

**THE CONSTRUCTION OF IMAGES OF POWER AMONG
THE SABAOT OF KENYA AS REPRESENTED IN THEIR
MALE INITIATION POETRY**

ROBIN TOSKIN CHEPSIGOR

C50/5625/2003

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF
MASTER OF ARTS (LITERATURE) OF KENYATTA UNIVERSITY.**

JANUARY, 2019

DECLARATION

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

Signature:.....**Date:**

Chepsigor Robin Toskin (C50/5625/2003)

Department of Literature

SUPERVISORS

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as University Supervisors.

Sign.....**Date**.....

Prof. John Mugubi

School of Creative and Performing Arts, Film and Media Studies,

Kenyatta University

Sign.....**Date**.....

Dr. Wallace Mbugua

Department of Literature,

Kenyatta University

DEDICATION

To my father,

John Kweyey Chepsigor Kapkamba for your foresight and commitment to send us to school albeit grinding poverty. Our family's relative success illuminated Kipsagam and Cheptumbelio, some of the remotest villages in Kenya. Today, a degree is the bare minimum academic credential a child aspires for there.

My mother,

Joyce Cheptalach, dropping out of school early did not stop you from providing for us, always chiding and admonishing us for not working hard at school. You brewed traditional beer, often dodging police dragnet and Provincial Administration, just to raise school fees for us. Mom, I am proud of you.

My wife and confidant,

Topister Sabila, I will forever be grateful for your constant reminder of the need to conclude this thesis and offering the moral support as I negotiated through this exhausting academic work.

My children,

Francine Cherotich, Heidi Koreny, Lindsey Yap'Tiyoy, Abel De-Sanctis Toskin and Giovanni Toskin Toskin, thank you for your encouragement. May the Almighty God also illuminate your path in pursuit of knowledge.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study would not have taken off were it not for the thought provoking comments from my initial supervisors, Dr. Ezekiel Alembi and Dr. Machayo Olilo both of whom have departed from our midst.

Dr. Alembi's mastery of Ethnopoetics and Dr. Olilo's wit and critical analysis laid the foundation upon which this study was anchored.

Prof. Michael Wainaina's perspectives on African ritual and critical thinking and my guide Herrickson Sakong Ndiema's insight opened this study to innumerable possibilities.

And like ducks taking to water, Dr. Wallace Mbugua and Dr. John Mugubi steered the ship to safety when I was about to give up. Their immense contribution in gathering my thoughts and giving this study the intellectual order it so much needed led to its logical conclusion. To the two, the least I can wish you is God's grace so you may, for years to come, be fountains of knowledge.

How can I forget Prof. Oluoch Obura, Dr. Kisa Amateshe, Dr Wasambo Were, Dr. Emmanuel Shikuku, Dr. Rachael Diang'a, Dr. Emmanuel Manyasa, Dr. J.S Makokha for their immeasurable intellectual input? To these great scholars, I say with utmost humility, a big thank you.

All the efforts would have counted for nothing were it not for administrative guidance from Dorothy Nekesa Kusienya (Secretary, Department of Literature), Esther Mugwe (Secretary, Department of Film and Theatre). May God bless you abundantly.

TABLE OF CONTENT

DECLARATION	i
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENT	ivii
DEFINITION OF TERMS	vii
ABSTRACT	viii
CHAPTER 1	1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background to the Study	2
1.2 The profile of the Sabaot Community	3
1.3 Statement of the problem	35
1.4 Research Objectives	36
1.5 Research Questions	36
1.6 Research Assumptions	36
1.7 Justification and Significance of the Study	37
1.8 Scope and Delimitation of the Research	37
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	38
2.0 Introduction	38
2.1 Theoretical Literature	38
2.2 Theoretical Framework	44
2.2.1 Introduction	444
2.2.2 Ethno-poetic theory	44
2.2.3 Psychoanalysis	46
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	49
3.0 Methodology	49
3.1 Research Design	49
3.2 Sampling Procedure	53
3.3 Data Collection	57
3.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation	59
3.5 Validity and Reliability	62
3.6 Logistical and Ethical Consideration	63

3.8 Conclusion	63
CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS	65
4.0 Introduction	65
4.0.1 Style and Stylistic devices	65
4.0.2 Performance	66
4.1 Stylistic devices in Sabaot initiation oral poetry	67
4.1.1 Imagery	71
4.1.2 Symbolism	77
4.2 Performance and its significance in power relations contest	95
4.2.1 Initiation as a performance arena for Sabaot oral poetry	96
4.2.2 Contexts of Oral Initiation Poetry Performance	97
4.2.3 Performance as arena for power relations contest	122
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	123
5.0 Introduction	123
5.1 Summary of the Findings	123
5.2 Conclusion	125
5.3 Recommendations	126
CITATIONS	127
APPENDICIES	132
Appendix I: Songs	132
Appendix II: Interview Guides	143

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Power: The ability or potential of one party to be able to influence or affect the actions, words and occasionally, beliefs and emotions of another.

Power relations: Contention of power as a phenomenon between communities living together or neighbouring each other. In this study, it was viewed from the Sabaot perspective.

Images of power: An image is a word, or phrase in a literary piece that appeals directly to a recipient's taste, touch, hearing, sight, or smell. It can also be understood to be any vivid or picturesque phrase that evokes a particular sensation in the recipient's mind.

Interpretive frame/Performance Arena: Are terms that have been used by (Bauman, 1986), (Foley, 1995) to mean the cultural scenes or events in which words in a performance, take other meanings instead of what they mean in day-to-day usage. This is also applicable to the Sabaot initiation period and accompanying poetry.

Referential language: Meanings of words in their daily usage.

Initiation: Is the process in which the social roles of the Sabaot or any other community are imparted into their youth.

Imaginative literature: Creative works of art produced by individuals or groups of individuals for the purpose of instruction, entertainment or both.

Associative values: Meanings words take in a performance arena over and above the basic meanings of words in day-to-day use.

Composition – in - performance: Refers to the composition of a piece of artistic work while simultaneously performing it for any purpose determined or known to a particular community within a performance arena.

ABSTRACT

This study examined the construction of images of power in initiation male oral poetry of the Sabaot with a view to revealing how this community contests power relations with its neighbours. The study also investigated how this contest of power relations creates or maintains a cultural identity, which like in any other community is derived from a sense of imagined superiority. Oral Poetry is an incontestable reservoir of values, sensibilities, aesthetics and also a genre through which traditional thought and imagination is achieved. The study assumed that initiation provides a cultural arena where Sabaot artists express those values, virtues, aesthetics and traditional thought and identity. The study postulated that the meaning(s) of words in the initiation poetry can only be understood within the context of performance of these poems. By analysing these poems the study set out to establish how the attendant images of power contribute to the creation of the Sabaot identity in contesting power relations. The study used a composite theoretical framework that integrates Ethno-poetics theory and Psychoanalytic Criticism theory to analyse collected oral poems. This framework enabled the study to gather and interpret data with respect to meanings that ‘words’ or ‘utterances’ take during performances as opposed to basic referential language outside the “performance arena” or “interpretive frame”. Psychoanalytic Criticism theory was beneficial in analysing the imagined superiority of the Sabaot as demonstrated by the images of power found in their male initiation poetry. Backed with a corpus of library research information the study narrowed down to the Sabaot living in Kopsiro division of Mt. Elgon District for the reason that initiation is still actively practised there. The findings are quite interesting, especially the fact that words acquire different meanings when placed in an “interpretive frame” or “a performance arena”. For example a community’s name becomes a symbol of cowardice. The mention of a monkey or rain in that arena takes an entirely different meaning from the basic referential meaning. The study offers compelling opportunities for research on many aspects of poetry of the Sabaot and reveals conflict resolution efforts.

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

Identities and socio-cultural issues are some of the most inalienable aspects of life one can never change in a person's life or in the life of a community. Every community has its own way of life hence identifiable culture. When culture is practised in a unique way as opposed to others, then it creates an identity. In literature, identity in creative writing would mean, the genre of specialisation in which a given writer is known for. For example, Charles Dickens was a renowned novelist, Okot p'Bitek (poet), William Shakespeare (playwright).

This chapter, however, situates Sabaot initiation songs and oral poems and their relevance to the people of the Sabaot community for now and posterity. The chapter also introduces the Sabaot: who they are (identity), their migration and settlement, language (linguistic grouping), history and political organisation (power and governance). In so doing, the chapter discusses what has been written about the Sabaot by several historians amongst them being (Were, 1968) and (Mwanzi, 1977).

In his book, *Culture and Behaviour of the Sebei: A study in Continuity and Adaptations*, (Goldschmidt, 1976) did extensive work on the Sabaot people. However, there are divergent accounts captured during research especially on the history of the Sabaot. Rather than delay the accounts until the findings section, which in any case narrows down to the construction of images of power among the Sabaot of Kenya as represented in their male initiation poetry, the study juxtaposes them as shown through this empirical research.

1.1 Background to the Study

Poetry, according to (Miruka, 1994), is a work of art that must have recognisable forms and motifs of thematic relationships and development to integrate words and sounds from their nominal value to verse.

Miruka's definition of poetry introduces four significant aspects of poetry namely: form, theme, words and sounds. In so doing, he also draws the line between written (words) and oral (sounds) different forms of poetry. (Miruka, 1994, P.88) contends that: "...an oral poem is principally composed and rendered using word of mouth." He goes on to say that: "...oral poetry is also dependent on suprasegmental features of language, that is, non-graphic aspects of language like tone and pitch..."

Oral poetry can be performed. In oral performance, the text is not fixed. It may be shortened or lengthened depending on the requirements of the moment (Miruka, 1994). It is essential according to (Andrzejewski et.al, 1985) that works of oral literature communicate their contents through sound waves produced by human speech and are aurally perceived.

As an art, poetry both written and oral is to be found in all human societies, including African communities where it serves certain functions. For instance, (Chinweizu et.al, 1980) notes that oral literature in Africa is the incontestable reservoir of values, sensibilities, aesthetics and also, a genre through which traditional thought and imagination is achieved.

In African communities such as the Sabaot - the target community of this study - oral literature plays a central part in the lives of the people since socio-cultural relations are built, maintained or severed as they relate with other neighbouring communities. The building, maintaining or severing of socio-cultural relations among the Sabaot is expressed through their oral literature. The Sabaot, both individually and as a community use various forms of oral literature in different social roles to articulate a commentary

upon power relations as a way of creating socio-cultural knowledge about their society. Such individuals could be members of the council of elders, husbands as heads of families, warriors and more so, the poets in the Sabaot community or any other person bestowed with responsibility of any kind within the community.

The Sabaot people gain the wisdom of the community through rituals such as that of initiation. Initiates take initiation process seriously because they know that if they do not go through it, they will not be welcome in any gatherings of “men”. For example, one might not even be allowed to marry an initiated woman. And if one had the luck of marrying such a woman, the children born out of such a marriage would be considered outcasts. Also, one cannot transact any “business” on behalf of the community if he has not been initiated into the secrets of the community.

These may explain probably why the mere mention of the word “initiation” usually elicits deep seated emotions among the Sabaot since they use circumcision as a symbol that enhances the status of an individual in the community. Initiation therefore, forms part of the culture of the Sabaot people through which identity; knowledge, beliefs, morals and customs of the community are imparted to the initiates. Through such cultural practice, a community like the Sabaot may use its oral literature to display certain notions of ‘assumed superiority’ that characterize the behaviour of their members amongst themselves or towards neighbouring communities. It may carry with it notions of power because initiation, at a psychological level, among the Sabaot, appear to confirm the social status of individuals and therefore provide an arena within which the images of power are constructed.

1.2 The profile of the Sabaot Community

The Sabaot people live on or near the slopes of Mount Elgon. The hills of their homeland gradually rise from an elevation of 1.5 to 4.3 kilometres. The area is crisscrossed by numerous mountain streams and spectacular waterfalls. Mount Elgon is an extinct

volcano about eighty (80) kilometres in diameter. The Kenya-Uganda border goes straight through the mountain-top, cutting the Sabaot homeland into two halves.

In recent years, the Sabaot people have been forced to drastically change their lifestyle from cattle herding to planting maize (corn) and vegetables because of the scarcity of land. Economically this change has been good for the people, because the frequent hunger spells have drastically reduced. Socially it has been a hard and traumatic change as the former leaders in the society have lost their power, old values have been eroded, and drinking homemade beer has grown to destructive levels. The Sabaot people are proud of their cultural heritage. The elders sing using their six-stringed lyre, about the lost glory of their free life as warriors and cattle people. They remember their best cows by name. The Sabaot do not adapt to change quickly, but most of their children now go to school. That is why the majority of adults have never learned to read. The young, educated people have become the new elite.

Traditionally the Sabaot have always believed in a creator, *Yeyiin/asis*. He is good and provides sunshine, rain and life, but he is far away. It was the belief in the ancestral spirits that controlled the daily life of the people and brought them fortune or, more often, misfortune. If sickness struck, sacrifices had to be made to appease the angry ancestor who sent the sickness to avenge some wrongdoing against him.

In this section the study also discusses the origin of the Sabaot people with reference to anthropological work done by scholars like (Goldschmidt, 1976), (Weatherby, 1967), and (Huntingford, 1927). Other scholars who have done extensive research on the historical origins of the Sabaot are (Taylor, 2002), (Kipkorir, 1973), (Mwanzi, 1977), (Were, 1968) and (Toweett, 1979), among other scholars.

1.2.1 Who are the Sabaot?

The Sabaot are grouped under the broader Kalenjin ethnic group. Linguistically, the Kalenjin are classified as Nilotes whose ancestors according to (Ochieng, 1985) entered

Kenya from the north or northwest in two streams. They are said to have passed through Ethiopian highland and the second group entered through southern Sudan past the shores of Lake Turkana as shown in the figure below:

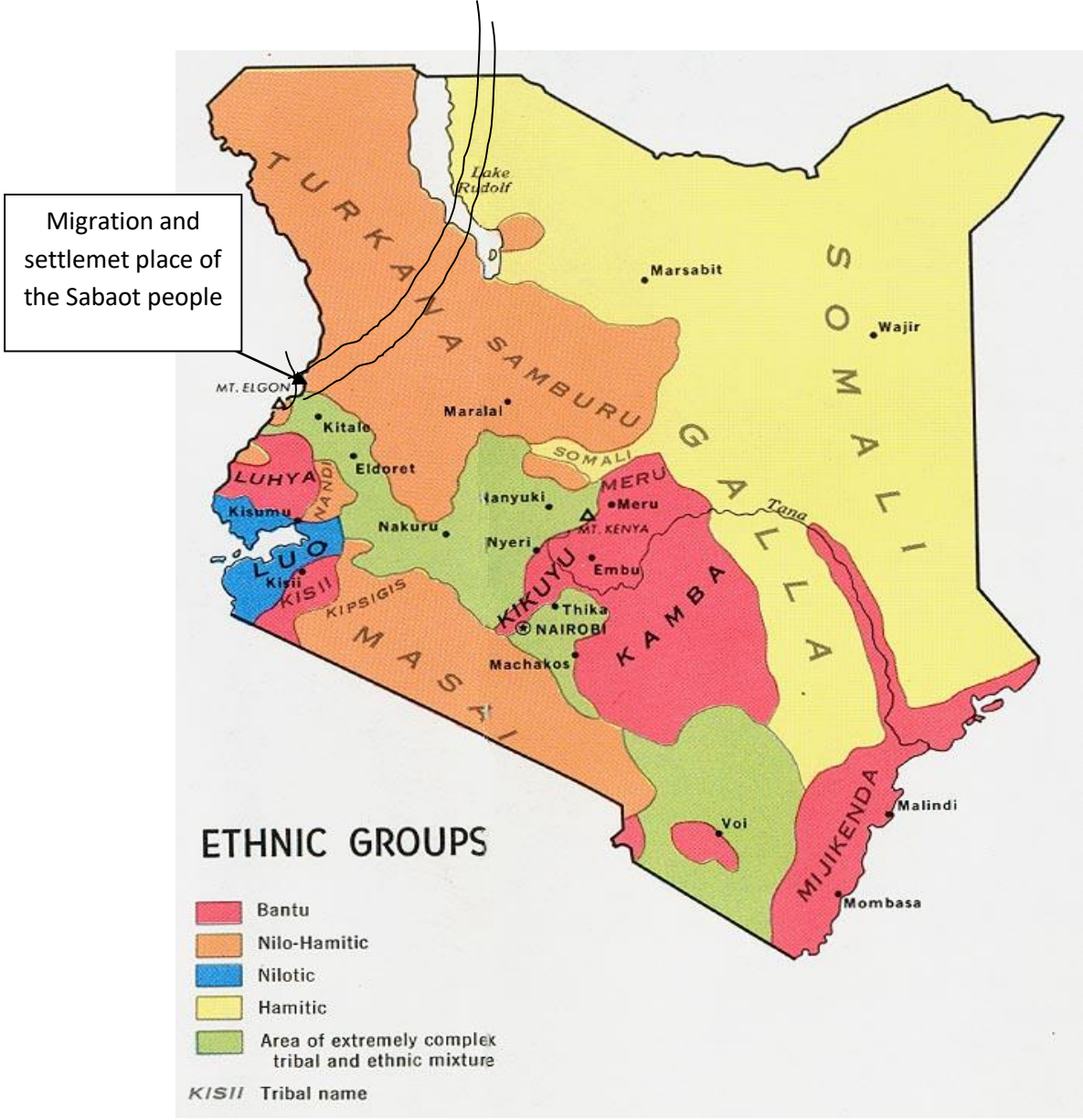


Figure 1: The map showing the migration of the Sabote people into Kenya

The Sabaot are one of the smallest subgroups of the Kalenjin and is the westernmost Kalenjin community occupying a vast part of Mt. Elgon.

(Goldschmidt, 1976) records that in the eighteenth century, the Sabaot occupied the whole of Mt. Elgon, utilising with variant emphases the old Kalenjin dual economy of livestock and grains.



Figure 2: Sabaot settlement homes around Mt Elgon.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Sabaot were pressed from all quarters. They were subjected to constant raiding by people they identify as Maasai and their Kalenjin relatives the Nandi, which had the effect of reducing the Sabaot population. The total population of all the Sabaot dialects in Kenya and Uganda was about 300,000 in 2009, of which half comprised the Sabaot on the Kenyan side of the border in the western and Rift Valley provinces (Taylor, 2002). Today, the population of the Sabaot people has increased due to several factors as high birth rate with minimal cases of

mortality rate. Fertile land for cultivation has ensured food is plenty and improved socio-economic amenities such as healthcare. There is also political stability in the region.

The table below shows the population growth of the Sabaot people in the past two decades:

YEAR	ESTIMATED POPULATION
2009	300,000
1999	290,000

Figure: table showing the population growth of the Sabaot people in the past two decades.

In the above table, it is evident that the population of the sabaot people increased by 10,000 within a period of 10 years. Several factors could have contributed to the rise such as minimal mortality rate as a result of improved healthcare.

The name ‘Sabaot’, however, is as recent as 1926 when the colonialists re-drew the border between Kenya and Uganda. Ever since this boundary was drawn, the unified identity of this community has suffered distortion by scholars - perhaps inadvertently. The geo-political boundaries have not helped matters.

Although the community is slowly evolving separate identities, I should hasten to add that; most Sabaot dislike the idea of being compartmentalized, preferring to be considered as a single unified group. (Taylor, 2004) noted that there is clearly a strong kinship bond amongst all Sabaot, regardless of location, minor differences in dialect, types of food eaten, subject material songs, ceremonies, house styles or farming methods.

1.2.2 Geographical location

Presently the Sabaot live in large concentration on the Eastern side of Mt. Elgon slopes down to Kapchorwa in Uganda and the plains separating Mt Elgon from the Cherangani range in small populations. The southernmost place to find the Sabaot is the present day Lwakhakha and Kapchorwa being the northernmost frontier bordering with the Bagisu of Uganda.



Figure 3: Sabaot home

A combination of factors like the Nandi and Masai raids together with the encroachment of the populous Bukusu community has seen the area occupied by the Sabaot reduced severely. White settlers did not help matters for the Sabaot for they were forced to join their clan members in Uganda or go to the reserve in Mt. Elgon. According to (Huntingford, 1927) the Sabaot could not move to the reserve area in Mt. Elgon because of the large herds of cattle they owned. The Sabaot could not imagine slaving for the white settlers so they retreated to the mountain caves and others went to their other

homes in Uganda. These afforded the Bukusu to move in and work for the settler farms in Trans- Nzoia.

The African government in 1963 further alienated the Sabaot by converting their ancestral land to Agricultural Development Corporation farms and gazetting as forest land that could not be mechanized. With the law that every Kenyan could live anywhere and own property it put the last nail on the Sabaot attempts to return to their ancestral land. To date it is a major factor in the ethnic relations pitting the Sabaot and mainly Bukusu around Mt. Elgon region and a few other ethnic groups.

(Goldschmidt, 1976) notes that the genealogical account of place names gives a sense of Sabaot history. These can be noted by the place names, which have since been changed by the ‘immigrant’ communities. Some examples are:

Original name	Changed form
Kineet nye Toror (on Ugandan side)	Tororo hills
Rokook	Luakhakha
Bung’om	Bungoma
Kanduy	Kanduyi
Sirisio	Sirisia
Kamelil	Kimilili
Kimining	Kiminini
Kataleel	Kitale
Suom	Swam
Chesamis	Chesamisi
Kibabiich	Kibabii
Sabaot	Saboti
Oineet nye Njoyee	River Nzoia (hence Trans-Nzoia)
Sirikween	Sirikwa
Kamokoywo	Kamukuywa
Terem	Teremi

Mt. Elgon at 4321 metres is the fourth highest mountain in East Africa after Mt. Kilimanjaro, Mt. Kenya and the Ruwenzori mountains. The Masai who had early contacts with the inhabitants of this mountain called it El Kony after Musobo's son Kipkony. An early explorer Joseph Thompson in 1885 called it Elgony and through Anglicization it later became Elgon. Initially though the Sabaot called it Masop, the personification of the founder of the Sabaot – Musobo.

Mt. Elgon is an extinct volcano and its slopes have rich volcanic soils suitable for many types of crops. The indigenous montane forest belt has receded due to agricultural activities. Its precious trees like the Elgon Teak were wantonly felled by politically connected people towards the end of President Daniel Arap Moi's regime to be sold to paper factories like Pan Paper in Webuye, Rai Ply in Eldoret and the Elgeyo Saw Mills.

Though considerably reduced, trees such as podo, cedar, and bamboo plants are still there. Mt. Elgon is also home to a number of wildlife such as Blue monkey, Black and White colobus monkey and De-brazza monkey. Others are buffaloes, elephants, antelopes and also game cats among many others in the Mt. Elgon National Park, which covers 169 square kilometres.

The lower plains are of low trees and high grass plateau area of rich grazing. Mainly non-Sabaot speakers, however, have settled this area. The plains called by (Were, 1968) the "Kitale corridor" was once covered by white thorn trees (*kataleel* - a Sabaot word for white thorns) which Kitale town derived its name.

The mountain is dotted with caves, which were a source of salt and refuge for wild animals, cattle and people alike, and often had dwellings constructed within them. It often provided refuge for the Sabaot particularly during the entire nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from the Masai raiders from the east in 1819, Karamojong in 1830, 1849, 1850, 1869, 1870 and 1874 from the north (Taylor, 2002) and then later the British

colonialists. Kitum cave found on the Kaitoboss peak (4231m) on Mt. Elgon served as a refuge on the eastern side against the Masai.

The Sabaot still dwell in circular styled houses made of wickerwork and plastered with mud and covered with a conical thatch roof. The roof has a spike, as decoration on the apex which other clans remove once the head of the family is dead. The inside is regularly smeared with cow dung mixed with ash or whitish soil to keep it clean. Change, however, is taking place with many now building houses with iron sheet roofing. This is largely because of dwindling availability of grass for thatching or simply consequences of modernity. It is also becoming increasingly unsafe for fear of arson resulting from an upsurge of ethnic tensions since the early 90's.

1.2.3 Language

Language as defined by several sources of references is said to be: "...the method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way". In literary discourse, language is always referred to as a style of a piece of writing or speech. Several scholars have devised their own understanding to language use, for example, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, one Kenya's prolific and distinguished writers, has shifted from English (which he refers to as a language for the colonisers) to Gikuyu (a local language spoken by about 6 million people), Ngugi says that African issues should be disseminated through the language that is well understood by people. In this case, language is a tool for linguistic identity as determined by their own phonetics.

However, in spatial differences, the Sabaot language has evolved dialects, which coincide with the broader clan names. Strides have been made since (Toweett, 1979) studied the language of the Kalenjin in general, toward studying specific community languages and its speakers. The Bible Translation and Literacy (BTL) in East Africa has particularly done a lot of work in the Sabaot language since 1981. Linguists Iver Larsen

and Fred Surai helped establish orthography and spelling of the Sabaot language under the Sabaot Language and Literature Committee from 1981 –1984.

Drawing from the immense work by BTL, (Taylor, 2002) also records Sabaot language to have thirteen consonants as follows; *b, ch, k, l, m, n, ny, ng', r, s, t, w, y*. In the Sabaot orthography, letter *p* is replaced with *b* and likewise *d* is replaced with *t*. The sounds *j, h, t, gh, th*, or *dha* are not found in the Sabaot language. The vowels system of the Sabaot is based on the five basic vowels [*a, e, i, o, u*] to form a complicated sixteen phoneme vowel sounds. Despite the complexity arising from the sixteen phoneme sounds, (Larsen, 1984) perceives the language to have two vowel families; the 'light' (normal) and the 'heavy' produced by a phonological device called 'Advanced Tongue Toot or + ATR) To show the distinction in tone between these devices, it was decided by the Sabaot Language and Literature Committee to mark the heavy or + ATR with lines over them, (Taylor, 2002, p.228). They give an example viz:

teeb vt. To ask (medium rising tone)

teeb vi To insert, place, put somewhere (low falling tone)

The Sabaot Language and Literature Committee also found out that the length of a vowel made a difference to meaning hence each of the five basic vowels could be written as short (single letter as in *o*) or long (double letter as in *oo*).

The example they give will suffice.

Karam She fetched water (ram – vt draw water)

Karaam adj. Good

Kaaram I fetched water

Karaam n. wasp (shortened version of *kaaramnyanteet*) (Taylor 2002).

Much as the BTL did a lot of work in establishing Sabaot orthography and spelling, there is a feeling that a lot of research still needs to be done on the orthography and spelling.

The claim by (Taylor, 2002) for instance that the Bok and Kony are the two main Sabaot dialects is utterly misleading. This has the effect of narrowing the diverse manner of speaking available to every person within the Sabaot community. What does she for instance mean by ‘main’ – Is it in terms of the number of speakers, ‘superiority’ or ‘authenticity?’ Phonological or lexical differences among the Sabaot clans cannot be justifiable reasons for this compartmentalization.

It is to be expected that a clan like Bok or Bong’omek living on the fringes of Sabaot territory will be influenced by communities like the Bukusu. In any case only the Bok as (Taylor, 2002) aptly records, have lost the consonant *l* (by replacing it with either *n* or *r* except when using recent loan words like *sibitali* (hospital)).

The Sebei clan members who live between Kassawai in Kenya and Kapchorwa in Uganda haven’t lost any of these consonants. Those clan members who spend most of their time in Uganda have acquired Luganda loan words for convenience. This is because of the Baganda administrators who were imposed on them during the British colonial rule. They switch back to Sabaot whenever appropriate. From an insider-point of view however these Sabaot dialects have not evolved sufficiently to warrant a distinction. What is more, a word in Sabaot language may have numerous synonyms to choose from and are known to all Sabaot fluent speakers. The decision to use one synonym over the other, serves to show a wide choice of word to use during conversations.

1.2.4 Mythological account of Sabaot origin

Not many Sabaot can recount their origins beyond the mere knowledge that they came from Egypt via Ethiopia to Sudan and eventual settling on Mt. Elgon. However, in an interview of Mzee Kisinja, (Taylor, 2004) records two myths. One is a tale of a journey made by their ancestors from a country north of Kenya called *Yeemetaab Burkey* (lit: ‘warm country’), which was also corroborated by Mzee Ibrahim Kamasai when the researcher interviewed him at Kopsiro in Mt. Elgon district.

The second account the elders give is an account similar to the Biblical exodus: In the beginning, all our people lived in the area close to Palestine, but then they began a migration into Africa. On reaching the Red sea, a Sabaot, according to Towett, *Woorkooyoonteet* (prophet/seer) called Kalel Tumbul entered the waters and cried: “So all can cross; the waters of our fathers will now divide and then close” (Taylor, 2004, p.47). After this happened, he led his people along the Nile through Sudan, and some made their home in Uganda, some in Tanzania and others continued to Mt. Elgon. (Toweett, 1979) narrates a similar myth.

Others recount a migration out of Egypt led by an ancestor called Kintu, (other Sabaot call him Kingo). The name Kingo may mean peace¹ to the Sabaot, but I suspect this is a lone word from the English word ‘king’. When I interviewed Mzee Ibrahim Kamasai he alluded to the founder of the Buganda kingdom, King Kintu, whom (Mwanzi, 1977) suggest could have emigrated from Mt. Elgon.

(Goldschmidt, 1976) and (Weatherby, 1967) recorded that the original ancestor was a one armed *Woorgoyoonteet* (prophet) who lived in the Teriet (a cold place high up in Mount Elgon) having come from *Kong’asis* (the eye of the sun, also used to mean East). This general direction still points towards Egypt. From the interaction with a number of old men at Kobsiro the researcher later learnt that this one-armed prophet was Kingo, who retreated high up Mount Elgon after the Karamojong defeated his sons led by Chepng’al at the battle of *Kotaap Kamung’ei* the border between the Sabaot and the Karamojong in Uganda.

During the study, an old man called Ibrahim Kamasai came across as adept and knowledgeable on the migration of the Kalenjin community. His recounting slightly differed with (Goldschmidt, 1976), who too recorded a genealogical myth of Sabaot origin. The difference is significant that the researcher was inclined to base the study on

¹This meaning was supplied by an old man interviewed by Goldschmidt at Kapchorwa in Uganda in 1976.

Kamasai's account given his etymological awareness about the names that designate the communities that make up the Kalenjin community.

The study will supply both (Goldschmidt's, 1976, p.17) and Kamasai's accounts below:

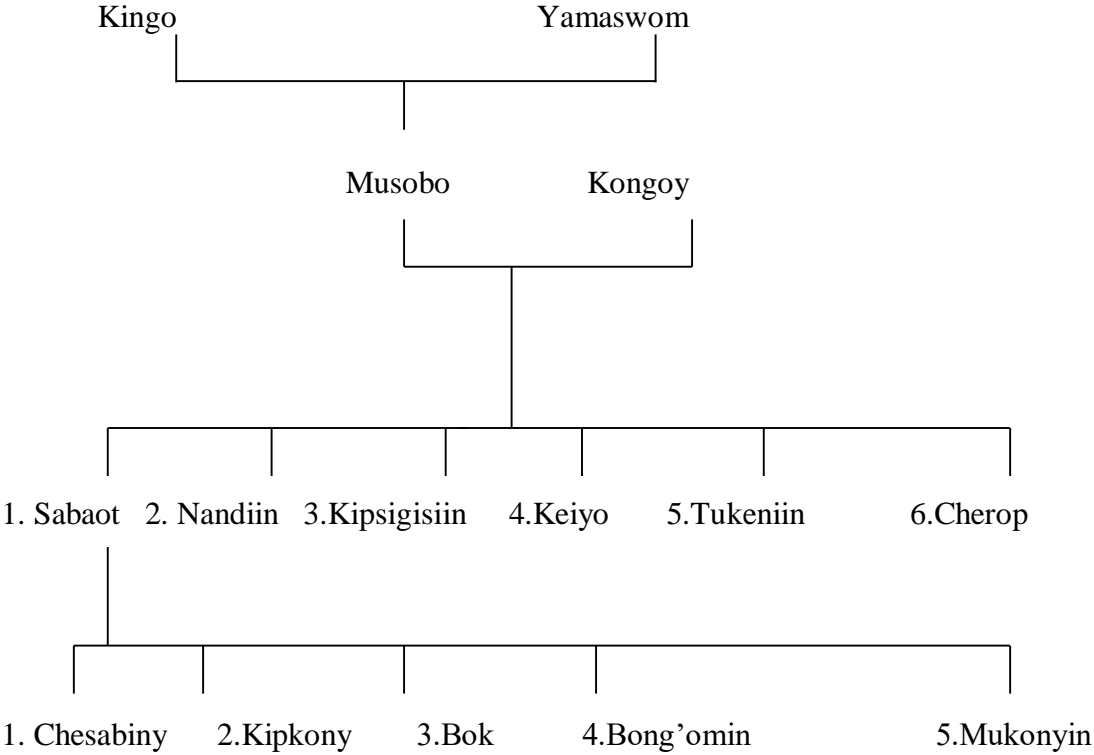


Figure 1. Genealogical myth of Sebei origins. Source: Adapted from Memorandum submitted by the Sebei, Kok, Committee to the Commission of Inquiry in Bugisu Districts (memiographed, Circa: 1960).

The similarity of these diagrams is the eponymous founder Kingo. The significant difference is that whereas the diagram drawn by Goldschmidt indicates that the Nandi, Kipsigis, Keiyo, and Tugen and Cherop descended from Musobo, Kamasai's recounting indicates that these communities dispersed even before the birth of Musobo.

Kamasai asserts that the dispersion resulted after a fight between (the greater Kalenjin group) and Karamojong led by Chepng'al. This war had not been sanctioned by the prophets and resulted in heavy casualties on the young initiates who were eager to prove their manhood. Subsequently the young widows demanded to be inherited and when the surviving warriors were asked to inherit, they refused and opted to quit the group. They later became the present day "Nandi" which etymologically according to Kamasai means – people who refused to inherit widows. The Nandi unlike other Kalenjin groups to date abhor wife inheritance. Younger warriors, who did not go to fight, accepted to inherit the widows, hence the name Kipsigis, from the word *Sigiik* or *Sigisiak* "those who sire". They also left the larger group to form the present day Kipsigis community.

Tugen, according to Kamasai was made up of cowardly people. They did not like fighting and even today unlike the other Kalenjin sub-groups. They wandered into the present day Baringo. Tugen in Kalenjin means to refuse to do something by making the sound "ugh!" With the breakup of the group, Kingo retreated to Mt. Elgon from plains called Kobur in Butandika, Buyaga, Uganda. He bore his last born son Musobo who remained with him at Mt. Elgon until he married Kongoy from whom he bore a first born son Kipkony (Kony) and last born son Mosopcho from whom the Mosopisyek descended from.

Musobo settled his sons on Mt. Elgon roughly as follows; though such settlements are coterminous. Kipkony from which the Kony clan came forth were settled between Kassawai River southwards to Kapsokwony. Chepsabiny from which the Sebei descended from were settled from Kissawai River in Saboti constituency northwards stretching to present day Kapchorwa district bordered by Bugisu district of Uganda.

Chebook, from which the Bok clan descended, was settled on the southernmost part of Mt Elgon up to the Kenya-Ugandan border Lwakhakha (*Luhya-nized* name for Sabaot Rokook). Someek was settled on the lower part of Mt. Elgon stretching to the present day Webuye. Bung'omin was settled on the area that is now the present day Bungoma district all the way to Sang'alo.

Kiboon moved to the present day Cherangany hills from where he bore Cherangany, Keiyo and Marakwet. An interesting observation was Kamasai's insistence that Pokot known to the Sabaot as Mukong'in was the son of Kiboon's sister in-law and not directly Musobo's son. Kiboon, however was responsible for settling of Pokot on the Cherangany hills through to Kapenguria. Mzee Kamasai says the name "Pokot" initially meant *weerit ap pukot* which roughly translates to "the son of sister in-law."

Mosopcho the last-born remained at the top of Mt. Elgon together with his father Musobo. The neighbouring Bukusu communities call them Ndorobo probably in relation to the Dorobo of the Mau and Tinet Forest.

1.2.5 The Sabaot and the problem of their identity

Fifty-five years after communities that make up the present-day Kenya regained their independence, confusion still surround the true identity of the Sabaot people. A number of scholars, writing from the comfort of their urban dwellings, may be, have chosen for their convenience or expediency if not total disregard of ethnographic research methodologies to label this community using different names some of which are unknown to them.

Today, not many Kenyans know exactly who the Sabaot are or where they live. Scholars, politicians and of late the media are responsible for this distortion and misrepresentation. Chief among these scholars are (Were, 1968 and 1972) who for instance calls them Elgon Kalenjii, (Mwanzi, 1977) calls them Sebei. Others like (Goldschmidt, 1976),

(Weatherby, 1969) have sought to distinguish Sebei in Uganda and Sabaot in Kenya. It is their authority that subsequent scholars have used to further draw a line within a community that happens to live across an international border drawn as late as 1926 by the British colonial government. The upshot has been an unjustified compartmentalisation of the Sabaot. The media and politicians on both sides of the international border often draw an imaginary line within the Sabaot community and choose to call those falling in Kenya “Sabaot” and those in Uganda “Sebei” and refer to their relationship as that of cousins.

(Ochieng, 1985) and (Ainsworth, 1955) call them Elgon Masai; (Taylor, 2002) and (Kakai, 2002) call them Sabaot while trying to foreground different identities of dialects that are spoken by this people. (Goldschmidt, 1976) expresses serious despair in trying to make distinction between what he calls “tribes” that make up the Sebei. This is a problem many “outsider” researchers encounter, but few have the grace to admit probably because of faculty demands and the urge to come up with at least something “new” by following the steps of earlier “authorities”.

Take for instance the statement by (Goldschmidt, 1976, p.63) that:

three recognised Sabaot tribal groups with close linguistic, cultural and social ties (to Sebei) are also found in modern Kenya; Kony; which lies just south east of Sebei, and Bung’om. There is a good deal of friendly moving back and forth, as well as intermarriage but the ties between the Sebei and those in Kenya are not so close... and have been further weakened by the international boundary.

The implication is that Kony, Bok and Bong’omek in Kenya are Sabaot and Sebei is a different community all together. This to an insider is totally untrue, but because it is by a scholar then it is true! It is rather obvious that the interaction of the clans that make up the Sabaot community is limited by the international boundary but by all means it does not mean they are different. Does it? (Kipkorir, 1973) writes that the Sabaot union includes three Sebei tribes in Uganda and their sister tribes on the Kenya side of the

border, Bok, and Bung'om. He describes the Sebei clan as a tribe that includes three other tribes something that is incredibly inaccurate if we define tribe as a group of people or family, who descended from a common ancestor. (Goldschmidt, 1976, p.11) compartmentalizes this community as “circum-Elgon Sabaot tribes” and to be on a safe side for the purposes of his research he says that his finding “applies only to the tribes in Uganda who identify themselves as Sebei.”

Having read Goldschmidt's work and like any Sabaot from any of the clans reading it, I have not found significant difference in the cultural practices studied by (Goldschmidt, 1976) or even (Taylor, 2002) to warrant distinction between the Sebei in Uganda and Kenya and the rest of the clans making up the Sabaot community. Therefore, any quotations drawn from Goldschmidt's work will be designated as Sabaot and not Sebei.

1.2.6 Socio-Political and Economic Organisation

The Sabaot did not have and still do not have a centralized system of governance. It is an individualist society. However, they had a mechanism with which they governed themselves. They were organized into units called *pororyeet* (pl. *pororisyeeek*) with each having a council of elders called *kirwookik* (s. *kirwokinteet*). A *pororyeet* was the equivalent of a battalion or a regime at any time there was war. Each *pororyeet* was independent during military operations led by *nyikaneet* (a brave person) or *olaiterion* a Maasai loan word. A *pororyeet* was further divided into *sangta* an equivalent of a village that also had its council of elders.

One qualifies to be an elder judge (*kirwokinteet*) based on his oratory skills. Those considered influential and possess a sense of good judgment of issues during council meetings (*kokwet*) enjoy leadership status. They are always called upon to arbitrate on serious matters regarding the community or specific clans. Rich men also enjoy some measure of authority because prosperity demonstrates one's ability to lead among the Sabaot.

Any war had to be sanctioned by the prophets. Even today there are prophets who still advise the Sabaot people on matters of their welfare. The 1992 ethnic clash between Sabaot and the Bukusu had been foretold by one relative of prophet Matui.²The consultation is to determine the conduct and outcome of the war. Prophets helped in the preparation of warriors if time permitted. The warriors are called to arms by the blowing of an *aryempuut* (a kudu horn).

There are medicines that are smeared on the bodies of the fighters to make them invincible or weaken the enemy. When an ox is slaughtered its entrails are read for auguries after which the warriors consume the meat. Old men encourage warriors with speeches and excursions of fore warriors who defended the community selflessly. Some warriors on their volition could smoke or infuse a solution made from the *silelyeet* plant to make them fearless.

Women do not go to war. However, they sometimes taunt warriors for inviting enemies into their land. Their main work is to provide food for the warriors. Men who had killed an enemy were decorated with cicatrices on their bodies using a sharp arrow and rubbing chyme on it. The first of the warriors to spear an enemy got cicatrices in five rows from the right shoulder to the breast. The second received it on the left shoulder and the third under armpit. Any person of any age-set who has also killed an enemy does this decoration. These marks are just like the medals of valour and would earn one privileges around the beer pot.

A *nyikaneet* (*olaiterion*) has to be a brave person and one who has killed an enemy of the community. A military leader has also to be a good speaker; one who can move the warriors into war or repulsing an enemy. It is instructive to note that these two positions, *kirwokinteet* and *nyikaneet* are not hereditary. They were not formalized nor did they give them control over others in the community.

² Recorded in an interview with Mzee Ibrahim Kamasai at Kobsiro Mt. Elgon District on 18/01/2005

The clan, age-sets and the territorial units formed an orderly social system of the Sabaot. These structures, however, were destroyed by the colonial administration, which continued with the rise of nationalism and statehood in Kenya and Uganda. The clans and age-sets still remain as very important structures in the internal harmony of the Sabaot community. The clan in particular still retains the jural responsibilities in major disputes within the community. The bigger clans, wrongly designated as tribes by (Goldschmidt, 1976) and (Weatherby, 1969), have smaller clans who draw its members across them. A person for instance who speaks the Kony dialect may or may not even belong to the broader Kony clan but have a clan membership in say the broader Sebei clan. Take me for example; my small clan is Kaptosiik who are to be found among the Mosobisyeeek, Sebei and Kony.

The biggest task of the clan is to discuss compensation if a member of one clan kills another. Payment is made in form of stock. It does not matter whether it is a boy, a girl, man or woman. Other functions are meting out discipline among errant members of the clan, arranging marriage ceremonies, initiation rituals and any other activity that is deemed to be big for an individual household.

Any clan whose member has killed another has the responsibility of handing him over to the bereaved clan or quickly arranges to meet the offended clan for a settlement. Otherwise they risk an innocent but prosperous member of the clan being killed in retaliation. Marital problems and negotiations are transacted through clans. Women do not belong to any clan. They will belong to the clan they are married in. They, however, take pride and will always swear by the name of their clans of birth. All the rites of passage also involve the clan.

1.2.7 Citizenship

Anybody born of a son of Musobo is considered a Sabaot. Since it is strictly a patrilineal community children born of Sabaot women married to non-Sabaot are considered outsiders. People from other tribes are welcome to join the community provided they

abide by the *ntarastiit* (the laws) of the Sabaot. One must accept to go through ritual ceremonies like circumcision for men and women respectively. However, that does not make one enjoy full citizenship rights of a *chitaap koreet* – (owner of the land). The foreigner cannot partake of the naming ceremonies and death rituals for the obvious reason that his/her spirits do not belong to the Sabaot community. A woman married to a Sabaot enjoys unlimited rights in the community although she is not free to name her children with the spirits of her tribe. It is possible though for her to unofficially call her child a name of her favourite relative.

There were elaborate ceremonies of welcoming an individual from one territorial unit to another. For the ‘owners of the land’ it was important that one notifies the *kirwokiik* (elders) of his intention to leave the *pororyeet* for another. It was important because a *pororyeet* was equivalent to a military regiment, which every able-bodied man belonged to. Elders would demand a farewell party be organized by the ‘emigrant’ and a message is sent to a recipient *pororyeet* of an ‘immigrant’ on his way to join them. Upon arrival at the new *pororyeet* one was inducted into the group by throwing another party. Usually it is bigger than the ceremony one throws at where he came from. A big ox is slaughtered and sufficient beer has to be brewed by the immigrant. The receiving *pororyeet*, however, retains the right to refuse an incoming member should it be established one is not of good standing.

1.2.8 Economic Activities

Initially Sabaot were pastoralists, but things have changed considerably. They now rely on dual economy of crop growing (grains in particular) and livestock keeping. Although grains now form the main income earner, it is unthinkable not to keep a cow, not just at this time when Bukusu are starting to rear them, but also for cultural reasons. A number of cash crops grown are: maize, wheat, beans and; eleusine and sorghum are grown for subsistence purposes. Bananas, too, on the Kenyan side are grown but not at the scale as in Kapchorwa district of Uganda probably because of the Baganda influence. Sweet potatoes, cassava too are grown with yams growing well on the Ugandan side.

Animals kept include cattle, basically the Zebu species and cross breed ones. Exotic breeds, too, are reared but because they are prone to East Coast Fever and other diseases they are not a favourite for the farmers. Zebu breed is particularly liked for the farmers because the oxen are used for ploughing because of the low level of farm mechanization on the high slopes of Mt. Elgon. They, too, are hardy and faster whenever the Sabaot go to raid from distant places. The Sabaot have two terms for acquiring these animals.

Poru/seet – this roughly translates to acquiring ‘legally’ from the enemy. It is glorified.

Choor – translates roughly to ‘steal’ known to many as ‘rustling’; a term used if one takes animals from a fellow kinsman. It is not glorified.

Division of labour is based on sex with men pre-occupied with cattle and women engage in household chores and in weeding and harvesting millet. Men are also involved in the preparation of farms especially clearing, ploughing and harvesting. Women are actively involved in weeding and planting.

1.2.9 Sabaot Cosmology and Philosophy

In this section, we are going to discuss the Sabaot understanding of their world and their philosophical underpinnings as they try to grapple with such issues as illness and death, prophesy, divination and auguries. We shall also examine Sabaot symbols, oathing, sorcery and a review of the character of its rituals that accompany rites of passage with special focus on the ritual of circumcision, which provide the basis of this thesis.

1.2.9.1 Cosmology

The Sabaot believe in an ultimate source of power, which is noted in their social way of life. *Asis/Asista/Yeyiin* is seen to be the source of this power believed and is to be essentially good. Sabaot elders say that *Asista/Asis/Yeyiin* can only love but does not hate. *Asista* means ‘sun’ but it doesn’t mean they adore the sun but believe it is the eye of the all-powerful one. He is believed not to be involved in the daily affairs of men and therefore no prayer or libation is directed His way since He doesn’t respond to prayers

and needs neither placatory action. A direct prayer like *Kukalyiing Yeyiin* – is a recent development modelled along the Christian tradition – ‘God help you’.

Asista however, may be thanked when good fortune befalls. The spirits of the dead called *oyiik* act as intermediaries not in the strictest sense of the word but that they answer wishes and prayers and should therefore be taken care of. *Oyiik* live below the earth at a place called *sililoy* and beyond there is *tampayayeet* a place far under that nobody knows.

The moon, rainbow, lightning and thunder are the other cosmic phenomena. The moon is considered good that is why some rituals except those of warding off death are done when there is moonlight. Lightning and thunder are harmful. They are thought to be sent by spirits. They can be prevented from striking a second time by performing a ritual in which specially made spears called *palpalisyeeek* are thrown at the place lightning struck an animal, person, tree or house so as to chase it away. This involves setting the spears about the area it struck by a left-handed person who has not suffered from lightning. This way, it is believed the place will be protected from lightning strikes by intercepting it and sometime to show it “the way” out of that place.

Sabaot people believe that human beings have *soponto* the essence of life, which resides in one’s heart and *atotoito* – the soul. Animals have *soponto* but not *atotoito* (the soul) but humans have both. *Soponto* (life) disappears upon death but the soul does not leave the body. The soul, which becomes *onyeteet* once one is dead, shuttles between the living and the spirit world down under. The spirit remains in contact with the clan in order to help or harm the living clansmen and other kinsmen. The spirits are very important in that it is through their desires that naming is based on. The Sabaot though do not believe in reincarnation.

1.2.10 Sorcery, Illness and Death

Sorcery claims the use of supernatural powers to harm others for selfish ends. Among the Sabaot, some people are believed to have evil eyes (*lakaniik*) which harm others especially children just by looking at them. This act is involuntary and those who know they have evil eyes declare it if they are good at heart so that whenever they visit a homestead where there are infants they would ask for them to be covered. A black pot or pan may also be put outside for the evil-eyed to look at first. This is thought to weaken the power of the evil eyes at that instance.

The Sabaot claim that the art of witchcraft and its cures is alien to them. They say witchcraft entered in their community in 1938 from Kitosh through two Sabaot women who learnt it from them. Sabaot categorize witchcraft into four types two of which are major. These are *paneet* whose intent is evil and meant to harm or kill. The one practicing it is called *poninteet*. A sudden death is always suspected on this category of witchcraft. It is considered a serious crime. The second one is what they call *kankaneet*; derived from the Swahili word *mganga*. It is used as a retaliatory weapon. It is thought to have entered into the community through the Bagisu – they have since called it *poortaap Usha* (the Bagisu disease). Sabaot claim that their form of retaliation is by use of the arrow but because of government it is increasingly becoming difficult that is why some people resort to witchcraft. The other two, *ntoyeniik* and witchcraft against initiates are believed to have existed among them for years now. *Ntoyeeniik* is practiced by women against men. It is said to curb men from marrying other women or having extra marital relations. Men fear women for the reason that this kind of witchcraft weakens men and become unfit for warfare. Witchcraft against initiates causes them to ‘cry the knife’ or bleed excessively. This is done out of envy.

Sabaot do not always attribute illness or death to witchcraft though aware of its existence. They rather blame it on natural causes like ill luck by rainbow, inherited diseases or cultural restrictions such as improper marriage. It calls therefore for one to inquire exhaustively about diseases before marrying from a particular clan. Some girls during circumcision bleed with a vertical ejection of blood. This is believed to be ill luck

and whoever marries such a girl would surely die. I have never seen one but stories are told in the community of women widowed more than twice which is blamed on their predicament during circumcision.

Death is the worst thing that can happen to a Sabaot especially from illness, but not when defending the community. Death is announced by the women of the household who make high-pitched wails, which are then picked up by neighbours. The wailing or screams differ depending on the purpose for instance to signal death, enemy attack or a wife receiving a beating by the husband. A four day mourning period is usually observed and three days for a “protected” person otherwise called *tekeryontet*.”

In olden days, the body was left in a bush to rot away and allow the spirit to come back amongst the clan members. With colonial rule things changed and today they bury the dead. The body lies in state in the house of the first wife. Mourning ends with a ritual called *kapuntoyeetab meet* – chasing away death. It also involves the hearing of claims from debtors as well as creditors.

Close relatives are shaved starting with the first brother who buried the deceased then the other brothers and their wives and finally the widows. Tufts of hair are left on the widow’s heads to show they are mourning. A woman’s funeral is handled by her husband’s clansmen during which time; the husband is under restriction until the cleansing ceremony four days later. The other wives are not supposed to cook for the husband during the mourning period, but someone appointed by the clan members. Dying at a very old age is referred to as *kaluleet* (sweet/painless death) and none of the funeral rites described is performed. Instead it is celebrated.

1.2.11 Prophets and Diviners (They are also functions of power)

Woorkoyiik (prophets) as the Sabaot call them were the closest organised authority the community had. They were and still are regarded highly in this community and the power to prophesy is inherited. They predicted disasters like locust plagues, military

invasions, hunting success and also disease epidemics. Some prophets are said to have predicated the arrival of Europeans.

Prophets filled the gap between the organisation of society and religious belief system of the community. The influence of these prophets was severely reduced by the colonial governments both in Kenya and Uganda. Some of the famous prophets among the Sabaot were Matui and his son Mongusho from the Sebei clan, Chonge from the Kony clan. Kamarat is a prophet said to have joined the Sabaot from the Rendille tribe and settled among them at the swampy area that is the present day Centre – Kwanza known to Sabaot as Sosaap Kamarat. The other prophet is Nasra who according to Mzee Kamasi cursed a generation of Sabaot warriors at a place called Litiey. Nandi raiders high up Mt. Elgon at a place called Matagat later killed him. Some clans are still revered for their capability to produce prophets.

Diviners are consulted to determine the cause of a death, illness and tell fortunes to the childless. Death or illness can be blamed on witchcraft if four different diviners point at the same person not by direct mentioning of name but implication. Sabaot are very superstitious people especially in relation to women. A Sabaot man with a son as a first-born would cancel his safari if the first person he meets on his way out is a woman. Likewise a man with a first-born girl would postpone a journey when the first person he meets is a man with a first-born son.

1.2.12 Oathing (Mumeek / Mumnyanteet)

The Sabaot distinguish between oathing and witchcraft or sorcery. Oathing is a serious ritual that nobody just calls for its performance. This is because oaths are potentially dangerous as they bind people of the same clan and repercussions may decimate a whole clan. It is better to swear upon taboo words than to perform oaths. This, Goldschmidt (1976) notes could explain why Sabaot are much given to maledictions. However, the swearing by ones mothers' vagina, his cattle or the skin robe (*artiit*) he wore at circumcision, takes on great power and may reach the level of an oath.

Mumeek (pl.) (oath) involves a public swearing ritual and is thus a dangerous form of oathing. The portion of the objects in question is used e.g. a part of the deceased person if he was killed or a stolen object. *Mumnyanteet* (s.) in its more restricted sense involves bringing together the accused, the accuser both accompanied by their clansmen. *Chaam mumeek* (eating the oath) is performed in front of the people of the village (*sangta*) on the path leading to the house of the accuser. It ends with stern statements that “if the accusations are false eat the owner of that house”.

A second type of *mumeek* is called *surupik*, which is also public in which supernatural powers are invoked to seek the victim. The accuser does not require swearing against himself. However it may return to the clan of its perpetrator. The third form is called *sekuteet* that is always carried out in secret by the aggrieved person or ones clan whether the individual is known or not.

1.2.13 Sabaot Symbols

Anthropologists have not found much evidence to suggest the Sabaots are good at visual or plastic artifacts. They however make use of flora more than fauna in their daily existence. Domestic animals like sheep, oxen and dogs are used for ritual purposes. Sheep are slaughtered whenever supernatural calamities are imminent. A pregnant ewe or a virgin one is slaughtered depending on the instance. An ox or bullock is used for major ceremonies. Goats are generally considered symbols of evil. Dogs are sacrificed in the sternest of oaths and for peace making between enemy tribes. Chicken is used in rituals of Gisu or Kitosh origins. The sacrificial animals are slaughtered for good ceremonies but suffocated, speared or stabbed for rituals involving death or retaliatory rites.

Animal products or parts such as butter (*mwaita*), heart (*mukuleito*), milk (*cheeko*), ram’s tail fat (*sundeet*), skin ringlets and chyme (*yeyandeet*) are important to the Sabaot rituals. Butter used on initiates and brides is highly symbolic of wealth and prosperity just as is

milk. Morning milk from a black cow is frequently used. The heart of an animal slaughtered is sacred to the clan and is always shared only by men of the clan. A ram's tail fat is used to remove the essences of evil from spiritual forces of the dead. Chyme is smeared on initiates particularly twins during circumcision period. Skin ringlets are worn on fingers, wrists by widowers or around the neck of a child born after twins for protection.

Wild animals play a small role in Sabaot symbolic representation. The leopard and lion is important in the process of initiation. Hyena is used in 'eating the law' (*chaam ntarastiit*) by which members of the community within a particular '*pororyeet*' affirm to abide by the laws governing them. This used to be organised by the prophets any time he felt lawlessness was creeping in. Animals, too, are used as totems by different clans. Members of a particular community are forbidden from killing a wild animal that is their totem.

Flora supplies very important symbols to the Sabaot community. *Koroseek* plants are used for oathing. Below is a summary of these plants and their uses.

Name of Plant	Function and uses
<i>Sinenteet</i> vine	Garland the mother of twins, initiates, bride and their mothers, beer pots filled with ceremonial beer, stock given in payment or tekensyeek (protected) animals.
<i>Kokorweet</i>	Not used as firewood. Only a widow can light it.
<i>Moykutweet</i> roots	Chewed and spat as a blessing along with

	or instead of beer, rams fat or milk on various occasions.
<i>Lepeywonteet</i>	Used as an infusion for bathing mothers of infants, initiates, and brides.
<i>Sosyonteet</i> (Palm frond)	Cleaning gourds, symbolic of peace in a number of ceremonies e.g. wedding or rituals of amity.
<i>Lopotiik</i> (Apples of Sodom)	Pelted against the doors of neighbours by initiates when demanding gifts and for rituals of amity.

Figure 3: Sabaot Ethnobotany

1.2.14 Rites of Passage

Initiation which is one of the rites of passage has been omitted from this section since it is given prominence in the subsequent chapters, especially chapter two.

1.2.14.1 Birth

Children are considered very important in a marriage and the birth of a new baby is welcomed with pomp and celebration. A pregnant woman is considered delicate and is secluded towards the end of her pregnancy. To know the sex of a baby one would always ask if the child born is a *mosowo* (cattle keeper) for a boy or a *lekwetaab bai* (millet harvester) for a girl. A boy is considered an asset unlike a girl who will perpetuate another clan. An extensive ritual is performed for a woman who gives birth to twins or if a child is born after a number of children died at birth. The ceremony performed when twins are born is called *tokomta*. A person who has undergone the rite at some point performs this ritual.

The naming ceremony follows a few weeks after birth depending on the urgency. There are names depending on the time, place, circumstance, birth, and people present at the time of birth or visitors and order of birth if twins. The second name is that of the departed ancestor (*oiyontet*) which may come from either clan of the parents.

The paternal grandmother or maternal grandmother if the former is no longer alive usually conducts the naming ceremony that bestows one with the name of an ancestor. Members of both clans are invited. It involves trying to balance a roundish object (*chemankonkonyet*), a dried fruit the size of tennis ball from a special plant with its seeds carefully removed, on an awl used to stitch decorations on gourds. The object is filled with fresh morning milk and with an awl stuck in the middle of the hut; the grandmother calls out in turns the names of all the dead ancestors of the child, female names from both clans if the child is a girl and male names from both clans if the child is a boy. The old men and women seated round the conducting grandmother help her to recall the names of the ancestors. If one name coincides with balancing of the *chamakonkonyet* three times or more on the handle of the awl, then that becomes the child's name. No parent controls the outcome even when the name that balances the *chamakonkonyet* belongs to the spirit of bad person during his earthly life.

If two or more names coincide with the balancing act, as it sometimes happens none of the names will be bestowed on the child. It does not matter whether one of the names balanced only once or more. The child may suffer serious ailments should the child be named after one of the spirits. Instead, a neutral name for a boy will be *Kitiyo*, which means, the spirits met on the child and *Tiyoi* if a girl.

Another category of naming ceremony is when a child is born after a number of children before it died at birth or immediately after. The parents and the clan will take measures to protect the child by giving names that disguise the child from the clan's spirits of death. A name from another community may be used which is not recognized by the

clans' spirits of death. Some names denote the uselessness of the child and therefore death would not be interested in it. A few examples are as follows.

<i>Maget/Chemaget</i>	Hyena
<i>Usha</i>	Gisu
<i>Ng'okit</i>	Dog
<i>Sikirio</i>	Donkey

A name from enemy tribes on the other hand for a protected child is believed to denote an inferior being which death may not be interested in.

1.2.14. 2 Marriage

Marriage as a rite of passage is extremely important to the Sabaot. It is a stage of one's transition that follows after the rite of initiation. Since initiation provides the schema of this study, it will be discussed soon after the institution of marriage. Marriage as an institution is important in guaranteeing the continuity of a clan. Children are integral in this institution. No one can take up a leadership position if one is not married and having children. Children of both sexes are valued for different reasons. Boys are considered agents of the clans' continuity and future warriors. Although times have changed, a boy is still valued in the context of 'threat' posed by the neighbouring 'enemy' communities who are perceived to be encroaching on Sabaot land. The girls are valued for being a source of bride wealth and one who would cultivate the values of her clan wherever she will be married. According to the Sabaot though, a woman belongs to the clan she is married in but the clan she came from will pride itself in their daughter if she turns out to be a good wife.

A man is expected to marry soon after initiation. Males are initiated when they turn 18 years or over and girls are circumcised at the age of sixteen years. With the changes in the 21st century, the age at which men are circumcised is coming down and female circumcision is slowly eroding. Elaborate marriage ceremonies are preceded with a pre-wedding ceremony called *kayeeyto*, which the marrying clan holds, at the bride's home. It involves feasting, beer drinking prepared by the marrying clan at their expense.

Negotiations are also held during this ceremony. The number of cattle and other stocks is fixed. Anything above that is negotiable. The standard requirements are as follows:

Cattle	12 heads
Sheep	8
Goats	4
Donkey	1

A sack of tobacco, blankets and clothing for parents and immediate relatives and neighbours is a requirement.

Of the twelve cattle one must be lactating – *chemwai* –, which literary means fat. It is symbolic of the good relations the clans are entering into which good things will be shared forever between them. Another head should be a bullock for the bride’s uncle known to Sabaot as *yeeytap ka: maama*.

The elders, however, emphasize that this is a token appreciation of their daughter. Mzee Naibei Berteet says that nobody can claim to have finished paying dowry ever! A story was told to me by Mzee Stanley Kapkwoyo of a man who jokingly told his in-laws that he had finished paying their daughter’s dowry. The backlash was devastating to the young man. He was forced to start paying afresh or risk his wife and children being taken away. Were it not for the intervention of the young man’s clan he would have lost it all, but ended with him paying a fine of only seven heads of cattle. The punishment would have been greater.

In the olden days parents helped their sons pay for dowry for their first wives, but not without the groom making an effort to meet the short fall by going for *seteet* (raiding the enemy) for cattle. Thereafter, one would know where to get stock for subsequent wives. With dwindling resources and emergence of western education, the number of stock for dowry is increasingly becoming negotiable. The Sabaot have not embraced fully the idea of converting dowry into monetary value. Mzee Ndiema Kigai says “let other communities do that but not us. It would look like we are selling our own daughters. We

don't sell ours". He goes on to say "if they marry our daughters they may give money but should not fail to bring *chemwai* (lactating cow) and *yeeytap ka: maama* (the uncle's bullock).

On the material day of wedding, the bride's parents and clan hand over their daughter amid pomp and celebration. The ceremony involves speeches from selected orators from both clans. When handing over their daughter there is always an accompanying symbol for their daughter's character. If a clan hands over their daughter with a gourd, a palm frond and *yiiteet* (a special dry plant stick for black coloring of milk – garlanded with *sinenteet*) then the receiving clan knows they have a very good wife for their son. But when they hand over their daughter with a gourd, a palm frond and just a stick garlanded with a *sinentee*, then it means their daughter though good, needs close 'attention' from the husband. Mzee Kigai asserts that there is no way a clan can cheat on the report of their daughter for soon or later it will be known and may dent the image of their clan.

1.3 Statement of the problem

From the literature surveyed, the Sabaot hold dear the practice of circumcision because it is also seen as a symbol of initiation in which the knowledge, beliefs, morals, customs and identity of the community are imparted.

The mere mention of the word "initiation" among the Sabaot evokes disdain for the uncircumcised because the rite also confirms the social status of individuals and thus opens doors to individuals to construct and contest power relations both within and outside the community. From the reviewed literature it is apparent that through initiation one sees himself as a Sabaot first and would therefore defend his community before anything else.

Yet in the studies done on the Sabaot of Kenya relating to their history, culture and literature, there is not one that establishes and analyses the images and stylistic devices

in their male initiation poetry used as weapons to contest power against neighbouring communities. This study, therefore, sought to establish and analyse the images and stylistic devices presented in their male initiation poetry and successfully link it to how it shapes the Sabaot's claim to superiority, real or imagined, in power relations contest with neighbouring communities so as to create a cultural identity.

1.4 Research Objectives

This study sought to:

- i. Interrogate images of power and analyse their meaning as reflected in the male initiation poetry of the Sabaot
- ii. Establish the importance of performance in the construction of images of power in Sabaot initiation poetry.
- iii. Examine the stylistic features employed in articulating the images of power.

1.5 Research Questions

- i. Are there images of power in the Sabaot initiation poetry and what do they mean?
- ii. How significant is performance to the construction and understanding of images of power in Sabaot initiation poetry?
- iii. What stylistic devices are employed by Sabaot artists in their male initiation poetry?

1.6 Research Assumptions

The study assumed that:

- i. Oral literature being a cultural reservoir of the Sabaot initiation poetry is loaded with images of power, creatively constructed by the community's poets.
- ii. Initiation provides an important cultural arena where Sabaot artists express values, virtues, aspirations, fears and "truths" of the community as they perform initiation poetry and whose meaning can only be understood within that context.
- iii. To articulate the images of power, poets use various stylistic features.

1.7 Justification and Significance of the Study

This study is significant and justified in a number of ways. First, this study makes a significant contribution to oral poetry as a genre in general and specifically among the Sabaot people.

The Sabaot have in the past engaged in vicious fights with their neighbouring communities due to competition for resources, a desire to preserve their cultural heritage as an identity to ensure continuity of their people in the face of power contests. By establishing and analysing the images of power in Sabaot male initiation poetry, this study explains the motivation that foments and sustains these fights. This study aids in understanding how communities construct the notion of power and how this subsequently affects their relations with other communities around them.

1.8 Scope and Delimitation of the Research

The scope of this study entailed:

- a) Library reading of relevant material on rituals of initiation and circumcision poetry.
- b) The Sabaot male initiation poetry particularly poetry relating to power relation construction which is the basis of this study. Although constructs of power relations are to be found in other literary genres among the Sabaot like ritual, dances or formal instructions during initiation rites, they are not the concern of this study, but only serve a complementary role to the oral poetry that was investigated.
- c) It was confined to the Sabaot community *per se* since the poetry is from the collective point of view of the Sabaot poets' imagination.
- d) It was conducted in Kopsiro Division of Mt. Elgon, an area where tension is perceived to exist between the Sabaot and neighbouring communities.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of existing literature on initiation oral poetry and the significance of initiation to the Sabaot as a community. It also refers to a few other communities that practice circumcision as a symbol of their social-cultural identity and practices. In addition, we review some texts so as to provide an operational definition of the terms “images” and “power” culture, identity and community.

2.1 Theoretical Literature

A theory is chosen on the basis of how suitable it is in the analysis of a given phenomena. In our efforts to choose a suitable theory for the study we came across theories which on close reading we found were not suitable to the analysis of images of power. We came across Mythological Criticism espoused by Carl Jung, who believes that there are primordial images, what he calls the “psychic residue” of repeated types of experience in the lives of very ancient ancestors which are inherited in the “collective unconscious” of the human race and are expressed in myths, religion, dreams, and private fantasies, as well as in the works of literature, (Abrams, 1999). We also came across Psychoanalytic Criticism theory, which on closer reading we concluded that Sigmund Freud’s model would be beneficial in analysing the imagined superiority of the Sabaot as demonstrated by the images of power found in their male initiation poetry.

Throughout the Sabaot initiation poetry there is continuous mention of the Bukusu, the Teso and disdain for the uncircumcised with usage of images or symbols that clearly shows how the Sabaot consider themselves superior. Psychoanalytic Criticism thus plays an important role of analysing the Sabaot peoples’ real or imagined superiority.

Ross Murfin discusses Freud’s view (Shelley, 2000) that all of us have repressed wishes and fears; we all have dreams in which repressed feelings and memories emerge disguised.

The Freudian model of psyche holds that there is the unconscious part, the id, which serves as a storehouse of our desires, wishes, and fears. Secondly, there is the ego which is the conscious part of the psyche that processes experiences and operates as a referee or mediator between the id and superego (often thought of as one's "conscience") (Bressler, 2006).

Thus the Psychoanalytic Criticism tries to expose the latent and underlying content of a work by looking at the metaphors, metonyms, images and symbols. Psychoanalytic Criticism, however, does not explain the assigned meanings of the images, which then calls for another theory with tenets that help us do that. That theory is Ethnopoetics as advocated for by (Hymes, 1981) and (Tedlock, 1983).

Ethnopoetics Theory emerges from the cultural studies and has been applied on the Amero-Indian folklore material. It has also been applied on Finnish oral material by (Harvilahti, 1994) and (Antonnen, 1994). (Alembi, 2002) also successfully applies the same model when analysing the funeral oral poetry of the Abanyole, a study that is close to our own analysis of the Sabaot initiation poetry.

Ethnopoetics emphasises the necessity of acquiring deep knowledge of the cultures and performance context of the poetry. Ethnopoetics theory espouses analysis, translation, or transcription of texts collected from traditional poets/singers/storytellers. It also includes studying collected ethnographic material and retranslating them to expose their aesthetic and situated meaning in the defined cultural arena.

Initiation poetry accompanies the process of initiation among the Sabaot as is the case for many other African communities that practice circumcision. (Finnegan, 1977) notes that circumcision songs have everything poetic because of the rhythm and metre in them. Apart from that, these songs have heightened language, metaphorical expression, musical form, accompaniments, structural repetitiveness and other poetic features like alliteration. These songs are set apart from everyday life and language through performances and context besides their local classification. Finnegan also points out that

those initiation songs are not fixed; rather they are composition- in -performance genres. Sabaot initiation songs are no exception.

Finnegan's study, however, is general only making a case for initiation songs as having everything literary about them but does not make in-depth analysis of specific songs. Among the Sabaot for instance, (Goldschmidt, 1976) notes that whatever transpires during this period, initiates will never give overt expression, even by implication, either in songs or in conversations. That is, it is context specific. The dominant overt theme of initiation recorded by is that of an ordeal - a trial and proof of bravery. The songs, exhortations, preparation and avoidance of evil forces serve to reiterate the theme of hardships to be faced and the necessity to be brave. It is a setting where they teach their youth the secrets and wisdom of the Sabaot community. The exhortations, the necessity to brave hardship, the teaching of the community's secrets and wisdoms are packaged in these initiation songs by use of images, metaphors and symbols.

Among the Gikuyu for instance, (Githiga, 1996, p.22) further says that initiation is the focal point of its rituals, myths and symbols. It ritualises, symbolises and externalises both the inner world and outer world of these people. It is significant because it is an African setting during which society's ethics, norms, values are imparted and is one of the vehicles which transmits culture dynamically from one generation to another and brings families together for sanctification of life, time and space. (Wainaina, 2002) notes that initiation among the Gikuyu confirmed the social status because it was the basic prerequisite for its full attainment. Like the Sabaot, also, that social status gives one the licence to transact on behalf of the community. An uncircumcised person cannot claim to talk on behalf of the Sabaot because "he or she does not understand the ways of the community."

Both studies by (Githiga, 1996) and (Wainaina, 2002) foreground the culture of a people and how it plays a significant role in their way of life. Such is the life of the Sabaot for they have to identify themselves in the midst of other communities.

Among the Tswana, the initiates were systematically taught a number of secret formulae and songs, admonishing them to honour, obey, and support the chief; to be ready to endure hardships and even death for the sake of the tribe; to be united as a regiment and help one another. They were further taught tribal traditions and religious beliefs, and tribal songs of war and self glorification, (Schapera and Cass, 1970). For the Sabaot, once you have been inducted in the secrets through initiation, one virtually can defend the community's interests against neighbouring or "enemy" communities.

This is where oral poetry finds a place within this initiation setting among the Sabaot since it is a very important tool of expressing experiences in their existence. It is what (Mukarovsky, 1978) says we observe the constant tension between art and everyday life, which precisely makes art a perpetual ferment of human life. Oral poetry therefore becomes central in human life as can also be discerned in (Alembi, 2002). He uses oral poetry as lens through which the phenomenon of death is revealed as understood by the Abanyole people.

A community such as the Sabaot uses its oral poetry as a medium through which they express the community's aspirations, pride, fears, and collective memory; it defines them as a people of a common ancestry. Initiation poetry thus becomes the rallying call to a cultural identity unique to them. This is usually done through the construction of images that stake claim on power or other pertaining ways of life in their oral poetry.

According to (Caudwell, 1977, p.34) the language of poetry artfully selects the words which when combined with dance and ritual, becomes a kind of a great switchboard of the instinctive energy of the community that directs it into trains of collective actions. The carefully selected words coupled with the rhythmic arrangements, makes it possible to chant them in unison, and release their emotional associations in all vividness of collective existence.

(Wellek and Warren, 1962) and (Merriam, 1964) contend that art (song) texts provide psychological release for the participants because of the freedom of expression allowed in the song. This freedom is more often than not overstretched and manifests itself as what (Paliokov, 1974) in *Aryan Myth* notes as an urge which is universal among human groups or cultures; namely that of claiming a distinctive origin, an ancestry that is both highborn and glorious. It could be through these expressions (images of power) that make explicit those obscure emotional forces, which determine the hostilities or alliances between clans and tribes. Therefore through initiation poetry, the communal individual is changed, having participated in the collective illusion of the community since he has been 'educated' and adapted into community's life. Sabaoth initiation poems contain those images of power, which on close analysis reveals claims to superiority that have always determined the hostilities between the community and its neighbours.

In their analysis, (Mackenzie, 1982) and (Guth and Rico, 1997) argue that images are either literal or figurative verbal representation of sense experience through words or phrases that identify, describe, or evoke sensory responses. Images bring out a vividly imagined detail that speaks to one's sense of sight, hearing, smell, taste or touch. They bring about a picture that one can see with the "mind's eye."

In using the term power, (Burns, 1968), (Maquet, 1971), (Wilson, 1973), (Sherridan, 1980), (Blalock, 1989) and (Furniss and Gunner, 1995) among other scholars all indicate that power is a contested phenomenon. That it is a latent resource to the people who wield it or assume to wield it. A claim to superiority by various communities is staked at through several media among them poetry. Besides, power according to Foucault in (Sherridan, 1980) is a relation between forces, where these forces are individuals or group of individuals.

(Wilson, 1973) also says that power applies to all forms of human behaviour and that it explains inter group behaviour as well as dyadic relationships. A quasi-agricultural community like the Sabaoth's stake at power may for instance be aimed at guaranteeing

their existence by attempting to control resources such as grazing land, water and cattle. Sifting through the Sabaot initiation poetry, it is discernible as to how the community arrogates itself the power to control the resources in the areas they insist are historically their homeland.

This is not unique to Sabaot as (Hull, 1972, p163-164) attests to claims by the Luo of Kenya and Uganda who by 1620, had settled among the inhabitants of Mount Elgon, which straddles the modern Kenya/Uganda frontier. The southern Luo claimed territorial title on the basis of their ancestral heroes who first entered the area. From these claims each clan developed its own songs to justify its presence. One of them begins:

The soil belongs to Oryang
And Kasede is the owner of the land.

Other than just the Luo, every Yoruba community in Western Nigeria possessed its own Oriki music, which was a delightful blend of song and poetry that articulated claims on land.

Conclusion

Several scholars such as (Burns, 1968), (Maquet, 1971) and (Caudwell, 1977) among others have demonstrated and acknowledged that as a work of art, oral poetry has the ability to create power images for a community where it is practiced. They also show the significance of this art within society's social-cultural set-up. Studies by scholars mentioned above are not specific to the Sabaot. Their revelations are not based on the Sabaot community, as our study is going to be.

Like (Caudwell, 1977) discusses language of poetry artfully selected becoming a switchboard of the instinctive energy of the community, the study of the Sabaot initiation poetry is thus imperative. For instance, circumcision day among the Sabaot is marked with singing and performance called *tumdo* where men stand on one side usually the

lower side and women on the upper side amid pitched dancing, drumming and singing. Within this form they transform the dance into *chemundarai* where a man and a woman thrust themselves to the centre hopping and clapping hands. One must show prowess in dancing. Then there is the *seriet* also called *njoliit* or *kironget*. This is orderly dancing and the songs are evocative. The songs cover the imperiousness of the community and a call to right whatever wrong that may have happened to the community. It is a re-affirmation of the glory of a respective *poroyeet* and the community at large.

It is, therefore, through understanding of the significance of circumcision as a symbol of initiation and attendant images, symbols, metaphors in the accompanying songs that we can appreciate how communities such as the Sabaot stake claim to superiority.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Introduction

The interpretive grid of this study tries to show the interrelationships between ethnomethodology and ethnopoetics and how they are embraced by the Sabaot to perform certain socio-cultural activities such as initiation through performance poetry. It further incorporates Ethnopoetics analytical framework, which (Alembi, 2002) calls *infra-cultural model*. It also employs the Freudian Psychoanalysis to understand the thinking and motivation behind the construction of attendant images of power in the Sabaot initiation poetry.

2.2.2 Ethno-poetic theory

Sabaot initiation oral poetry is performative. It can therefore be studied fruitfully using the ethno-poetic theory. The proponents of this theory are (Hymes, 1981), (Tedlock, 1983). These two scholars articulate divergent, but reconcilable strands in ethno poetics.

According to (Tedlock, 1983), Ethnopoetic theory studies the verbal arts in a worldwide range of languages and cultures whereby:

(a) Attention is paid to the vocal - auditory channel of communication in which speaking, chanting or singing voices give shape to proverbs, riddles, curses, laments, praise, prayers, prophecies, public announcements and narratives.

(b) Emphasis is placed on the patterning of the texture, which must be shown in the transcription since the aural qualities in performance are central to the organization of speech.

(c) Emphasis is on fieldwork to provide a basis for rich interaction between the researcher and study community and interpretation of the oral texts.

On the other hand, (Hymes, 1981) develops ethno poetics strand in which:

(a) Emphasis is on the notion that many things in narratives revolve around a pattern number or a sacred number or some multiple of it.

(b) Focus is on the stylistic and grammatical features in order to find the formal poetic structure of a text, the underlying rhetorical form in the texture.

(c) The elementary principle of structural linguistics is applied. It is also based on the pragmatic study of language, in which signs and texts are studied in terms of use in communication. Semiotically speaking, meaning is studied in terms of the relationship between the sign and the user.

(d) Texts analysed are available only as written documents.

(Hymes, 1981) goes on to say that, works of verbal arts are subtle organizations of lines and reports of that experience. He contends that while looking at the organization of lines as they present the experiences, it is worthwhile to (attend to) contexts that the oral materials come from because contexts have a cognitive significance. He further notes that those contexts can suppose a range of meanings so that if “words” are transferred to a performance arena, the interaction of item and context “mutes” the denotative force of traditional units of utterance and foregrounds the special metonymic, performance-based meaning selected by the situated “words.” (Bauman, 1986) and (Foley, 1995) argue that the meaning of some words can only be understood within culturally defined contexts during performance, which they refer to as the “interpretive frame” or “performance arena” respectively.

2.2.3 Psychoanalysis

Sigmund Freud is widely considered as the founding father of psychoanalysis, a method for treating mental illness and also a theory which explains human behaviour. Freud believed that when we explain our behaviour to ourselves or others (conscious mental activity), we rarely give a true account of our motivation. This is not because we are deliberately lying. While human beings are great deceivers of others; they are even more adept at self-deception. Our rationalizations of our conduct are therefore disguising the real reasons, (Freud, 1915).

Freud's life work was dominated by his attempts to find ways of penetrating this often subtle and elaborate camouflage that obscures the hidden structure and processes of personality. Through this concept and by analyzing initiation oral poetry of the Sabaot people it is clear they have been able to survive, endure and accommodate certain acquired life changes in their livelihood drawn from their pastoralist's lifestyle.

This theory has been used along other theoretical framework to explain how the Sabaot community find their existentiality as discussed below:

a) The unconscious mind

On the surface is consciousness, which consists of those thoughts that are the focus of our attention now, and this is seen as the tip of the iceberg. The preconscious consists of all which can be retrieved from memory. It's believed that through this unconscious mind that kept the Sabaot people on the need to move out of their original place of settlement to look for better alternatives.

The unconscious mind acts as a repository, a 'cauldron' of primitive wishes and impulse kept at bay and mediated by the preconscious area. For example, (Freud, 1915) found that some events and desires were often too frightening or painful for his patients to acknowledge, and believed such information was locked away in the unconscious mind. This can happen through the process of repression.

Sigmund Freud emphasized the importance of the unconscious mind, and a primary assumption of Freudian theory is that the unconscious mind governs behavior to a

greater degree than people suspect. Indeed, the goal of psychoanalysis is to make the unconscious conscious. This is evident in the decision the Sabaot made all the way from the Northern Africa, passing through several nations only to realize their consciousness in the present Kenya. This also reveals their inner conflicts, desires and suppressions of the collective psychology of the Sabaot as they relate with their neighbours.

As of other scholars who have contributed an array of works on psychoanalysis, (Forster, 1927) for example, tells us that at the psychological level, literary material can transform us into beings to which 'a' voice speaks to and makes us unreasonable over things we like and be ready to bully those who like something else. (Merriam, 1964) also notes the above; but he again adds that art provides psychological release for the participants because of the freedom of expression allowed in it. It would appear, therefore, that what these two scholars have said in relation to the psychoanalytic theory in literary materials is also applicable and particularly provide insights into how we may be constituted under changed circumstances, and possibly how those changes may be brought about.

From the transcribed initiation poems we reveal the inner conflicts, desires and suppressions of the collective psychology of the Sabaot as they relate with their neighbours.

b) Migration, Identity and Postcolonialism

Psychoanalysis and its prominent theorists have contributed to migration literature by identifying a framework of features and principles. (Abdolali and Poujafari, 2014) observe that the primary focus of this literature on marginal groups brings it under postcolonial theory. Post-colonialism in its most recent definition is concerned with persons from groups outside the dominant groups and therefore places subaltern groups

in a position to subvert the authority of those with hegemonic power (Abdolali and Poujafari, 2014, p.686).

(Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2006) note that post-colonial theory entails migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation and influences to discourses. The theory can be applied to the topic of migration because migrants are positioned at the margins of society and are subject to discrimination of the majority. Taking into account the fact that post-colonial studies turn the world upside down, a study that looks at issues from the view of the despised migrant aptly comes under it (Young, 1995). Post-colonialism explores all ambiguities and complexities of diverse cultural experiences. Ashcroft expounds that the hyphen in the term stands for material effects of colonization, the enormous diversities and the hidden responses to it throughout the world (Ibid p.3). The crucial concepts of post colonialism in this study context, is that it explains migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation that the Sabaot underwent in their efforts to settle in Kenya and cope with their violent neighbours.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Methodology

Research is a complex, but worthwhile undertaking, which as (Kothari, 2004) explains is a scientific and systematic search for pertinent information on a specific topic. The goal is to discover answers to questions through the application of scientific procedures.

A study of this nature therefore requires a research methodology, which (Kothari, 2004) found is a way to systematically solve the research problem. Being a systematic search for new information there are various steps that are generally adopted by a researcher in studying his research problem along with the logic behind them.

This study has adopted the qualitative research method while paying attention to gathering the male initiation oral poems of the Sabaot of Kenya for purposes of analysis. (Crossman, 2013) sees qualitative research as an exercise involving fieldwork, in which the researcher observes and records behaviour and events in their natural setting. The researcher physically goes to the people, setting, or site, to observe the subject as it normally and naturally occurs or behaves.

Qualitative methodology is used by researchers in the study of human behaviour, and may be used in addition to or in place of quantitative methods (Guazzo, 2008). He continues that the use of qualitative methods by researchers allows the researcher to obtain a rich set of data. Qualitative methods encompass a variety of methodologies including observation, interviewing, document analysis, and archival document analysis. Basically, this research has deployed some of these methods of data collection and analysis.

3.1 Research Design

According to (Kothari, 2004), a research design is the conceptual structure within which research is conducted. He holds the view that a research design constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data. As such the design includes an outline of what the researcher will do from writing the hypothesis and its operational

implications to the final analysis of data. A qualitative research such as this, demands a proper outline to plough through the cultural terrain of the Sabaot people with a view to understanding the construction of images of power within a dedicated initiation arena.

To come up with an effective methodology to collect and analyse data for the purpose of studying construction of images of power among the Sabaot of Kenya as presented in their male initiation poetry, the study first identified and defined the variables to be investigated.

3.1.1 Variables

Images of power, which is our primary subject of investigation, is the dependent variable. Initiation and performance are independent variables for they influence the construction of images of power of Sabaot's male initiation poetry.

3.1.1.1 Images of power

An image is a word, or phrase in a literary piece that appeals directly to a recipient's taste, touch, hearing, sight, or smell. It can also be understood to be any vivid or picturesque phrase that evokes a particular sensation in the recipient's mind. Power can be defined as the ability or potential of one party to be able to influence or affect the actions, words and occasionally, beliefs and emotions of another or group of people.

Images of power, therefore, can be defined as words, phrases in a literary piece which appeal to taste, touch, hearing sight or smell and do influence or affect the actions, words and occasionally, beliefs and emotions of another person or group of people.

3.1.1.2 Initiation

Broadly speaking, initiation can be defined as an elaborate ceremony to mark a transformation of an individual from one role to another. In some communities, including the Sabaot, cutting of the foreskin for males and cutting the tip of the clitoris is a lasting mark which acts as a symbol of initiation. Taken this way, initiation thus becomes a rite of passage in which an individual is taught the ways of respective community as a formal way of admission into the group so as one can transact business without hindrance

This form of initiation, especially for the Sabaot is usually done at the puberty stage to mark transition from childhood to adulthood.

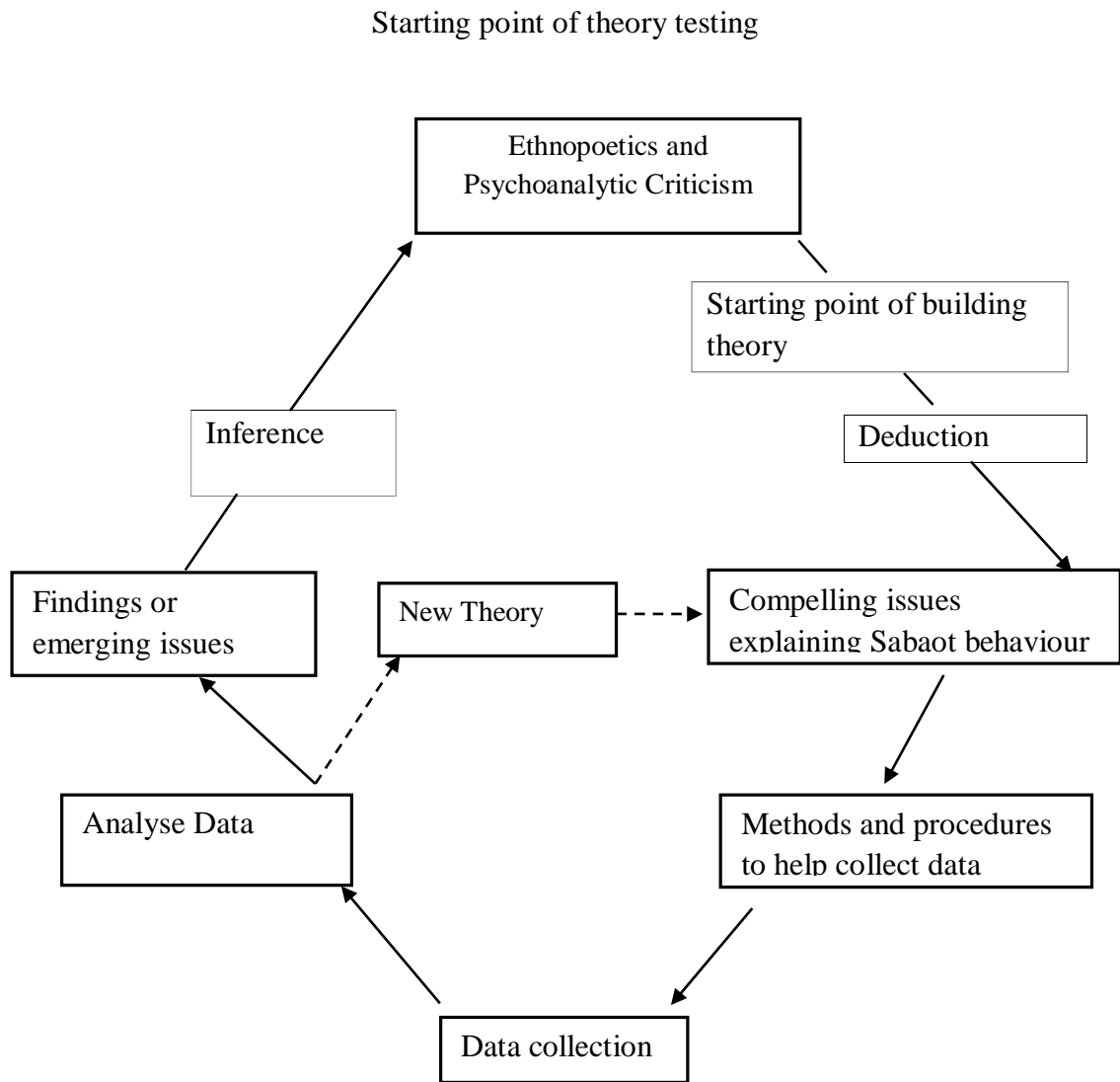
3.1.1.3 Performance

Is an action or series of events/actions in which an individual or group of people behave in a particular way for another group often called the audience in a designated arena. In some instances the line between the person carrying out the event and the audience is blurred giving rise to a participatory theatre where audience members get involved.

From the foregoing it is clear that the study had to be of a descriptive and observational nature. Armed with this information, we designed our research as follows. This approach is flexible and has allowed for more freedom during data collection to go in-depth in obtaining vital information. These strategies have also been used because the variable of study which is tradition is not stable and has put the research in the grouping of ethnographic studies.

The research also adopts confirmatory and observational methods because they aid in answering the research questions asked and in achieving objectives set in the study.

Research Design: Figure (3)



First we begun with the known theory based on library research which concluded that the Ethnopoetics theory and Psychoanalytic criticism would adequate help us study the construction of images of power among the Sabaot as presented in their male initiation poetry.

The issue of initiation among the Sabaot is an emotive one and therefore sought to study the images of power in their male initiation poems. To do we came up with the methods

and procedures to collect data (the poems) and also interviewed and mingled with the Sabaot so as to get the meaning.

Once we had our data, we analysed and tested it to see if our Ethnopoetics and Psychoanalytic Criticism theories hold.

3.2 Sampling Procedure

To bring this study to reality, several sampling procedures were involved to enable the researcher to examine the intended purpose beyond and within its scope for example several texts have been brought on board for close reference. Several interviews were also carried out to enable the researcher account for research evidences that this study was real and credible. Drama, music and other performance skills were also incorporated to create memorability and also enhance visual impression.

3.2.1 Research Field/Location of the Study

Data for the study was collected in Kopsiro Division of Mt. Elgon District. This is because there is a strong perceived tension between the Sabaot and their neighbours in this region. The Sabaot culture has also undergone transformation what with the advent of Christianity. However, Kopsirois perceived to be still not interfered with because of its geographical position, high up Mt Elgon. Kopsiro is also a division that is very close to where I live and I know the terrain and the people that occupy this area well. It was an advantage because as (Alembi, 2002) observes in a study similar to this, one needs to be an insider, a trusted “member” of the study community in order to get maximum co-operation and information from the study community.

Below is a photo of one of the Sabaot's dancing groups:



3.2.2 Sample Size

According to (Kothari, 2004), a sample size refers to the number of items to be selected from the universe to constitute a sample. The size of sample should neither be excessively large, nor too small. It should be optimum and should take into consideration such requirements as efficiency, representativeness, reliability and flexibility.

According to (Mugenda&Mugenda, 2003), a sample size of between 10% and 30 % is a fair representation of a target population. The population of the Sabaot in Kenya according to the 2009 Kenya Population and Housing Census was about 240, 886.

The sample size, going by Mugenda and Mugenda (ibid) would be either 24,000 or 72,000 which for practical purposes would be challenging. And even if as the research focuses on the Sabaot of Kenya within Kopsiro Division in Mt Elgon, Bungoma County, which is approximately 50,000 it would still be impracticable to go for a large sample. As Kothari (ibid) contends, a researcher must determine the size of sample based on desired precision as an acceptable confidence level for the estimate. Needless to say the cost, too, dictates the size of sample.

3.2.3 Sampling Technique

Conducting field studies requires that a researcher considers time and cost, which therefore leads to a selection of respondents. The selected respondents should be as representative of the total population as possible in order to produce a miniature cross-section. The selected respondents according to (Kothari, 2004) constitutes what is technically called a 'sample' and the selection process is called 'sampling technique'.

For purposes of this study a variety of sampling techniques were employed for maximal understanding of the phenomena under inquiry.

The study paid attention to gender and age because the initiation ceremony involves age-grades and knowledge. Although the study focuses on male initiation, women especially of advanced ages play a part in specific education of the initiates including the male ones. To arrive at In-depth interviews using Kiswahili and Sabaot were conducted with respondents on the basis of their standing within the community during the initiation season.

The study reviews Sabaot people's understanding of the various images in the male initiation poems. For this purpose the researcher interviewed initiates, performers and opinion leaders. (Kothari, 2004) notes that one must remember that two costs are involved in a sampling analysis viz., the cost of collecting the data and the cost of an incorrect inference resulting from the data. The scholar maintains that the researcher must keep in view the two causes of incorrect inferences viz., systematic bias and sampling error.

With this in mind, the study divided the informants and assigned a sampling procedure that would yield responses as close as possible to the set objectives as enumerated below.

(a) For initiates, the study used random sampling to get 10 male initiates. Under this sampling design, every item of the universe has an equal chance of inclusion in the

sample, (Kothari, 2004). Since they all undergo the same rituals, any randomly selected male initiates is considered representative. Another 10 young people were interviewed to represent people who have gone through the initiation rite. The assumption here is that information gleaned from them regarding the power of the songs not only shapes identities but also builds power relations between the Sabaot and their neighbours.

(b) For performers, purposive sampling is used. This is where the researcher deliberately selects those individuals considered by fellow community members to be knowledgeable performers of initiation poems. In this type of sampling, items are selected deliberately by the researcher; his choice concerning the items remains supreme. The researcher, according to (Kothari, 2004) purposively chooses the particular units of the universe for constituting a sample on the basis that the small mass that they so select out of a huge one will be typical or representative of the whole.

(Tongco, 2007) advocates for purposive sampling because it is fundamental to the quality of data gathered since it ensures reliability and competence of the informant. In view of this, we deliberately chose 20 respondents (15 men and 5 women) aged between 20 and 80, besides taking part in some of the initiation ceremonies.

Of the 15 men, 11 were aged between 20-45 most of who actively participate in singing and performing of these Sabaot initiation poems and are actively involved in contesting power relations with the neighbouring communities. In case of conflicts, they are more often than not involved in fights with the neighbouring communities. In other words they are the warriors. This group also provided insight into the meaning and significance of performance of Sabaot male initiation poems. The other four old men and five women were aged 60 and above who provided insight into the meaning and significance of the poems and change in trend of the Sabaot world view.

(c) As for opinion leaders, the study used snowball sampling initially and subsequently purposive sampling. Snowball sampling entails identifying one informant

who led the researcher to another leader who in turn identified another leader until the information being sought is arrived at. With this procedure the research narrowed down to ten opinion leaders; both male and females. Opinion leaders among the Sabaot are those considered versed in the culture of the Sabaot, and accepted by members of this community as capable of giving direction on the cultural views of the community. The average age of these informants was fifty years and above.

3.3 Data Collection

Primary Data

The primary source of information, ideas and concepts of this study were derived from community based programmes such as festivals, gatherings and competitions within and outside the Sabaot community. Several texts by prolific scholars were also used to enhance the researcher's expertise in data collection.

Secondary Data

The study enriched primary data by studying, reviewing and selecting of scholarly, literary articles, refereed journals, books, projects and theses from online sources, Post Modern Library at Kenyatta University, Kenya National Library Services and the University of Nairobi. Secondary data enriched the study with ideas on migration literature, psychoanalysis for instance, unconscious mind and identity. It also highlighted strands of ethnopoetry and other social science concepts like psychology for analysis and interpretation of data.

3.3.1 Data collection procedures

3.3.1.1 Personal Interviews

The study used interviews based on a standard set of questions in a questionnaire. The respondents answered orally. By using this method the researcher was able to clarify the questions and it also helped the study get information from the illiterate informants but who were knowledgeable about Sabaot customs.

Personal interviews as noted by various scholars such as (Babbie, 1992) are good ways of gathering information from community leaders, particularly those who might be

unwilling or too busy to complete a written survey. In any case, during initiation ceremonies most people are focused on making merry than sitting to reflect on scholarly issues. Although the researcher later sat down with a focus group of old people and young to review some of the far reaching findings, personal interviews helped to control the research and respondents did not have the opportunity to consult one another before responding to the questions.

3.3.1.2 Observation and Recording

Recording and observation was used in this study. Where we were allowed by custom, we used an audio recorder so we could later transcribe the material.

We also took photos where we were permitted. Apart from these we prepared ethnographic field notes from participants and our own observations.

3.3.1.3 Focus Group

Another instrument that was used to generate data was focus group review. This helped in harnessing standardized data and prompts from the respondents. The study employed this approach especially when we wanted to gain insight into the collective behavior of the Sabaot in view of the Psychoanalysis theory.

It was also in keeping with (Bauman, 1986) and (Foley, 1995) insistence of a co-operative in entry into the performance arena or the interpretive arena where we learnt the meanings of the images of power used in the poems. We brought together the 20 respondents where we prompted them, again with the set questions to establish whether they held a common opinion and understanding of the images as employed by the singers.

Indeed, there occurred instances of difference in understanding and the usage of certain images but the central theme, in which the notion held about the non-Sabaot, remained. (Krueger and Casey, 2000) contends that a focus group helps in accessing and

synthesizing the perceptions, ideas, opinions and thoughts of people about any practice or idea.

3.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation

A study of major concepts of ethnopoetry, ethnomethodology and psychoanalytic theory and features of migration literature guided the researcher in comprehending unconscious mind, identity, power, images, fixity and characteristic themes of identities and social issues in psychoanalytic discourse.

The researcher related these theoretical aspects to the ethnopoetics of the Sabaot people through creation of power and images in their struggle to maintain their unconsciousness as a result of their migration to a new environment which was marked by rebellion from other neighbouring communities.

In view of these positions, the study of construction of images of power as represented in Sabaot male initiation poetry, which seeks to produce the kind of research findings from “real-world settings” where the “phenomenon of interest unfold naturally” (Patton, 2001), the study must submit to validity and reliability tests. Moreover, unlike quantitative researchers who seek casual determination, prediction, and generalization of findings, qualitative researchers seek instead illumination, understanding, and extrapolation to similar situations (Hoepfl, 1997). All these have been achieved in a qualitative mode of research the study conducted.

Once the primary data was gathered, the next stage was to analyze it while paying attention to the research objectives. The data gathered through interviews, focus group review, observation and documented literature have been objectively analyzed using Ethnopoetics and psychoanalysis to unravel meaning of the constructed images in the initiation poetry within the dedicated performance arena. The study grouped the poems into the following 12 categories.

<i>Ketich chepkoyeet</i>	(announcing intention to be initiated)
<i>Yeitap Kotiok</i>	(Alternate ceremony)
<i>Kanuretaap poryonteet</i>	(Preparation of beer for ceremony)
<i>Wonseet</i>	(The actual day of circumcision)
<i>Chemomo</i>	(Feeding the community- performance in the evening)
<i>Tikyineet</i>	(Performance at night)
<i>Yekoneet</i>	(Performance at Dawn)
<i>Kapchai</i>	(Performance from the river back home)
<i>Mutisheet</i>	(Performance immediately after the actual cut)
<i>Cholyeet/njoliit</i>	(Dance after the cut)
<i>Kunundyo kumumusiak</i>	(Performance during seclusion)
<i>Ng'etuneet</i>	(Performance when adopting age-set)

Once we had categorization in place we surfed through the individual responses of each of the 20 respondents, we pieced together recurring answers in view of the images identified. Those that were similar provided helped us to recap and condense meanings and drawing conclusions. Because analysis is an essential component of ensuring data integrity, accuracy and appropriateness in coming up with our research findings we went further and presented it to all of them as a group. This helped us eliminate some inconsistencies as result of overzealousness of respondents who had a clue of what the research was all about. It also helped to guard the integrity of the findings.

The study used Ethno methodology based on (Alembi, 2002) conceptual-analytical framework, which he refers to as *infra-cultural model*. This model advocates an entry by researchers into the rhythm of life of communities as a good basis to learn and experience their beliefs, fears and perceptions (ibid). By so doing, the study had a sound

base to research about the study community and demonstrate their perception of phenomenon we studied; construction of images of power through initiation oral poetry of the Sabaot community.

Therefore, *infra-cultural model* in the study of construction of images of power in Sabaot male initiation oral poetry entailed interpretation of words and actions within specific cultural contexts. The meanings of words and actions could only be located within the perceptions of the community. As researchers we were brought into a reflective process to gather information on the phenomenon and in some instances we interpreted it together as partners and later synchronized it with the relevant library researched information.

Below is a summary of the *infra-cultural model* of analysis this study used:

- 1.) Emphasis was on an insider-analysis and interpretation of works of art and in which we got the reality of the Sabaot community community.
- 2.) We entered the context of performance of the initiation poems, what has been called the “interpretive frame” (Bauman, 1986), performance arena (Foley, 1995) or the dedicated arena.
- 3.) We examined narrative patterns beyond mere concern with stylistic features and other formal elements of the surface structure to using these features to elucidate the theme of study.
- 4.) We were deeply involved in dialogue and interaction with the Sabaot informants to understand the structural and underlying issues surrounding the images in their initiation poetry.
- 5.) Because the assigning of meaning to oral texts is defined by the culture and traditions of the performer and the audience we studied the significance of the performed and given meaning.
- 6.) To discover meaning so that metonyms can modulate into meaning we entered at permitted times the performance arena.

During the research, together with my informant Herickson Sakong Ndiema, we adopted the roles of a complete participant or participant observer whenever it called for and if the Sabaot customs permitted. As complete participants, we concealed our research objectives, obviously against (Erikson, 1967), who believes it is an invasion of privacy. But we did these to try and understand how immersed psychologically the Sabaot are in this dedicated arena.

Yet at times, we became participant observers where we assured the Sabaot of our observer roles, which allowed us to record the observations during performances.

Naturally, they concealed some things because of fear of giving out information to strangers. To establish the meanings of these words and actions, we interviewed 20 people (see Apendices 1,2,3), with the help of our informant Herickson Sakong Ndiema, a renowned singer, composer and performer of the Sabaot initiation poetry.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

The two concepts have generated heated debate as to whether they are necessary in qualitative studies in the first place or they should just be confined to quantitative research. (Patton, 2001) states that validity and reliability are two factors which any qualitative researcher should be concerned about while designing a study, analyzing results and judging the quality of the study.

While qualitative researchers have argued that the term validity is not applicable to qualitative research they have, at the same time, realized the need for some kind of qualifying check or measure for their research. To ensure reliability in qualitative research, (Golafshani, 2003) argues that examination of trustworthiness is crucial because as (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.290) ask, “How can inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?”

Just as the terms reliability and validity are essential criterion for quality in quantitative paradigms, in qualitative paradigms the terms Credibility, Neutrality or Comfirmability,

Consistency or Dependability and Applicability or Transferability are to be essential criteria for quality (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

3.6 Logistical and Ethical Consideration

The researcher got an introductory letter from Kenyatta University in order to enable him access the research location through the gate-keepers such Assistant Chief or Chief. Given the small population of the Sabaot the identity of someone from the locality is not a problem. In fact, if anyone is in doubt just by introducing oneself by the family name is enough. However, for ethical reasons, the researcher presented a formal introductory letter to the Assistant Chief who shared it with the village head (*Bondetaap Kook*). During the study, the researcher discovered that the Sabaot are a highly secretive people and would not divulge sensitive cultural information. The respondents, however, gained the confidence of the researcher, being one of their own, but warned not everything was for publication.

3.8 Conclusion

Studying the construction of images of power in which medium in African traditional set up is a challenge task especially in trying to arrive at meaning and how it is used to contest power relations between neighbouring communities. It thus requires a well thought out research methodology backed up by a good research design because as (Hoepfl, 1997) argues this kind of research is geared towards illuminating and creating understanding of phenomena under research.

Above all, it throws at the researcher the burden of ensuring credibility, neutrality or confirmability, consistency or dependability and applicability or transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), the various methods and tools and especially focus group review helped in meeting these criteria. Some of the limitations in study dictated that a skilled moderator was needed. The researcher was lucky to have Mzee Ibrahim Kamasai, who exhibited wide ranging knowledge of the Sabaot initiation tradition that was easily corroborated in the focus group review.

Some participants were less candid in their responses in front of peers, which the researcher later learnt was the fear of appearing to “reveal too much inside information.” In the next chapter, the study delves into the attendant images in the Sabaot male initiation poetry by exploring the idea of power as they manifest themselves in the performance of the poems. The chapter presents the poems both in Sabaot language and the transcribed for the purpose of analysis.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

Stylistic devices and performance as tools of articulating power relations contest

4.0 Introduction

4.0.1 Style and Stylistic devices

The term style in literary art cannot be talked of without language. Language thus uses words, which may be written or verbalised. How they are written or verbalised is done in some style so as to attain the desired effect.

According to (Mugubi, 2017), literary style may be regarded as the personal and creative fashioning of the resources of language and extra-lingual aspects which a writer's or artist's chosen dialect or language, period, genre, and his or her purpose within the genre offer him or her.

Words whether written or uttered are the most significant elements of any human culture. This study demonstrates that words engage contexts in order to reveal how the Sabao for instance are involved in contesting power relations with their neighbouring communities. Words become verbal symbols, which as (Gigliani, 1972) asserts, reveal a range of meanings and attitudes that members of any society attach to those symbols. Such meanings generate certain behaviours among individuals of a particular social grouping that we habitually think of as customary behaviour of a particular group. Such behaviour Gigliani (ibid) contends expresses a peoples' idea of space and time, generalised goals and aspirations - the *Weltanschauung* of every social group.

(Durkheim, 1915, p.313) says such conceptualisation of ideas is “priceless instruments of thought which the human groups have laboriously forged through the centuries and where they have accumulated the best of their intellectual capital.” It is this intellectual capital that a social group therefore constantly draws from, any time they are involved in contesting a phenomena with its competitors. To achieve the desired results such a contest is done in some style.

Style must as a matter of fact involve the effective use of language to send a clear message to the “other” by way of making statements that will either rouse the emotions of its members or belittle the ‘others’ jest. (Lucas, 1955) notes that without emotion there can be no art of literature, nor any other art. Style, therefore, is designed to demonstrate how the use of language differs from ‘normal’ uses of language as it is viewed to be a deviation from the standard (Carter and Nash, 1990). The performers/composers of the poems take an already existing structure and fit in words that express the collective minds of that community. The styles that are used are metaphors, which portray images, symbols, repetition, metonymy or idioms.

As the title of this thesis suggests, we demonstrate the meanings of various images as explained by our respondents in the field. The meanings selected will be those that express the contest of power relations against the neighbouring communities and more so the Bukusu and Teso.

4.0.2 Performance

The term performance has continually received attention the world over for what it is. Many scholars contend that every action we undertake in life is a performance. (Carlson, 1996) insists though that our lives are structured according to repeated and socially sanctioned modes of behaviour therefore raising the possibility that human activity could potentially be considered as performance.

(Goffman, 1959) for instance says that a ‘performance’ may be all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants. In this section, the study discusses the significance of performance of male initiation poetry among the Sabaot of Kenya as a way of contesting power relations and constructing or enhancing their cultural identity.

4.1 Stylistic devices in Sabaot initiation oral poetry

Sabaot rites of passage begin at birth, followed by initiation through to marriage and finally death. Ritual ceremonies mark all these stages of transition and are always marked with a period of seclusion. This seclusion is necessary because the Sabaot believe that anybody going through transition is always in danger hence the need to be protected.

As discussed in the literature review, the initiation rite among the Sabaot is key to the socialisation of the Sabaot, both males and females, into the ways of the community. Whoever does not undergo this rite is chided by those who have undergone it. Furthermore, the community berates any community that does not observe this rite for both sexes. The continued tenacity with which the Sabaot adhere to this custom suggests some overriding social importance of this ritual, but remains unverballed, (Goldschmidt, 1976).

That the Sabaot pride in this rite is thus the focal point of the community’s existence and a period in which the community’s values and secrets are perpetuated. This rite marks the ritual transformation of an individual from childhood to adulthood. This is when an individual takes up responsibilities expected of a grown-up Sabaot man and woman as soon as the cycle of initiation process is completed.

The clan does meticulous preparation for this process immediately the initiates to-be announced their readiness to undergo it. Before the power of the prophets had waned,

they used to announce the period on which the ceremonies would begin starting from *pororisyeek* in Kenya all the way to the last *pororyeet* in Kapchorwa, Uganda. The period between each initiation used to be between 6-7 years for boys and after every 2 years for girls but with change girls can now be initiated every year and even boys who a few years ago were circumcised every even year.

The arrangements enhanced unity between all the clans that make up the Sabaot community. Some young energetic men could participate in almost all the ceremonies for there was no jumping the order of circumcision by any *porooyeet*. However, this form of arrangement started dying down with the drawing of the international border at Suom in 1926. The colonial government curtailed the free movement of the Sabaot into and out of either country. With the death of prophet Matui in 1938, this arrangement was further thrown into severe unco-ordination. The process of initiation started with preliminaries such as:

ketich chepkwoyeet (A form of announcing intention to undergo initiation.) This announcement is usually motivated by a sense of rejection from older men who berate an initiate to-be by calling one *weriit* (boy) or *Chepto* (girl).

By this, boys and girls decide, “enough is enough” and start practicing by grouping themselves to sing, and dance every evening. This shows their readiness to be initiated and pressure automatically builds up on the parents and elders in general. Within no time parents consent and the young initiates hit the road to invite relatives and friends of their parents. From the time they announce their readiness, they put on initiation regalia like beads and colobus monkey hats not forgetting to carry a whistle everywhere they go. Gifts flow freely wherever they visit.

Back at home, parents must organize for instructors/sponsors otherwise called *matireniik* among the Sabaot. The order of the initiates within a *pororyeet* has to be determined by

the group of parents. Each initiate, girls included, has to have a *matirionteet* (p1. *matireniik*). The whole *pororyeet* is now thrown into festive mood. It is the time for lavishness. Wealthy parents want to show off. The ravages of economic down turn have taken toll on this festivity among the Sabaot. Today, people spend modestly because school fees await them immediately the initiate walks out of seclusion after circumcision. In the olden days, a person could be held captive by his pinta (age-set) if they felt he was being selfish yet he had *tukuuk* ('things').

For 'new parents', those circumcising for the first time, the initiation ceremony posed another challenge, that of hosting his age-mates with a *Yeeytap Kotiek* ceremony ('the bullock of arrows') and lots of traditional brew. This is a special ceremony which the 'new father' treats his age mates to a bullock that is skinned using arrows. A special guest chosen by the host would traditionally come with a cow as a way of accepting the honour. In the years gone by, it was unheard of for one to initiate his first born child without first hosting his age-mates.

Immediately after this ceremony the young initiates gather firewood to be lit during the initiation ceremony. They also have to take sacks of maize to the posho mill for grinding. They have to participate in the fermenting of the flour to make beer. Three days before circumcision ceremony begins there is the preparation of traditional beer in a small pot called *kramiit*. The process is referred to as *chinuur poryonteet*. The resultant beer belongs to the circumcisers and the *matereniik* (the instructor/sponsor). The functions of the instructor are:-

- (a) To administer the medicines sanctioned by the community for cleansing initiates - usually purgatives or emetics.
- (b) Accompany initiates (at least one of them) on the material day of circumcision as they go to nearby relations during the day to dance.
- (c) To instruct the initiates on dances, songs, positions on the line and the general behaviour during initiation period.

- (d) Introduce the initiates into the ways and secrets of the Sabaot community and the need for bravery in the face of adversity.
- (e) Dispose off parts cut from the genital organ of an initiate.
- (f) The instructors also assume the permanent role of a godparent to the initiate. The initiate will forever call ones' instructor father.
- (g) To oversee the adoption of age-set name by the initiate

Four days after the adoption of an age set, the instructor oversees the choice of a new name at the end of initiation cycle. (Adopting a new name is no longer strictly adhered to due to changes that have occurred over time). The choice of the sponsor rests on the father of the initiate and will always depend on the bravery of initiates one has sponsored before. If an initiate “cries the knife” the sponsor stands to lose the trust of parents of the initiate to-be.

Before the actual day of circumcision ceremony the group of parents initiating their children will have determined the initiates' positions or order on the single file line. The initiates have to be referred to by their ordinal position during the entire period of initiation. Every parent wants his son to take the position of *Kaporet* (the first born on the line) because parents would always want to claim pride in their son should he be the first on the line be brave the knife and others followed too. No two sons, however, of a family may follow each other on the line. A small child is chosen to strand between two brothers in the entire duration of circumcision ceremony should it happen so. The ordinal position of *Kaporet* has seniority and draws respect from the person initiated on the same day, but it does not give one the legitimacy to lead the group in future.

The circumciser for men is called *mutinteet* (pl. *mutiik*) and *korkotum* or *kepinteet* for girls. A parent has the right to choose the circumcisers of their initiates. The chosen one would be given between Ksh 150/= to Ksh 300/= up from Ksh 2/= in the seventies, for booking the knife. The price is higher for a *tekeryonteet* (protected child). The initiates

are then sent to the circumciser's home to pick the knife. Usually the circumciser will hand over a specially wrapped knife used for the cut as a sign of acceptance to perform the ritual. The knife is well kept by the father of the initiate until circumcision day when the father hands it over officially to the circumciser.

The Sabaot have their own circumcisers who though very respected are also chastised for earning a living from blood money. Changes begun to occur in the eighties when circumcisers from the Gisu and Bukusu communities became accepted to perform the cut. Debate has raged since then on the appropriateness of their sons being circumcised by outsiders. Those in support say there is no problem for it is the Sabaot who taught them the art of circumcision when they circumcised the Gishu boy Mango. Those against fear the enemy will slowly eat into their community.

4.1.1 Imagery

Imagery can be defined as the collective use of vivid or figurative language to represent objects, actions, or ideas. An image is a word or cluster of words that stimulate sense perceptions whether they are to be found in written texts or oral texts. Though imagery is common in arousing sense perceptions it also appeals to the sense of hearing, touch, smell or taste whereby this imaginary experiences end up to a large extent being the meaning of the poem.

Song 1: *Tulweenyo* (Our Mountain)

Stanza 1

<i>Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo</i>	Who will guard our mountain?
<i>Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo leyye</i>	Who will guard our mountain leyye?
<i>Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo</i>	Who will guard our mountain?
<i>Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo leyye</i>	Who will guard our mountain leyye?

Stanza 2

<i>Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo</i>	Who will guard our mountain?
<i>Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo leyye</i>	Who will guard our mountain leyye?

<i>Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo</i>	Who will guard our mountain?
<i>Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo leyye</i>	Who will guard our mountain leyye?

Stanza 3

<i>Tonoon, tonoon kekosung</i>	Be steadfast so we see
<i>Haa kanaming rotweet</i>	The knife will catch you
<i>Nto wuchikey kaptaske</i>	Or just run to the Teso
<i>Nto kewo kapkutosik</i>	Or just run to the Kitosh

This called on everyone to defend the mountain against invasion by the enemy. It is sung by women to incite the youth to take responsibility of defending the community against the nearby enemies. It is a call to exert territorial supremacy. The mountain symbolises the Sabaot territory. Braving the knife means one can brave the enemy community in defending the mountain. The initiates are teased to run to Tesoland (*Kaptaske*) or Kitosh (Bukusu) if they cannot brave the knife.

To a Sabaot, the people who do not circumcise are cowards. A Sabaot born to a circumcised woman is superior to say a Bukusu, who don't circumcise their women! These two communities thus become images of the feint hearts. The response during the performance is always intense as everyone wants to be heard to be ready to defend the community.

Using the *infra-cultural analysis* of folklore in Ethnopoetics, these experiences have to be viewed in the context in which they are uttered. Through the use of imagery, artists expand and enhance the basic literal meaning of their words by using devices such as similes, metaphors, symbols, and other figurative language in order to evoke memories and associations that create a certain mood. The study set out to examine the construction of these images and subsequently how they play a role in the power relations contest.

Power as explained in Chapter 1 is a resource, which every community wants to have so as to sustain itself in the face of other competing communities. The Sabaot therefore need to contest their relation with the Bukusu. This is when the community's poets come in handy in acting as the community's defenders by providing commentary using their imagination. Their artistic expressions find a perfect setting during initiation ceremonies since it can affect us. (Okpewho, 1991) notes that a piece of poetry can affect us by touching us emotionally so that we feel pleasure or pain, and the other by stirring our minds deeply so that we reflect on some aspect of life or some significant idea.

In situations where communities are contesting for superiority, emotions are always evoked. Those emotions are always raised by words, which are artistically selected by whoever utters them. This is where the performer of the poem thrives because one takes an existing form of art and uses exaggerated images to rouse the emotions of his fellow members. This is usually meant to stir his kinsmen to rise into action. Let us examine the following oral initiation poem.

Song 2: Bukwo (Bukweet: Terminaliamollis) - Home of brave men

<i>Le Bukwo yee</i>	Le Bukwo yee
<i>Oh yaya Bukwo</i>	Oh yaya Bukwo
<i>Le Bukwo yee</i>	Le Bukwo
<i>Oh yaya Bukwo</i>	Oh yaya Bukwo
<i>Le Kopsiro yee</i>	Le Kopsiro yee
<i>Oyaya Kopsiro</i>	Oh yaya Kopsiro
<i>Le Kopsiro yee</i>	Le Kopsiro yee
<i>Oh yaya Kopsiro</i>	Oh yaya Kopsiro
<i>Le Bukwo yee</i>	Le Bukwo yee,
<i>Oh yaya Bukwo</i>	Oh yaya Bukwo,
<i>Le kamureen eh</i>	Home of brave men,
<i>Oh yaya Bukwo</i>	Oh yaya Bukwo,
<i>Le kamureen eh</i>	Home of brave men,

<i>Oh yaya Bukwo</i>	Oh yaya Bukwo.
<i>Le Kopsiro yee</i>	Le Kapsiro yee
<i>Oh yaya Kopsiro</i>	Oh yaya Kopsiro
<i>Le kamureen eh</i>	Home of brave men
<i>Oh yaya Kopsiro</i>	Oh yaya Kopsiro

Bukwo is a place immediately on the Ugandan side of Kenya – Uganda boundary at Suom, North West of Kitale. Kopsiro is one of the divisions in Mt. Elgon District, which borders the Bukusu and the Teso communities on the eastern side.

Bukweet from which Bukwo is derived from is a very important plant in the Sabaot ethnobotany. The Sabaot have this habit of naming places using plant names or animal names that are found within a location. *Bukweet* (*Terminaliamollis*) has medicinal importance and is used in many important rituals within the community.

Therefore, during initiation the singing of such a song is meant to stir up the initiates' thinking to ask more about Bukwo. It thus becomes a visual image as the initiates get a clear picture of his duty to know the importance of the plant and hence protect the place (now Bukwo) because the plant is found there.

Secondly, the performers sing;

<i>Le Bukwo yee</i>	Le bukwo yee
<i>Oh yaya Bukwo</i>	Oh yaya Bukwo
<i>Le Kamureen eh</i>	Home of brave men
<i>Le Kopsiro yee</i>	Le Kopsiro yee
<i>Le Kamureen yee</i>	Home of brave men

Bukwo and Kopsiro are elevated to the level of sacred places, as they are home to brave men. By incorporating them into initiation poems it puts pressure on Sabaot initiates to recognise the significance these places as frontier zones and thus the need to protect their

homeland. It also serves as a warning to those “outsiders”, though implied, that those areas are home to brave men and not cowards.

The repetition evident in the poem is very important in stressing the significance of Bukwo and Kapsiro in Sabaot history. In terms of power relation contest therefore, one can deduce a game of ownership of places between the Sabaot and their neighbours. From the developments since independence we have seen non-Sabaot encroaching into what Sabaot believe is their cradle land and this has always generated inter-ethnic tensions.

Another poem like the one below demonstrates power relations contest and alludes to a conflict with their neighbours.

Song 3: *Pigaap Koreet* (Owners of the land)

<i>Le kyamwochi pigaap koreet</i>	I told owners of the land,
<i>Oh ee kyamwochi pigaap koreet, koko</i>	I told owners of the land, grandmother,
<i>Oh ndekiwo kelyaap lagam</i>	Had you gone mountainward,
<i>Kale piko che kimweyto piko</i>	I say people have been taken away
<i>Oh ee ngimwochi pigaap Sabaot</i>	Oh tell owners of the land,
<i>Oh chito nye kilanyaat lagameet</i>	The man who climbs mountains,
<i>Kabotyi piko chebugat</i>	People got lost at Chebugat
<i>Momitee manyiror</i>	Manyiror is not here
<i>Oh arap Kinyokye ee</i>	Oh son of Kinyokye
<i>Imwochi momo irat mo</i>	Tell mother to tie her womb
<i>Oh ee makakuwo chito</i>	Oh the man has gone
<i>Makakwam tengwereek</i>	The ants have eaten him
<i>Kakwam nee Nanapa</i>	What became of Nanapa?
<i>Kiyeeek nyoto Manyiror</i>	That became Manyiror
<i>Muroni kibo Kapchai</i>	Him of Kapchai clan
<i>Eh pichu kibo kabunjos</i>	Those people of Kabunjos

<i>Oh kale king'atee mureenik Nanapa</i>	The men stopped at Nanapa
<i>Kimwoyee bondeet Kimwolyok</i>	Said oldman Kimwolyok
<i>Kale moiye pekaap Kitaweet</i>	That you drink not stony water
<i>Kale moiye pekaap kitaweet</i>	That you drink not stony water
<i>Kale kimwoi baba Chonge</i>	Said father Chonge
<i>Oh ee morich baba Mukimba</i>	Oh don't go near father Mukimba
<i>Le Kamwook pigaap koret</i>	I have told you owners of the land
<i>Oh ee kamwook pigaap koreet</i>	Oh ee I tell you owners of the land
<i>Tyangocheet nyoto nyebo keeny</i>	That is the old story

It is clear in the poem that the Sabaot were in conflict with a neighbouring community. The poet alludes to some warning, which apparently was not heeded to where the poet says, "I told owners of the land (Sabaot), had you gone mountain-wards."

The Sabaot must have suffered casualties because the poet says, "I warned of the people, who smuggled away our people."

The poet adds, "People got lost at Chebugat. One of them is Manyiror son of Kinyokyee – eaten by ants." The mother has been told to 'tie her womb' – to bear with the loss.

The Sabaot here recognise the presence of an enemy. It appears also that the warriors ventured too far from the mountain – their fortress that is why they suffered casualties as revealed by the line, "You drink not stony water" and "had you gone mountain-ward."

According to Mzee Ndiema Kigai, stony water is to be found in the plains not highlands where the Sabaot live.

There is one 'father Mukimba', who clearly is not a Sabaot as Chonge (one of the community's revered prophets) warns everyone not to go near him. Father Mukimba is of inferior stock and so the Sabaot should not have anything to do with him and his community.

This is a clear desire to maintain a separate cultural identity. In this poem, the Sabaot impute or ascribe to themselves good things in life, such as fresh water in the mountains, as opposed to stony water to be found in the land of the enemy.

4.1.2 Symbolism

A symbol is a word, place, character, or object that means something beyond what it is on a literal level. Symbolism is the systematic use of recurrent images in a work of art to create an added level of meaning. The use of symbols is meant to make those things that would have otherwise remained inexpressible concrete. By concretizing the phenomenon in question, emotions in the subconscious well up and the listener or the addressee begins to see things clearly.

The use of symbols in Sabaot initiation poetry appeals to the initiates' interpretation of issues that affect him. Let us examine the poem that follows:

Song 4: *Mi lekweet moo* (Child in the womb) – bravery and steadfastness

Refrain:

<i>Oyee milekweet moo</i>	The child is in the womb
<i>Oyee kakiyeech ee</i>	It has dawned
<i>Maraat mbo momo moo</i>	Our mothers will tie their wombs
<i>Kale momo mamuye</i>	Mother says she does not fear
<i>Rotweet nyo mutus</i>	A blunt knife
<i>Makakuwuur koreet kei</i>	The world has become bad
<i>Ripkwoo ng'oo tokoreet</i>	Who will care for the protected one?
<i>Oh kakuwuur koreet kei</i>	Oh the damn world has become bad
<i>A mbo momo mi yu</i>	Even our mothers are here
<i>Oh lekweenyoo</i>	Oh our child
<i>Makakucho andowoo</i>	Your fathers friend is here
<i>Makakucho pasuben</i>	Your father's close friend is here too
<i>Makakuwuur koreet kei</i>	The damn world has become bad
<i>Riibkamwoong mabuun pei</i>	Let no rain seep into the homestead
<i>Oyee yuunyotoo mwaita</i>	That is how fat is

<i>Karam lakwenyoo</i>	Our child is good
<i>Oyee korenyoo</i>	Oh our land
<i>Oyee kakiyeech oyee</i>	It has dawned
<i>Oyee lekwenyu Oyee</i>	My child
<i>Oyee lekwenyu kaboret oye</i>	My first born
<i>Ole omoo nee wei?</i>	What will eat me?

A symbol may be an object, a situation, setting or a character. In this poem there are objects as symbols. Let us examine symbols in each stanza and give the meanings.

4.1.2.1 Character symbols

Stanza 1

<i>Milekweet moo</i>	There is a child in the womb	(expectation)
2. <i>Ambo momo mi yee</i>	Even mother in here	(important persons)
3. <i>Oh lekweenyoo</i>	Our child	(symbol of hope)
4. <i>Makakicho andowoo</i>	Father's closest friend	(important person)
<i>Pasubeen</i>	Father's great friend	(important person)
5. <i>Karam Lekweenyo</i>	Our child is good	(symbol of good things to come)
6. <i>Oyee lekwenyu Kuboreet</i>	Oh my first born child	(harbinger of good things)
<i>Ole omoo nee?</i>	What will eat me?	(Assertion of safety)

Over and above the usual casual meaning of words like “child is in the womb” those words have taken a far bigger meaning than can be known by a member outside the community. The fact that a child is in the “womb” i.e. the womb of the initiate is something to be proud of. The child here other than for progeny stands for great expectation and hope. It should be seen in the light of the last line of stanza 6 “What will eat me?”

The community expects protection from the newly initiated. As discussed elsewhere once a Sabaot has been initiated successfully, he becomes the protector of the community.

When the poet says;

Even mother is here.....

Father's closest friend is here too

And father's friend who is your father in law.....

It puts pressure on the initiates. It is no longer a single man's affair. The initiates must brave the knife because everybody is here. A crying of the knife will mean he has disgrace the whole community. The knife being a sign of bravery means therefore an initiate may not face the enemy if he "cries it."

The child (son) becomes the symbol of defence as can be seen in the subsequent lines. Our child is good as opposed to my child – which is individual. The first born is always a very important (ordinal position) as whoever leads the others must demonstrate impeccable bravery. Everybody has been made aware that nothing will eat them. Whatever thing it is, that will eat them is the community's enemies known to them Sabaot as the Bukusu, Teso or any other non-Sabaot posing a threat to them.

4.1.2.2 Object symbols

Ambo momo Mamuyee

Mother does not fear

Rotweet nyo mutus

blunt knife

Makakuwuur Koreet kei

The damn earth has become bad

It is repeated

Ribkamwoong mabun bei

Take care of your homestead lest it rains through.

Oye yunyoto mwaita

That is how fat tastes.

Oyee korenyo

Oh our land.

In the 2nd Stanza mother says she does not fear a blunt knife. Other than just being a knife it is a blunt knife. Sabaot women are always circumcised to mark the transition from childhood (girl) to adulthood (women). They, too, have to demonstrate bravery. But this goes beyond braving the knife but that she is ready to defend the community should it come to worse (bluntness). An enemy may threaten to overrun the community and therefore mother may come to the rescue. “The damn earth has turned bad” is said to mean that despite tranquility things can go wrong and that is why the initiate is told in the next stanza. “Take care of your homestead (homeland) lest it rains through.” This line is repeated in most Sabaot songs.

Rain though good can be destructive. Neighbours are good but can be bad at times. “Rain” here symbolised the destructiveness of a neighbour. The initiates are thus forewarned not to let rain fall through the homestead (which means homeland) It is shameful to let rain sip into ones house when there are men can fix the thatch. ‘Rain’ here also takes a symbolic meaning as one is directed not to let rain leak into one’s house. Any leakage is seen as intrusion and may cause discomfort deep in the night. Any communities getting into the heartland of the community are deemed an intrusion and hence as source of discomfort.

“Fat” is wealth and that is why the initiate is told there are no two ways to go about it. One has to be brave. The overall theme is summed up by the last line. “Oh our land” By the mere mention of their land it evokes all sorts of thoughts about their homeland.

4.1.2.3 Symbols of situations

Stanza 1	<i>Oyee kakiyeech</i>	Oyyee it is dawn
Line 2	<i>Mileekwet moo</i>	The child is in the womb
3 rd stanza	<i>Kakuwuur Koretei</i>	The world has become bad

When the poet says, “oyee kakiyeech” the expression and tone is that of surprise and you can see it in the face. The way the performers jump up and down shows utter disbelief and therefore it is time for the initiate to rise up, this child we have been expecting for far too long! And guess what everybody is here including Ndowo, Pasuben, two dear friends of father. So it is up to the initiate. Taken a step further, the initiates from now henceforth will be under the scrutiny of the eyes of the dear ones. Will the initiates back off from the responsibilities that come with this feat?

4.1.2.3.1 Broom

Song 7: *Sererwo (Broom) - performed during Kanureetaap Poryonteeet*

<i>Sererwo ee</i>	Broom ee
<i>Ee ee sererwo ee</i>	Ee ee the broom ee
<i>Ee hoyya</i>	Ee hoyya
<i>Kemechachek sererwenyo</i>	We want our broom
<i>Sosyo Kimirey ee</i>	Sosyo Kimirey ee
<i>Ee ee sosyo ee</i>	Ee ee the plam frond ee
<i>Ee hoyya</i>	Ee hoyya
<i>Kemechachek sosyo ee</i>	We want the palm frond ee

Sererwo is a broom used symbolically to sweep away childhood and other uncleanness. *Sosyonteeet* (a palm frond) is a symbol of plenty as well as goodwill during transition to another stage in life such taking up leadership position.

4.1.2.3.2 Herbs

Song 9: *Bukwo (Bukweet: Terminaliamollis)*

<i>Bukwo ee</i>	Bukwo ee
<i>Ee ee bukwo ee</i>	Ee ee bukwo ee
<i>Bukwo ee</i>	Bukwo ee
<i>Ooyyaya bukwo</i>	Ooyyaya bukwo

Bukwo is a medicinal herb, whose leaves are bitter. Its mention reminds the initiates of how painful a cut is and thus they should be prepared for the painful knife.

4.1.2.3.3 Spear and Shield

Song 9: Long'eet (Weapon) - Defending Land

<i>Aa ee ho woyye</i>	Aa ee ho woyye
<i>Nama long'eet chorweenyu</i>	Pick your spear my friend
<i>Aa ee kemeche Kataleel</i>	We want Katalel

Chorus

<i>Aa ee ho woyee</i>	Aa ee ho woyee
<i>Nama long'eet cherweenyu</i>	Take your spear my friend
<i>Aa ee ho woyye</i>	Aa ee ho woyye
<i>Nomwo longeeet cherwenyu</i>	Take the shield too my friend

The poet in the song is calling upon the warriors of the community to take up their arms to defend the community. The poet makes it clear which territory is being referred to: Katalel. The spear alluded to in the song by the poet is one of the weapons that the Sabaot use to defend their land.

4.1.2.3.4 Milk

Song 10: Chemomo (Feeding the community)

<i>Okuru Chemomo ee</i>	Sing for me chemomo ee
<i>Hoyee howoye hoyee</i>	Hoyee howoye hoyee
<i>Hoyee ho</i>	Hoyee ho
<i>Otuwoon kumnyeet ee ho</i>	Place ugali here
<i>Hoyee ho</i>	Hoyee ho
<i>Otuwoon cheeko</i>	Place milk here

<i>Otuwoon beenyto</i>	Place meet here
<i>Tomotee ee ho</i>	Bring also tobacco here
<i>Hoyee ho</i>	Hoyee ho

This is a time for ostentation. It is time to show off how the family can feed the entire community. When an item is named in the song/lyric, it is brought by women and in plenty and placed before the initiates dancing until the last, followed by ululations. To be able to feed an entire community is a sign of power and means to face any difficulty. The second part is sung after all the items have been brought. Then the items are given to the participants who also act as choral respondents.

This song/poem demonstrates the initiates' readiness to feed the wider community – and enhance the idea of sharing. Once one is initiated he should be in a position to provide not just to his immediate family, but to the entire Sabaot community.

Certain performances will take place depending on the composition of the initiates. There could for instance be initiates whose parents are dead and the protected ones (*tekeryonteet*). For those who do have either parents or all are dead, elaborate rituals are performed at the graveside. The initiates stand at the grave of one's parent whereby some little soil is scooped and smeared on the initiate and some beer poured on the grave. This is meant to unite the spirit of the departed with the child to avert any displeasure.

An initiate may sing a song to address his departed parent(s) to promise, that he will defend the homestead according to how they would have wished if they/he were alive. The images in the songs portray the steadfastness of the initiate to carry out the wishes of the departed parent.

After seclusion, the mothers of the initiates take cow horn filled with butter to anoint and bless initiates by rubbing on the head of each of them. As the mothers place the butter on the initiates' heads the fathers are supposed to remove it and place it in the mother's

cloth. An initiate may refuse to allow them to do this until he has been promised a cow or two.

Song 18: *Anyiny tany* (A cow is sweet)

Sol: <i>Oyye laleyyo momoo!</i>	Oyye laleyyo Mother
Respondents: <i>Sumberere chekaap</i>	Sumberere milk in the guord
Repeat Choral: <i>Sumberere</i>	Sumberere
Sol: <i>Mayey lanee momoo?</i>	What do I do mother?
Sol: <i>Salu cheeko momoo?</i>	So that I partake of milk mother?
Sol: <i>Cheekaab teta wee?</i>	Cow milk wee?
Sol: <i>Mawoo seteet moomo?</i>	Will I go for a raid mother?

Here, questions are posed on behalf of the initiate. The mother is asked what should be done so that the initiate gets milk. Not just milk from any animal. It is cow milk. The answer obviously is to raid enemy community. The song encourages or rather urges initiates that to be man enough and want to own herds of cattle and many milk gourds (*sabaayweet*), one should go for a raid.

The cow is a symbol of wealth and raiding represents manliness and audacity. Note that there is emphasis on calling out mother. It is mothers who cry the most should their sons be killed and they too celebrate the most should their sons succeed at raiding.

4.1.2.3.5 Tobacco

Song 14 (a): *Tomoteet* (Vagina) – Last minute, anything goes, brace for trouble

<i>Ayeko yeko</i>	It is dawn, it is dawn!
<i>Ayeko yeko</i>	It is dawn, it is dawn!
<i>Wemwochi kabsanteet</i>	Go and tell the husbands
<i>Kuyeyta Kumbaut</i>	To prepare the oil skin

<i>Wemwochi Kabkorkeet</i>	Go and tell the wives
<i>Kuyeyta tomoteet</i>	To prepare tobacco
<i>Yeekoneet ee</i>	Ee the biting cold of the dawn
<i>Yeko yeko, yeko</i>	Dawn dawn, dawn

Yeekoneet means the coldness (biting coldness) of cockcrow (early hours of morning). Tobacco takes a different meaning altogether. Tobacco here refers to the vagina and women are urged to prepare because the initiate is about to become a man. His penis is about to be sharpened for the vagina.

4.1.2.3.6 Granary

After the ritual of shaving, the female initiates enact the entering of the granary to take out maize (four times) before enacting grinding on the grinding stone, peel a plantain, slash, and cook with salt. The entering into a granary four times is meant to emphasise that a woman should not tire cooking for her people.

4.1.2.3.7 Ape

Song 19: *Chebyongeet chiito* (The man is an ape) –Intruder/enemy

<i>Ng'o nyo mure lakaam?</i>	Who is that crossing the mountain?
<i>Ng'o nyo muree lakaam nyewu lekwaab chebyongeet</i>	Who is that crossing the mountain who looks like an ape's child?
<i>Haa chebyongeet chiito Ng'o nyo kaam amiik</i>	Haa the man is an ape Who is that eating our food?
<i>Ng'o nyo kaam amiik nyewu lekwaab chebyongeet</i>	Who is that crossing the mountain who looks like an ape's child?
<i>Haa chebyongeet Haa chebyongeet chiito</i>	Haa an ape Haa the man is an ape

The Sabaot inhabit Mt Elgon. Reference is made of this ancestral home in songs for instance in the verses above for example, “who is that crossing the mountain?” The respondents say it is an ape. Ape here is not the animal you know. Ape here takes a different meaning within this dedicated arena to mean an enemy. In the collective psyche of the Sabaot, these are people from outside communities who occupy land along the mountain. The song thus teaches vigilance. It discourages laziness and one has to be active and always alert to danger. Take care of community property lest an enemy (*cheebyongeet*) devours it.

Song 20: *Keetaara sikirieet* (A donkey has kicked me) – But nobody believes

Sol:	<i>Keetaara sikirieet</i>	A donkey has kicked me
Resp:	<i>Keetaara sikirieet rongeet</i>	A donkey has kicked me, a lie
	<i>Keetaara sikirieet</i>	A donkey has kicked me
	<i>Keetaara sikirieet rongeet</i>	A donkey has kicked me, a lie
Sol:	<i>Kuurwo ng’o baaba</i>	Who will call father for me?
Resp:	<i>Kuurwong’o baaba</i>	Who will call for me father
	<i>Kumotwooy</i>	Kumotwooy
	<i>Kuurwong’o baaba</i>	Who will call father for me?
	<i>Kuurwong’o baaba</i>	Who will call for me father
	<i>Kumotwooy</i>	Kumotwooy

If one is not alert then the enemy (*sikirieet*, donkey) will kick your back. This is when you will call for help of a stronger and brave colleague (*Matwooy* – was a historically brave man who killed a leopard). It can refer to the elders too. It is inconceivable that a donkey (a symbol of an enemy) would actually kick you hence the addition of ‘a lie’ in the song. Admitting that you have been kicked by a donkey is a sign of weakness, but nevertheless father Kumotwooy (symbol of help from fellow community members) is there for you.

4.3.1 Images of power and their meaning in songs on circumcision day

The image of the mountain is a recurrent theme in most of Sabaot initiation oral poems sung on circumcision day. In one of the songs, which even without the mention of its

name, it is clear that the mountain in question is Mt Elgon often extolled in reverence by the Sabaot as their territory. The poem underscores the essence of land as basic to the Sabaot person.

In the poem Song 1: *Tulwenyoo (Our mountain)*, the community is posing a rhetorical question on, who will guard this cherished commodity on behalf of the community.

It goes:

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| <i>Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo</i> | 1.
Who will guard our mountain? |
| <i>Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo leyye</i> | Who will guard our mountain leyye? |
| <i>Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo</i> | Who will guard our mountain? |
| <i>Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo leyye</i> | Who will guard our mountain leyye? |
| | 2. |
| <i>Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo</i> | Who will guard our mountain? |
| <i>Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo leyye</i> | Who will guard our mountain leyye? |
| <i>Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo</i> | Who will guard our mountain? |
| <i>Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo leyye</i> | Who will guard our mountain leyye? |
| | 3. |
| <i>Tonoon, tonoon kekosung</i> | Be steadfast so we see |
| <i>Haa kanaming rotweet</i> | The knife will catch you |
| <i>Nto wuchikey kaptaske</i> | Or just run to the Teso |
| <i>Nto kewo kapkutosik</i> | Or just run to the Kitosh |

The song is performed mostly by women, but men are free to join in. It is a clarion call to the defenders of the community to be wary of intruders. The fact that the call for security comes from the women folk puts into question the role played by men. In the traditional African setting, security is a reserve for men. In the poem, the women are calling on the male community of the society to take up on their responsibility of defending the community. But at the same time they define who a man is; someone who has faced the knife. Only a circumcised male member of the community is allowed to

assume the role of the community's warrior. That is why the poem seems to chastise those who are afraid of facing the knife to run away to neighbouring communities and hide there for they are deemed unfit to defend the community's land.

Below is another poem **Song 19: *Chebyongeet chiito*** (The man is an ape) that illustrates the image of power by using the mountain motif. It goes:

<i>Ng'o nyo mure lakaam?</i>	Who is that crossing the mountain?
<i>Ng'o nyo muree lakaam nyewu lekwaab chebyongeet</i>	Who is that crossing the mountain who looks like an ape's child?
<i>Haa chebyongeet chiito Ng'o nyo kaam amiik</i>	Haa the man is an ape Who is that eating our food?
<i>Ng'o nyo kaam amiik nyewu lekwaab chebyongeet</i>	Who is that crossing the mountain, who looks like an ape's child?
<i>Haa chebyongeet</i>	Haa an ape
<i>Haa chebyongeet chiito</i>	Haa the man is an ape

Again, the mountain is understood to be Mt Elgon, which the Sabaot claim to be their ancestral home. In the poem above, those reciting keep asking the question: "Who is that crossing the mountain?" The respondents say it is an ape. Ape here is not the animal you know. Ape here deviates from the basic referential meaning for it is uttered in a dedicated arena, which now means an enemy. In the collective psyche of the Sabaot, an ape referred to here are people from outside communities who occupy or trespass the land along the mountain. The song thus teaches vigilance. It discourages laziness and one has to be active and always be alert to danger as each person is warned to take care of community property lest an ape (*chebyongeet*) devours it.

4.3.1.1 The knife/The Cut as an image of power

The knife is the tool that facilitates the cut. Therefore, the knife/the cut becomes an image of because the physical cut marks the climax of the initiation process into adulthood and moranhood. The cut is feared, dreaded and revered in equal measure.

The poem (**Song 1, Stanza 3: Tonoon (Be steadfast)**) goes:

<i>Tonoon, tonoon kekosung</i>	Be steadfast so we see
<i>Haa kanaming rotweet</i>	The knife will catch you
<i>Nto wuchikey kaptaske</i>	Or just run to the Teso
<i>Nto kewo kapkutosik</i>	Or just run to the Kitosh

The novices are called upon to be steadfast, an encouragement to the young boys who are about to become men since what they are about to undergo is a test of their manhood. The poem calls upon the boys to be brave and show their resolve to defend the community by bravely undergoing the cut. In order to instil the essence and urgency of the knife, the poet warns the initiates, who are mentioned by name that “The knife will catch you”. This is to imply that there is no room for cowardice, there is no chance for turning back. The dictates of tradition must be adhered to and no one can forfeit that.

At the same time, cowards are advised to seek refuge well in advance in neighbouring communities among them the Teso. The Teso are a Western Kenya community who are not known for circumcising their boys as a way of initiating them into adulthood. The poet does not mince her words on the consequences should one wince or cry during the cut. Since circumcision is the highlight of initiation, it is meant to ascertain ones readiness to face adversity and put to test ones fortitude. Should a man “cry the knife”, then one has to bear shame for the rest of his life.

Besides being taunted by age mates and other members of the community throughout his life, tradition does not allow a man of such great cowardice to head the community’s warriors. He is not allowed to lead any military operation or even make any suggestion appertaining to military tactics. Since he failed the fundamental test of bravery, he is deemed not strong enough to face an enemy let alone come up with war strategies. At best he can be a foot soldier.

Another consequence that the poet spells out is that the same man cannot drink beer from the same pot with other brave men during any ceremony. Essentially, having failed the bravery test such character is not fit enough to commune with brave men. He is considered to be of a lower caste; that of uncircumcised boys. Tradition says that even if one undergoes the physical cut, but still cries in the process, then such a person has not become a man and thus cannot be in the presence of 'men'.

For a Sabaot woman to marry a coward is unheard of. Word quickly spreads around about the display of cowardice during the cut by the character. As such many women, who have come of age to marry, will avoid him. It is not only the women, but families whose daughters have reached the prime age of marrying. Such a suitor will be quickly turned away since he will not only bring shame to the family, but will also bring to the family the dreaded blood of cowardice.

Cowardice is not only displayed when an initiate winces or cries, it can also be evidenced in the occasion an initiate refuses to enter the circumcision arena. As with the earlier offences, this display of cowardice has its penalties. First, the initiate is forcibly put into the arena where he/she undergoes the cut. After the cut, the parents of the culprit have to make extra payment to the initiator. The parents must also provide a ram to the men who held him down for their 'cleansing' since he has bestowed a curse upon them. In the event the initiate in question is a girl, the man who held her down must hold three others on subsequent occasions in order to avoid death by ill luck.

The Sabaot tradition does not also forgive girls who show cowardice during the cut. In the case of women, the consequences are severe as compared to those meted out against ladies. Such a woman becomes a victim of the tradition. To begin with, tradition does not allow her to be married as a first wife, a position that is cherished by every other Sabaot woman, according to Ibrahim Kamasai. Additionally, she cannot be married by a young man even if he already has a first wife since she is seen as an object that can weaken a potential soldier of the community. Consequently, such women are married by old men.

She is also barred from marrying a younger man because she is seen as someone who is careless and cannot take care of her in the event her man falls ill. Her cowardice is equated to being irresponsible.

Equally tradition does not allow such a woman to participate in future circumcision events. The society sees her as someone who can bring bad-luck to the initiates if she is left to witness a circumcision ceremony. For the community to be sure that she does not sneak in, men secure her by tying her to the centre post of her house whenever there is a circumcision ceremony. Ideally, the community excommunicates her from such social events. It is a curse that she has to bear for the rest of her life.

Fellow women do not spare such characters. As if the punishment is not enough, such characters are subjected to jeers and taunts from fellow women. They inform them that cowards should join the Kitosh, Karamojong and the Teso men and women. This is a wounding insult and a constant reminder of their acts of cowardice. It is also a warning to future initiates, who may harbour such ideas as of not adhering to the requirements of the community's circumcision regulations as dictated by tradition.

4.3.1.2 Spear as an image of power

The spear is a weapon for defence and attack among the Sabaot. The image of the spear features prominently in Sabaot male initiation poetry as shown in one of the poems below.

Song 9: Long'eet (Spear and Shield) – To defend land

<i>Aa ee ho woyye</i>	Aa ee ho woyye
<i>Nama long'eet chorweenyu</i>	Pick your spear my friend
<i>Aa ee kemeche Kataleel</i>	We want Katalel

Chorus

<i>Aa ee ho woyee</i>	Aa ee ho woyee
<i>Nama long'eet cherweenyu</i>	Take your spear my friend
<i>Aa ee ho woyye</i>	Aa ee ho woyye

This is an equivocal call to arms to defend the land. It urges the initiates to defend the Sabaot territory such as Katalel. The spear, arrows and shield (long'eet) are very important weapons among the Sabaot. In fact, during seclusion the new initiates are taken through the artisanship of making arrows, spears and shields.

The night performance is interrupted momentarily with sessions with the circumciser and the instructor, who teaches through sayings/proverbs and poems the ways of the community. Some of the poems are forbidden to be repeated outside the context. Some can be repeated outside the context like the above poem.

There are songs sang in the evening as the initiates come back from the day long sojourn to call nearby relations. One of such is called Chemomo, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

4.3.1.3 Creator as an image of power

The Sabaot appreciate the import of power and believe in the existence of a superior power – the all powerful creator. These creator (Yeyiin) is revered and considered to be above the human race. The poem below reinforces that belief and consciously, the Sabaot hold the view that no other force, other than the creator, can therefore, challenge them.

The poem (Song 21: Yeyiin (Creator)) goes:

<i>Ng'onye riibe biiko tukuul – ee</i>	Who takes care of all people
<i>Ing'ing' yeyiin</i>	It is you the Creator
<i>Ing'ing' yeyiin</i>	It is you the Creator
<i>Ing'ing' yeyiin</i>	It is you the Creator
<i>Ing'ing' yeyiin</i>	It is you the Creator
<i>Ing'ing' Yeyiin</i>	It is you the Creator

Viewed together with the first two poems, the third poem teaches that the only powerful force is the creator (Yeyiin) not those from outside the community. It also teaches the

initiates on spiritual dependence on God during their daily activities. It is normally sang before dawn or before one starts the day's activities while in seclusion.

4.3.1.4 Cow as an image of power and wealth

From several interviews with respondents, it is clear the Sabaot hold dear their livestock particularly cattle. According to the Sabaot, whoever has cattle has wealth. And whoever has wealth has power. The cow, therefore, holds an important place in the life of a Sabaot as the **Song 18: *Anyiny tany* (A cow is sweet)** below demonstrates.

<i>Sol: Oyye laleyyo momoo!</i>	Oyye laleyyo Mother
Respondents: <i>Sumberere chekaap sabayweet wee</i>	Sumberere milk in the guord
<i>Repeat Choral: Sumberere</i>	Sumberere
<i>Sol: Mayeey lanee momoo?</i>	What do I do mother?
<i>Sol: Salu cheeko momoo?</i>	So that I partake of milk mother?
<i>Sol: Cheekaab tetee wee?</i>	Cow milk wee?
<i>Sol: Mawoo seteet moomo?</i>	Will I go for a raid mother?

In this poem, the poet poses questions on behalf of the initiate. The mother is asked what should be done so that the initiate gets milk. Not just milk from any animal. It is cow milk. The answer obviously is to raid enemy community. The song encourages or rather urges initiates that to be man enough and want to own herds of cattle and many milk gourds (*sabaayweet*), one should go for a raid. The cow is a symbol of wealth and raiding represents manliness and audacity – far from the normal desire to own a cow. Here, meaning goes to another level altogether. Note that there is emphasis on calling out mother. It is mothers, who cry the most should their sons be killed and they, too, celebrate the most should their sons succeed at raiding.

How Sabaot initiation oral poems use stylistic devices to articulate power contest

This section set out to explore the images of power within the context of the performance of the Sabaot initiation poetry. From the poems analysed, it is evident that Sabaot poets engage in the construction of images of power through initiation poetry. On close scrutiny is clear that these images are purposefully used as means of contesting power relations with neighbouring communities as well as maintaining a cultural identity.

Identity according to (Rupensinghe and Tishkov, 1996, p.14) is seen as a continuous and dynamic development emphasizing both existential and social components. This is because the search for identity is a powerful psychological driving force which has propelled human civilizations over time. In the above poems, there are myths of origin, enemy images demonizing the other in line with ethnic relations studies concomitant with findings in (Rupensinghe and Tishkov, 1996).

Several other scholars as (Baker, 1983) argue that attributes of identity whether real or imagined, significantly shape an individual's (or group's) perception of an behavior toward himself and others. In the poems analysed, it is clear the Sabaot as a group recognize itself as possessing attributes of courage that distinguish it from others. The mountain (Mt Elgon) and the territory around it is a resource. And, therefore, the Sabaot claims of ownership have to be reinforced by way of differentiation between the "We" and "they" by imputing positive values to themselves and negative ones to the opposing group, Rupensinghe and Tishkov, 1996).

From a psychological point of view, (Cauldwell, 1977) contends that a poem may act as an instrument used to produce collective emotion. He says: "poetry combined with dance, ritual and music becomes the greatest switchboard of the instinctive energy of the tribe, directing it into trains of collective action, (Cauldwell, 1977, p.34).

The Sabaot poems discussed above point to what (Levine and Campbell, 1972) call ethnocentrism, which they say is an attitude or outlook that takes account of multiple points of view, but regards those of the other cultures as incorrect, inferior or immoral.

According to these scholars, each group nourishes its own pride and vanity, boasts itself superior, exalts its own divinities and looks with contempt outsiders, Levine and Campbell, 1972). It is for this reason that such epithets as the uncircumcised arise in Sabaot initiation poetry directed at their neighbours Teso, and Bukusu who the Sabaot regard as born of girls.

All these is because of power contest constructed by Sabaot poets in intiation poetry in the sense of what Carmack in (Tedeschi and Albany, 1974, p.3) describe as interpersonal or intergroup influence directed toward change and involving manipulatory and contested forms of influence.

It is clear from this section that Sabaot initiation ceremony is an arena images of power gain their contextual meaning.

4.2 Performance and its significance in power relations contest

This study examines performance, its significance in constructing and contesting of power relations between the Sabaot and the neighboring communities especially the Bukusu and the Teso. If we follow Carlson's view of performance, is it therefore possible to examine the performance of Sabaot initiation poetry which in this case is not an everyday activity? The assumption here is that power relations contest is an everyday occurrence in which its approach is borrowed from the community's reservoir always stocked up during initiation period.

(Schechner, 2002) says that performance marks identities and with time, reshape and adorn the body and tell stories. He continues to say that performance of art, rituals, or ordinary life – are made of – “twice behaved behaviours (i.e. physical or verbal actions that are not for the first time, prepared, or rehearsed). The object of this chapter thus is to reveal how utilised performance (set apart from the daily performances) mark the identity of the Sabaot culture from the rest and how in particular it enables them contest power relations in an attempt to ensure the continuity of the community and protecting resources they believe are theirs.

The performance of male initiation poems therefore becomes indispensable because performance according to (Foley, 1995) is understood as the enabling event. It is the event that provides the traditional context within which interpretations of initiation poetry can find its true meaning.

(Bauman, 1986) says oral performance, like all human activity, is situated, its form, meaning and functions rooted in culturally defined scenes or events – bounded segments of the flow of behaviour and experience that constitute meaningful contexts for action, interpretation, and evaluation. The first task in the study of performance events, therefore, is to identify the events in ways consistent with how locals understand them and the relevance to the analytical problems at hand.

4.2.1 Initiation as a performance arena for Sabaot oral poetry

Initiation is one rite of passage that has very significant meanings, attached to it. As observed in the literature reviewed, no individual would transact on behalf of its community (Sabaot) without undergoing this rite. And because of its social significance it follows that one has to pay attention to the dynamics of the initiation process.

It means thus that an individual has to learn some, if not all the activities, that take place during the initiation period. The initiation process is accompanied by poems which every member has to learn to sing, recite or chant. Even with changes taking place as a result of the Christian religious influence, individuals feel compelled to learn these initiation poems.

Learning of these poems is through observation and participation in the initiation process. There are those skilled and experienced singers or reciters. These skills and experiences are acquired through regular attendance of initiation ceremonies and interest depending on an individual. Those who end up with this experience always go on to become sponsors (*matireniik*) of initiates. They will always be involved in performing

and leading the initiates during the initiation process. Such individuals, both men and women end up becoming professionals in this area.

There are those part-timers. They could be experienced but are not instructors/sponsors, but they would always actively participate in the initiation process. Then the other members of the community participate in the performance and singing/chanting of those initiation poems. They need not be invited, but would just attend because it is an open ceremony to the members of the community. Foreigners/outsideers may also attend just to revel, but not enter restricted areas where rituals of the community are performed.

Initiates, too, can lead in the singing of the initiation poems. In the case of the initiates they sing their own praises, the community, clan and the family. The frenzied crowd sings and dances to these songs and other singers join in singing the initiates' praise or even challenge the initiates by questioning their bravery.

4.2.2 Contexts of oral initiation poetry performance

The performance of initiation oral poetry is highly specialised. Its performance is set apart from the daily performances of other activities. Children are always discouraged to imitate the initiation process by adults because of the implications such performance carried. This we think confirms (Bauman, 1992) definition of performance as a mode of communicative behaviour and a type of communicative event. There is no way, therefore, adults would stand by watching children perform initiation poems. Such initiation poems again are loaded with images and taboo words that are only sanctioned within a dedicated arena.

The performance of initiation poetry commences with *Ketich Chepkwoyeet* (announcing readiness for initiation), which is followed by alternate ceremonies depending on whether one of the initiates is a first born. The alternate ceremony is called *Yeeitaap Kotiek* (literal: oxen of the arrows). The second context of performance is *Kanureetaap Poryonteet* preparing the circumciser's traditional beer. The third context is the actual

day of initiation which starts from sunrise to the next sunrise when one undergoes the cut.

The fourth context is that of *lapchineet*, which comes four-days after circumcision and finally the fifth context in that of *ng'etuneet* (taking up of age-set/name). The five contexts are discussed below followed by the structure and meaning of some of the poems.

4.2.2.1 *Ketich Chepkwoyeet* (announcing intention to be initiated)

This is a period when initiates express their readiness to be initiated. They communicate their readiness by grouping themselves during moonlit nights to sing and dance. It is sometimes referred to as *chimuchii rotweet* (teasing the knife). Both boys and girls come together to participate in this performance. The younger children also take part in this performance by joining their brothers and sisters in chanting their announcement. Soon, the parents find out their sons or daughters are ready to become men and women. Once the declaration is made, the parents join the fray of performance by acting out their role of making the stage ready for the circumcision of their children.

They therefore start making preparations for the initiation ceremony. One must have enough food and maize for the brewing of traditional beer. It is at this point that some parents find it difficult to raise these enormous resources for the ceremony. Others try to talk out of the ceremony their children often leading to disastrous acts. If a parent does not have enough resources he may consult his clan for help and because of the shame this kind of thing always bring every parent is always monitoring the growth and development of his child so as not to be caught off guard should the child demand to be circumcised.

The songs or poems sung during this period of announcing are almost the same as those to be sung during the actual initiation day. The only difference being the absence of taboo words though sometimes they can be sneaked in the structure of the poems.

Structure and Meaning of *Chepkwoyeet* poems

The structure as mentioned elsewhere earlier is the same only that the reciters/singers use their creativity to enhance each performance. (Harvilahti, 1994) too, note that the composer of a folk poem unsuspectingly and without recourse to any material that seem similar to his poem composes along some of these poems while performing.

The poems, thus, recited are not drawn from memory in fixed forms, but are dependent on the creativity of the performer. It is therefore important to recognise the tenets of the Oral-Formulaic Theory created by Milman Parry and Albert B. Lord why they say, (Harvilahti, 1994) that the performers of narrative poetry did not reproduce their poems as complete either drawn from memory [but used its lead as internalised system of poetic devices or formula technique] providing the basic tools (formulas, themes and story patterns) for the production of folk poetry that varied from one performing situation to another, what is referred to as composition in performance.

The initiates draw an internalised system in order to create poems that will drive home their plea to be initiated. This is possible because they have been participants in previous performances they have attended or heard others sing them.

To understand the structure and meaning of Cheepkoyeet poems, let us examine one below:

Poem 5: *Kisoobe rootweet* (to tease the knife)

Stanza 1

<i>Hoyye woleyye</i>	Hoyye woleyye
<i>Haa Haaha</i>	Haa Haaha
<i>Woyye leyye</i>	Woyye leyye
<i>Haaha haaha</i>	Haaha Haaha
<i>Aroor keeltaab cheerobeey</i>	The path is clear like the river
<i>Haa haaha</i>	Haaha Haaha
<i>Woyye woleyye</i>	Woyye woleyye

Haaha

Haaha

The poem is performed by boys and girls who desire to be initiated. The poem captures the mood of the occasion. There is a sense of excitement and expectation as the would-be initiates want their message to reach their parents. The aura of performance under the moonlit night is heightened when more performers in the face of their young siblings join the ensemble. As they come together and raise their voices in unison, indeed the parents cannot avoid, but listen to the message of the song and heed to the desires of their children. As a result, the parents will start preparing for the ritual. This message is reinforced and reiterated through the refrain of the chorus *Aroor Keeltaab Cheerobeey* – meaning ‘the road is clear as the course of river’ which is continually repeated.

Stanza 2

<i>Aweeti Kaapmama Cherang’any</i>	I’m going to Cherang’any my uncle’s place
<i>Haa hoo woyye ho awetii ee.</i>	I’m going
<i>Sayyoyye Kaapketis nyobotaay</i>	I will cross all ridges to get there
<i>Suwayiit Kong’asis nyobotaay</i>	I will reach there by sunrise

This tells the parents that the initiate is ready even to go to the uncle’s place. An uncle is a very important person. Cherang’any is revered as a hill where the sun rises and great rivers have their source there. The initiate is ready to cross this arduous terrain, risking his life by travelling all night to arrive there at sunrise. This occurs especially when the parents are not wealthy enough to raise the resources required for the performance of the ritual. The desire in the voice of is evident in the sense that the persona is willing to sacrifice his/her life to meet the cost of the initiation. This is underscored by the dangerous and torturous journey about to be made by the persona in order to get assistance from the uncle. Also in the performance of the song, the poet underscores the importance of community members in general, and close family members in particular.

Stanza 3

<i>Hoyye ho woyye babaayye</i>	Hoyye woyye my father
<i>Woyye babaay yye</i>	Hoyye woyye my father
<i>Kiibo keny ng'alechu</i>	Our forefathers practiced it
<i>Kesichee ng'o kuwonaat</i>	Who was born circumcised?

This stanza is a plea to the father that the persona has accepted and is ready to be immersed in the ways and traditions of the community because he has come of age. The persona informs the parents that he/she is aware that no one is born circumcised and since his/her forefathers went through the same experience, why not him?

Coming of age for the initiate means that he is ready to execute communal duties required of him by his new status. The novice is therefore ready to go hunting; defend the community and is ready to lead provided the community gives him the green light. By accepting to initiate them into the ways of the Sabaot then it shows acceptance into senior membership in the community. These poems are replete with images that are used to demonstrate awareness of the community's demands and responsibilities that await the initiates to be.

4.1.2.2 *Yeiytaap Kotiek* (alternate ceremony)

This is a participant specific ceremony. The ceremony is a reserve of parents, who are initiating their children for the first time; first-born children. Those who have once initiated their children need not perform this ceremony. This ceremony is significant in two ways. First, it is a time when the new parent feeds his age-mates/age-group because since they took up their age-group there is no elaborate ceremony in between for one to feed his age-set.

The new parent chooses one special friend out of his age-set who in turn brings a bull and from then on, a permanent relationship will have been sealed. The rest come to

accompany their age-mates/age-sets in this ceremony, but it doesn't mean they are any lesser age-group members.

The slaughtering and the skinning of the bull/ox is done in a special way. The bull/ox that is slaughtered is skinned using arrows. No knives are used in skinning but can be used in cutting the throat and carcass (body) into pieces. This is the reason it is called *yeiytaap Kotyiek* (the oxen/bull of the arrows). The other significance is that of the 'new parent's contribution to the welfare of the entire Sabaot community. Any addition to the defenders of the community or senior personnel is a welcome thing. Therefore the new parent becomes a very important member of the community. In the event that an initiate excels at war, the praises earned trickles down to the father of the hero. The clan of the hero's mother may also stake claim to the prowess of the warrior if their clan is known to be fearless. All these, however, can only happen if one has been initiated.

Performance of songs during alternate ceremony (*Yeiytaap Kotyiek*)

The performance of the songs of this ceremony is done in a special manner since they are meant to invite the selected age mates of the father of the initiate. The song also designates special names to the four invitees who are in turn informed of their respective roles.

Song 6: *Sosyoo* (Palm frond)

Hee ee ho woyya sosyo ee	Hee ee ho woyya our palm frond ee
<i>Kemehachek sosyontenyoo</i>	We want our palm frond
<i>Kimireey eeh</i>	Kimireey eeh
<i>Hee ee ho woyya sosyo ee</i>	Hee ee ho woyya our palm frond ee
<i>Kemehachek sosyonteenyo</i>	We want our palm frond

Song 7: *Sererwo* (Broom)

<i>Kale sererwo ee</i>	I have said the broom
<i>Woyyee sererwo ee</i>	Woyyee our broom ee
<i>Kemechachek sererwuo ee</i>	We want the broom ee
<i>Kale Kimireey sosyo ee</i>	Kimireey I have said the palm frond

Song 8: *Ankurwo* (Tropical Oregano –Oregano ssp)

<i>Ankurwo ho woyya</i>	Ankurwo ho woyya
<i>Hee ee hoo woyya</i>	Hee ee hoo woyya
<i>Hoo woyya</i>	Hoo woyya
<i>Kemechachek ankurweenyo</i>	Kemechachek ankurweenyo

Songs 6, 7, 8 above welcomed four age mates who are designated the names Among’o, Antowo, Pasuben and Nkiyoweey, who had specific roles spelled out below.

1. *Among’o* gave a cow
2. *Antowo* gave a bull
3. *Pasuben* Never drank water, but milk (friend’s home)
4. *Nkiyoweey* Adviser (carried a stick) herder.

These special friends share special meat parts from the bull killed and slaughtered in a special manner. The meat is eaten with some herbs to cement these special titles and relationship. During song 7 anointing oil (*mwaayta*) is poured freely in libation.

The ceremony is carried out in a secret place where passers-by cannot access neither can children, for instance, near a river deep in the bush. The water in the river is for cleansing. Beer is taken there too. This is a one-day ceremony where the meat is roasted and all of it is eaten and so is the traditional brew. The ceremony starts at dawn through to dusk involving only invited guests by the initiates.

It is a time friends exchange gifts to strengthen their relationship, which should last a lifetime. It is a relationship that extends to their children who should remain family friends even after the death of their parents. In such instances if one does not take a gift in return their offspring or grandchildren are under obligation to take it the next time there is such a ceremony.

4.1.2.3 *Kanureetaap poryonteet* (Preparation of beer for ceremony)

This ceremony takes place three days to the actual day of initiation proper. This is the day when the fermented flour is roasted in preparation of the traditional beer. Women are called upon to do the work of roasting the fermented flour in big pans made from cut drums.

A little beer is prepared in a small pot, which will be consumed by the circumciser and his team of instructors/sponsors. The songs/poems sung are heavy in meaning. The initiates display their strength and readiness for the knife. The dancing is highly symbolic and demonstrates their bravery to face the tasks that will be brought forth.

To prepare this beer means a lot to the initiate. There is no backing off because by dipping one's hand in the pot to mix the flour with ground millet (yeast), it is a sign that you and not anybody else waits for the knife. Backing off after this brief, but highly symbolic ceremony can invite the wrath of the community members. The accompanying (songs/poems) are similar in structure with the rest of initiation songs only that the soloist and performers use their creativity to adapt the poems to the situation.

Song 2: Bukwo (Bukweet:*Terminaliamollis*) - during *Kanureetaap Poryonteet*

<i>Bukwo ee</i>	Bukwo ee
<i>Ee ee bukwo ee</i>	Ee ee bukwo ee
<i>Bukwo ee</i>	Bukwo ee
Ooyyaya bukwo	Ooyyaya bukwo

<i>Sererwo ee</i>	Broom ee
<i>Ee ee sererwo ee</i>	Ee ee the broom ee
<i>Ee hoyya</i>	Ee hoyya
<i>Kemechachek sererwenyo</i>	We want our broom
<i>Sosyo Kimirey ee</i>	Sosyo Kimirey ee
<i>Ee ee sosyo ee</i>	Ee ee the plam frond ee
<i>Ee hoyya</i>	Ee hoyya
<i>Kemechachek sosyo ee</i>	We want the palm frond ee

Bukwo is a medicinal herb, whose leaves are bitter. Its mention reminds the initiates of how painful a cut is and thus they should be prepared for the painful knife.

Sererwo is a broom used symbolically to sweep away childhood and other uncleanness.

Sosyonteet (a palm frond) is a symbol of plenty as well as goodwill during transition to another stage in life such as taking up leadership position.

4.1.2.4 Performance on the actual day of initiation

The ceremony begins early in the morning with the slaughtering of a bull. The initiates are paraded in a line on the order that had already been agreed upon after the parents had acknowledged the need to initiate their children. As mentioned earlier, the order of birth is very important. In the event there are both sexes, traditionally, boys are to lead the girls. A girl can be a leader in the case where there are only girls.

As part of their preparation, chime from a bull's bowels is smeared on the initiates' faces before they set off to call nearby relatives. The journey to the relatives' homestead is a spectacle that involves dancing and singing. In every homestead they visit they must sing and dance with vigour and energy as is required by tradition.

4.1.2.5 Performance at night

Here, the performance of initiation poems reaches fever pitch. It is the time the initiates show their prowess in dancing and singing to demonstrate their readiness for the challenges of manhood in the Sabaot community. It is a time for the initiates to dance in the performance arena for the purposes of demonstrating their bravery and readiness to join warrior-hood. Darkness comes with some degree of fear. By subjecting the initiates to moving around the village visiting homes in darkness, their bravery is being put into test. The initiates go round the homesteads of each initiate to dance on ‘their soil’ as a way of pitching in their land. The homestead there takes the symbol of Sabaot land as each initiate is exhorted to jump firmly and steadily on their soil and protect homeland from ‘rain’.

‘Rain’ here takes a symbolic meaning as one is directed not to let rain leak into one’s house. Any leakage is seen as intrusion and may cause discomfort deep in the night. Any communities getting into the heartland of the community are deemed an intrusion and hence as a source of discomfort. The performance of the song imparts in the initiates their role of defending the community.

Song 9: *Long’ eet* (Spear and shield) - To defend land

<i>Aa ee ho woyye</i>	Aa ee ho woyye
<i>Nama long’ eet chorweenyu</i>	Pick your spear my friend
<i>Aa ee kemeche Kataleel</i>	We want Katalel
Chorus	
<i>Aa ee ho woyee</i>	Aa ee ho woyee
<i>Nama long’ eet cherweenyu</i>	Take your spear my friend
<i>Aa ee ho woyye</i>	Aa ee ho woyye
<i>Nomwo long eet cherwenyu</i>	Take the shield too my friend

This is an equivocal call to rise up in arms to defend the land. It urges the initiates to defend the Sabaot territory such as Katalel. The poet is conscious of his mission of imparting in the minds of the initiates their prime duty of defending the community. The

poet alludes to symbols of the community's defence: the spear, arrows and the shield. These are very important weapons among the Sabaot. In fact, during seclusion the new initiates are taken through the artisanship of making arrows, spears and shields. This prepares them for the duty ahead of not only carrying arms, but also how to make and use them.

At night performance is interrupted momentarily with sessions with the circumciser and the instructor who teaches through sayings/proverbs and poems the ways of the community. Some of the poems are forbidden to be repeated outside the context. Some can be repeated outside the context. There are songs sang in the evening as the initiates come back from the day long sojourn to call nearby relations. One of such is called *Chemomo*.

Song 10: *Chemomo* (Feeding the community)

<i>Okuru Chemomo ee</i>	Sing for me chemomo ee
<i>Hoyee howoye hoyee</i>	Hoyee howoye hoyee
<i>Hoyye ho</i>	Hoyye ho
<i>Otuwoon kumnyeet ee ho</i>	Place ugali here
<i>Hoyee ho</i>	Hoyee ho
<i>Otuwoon cheeko</i>	Place milk here
<i>Otuwoon beenyto</i>	Place meat here
<i>Tomotee ee ho</i>	Bring also tobacco here
<i>Hoyee ho</i>	Hoyee ho

This is a time for ostentation. It is time to show off how the family can feed the entire community. When an item is named in the song/lyric, it is brought by women and in plenty and placed before the initiates dancing until the last, followed by ululations. To be able to feed an entire community is a sign of power and means by which to face any difficulty.

The second part is sung after all the items have been brought. Then the items are given to the participants who also act as choral respondents. This song/poem demonstrates the initiates' readiness to feed the wider community – and enhance the idea of sharing. Once one is initiated he should be in a position to provide not just to his immediate family, but to the entire Sabaot community.

Certain performances will take place depending on the composition of the initiates. There could, for instance, be initiates whose parents are dead and the protected ones (*tekeryonteet*). For those who do have either parents or all are dead, elaborate rituals are performed at the graveside. The initiates stand at the grave of one's parent whereby some little soil is scooped and smeared on the initiate and some beer poured on the grave. This is meant to unite the spirit of the departed with the child to avert any displeasure.

An initiate may sing a song to address his departed parent(s) to promise, that he will defend the homestead according to how they would have wished if they/he were alive. The images in the songs portray the steadfastness of the initiate to carry out the wishes of the departed parent.

Song 11: *Iraat moyeet* (Fasten your stomach) - Bravery and Perseverance

<i>Iraat moo we</i>	Fasten your stomach
<i>Iraat moo</i>	Fasten your stomach
<i>Iraat moo kekosuung</i>	Fasten your stomach we see what you are made of
<i>Irib komwoong mobuun beey ee</i>	Keep watch of your home lest it is rained on ee
<i>Hoo oo hoyye woleyye</i>	Hoo oo hoyye woleyye
<i>Aroor keeltaab cheerobeey</i>	The path is clear like a river
<i>Mmm mokerur ee Cherang'any</i>	Mmm it is dawning at Cherang'any
<i>Oborochii Kuchoo</i>	Clear the way for him to come
<i>Hoyye wo leyye Mm</i>	Hoyye wo leyye Mm

Yoo kayyeech koreet kohiloon

When dawn is screaming

These songs are interspersed with chants by elders who order the initiate to be brave not to fear the knife lest he be killed. The fear of the knife ('crying the knife') among the Sabaot brings shame upon a family. The initiate is not supposed to speak during these chants, only nodding in agreement. Speaking would mean questioning authority.

As the day breaks, the songs also change. The initiates, thus, understand that things are now 'bad'. Most of the initiates no longer sing any of the poems. It is the revelers who take full charge of the proceedings. The initiates are taunted and teased to run away at the hour to avoid any embarrassment in the full gaze of the community and sunrise.

Song 12: *Yekoneet* (Dawn) - The knife is fast approaching

<i>Ayeko yeko</i>	It is dawn, it is dawn!
<i>Ayeko yeko</i>	It is dawn, it is dawn!
<i>Wemwochi kabsanteet</i>	Go and tell the husbands
<i>Kuyeyta Kumbaut</i>	To prepare the oil skin
<i>Wemwochi Kabkorkeet</i>	Go and tell the wives
<i>Kuyeyta tomoteet</i>	To prepare tobacco
<i>Yeekoneet ee</i>	Ee the biting cold of the dawn
<i>Yeko yeko, yeko</i>	Dawn dawn, dawn

Yeekoneet means the coldness (biting coldness) of cockcrow (early hours of morning). Tobacco takes a different meaning altogether. Tobacco here refers to the vagina and women are urged to prepare because the initiate is about to become a man. His penis is about to be sharpened for the vagina.

This is when boys have to be separated from the men. As the initiates are taken to the river (*Kapchai*) early in the morning there are songs/poems performed at this stage. They

are meant to harden the hearts of the initiates. Comparisons are drawn from the history of the community of those who cried the knife and the consequences they suffered. Very brave people, who went on to fight their enemies after circumcision are brought to the attention of the initiates. By invoking the names of the community's warriors, the speaker provides role models to the initiates in order to inspire them to undergo the ritual bravely.

Song 13: *Mobuun beey* (Lest it rains) – Vigilance and bravery

<i>Haa haa woyee leyye</i>	Haa haa woyee leyye
<i>Haa</i>	Haa
<i>Iriib Komwong' mobuun beey</i>	Keep watch on your home lest it is rained on
<i>Kiibo ng'ala somoyneen</i>	These things belonged to Somoyneen
<i>Kii ng'ala kipnyikeu</i>	These things belonged to Kipnyikeu

Names of prominent people or preceding age-sets (Somoyneen, Kipnyikeu) are highlighted so as to remind the initiates that even they can undergo the rite successfully as did their predecessors. Again, the theme of defending the community is reinforced as the initiates are reminded to keep watch lest their home is rained on.

4.1.2.6 From the river back home

'All is over' is the message that echoes through the songs. The performers exonerate themselves from the proceedings from this point. Everybody else washes his/her hands and leaves the initiates' destiny in their own hands. The stage is set and initiates are warned that whatever happens at the arena is actively of their own choice. The sponsors make it clear they have played their part and now the cut is for the initiates to endure.

Song 14: *Iyeetkeey aboyyo* (Defend Yourself)

<i>Hoo hoo</i>	Hoo hoo
<i>Iyeetkey we murooni</i>	Defend yourself warrior
<i>Kumomwook kumereet</i>	Let this foreskin open it
<i>Yoo kayyech kekosuung'ee</i>	When day break comes so we see
<i>Kumomwook kumereet</i>	Let this foreskin open it
<i>Iyeetkeey wo weri ee</i>	Defend yourself you boy
<i>Hoo hoo kumomwook kumereet</i>	Hoo hoo let this foreskin open it
<i>Oo chematakwey</i>	Oo bye bye
<i>Chematakwey – haa</i>	Bye bye haa
<i>Iwisano yo kanaam ee</i>	Where will you run to when it is held
<i>Iwetyano yo kanamuung' ee</i>	Where will you go when it holds you
<i>Iriib Komwoong' mobun beey ee</i>	Keep watch on your home lest it is rained on

The taunts are meant to instil courage to face the knife. The initiate remains silent and static as the jibes flow. No dancing, no movement. The symbol of rain and the homestead features prominently again. The stage at which things have reached, the initiate cannot just run away. He is helpless and he is surrounded. It is over for him. “Where will you run to when it (penis) is held?” is evidence the initiate cannot escape the knife.

4.1.2.7 Performance after the cut: *Cholyeet/Seriet*

Immediately the circumciser blows the whistle to signal the end of the operation, women burst into high pitched ululation (sikarkar) to express joy at the bravery of the initiates. Men join in dancing and praising Kaporeet the ordinal position of the first on the line. He is believed to have successfully led the rest to a successful initiation campaign. Prizes, gifts start pouring in. The mothers of the initiates bedeck their sons and daughters with highly symbolic gifts.

The mothers may anoint their sons with fat from cow milk. The fat is a wish of prosperity of their initiates (now chemeriik). The fat from the cow in particular elevates the significance of cattle. It is from this point that the initiate starts to appreciate ownership of cattle. The journey into ownership of cattle starts here. The initiates know there will be marriage soon after emerging from seclusion and taking up an age-set. Songs/poems sung at this point serve to reiterate the graduation into manhood or womanhood in the case of girls.

Song 15: *Cholyeet/Seriet*

<i>Woyye cholyeet cholyeetab kuboreet</i>	Sing me a song of the firstborn
<i>Mm mm nyenyacheek cholyeet</i>	Mm mm the song is ours
<i>Mm mm nyenyacheek korkeet</i>	Mm mm the wife is ours
<i>Chemeyii we kiriibo</i>	The barren one kiriibo
<i>Haa haa</i>	Haa haa
<i>Chematwar we kiriibo</i>	That who can't carry kiriibo
<i>Haa haa</i>	Haa haa
<i>Momo nyokiyi kucho sang!</i>	Mother who gave birth to come out
<i>Haa haa</i>	Haa haa
<i>Mwochi momo kucho koo</i>	Tell mother to come in the house

Haa haa

Haa haa

Ntonyo manayi kucho sang

Let the barren go out

Haa haa

Haa haa

Usually the women ululate while happily sprinkling flour over the crowd.

In the first stanza, other age sets would join the circle to dance. In the second, the barren were mocked as they had nothing to rejoice for they have not added to the community's preservation. This underlines the importance of contributing to the community's future. The newly married with no children are not accepted to dance in the circle even if they belong to the age set.

Dance styles: *Cholyeet and Njoliit*

The first dance style is called Cholyeet. The revelers, especially the elders quickly regroup after the initiates have been cut to perform this category of songs. They are performed by women on one side and men on the other. Thereafter, they embark on Njoliit. This is orderly dancing and the songs are evocative. The songs cover the imperiousness of the community and a call to right whatever wrong that may have happened to the community. It is also a re-affirmation of the glory of a respective pororyeet (ridge) and the community at large.

4.1.2.8 Songs that accompany rituals during seclusion

Song 18: *Anyiny tany* (A cow is sweet)

Sol: *Oyye laleyyo momoo!*

Oyye laleyyo Mother

Respondents: *Sumberere chekaap sabayweet wee*

Sumberere milk in the guord

Repeat Choral: *Sumberere*

Sumberere

Sol: <i>Mayey lanee momoo?</i>	What do I do mother?
Sol: <i>Salu cheeko momoo?</i>	So that I partake of milk mother?
Sol: <i>Cheekaab teta wee?</i>	Cow milk wee?
Sol: <i>Mawoo seteet moomo?</i>	Will I go for a raid mother?

In this poem, the poet poses questions on behalf of the initiate. The mother is asked what should be done so that the initiate gets milk. Not just milk from any animal. It is cow milk. The answer obviously is to raid enemy community. The song encourages or rather urges initiates that to be man enough and want to own herds of cattle and many milk gourds (*sabaayweet*), one should go for a raid.

The cow is a symbol of wealth and raiding represents manliness and audacity. Note that there is emphasis on calling out mother. It is mothers who cry the most should their sons be killed and they too celebrate the most should their sons succeed at raiding.

Song 19: *Cheebyongeet chiito* (The man is an ape)

<i>Ng'o nyo mure lakaam?</i>	Who is that crossing the mountain?
<i>Ng'o nyo muree lakaam nyewu lekwaab chebyongeet</i>	Who is that crossing the who looks like an ape's child?
<i>Haa cheebyongeet chiito Ng'o nyo kaam amiik</i>	Haa the man is an ape Who is that eating our food?
<i>Ng'o nyo kaam amiik nyewu lekwaab cheebyongeet</i>	Who is that the mountain who looks like an ape's child?
<i>Haa cheebyongeet</i>	Haa an ape
<i>Haa cheebyongeet chiito</i>	Haa the man is an ape

As explained elsewhere, reference is made of this ancestral home (Mt Elgon) in songs, for instance, in the verses above for example, “who is that crossing the mountain?” The respondents say it is an ape. Ape here is not the animal as we know. Ape here takes a

different meaning within this dedicated arena to mean an enemy. In the collective psyche of the Sabaot, these are people from outside communities who occupy land/territory along mountain. The song thus teaches vigilance. It discourages laziness and one has to be active and always alert to danger. Take care of community property lest an ape (*cheebyongeet*)/enemy devours it.

The seclusion period begins immediately the initiates leave the circumcision arena. The initiates a week before they are circumcised do the building of a house for *chemerik*. This house, called *mentyeet* will be the initiates' home for the entire seclusion duration.

Tradition does not permit any member of the community to visit the initiates in their *mentyeet*. Tradition only provides for the instructors and *mweniik* or *chemkeshishak* (uninitiated girls) who serve food prepared by the mothers of initiates. The food is always carried in baskets metaphorically called *ng'enyta* (salt lick drawn from caves) and may be eaten only by their servants should it remain.

The same tradition spells out regulations guiding the conduct of the initiates during seclusion. First, the initiates are not allowed to see or come into contact with any member of the opposite sex. Also the initiates are not allowed to have a bath in the entire seclusion period. However, they are allowed to cleanse themselves using leaves from special herbs. With regard to their beddings, the initiates cannot use skins or hides, but can use special leaves from *wusweet* or *ankurwet* (Tropical Oregano –Oreganosp) plants. If they dry, the leaves are to be kept aside for burning at the end of seclusion period. The initiates' diet comprises milk, vegetables and starchy food.

Another code to be followed is the initiates' attire. They can only put on a special robe known as *artiit* – cowhide with hair removed. This robe is very important for one may swear by it because one will never put it on in his lifetime. As for the female initiates, they must always lie on their backs for the vagina to heal.

Four days after circumcision initiates undergo a ritual called *lapchineet* (partial release from seclusion). It is done after three days if one of the *chemeriik* is a *tekeryonteet* (the protected one) and the traditional beer for this occasion called *lapayweek* will have been brewed. The girls are shaved each by her sponsor/instructor using a hand held ordinary blade. The boys can be shaved by any of the instructors in the kraal. Initiates may refuse to be shaved by the instructor until the instructor gives him a small present.

Milk is spit on their heads or traditional beer before shaving commences. If a *tekeryonteet* (protected one) is among them an oval reed basket (*taseet*) is held near him/her and a drum is played during the shaving process. The songs sung during this time are largely praise songs. They include:

Song 16: *Kaporet* (First born)

<i>Ai nyi kaporet eeh</i>	Thanks our first born
<i>Awei nyi kaporet kasubayiing</i>	Greetings our first born
<i>Nte kiteechi rotweet, nte teyiss tukul</i>	Had you feared the cut, others would the same
<i>Kiyony, kuyong'I chuut tukul</i>	As you kept still, others did so
<i>Yukuu muren</i>	You are very brave.

A mother would also sing a song referring to the stripes on her stomach from the tight thong she wears after childbirth.

Song 17: *Irat moyeet* (Fasten your stomach)

Kyaraat moet kayiing My waist is stripped from the bridging cord.
Nte keriiir, kawetyonu? Had you cried it would have disappointed me.
Ang'arakaat kemuch But now you have completed your initiation.

After shaving the initiates take bath. Boys take bath in the kraal while their penises are inspected to ascertain their due healing. The girls' instructors also inspect the wounds of the girl initiates and administer the necessary medicines. They then light a fire to burn

the pile of hair and pieces of their genitals lest an evil person finds them. It also symbolizes severing any relations with childhood. All these preparations are meant to lead the initiates into contact with the community's animals; *melilio* (leopard) for girls and *ng'etunyto* (lion) for men.

Once the initiates have been shaved and taken bath a bird is released by one of the instructors to signify their partial release. Women now break into song in praise of the brave initiates. One initiate after the other in their order of initiation goes back to the house. The circumciser standing at the door has to lecture an initiate before entering. One is told how to behave especially on obedience towards parents, his seniors and mutual respect for his age mates. The need to speak the truth is overemphasised.

The circumciser also cautions a male initiate against other people's wives especially making love to another man's wife and if it should happen then it should be in the bush not in his or another man's bed as this would amount to courting death. After all these instructions the parents go into the house to spit beer on the initiates as a sign of blessing.

Two days later, the initiates have to paint their faces and body with white clay. This period is characterised by other restrictions on top of the earlier ones. Initiates are forbidden from walking along or crossing paths. If one has to cross, he/she would have to break off leaves to step on. There is no taking chance for this period of seclusion is fraught with dangers. Initiates are not to visit people's houses, touch meat or beer, stay away from the fireplace, or touch blood. One should take utmost care not to injure oneself and draw blood out of the body. Besides greetings are by word of mouth –no shaking of hands not even among themselves. No initiate is to engage in sexual intercourse. Speaking loudly or raising any alarm is forbidden. The initiates can greet each other by hitting each other severely on the ankle using sticks they normally carry. Initiated persons take the sticks from the initiates and squeeze the wrist between them. The pain is to be borne without grumbling.

During this period initiates are expected to be waking up at dawn to go outside to sing songs that recount the tasks of a man and girls those of a woman. Some of these songs are vulgar and are always intended for the other initiates in seclusion.

There are four standardised songs:

Song 20: Keetaara Sikiriet (A donkey has kicked me)

Sol: <i>Keetaara sikiriet</i>	A donkey has kicked me
Resp: <i>Keetaara sikiriet rongeet</i>	A donkey has kicked me, a lie
<i>Keetaara sikiriet</i>	A donkey has kicked me
<i>Keetaara sikiriet rongeet</i>	A donkey has kicked me, a lie
Sol: <i>Kuurwo ng'o baaba</i>	Who will call father for me?
Resp: <i>Kuurwong'o baaba</i>	Who will call for me father
<i>Kumotwooy</i>	Kumotwooy
 <i>Kuurwong'o baaba</i>	 Who will call father for me?
<i>Kuurwong'o baaba Kumotwooy</i>	Who will call for me father Kumotwooy

If one is not alert then the enemy (*sikiriet*, donkey) will kick your back. This is when you will call for help of a stronger and brave colleague (*Matwooy* – was a historically brave man who killed a leopard). It can refer to the elders too. It is inconceivable that a donkey (a symbol of an enemy) would actually kick you hence the addition of ‘a lie’ in the song. Admitting that you have been kicked by a donkey is a sign of weakness, but nevertheless father Kumotwooy (symbol of help from fellow community members) is there for you.

Song 21: Yeyiin (Creator)

<i>Ng'onye riibe biiko tukuul – ee</i>	Who takes care of all people
<i>Ing'ing' yeyiin</i>	It is you the Creator
<i>Ing'ing' yeyiin</i>	It is you the Creator
<i>Ing'ing' yeyiin</i>	It is you the Creator
<i>Ing'ing' yeyiin</i>	It is you the Creator

Viewed together with the first two songs, the third song teaches that the only powerful force is the creator (*Yeyiin*) not those from outside the community. It also teaches the initiates on spiritual dependence on God during their daily activities. It is normally sung before dawn or before one starts the day's activities while in seclusion.

Since it is a period of healing, few rituals are performed with a lot of time devoted to lessons on the history of the community and culture. These lessons are taught by way of songs, riddles, stories and proverbs. It is during this period that initiates gain insight into the secrets of the community. Only young virgin are allowed to take food to the place where secluded boys are.

A month later, initiates are to be released to cross paths and visit friends though with painted faces. A lavish party is again organised by parents of the initiates where beer pots for specific visitors have to be availed. There should be a pot of beer for:

- The sponsors/ instructors
- The father's clansmen
- The father's age-set
- Mothers' brothers (the uncles)
- The men, who have married from the host clan (*kabikoisiek*) i.e. the son's in-law of the can.
- A special pot for the father's friend. This is usually the man the father of the initiate stood next to when they were circumcised.

This special guest often supplies a bullock. No animal is slaughtered on this particular occasion. When evening draws near, initiates collect *lapotiik* (Sodom apples) in baskets for they will have to go out pelting people's houses as a way of demanding gifts. This is accompanied with distinctive whistling and singing. The woman in the house then takes millet, sorghum or other foods available including maize. If the house they come to has a

tekeryonteet (protected child) they just whistle and sing. The practice is done when there is moonlight and from then on, an initiate is free to cross a path. This is why the practice is called *chisir areet* (crossing a path). The moon is considered a good celestial body and every ritual associated with good spirits is held in moonlight. This practice though has waned.

The age-sets are determined in terms of the period of initiation through circumcision. It is a grading system that recognises seniority. Girls do not have age sets but they do belong to the age set of their husbands. This age-set system is cyclic. The age set names are listed below:

Nyonki
Sowe
Alimomo
Kwoimet
Kapelach
Chepkoy
Rimrim
Ndatwa
Simoineen
Maina
Korongoro
Chumo

The mothers of the initiates take cow horn filled with butter to anoint and bless initiates by rubbing on the head of each of them. As the mothers place the butter on the initiates' heads the fathers are supposed to remove it and place it in the mother's cloth. An initiate may refuse to allow them to do this until he has been promised a cow or two. The initiates then burst into song with this starter:

What is the age-set?
The age-set that will never end?

From this point they are no longer *chemeriik* but *ng'unyiik* – in reference to the wet butter that covers them. They are uncovered and for the first time they come face to face with their parents. It is a proud moment. *Ng'unyiik* may now go home and sit outside receiving gifts and food from people. Initiated girls may now come and live with the boys – no sexual intercourse is allowed though but you never know, the young men want to test their second spears! Each initiate receives new clothes and the traditional clothing (*artiit*) is now shed and never to be worn again.

Four days later the final ritual of shaving again takes place at the home of one of the parents. A big fire is lit for burning the hair after which the new men can now laugh. The girls are to enact all the chores associated with women while their female sponsors spit beer on their heads. For instance, they have to enact the entering of the granary to take out maize (four times) before enacting grinding on the grinding stone, peel a plantain, slash and cook with salt. The entering into a granary four times is meant to emphasize that a woman should not tire cooking for her people. The father slaughters a ram and is cut into four pieces which the *matiryonteet* (instructors) spits on as a way of blessing them and feeds the new men and women to remove the restriction on meat and salt.

Before entering into the houses of their mothers the girls are to be blessed by an old woman sitting at the door and using milk from a black cow, spit blessing to the *ng'unyanteeet* as one enters the house for four successive times. This is done in all the father's wives houses and father's neighbours too. As the ceremony draws to an end, the *matiryonteet* (instructor) asks each new man and woman what name one wishes to take. This practice is no longer common.

A final ritual for men involves taking all the tools, weapons and shields blessed by the *matiryonteet* (instructor) by way of spitting beer, chewed *moykutwet* root and smearing them with fat. A strong and agile *matiryonteet* takes some of these implements and runs

with them while the young men carrying theirs run after him as fast as they can. This cycle of initiation comes to an end with contests in shooting arrows at targets, throwing spears and clubs. From then on, one becomes a Sabaot man, and a girl will have been transformed to a Sabaot woman.

4.2.3 Performance as arena for power relations contest

This section set out to demonstrate how meaning is constructed among the Sabaot community through the performance of initiation poetry. Clearly, the study has shown that performance of the initiation poetry is significant in constructing and contesting power relations among the Sabaot.

It is established that the performance of the Sabaot initiation poetry marks the identity of the Sabaot culture from the rest and how in particular it enables them contest power relations in an attempt to ensure the continuity of the community and protecting resources they believe are theirs. The performance of male initiation poems therefore becomes indispensable because performance is a facilitating event. It is the event that provides the traditional context within which interpretations of initiation poetry can find its true meaning.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

After addressing ourselves to the objectives of the study and attempted a response to the research questions, the present chapter seeks to provide a summary of the findings. The chapter will also draw conclusions derived from the findings of the study. Finally, the chapter shall present recommendations. The recommendations are aimed at proposing research possibilities in Sabaot oral poetry in particular and African oral literature in general. It also suggests the usefulness of the findings for several fields of study. From the outset and informed by (Chinweizu et.al, 1980) that Oral literature is an incontestable reservoir of values, sensibilities, aesthetics through which traditional thought and imagination is achieved, the study sought to interrogate the construction of images of power in the initiation poetry of the Sabaot to enhance and or maintain their cultural identity.

This chapter also gives a summary in view of the assertion by (Furniss and Gunner's, 1995), that oral poetry is a domain in which individuals build, maintain or severe social-cultural relations and where individuals or communities wittingly articulate commentary upon power relations in society through oral poetry.

5.1 Summary of the Findings

By collecting and analysing initiation oral poems of the Sabaot, this study has amply demonstrated how the target community contests power relations and create, maintain and enhance their cultural identity. The study has identified loads of images and symbols attendant to the Sabaot initiation poems which through analysis shows the community's imagined superiority that helps them maintain their relations with neighbouring communities.

The first chapter provided the background to the study by citing the place of oral literature in African literature scholarship. In the first chapter we also stated the problem of the study as the need to fill the gap in collection and critical analysis of Sabaot initiation oral poetry. The chapter has also presented the research objectives and the accruing research questions that the study sought to answer together with the assumptions of the study. The reviewed literature immensely informed the study with regard to oral poetry in general and initiation poetry in particular.

We also sought to provide the study's theoretical orientation by exploring literature on the two selected theories: ethnopoetics and psychoanalysis. The critical area of research methodology was also addressed. In this we were able to determine how to access the ritual performances especially the Sabaot initiation oral poetry for recording and analysis and the findings presented in this thesis.

The second chapter set out to explore the idea of power as it manifests itself in the performance of the Sabaot initiation oral poetry. The chapter also explored the social, traditional and cultural contexts that enable the performance of the community's initiation poetry. It sought to highlight the rites of passage celebrated among the Sabaot. It goes ahead to contextualise the Sabaot initiation ceremony. The section also provides a critical scrutiny of the images of power and how they construct meaning in the Sabaot initiation ceremony.

The third chapter focuses on the performance of the Sabaot initiation oral poetry and its essence. We have gone ahead to define the term performance and contextualized it to the performance of the Sabaot initiation oral poetry. We have established that Sabaot initiation is one rite of passage that has very significant meanings, attached to it. Indeed no individual would transact on behalf of its community (Sabaot) without undergoing this rite. And because of its social significance it followed that one has to pay attention to the dynamics of the initiation process. It was realised that the performance of initiation

oral poetry is highly specialised. Its performance is set apart from the daily performances of other activities.

This chapter also presents the findings of the study in terms of the stylistic devices evident in the Sabaot initiation oral poetry. It is an extensive introspect of the poetics of initiation poetry by way of analysis using the *infra-cultural model* of folklore. It also looks at the stylistic devices employed by the performers of the initiation poetry and analyses meanings of identifiable images that portray identity construction among the Sabaot. This chapter has also addressed itself to the significance of performance in identity construction. The meaning of performed poems is found in stylistic expressions as well as their performance. The poems gathered from the research field were recorded and transcribed in Sabaot language with loose translations placed next to it for ease of comparison and understanding followed by its analysis.

5.2 Conclusion

Like any other culture, the Sabaot initiation process is fast changing due to modern western education. The initiation period has been reduced to merely a month from the ancient six months. The greatest challenge was brought by the advent of Christianity and economic difficulties. Although this practice is still performed, the scale of its performance has drastically reduced. People are hard pressed to pay school fees for their children and therefore cannot afford to splurge on a lavish ceremony.

In Kobsiro, Kaptama and Kwanza Division at a place called Matumbei stretching into Uganda, the practice is still very much alive. The upper belt of Saboti division where there is a large concentration of Sabaot, the practice is still performed although on a small scale compared to the ones mentioned above. Most parents nowadays choose to take their children to hospital and thereafter invite sponsors/instructors to their homes to talk to their children.

Female circumcision is unjustifiably labelled female genital mutilation, at least in the eyes of some Sabaot, for the practice is being challenged by Government. It is interesting though to note that even with NGOs 'pouring' money to fight this practice many Sabaot

women adamantly refuse to drop it. They believe it is the only surest way to be inducted into womanhood. They insist that the bonding and affirmation of bravery by withstanding the cut is the best way they can claim to be Sabaot.

As for the men, some are decrying the erosion of this custom when parents take their children to hospital. Through traditional circumcision they claim, one can affirm his belonging to the Sabaot community and will make one fight for Sabaot identity. That is probably why they fondly refer to themselves as *Pigaap Koreet* (owners of the land).

5.3 Recommendations

This study restricted itself to oral male initiation poetry of the Sabaot yet the constructs of power relations are to be found in genres like ritual or dances in different communities. As advocated by (Alembi, 2002) in his *infra-cultural model* (entering into the rhythm of life of the study community) of Ethnopoetics, further studies can also be conducted on Sabaot myths as constructed in their oral poetry.

That the study limited itself to the Sabaot community by delving into the collective point of view of the Sabaot poets' imagination, the same can be researched among other communities.

Also, controversial as it may sound, research can be done on the construction of images in Sabaot women initiation poetry and their role in shaping the woman's position in this community.

The Sabaot have fought bitter wars with the Bukusu and other neighbouring communities, involved in raids and counter-raids for cattle with the Pokot and Karamojong both in Kenya and Uganda. Therefore, this study can be useful for researchers involved in conflict and conflict resolution studies by re-thinking the understanding of such words as 'cattle rustling' for among pastoral communities, the practice is not criminal.

CITATIONS

- Abrams, M. H. (1993). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Heinle & Heinle.
- Alembi, E. (2002). *The Construction of the Abanyole Perceptions on Death through Oral Funeral Poetry*. (PhD Dissertation)
- Andrzejewski, BW, Pilaszewicz. S, Tyloch, W. (1985). *Literatures in African Languages. Theoretical issues and Sample Surveys* edited. Warsaw: Cambridge University Press.
- Anttonen, P. (1994). *Ethnopoetic Analysis and Finish Oral Verse*. In Siikala, A-L and Vakimo, S (eds). *Songs Beyond the Kalevala. Transformations Oral Poetry*. Tampere.
- Ashcroft, B, Griffiths, G and Tiffinm, H. (2006). *The Post-Colonial studies reader*. London; New York: Routledge
- Babbie, R. E. (1992). *The practice of social research*. Belmont Calif: Wadsworth Pub.Co.
- Baker, D.G. (1983). *Race, Ethnicity and Power*. London: Routledge and Keegan Paul.
- Bauman, R. (1986). *Story, Performance, and Event: Contextual Studies of Oral Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bauman, R. (1992). *Folklore, Cultural Performances and Popular Entertainments*. London: Oxford University Press
- Blalock, H. M. (1989). *Power and Conflict: Towards a General Theory*. Newbury Park. CA: Sage Publications.
- Bressler, C. E. (2007). *Literary Criticism: An introduction to theory and practice 4th Ed*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall
- Burbank, J.(1978). *Structure, Sign and Function: Selected Essays* by Jan Steiner, Mukarovsky. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Burns, L.A. (1968). *Of Powers and Their Politics: A Critique of Theoretical Approaches*. Englewood cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall.
- Carlson, M. (1996). *Performance: A Critical Introduction*. London: Routledge.
- Carter, R & Nash, W. (1990). *Seeing Through Language*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Caudwell, C. (1977). *Illusion and Reality*: London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd

- Chinweizu, O. J and Ihechukwu, M. (1980). *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature*. London: KPI
- Crossman, A. (2013). 'Qualitative Research Overview. Sociology about.com/ud/research/overview-Qualitative-Research method.htm.about.com.sociology.
- Finnegan, R. (1970). *Oral Literature in Africa*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- _____. (1977). *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance and Social Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Foley, M.J. (1995). *The Singer of Tales in Performance*. Bloomington and Indiana.
- Forster, M. E. (1927). *Aspects of the Novel*. Victoria: Penguin Books.
- Furniss, G. & Gunner, L. (1995). *Power, Marginality and African Oral Literature*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Githiga, J. (1996). *Initiation and Pastoral Psychology: Toward African Personality Theory*: USA, Githiga International Ministries.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday
- Golafshani, N. (2003). *Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. The Qualitative Report*, 8(4), 597-606. Retrieved (October 2017), from [http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR?QR8-4\)golafshani.pdf](http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR?QR8-4)golafshani.pdf)
- Goldschmidt, W. (1976). *Culture and Behaviour of the Sebei: A study in Continuity and Adaptations*. Berkeley, L.A. University of California Press.
- Guazzo, G. (2008). 'Qualitative Methods' in International Encyclopedia of the social Sciences [http://www.encyclopedia.com/iG2.3041532.html/\(05/08/2014\)](http://www.encyclopedia.com/iG2.3041532.html/(05/08/2014))
- Guth, H & Rico, G. (1997). *Discovering Literature*: New Jersey: Blair Press BookPrentice Hall.
- Harvilahti, L. (1994). *The Ingrian Epic Poem and its Models*. In Siikala, Anna-Leena and Vakimo, Sinikka (eds.): *Songs Beyond the Kalevala. Transformations Oral Poetry*. Tempere.

Hoepfl, C. M. (1997). *Choosing qualitative research: A primer for technology education researchers*. Journal of Technology Education, 9(1), 47 – 63. Retrieved September 29, 2017, from <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JTE/v9n1/pdf/hoepfl.pdf>

Hull, W. R. (1972). *Munyakare: African Civilisation Before the Batuuere*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

Huntingford, G.W.B. (1927). *Miscellaneous records relating to the Nandi and Kony* J.R.A.I., LVII, pp.417-461.

Hymes, D. (1981). *Breakthrough into performance*. In D. Hymes, “*In vain I tried to tell you*”: Essays in Native American ethnopoetics. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Jung, C. (1938). *Psychology and Religion*. New Haven CT: Yale University Press.

Kakai, W. (2000). *History of Inter-Ethnic Relations in Bungoma, Mt. Elgon & Trans-Nzoia Districts*. PhD Diss.; Kenyatta University.

Kai, E.T. (1967). A comment on disguised observation in sociology, pp. 366-373 *Social problems* Vol.14, No. 4 (spring, 1967) Published by: Oxford University Press on behalf of the Society for the study of social problems.

Kenyatta, J. (1938). *Facing Mount Kenya*. Nairobi: Kenway Publications.

Kesby, J. (1977). *The Cultural Regions of East African*. London: Academic Press.

Kipkorir, E. B. (1973): *The Marakwet of Kenya: A Preliminary Study*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd.

Kothari, C. R. (2004), *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*, (Second Edition), New Age International Publishers.

Krueger, R. A. & Casey, M. A. (2000) *Focus Group: A Practical Guide for Applied Researchers* (3rd Edition). Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.

Larsen, I.A. (1984). ‘*Vowel Harmony in Koony*.’ Occasional Papers in the Study of Sudanese Languages 3:29-46. University of Juba.

Leon, P. (1974). *Aryan Myth: History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe*. New American Library. New York: United States.

Levine, A.R and Campbell, D.T. (1972). *Ethnocentrism: Theories of Conflict, Ethnic Attitudes and Group Behaviour*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

- Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Lord, A.B. (1960). *The Singer of Tales*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press
- Mackenzie, B. (1982). *The Process of Fiction: Contemporary Stories & Criticism*. London: Harcourt Bruce & World.
- Maquet, J. (1971). *Power and Society in Africa*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company
- Merriam, A. (1964). *Anthropology of Music*. Bloomington Indiana: Northwestern University Press.
- Miruka, O. (1994). *Encounter with Oral Literature*. Nairobi: EAEP
- Mugubi, J. (2017). *Style in literature: A Practical approach to literary analysis*. Nairobi: Royallite Publishers
- Mugenda, O.M. & Mugenda, A.G. (2003). *Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. Nairobi: Acts Press.
- Mukarovsky, J. (1978). *Structure, Sign and Function*. (eds) John Burbank and Peter Steiner. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Mwanzi, H. (1977). *A History of the Kipsigis*. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau
- Ochieng', R. W. (1985). *A history of Kenya*. Nairobi: Macmillan Kenya.
- Okpewho, I. (1991): *The Epic in Africa. Towards a Poetics of Oral Performance*. (Revised Edition) New York Columbia University Press.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Rupensinghe, K & Tishkov A.Valery. (1996). *Ethnicity and Power in the Contemporary World ed*. Tokyo: United Nations University Press.
- Russet, B and Starr, H. (1981). *World Politics: The Menu for Choice*. New York: W.H Freeman and Company.
- Schapera, I and Cass, F. (1970). *A Handbook of Tswana Law and Custom*. London.
- Schechner, R. (2002). *Performance Theory*. www.iconsilume.com/2009/01/richar-schechner-performancetheory.

- Sherridan, A. (1980). *Foucault*. London: The Athlone Press.
- Sutton, J. (1973). *The Archaeology of the Western Highlands of Kenya*. Nairobi: British Institute in Eastern Africa.
- Taylor, J. (2002). “*The Music of the Sabaoth: Bridging Traditional and Christian Contexts*.” (Ph.D Dissertation), the University of Edingburgh
- Tedeschi, J.T & Albany, S. Eds. (1974). *Perspectives on Power*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.
- Tedlock, D. (1983). *The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania
- Thompson, D. (1975). *What to Read in English literature*. London: Heinemann.
- Tongco, M.D.C. (2007). Purposive Sampling as a Tool for Informant Selection. *A Journal for Plant, People and Applied Research*, 5, 147-158.
- Towett, T. (1979). *Oral (Tradition) History of the Kipsigis*. Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau.
- Wainaina, M. (2002). *The Worlds of Gikuyu Mythology: A Structural Analysis*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya.
- Weatherby, J. (1967). *Aspects of the Ethnography and oral tradition_of the Sebei of Mount Elgon*. (Unpublished master’s thesis). Makerere University College, Kampala, Uganda.
- Wellek, R & Warren, A. (1962): *Theory of Literature*. New Haven, Conn: Penguin Books
- Were, G. (1968). *East African through a Thousand Years*. Nairobi: Evans.
- Wilson, J.W. (1973). *Power, Racism and Privilege*. New York: The Macmillan Company.

APPENDICIES

Appendix I: Songs

Song 1: *Tulwenyoo* (Our Mountain)

1.

Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo

Who will guard our mountain?

Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo leyye

Who will guard our mountain leyye?

Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo

Who will guard our mountain?

Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo leyye

Who will guard our mountain leyye?

2.

Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo

Who will guard our mountain?

Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo leyye

Who will guard our mountain leyye?

Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo

Who will guard our mountain?

Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo leyye

Who will guard our mountain leyye?

3.

Tonoon, tonoon kekosung

Be steadfast so we see

Haa kanaming rotweet

The knife will catch you

Nto wuchikey kaptaske

Or just run to the Teso

Nto kewo kapkutosik

Or just run to the Kitosh

Song 2: Bukwo (Bukweet: Terminaliamollis)

Le Bukwo yee

Le Bukwo yee

Oh yaya Bukwo

Oh yaya Bukwo

Le Bukwo yee

Le Bukwo

Oh yaya Bukwo

Oh yaya Bukwo

Le Kopsiro yee

Le Kopsiro yee

Oyaya Kopsiro
Le Kapsiro yee
Oh yaya Kopsiro
Le Bukwo yee
Oh yaya Bukwo
Le kamureen eh
Oh yaya Bukwo
Le Kamureen eh
Oh yaya Bukwo

Oh yaya Kopsiro
Le Kopsiro yee
Oh yaya Kopsiro
Le Bukwo yee,
Oh yaya Bukwo,
Home of brave men,
Oh yaya Bukwo,
Home of brave men,
Oh yaya Bukwo.

Le Kapsiro yee
Oh yaya Kopsiro
Le Kamureen eh
Oh yaya Kopsiro

Le Kapsiro yee
Oh yaya Kopsiro
Home of brave men
Oh yaya Kopsiro

Song 3: (Pigaap Koreet): Owners of the land

Le kyamwochi pigaap koreet
Oh ee kyamwochi pigaap koreet, koko

Oh ndekiwo kelyaap lagam
Kale piko che kimweyto piko
Oh ee ngimwochi pigaap Sabaot
Oh chito nye kilanyaat lagameet
Kabotyi piko chebugat
Momitee manyiror
Oh arap Kinyokye ee
Imwochi momo irat mo
Oh ee makakuwo chito
Makakwam tengwerek

I told owners of the land,
I told owners of the land,
grandmother,

Had you gone mountainward,
I say people have been taken away
Oh tell owners of the land,
The man who climbs mountains,
People got lost at Chebugat
Manyiror is not here
Oh son of Kinyokye
Tell mother to tie her womb
Oh the man has gone
The ants have eaten him

<i>Kakwam nee Nanapa</i>	What became of Nanapa?
<i>Kiyeek nyoto Manyiror</i>	That became Manyiror
<i>Muroni kibo Kapchai</i>	Him of Kapchai clan
<i>Eh pichu kibo kabunjors</i>	Those people of Kabunjors
<i>Oh kale king'atee mureenik Nanapa</i>	The men stopped at Nanapa
<i>Kimwoyee bondeet Kimwolyok</i>	Said oldman Kimwolyok
<i>Kale moiye pekaap Kitaweet</i>	That you drink not stony water
<i>Kale moiye pekaap kitaweet</i>	That you drink not stony water
<i>Kale kimwoi baba Chonge</i>	Said father Chonge
<i>Oh ee morich baba Mukimba</i>	Oh don't go near father Mukimba
<i>Le Kamwook pigaap koret</i>	That I have told you owners of the land
<i>Oh ee kamwook pigaap koreet</i>	Oh ee I tell you owners of the land
<i>Tyangocheet nyoto nyebo keeny</i>	That is the old story

Song 4: *Mi lekweet moo* (Child in the womb)

Refrain:

<i>Oyee milekweet moo</i>	The child is in the womb
<i>Oyee kakiyeech ee</i>	It has dawned
<i>Maraat mbo momo moo</i>	Our mothers will tie their wombs
<i>Kale momo mamuye</i>	Mother says she does not fear
<i>Rotweet nyo mutus</i>	A blunt knife
<i>Makakuwuur koreet kei</i>	The world has become bad
<i>Ripkwoo ng'oo tokoreet</i>	Who will care for the protected one?
<i>Oh kakuwuur koreet kei</i>	Oh the damn world has become bad
<i>A mbo momo mi yu</i>	Even our mothers are here

<i>Oh lekweenyoo</i>	Oh our child
<i>Makakucho andowoo</i>	Your fathers friend is here
<i>Makakucho pasuben</i>	Your father's close friend is here too
<i>Makakuwuur koreet kei</i>	The damn world has become bad
<i>Riibkamwoong mabuun pei</i>	Let no rain seep into the homestead
<i>Oyee yuunyotoo mwaita</i>	That is how fat is
<i>Karam lakwenyoo</i>	Our child is good
<i>Oyee korenyoo</i>	Oh our land
<i>Oyee kakiyeech oyee</i>	It has dawned
<i>Oyee lekwenyu Oyee</i>	My child
<i>Oyee lekwenyu kaboret oye</i>	My first born
<i>Ole omoo nee wei?</i>	What will eat me?

Stanza 1. <i>Milekweet moo</i>	There is a child in the womb (expectation)
2. <i>Ambo momo mi yee</i>	Even mother in here (important persons)
3. <i>Oh lekweenyoo</i>	Our child (symbol of hope)
4. <i>Makakicho andowoo</i>	Fathers closest friend (important person)
<i>Pasubeen</i>	Father's friend (important person)
5. <i>Karam Lekweenyo</i>	Our child is good (symbol of good things to come)
6. <i>Oyee lekwenyu Kuboreet</i>	Oh my first born child (harbinger of good things)
<i>Ole omoo nee?</i>	What will eat me? (Assertion of safety)

Song 5: Kisoobe rootweet (Teasing the knife)

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1. | <i>Hoyye woleyye</i> | Hoyye woleyye |
| | <i>Haa Haaha</i> | Haa Haaha |
| | <i>Woyye leyye</i> | Woyye leyye |
| | <i>Haaha haaha</i> | Haaha Haaha |
| | <i>Aroor keeltaab cheerobeey</i> | The path is clear like the river |
| | <i>Haa haaha</i> | Haaha Haaha |
| | <i>Woyye woleyye</i> | Woyye woleyye |
| | <i>Haaha</i> | Haaha |
| 2. | <i>Aweeti Kaapmama Cherang'any</i> | I'm going to Cherang'any my uncle's place |
| | <i>Haa hoo woyye ho awetii ee.</i> | I'm going |
| | <i>Sayyoyye Kaapketis nyobotaay</i> | I will cross all ridges to get there |
| | <i>Suwayiit Kong'asis nyobotaay</i> | I will reach there by sunrise |
| 3. | <i>Hoyye ho woyye babaayye</i> | Hoyye woyye my father |
| | <i>Woyye babaay yye</i> | Hoyye woyye my father |
| | <i>Kiibo keny ng'alechu</i> | Our forefathers practiced it |
| | <i>Kesichee ng'o kuwonaat</i> | Who was born circumcised? |

Song 6: Sosyoo (Palm frond)

<i>Hee ee ho woyya sosyo ee</i>	Hee ee ho woyya our palm frond ee
<i>Kemechachek sosyontenyo</i>	We want our palm frond
<i>Kimireey eeh</i>	Kimireey eeh
<i>Hee ee ho woyya sosyo ee</i>	Hee ee ho woyya our palm frond ee
<i>Kemechachek sosyonteenyo</i>	We want our palm frond

Song 7: Sererwo (Broom)

<i>Kale sererwo ee</i>	I have said the broom
<i>Woyyee sererwo ee</i>	Woyyee our broom ee
<i>Kemechachek sererwuo ee</i>	We want the broom ee

Kale Kimireey sosyo ee Kimireey I have said the palm frond

Song 8: *Ankurwo* (Tropical Oregano –Oregano ssp)

<i>Ankurwo ho woyya</i>	Ankurwo ho woyya
<i>Hee ee hoo woyya</i>	Hee ee hoo woyya
<i>Hoo woyya</i>	Hoo woyya
<i>Kemechachek ankurweenyo</i>	Kemechachek ankurweenyo

Song 9: *Long'eet* (Spear and Shield)

<i>Aa ee ho woyye</i>	Aa ee ho woyye
<i>Nama long'eet chorweenyu</i>	Pick your spear my friend
<i>Aa ee kemeche Kataleel</i>	We want Katalel

Chorus

<i>Aa ee ho woyee</i>	Aa ee ho woyee
<i>Nama long'eet cherweenyu</i>	Take your spear my friend
<i>Aa ee ho woyye</i>	Aa ee ho woyye
<i>Nomwo longeeet cherwenyu</i>	Take the shield too my friend

Song 10: *Chemomo* (Feeding the community)

<i>Okuru Chemomo ee</i>	Sing for me chemomo ee
<i>Hoyee howoye hoyee</i>	Hoyee howoye hoyee
<i>Hoyye ho</i>	Hoyye ho
<i>Otuwoon kumnyeet ee ho</i>	Place ugali here
<i>Hoyee ho</i>	Hoyee ho
<i>Otuwoon cheeko</i>	Place milk here
<i>Otuwoon beenyto</i>	Place meet here
<i>Tomotee ee ho</i>	Bring also tobacco here
<i>Hoyee ho</i>	Hoyee ho

Song 11: *Irat moyeet* (Fasten your stomach)

Iraat moo we Fasten your stomach
Iraat moo Fasten your stomach
Iraat moo kekosuung Fasten your stomach we see what you are made of
Irib komwoong mobuun beey ee Keep watch of your home lest it is rained on ee

Hoo oo hoyye woleyye Hoo oo hoyye woleyye
Aroor keeltaab cheerobeey The path is clear like a river
Mmm mokerur ee Cherang'any Mmm it is dawning at Cherang'any

Oborochii Kuchoo Clear the way for him to come
Hoyye wo leyye Mm Hoyye wo leyye Mm
Yoo kayyeach koreet kohiloon When dawn is screaming

Song 12: *Yekoneet* (It's dawn)

Ayeko yeko It is dawn, it is dawn!
Ayeko yeko It is dawn, it is dawn!
Wemwochi kabsanteet Go and tell the husbands
Kuyeyta Kumbaut To prepare the oil skin
Wemwochi Kabkorkeet Go and tell the wives
Kuyeyta tomoteet To prepare tobacco
Yeekoneet ee Ee the biting cold of the dawn
Yeko yeko, yeko Dawn dawn, dawn

Song 13: *Mobuun beey* (Lest it rains)

Haa haa woyee leyye Haa haa woyee leyye

<i>Haa</i>	Haa
<i>Iriib Komwong' mobuun beey</i>	Keep watch on your home lest it is rained on
<i>Kiibo ng'ala somoyneen</i>	These things belonged to Somoynen
<i>Kii ng'ala kipnyikeu</i>	These things belonged to Kipnyikeu

Song 14: (Iyeetkeey aboyyo) (Defend yourself)

<i>Hoo hoo</i>	Hoo hoo
<i>Iyeetkey we murooni</i>	Defend yourself warrior
<i>Kumomwook kumereet</i>	Let this foreskin open it
<i>Yoo kayyech kekosuung'ee</i>	When day break comes so we see
<i>Kumomwook kumereet</i>	Let this foreskin open it
<i>Iyeetkeey wo weri ee</i>	Defend yourself you boy
<i>Hoo hoo kumomwook kumereet</i>	Hoo hoo let this foreskin open it

<i>Oo chematakwey</i>	Oo bye bye
<i>Chematakwey – haa</i>	Bye bye haa
<i>Iwisano yo kanaam ee</i>	Where will you run to when it is held
<i>Iwetyano yo kanamuung' ee</i>	Where will you go when it holds you
<i>Iriib Komwoong' mobun beey ee</i>	Keep watch on your home lest it is rained on

Song 14 (a): Tomoteet (Vagina) – Last minute, anything goes, brace for trouble

<i>Ayeko yeko</i>	It is dawn, it is dawn!
<i>Ayeko yeko</i>	It is dawn, it is dawn!
<i>Wemwochi kabsanteet</i>	Go and tell the husbands
<i>Kuyeyta Kumbaut</i>	To prepare the oil skin
<i>Wemwochi Kabkorkeet</i>	Go and tell the wives
<i>Kuyeyta tomoteet</i>	To prepare tobacco
<i>Yeekoneet ee</i>	Ee the biting cold of the dawn
<i>Yeko yeko, yeko</i>	Dawn dawn, dawn

Song 15: Cholyeet/Seriet (Ostentation)

<i>Woyye cholyeet cholyeetab kuboreet</i>	Sing me a song of the firstborn
<i>Mm Mm nyenyacheek cholyeet</i>	Mm mm the song is ours
<i>Mm Mm nyenyacheek korkeet</i>	Mm mm the wife is ours
<i>Chemeyii we kiriibo</i>	The barren one kiriibo
<i>Haa haa</i>	Haa haa
<i>Chematwar we kiriibo</i>	That who can't carry kiriibo
<i>Haa haa</i>	Haa haa
<i>Momo nyokiyi kucho sang!</i>	Mother who gave birth to come out
<i>Haa haa</i>	Haa haa
<i>Mwochi momo kucho koo</i>	Tell mother to come in the house
<i>Haa haa</i>	Haa haa
<i>Ntonyo manayi kucho sang</i>	Let the barren go out
<i>Haa haa</i>	Haa haa

Performance and rituals during seclusion

Song 16: Kaporet (Brave first born)

<i>Ai nyi kaporet eeh</i>	Thanks our first born
<i>Awei nyi kaporet kasubayiing</i>	Greetings our first born
<i>Nte kiteechi rotweet, nte teyiss tukul</i>	Had you feared the cut, others would do the same
<i>Kiyony, kuyong'I chuut tukul</i>	As you kept still, others did so
<i>Yukuu muren</i>	You are very brave.

Song 17: Ng'araach moyeet (Happy you braved the knife)

<i>Kyaraat moet kayiing</i>	My waist is stripped from the bridging – cord.
<i>Nte keriiir, kawetyonu?</i>	Had you cried it would have disappointed me.
<i>Ang'arakaat kemuch</i>	But now you have completed your initiation.

Songs that accompany rituals during seclusion

Song 18: *Anyiny tany* (A cow is sweet)

Sol: <i>Oyye laleyyo momoo!</i>	Oyye laleyyo Mother
Respondents: <i>Sumberere chekaap sabayweet wee</i>	Sumberere milk in the guord
Repeat Choral: <i>Sumberere</i>	Sumberere
Sol: <i>Mayey lanee momoo?</i>	What do I do mother?
Sol: <i>Salu cheeko momoo?</i>	So that I partake of milk mother?
Sol: <i>Cheekaab teta wee?</i>	Cow milk wee?
Sol: <i>Mawoo seteet moomo?</i>	Will I go for a raid mother?

Song 19: *Chebyongeet chiito* (The man is an ape)

<i>Ng'o nyo mure lakaam?</i>	Who is that crossing the mountain?
<i>Ng'o nyo muree lakaam nyewu lekwaab chebyongeet</i>	Who is that crossing the mountain who looks like an ape's child?
<i>Haa chebyongeet chiito</i>	Haa the man is an ape
<i>Ng'o nyo kaam amiik</i>	Who is that eating our food?
<i>Ng'o nyo kaam amiik nyeewu lekwaab chebyongee</i>	Who is that crossing the mountain who looks like an ape's child?
<i>Haa chebyongeet</i>	Haa an ape
<i>Haa chebyongeet chiito</i>	Haa the man is an ape

Songs that accompany rituals during seclusion

Song 20: Keetaara sikirieet (A donkey has kicked me)

Sol: <i>Keetaara sikirieet</i>	A donkey has kicked me
Resp: <i>Keetaara sikirieet rongeet</i>	A donkey has kicked me, a lie
<i>Keetaara sikirieet</i>	A donkey has kicked me
<i>Keetaara sikirieet rongeet</i>	A donkey has kicked me, a lie
Sol: <i>Kuurwo ng'o baaba</i>	Who will call father for me?
Resp: <i>Kuurwong'o baaba Kumotwooy</i>	Who will call for me father Kumotwooy
<i>Kuurwong'o baaba</i>	Who will call father for me?
<i>Kuurwong'o baaba Kumotwooy</i>	Who will call for me father Kumotwooy

Song 21: Yeyiin (Creator)

<i>Ng'onye riibe biiko tukuul – ee</i>	Who takes care of all people
<i>Ing'ing' yeyiin</i>	It is you the Creator
<i>Ing'ing' yeyiin</i>	It is you the Creator
<i>Ing'ing' yeyiin</i>	It is you the Creator
<i>Ing'ing' yeyiin</i>	It is you the Creator
<i>Ing'ing' Yeyiin</i>	It is you the Creator

Song during adopting age sets

Song 22: Roote mwaayta (Oil/butter is flowing)

<i>Oo hoyye wo leyye</i>	Oo hoyye wo leyye
<i>Oo hoyye wo leyye we</i>	Oo hoyye wo leyye we
<i>Makakuroot mwaayta (name of age-set inserted here) ee</i>	Eh oil is flowing
<i>Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo</i>	Who will guard our mountain?
<i>Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo leyye</i>	Who will guard our mountain leyye?

Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo

Who will guard our
mountain?

Riipkweech ng'o tulweenyo leyye

Who will guard our
mountain leyye?

Aa ee ho woyye

Aa ee ho woyye

Nama long'eet chorweenyu

Pick your spear my friend

Aa ee kemeche Kataleel

We want Kataleel

Appendix II: Interview Guides

Interview Guide for Initiates

1. How old are you?
2. (a) Is your age important in determining when you should undergo initiation?
(b) If yes explain why
3. What is the significance of this rite in the context of Sabaot community?
4. What would happen to a male Sabaot if he does not undergo this rite?
5. (a) Are there any songs that accompany this rite in the community?
(b) If yes can you sing for me some of these songs?
(c) What is the significance of these songs among the Sabaot?
6. (a) Who performs this initiation poetry among the Sabaot?
(b) Explain how the songs are performed
(c) How do the performed versions of the songs affect the initiates during and after Initiation?
6. (a) As an initiate who has undergone through this rite, have you had occasions to talk to people who have attended your initiation ceremony?
(b) If yes, what did they tell you was the impact of the song performances to them?
(c) How did the experiences during performance differ from your own as an initiate?

Interview Guide for Performers

- 1.) Who performs male initiation poetry in your community?
I have learnt that you perform male initiation poetry
- 2.) (a) When did you start performing initiation poems?
(b) Were you taught how to perform or is this inherited?
(c) If you were to perform, who taught you?
(d) Please describe the process of learning how to perform initiation poetry.
- 3.) (a) How do you get the songs to sing and perform during initiation?
(b) Please sing for me some of these songs
- 4.) Some people have claimed that during the performance of male initiation poetry, the artist gets to the extent that they get into different realm of existence.
(a) Is this true according to your experience as performer of this poetry?
(b) I have been informed that there are different stages in the initiation process of the Sabaot boys. Please describe how you perform in each of the stages.
(c) What is the meaning of the performances in each of these stages?
- 5.) (a) Have you ever talked to the initiates and your audiences during such performance about the performances?
(c) If yes, what did they tell you is the impact of the performance on them?
(d) Would they experience the same impact if the songs were sung without reference details that go with it?
- 6.) (a) In your view how do these performances inject the initiates and the audience feelings of patriotism to their community?
(b) In your view are there any images in the songs that are performed that confirm this feelings of patriotism?

Interview Guide for Opinion Leaders

- 1.) The Sabaot have a category of people they refer to as opinion leaders/shapers. How does one qualify to join the group?
- 2.) (a) You are an opinion leader in this community. What are the expectations of the Sabaot people of you?
 - (b) Does this opinion include giving direction to cultural issues of your community?
 - (c) If yes, to what extent can you advise on the issue of initiation among the Sabaot?
- 3.) What is the significance of this cultural practice among the Sabaot?
- 4.) (a) Please sing for me some of the initiation songs that you know.
 - (b) Are those songs that were sung during your initiation or are they songs that were sung during other initiations?
 - (c) How important are those songs to the initiates and other members of the community?
- 5.) (a) As an opinion leader in this community, are you also a performer?
 - (b) If yes, describe how you perform these poems.
 - (c) In your view how does the performance of initiation poems affect the initiates and the audience?
 - (d) Does this enhance or inhibit relations between the Sabaot and the neighbouring communities?

