic value. The dramatic opening and the silence that marks this opening are key theatrical shifters (theatrical speech acts) which help to frame and set the beginning of performance time. As the performer makes his first walk from the western to the eastern side on the straight path that he walks (yingila, also called omuse), he establishes his theatrical territory and space. At the same time, he studies and establishes his audience. The prayer he utters (mostly acknowledging both the ancestral and Christian God) helps to enhance the ritual atmosphere. The momentary silence at the beginning is a way of ordering his words and summoning the necessary dramatic energy to begin the performance. The beginning session, therefore, though brief, is significantly important for both performer and his audience. It helps the performer to get into character, while the audience are allowed time and opportunity to adopt the appropriate mood and attentiveness required for the occasion.

Having prepared the stage for theatrical communication, the selection of artistic genres for specific purposes was done consciously and carefully. The narrative or the mythic-legend, for instance, are embryonic thematic and structural resources offering
vast interpretive potential and providing a context for intensive role-playing. In the Mango mythic-legend, performed as part of the omuse for King'asisa, the performer succeeds in re-enacting a mood of anxiety and suspense. When he wants his audience to laugh he makes them laugh. He speaks with the whole body—hands, face, voice movement and eyes. The events are re-created as if they were actually taking place at the place of performance. It was a transposition, through the dramatic, into the historic present.

This mythic-legend of Mango also helps to make a historical connection. It links the ritual ceremony of circumcision and gives it justification. As a dramatic technique, it serves as a tension-relieving element and helps the audience to share in the action of omuse: the performance must not only have religious significance but also and, crucially, aesthetic value. The choice of a Bukusu mythic-legend within a Tachoni context, as was indicated, was a deliberate act by Walucho, a Mutachoni ritual-performer, to demonstrate a deep and enduring kinship between the B'ab'ukusu and Ab'atachoni. The audience was composed of both Ab'atachoni and B'ab'ukusu.

The choice and performance of this mythic-legend of Mango was a conscious attempt to invalidate occasional animosities between these two communities especially during campaigns for parliamentary seats. It is usual in cases where both a Mutachoni candidate and Mub'ukusu one are involved to invoke ethnic sentiments as strategy of winning elections. This should be comprehended against the overwhelming numbers of the B'ab'ukusu relative to the Ab'atachoni. Though Walucho did not mention it directly, the recent parliamentary (1988) elections, especially in the newly created Webuye constituency, were on his mind. Soon after this
mythic-legend he lamented about the lack of at least one Omutachoni parliamentarian in Bungoma District.

The ability of the narrative to provide a creative context for social and philosophical re-codification is further illustrated by the story of Wanakatawa presented in the second case study, the "standing type" of omuse. According to Manguriechi, this narrative emphasizes the inescapability from personal responsibility and the universal reality of death. If you kill a man, for instance, the courts await to send you to jail (the white ant that fell in the trap-hole was eaten). If you escape the courts, heaven awaits you (the one that flew away was eaten by birds). Above all, death is a sure and universal reality and Walunabe awaits everybody (the one white ant that remained underground was eaten by safari ants). The performance of this story by Manguriechi had therefore two basic functions. First was its ability through the use of language—its stylistics—to engage the imagination. Second was the ingenious twist that Manguriechi gave this narrative to define human destiny and responsibility. This twist in interpretation also serves an important pragmatic function. The ritual-performer is a professional mourner. He helps the bereaved family and the community not only to live and accept death, but also to appreciate its universality. This lessens its tragic force.

In the second story used by Manguriechi, Namukholondo and Liliachichi, the performer was again able to inject some creative variation to his performance and at the same time emphasize the universal nature of death. His delivery of the characteristics of the two insects was humorously done, appealing to the total sensory system. The smell of Namukholondo, the kinaesthetics of weeping and crying by the insects,
the scenic and aural aspects. The examples acted above indicate the signifying potential of the narrative both as an act of role-playing and as an embryonic unit. The narrative is part of the semiotic resources of omuse. The ritual-performer makes a choice from the narrative matrix, contextualizes it within a specific omuse, and by this, makes the selected narrative part of the omuse.

The use of space—the proxemic sense—helps to underline the social position and hierarchy in the community. The place of elders and prominent men in society is well-marked. Age, sex and social position emerge as significant factors in defining one’s place in this society. There is however, an underlying tension between age and one’s socio-economic position. A younger man may sit on the chairs or stools at the 'C' area (See illustration, page 32), while a more elderly member of the society sits on the ground because of the latter’s lower socio-economic status. One factor, however, helps to reduce the tension that may be engendered by this hierarchical seating arrangement and this is the closeness of physical contact. The seating arrangement is organized to encourage physical closeness and, therefore, psychological closeness. Moreover, the ritual-path that the performer walks or his position at the middle acts as a further cohesive tool. The description of a straight line is at once a dramatization of a desire for successful passage for the deceased as well as it is for the living a symbolic search for a regenerative and enduring cultural norm. Furthermore, it is a physical and visual externalization of the belief in life.

Attire is another significant theatrical symbol and force. The visual impact of the set of attire that the ritual performer wears is a reflection of its symbolic cultural signification. The materials are derived from
animals that are observed and perceived to have symbolic significance. The colobus monkey for instance, from which the colobus monkey skin is made is known for its ingenuity and its ability to live longer than most animals. The elephant's ivory, from which the armlet is made, has obvious value and, is symbolic of the ability of the elephant to live for long. The symbolic significance of the attire is its signifying capacity for longevity, procreation, continuity and regeneration. The grandfatherly status of the deceased is proof of this belief in continuity and a celebration of life and its assuredness. The performer in this context, is a guardian of the stable internal world of the community: its values, customs and social beliefs that hold them together. The choice of attire reveals an intimate relationship between man (culture) and nature. Man is depicted as a conscious actor in a complex world.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the mutual relationship between social and religious purpose, and aesthetics particularly the use of creative role-playing as an inseparable aspect of the ritual accomplishment of omuse. Through imaginative and creative role-playing, the performer has the 'poetic license' to re-codify 'history' myth, legend or narrative for the specific purposes of omuse. It is these potential relationships that the community expects a performer to make between the past (the cultural heritage: history, art) and the now within certain established conventions, that make this performance (omuse) a mode of drama—a language—with rules of formation and transformation.
CHAPTER FOUR

DANCE - THEATRE: OKHUUYA

4.1. Introduction

This chapter describes and analyses the burial dance called okhuuya among the Ab'atachoni. This is a dance of escort and is examined here as a genre of the Ab'atachoni theatre and it is viewed in itself as a system of meanings, realized on specific occasions distinctively and uniquely.

4.2. Basic Premises and Definitions

Dance and music are central aspects of the cultural and creative life of the Ab'atachoni. Dance and music occur in diverse situations, including wedding ceremonies, political rallies, religious ceremonies, political rallies, religious ceremonies and school festivals. Dance-drama is an aspect of this larger cultural phenomenon that often utilizes dance and music as a realization of the human abstract ability for dramatisation.

The concept of dance in this chapter is confined to purposeful and rhythmical non-verbal body movement with an inherent aesthetic value as opposed to ordinary motor activity like walking or running (Adapted from Sebeok, 1986:170).

Dance-drama is that genre of performance whose creative and expressive mode is dance-performance, involving actions of role-playing that are aesthetically significant. Dance-drama is a reflective re-codification of social experience with a complex symbolic relationship to its context. That is, unlike animals, for instance, human beings have the ability to reflect intellectually over the very creative process of dance-drama itself and respond to the
emerging relationships established in the performance. This reflective ability is at the base of the generative capability of man to borrow, appreciate and develop new dance-forms.

Arising from the above definitions of dance and dance-drama it is the argument of this chapter that:

The human body, the instrument of dance, is the locus of transformation of both inner and outward experiences. The dance draws upon innate cognitive structures, and social and cultural message exchanges to externalize inner thoughts and feelings. Given that meaning derives from social interaction, shared knowledge about the dance and experience in its use or observation affect the degree of understanding of a dance performance. (Sebeok, 1986:170).

4.3. Concept and Purpose of Okhuuya

Okhuuya is a ceremony of escort within the Ab'atachoni cosmology. That is, there is a period when a person is neither mortal nor immortal and it is crucial that the society, through a series of activities, ensures the transition from mortality to immortality. Okhuuya, as one of a series of transitional ceremonies, aims at ensuring a safe transformation and transference from the mortal world to the not-so-distant next world. The occasion of okhuuya is a dramatic celebration of a firm belief in an after life (See also Nketia, 1969:5).

The ceremony of Okhuuya as an aspect of the religious practice of the Ab’atachoni utilizes dance and music as the basic tools for aesthetic and religious communication. The use of music and dance is an act of
initiating aesthetic energy through "an integral, aural, kinesic and visual experience"
(Nketia, 1989:53)

This intergrated event, stimulates "response and interaction" (Nketia, 1989:53), and this "response and interaction" amplifies and intensifies both the aesthetic and spiritual dimensions of the okhuuya ceremony. In the ceremony of okhuuya, dance and music are both inseparable and complementary.

4.4. Modes and Procedures

The activity of okhuuya is performed on the first day after the burial of a Mutachoni grandfatherly male elder. The deceased must also have planted the omutoto (fig) tree and be an initiate of the okhulichana cult. Okhuuya is performed in three stages. The first stage is the arrival of the participants. The second stage is the welcome, when those participants who have already arrived welcome those who arrive later. The third stage is performed after all the participants have arrived. This is performed after an interval signalling the end of the first two stages of arrival and welcome. The last stage, involving only men, re-enacts the act of war and in the context of okhuuya is both a celebration of continuity and a challenge to death. All the three stages are accomplished in song and dance.

The performance begins very early in the morning, as early as six o'clock. The first two stages are performed with cattle while the last stage does not involve cattle. The herd of the deceased is the first to test the arena of performance. After the herd of the deceased has tested the arena of performance, neighbours and relatives from among the Ab’atachoni begin arriving with their herds, and as they approach the home, they sing specific songs. The ceremony takes
place on an open ground at the homestead of the deceased. This space is chosen according to its proximity to the deceased's grave and its ability to accommodate comfortably the action of the performance.

4.5. The Okhuuya of Khisa King'asia

In this subsection, a description of the okhuuya ceremony carried out for Khisa King'asia is presented as observed on January 26, 1990. The homestead of the deceased is situated around Tongaren market in the Tongaren Division of Bungoma District. The ceremony began at about seven O'clock in the morning. The herd of the deceased was escorted to the arena by Khamala King'asia, a brother to the deceased. After about thirty minutes, the herd of the deceased left the arena and was taken for grazing.

After some time, towards eight in the morning, other families began arriving. The structure of events was as follows: a family arrived, singing a song; those already present ran and met them and escorted them to the arena. This general sequence of events alternated between the action of arrival and welcome until the participants were convinced that no other families were likely to arrive.

To clarify this event of arrival and welcome, a short description of an example of one specific arrival and welcome is described below. This description is based on the arrival of James Mutali of Wab’ukhonyi, Naitiri Location, Tongaren Division. Mutali arrived at about ten-thirty in the morning. When the participants saw and heard Mutali’s family arrive, they ran to welcome him and his group. The female participants announced this arrival with ululations as an act of what one female participant told me is an affirmation of esikhoyelo or joy (personal conversation with Naliaka Murumba, January 26, 1990). As the family of Mutali
settled on the arena of performance, a general atmosphere of excitement, joy and celebration engulfed the whole home. A horn was blown, in the same way, I was told, it would be blown to announce danger or war (personal conversation with Khamala Murumba, January 26, 1990).

After about five minutes of rigorous dancing and singing, the participants surrounded the herd of Mutali with clubs, branches and sticks (See Photo 5, Appendix two). One of Mutali’s oxen was dressed in khanga (clothing) material. As the dancing continued around the animals, they began bellowing in excitement. One of the oxen was tamed by a few strong young men. This was done by holding the ox by its horns. The ox was first escorted to the house where the deceased had lain and then to his grave. For the whole period from arrival up to the time this family left the arena, the female participants punctuated the whole event with ululations. After a period of about twenty-five minutes, Mutali’s herd left the arena.

The participants who took a leading role in terms of the dancing and singing were the young men, especially those of between twenty-five and thirty-five years of age. The elderly, mostly agemates of the deceased, sat at one end on the fringes of the arena occasionally coming in to sing and dance. The women sat next to the elderly men and also came in occasionally with ululations and dancing. The elder wife to the deceased most of the time stood on the fringes holding her husband’s spear and a gourd of milk. The stages of arrival and welcome were accomplished by a number of specific songs and dances, notably ‘We search for Isebe on the hill’ (Khukhab’anga Iseb’e khulukulu) and ‘It is our sorrow’ (Nesib’ela syefu).

The song performances took an antiphonal structure. On this occasion, four male soloists led the songs. These
were Nakitare Murumba, his two sons Ngob’ilo and Nyongesa, and Misiko King’asia. At about noon the stages of arrival and welcome came to an end because no other family arrived after this. The participants rested for about one hour before the last stage was performed.

The third stage of okhuuya, a war-drama, began at about one O’clock in the afternoon. One elder, Nakitare Murumba, summoned the male participants who began by singing and performing ‘running songs’ around the home. All the songs performed at this stage were war songs and the dance actions and movements closely enacted the activity of war. After two of the ‘running songs’, ‘We shall wash blood’ (Khulietub’a Mab’anga, Appendix Two, Song VII) and ‘We want war’ (Khwenya ob’usolo, Appendix Two, Song VII), the participants assembled at a convenient place near the grave of the deceased. Participants wielded spears, clubs branches and sticks. The participants then formed a circle by holding hands. Within this human circle, a series of song performances were carried out. The first performance was based on the song ‘Trample down’ (Samba asi, Appendix Two, Song VI).

The performance of the song Samba asi re-enacted elephants trampling down. James Mutali told me (January 26, 1990) that this performance is an imitation of elephants by ‘elephants’. This act of imitating elephants was performed within the antiphonal structure of the song. Different age-sets were praised by Nakitare, who was the soloist for this song. As each age-set was mentioned the participants acknowledged its greatness by thumping their feet on the ground in unison. At one point the emotional intensity was so great that participants released war cries. The song performance of Samba asi gave way to the song ‘When the whip makes me feel pain, on the road’ (Khane sib’oko nesianjuna, khumuyila). This is a
leaping song. The soloist called a particular participant by name in the song and the individual called moved into the middle of the circle and leaped within the rhythmical structure of the song. The participant was required to make a set of two leaps: one not so high, followed by the highest that the particular participant was able to make. The nature of the leap invited varied responses depending on whether the leap was seen as clumsy or graceful. After the performance of the songs within the circle, two more songs were performed outside the circle (‘running songs’). These were khulie tub’a mab’anga and khwenya ob’usolo. These were performed around the homestead and at about 2.00 p.m. the ceremony came to an end. The participants could be heard saying “kawa”, “khwakamala” (“It is finished”, “we have accomplished”). The participants began leaving for their homes.

4.6. The Okhuuya Ceremony: A Theatrical Interpretation

The ceremony of okhuuya is a drama of escort. It is argued that a theatrical interpretation of the ceremonial events contributes to an increased awareness of the social significance of this occasion. To elaborate this premise, an interpretation focusing on the following aspects will be undertaken in this sub-section: Its conceptual base, dance and movement, the verbal/musical underscoring and dialogue-in-performance, participants and “audience” assembly, and the symbolic aspects of the ceremony.

The conceptual dimension of okhuuya as a drama of escort defines its ability to provide a context for the exteriorization of communal belief and feeling about death. It is notable that two apparently conflicting feelings emerge in the verbal and kinetic performance aspects of the okhuuya. In the song ‘it is
our sorrow' (nesib'ela syefu), there is both a feeling of sadness and joy intermingled in one creative act (Appendix Two, Song II).

The soloist at one pole presents joy and celebration (esikhoyelo) and at another pole, sorrow and loss (nesib'ela). This surface realization reveals a deeper emotional meaning that perceives reality as moving productively between joy (life) and sadness (death). Death is seen as an inevitable and necessary aspect of the very process of life. The dead and the living are mentioned and presented as an organic relationship. The living social unit is part of the long line of the ancestral world. In this song, a brother to the deceased, is mentioned. Both Khamala and Khisa, the deceased, are grandchildren of Murumba. Netondo is their mother while Murunga was one of the wives of Murumba.

Similarly, the last stage of okhuuya - the war drama - is an externalization of victory and a challenge to death. It is the verbal-musical-kinesthetic enactment of bravery, defiance of death and an assertion of life. The emphasis of the performance and the emotional experience enacted aim at a transcendence of the negative feelings about death. In the performance of the song 'trampling down' (samba asi), for instance, (Appendix Two, Song IV), the thumping of feet is not a mere imitation of elephants, it is an act of trampling death into the earth where he is. It is also a recreation of bravery as well as a demonstration of the unity between man and earth. The wielding of spears, clubs and branches as well as the occasional war cries reinforce this feeling.

The inevitability of death (its acceptance), and its challenge are also reinforced and revealed in the dance and movement of okhuuya. Participants dance on top of the grave affirmatively challenging death and
between soloist/soloists, soloists/participants. One aspect of dialogue in music is the act of okhufua (‘blowing upon’). Okhufua is a system of giving rewards either in the form of money or other items to a soloist by a participant who is impressed by the soloist. By okhufua, a soloist is ‘cooled down’ yet this act also boosts his performance. On the occasion described in this chapter, ‘blowing upon’ helped to lessen a soloist’s performance anxiety and was an acknowledgement of the soloist’s competence to perform. Whenever a participant ‘blew upon’ a soloist, other participants were also encouraged to ‘blow upon’ the soloist. This act of okhufua in semiotic-performance terms was a signal—a transactional code—that initiated a dynamic relationship between soloists and the rest of the participants.

The system of okhufua as supplemented and reinforced by the antiphonal performance structure underscores a significant role of the soloist in this community. A soloist is a creative custodian of the internal logic of his society both in the communal and the individual sense. In terms of aesthetic evaluation, the standards are defined and evaluated in situ, in (and during) the performance itself. A competent soloist will gauge his popularity by the general response both in terms of the enthusiasm that his performance initiates and the rewards he receives. On the occasion of okhuuya for Khisa King’asia, the mutual awareness of standards set in performance by the soloists had a significant impact on the performance.

The awareness of standards set by the four soloists had a mutually reinforcing effect on each soloist. There was an element of tacit competition. At every one moment one soloist would lead the rest of the participants in song once and would give way to another soloist after some time. Every time one soloist took over from another, he was obliged to move
the performance to a greater level of dramatic intensity of simply measure up to the preceding performance. This tacit but creative musical dialogue was a way of enhancing the action and intensity of the music. This however was never allowed to degenerate into aggressive hostility. Rather, the attempt to excel and the conscious awareness of the aesthetic stands drove the soloists towards excellence.

Participatory action on this occasion was of four basic categories. The young and the middle aged, the elderly, the females and the 'audience'. The type of participatory action is categorised alongside the nature of involvement and role in the whole performance. The young and the middle-aged on this occasion took a leading role in the events of okhuuya. The young took a leading role in the escorting of cattle to the arena and later on they took these cattle for grazing. The middle aged were mainly involved in the action of welcome, especially in the taming of the bulls for ritual-dramatization. Again in the last stage involving a re-enactment of war, they were the majority. In this category, men were the majority although a few women joined in the first two stages of arrival and welcome, their involvement was not continuous as they had to take part in ancillary activities, like cooking. Moreover, the attendance at this ceremony by the younger women participants was negligible. On the whole however, the women participants provided necessary aspects like ululations which are basic to a celebration of achievement, escort and defiance. In the last stage of the ceremony, the female participants were excluded from the main action. Otherwise, their presence on the fringes of the dramatic arena, provided a necessary moral and social boost and background to the main action.
The elderly grandfatherly participants in the ceremony were another category. These were mainly agemates of the deceased and they provided a guiding base to the development of the drama. They sat, mostly on the fringes of the main dramatic arena (See Photo 10, Appendix Two), and served as a demarcating line to one end of the performance arena.

The last category, the fourth, was the audience in the sense of the play production context where there is a clear hiatus between the action and audience. These included neighbours who are not Ab’atachoni and had no significant blood relationship to the family, or those members of the Ab’atachoni who have lost touch and empathy with the internal intentions of this occasion. Members of this category were unlikely to influence the nature and course of the main dramatic action. Their presence, however, provided a supportive background and helped to define the situation as a larger unit in social interaction beyond merely its ‘Tachonic’ confines. For this category, the main action was merely an aesthetic end in itself. This category, formed a semi-circle around the main action on the left side of the male elderly participants (See Photo 12, Appendix Two).

The symbolic significance of okhuuya is its suggestion of the struggle between the reality of death and the possibility of life. The whole ceremony is a symbolic code of the communal belief in an after life, in immortality—in this sense a mythic drama of life’s assuredness—and the symbols associated with this ceremony affirm this belief. Cattle, for instance central to this ceremony, are a source of life. As multivalent symbols, cattle are one pole practical providers of milk, beef, hides, and other needs and, at another, they are metaphors of fecundity, continuity and procreation. The practical role they serve sets a frame for the latter metaphorization. At another
level, the action of holding a bull by the horns and
dancing it to the house where the deceased had lain
and, to his grave is also an act of 'taming' death:
facing upto death and challenging it and asserting
life. The dressing of some oxen in khanga clothing
material is a visual-aesthetic code for life and its
celebration. In one of the songs performed on this
occasion, 'Mother Cattle' (Mama Ing'ombe), the key
role of cattle is stressed (Song III, Appendix One).
One of the elderly female participants Kwa-Vitali, who
was present on this occasion, told this researcher
that the role of cattle in this ceremony is
significant as a signal to the ancestral world next
door. The ancestors will acknowledge and welcome the
deceased based on the number of cattle that dance for
the deceased. Cattle represent a firm belief in
regeneration.

The belief in regeneration is reinforced by the custom
that requires the widow to hold the spear of the
deceased in one hand and a gourd of milk in the other.
On the occasion described in this chapter, the widow,
with a spear and gourd of milk, was a powerful visual-
scenic image of preparedness and readiness to face up
to the challenges of widowhood. The gourd of milk is
an embodiment of life and the spear is both a
reflection of loneliness (loss) but also a
demonstration of vitality, bravery, procreation, that
is, a challenge to death.

4.7. Conclusion

The ceremony of okhuuya is a theatrical presentation
and externalization of the Ab'atachoni communal
beliefs and emotions about death. Okhuuya is drama
that is a specific response to a specific crisis of
transformation form one state to another. The
spectacle of okhuuya is a symbolic struggle between
death and life enacted through combined visual-scenic, verbal-musical and kinesthetic images. The ceremony of okhuuya proceeds from a specific cultural concept of drama and each performance is a distinction within the okhuuya-langue.
NARRATIVE THEATRE: OLUKANO

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the narrative (olukeno) is analysed as a genre of Ab’atatachoni theatre. The narrative form has probably received the greatest critical attention in literary studies, yet this attention has rarely focused on the theatrical performance aspects of the art form. A theatrical-performance approach is suggested as a viable critical strategy for analysing the dynamic relationships and meanings realised in a live performance.

5.2. Analytical Framework

The analytical framework suggested in this chapter proceeds within the central thesis of this study. It is assumed that human beings are endowed with a general capability for narration (the narrative-langage). This narrative-langage enables human beings to use the narrative ability as a tool for relating to their social context and to make aesthetic evaluations of what is an appropriate narrative performance in particular situations. Thus the universal human capability is translated culturally as a narrative-langue. Each community develops a narrative matrix from which individual performers select and perform on specific occasions. This specific realization is the narrative-parole.

The performance of the narrative, the parole, is done against cultural rules of formation and transformation (Anozie, 1981:19). Competence, in the context of the narrative performance, refers to both the performer’s and audience’s internalization of these rules. The
texture of a meaning in a narrative is established in the actual performance. The specific narrative that a performer selects provides a general 'semantic' context within which the artist moulds certain recognizable meanings.

5.3. Approaches

Critical attention towards the narrative mode has revolved around three basic approaches: functionalist formal-structural and, aesthetic-performance approaches (cf: Okpewho, 1983: Passim). This broad sweep should not be construed as an act of sterile reductionism. Rather, it is acknowledged that finer distinctions exist. The aim here is to indicate the major premises that cut across the three approaches as a preface to the suggested approach.

In the functionalist approach, emphasis revolves around viewing the narrative as a tool of maintaining order and harmony (Malinowski, 1926: Passim) to seeing it as a tool of preserving tradition by its "constant recreation" (Lord, 1961:29)

For Malinowski, the myth, for instance, is a social device for legitimizing the social structure. It is a coded function that gives justification to the system of values and norms. Malinowski's approach to the narrative (myth) does not give due recognition to the creative and contextual factors. The narrative performance is not an innocent code working towards a preservation of a harmony, it is also a creative recodification of social experience embodying, at the same time, possibilities of new social structure(s) (See, e.g., Okpewho, 1983:25). Formal-structural approaches derive their methodological rigour from linguistic science, especially structural linguistics. The emphasis is on linear sequences in the narrative or the focus is the narrative as a type of 'grammar'
for a community. Vladimir Propp, normally associated
with formalism, examines the structure of the tale in
terms of what he calls functions. The function is
defined in terms of its cause-effect, that is, in
terms of what the dramatis personae do (Propp,
1968:xxi). These functions are constant irrespective
of how and by whom by they are carried out. The
possible number and sequence of the functions is
constant. He identifies thirty-one functions although,
these functions need not all appear in any one
particular tale. Propp's method of analysis is a
linear structural one. This can be compared to Levi-
Strauss whose method is 'grammatical'.

For Levi-Strauss, the analysis of a tale should lead
to an abstract model of 'grammar' able to explain the
internal cultural logic. This is analogous to
structural linguistic approaches to language study,
where a language is seen as an abstract system of
rules which form the basis for its actual use in
everyday life. A structural analysis applied to the
narrative seeks to formalise the 'rules of grammar' of
competence and performance. Levi-Strauss' method is
exacting and complex but it is significant in so far
as it acknowledges the universality of cultural logic.
The formal-structural approaches have a bias towards
'sequences' and 'grammars' which underplay any
individual consciousness or creativity. While a
certain stability is always evident in any cultural
system, the role of individuals should not be
underestimated, especially the creative performers. In
this study the culture-specific elaboration of the
narrative capability is acknowledged and yet the focus
is more towards the aspects of context, like the
performance space, the creative ability of the
performer to use this space for role-playing to
establish images and relationships.
The third major category of approaches in the study of narrative is the aesthetic-performance. The emphasis of such approaches is on the beauty of the images presented and the creative ability of the performer to seize the situation of performance and mould it towards a recognizable end. For Okpewho (1983), for instance, the very concept of the type of the tale cannot be meaningfully determined outside actual performance situation. He thus calls his approach qualitative, recognizing varying performance abilities and their effect on the nature of the aesthetic experience (See also, Scheub, 1976/77; Phillip Knoss, 1977; Finnegan, 1974). The suggested approach in this chapter closely proceeds from this qualitative premise. It, however, goes further to argue that the narrative performance is a genre of theatre realized in specific cultural contexts. The performance is seen as theatrical: focussing attention on the use of role-playing within a theatrical space. This awareness justifies the theatrical-performance approach. It is theatrical in so far as the narrative is seen as a mode of drama with a culture-specific elaboration and it is performance-based in so far as the live performance is the moment when meaning is experienced and realized.

5.4. The Narrative-Parole

In this sub-section an example of a live performance is described. The actual story is given in Appendix Three. In this sub-section, only a synopsis and a description of the general circumstances of the performance are given.

The date of performance was the 24th December 1989 at Mr. Richard Karani’s home in Naitiri location, Bungoma District. There was a general sense of celebration since it was a kind of family re-union, with some of the family members who had been away from home for a
long time now present for the Christmas festival. The specific narrative described in this chapter, and later quoted verbatim in the appendix, is one among many that were performed on this evening. There were fifteen people in attendance. This audience of mostly brothers and sisters and some other relatives have a lot of common experiences that contributed to the liveliness of the atmosphere, and the effect of certain evoked images in the story. Moreover, the date of performance was just Christmas eve.

Just before the performance described in this subsection, a maternal aunt, Joice Odeo, had just performed a narrative called Wanakhatandi (This is a name of a man.). After she had finished, a member of the audience suggested that Salume Namukuru perform the narrative of 'The woman, the ogre and the boy, ('Omukhasi, linani nende akhasolili akho') Salume Namukuru, aged about sixty-five, is an accomplished performer. She does not have any formal education. The time was about nine O'clock. Salume Namukuru cleared her throat and began telling her story.

The story begins with a pregnant woman who makes a deal with an ogre. The ogre agrees to give the woman some fish in anticipation of the child whom the woman will give birth to. When the child is eventually born, the woman is not willing to fulfil her part of the deal. In the first place she asks the ogre to let the boy grow up and become fat before he can eat him up. When the boy grows up the woman postpones the handing over of the boy by using a series of delaying tactics. The ogre becomes extremely impatient and eats up the woman herself. At this stage in the story, the father of the boy is introduced. He blames his son for the death of his wife. The father organizes to kill his son but the boy kills him before the father can kill him. The boy runs away to his sister's home. When
the sister is told of what the boy has done; she organizes for her 'serpent-husband' to kill the boy. Predictably again, the boy kills his brother-in-law before the brother-in-law can kill him.

After killing his 'serpent' brother-in-law, the boy goes and stays with an old woman. The old woman asks the boy to look after some amamela (a type of yeast) for her. Some chickens come and eat some of these amamela. The boys makes them pay for him for the damage. They give him an egg and he runs off to a far off place where he meets boys playing with sticks. He is amazed that they play with sticks instead of eggs. They ask him for his egg which they break. They compensate him by giving him some sticks. The story proceeds in this fashion with the boy tempting various groups of people with different items which these groups damage then they have to compensate him. He finally arrives in the 'no-men-land' inhabited only by women and dogs. The boy hides in ash dumping ground. One woman discovers the boy (who is now a young man) and hides him in her room. After some time this woman becomes pregnant. Other women press this woman to share her discovery with them. After this act, many more people are born and this society is now transformed into a human society.

5.5. The Olukano Performance: A Theatrical Interpretation

In this sub-section, the performance of the story of 'The boy, the woman and the ogre' is interpreted in theatrical-performance terms. To elaborate our thesis in this chapter that a theatrical-performance approach is productive and viable, the following aspects will be examined. First is the the 'formulaic' beginning which is here termed a theatrical speech act that helps to signal the change of frame from ordinary interaction to narrative (theatrical) interaction. Second are conceptual aspects, and here it is argued
that the story appeals to the audience because of its potential ability as 'script' to underly complex social realities concretized here by Namukuru in a specific context. Third is the role of the context (the social and physical context), especially the festive mood and the home environment enhanced by the physical emotional closeness of the audience. Fourthly, we note the verbal and extra-verbal resources, the use of voice and body to externalize concrete and abstract images, including the narrator's control of the story.

The 'formulaic' beginning in reference to the performance of this story is marked by the cough the performer makes and the actual beginning of:

"There once lived a pregnant woman..."

("Yaliyo omukhasi oyo yali nende esisombo...")

This 'formulaic' beginning is a theatrical speech act that signals a change of context. This act transforms the physical space into a theatrical space, at the same time transforming the social relationships into performer (Salume Namukuru) and audience. More significantly the participants interpret the events narrated with a dramatic background. In other words, Namukuru, the person, now transformed into a performer by this beginning, prepares her audience and co-opts them to be part of the process of artistic creation. In the theatrical world established, the performer can play the boy, the woman, the husband, the ogre or act as a mere narrator and her audience recognize these shifts when they occur.

The conceptual appeal of this story lies in its ability to present a complex moral structure that obviates any clear cut straight jacket. The story, for instance, may to some extent exemplify the
psychoanalytic antagonism between father and son. The boy kills his 'father' and proceeds to kill the 'serpent' (his brother-in-law) and ultimately finds himself in a situation where he is the only man in a community of only women and dogs. This idea of a male-adult threat to the boy runs across the major narrative acts of the story. In the actual performance, the two youngest members of the audience, Mukhwana and Mulongo (twin boys), easily identified with the boy. Furthermore, a corollary premise of the conceptual appeal of this story lies in its ability to pose a problematic ethical-human problem: Is life an inevitable constitution and interaction between good and evil? In the story, the continuous intrigues of the boy eventually culminate in a (pro)-creative act by which continuity is guaranteed.

The third factor that contributes to the texture and nature of the aesthetic experience that this performance presents on the occasion quoted is the context. The social context comprising members of one family and their relatives and the physical warmth implied in a home environment contributes to the liveliness and richness of the performance. The images the performer evokes find fertile ground for creative expansion. The factor of context interacts closely with the fourth factor, the verbal and extra-verbal resources utilized by the performer, including her skilful control of the actual unfolding of the story. Salume Namukuru weaves her story effortlessly, at the same time skilfully controlling the audience involvement. She knows when to let the laughter continue, when to cut it out, and when to encourage it. She is not a mere story-teller, she is a creative artist. A good part of this story involves what the characters say and do and there was a skilful balance between the descriptive detail and the direct dialogue. These transitions between detail and
dialogue were reflected in the performer’s change from narrating what was happening at any moment, as opposed to the actual identification with the depicted character.

The descriptive detail is rendered in her normal voice with the appropriate gestures, while the dialogue is the dialogue of the specific character in the story. Most of the action is embodied in the dialogue, in the relationships and interactions between the different characters. The description moves inevitably towards an encounter, a conflict or a significant incident. The boy runs from home, he goes to his sister’s place, there he kills his brother-in-law. He then moves to that old woman’s place and lets the old woman’s yeast be eaten by the hens. The story must then move on until the boy eventually arrives in the ‘no-men-land’. The time change in this story is measured against significant dramatic moments so that time is really dramatic experienced time.

Repetition plays a key role both in the dramatic structure and performance quality of this story. The drama moves to a point, where with each new episodic addition, the narrator has to recall the sequence and history: how the boy has come to own a specific item. The list expands as the drama expands, the yeast leads to an egg, the egg to sticks, the sticks lead to fried flour, the flour leads to simsim, and lastly to the feathers. By this repetition, the performer is able to underline, first, the passage of time and second, distance. She also, by this repetition effectively defines the boy’s character, his love for intrigue and even treachery. The repetition is also rendered in rising and falling cadences which give the story a sense of the lyrical. The constant return to this sequence hits the audience with a certain sense of familiarity, it brings them back to the dramatic
moment by recalling what has passed and happened and their attempt to join in the recalling evokes a communal aesthetic act. Thus, at the level of the external structure and texture of this story, this repetition sets a certain physical pattern, a certain spiral plot pattern: the return to the familiar is a repetition within a progression forward and it sets a background against which the next narrative action is built.

There is another level of syntactic repetition on a smaller scale. Certain lexical items are repeated to reinforce a specific pattern in the development of the story. For instance, in the early parts of the story, in the first narrative act, the performer occasionally uses 'when' ('ori') to signify the repetitive act of the ogre. The ogre has been promised a child by the woman, but the woman is reluctant to give the boy away directly. She keeps organizing for more convenient ways to give away her boy. Each time, however, the boy knows about these plans and he manages to escape. The ogre keeps returning to demand his prize. This repetitive act is captured by the use of 'when'. Moreover, this word is given a specific tone and intonation to signal a certain anxiety. The audience expect something to happen each time the ogre comes and a sense of relief is registered each time the ogre misses his target. This repetitive act also serves to emphasize the wickedness of the woman: how dare she concede to such a deal? The image of an ogre is clear in the audience's mind. In any case, the performer may actually be pointing to the fact that this child is really a product of an illicit affair between the woman and the ogre. When the woman promises the child in the stomach to the ogre, is she not saying "the next child will be yours by virtue of the adultery we are about to commit"?
Again, the ogre's attempt to get the child is preceded by the statement "No! This time..." from the woman. These words are significant. These reveal the woman's hesitancy in fulfilling what she had earlier promised, a reflection of her nagging guilt conscience. She cannot give the ogre the child directly. This hesitancy if tied up with the interpretation of her illicit affair, reflects her growing guilt conscience that eventually consumes her. She cannot live with the idea of an ogre boy, for that is what the boy is, a product of an unusual communion. Note that the father, when we first encounter him, does not refer to the boy as "my son", instead he merely says "you have caused my wife's death". Thus, these familiar aspects of repeated structures set this story within a certain recognizable mode defined by a continuing saga. This is what Scheub (1976/77:349) calls the "expansible image" by which he means "... the recurrence of image-sequences consisting of a central action which is similar if not identical with each repetition" (Scheub, 1976/77:349). As Scheub says, each repetition complements and supplements the action, it moves the story forward. In the story quoted in this chapter, the three narrative acts are defined by key actions: either the boy is trying to escape from the father or the ogre; or from his brother-in-law; or he is playing a string of intrigues on the characters he encounters.

In all these encounters, key familiar actions and images are repeated, yet each repetition adds to the movement of the story. Scheub again aptly comments:

the artist fashions a work of art around repeated action, moving the characters towards a climax, succeeding repetitions adding further new information to the accumulated experience.
(Scheub, 1976/77:349)
The dramatic pause is another significant performance technique. In this story, pauses are represented by the elliptical marks which also indicate some blank visual space. The elliptical marks also mark the three major narrative acts of this story: the boy's encounter at home; at his sister's, and his sequence of intrigues that eventually lead him to the 'no-men-land'. The pauses are performance techniques that reflect the dynamic nature of a live performance situation. The performer develops the story to a point where a major transition has to occur. In the first narrative act, for instance, the story moves to a point when the mother is devoured by the ogre. It becomes expedient to introduce the father at this point. The narrator does not want to go into the details of how the father is angered by this fact of the ogre eating his wife. She does not say that the father then hatched up a plan which would lead to the death of his son. She merely makes a significant pause then proceeds.

In view of what has happened in the story, the pause represents a change in relationships, it is a sub-climax which signals a change in the dramatic development of the story. The father-son relationship is transformed to an antagonistic one, maybe because the son is, after all, a product of adultery.

The pause is part of the gestural language of Salume Namukuru. The use of gesture in this story is a key element. The case of Salume Namukuru confirms Scheub's (1976/77) analysis of the role of body and image in oral performance. The gesture is the one element that helps the performer, apart from the direct verbal rendering, to register a meaningful relationship with both her context and the internal world of the story. The artist's body, in Scheub's terms (1976/77: 363), has three functions during a performance. First he
says "it is a physical body, and this establishes an immediate kinship between members of an audience and the artist" (Scheub, 1976/77:363)

Secondly, he says, "it is a social body", whose basic objective is: "to bring the several physical bodies of audience and artist into an ideal social and artistic bond" (Scheub, 1976/77:363)

This is what initiates a variety of images in the performing situation. Finally, Scheub says, the body is the "performing (an artistic) body which bridges the physical and social bodies shaping them into an instrument of mimesis" (1976/77:363).

In the experience of this story, Salume's body is an intensive artistic channel shaping the performance, controlling her audience and setting a general framework within which the story completes itself. The gesture, like Scheub comments (1976/77:365) of the Xhosa performer, is both complementary and supplementary. It reinforces a specific action or it functions to set up a context within which the story develops, that is, when it is merely abstract. The smile, as used by Salume Namukuru, is a good example. Her smile helps to set a mental attitude to the interpretation of specific events. When the boy, for instance, offers her sister some of the prepared 'salt' to lick, Salume performs this act with a smile. The smile signals to her audience not take the sister's act of licking her husband's ash tragically, she encourages the audience, by her smile, to take part in the conspiracy with a sense of delight. The smile in this case is not obviously a direct gesture.

An example of a powerful use of a direct image was her act of showing the father's attempt to kill the son in the hole. This act is mirrored through the appropriate
of role-playing, the interaction between the performer and the audience, and how the nature of theatrical transaction contributes to the realization and signification of certain images.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND TASKS

The main objective of this study has been to outline and describe three aspects of the Ab'atachoni theatre matrix, the ritual, dance and narrative variants. A theatrical-linguistic model was suggested as a viable framework for an analysis of the concept and nature of performance as a reflection of both the theatre-langue (matrix), and the universal drama-langage (i.e. the universal human ability). Since a systematic awareness of the nature of the theatre-langue, within the abstract concept, "drama" emerges in the context of actual performances, the research methodology was designed to reflect this assumption. That is, the actual performance was the focus of the research fieldwork.

The performance was seen as an arena of complex interrelationships, not just as a result of the involvement of many individuals, but also as a reflection of the nature of art (theatre) itself. The theatrical-linguistic model was necessarily, therefore, placed within a semiotic framework as an attempt to account for the dynamic signals and relationships that define performance. This model is positively reductive, allowing a greater grasp of the relationships between drama (the abstract ability), theatre, its conventional realization, and performance, its specific actualization on an occasion. More significantly, this model avoids an evolutionary, value-charged scheme that sees theatre as moving towards some ideal. What is significant is that a concept of drama is universal to man and it emerges variously at different historical moments and in different cultures.

Further, this model privileges the pragmatic context within which certain forms occur as modes of organizing both man's experience and involvement in it. Aesthetic standards are never an issue. They are tied up with the pragmatic context. Each pragmatic context recognises its own aesthetic moments
and no situation whatsoever can justify a cross-contextual comparison in aesthetic standards as if the different theatre matrices have the same pragmatic imperatives. In omuse, for instance, the aesthetic standards revolve around the performer's grasp of who his audience are, of the funeral frame, and his choice of artistic items, like narrative, proverb, to communicate aesthetically, enhancing social cohesion as well as neutralizing the tragic reality of death.

The definition of drama, as a result, cannot be confined to aspects like the extent of the disjunction between the action and the audience. The linguistic generative model invalidates this and places the concept of 'disjunction' at the level of a mere elaboration of the langage.

The basic framework of this study also recognises the creative relationship between the matrix, the genre and the performance. The transformation of dramatic forms within a theatre matrix is a reflection of both the complexity of social relationships and the contribution of creative individuals. The specific nature of the relationships between creative individuals, social reality and the mode of drama is, however, one of the tasks this study poses. By implication also, it is necessary to study the different langue-systems of theatre, in Africa, to arrive at a precise understanding of the general "rules" of formation and transformation. This is another key task.

The analysis of African theatre and drama has often proceeded within theoretical confusion. This study has attempted to show the usefulness of a consistent but flexible model in describing drama, the abstract concept; theatre, its conventional realization; and performance, its particular actualization on a specific occasion.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Bascom, W. 1954. 'Four Functions of Folklore'. In Journal of American Folklore. 67:333-349.


Bukenya, A. 1989. ‘Collecting and Processing Data in Oral Literature’. Lecture material prepared for external degree students for the University of Nairobi.


Snead, J. 1984. 'Repetition as a Figure of Black Culture'. In *Black Literature and Literary Theory*. ed. Louis Gates jnr. New York: Methuen.


Wafula, C. and Mutoro, H. 1985. 'The Distribution of some aspects of material culture objects in Western Kenya with particular reference to Babukusu of Bungoma District' In 'Our Culture Development Symposium, Western Province', Golf Hotel, Kakamega.


Wanjala, C. 1985. 'Literary and Musical Traditions of Western Kenya: The Case of Bungoma District'. In 'Our Culture Development Symposium, Western Province, Golf Hotel, Kakamega.'

Zirimu, P. and Bukenya, A. 1976. 'Oracy as a Tool and Skill for African Development'. Kampala: Makerere University.
The story of Mango took place at Alego. The Ab'atachoni and Ab'abu'kusu had forgotten the practice of circumcision. So Mango killed the serpent of Yab'eb'e and restored the practice of circumcision. Yab'eb'e would normally strike on the head and was killing humans and animals alike. Mango decided to end this problem by killing Yab'eb'e.

Mango started preparing himself. He sharpened his sword until it was bright sharp. On the day of the actual confrontation Mango went into the serpent's cave and hid himself in a strategic corner. The snake was said to spit dangerous venom into the cave before it entered. This would choke to death or blind any intruder into the serpent's cave. At its normal hour of arrival, it came as usual sniffing around and it spat into the cave. When it spat Mango covered his eyes tightly. After it spat, it began entering by its tail. It entered and coiled itself into a bundle. Before the head could finally rest on the coils, Mango brought his sword onto the neck and the head fell several metres away. The rest of the body, coiled dangerously around Mango's body. Mango struggled with it cutting into these coils. Finally, when life ebbed out of the coils, Mango ran out triumphantly and shouted with joy: "I have killed it! I have killed it."

All this time, the rest of the community was in deep anxiety. They though Mango would not return. Some people fearing the consequences of Mango's act had perched themselves on the
trees to observe from a safe distance. Some had locked themselves in their houses. On hearing Mango’s shouts, they thought, “now this is the end.” Those who were on trees fell down, some with serious injuries. Those in the houses shook heavily. But as Mango approached the village, people realized that Mango was safe. When they realized that he had actually killed the serpent, everyone was overcome with joy.

After this courageous and extra-ordinary act, it is said, the community decided to have Mango circumcised. They said Mango had proved himself as a man of extra-ordinary bravery and could not remain omusinde (i.e. uncircumcised). After Mango, the community decided to have men of Mango’s age undergo circumcision. The tradition took firm hold among Ab’atachoni and B’ab’ukusu up to this day. The song that the B’ab’ukusu sing when they are escorting a candidate for circumcision from the river to his home for the clinical operation takes its theme from this story.

Original language: Olutachoni

Mango


86
Once upon a time, a woman went to harvest (khub’iliika) white ants called Wanakatawa. The first Wanakatawa to come out of the hole reached the edge of the trap-hole (efub’o)* and did not feel like falling into this efubo. The woman told this one termite, ‘you hesitate then you’re a witch’.

Upon these words, this Wanakatawa fell into efubo. The Second Wanakatawa fell into efubo. The second Wanakatawa flew away away and did not fall into the efubo. The third Wanakatawa never came out of the ant-hill at all. Each of these Wanakatawas had their own fate.
The one Wanakatawa that fell into the efubo was eaten by woman.
The second Wanakatawa that flew away was eaten by a bird.
The third Wanakatawa that remained underground was eaten by Walunabe (some type of safari ants).

Because of this, Wanakatawa said:

In the trap-hole, I am eaten (mufub’o b’ulilo)
Up in the air, I am eaten (mungaki b’ulilo)
Underground, I am eaten (mwilob’a b’ulilo)

*The process of harvesting white ants among Ab’atachoni and Babukusu involves erecting some structure on the ant-hill. This includes sticks which are erected around the ant-hill to look like a small hut. This is then covered by blankets or bed-sheets or some clothing material. A small place is left to allow some light in so that when the white ants come out, they go towards this direction. At the end of this lighted spot, there is a small hole dug (efubo) and smoothened by placing on its wall, banana leaves so that once the white ants fall in, they are trapped. Otherwise some fly away before they are harvested and birds then have a field day.

**Original language:** Lub’ukusu

**Wanakatawa**

Omukhasi mulala kab’ao wacha khub’iliki chiswa chab’alanganga b’ali Wanakatawa. Olinyo Wanakatawa wokhurunga wola khufub’o wemosia. Omukhasi oyo wab’olela Wanakatawa oyo ali: “newomosia ab’a ewe omulosi”.

Wanakatawa oyo ngakaulila b’usa wakwa mufub’o. Wanakatawa wakhubili wapurukha khukwa mufub’o tawe. Wanakatawa wakhutaru sekarura musiswa tawe.

Wanakatawa wakwa mufub’o omundu walia. Wanakatawa wapurukha enyuni yalia. Wanakatawa wasikala mwilob’a Walunab’e walia.

Khubela kano Wanakatawa waloma ali:
"Mufub'o b'ulilo"
"Mungaki b'ulilo"
"Mwilob'a b'ulilo"

Namukholondo and Liliachichi

Namukholondo (a black insect that exudes a bad smell when touched) and Liliachichi lived together. One day Namukholondo asked Liliachichi why she had a very thin waistline. Liliachichi told Namukholondo:

"I have a thin waist because of my people. My grandmother died and in mourning, I took ropes and tightened my waist so I became thin.

When my uncles died, I took ropes and tightened my waist so I became thin.

Why, I am thin because my people died and I have thinned myself".

After this explanation, Liliachichi also asked Namukholondo to explain his bad smell.

"What about you; why are you so smelly". Namukholondo gave the following reasons for this bad smell:

"When my grandmother died, I fell on her weeping and crying. But because she was smelly, the smell also caught up with me.

Again, when grandfather died, I fell on him weeping and crying. But because he was also smelly, the smell followed me.

Also, my mother died, I fell on her weeping and crying and the smell did not leave me.

So you see my people died: that is why I smell".
Namukholondo nende Liliachichi

Namukholondo nende Liliachichi ab’ele b’amenya alala.
Enyinga ndala Namukholondo warebaa Liliachichi ali “Newe, wang’era sina munda”? Liliachichi lyab’olela Namukholondo lili:

“Neng’era munda sikila b’ab’andu b’ange.
Kukhu wafwa nemukhulila nab’ukula, kimikoye neboa mala neng’era.

Olinyo khocha b’afwa, nab’ukula kimikoye neb’oa neng’era.

Neb’oa sikila b’ab’andu b’ase b’afwa mala neng’era.

Liliachichi nalio lyareb’a Namukholondo lili “Newe wase kub’olo kwasi?
Namukholondo waloma ali:

“Kukhu wafwa nalila nemukwakho, kub’olo kwandila.
Oli nyo kuka wafwa nalila nemukwakho, kub’olo kwandila.
Mayi yesi wafwa, nalila nemukwakho kub’olo kwandila.
Nono b’ab’andu b’ase b’afwa niko kakila nembunya”.

APPENDIX TWO

PART ONE: SONGS OF OKHUUYA

We search for Isebe on the hill

Name of the performer: Nakitare wa Murumba
Education background: No formal schooling
Time of performance: 8.30 a.m.
Occasion: The okhuuya ceremony for Khisa King’asia
Place: Tongaren, Ndalu Location
Tape No.: One
Song No.: One
1. Soloist: Eh! *Iseb’e*

2. Chorus: On the hill

3. Soloist: Eh! *Iseb’e*

4. Chorus: Searchers we are, we search for Isebe
   on the hill

5. Soloist: We were *Ab’aumbwa*

6. Chorus: On the hill

7. Soloist: We were *Ab’aumbwa*

8. Chorus: Searchers we are, we search for Isebe

9. Soloist: *Iseb’e* moved

10. Chorus: On the hill

11. Soloist: This *Iseb’e* of Khaumo

12. Chorus: Searchers we are, we search for *Iseb’e*
   on the hill

13. Soloist: Son of Namatondoi

14. Chorus: On the hill

15. Soloist: (We) search for *Iseb’e*

16. Chorus: Searchers we are, we search for *Iseb’e*
   on the hill

17. Soloist: Warriors of Maanga

18. Chorus: On the hill

19. Soloist: (We) search for *Iseb’e*

20. Chorus: Searchers we are, we search for *Iseb’e*
   on the hill

21. Soloist: Children of Murumba

22. Chorus: On the hill

23. Soloist: (We) search for *Iseb’e*

24. Chorus: Searchers we are, we search for *Iseb’e*
   on the hill

25. Soloist: Richard son of Murumba

26. Chorus: On the hill

27. Soloist: (We) search for *Iseb’e*

28. Chorus: Searchers we are, we search for *Iseb’e*
   on the hill

29. Soloist: The cattle of Maanga

30. Chorus: On the hill

31. Soloist: Tacho is *Iseb’e*

32. Chorus: Searchers we are, we search for *Iseb’e*
   on the hill
Original Language: Olutachoni

Khukhab'anga Iseb'e Khulukulu

1. Uramo: Eh! Iseb'e
2. Bosi: Khulukulu
3. Uramo: Eh! Iseb'e
4. Bosi: Khukhab'anga Iseb'ekhulukulu
5. Uramo: Khwali Ab'aumbwa
6. Bosi: Khulukulu
7. Uramo: Khwali Ab'aumbwa
8. Bosi: Khukhab'anga Iseb'e khulukulu
9. Uramo: Iseb'e yarula
10. Bosi: Khulukulu
11. Uramo: Iseb'e ye Khaumo
12. Bosi: Khukhab'anga Iseb'e khulukulu
13. Uramo: Mwana wa Namatondoi
14. Bosi: Khulukulu
15. Uramo: Khukhab'anga Iseb'e
16. Bosi: Khukhab'anga Iseb'e khulukulu
17. Uramo: B'asiani B'e Maanga
18. Bosi: Khulukulu
19. Uramo: Khab'a Iseb'e
20. Bosi: Khukhab'anga Iseb'e
21. Uramo: B'ana B'a Murumba
22. Bosi: Khulukulu
23. Uramo: Khab'a Iseb'e
24. Bosi: Khukhab'anga Iseb'e khulukulu
25. Uramo: Richard wa Murumba
26. Bosi: Khulukulu
27. Uramo: Khab'a Iseb'e
28. Bosi: Khukhab'anga Iseb'e khulukulu
29. Uramo: Ing'ombe ya Maanga
30. Bosi: Khulukulu
31. Uramo: Tacho Iseb'e
32. Bosi: Khukhab'anga Isebe khulukulu
Our Sorrow

Name of the performer: Ngob’ilo Nakitare
Education background: Certificate of Primary Education (C.P.E)
Time of performance: 9.00 a.m.
Occasion: The okhuuya ceremony for Khisa King’asia
Place: Tongaren, Ndalu Location
Tape No.: One
Song No.: Two

1. Soloist: It was sorrow
2. Chorus: It is sorrow
3. Soloist: It was sorrow
4. Chorus: Our sorrow it is, it is our sorrow
5. Soloist: This sorrow, I smile at it
6. Chorus: It is sorrow
7. Soloist: Our sorrow
8. Chorus: Our sorrow it is, it is our sorrow
9. Soloist: Khamala Murumba
10. Chorus: It is sorrow
11. Soloist: I smile at you
12. Chorus: Our sorrow it is, it is our sorrow
13. Soloist: You smile at it
14. Chorus: It is sorrow
15. Soloist: He laughs mysteriously
16. Chorus: Our sorrow it is, it is our sorrow
17. Soloist: You play at it
18. Chorus: It is sorrow
19. Soloist: Children of Bukura
20. Chorus: Our sorrow it is, it is our sorrow
21. Soloist: Sande is sorrow
22. Chorus: It is sorrow
23. Soloist: Khamala is sorrow
24. Chorus: Our sorrow it is, it is our sorrow
25. Soloist: Children of Netondo
26. Chorus: It is sorrow
27. Soloist: Murumba is sorrow
28. Chorus: Our sorrow it is, it is our sorrow
29. Soloist: Walk slowly
30. Chorus: It is sorrow
31. Soloist: Children of Netondo
32. Chorus: Our sorrow it is, it is our sorrow
33. Soloist: Walk slowly
34. Chorus: It is sorrow
35. Soloist: Children of Elukongo
36. Chorus: Our sorrow it is, it is our sorrow
37. Soloist: The king is sorrow
38. Chorus: It is sorrow
39. Soloist: Murunga is sorrow
40. Chorus: Our sorrow it is, it is our sorrow
41. Soloist: Ngachi is sorrow
42. Chorus: It is sorrow
43. Soloist: He smiles mysteriously.
44. Chorus: Our sorrow it is, it is our sorrow.

Original Language: Olutachoni

Nesib’ela Syefu

1. Uramo: Syali esib’ela
2. Bosi: Nesib’ela
3. Uramo: Syali esib’ela
4. Bosi: Nesib’ela syefu, nesib’ela
5. Uramo: Nasichekhela
6. Bosi: Nesib’ela
7. Uramo: Sib’ela syefu
8. Bosi: Nesib’ela syefu, nesib’ela
9. Uramo: Khamala Murumba
10. Bosi: Nesib’ela
11. Uramo: Nakhwichekhela
12. Bosi: Nesib’ela syefu
13. Uramo: Wasichekhela
14. Bosi: Nesib’ela
15. Urama: Achakhanga lukano
16. Bosi: Nesib’ela syefu, nesib’ela
17. Urama: Wasib’ayila
18. Bosi: Nesib’ela
19. Urama: B’ana b’a Bukura
20. Bosi: Nesib’ela syefu, nesib’ela
21. Urama: Sande esib’ela
22. Bosi: Nesib’ela
23. Urama: Khamala sib’ela
24. Bosi: Nesib’ela syefu, nesib’ela
25. Urama: B’ana b’a Netondo
26. Bosi: Nesib’ela
27. Urama: Murumba sib’ela
28. Bosi: Nesib’ela syefu, nesib’ela
29. Urama: Kenda kalaa
30. Bosi: Nesib’ela
31. Urama: B’ana b’a Netondo
32. Bosi: Nesib’ela syefu, nesib’ela
33. Urama: Kenda kalaa
34. Bosi: Nesib’ela
35. Urama: B’ana b’e Lukongo
36. Bosi: Nesib’ela syefu, nesib’ela
37. Urama: Mwami sib’ela
38. Bosi: Nesib’ela
39. Urama: Murunga esib’ela
40. Bosi: Nesib’ela syefu, nesib’ela
41. Urama: Ngachi esib’ela
42. Bosi: Nesib’ela
43. Urama: Achakha Makacho
44. Bosi: Nesib’ela syefu, nesib’ela

**Mother Cattle**

Name of the performer: Nyongesa Nakitare
Education background: O - Level
Time of performance: 10.00 a.m.
Occasion: The okhuuya ceremony for Khisa King’asia
Place: Tongaren, Ndalu Location
Tape No.: One
Song No.: Three

1. Soloist: This cattle
2. Chorus: Cattle is our mother
3. Soloist: This cattle
4. Chorus: Cattle
5. Soloist: This cattle
6. Chorus: Cattle is our mother
7. Soloist: This cattle
8. Chorus: Cattle
9. Soloist: Of Iyaya
10. Chorus: Cattle is our mother
11. Soloist: This cattle
12. Chorus: Cattle
13. Soloist: Ooh!
14. Chorus: Cattle is our mother
15. Soloist: It is age old
16. Chorus: Cattle
17. Soloist: Of Makhakha
18. Chorus: Cattle is our mother
19. Soloist: Of Iyaya
20. Chorus: Cattle
21. Soloist: Of Munyenyi
22. Chorus: Cattle is our mother
23. Soloist: Eeh!
24. Chorus: Cattle
25. Soloist: Of 'creative' words
26. Chorus: Cattle is our mother

Original Language: Olutachoni

Mama Ing’ombe

1. Uramo: Ing’ombe-yii
2. Bosi: Mama ing’ombe
3. Uramo: Ing’ombe-yii
4. Bosi: Ing’ombe
5. Uramo: Ing’ombe
6. Bosi: Mama ing’ombe
7. Uramo: Ing’ombe-yii
8. Bosi: Ingo’ombe
9. Uramo: Ya Iyaya
10. Bosi: Mama ing’ombe
11. Uramo: Ing’ombe-yii
12. Bosi: Ing’ombe
13. Uramo: Ooh!
14. Bosi: Mama ing’ombe
15. Uramo: Yikhale
16. Bosi: Ing’ombe
17. Uramo: Ya Makhakha
18. Bosi: Mama ing’ombe
19. Uramo: Ya Iyaya
20. Bosi: Ing’ombe
21. Uramo: Ya Munyenyi
22. Bosi: Mama ing’ombe
23. Uramo: Eeh!
24. Bosi: Ing’ombe
25. Uramo: Ya Makhua
26. Bosi: Mama ing’ombe

Trample Down

Name of the performer: Nakitare Murumba
Education background: No formal schooling
Time of performance: 1.00 p.m.
Occasion: The okhuuya ceremony for Khisa King’asia
Place: Tongaren, Ndalu Location
Tape No.: One
Song No.: Four

1. Soloist: Eeh! eeh!
2. Chorus: Eeh! eeh! Trample down
3. Soloist: Weren’t *Kinyikeu people
4. Chorus: Haah, haah haah! Trample down
5. Soloist: Weren't Maina people
6. Chorus: Haah, haah haah! Trample down
7. Soloist: Weren't Kolongolo people
8. Chorus: Haah, haah haah! Trample down
9. Soloist: Weren't Kananchi people
10. Chorus: Haah, haah haah! Trample down
11. Soloist: Weren't Nyange people
12. Chorus: Haah, haah haah! Trample down

* All the underlined words refer to circumcision age-sets.

Original language: Olutachoni

Samba asi

1. Uramo: Eeh! eeh!
2. Bosi: Eeh! eeh! Samba asi
3. Uramo: Kinyekeu b'ali b'andu
4. Bosi: Haah, haah hah! Samba asi
5. Uramo: Maina b'ali b'andu
6. Bosi: Haah, haah hah! Samba asi
7. Uramo: Kolongolo b'ali b'andu
8. Bosi: Haah, haah hah! Samba asi
9. Uramo: Kananchi b'ali b'andu
10. Bosi: Haah, haah hah! Samba asi
11. Uramo: Nyange b'ali b'andu
12. Bosi: Haah, haah hah! Samba asi

When the Whip makes me feel pain, on the road

Name of the performer: Nakitare Murumba
Education background: No formal schooling
Time of performance: 1.30 p.m.
Occasion: The okhuuya ceremony for Khisa King'asia
Place: Tongaren, Ndalu Location
Tape No.: One
Song No.: Five
1. Soloist: When the whip makes me feel pain
2. Chorus: On the road
3. Soloist: When the whip makes me feel pain
4. Chorus: On the road
5. Soloist: Of Kibeu, when the whip makes feel pain on the road
6. Chorus: On the road
7. Soloist: When the whip makes me feel pain
8. Chorus: On the road
9. Soloist: Eeh! Tacho, When the whip makes me feel pain
10. Chorus: On the road
11. Soloist: Of Misiko, When the whip makes me feel pain
12. Chorus: On the road
13. Soloist: Descendants of Mumbayi, When the whip makes me feel pain
14. Chorus: On the road
15. Soloist: Of Chinungo, When the whip makes me feel pain
16. Chorus: On the road

Original language: Olutachoni
Khane sib’oko nesianjuna, khumuyila

1. Uramo: Khane sib’oko nesianjuna
2. Bosi: Khumuyila
3. Uramo: Khane sib’oko nesianjuna
4. Bosi: Khumuyila
5. Uramo: Wa Kib’eu, Khane sib’oko nesianjuna
6. Bosi: Khumuyila
7. Uramo: Khane siboko nesianjuna
8. Bosi: Khumuyila
9. Uramo: Eeh! Tacho, Khane sib’oko nesianjuna
10. Bosi: Khumuyila
11. Uramo: Wa Miskio, Khane sib’oko nesianjuna
12. Bosi: Khumuyila
13. Uramo: Be Mumbayi, Khane sib’oko nesianjuna
14. Bosi: Khumuyila
15. Uramo: Wa Chinungo, Khane sib’oko nesianjuna
16. Bosi: Khumuyila
We shall wash

Name of the performer: Ngob’ilo Nakitare
Education background: Certificate of Primary Education
Time of the performance: 1.45 p.m.
Occasion: The okhuuya ceremony for Khisa King’asia
Place: Tongaren, Ndalu Location
Tape No.: One
Song No.: Six

1. Soloist: Us, we have washed
2. Chorus: We shall wash
3. Soloist: Us, we have washed
4. Chorus: We shall was blood and run
5. Soloist: At Ndivisi we washed
6. Chorus: We shall wash
7. Soloist: At B’ulaya we washed
8. Chorus: We shall was blood and run
9. Soloist: We, Tacho we wash
10. Chorus: We shall wash
11. Soloist: At Sikimo we washed
12. Chorus: We shall was blood and run

Original language: Olutachoni

Khulietuba

1. Uramo: B’ene kwetub’a
2. Bosi: Khulietuba
3. Uramo: B’ene kwetub’a
4. Bosi: Khulietub’a mab’anga mani khwelukha
5. Uramo: Ndivisi kwetub’a
6. Bosi: Khulietub’a
7. Uramo: B’ulaya kwetub’a
8. Bosi: Khulietub’a mab’anga mani khwelukha
9. Uramo: Tacho kwetub’a
10. Bosi: Khulietub’a
11. Uramo: Sikimo kwetub’a
12. Bosi: Khulietub’a mab’anga mani khwelukha
*Sikimo refers to a settlement scheme, in this case called Tongaren in Bungoma District.

**We want War**

Name of the performer: Misiko King’asia  
Education background: O - Level  
Time of performance: 2.00 p.m.  
Occasion: The okhuuya ceremony for Khisa King’asia  
Place: Tongaren, Ndalu Location  
Tape No.: One  
Song No.: Seven

1. Soloist: We want war  
2. Chorus: We want war  
3. Soloist: We want war  
4. Chorus: Aah! Aah! we want war  
5. Soloist: Tacho, that, we want war  
6. Chorus: We want war  
7. Soloist: We want war  
8. Chorus: Aah! Aah! we want war  
9. Soloist: Children of Murumba, that we want war  
10. Chorus: We want war  
11. Soloist: We want war  
12. Chorus: Aah! Aah! we want war

**Original language: Olutachoni**

1. Uramo: Khwenya ob’usolo  
2. Bosi: Khwenya ob’usolo  
3. Uramo: Khwenya ob’usolo  
4. Bosi: Aah! Aah! khwenya ob’usolo  
5. Uramo: Tacho, mbo, khwenya ob’usolo  
6. Bosi: Khwenya ob’usolo  
7. Uramo: Khwenya ob’usolo  
8. Bosi: Aah! Aah! khwenya ob’usolo  
9. Uramo: B’e wa Murumba mbo khwenya ob’usolo  
10. Bosi: Khwenya ob’usolo  
11. Uramo: Khwenya ob’usolo  
Participants prepare to welcome a family. The widow can be seen in the middle holding a gourd of milk.

Photograph 2 & 3: A section of the participants (male) have just tamed a bull and are in the process of taking it to the house where the deceased had lain before burial and to his grave.
Photograph 4: An example where both the female and male participants join in a dance of welcome of a family to the homestead.

Photograph 5: Participants dance around the cattle. Nakitere wa Murumba, in a brim hat, leads the participants in song and dance.
Photograph 6: Some participants dancing on the grave. A hornblower is among them.

Photograph 7: Cattle in the dramatic arena. In the background can be
Photograph 8: A section of the participants sing and dance from a distance to the main action. The house where the deceased had lain can be seen in the background.

Photograph 9: Participants dance on top of the grave. The plant in the foreground is the one referred to in Chapter four as oluswa.
Photograph 10: The elderly members of the audience seated at the fringes of the main dramatic action. Generally agemates of the deceased.

Photograph 11: One of the daughters of the deceased seated on the grave.
Photograph 12: The open space of the arena. In the middle participants dance on the grave and in the background the audience watch on.

Photograph 13: Participants dance around a bull that has been tamed by holding the horns.
Photograph 14: Participants dance around cattle.

Photograph 15: a family exits after a session of welcome.
Photograph 16: A section of the participants in the main dramatic portion of welcome.

Photograph 17: Nakitre Murumba, again, leads the participants in a dance performance (in brim hat).
Photograph 18: Participants dance around and on the grave.
APPENDIX THREE

NARRATIVE THEATRE

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Place: Mr. Richard Karani's home, Naitiri

Date of performance: 24th December, 1989

Audience: Fifteen people, seven men and eight women

Performer: Salume Namukuru

Age: Sixty Five years

The two members of the audience, Mukhwana and Mulongo (twins) mentioned in the bracketed comments in the story, are about fourteen years of age and they are the last born of Mr. Karani. The bracketed comments are only included in the English translation to aid the reader appreciate some aspects of the actual context of performance. In this story most of the original linguistic structures have been retained in translation to at least capture some of the aspects of the original.

The story:

'The woman, the boy and the ogre'

There once lived a pregnant woman. One day, she found an ogre (okunani) fishing. The woman said to the ogre:

"Give me some fish. The child who is in this stomach (narrator points to her stomach), when I give birth, I will give it to you".

The ogre gave her some fish, she ate them. When she gave birth, the ogre came and said:

"Give me the child" She answered,
"No! wait for the child to grow up a bit and become fat".
The child grew up and became fat. When the ogre came back, she said:

"Let the child stay and care for my cattle a bit".

The child grew up. He herded cattle. When the ogre came again, the woman gave another excuse. She said:

"I will send them for some vegetables. The one I will give akhatendekele (a type of basket), is the one for you".

But the boy heard this conversation. He organized to have all his mates carry ebitendekele (plural).

When the ogre went for the child at the vegetable site (he) asked:

"Where is the child who was promised me?

The children answered:

"But all of us have the baskets, how will you know?"

The ogre went home and returned the following day:

"I want the child", he insisted
(Interjections of eeh! 'now' 'now').

The woman answered:

"This time, I will send them to the river. The boy I will give the nasikhati pot, (a type of pot) is the one for you".

The boy again, arranged for the rest of the children to carry nasikhati pots. When the ogre went to the river to get his prey, the children answered:
But all of us have the nasikhati pots, ow will we know?"

The children returned home safely. The ogre went to the woman fuming:

"Why do you cheat me so?"

The woman said:

This time, I will make a rat-trap so that when you come, I will set-off the trap and say a rat has been trapped. I will then send over the boy. When he comes, you will grab him".

The woman went and set up a trap. The ogre, as arranged, went and set it off. The woman then told the boy to go and get the rat so that they could eat it with ugali. (giggles and laughter, especially from Mukhwana and Mulongo. Narrator miles).

"Why don't you go for it yourself,"

the boy said.

The boy refused. The ogre came back to the woman, fuming:

"You! why do you cheat me?"

The woman said: "No! this time, I will tie myself with sib’oyo (some kind of dressing) with chininyinja (jingle dressing). When you touch me at night you will know".

When the boy confirmed that the mother was asleep, he untied his mother’s esib’oyo and chininyinja and dressed himself in them. When the ogre came, he felt the boy and realized that as not his target. When he caressed the woman, he found her naked. He quickly grabbed her. She cried out.
"No! No! I am the one"

The ogre said:

"No! Because you always cheat me today
I will eat you".

The ogre ate her.

(The action of 'caressing' 'grabbing' and finally 'eating the woman' evokes a lot of laughter and satisfaction to the audience)

The next day in the morning, the father of the boy said:

"You have caused my wife's death, why?" The boy denied this.

The father of the boy told him they were going to dig some hole. Of course, the actual intention of the father was to kill and bury the boy in the hole. When they were digging the hole, they would take turns at removing the soil from the hole. When the boy went into the hole, the father would attempt to kill the boy. The boy would ask:

"Eeh! father. You want to kill me with the spear?".

The father would reply:

"No son. I am just limiting the act of killing an animal".

When it was the father's turn to remove soil from the hole, the boy decided to kill his father. He buried him in the same hole, the boy decided to kill his father. He buried him in the same hole. The boy then went back home and told his step-mother to kill a chicken and make some ugali. The step-mother did exactly that, thinking it was for the boy and his father. She took the food to the place where they were digging the hole. She waited and waited but saw nothing. Meanwhile, the
boy had run to his sister’s home. He stayed there for a long time. One day, the news of the boy’s act reached her. She was told:

“Eeh! This one has killed the father”

This news shocked the sister

One day the sister told the boy to get some ugali from a big pot. In this pot was the sister’s husband, who had apparently turned into a snake. The intention of the sister was to have the snake (her husband) bite the boy. The boy refused...

The sister went to the farm one day. The boy made a big fire and struggled with the pot to this fire (interjections of ‘Yes’ ‘that is fine’ etc.). The boy then returned this pot to its usual place. When the sister came back, the boy gave her some of the ash saying:

“I have made some nice *omunyu some which is very tasty”.

“Let me have some”, the sister asked.

The boy gave his sister some. The sister tasted and wondered what this ‘tasty’ omunyu was all about. The boy quickly left the house, saying:

“Oh! You have licked your husband”.

The boy left, running away. The sister followed, chasing the boy. She shouted to the people ahead to stop the boy but the boy would tell them that the sister was telling him to run faster to the farm because he had forgotten her digging hoe there. By telling people this, they would let him pass. The boy went and went and reached the house of an elderly lady and stayed there.

One day, this old woman asked him to look after her amamela (some type of yeast). While this boy was looking after this
yeast, some chickens came and ate some of it. The boy told the chicken:

"Eeeh! You have eaten my yeast!
(some type of salt normally prepared from maize stalks or stones in the river)
And this yeast is not mine, it is that old woman's. What will you give me?"

A hen laid an egg and gave it to the boy. The boy left the old woman's place. He went, went, and came across some boys who were throwing some sticks (emisukini). He told them:

"Eeehe! so you boys throw sticks"

The boys agreed. The boy then told them:

"In our home place, we throw an egg."

They then asked the boy to give them his egg so that they could throw. They threw the egg around the boys. Eventually, the egg fell and broke. The boy quickly cut in:

"Eeeh! you have broken my egg. And this egg was not mine, it was Wanangokho's (the hen's); and the hen did not give it to me for nothing, she gave it to me for my yeast; and that yeast was not mine it was that old woman's."

Those boys took their sticks and gave them to that small boy. The boy then left. The boy went and met some people frying amalwa (fermented flour). The boy said to them:

"So you people just fry amalwa.
At our home place, we use sticks."

They borrowed the sticks from him. They fried the flour, they fried the flour, until the sticks burnt away. The boy said:
"Eeh! Eeh! you have fried away my sticks! And they were not mine, they were for the grazers; and the grazers did not give them to me for nothing, They gave them to me for my egg; and that egg was not mine, it was for the hen; and the hen did not give it to me for nothing, she gave it to me for my yeast; and that yeast was not mine, it was that woman’s”.

Those people took the fired flour and gave him. He went and met some people beating (threshing) simsim.

He said:

"Eeh! we, at our place, we do not just bet simsim”, he said, “We beat while eating fried flour”

They started beating the simsim and eating some fried flour, beating and eating. They ate, they finished the fired flour. He said:

"Eeh! you have have eaten that fried flour! That fried flour was not mine, it was for the friers (nab’usiyile i.e. those who fry) and the friers did not give it to me for nothing, they gave it to me for my sticks; and the sticks were not mine, they were for the grazers; and the grazers did not give it them me for nothing, they gave them to me for my egg; and the egg was not mine, it was the hen’s; and the hen did not just give me that egg, she gave it to me for my yeast; and the yeast was not mine, it was that old woman’s”.

They had to give him simsim. He left. He went and found guineafowls eating pebbles. He said:

"Eeh! so you eat pebbles. We eat simsim at our home place”.

They asked him to give them some. They were given. They ate, ate and finished. He said:
"Eeeh! you have eaten all my simsim! And that simsim was not mine, it was for those who beat (the beaters i.e. *Wanab’akhupi*) and the beaters did not give it to me for nothing, they gave it to me for my fried flour; and the fried flour was not mine, it was for the the friers; and the friers did not give it to me for free, they gave it to me for my sticks; and those sticks were not mine, they were for the grazers; and the grazers did not give them to me for nothing, they gave them to me for my egg; and the egg was not mine, it was for that hen; and the hen did not give it to me for nothing, she gave it to me for my yeast; and the yeast was not mine, it was that old woman’s”.

(At this stage, the audience has begun to join in the recitation of the sequence).

They plucked feathers and gave them to him. He went and met Abarwa (actually the Sabaot). They were shooting arrows on bows. He told them:

"So you people just shoot! In our place, we shoot arrows that have feathers”.

They said to him: “Give us some?” He gave them the feathers. They tied the feathers to the arrows. They shot, until the feathers were all finished. He said:

"Eeeh! my feathers... they were not mine, they were for the guineafowls; and the gunieafowls did not give them to me for nothing, they gave them to me for my simsim; and the simsim was not mine, it was for the beaters; and the beaters did not give it to me for nothing they gave it to me for my fried flour; and the fried flour was not mine, it was for the friers; and the friers did not give me the flour for nothing, they gave it to me for my sticks; and the sticks were not mine, they were for the grazers; and the grazers did not give me the sticks for nothing, they gave them to me for my egg; and the egg was not mine, it was for that hen; and the hen
did not give me the egg for nothing, she gave me for my yeast; and that yeast was not mine, it was that old woman's".

(The audience enjoys being part to the faithfull recitation of this sequence).

The Ab'arwa gave the boy arrows and bows. He went and went and reached in another land. He did not meet people. This was a land inhabited by only women and dogs. He went to a spot where ash was dumped. He manoeuvred himself into the ash and covered his body with the ash. A woman came to dump some ash. She saw some strange object. She saw a human stick protruding (much laughter). She removed the ash carefully around the strange object. She discovered a man. She wondered loudly.

"Eeeh! So it is a man! I have discovered a man for myself".

She took the man to her house. They stayed in her house, without the other women or the dogs knowing about this secret man. Then this woman gave birth to a child.

Other women asked her:
"Where did you get this child?"
"How come! How have you become pregnant?"

She told them it was the dogs. Other women refused to believe this. She asked them to brew beer. They did. She then revealed to them her secret. This was how people multiplied in greater numbers.

Original language: Olutachoni

'Omukhasi nende okunani'

Yaliyo omukhasi oyo yali nende esisombo. Yinyinga ndala wanyola okunani kulalobanga ching'eni. Omukhasi oyo wasunga ari:

"Mbekho ching'eni, omwana uli munda muno, nenibule, ndakhua ewe (olie)"
Okunani okwo, kwamua, walia. Ori web’ula kwecha, kuri:
“Mbe omwana”

Oyo ari ta,

“Linda achoekho akhomele”
Ori kukalukha khandi, ari tawe:

“Linda akendekho”
Omwana yakhakenda. Kwakalukha, ari tawe:

“Linda yanjayilekho ching’ombe mbesio”

Omwana wachoa, wakhaya ching’ombe. Ori kwecha khandi, wakhaya.
Omukhasi mwenoyo wasunga ari:

“Kene mbarume chifwa, wakene mbelesie akhatendekele niye omwenoyo”

Khane omwana oyo uulile Wasolola ab’asie b’osi b’osi nende eb’itendekele. Ori okunani kwicha syafwa kuri:

“Omwana wab’andumire ano ali?”

Nab’o b’akalusia:

“Nefwe fwesi khunende eb’itendekele olamanya orie?”

Okunani kwachelela. B’wasia kwakalukha.

“Esie nenyile omwana”

Omukhasi oyo, wakalusia;

“Tawe, lelo ndab’aruma nende cha nasikhati”
Omwana oyo khandi wasolola ab’asie nende chinyungu cha nasikhati chong’ne okhucha emuchela. Ori okunani kwecha khandi kureb’a, b’ari “Ndi fwesi khunende chinyungu cha nasikhati”. Khandi b’achelela. Okunani kwasungila omukhasi kuri:

“Umbombelesianga orie?”

Omukhasi ari lelo ndareka lilib’a. Olecha orekusie mani osunge ori imbeb’a yitililwe ori yecha, nomunyola.

Wakhola ario, basi ... ori linani lirekula oyo wasungila omwana ari cha otile imbeba wiche khulile ob’usuma. Omwana oyo ari:

“Ne wamwene socha”

Khelob’ela!

Khandi okunani kwecha, kuri:

“Ewe! umbombelesianga sina”? 

Ari tawe, lelo ndab’oa esib’oya nende chinyinja. Olab’a ori otilakho nomanya.

Omwana oyo, yakhakila ori ng’ina wakona, wamukangulula chinyinja nende esib’oya web’oa. Okunani ori kwecha kwaabasia omwana, unende esib’oya nende chinyinja, kwalekha. Ori kwecha kwatila khumukhasi oyo u-b’usa, kwamutila. Ari:

“Tawe esie”

Kuri:

“Awa, ngaumbombelesianga, b’ulano ndakhulia”

Kwamulia.
Ori b'wasisa, samwana ari:

"Eeh! ewe okilile omusiele wanje, okunani kwamulia sina?"

Oyo ari:

"Tawe"

Samwana ari:

"Khuche khuyab'e ob'uko"

Yaani, ob'uko b'uno b'ari samwana alamusikhamo.

Ori b'ayab'a, ori omwana akota lilob'a, samwana amukeleka.

Omwana areb'a ari:

"Eeh! Papa, okana okhumbuna!"

Samwana ari:

"Tawe, Papa ndakelekganga b'uchwa."

B'asi, ori samwana naye wakalukhamo okhukota lilob'a ne omwana oyo peb'e, wamwira na amusikha mub'uko b'wenob'u.

Omwana chana wakalukha yingo wasungila omukhasi undi ari:


Ori khamenya, khamenya, b'ari:

"Eeh! Khano khayera samwana"

Oyo ari:

"Eeh!"
Basi warekukha, wakhalekha munju. Ne omusacha naye wayekela injukha wamenya munyungu. Ori omukoko alakhalaka arì cha obuk'ule ob'usuma omwo, khaloba. (Yaani, munyungu kusudi mbo injukha ekhalume).


"Esie yaya nisambile omunyu kwanula"

Oyo arì:

"Tawe mbekho khulole"

Khamuwelesia. Ori khamuwelesia wakhomba kho, ... arì: "Aaah! Nekharura. Khari:

"Wakhomba okusacha!"

Nekharekukha khelukha oyo b'ari yongakho arì mbambile omwana oyo nakho khari "Tawe alasungilanga arì, timaka b'wangu nilekhile imbako mulukongo ab'andu b'alab'ukula". Abandu bakahlekha khab'ira.

Khacha khacha khatukha munju yomusiele undi b'asi khamenya mub'wenomwo.

Yinyinga ndala omusiele wakhab'ila arì ndindile amamela kano. Chingokho charurayo chab'ocha khumamela chana. Khari:

"Eeh! mwab'ocha amamela kanje!
Ne amamela kano sekali akanje tawè ko omusiele.
Mulamba sina?"
Yingokho yarera lib’uyu khab’ukula. Kherekukhila. Kha-cha, khanyola ab’asoleli b’andi b’alasukunanga emisukuni. Khari:

“Eeh! khane enywe musukunanga emisukuni”. Ab’o b’ari bafukilila, Khari:

“Efwe ewefu, khusukunanga nende lib’uyu”.

B’asukuna lib’uyu neb’ab’ukanisiana. B’asukuna lib’uyu nab’ab’ukanisiana. Olumalilisi lib’uyu lyekhupa asi lyatikha. Khari:

“Eeh! mwara lib’uyu lyanje, nelib’uyu selib’ele elianje ta, libele lya wanagokho, ne wanangokho seyambele b’uchwa ta, yambele khumamela kanje, ne amamela ako sekabele akanje ta, kabele ko omusiele oyo.”

Ooh! ab’o basuta chindab’usi bakhawelesia (emisukuni). Kharekukha. Khacha khanyola ab’andu b’andi b’alasiyilanga amalwa. Khari:

“Khane enywe musiyilanga b’usa... Efwe khusiyililanga chindab’usi chino”.

B’asi, khab’ukula chindab’usi khab’awa. Basiyila amalwa; Basi yila amalwa - chindab’usi chaya chawa. Khari:

“Eeh! eeh! Enywe mwasiyila chindab’usi chanje chib’ele chaab’ayi, ne ab’ayi seb’ambele b’usa ta, b’ambelel khulib’uyu lianje, ne lib’uyu elio nalio selib’ele elianje ta, lib’ele lia wanangokho, ne wanangokho naye seyambele b’uchwa ta, yambele khumamela kanje, ne amamela nako sekabele akanje ta, kab’ele ko omusiele”

Ab’o b’asuta amalwa bakhawelesia. Khacha khanyola balopanga chinuuni. Khari:
“Eeh! efwe wefu sekhupanga chinuni busa ta.
Khupanga nekhulia amalwa”.

Abo b’opa chinuni neb’alia amalwa. B’alia, b’alia,...

Khari:

“Eeh! mwalia amalwa ako! Amalwa ako sekabele akanje ta, kab’ele kab’usiyile, ne nab’usiyile seyambele b’usa ta, yambele khundabusi chanje, ne chindabusi sechib’ele echanje ta, chib’ele chaab’ayi, ne ab’ayi seb’ambele b’usa ta, b’ambele kwib’uyu lyanje, ne lib’uyu elio nalio selib’ele elianje ta, libele lya wanangokho, ne wanangokho naye seyambele b’uchwa ta, yambele khumamela kanje, ne amamela nako sekab’ele akanje ta, kab’ele ko umusiele”.


“Eeh! Khane ewenyu yino mubocha busa chimbale.
Efwe khub’ochanga chinuni”.

Ab’o b’ari: “Khuwekho khulole”. Khachukhila amakhanga chinuni. Amakhanga kakhalia chinuni kamala. Khari:

“Eeh! Enywe mwalia chinuni chanje mwamala. Ne chinuni sechib’ele echanje ta, chib’ele cha wanab’akhupi, ne wanab’akhupi seb’ambele b’usa ta, b’ambele khumalwa kanje, ne amalwa ako sekab’ele akanje ta, kab’ele kanab’usiyile, ne wanab’usiyile seyambele b’usa ta, yambele khundab’usi chanje, ne chindab’usi sechib’ele echanje ta, chib’ele cha ab’ayi, ne ab’ayi seb’ambele b’usa ta, b’ambele kwib’uyu lyanje, ne lib’uyu elio nalio selib’ele elianje ta, lib’ele lya wanangokho, ne wanangokho naye seyambele b’uchwa ta, yambele khumamela kanje, ne amamela nako sekab’ele akanje ta, kab’ele ko omusiele”

Ab’o b’akhula amafumbo khacha. Khacha khanyola Ab’arwa balalasanga ob’uyingo. Khari: “khane enywe mulasanga b’usa! Ewefu, khulasanga nende amafumbo”. Bari:

“Khuwekho”
Khab'awa, khab'awa. B'ab'oa, b'ab'oa khub'uyingo b'alasa. Amafumbo chana kawa. Khari:

"Eeh! emilo kyanje, sekib'ele ekianje ta, kibele kya wanekhang'a, ne wanekhang'a seyambele b'usa ta, yambele khununi chanje, ne chinuni sechib'ele echanje ta, chib'ele cha wanab'akhupi, ne wanab'akhupi seb'ambele b'usa ta, b'ambele khumalwa kanje, ne amalwa ako sekab'ele akanje ta, kab'ele kanabusiyile, ne wanab'usiyile syambele b'usa ta, yambele khundab'usi chanje, ne chindab'usi sechib'ele echanje ta, chib'ele cha ab'ayi, ne ab'ayi seb'ambele b'usa ta, b'ambele khwib'uyu lyanje, ne lib'uyu elio naliyo selib'ele elianje ta, libele lya wanangokho, ne wanangokho naye seyambele b'uchwa ta, yambele khumamela kanje, ne amamela ako sekab'ele akanje ta, kab'ele ko omusiele."

Ab’o b’abukula ob’uyingo b’akhawelesia. Khacha, khacha, khola musib’ala sindi khanyolamo ab’andu ta, chimbwa chong’ene. Chimbwa chong’ene chamunya nende abakhasi. Asi... omundu oyo wacha mwikokhe. Ori omukhasi oyo alacha okhuchukha likokhe, walola ahookhacholocholo khasingile mwikokhe. Wafimbula. Ari:

"Eeh! wina uno?"

Na amuyila munju mumwe. Bamenya b’usa munju mumwe omwo, imbwa namwe ab’akhasi b’andi seb’alola kho tawe. Ori b’alengela oyo web’ula omwana. Ne ab’o bari:

"Eeh! Ne wib’ule oriena owmana uno?"

Oyo ari:

"Ndi ab’andu b’akhwamenya nab’o”.

Nab’o b’ari tawe:

"Ab’ano ta"

Basi. Wab’asungila ari koya amalwa. B’akoya amalwa kho wab’eb’ulilila ab’andu b’eb’ulikhana khusib’ala.