

EDUCATIONAL VALUES OF "SIGENDINI LUO": THE KENYA
LUO ORAL NARRATIVES.

by

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EDUCATIONAL VALUES OF "SIGENDINI LUO: THE KENYA
LUO ORAL NARRATIVES

VOLUME I

Declaration.

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

Abuelaga
.....
Candidate

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

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.....
John Ruganda

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Austin Bukemba.

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ABSTRACT.

This study examines the educational values of sigendini Luo, the Luo oral narratives.

Oral narratives form an important genre of oral literature which is recognised and accepted as literature within the context in which the term literature is used in this thesis. The term literature here does not refer to written literature only, but is used in its widest context including sung, spoken, danced or acted literature which is all oral in nature.

The investigations and analysis of the sigendini Luo have revealed that these were not used purely for amusement and as a pastime, but that they had other functions and roles as well. One of these functions was to transmit certain educational values to the younger members of the society. This study is an attempt to examine critically what these educational values were, and to establish what supplementary part they played in the education of the Luo children.

Sigendini, as a genre of literature, are created from the life's experiences of the people, emanating from issues which are social, economic, political and religious in kind. Therefore, as is the case with written literature, sigendini act as a mirror of the society which creates them. We can tell the sort of life the Luo led, their history over the years, philosophical thoughts, ideals and beliefs from their sigendini which we are discussing here.

The study further advances the idea that sigendini embody certain general knowledge that enlightens the children about their world. The importance of work and how dependent human beings are on their environment is also raised and examples are given of actual instances where various characters in sigendini are engaged on work, exploiting their environment for their subsistence.

The existence of a supernatural power, the Luo Nyasaye, God, is discussed at length. From the discussion, we come to realise that according to the Luo, religion is something that is lived and practised every moment of the day.

The part that sigendini play in the promotion and training of artistic creation, using the mind and imagination is also examined in the study. From listening to the sigendini and also by being given opportunities to take part in telling sigendini, the children themselves, acquire the art of story-telling and may eventually grow up to be (at least some of them) good story-tellers, good speakers and orators for they become used to addressing audiences while they are still young.

These points are all viewed as being important for creating viable conditions which assist children in their education towards self-development and learning to live in harmony with others in their society and to be self-reliant.

Twenty-one sigendini are analysed in detail in the body of the thesis as representative of samples of the narrative mode.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: PURPOSE, METHOD, AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

1.1 Purpose: The purpose of this study is to ascertain the educational values of the twenty-one sigendini Luo that have been chosen here for analysis. Themes, content, structure and context of each of the twenty-one sigendini will be examined in relation to the cultural context as a means of highlighting their educational values.

Sigana, that is, narration, as a technique in oral literature used in imparting certain educational values of a creative nature, will also be examined in a section of the thesis. This is important as it throws new light on the study of African oral literature.

Our traditional literature contains material and techniques which are not found elsewhere. We need to salvage these and use them in our writing. We are also the people to create new African English and African French(understanding). These will give us the facility we need for transmitting our cultures and wisdom. The need for teaching has never been so great. It calls for the employment of all the techniques we know.....¹

The sigendini Luo cannot be studied in isolation from the other genres of Luo oral literature and traditions. Moreover, the educational values that they embody are only operational in relationship to the total cultural

heritage of the Luo. It is therefore, ^{only} logical that a brief examination of those other genres and traditions should also be made.

Many scholars, mostly anthropologists, have already studied and recognised the functions and important roles played by oral narratives in various societies. But the primary concern of these scholars has been the society and not the literature. They have, therefore, studied the oral narratives for better understanding of the anthropological issues of those societies. In this study, however, the reverse is the case; these sigendini are being studied in their own right as literary works of art and as an important genre of oral literature.

These stories are treated as forms of literature in its own right, worthy of study in literary terms. In the past it could be assumed without question that, in the case of non-literate African societies, it was not feasible to speak of their having a 'literature' at all; this arose partly from a narrow and strictly etymological definition of the term 'literature', and partly from the particular theoretical interests of those British social anthropologists who tended for a time to hold monopoly in the study of such people. Consonant with these interests examples of what were classed as 'folktales' or 'myth' could either be ignored or else approached primarily in terms of some other aspect of the society. ...²

Another purpose for studying these sigendini is to try and find out whether they would be suitable for use in schools, thus providing the much needed reading material on African oral literature. Again, it is hoped that the methods that have been applied here might prove useful in conducting similar research and investigation in oral narratives from other Kenyan ethnic groups. It is further hoped that the study would be a contribution towards creating a better understanding of African oral literature and a worthwhile addition to the growing number of studies of African culture.

1.2 Methods and techniques:

The twenty-one sigendini Luo which we are examining in this thesis are a part of a large collection that was gathered in the field between April, 1976 and December 1978 among the Luo, who live in the Nyanza Province of Kenya.

Cassette tapes and a cassette recorder were used to tape sigendini directly from informants and also to record interviews and any other information that was relevant to the study.

Field notes were also taken on any points that could not be recorded, but which it was felt might prove important to this study. Notes were also taken on the attitudes of the narrators and participants towards their oral narratives as well as of the general observations that were made on all that went on while sigendini were being taped. For

instance, sometimes when the audience laughed during a performance, it might not have been as a result of what the performer had said, but rather as a result of a gesture or a movement he made. All these minute details were taken down as it was felt that they would prove important when the sigendini were being analysed.

Interviews and recordings of sigendini took place in the homes of informants. There was always a crowd around, made up of those who came, without any invitation, to listen to sigendini. Some of those who turned up on their own to listen to sigendini and who formed the merry audience that we often had, sometimes proved to be excellent storytellers or turned out to possess vast knowledge on other aspects of Luo oral literature and traditions.

Sometimes the meetings took place in the evenings or at night when those who had been busy during the day, especially the women, had finished their daily chores and could spare a few moments to sit and relax, talking and telling stories. Everything that was said during these sessions was either recorded or taken down in note form.

At one place in Kisumu District, the sigendini were told and recorded in a typical siwindhe situation (pp. 41-50). The sigendini were collected from young and old alike, without any discrimination.

Photographs of appropriate evidence which it was felt

would in one way or another be supportive of the study were taken as well as those of the narrators and the groups which attended sigendini-telling sessions.

The interviews were broad and flexible and included any available piece of information on Luo oral traditions and customs.

From the field, the data that had been collected was transcribed in Luo. This is a hard job that requires much patience and careful attention. From the Luo transcription, the material was translated into English. Translation into English is almost wholly literal.

It would not have been possible to use all the sigendini that were gathered during the three months field investigation; therefore after spending a considerable amount of time analysing the sigendini critically, only twenty-~~one~~ have been selected for this study. Again, it was found necessary that only a few of the photographs which were taken in the field should be included in the thesis.

There were no substantial problems that were encountered during the field investigations. Occasionally, I met those people who were unwilling to give any information on the sigendini Luo or traditions because they felt it was a futile exercise and of no consequence and they therefore did not wish to waste their time engaging on such mundane matters. Occasionally when those present, apart from one

or two informants, felt too shy to say anything on Luo traditions or to tell sigendini, it was found that if a previous recorded performance was played back to them; they immediately showed marked interest as they too wanted to hear their own voices played back on the tapes. On the whole, the reaction and the reception from those interviewed, the audience and the narrators was favourable and we enjoyed the sessions immensely. The gatherings for interviews were social occasions where much laughter, fun and joking went on all the time.

Nyanza Province, where the Luo live, covers a vast area that is made up of three districts of Siaya, Kisumu and South Nyanza (Vol. II, Appendix C(1)). It was felt that the three months that were spent in the field collecting Luo oral literature material was inadequate. To be able to carry out a thorough research and document all aspects of Luo oral literature, one would require one to two years or a longer time. Another very limiting and frustrating factor was the funds made available for projects such as this one. The grant is very limited and often restricts the extent and depth of the investigations.

1.3 Scope:

The thesis examines educational values of twenty-one sigendini Luo.

The contents of the sigendini are analysed so as to identify the themes and the educational values that they

advance. But the analysis has to be based on sound logic. Therefore, since these sigendini are treated here as literary works of art, it will be assumed that, like all other literary works or art, they too are created from man's experiences in the course of his existence. These experiences which form the content of sigendini are, as we know, always on social, historical, economical, geographical, ecological, religious and moral issues. Therefore, in order to identify the educational values of these sigendini, we must examine in them themes that touch on these issues.

Whether oral or written, literature is a mirror of life. It reflects what people do and think, how they live, what they experience and the values they hold. It is a portrait of life, and consequently it covers every theme of human existence. Man is put at the centre of action, and it is literature and the oral traditions which tell us something about man in relation to the universe and the response to his environment. Man draws a picture of himself and of the world as he sees it.

He depicts the imprint of his moods and personality his characteristics and activities, his kindness and cruelty, his quarrels and friendships, his slaughters and rescues. These two are the media of a self-portrait and the streams which transport most of the cultures and customs of our peoples. As such, every story ... must be viewed against the

background of its setting in order to be fully understood and interpreted...³

The form structure and style of the sigendini will also be analysed in so far as these articulate the content which, as we have already seen, is made up of themes from which we have to identify the educational values of the sigendini.

Form as a technique will also be examined so as to establish the part it plays in the training on literary creativity and appreciation.

1.4 Layout:

The study is divided into two volumes. The first volume consists of seven chapters, introducing developing and concluding the subject. Chapter One is the introduction, which covers the purpose of the study, the methods and techniques that were used in collecting these sigendini; the scope of the study, that is how much ground is covered in the analysis and examination of the educational values of the twenty sigendini that have been selected for study here, and a comprehensive definition of educational values and education as perceived by the Luo.

Contained in Chapter Two is information on the background to Luo society: the geography of the land, history, socio-political organisations, customs, beliefs and religion, work and leisure in relation to the education of children,

childhood education, courtship and marriage. Chapter Three is divided into two parts. The first part is about general information on Luo oral literature, giving actual examples of genres such as ngeche, wende and so on. The second part is on sigendini, oral narratives, that is, what they are, situations and occasions for telling them, the narrator and the purpose for telling them.

In Chapter Four, which is the first chapter of the main body of the study, we examine sigendini with themes that lay stress on socializing activities, self-development, awareness of God, beliefs and moral inculcations. In Chapter Five, we look at sigendini with themes and values on general knowledge relating to historical, political, environmental adaptation and responsibility, work and the interrelatedness of things in the abstract and physical world. Chapter Six is on sigendini with themes that stress values of imaginative, expressive, creative and training and aesthetic appreciation. The conclusion and summary of the study form the substance of Chapter Seven. Footnotes and bibliography are found at the end of the volume.

The second volume contains the transcribed sigendini in Luo and a literal English translation, both of which are numbered in corresponding lines to allow ease of reference. There are also annotations at the end of certain stories where it was found necessary. Lastly, there is Appendix A which contains tapes and interviews, Appendix B photographs and Appendix C 1 and 2, maps. The volume is an important part of the thesis because although in this study, we have used the sigendini for their educational value, another scholar might choose to use of them

for a different purpose altogether. The volume is considered to be a valuable source of material from which students and scholars may refer to while researching on oral literature and traditions.

1.5 Definition:

The educational values of sigendini Luo form the main topic of this ~~thesis~~. Therefore, we have to make an attempt to define what these values are. We intend to use the word value here in its broadest sense. For instance, we use it here to mean those qualities or characteristics which are attached to an 'object' or a 'thing' that make it worthwhile, desirable, acceptable and morally commendable. But, we also need to define the word education and what the Luo mean by it. We have to do all this before we can define educational values in general.

Generally, education means teaching, training and giving guidance and assistance to a child so as to make him into a person who is mentally, physically and spiritually fully developed. In other words, education is a process of socialization. It also means creating conditions and situations that assist in moulding a child into a totally developed person who is self-reliant, while at the same time is socially acceptable as a useful member of his community. Education, therefore, is a process of preparing an individual for the sort of life he will lead. This is the informal education as opposed to the formal school education. It is what Plato calls, 'The Ideal of Liberal Education', and about which he says:

We must not be indefinite about the meaning of education. At present, when we are criticising or praising a man's upbringing, we call one person educated for the calling of a retail trader, or of a captain of a ship, and the like. But we are not speaking of education in this narrower sense, but of that other education in virtue from youth upwards, which makes a man passionately desire to be the perfect citizen, and teaches him how rightly to rule and how to obey. This is the only education which upon our views, deserve the name; that other sort of training, which aims at the acquisition of wealth apart from intelligence and justice, is an illiberal. ...⁴

This is also the type of education which the traditional Luo society knew, recognised and valued, whose major aim was to develop the individual to his fullest potential and to prepare him for the kind of life he would lead and for the benefit of the community of which he is a member. In this regard, every group of people draws from its own culture, customs, art, literature and traditions. It is therefore important in any given system of education to impart to each child a comprehensive knowledge of all that which should give him a clear insight into the problems and concepts of his immediate world.

This is the type of education which the Luo say is meant to be 'for life': 'dhano ipuonjo nyaka tho' - a person is taught from birth until he dies.

The assumption, therefore, is that, according to the Luo education is a continuous process that is meant to mould a person throughout his entire life to enable him to lead a harmonious, full and profitable life as a human being and to learn to value that humanity in other members of his society:

Education was thus 'informal', every adult was a teacher to a greater or lesser degree. But this lack of formality did not mean that there was no education nor did it affect its importance to the society. Indeed it may have made education more relevant to the society in which the child was growing up. ...⁵

From our brief definition above, we could make a general assumption that educational values are those values which assist towards the fulfilment of the goals of education as perceived by the Luo. The twenty-ne ~~si~~ ~~and~~ ~~ini~~ that we examine here are created from experiences of the Luo, they, therefore, embody and transmit values that are on the people's wisdom, philosophy, history, religion, customs and traditions. In fact all the aspects of the lives of the people that they consider worth passing on to the younger generations are preserved in their oral narratives

and literature as a whole.

There was much that Acholi children learned by listening to myths, legends and folktales, proverbs, riddles, folk songs, rhymes and other aspects of oral literature. In deep well of folklore, we found moral messages, histories, wisdom and philosophy or the outlook on life. ... Besides promoting mental development, oral literature was entertaining. ...⁶

According to child psychologists, both mental and physical development of the average normal children, change immensely during the first few years of life. Therefore, by being told sigendini at such an early age, Luo children became exposed to the educational elements in the sigendini when their characters are still malleable. As they grow and gain more insights into the problems and ways of their people, the youngsters internalise some of these values. When they begin to show signs of conformity, among other things, in their behaviour and actions, then it is assumed that some learning has taken place and that part of this learning, has been through sigendini.

A Luo child who is about fourteen or so who still exhibits marked negative and childish behaviour in his actions is said, "not to have learnt well" and that "his mother and father have not taught him well".

The Luo believe that 'it is only possible to forge the iron while it is still hot'. Once it is cold, you will either need a great force to shape it or it might break. A more direct proverb of the belief is that 'a tree is shaped while still young, when grown, it breaks'. A direct interpretation of the two proverbs is 'all that could be expected of man must begin at his earliest age. ...'⁷

CHAPTER TWO

THE LUO LAND

2.1 The People.

The Luo of Kenya whose sigendini, oral narratives and their educational values form this study, are a Nilotic group of people. They live in Siaya, Kisumu and South Nyanza Districts of Nyanza Province, around Lake Victoria (Lake Sango). Nyanza Province covers an area of approximately 16,162 sq. km. The Luo number over two million.

The main geographical features of the area are, Lake Victoria, the lowlands around its basin, and the Kavirondo rift valley which runs along the centre of the Province.

The Nandi hills form the north east wall of the escarpment of this small rift valley rising into an undulating surfaced plateau, with gradual slopes apart from where river valleys have dissected the landscape. The highest residual mountains are the Cherengani. A little way from Kisumu town on the Kavirondo Gulf, the land rises gradually to the north, forming the Ojola, Nyahera, and the Bunyore hills. There are also hill-ranges to the west and north west respectively in Seme location where the legendary Kit Mikaye (the first wife's stone) is situated. These are three large rocks which rest on top of each other. A number of interesting sigendini exists about these rocks.

Other hills are found in Gem, Alego and Ugenya locations. There are also Ramogi and Usenge hills in Yimbo locations. These hills are composed of granite rocks which jut out

here and there, forming granite tors. To the east of Kisumu town are the Kipsigis and Sondu hills and a little to the south east are found the Agai, Kisii, Kakelo, Kachieng' and Wire hills in South Nyanza. Between these hills and the lowlands around the lake which in the olden days were covered with thick forests of massive trees, is the Nyabondo plateau that rises to a height of over 1,500 m. above the sea level. Homa mountain is situated on the lakeshore, in South Nyanza district where it stands visible to the west, right opposite Kisumu town across the lake. It is an extinct volcanic mountain, but the areas around it, are still prone to earth tremors.

The land is well drained with rivers. The biggest of these are Nyando which runs along the Kano plains from the Nandi hills, Kuja in South Nyanza, Miriu which marks the boundary between South Nyanza and Kisumu Districts, Nzoia and Yala in Siaya District. Several smaller rivers called Awach which is a Luo geographical term that refers to rivers that are only full and flooded while ^{it} rains, but which subside a few hours after the rain stops, are also found all over the Luoland. All these rivers flow to the west and drain into Lake Victoria forming swamps at the mouths in certain areas such as those which are found on the Kano plains along river Nyando's flood plain. The rivers have a varied regime, receiving water mainly from the heavy precipitations between March and September. But the rainfall is seldom continuous over a long period, as dry intervals

occur during the rainy seasons when sunny spells are often experienced.

Lake Victoria, which to the Luo is known as Nam Lolwe, the lake with no end, is a prominent feature in this area as we have already observed. In fact, there are a number of sigendini which relate to the lake and the Kavirondo Gulf as well. There are some people who are still alive in that region who claim that as small children, they walked with their parents from Uyoma (Vol. II, Appendix C (1)), to Sango Bay in Nyakaca. This would then mean that the area which is now part of Lake Victoria, at one time used to be dry land.

Practically, all the physical features such as the rivers, rocks, earth, including trees and animals that inhabit the forests and the bushes in that region, appear in one form or another in the sigendini Luo.

2.2 History.

Historically, the Luo are said to have migrated from Southern Sudan, eventually settling in their present home in Kenya between the fifteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The Shilluk, Jur Luo and Nuer of the Southern Sudan and Dinka of the Southern Ethiopia, to mention but a few groups found in these areas, bear close linguistic and cultural relationship to the Luo. (See Appendix C (2) Vol. II - map of the area occupied by groups of Luo speaking people in the Sudan).

The name Luo has raised some debate with regard to its origin. Perhaps some research should be done, starting from the Sudan to determine its true origin.

The word "Luo" also needs interpretation, because it has more than one meaning. If we say the "Luo", we often refer to the southern Luo people (particularly the Kenya Luo), or refer to the Luo language, or to the people we generally call "Nilotes". But the word luwo, lupu, or luw means to speak, to follow or to come after. We can say "iluwo lep mane?" This may be translated as "what language or tongue do you follow (speak)?" With the answer "Aluwo lew luu", "I speak Luo tongue". The term lupu also means fishing, "luwo rech", to follow fish", or "luwo dhako" (riso) a party at the Luo marriage ceremony, which takes place after a woman has returned to her kins home, with the riso ceremony following. From the linguistic evidence, it appears to me that "Joluo" comes from the word "Jolupo" which means fishermen, or "luw dhok", "come after cattle!". If a traveller comes to a village at any time of day and turns his eyes towards the lake or river, he will certainly be curious, and ask who those people are; the answer to that question will definitely be "Joluo", as they are referred to by those who are at home. This is, in fact, the term that the "Nilotes" tend to imply.

In this case, the word "Luo" should be the general term referring to people who previously lived along the Nile valley. ...⁸

One of the Luo folk stories supports the historical findings about their migration from Southern Sudan.⁹ The story states that the Luo speaking group lived together under their leaders at a place called "Dhowath". Then there arose a serious quarrel between two Luo brothers, the consequences of which made it impossible for the group to continue to live together. (story 2 Vol. II).

2.3 Work, occupation and leisure

The rainfall in most parts of Nyanza is between 75 - 115 milimetres a year, varying from one part of the province to the other. The land and the climate are suitable for the cultivation of maize, coffee, tea, bananas, fruits, vegetables, rice, cotton, groundnuts, millets and flowers. These are grown mostly on small holdings. The yield is always heavy especially that of Maize, and there is often a surplus which is sold to the ^{National} Cereal Board and produce, for resale to consumers and supply to the less productive areas of the land and for export as well. Cultivation and proper care of the land is part of the traditional education which a Luo child starts to receive very early as he grows up. Land and what it yields is regarded as great wealth and so is cattle which graze on it. A number of sigendini Luo feature the importance of farm produce and cattle. There are even some sigendini in which these are depicted

in situations when they are able to talk and behave like human beings.

The Luo also keep cattle and therefore live by both pastoral and agricultural economy. Those who live along the lake are good fishermen. (stories 1, 8, 11 Vol. II). Fish from the lake is used for food and for commercial purposes as well. Dry fish is sold in markets in both rural and urban areas all over the country. At one time, the Luo must have been actively engaged in hunting because they have many sigendini on hunting. (story 7, Vol. II). For economical reasons, large number of Luo are today found everywhere all over East Africa in urban and rural areas, where they engage in all types of jobs such as fishing, office work, mining, farm work and trade.

The staple food of the Luo is Kuon, a kind of stiff porridge made from maize meal, millet flour or cassava and wimbi flour. The mixture is eaten with cooked vegetables, fish, meat chicken, blood and milk. In addition to these, the people eat other foodstuffs such as sweet potatoes, groundnuts, beans, peas, cassava, ghee, rice, bananas and fruits. They also grow sugarcane in many areas of the province, especially on the Kano plains and at Awendo in South Nyanza where a large sugar factory is being constructed. Sugarcane is becoming an important cash crop and is more and more being grown on small plots of land by individual peasants and also on large plantations by large scale farmers. ~~Cotton~~, tobacco, and groundnuts are also

grown as cash crops. Apart from rice grown around Ahero by irrigating the land using waters of river Nyando, the crop is also grown elsewhere. It is grown around the lake where it is swampy and flat such as areas around Rae, Wasare, and Apondo in Kisumu District. As many as three crops a year are grown on small plots by individuals.

Dairy or grade cattle are kept in places with cooler climate such as the Nyabondo plateau and elsewhere in Siaya and other parts of South Nyanza districts.

On the whole, hard work and perseverance are virtues which are highly regarded by the Luo. A person who is not able to care for his family was of no consequence and was disregarded and not respected by his community. Children, are therefore taught the value of work at an early age. There are many sigendini on work and occupation.

The Luo believe in enjoyment after work! They are thus great entertainers. After harvest they like to hold beer parties at which friends and relatives drink, sing praise songs and dance. They also eat a lot on such occasions. This is the time to show off by the well-to-do. The rich were expected to be generous and kind to the less fortunate, otherwise people did not think much of them or of their wealth. There were also games which grown ups and children engaged on as part of their pastime. 'Mbao, Ajua was and is still a popular game with the Luo. Adhula, a game that is very much like hockey, also used to be

popular with adult male members of the Luo community and so was wrestling, olenko.

2.4 Socio-political organizations

Some of the most important leaders among the Luo were often rich men or medicine-men who supposedly possessed certain mystic powers. But elders in a homestead also saw to the everyday running of social affairs. For example, before harvest or sowing time, an elder in the locality performed some ceremonies. These were important and nobody was expected to go out to harvest or to sow before such ceremonies were performed. The elders from several homesteads in a locality called gweng' in Luo, met quite often. They met and held consultations with each other on matters of general importance regarding the people's welfare. On the whole, the leadership was carried out through consensus and was therefore democratic^{ly} in nature.

Traditionally, the Luo women were not supposed to give their views openly on any important matters. But privately, they were consulted. Before, a man took an important decision which could affect the family, he might say, 'we adhi apeni orindi mondi' wait, let me go to consult with the headrest before I give my view'. The headrest was in most cases a wife, frequently the first wife.

2.5 Beliefs and customs:

The Luo lived in homesteads housing several families who were often connected by kinship. A homestead was surrounded by a high euphorbia hedge and had a gate that was securely locked at night.

The homestead, pacho or dala or dipo, therefore, forms the basis of their social life and the source of their beliefs such as beliefs in Nyasaye. Were: the 'Supreme Being', who controls people's lives and from whom all powers originates. Besides the 'Supreme Being', they contend that each individual has his or her own god, Nyasache, who in collaboration with the ancestors of that particular individual, is responsible for his or her luck and well being.

The Luo believe in the powers of magic and medicine. Those whom they know as being endowed with these mystic powers are referred to as jomariek - the wise ones who are capable of making people die as they wish. They are feared to the extreme! They can work bilo, which is a potent herb mixture. According to the Luo, the dead and the living communicate. The ancestors are therefore considered to be alive and play an important part in the lives of the living who must appease them regularly with great gifts of sacrifices to be on the safe side. This partly explains why dead relatives are buried with care and pomp among the Luo. The relatives make sure that all rituals are performed correctly to avoid revenge in the form of misfortunes which would arise from the displeasure of the dead.

Traditionally both Luo men and women went through nak;

which is the extraction of the six lower middle teeth. This was done as a form of initiation which youth went through before they could be regarded as adults. The operation took place at about the age of twelve. One of my informers told me that 'hak to us is comparable to circumcision which is practiced by other ethnic groups". After boys and girls had been through nak, they were regarded as adults and were then introduced to a string of new taboos and beliefs which were part of their education. For instance, after nak, a young person was not supposed to open the door of his/her parents' living house any time he/she found it closed.

Several other reasons have been advanced as reasons why the group extracted their six lower teeth. One such theory is that the practice made the Luo distinguishable from their Bantu neighbours, some of whom extracted a few teeth or did not extract any at all. Another theory is that if a person fell sick with lock-jaw which is said to have been prevalent around the lake, or with any other types of sickness, he could be given medicine and could also be fed through the gap using the narrow end of the gourd or calabash.

Luo men and women used to pierce holes in the lower lobes of their ears through which ornaments were inserted. Again, between the ages of forty and fifty, a man could kayo ngaga; that is, he could have holes ^{pierced} around the outer edges of both ears and have beads of varying colours fixed in them. Kayo ngaga was a rank which a man entered only when he felt that he was mature enough and also that

he had accumulated enough riches in the form of cattle. It was an expensive affair and could cost a man up to three goats or even one or two heifers. The rank carried with it marked social esteem and men who did not attain it were often jeered at and shouted down by others. They were nick-named onguru, cowards, and were rudely referred to as 'women'.

Traditionally, Luo women wore tassels, chieno, made of sisal fibre, fastened with a string around their waists. This was an important attire and a married woman was not supposed to serve a meal to her husband without wearing one. Men and elderly women also wore goatskin cloaks suspended across their shoulders by a piece of string.

Young girls and young women, customarily had their abdomen and backs tattooed into patterns: in a practice known as ket in Luo. This was done as a form of beauty and a mark of adulthood.

2.6 Education and family life:

Education is for life - this is what the Luo believe. Man they say, 'is taught until his death day' - dhano ipuonjo nyaka tho. Therefore, a child's education started from birth and continued throughout his life. Parents, grandparents, ayahs known as joidi, siblings and later on peers were the first and immediate instructors and teachers. A child was taught through oral literature, through instructions as well as through practical means.

Members of a baby's immediate family played a crucial role in its education and socialisation. Yet while this was the case, the Luo also believed that a child belonged to everybody - (where everybody means all Luo); and as such, everyone even those who were not related to him had a right to protect him from any possible harm, to discipline and to direct him whenever need arose.

In the early stages, a child learnt through observation and imitation as he copied those around him and also from the answers which they gave to his numerous questions. At an early age both boys and girls were taught the basic rules by their mothers. A mother taught and helped a child with his first speech and sentences; and immediately he was able to understand stories she began to tell him about some of the taboos and beliefs which would form his code of conduct in the society.

"If you are eating", she would tell the child, 'and you rest one hand with the palm flat downward on the ground, then your mother would die'. 'If you are eating and you tilt the bowl to choose the piece of meat to pick up, then you will fart near guests which would be highly embarrassing.' 'If you whistle at night, you are inviting a snake to your house.' If you kill a frog, one^{of} your mother's breast will drop off. Therefore right from very early, a child received instructions through oral literature as well as through other means. What better way of scaring a child from killing the harmless frog than telling him if he did so,

then he would cause suffering and humiliation to his own mother! Education on conformity and stress laid on observation of taboos and folk beliefs continued throughout a child's life.

Right from the beginning both boys and girls helped their parents, but mostly their mothers with light duties in the home. They helped by minding the fire, looking after grain when it is put out on a mat to dry, keeping chicken away from eating it up and of course, running errands and looking after small sisters and brothers if there are any.

As the children grew older, their interests and duties were changed and directed into relevant areas according to their sex and duties relegated to them by the community. A little boy's interests were reverted towards jobs and duties performed exclusively by male members of his family such as mending of fences, making granaries, milking cows and goats slaughtering and skinning the animals and even helping animals to deliver young ones. He began to accompany his father or older children to the field to graze the animals.

2.7 Marriage

Among the Luo, marriage as an institution is honoured and greatly respected. People who do not marry are seen as worthless misfits. Even slaves or prisoners of war have the right to marry, and their masters saw to it that they married and were given land on which to raise families.

Dowry was paid in the form of cattle. Up to thirty heads of cattle could be paid for just one woman. Goats and sheep, and of course nowadays money as well, are paid as bride wealth. However, due to the changing economic situations, as little as three or four heads of cattle; or a few hundred shillings to two or more thousands of shillings may be paid. There is no uniform amount which has to be paid. In fact broadly speaking, marriage is the one institution which has not been overtly commercialised among the Luo. Customarily, the Luo expected every bride to be a virgin on her bridal night. This was a source of great honour to the parents, the husband and the girl herself. Therefore every girl had to pass through siwindhe (pp 44-50) where they received intensive sex education and some general and practical instructions on courtship.

The more wives and children a Luo had the richer he was considered to be. That is why they have been polygamous. The Luo see children as gifts from God which you can't refuse or limit in number and of whom there cannot be enough. To this extent, to have twins among the Luo is as it were to be 'twice blessed' and the incident was followed by special ceremonies largely to thank the supreme power. This was the only occasion when it was permitted for men and women to indulge freely and publicly in singing obscene songs and dancing obscene dances.

Naming of babies by the Luo was done systematically. In certain instances, a medicineman had to be consulted

before a baby was given a name. A baby may be given a name according to the season and the time of its birth. For example, a baby born just before mid-day at around nine or eleven may be called Onyango if it is a boy and Anyango if it is a girl. The first born of the twins is called Opiyo and the second one is called Odongo if a boy and Apiyo and Adongo respectively if a girl. The child who comes after twins is called Akelo if a girl and Okelo if a boy. If born during the dry season, a child may be named Coro if a boy and Aoro if a girl. The Luo also name babies after their dead ancestors and to them the children are real representatives of the dead. If a father names his child after his dead father or mother, he would have lots of sentimental attachment towards that child. Babies were also named after certain important events in the community, such as famine, epidemics and migrations.

The social life, belief, economic and political ways of the Luo of which we have given a summary here, come out with marked clarity through their sigendini, and also features prominently in the other genres of the Luo oral literature.

2.8 Luo Language:

Luo language is tonal and as such there are a number of words whose meaning are determined only by tonal variations. For instance; the word Moko, may mean five different things, depending on whether one raises ones voice and where and on what Sound one puts emphasis. Moko, written MOKO means

to light fire, to get stuck, to take roots, for example of a plant when it has been transplanted, to eat anything powdery such as sugar in large quantities, riches and a proper name. Written ^{mb} ~~mb~~, the same word moko, means others, such as other things, gik moko. Luo language has many words with a set of different meanings such as this one.

Over the years, the Luo language has grown and expanded considerably, taking on many new words and phrases from other languages such as Swahili, Luhya, and even English. In fact, it is even alleged by linguists that the letter 's' is not Luo because other Nilotic groups do not have it. It is therefore thought that the Luo 'acquired' it from other ethnic groups. However, in the ~~thesis~~ only words which are known and commonly used by the Luo of Kenya have been used.

The Luo spoken by all Kenyan Luo does not have much linguistic variation except a slight difference in tone and speech speed. This variation becomes pronounced as one goes from South Nyanza district to Kisumu district, becoming more distinct in Siaya district, particularly in Alego and Ugenya locations and in some parts of Gem location. The variation which is very slight is dialectal in nature.

Some words and phrases that are used in sigendini Luo are meaningless in other situations and context: and indeed in other languages as well and have no equivalent or

synonyms. In such cases, these have been left in the thesis where in certain instances, they have been used instead of English equivalents. For instance, the word sigendini, (sigana, singular) has been used many times instead of oral narratives or stories. This is also the case with the word ngeche which has been used instead of the English word proverbs. In fact, any Luo words which have been used in the thesis have been underlined and explained in the text accordingly.

CHAPTER THREE

LUO ORAL LITERATURE

3. The Literature and its forms:

The Luo have a rich oral literature which has been preserved and passed down from one generation to the next by word of mouth. Over the years, the literature, like the society which creates it, has not been static. It has grown and changed, taking on new dimensions and meanings while preserving and expressing those values which meet the society's needs.

The raw material from which the various genres of the Luo oral literature are created are the people's experiences which emanate from their total involvement with life. That is, the literature is concerned with the political, social and economic activities of the Luo, which include also their beliefs and philosophical thoughts. It is the authentic popular literature that they have known from the time immemorial and is in actual sense, therefore, more than just their literary expression. As the Herskovits say "a substantial body of folklore is more than the literary expression of the people. It is their ethnography which if systematized by students, give a penetrating picture of their way of life."¹⁰

Through studying the oral literature of the Luo, a whole panorama of their way of life is revealed. The literature presents themes which strike deep at the conflicts and contradictions in life and the search for fulfilment and self-realisation;

all which take place in the course of man's involvement with life. It mirrors the people's social attitudes and their world view. The literature as we have already observed, is kept alive through constant telling to the youth, who also in turn tell it to each other thus keeping the stream of knowledge and life flowing like an endless river.

Literature is free and available to any member of the Luo society who is able to listen to it, to comprehend it and to benefit from its educational values. Through it the society transmits to its youth its cultural heritage and values. The literature plays vital roles in the society, for in most African societies, art is always functional and never indulged in simply for aesthetic appreciation alone.

Luo oral literature, like written literature, is made up of many genres, among which the following are the most easily distinguishable:

1. Ngeche - Proverbs
2. Kweche - Folk beliefs
3. ~~Weche ma wachore~~
Awacha - Rumour.
4. Wende - Songs
5. Idiende - dances
6. Ngera - jokes

1. Ngeche: This cannot be taken to mean proverbs only as the word ngeche in Luo means and embraces a wide

cluster comprising riddles, sayings as well as some stories and phrases which call for interpretation before their meanings can be fully understood. Ngeche as a genre of Luo oral literature are more in constant use than sigendini - oral narratives. In the course of a conversation, one often finds a saying or a ngero (singular of ngeche) which fits the occasion and the situation. They may be used to illustrate or to add depth of meaning to a point made or sometimes to admonish, to warn, or to praise a person for some commendable action. Some ngeche, therefore, like the other genres of oral literature, have grown and developed with the Luo society. These, it would appear, have been operative from time immemorial and have become the people's wise sayings which have stood the test of ages and have been handed down from one generation to the next. Some of the ngeche have, therefore, become fixed in content and form and do not change.

In some societies, such as that one of the Akan of Ghana,¹¹ proverbs are valued mainly for their aesthetic qualities in adding beauty to the language thus making the speaker more fluent and rhetorical. The Luo on the other hand, while they appreciate good conversation, where words are deployed to the full, tend to value ngeche more for their hidden meanings and wisdom behind them than for their aesthetic functions and enhancement of the beauty of the language alone.

The Luo regard ngeche as the embodiment of their beliefs, philosophical thoughts and wisdom and, therefore, as of great educational value. A good orator often uses ngeche in the course of his deliberations to heighten the wisdom that lies behind his words.

Some proverbs, as part of ngeche, often contradict each other but, probably that is why they are considered as wise sayings. These two seem to bear direct contradiction to one another:

Mirikini kideny - a person who is always in a hurry never goes without food, this could be an equivalent of 'the early bird catches the worm'.

Mirikini jamuod nyoyo gi kuoyo - a person who is always in a hurry may eat his nyoyo (cooked maize and beans) with sand.

There are always two sides to any argument, the good and the bad, the negative and the positive. Life is full of paradoxes and as a result there is no set rules. A person who hurries may gather much while stragglers may get nothing. But at the same time while he hurries, he may meet with danger. It is painful when he grinds grit with his teeth while hurrying over his food for no reason whatsoever. As we have already noted, ngeche must always be interpreted before their meanings can be fully comprehended.

Another group of ngeche is used mainly by children. But adults too may join in telling and interpreting them. These are, in reality riddles. One interesting observation I made in the course of my field investigation among the Luo is that there are some new ngeche (riddles) which have been created using modern articles, events and situations. This one here will serve as an example of what I mean:

Ji moruako ogute mach^alre kendo onindo e ot achiel ni to gin ng'a giri?: People who wear the same type of hat and all occupy one single room, who are they?

Answer: Match sticks in a match box kibirit e od kibirit.

This is what is meant when it is said that most genres of Luo oral literature are adjusting to changes in the society and are also taking on new meanings using new articles and new developments.

These types of ngeche are unlike the first type mentioned above in that they are flexible and adaptable and allow for the creation of new ones. They are often used for entertainment, as a means of testing wit and alertness of mind. Children and youth like to compete with each other in trying to interpret them.

A third popular type of ngeche Luo are groups of words and sentences which are actually puns and tongue-twisters. There are only a few of them and their contexts are fixed. Some are complicated and hard to repeat correctly without making a mess of the sentences, ending up by producing

meaningless words. Acham tap chotna malando, chotna cham tapa malando: I eat from my lover's brown earthenware bowl, my lover eats from my brown earthenware bowl. One is supposed to repeat the sentences going faster and faster without stammering. Ngeche Luo also cover similes, and, like ngeche, these are constantly used in daily conversation. Some of the similes are complimentary, while others are not and are used in insulting or scolding others. For instance, someone may tell a person who has annoyed him, irach ka mane ong'og gi dhok: you are as ugly as someone who was vomited through the mouth and not born through the normal channel. Or sometimes when a person is able to find something that another person kept in a secret place, the person who hid the article may say, ariak ka kuth otieno: you are as keen or sharp as the thorn of night, which is both complimentary and yet just a little insulting at the same time.

2. Kweche: folk beliefs and taboos:

Taboos and folk beliefs which form another large part of Luo oral literature contain much teaching about the norms and conventions of the society. Kweche are numerous and are keenly observed at all levels of the society. In actual sense they are used as a means of keeping and maintaining order in the society and homes. They form the basis and core of the Luo community code of behaviour. A person who breaks any of the important Kweche may suffer untold misfortunes, and may even die from chira, a slow wasting disease which follows as a punishment.¹²

For example, when one of the parents of an infant commits adultery, the baby is likely to fall sick with diarrhoea, grow thin with veins jutting out on its forehead and eventually die. However, if the guilty parent owns up, the whole family is given manyasi, a kind of cleansing herbal medicine, in which case the baby may be saved from emaciation and eventual death.

Kweche are usually talked about and taught to the children in the same way that sigendini and ngeche are; that is they are used at appropriate times and situations.

3. Rumours - weche ma wachore awacha:

New stories, ngeche, songs and other genres of the Luo oral literature often spring from rumours. What Onyango Ogotu and Roscoe have related in their book, Keep My Words¹³ have now become part of the sigendini. There are always all sorts of rumours going around in the countryside which often become sources of oral literature.

For instance, in the early 1950's, there was a rumour in Nyanza province about a man called Ong'wena who was said to be living in Kisumu township. It was a rumour because there was nobody who could say for certain they had seen or met the gentleman personally; yet the rumour persisted year in and year out. It was strongly rumoured that Ong'wena could allure any woman to his home by merely greeting her. It was rumoured that a woman who responded to Ong'wena's greetings, would voluntarily follow him to his

house and would remain there until he got satiated with her and ordered her to go away. As a result of this rumour, in those days, a woman who found herself alone in Kisumu town for one reason or another, did not answer back salutations from strange males. Several stories have emanated from this rumour about wives and daughters who disappeared and went to stay with Ong'wena in Kisumu, returning to their homes months later in a state of estrangement.

4. Wende - songs.

Wende of all types form another large category of the Luo oral literature. The people love singing and often sing on many occasions, individually, or in groups. They have songs for almost every conceivable occasion in their society. As in other African communities, while an individual may sing alone while doing some work, or walking or just for pleasure, often the real music-making only takes place as a social or group activity.¹⁴

Wende thum are songs accompanied by nyatiti, the eight-stringed lyre whose player is popularly known as jathum. Jathum is a real narrator and is honoured greatly by the Luo. Without jathum a traditional Luo feast and entertainment is considered incomplete. Often, during jathum's performance, men and women praise themselves and also often request him to sing songs praising them individually, their friends and relatives, dwelling on their virtues and accomplishments. An accomplished jathum, who is able to sing stories beautifully, may be rewarded with a bull or a heifer.

Wende geto or huwege: satirical songs.

These are songs that are sung to ridicule or to taunt someone as an allusion to his unbecoming conducts. For example, when someone breaks one of the folk beliefs, or commits a crime, a song, huwege, may be made up to ridicule him.¹⁵

There are also lullabies and children's play songs, but Luo lullabies are few and tend to be fixed in content. They are short and repetitive. Sitting down, the ayah, known as japidi in Luo, sings gently, patting the baby, holding him across her lap or holding him with his head resting on one of her shoulders. Or if it is a bigger child, she may carry her sitting astride on her back.

Through songs youth learn about their history for while the songs act as ^u means of self-expression and entertainment, they also embody certain social values and perpetuate historical events, philosophical thoughts and so on. Some of the songs teach patriotism by evoking the deeds of brave warriors and their triumphs and how much they loved and cared for their land and people.

Sigweya and dhero - chants or sung praise poetry:

Men and women sometimes have their own sigweya with which they are associated and which they chant whenever the need arises. At funerals, instead of weeping and wailing like the women often do, men sometimes prefer to resort to sigweya. Instead of weeping, a man might chant sigweya in

praise of whoever is dead. There are some sigweya with fixed words which one must just learn as they are, while there are others which one may make up to fit whatever occasion it may be.¹⁶

5. Take gi miende: games and dances.

These form another popular category of Luo oral literature. The Luo have dances and games of all kinds, which are performed in groups to the accompaniment of bul drums, or nyatiti the eight-stringed lyre or orutu, the one stringed fiddle. Some of these miende have got their own particular songs which are sung when they are performed.

Other songs are beer party ones whose singers can be either men or women. Like jathum, these beer party singers compose songs on all sorts of topics and the songs often become popular if they are interesting and have sweet tunes. The singers dress gaily and tie bunches of jingle bells on their ankles. And like jathum, they are poets and narrators.

6. Ngera: jokes and taunts:

These form another verbal genre of Luo oral literature. These are not fixed in any form and are indulged in freely depending on the occasion and situation, mostly by agemates and equals. As a matter of etiquette, youths do not often joke with adults unless under special circumstances. However, the reverse is the case; adults often joke with and tease youths and can even drive them to tears. This is one

way in which the young are supposed to learn to be tolerant.

These genres of Luo oral literature that we have briefly mentioned here are closely interrelated and often share functions. We have made an attempt to categorise them as the Luo themselves would do and also given them the names by which they are known to the Luo. It is through them that the Luo society as a whole transmits to the youth its cultural heritage and values and even in the present time, as Taban lo Liyong says, "the past is also mixed in with the present... you never know when you act, whether the rest of your activity is in your tradition or in your acquired school education..."¹⁷

3.2 Sigendini - Oral narratives:

Sigendini in Luo include historical accounts of real life experiences and do not, therefore, refer only to what is past or only to that which is fictitious and unrealistic. (see chapter seven)

Like ngeche and other genres of Luo oral literature, sigendini feature a lot in every day conversation and are functional at various levels in the Luo community. They are often used in conversations and in explaining or finding solutions to issues. A person could say to his friend, 'do you remember the story of so and so'? And the person being addressed having learnt the stories as a child would instantly know the story the speaker is referring to. Then he may use the incidents in the story to illustrate a point or to prove something.

Sigendini are told to children because of their educational values. Much of the Luo's wisdom, expectations, knowledge and experiences of the past ages are passed on to the children through sigendini. Sigendini - telling sessions also provided psychological escapism when the children temporarily forget about real life and retreat into an imaginary world of sigendini where the absurd, the impossible and the abnormal in the real world is acceptable and is regarded as being quite ordinary, and where animals live, act, behave and do everything else like human beings. Sigendini provide entertainment thus giving the people something to do in the evening to while away time. Nonetheless, the entertainment that is provided by sigendini differs somewhat from that which is derived from watching television in that story-telling sessions are shows in which everybody is involved. Both performers and participants take an active part all the time. While one listens, and enjoys sigendini, told by others, one is at the same time challenged and made to keep alert, thinking of what he too might have to narrate when his turn comes along to do so.

1. Classification of Sigendini:

Sigendini Luo are not classified in any clear set categories. Individual sigendini get their titles from their heroes and heroines. For instance, the first story in Chapter Four is called sigand Nyngondho wuod Ombare: the story of Nyamgondho the son of Ombare, story 14 is called otenga gi agak - the story of the kite and the hawk,

story 17 is sigand duko moro pi o'diak - the story of a certain woman and the hyena.

The Luo also do not compartmentalize their sigendini into strict moral categories. To them, the sigendini are about life and its experiences; a phenomenon which cannot be carved out into one whole smooth junk, but which is ever wrinkled here and there and refractured with both the good and the bad. While it is accepted that sigendini Luo provide the much needed entertainment, they also at the same time act as vehicle, conveying some basic cultural values which are inter-dependent on each other; at one level general and superficial, at another deep and complex. Morals are just one of the issues with which the stories deal, and are not explicitly the most important one since all the other aspects of the people's life such as economic, historical, political and social affairs are also considered to be just as important. What Ruth Finnegan expresses about the Limba stories are equitable to the sentiments which the Luo also hold of their stories:

It would thus be misleading to say of the Limba tales that there is any one message or purpose conveyed in the stories, or that each story must somehow have some fixed and definite lesson which it is primarily intended to communicate. It is true that several stories do end with an explicitly stated moral. But, ^{as already pointed out, even in these cases,} the moral is not always ^{an} essential element of the story, but is often tacked on as a

kind of after-thought or neat conclusion and sometimes omitted altogether in otherwise very similar stories. Furthermore, an explicit moral is only a kind of conclusion among several possible ones... People's wisdom and experiences are passed on, certainly and this is occasionally explicitly recognised by reflective Limba as one of the values of their stories but this transmission takes place in a subtle way, not in terms of simplistic moral or function; people's joint and individual experience is conveyed and reconveyed and reformulated through the complex medium of the stories...¹⁸

2. The narrator:

In the Luo community, any person is free to tell sigendini. This is because the art of story-telling is not a monopoly of a group of people or certain individuals as is the case in some societies such as that of the Bini of West Africa.¹⁹ At an early age, a Luo youth is exposed to story-telling sessions and experiences which would enable him to grow within the culture. Yet to be a skilled story-teller depends to a large extent on a certain ability that an individual may possess. Any Luo may be able to tell any sigendini (especially was this true of those who grew up in the traditional society) that have been narrated to him by others, but to be a famed narrator, he must be able to do more than that; that is, he must be able

to create the story anew, each time he tells it. He should be able to do this by putting it into its proper perspective, juxtaposing it with other developments which his audience is able to comprehend and to credit. In other words, the plausibility of any given story depends on its teller and his audience who set it against its social environmental background. Therefore, a story teller is many things at the same time; he is a teacher as well as a social commentator.

Both the narrator and the audience are performers and are necessary for the existence and success of a story as both give it life and also control its form and content. Nonetheless, the narrator is the controller and therefore must, apart from possessing those other qualities, be an intelligent person who is able to assess the understanding ability of his audience and also to adjust his method and language accordingly.

When telling a story to an audience composed of children, he would try to make himself simpler and clearer, by using language that the children are able to understand.

A good narrator should be fluent in his language, and should also possess a wide vocabulary and be well versed in the use of ngече, similes and other forms of figurative speech. The narrator should also be a pleasant person who enjoys entertaining people and who is eager to pass on some of the knowledge that he possesses to others. He should be someone

endowed with a retentive memory with imaginative and creative abilities and who is not in the least shy or timid because as a narrator, he has to use some taboo words which become unavoidable in the course of his narration. He has to be someone who is bold and full of confidence because proper Luo story telling involves gesturing with hands and other parts of the body as well as dramatisation, and elaborate use of ideophones.

To be fully effective therefore, he also must be familiar with the techniques applied in oral story telling and be able to employ these according to his requirements (see chapter six). He has to use clear and descriptive, narrative methods, changing into dialogue, reporting and mimicry whenever appropriate; and he does all this so as to render the story, not only alive, but authentic, interesting and real. For instance, when he tells a story about othin othin, he should be able to lisp and act comically like othin othin is supposed to do. He should be able to 'bridge' that valuable link in the continuum of the past and present cultural traditional heritage and the fictitious world of some of the sigendini which are all wrapped up together forming the future. A competent narrator is able to inspire his audience through clear and well defined words which adds to the interest and enthusiasm he should himself show in the sigendini.

In the Luo community, the expert story tellers who meet the above requirements are often old women who have passed

child bearing age. Such women are known as nimbe (singular is pim). Their houses become known as siwindhe, a kind of dormitory where grown up girls as well as little boys and girls from the age of about seven to fourteen spend the nights. A typical Luo homestead often had many families who are closely connected by kinship, and children from these families formed the audience of the pim's nightly story-telling sessions. It is appreciated that pim is more than just a story-teller, but is an instructor and a teacher as well. She educates youths on almost all aspects of life which included the general norms and conventions of their society. Ayayo summarises the importance of siwindhe in these words:

All the youths must pass through this institution and for those found to be ignorant of the Luo inner life, there is a saying that reads: 'iming'ka manene ok oninde siwidhe nade - you are as uneducated (naive) as someone who never slept in siwindhe'..

The pim teaches the youths customs, traditions, history, and family life of the Luo in her house. The method used in this institution (siwindhe) is by telling or singing stories. These stories called sigendini in dholuo are never permitted to be told by day, as they say that it would prevent young ones from growing. These stories cover all walks of life... Siwidhe education stresses Luo ideologies in the form of stories, tales, songs and riddles....²⁰

In the evening after supper, the little girls and boys can be seen heading to the siwindhe to spend the night. They might be carrying some firewood, especially during the cold weather. The firewood is for the old lady to burn to keep the house warm.

Story telling only begins when everyone present is comfortably settled, lying down on the mat with the fires burning. Sometimes story-telling is preceded by a short period of riddling or by general conversation when news items are exchanged between the various members of the group. Often, those who sleep in a siwindhe are either good friends or close relatives. There are things talked about in the siwindhe which are not supposed to be repeated to outsiders or to non-members of that particular siwindhe. If the homestead happens to be a huge one with many families and children, then there could be more than one siwindhe in such a home.

There are siwindhe in almost every home and night visits called gono in Luo are exchanged between different siwindhe members. These visits provide one way by which new stories are learnt. New stories are also learnt from other sources. In the evenings while supper is cooking, a mother may tell her children stories she herself learnt when she was a little girl. Again, any new members of the homestead such as newly married women may also tell children new stories. When children go away to pay visits to their relatives, they often learn new stories which when they

return home, they eagerly tell to others in their siwindhe.

In the siwindhe, nobody especially, the little boys and girls have a fixed place to occupy on the sleeping mat. Figuratively this taught the children something about life. Nothing is ever constant and stable. One is supposed to sleep anywhere on the mat. One may sleep right at the end of the sleeping mat or right in the middle between others. Hence the Luo proverb - inind diere, inind tung' - *the corner of the mat is the worst.*

When everybody is ready to listen to a story, one person in the group calls out saying, si ana go nyim dhot - story hits the place directly above the threshold; si ana go kachiena - story hits the sleeping part of the house; si ana go tielo - story hits opposite the door and so forth. Nobody could tell me the significance of these phrases, but it is possible they are used to make everyone attentive.

Anybody may be called upon to start, but normally, whoever happens to be sleeping at the end of the mat towards the door often starts. He begins by saying, 'I am going to tell you a story of...' then he names the story he is going to narrate. The audience remains attentive, yet passive and only joins the narrator at the end of the si ana to say 'thu tinda adong adong arom gi yien matok kanera - thu tinda may I grow as tall as the trees behind my maternal uncle's home'. Thu tinda - the end let it be.

In the course of narration, whoever is telling a story keeps on asking, unindo? - are you sleeping? To which the

audience answers, ooyo, waneno, no, we are awake. When the voices answering back grow fewer, she may stop for that night and continue the following day. But, this does not mean that the youngsters drop off immediately they lie down on the mat. The story telling sessions are important occasions that are treasured by both adults and children, and to which every child looks forward. Therefore everyone present keeps awake for as long as is possible to hear and to tell stories. Again, in the traditional society, the Luo served supper early in the evening; it was possible that by about 6.00 p.m. most siwindhe had already assembled.

During the story telling session, not everyone has always a story ready to tell. Excuses are therefore allowed. In that event, the person concerned has only to say: 'osiglo leny odwa thee kor ka mach!

\ Osiglo sits at the sleeping part of our house looking oily' (thee is just an expression that cannot be translated into English or any other language). Osiglo is a small pot that is used for storing fat from milk that has been churned in a gourd before it is clarified into ghee. This phrase would be accepted as an alternative to telling a long story.

Sometimes, the group may decide that the pim took turn in telling the siwendini on an evening. Siwindhe as an educational institution, provides conditions that are conducive to story telling. It also allows for cordial interactions between youths and brought them into contact

with their social values and cultural heritage by way of the instructions they received from the pim. Apart from the other things that the children learn from story-telling sessions, they also learn to be creative, to use their intelligence and imagination effectively and to express themselves wisely, articulating clearly, following in the foot-steps of the grown-ups.

CHAPTER FOUR

SELF-DEVELOPMENT, SOCIALIZATION AND

AWARENESS OF GOD

4.1 Self-development and socialization:

Sigendini Luo which we aim to examine here lay stress on the importance of self-development and several other aspects and activities which fulfil goals and objectives of education as viewed by the Luo. These values are meant to assist a child in developing positive qualities in his character and to acquaint him with the norms and conventions of his society. A child's young mind does not have to puzzle out heavy philosophical thoughts embodied in the sigendini because these are woven into captivating episodes and made much simpler.

Educational values of socialization and self-development are considered important as they form the foundation of the well-being of every individual in his society. Therefore, a child is introduced to these long before he is able to comprehend much that goes on around him. The first lessons are delivered to him through simple dos and donts such as 'do not tell each other sigendini during the day, if you do, then you will be stunted in growth.' Which child does not wish to grow bigger? This dont is effective and is carefully observed by every child.

Yet, it is obvious that the dont is only one way of keeping children away from telling each other stories during the day when they should be doing other things that can only

be done during the day. Nobody is spared from work in the Luo community. Even small children are given jobs such as looking after calves, sheep and goats, attending to the cooking fire, looking after babies and doing a host of other things that suit their strength and state. If they are allowed to tell sigendini to each other during the day, they would become too engrossed in the stories and would be likely to forget to attend to whatever duties they had been assigned. The education is a practical one. The most obvious reason why the children are stopped from telling sigendini to each other during the day is that the Luo consider sigendini to be an important source of education. They therefore wish that they should only be told under secure, settled conditions when attention would not be divided as would be the case when they are told during the day. This is what Ochoona Ayayo says about story-telling:

The situation in siwindhe is that of communicating knowledge, beliefs, customs and traditions, norms, rights and obligations to the young members of the society...²¹

Onyango Ogutu and A.A. Roscoe are even more explicit when they say:

A typical night in siwidhe begins with the door being securely fastened and checked, and the mats and bedding spread. With all the young people lying on their mats, the grandmother or (pim) lying on her uriri, a special bed reserved for her age and experience, then declares, "Now, let the

house be quiet" and as though officially breaking the silence, asks, "who will begin..."²²

As we have already mentioned, certain aspects of the educational values of sigendini, play an important part in socialization and self-development of the Luo child: a process which is a life long one, since it is one of the people's belief that man is taught until he dies.

From an early age, a Luo child learns the act of sharing with others, but we know from studies on child development, that at this early age, a child's world revolves around himself and he therefore tends to be selfish, only thinking of himself. The idea of self esteem is not entirely negative, really, since we are again reminded that a person must first value himself highly in order to be able to value others. However, in the case of a small child, there is marked selfishness tendencies which must be curbed. For instance, when there are four bananas to be shared among four children, one of them might insist on taking all, leaving nothing for the others. It is this sort of selfish greedy tendencies that need to be curbed.

In story II, Simbi Nyaima: the evil of selfishness and the consequences of refusing to share with others is clearly brought out. Especially is this apparent when we 'review' the sigana (story) against the background of its cultural and environmental setting in order to understand it fully.²³ an approach which we shall take with all the twenty-one sigendini.

The villagers and their elder refuse to share with nyar Anyango/Gwasi, the abundant food that they have prepared for the feast. Neither is the elder willing to give her shelter for the night even though it is going to rain and darkness is fast approaching. The villagers too, like their elder, are hostile towards Anyango, and were it not for the one sympathetic village woman, Anyango would have left the village still in a famished and deprived state. Apart from bringing out the idea of sharing with others, the story also brings out the idea of social responsibility. The Simbi villagers do not wish to have an outsider intruding in their midst; hence they shun Anyango. But in shunning her, they also shun their social obligation when they exhibit such selfish, ungenerous and negative attitude towards her. Possibly, all the blame should be heaped on the village elder for having started the whole thing. In fact by his actions, he shows that "he did not learn well when he was a child": the education which he received failed in certain respects to develop him fully into a responsible individual.

Selfishness provides the subject of many tales, because it runs counter to African collectivism. Quite early in his life, the African child is taught how to live in society and share with others, providing a place for them physically beside himself, as well as in his own heart. Thus, to 'understand' and 'feel' were expressed by the same term in many of our languages. When we felt, we put

ourselves in the other person's place, and tried to understand him, entered into his feelings become in fact one with him. Giving was one of the essential features of our civilisation, and to fill the village with prattle of children was another of disseminating joy....²⁴

The theme of sharing with others is at the core of most African societies. Therefore, the message of the story is important to the well being of the whole society and forms the nuclear of African socialism. The Luo children are made aware of the need to share with others through sigendini such as this one of Simbi Nyaima, so that when they grow up they will accept the philosophy of the extended family system which is part of the social responsibility. The Simbi villagers together with their elder are consumed by water for neglecting or shunning their social responsibility by feeling too good to welcome Anyango.

Living meant creating and promoting the survival of the family, and the continuity of society.

Life meant health, joy, plenty and when people met they would ask 'is there peace at home?'

If someone, apart from being the father of many children and husband of more wives than one, is also a link in the large family chain, stretching beyond him back into time and thrusting forward into the future, peace is of inestimable value

and every act performed requires the most accurate assessment. This sense of peace enabled us to turn life into the great festival it is, and should in fact be...²⁵

In story I: Nyamgondho the son of Umbare; Nyamgondho loses everything that he possess, not necessarily because he is disrespectful towards his family, but rather because he has become irresponsible and selfish and would not share his time and companionship and other things with them. The normal accepted social behaviour of the Luo regarding an old man which I believe Nyamgondho was, is that he should not stay out late into the night. However, should he find himself compelled to do so, he should return home quietly without disturbing others. Now, Nyamgondho does exactly the opposite.

One other cultural educational aspect that needs some explaining here is that according to the Luo, a father, especially a polygamous one, should be around in the evenings to ascertain that his children behave themselves at meal times and that they are properly fed. As the head of the family, he should preside over the evening meals. Furthermore these occasions provided him as a father with unique opportunities to socialise with his children and to learn to know each other better. Normally the boys would eat with their father at 'duol' while the girls would eat with their mother in the family house. Therefore, the educational aspects that are carried in the story of

Nyamgondho are important on socialization of individuals and the group as a whole.

Story 6: The two brothers is another sigana with aspects that touch on socialization of individuals and sharing with others. The elder son is selfish and wicked. He is still young, but that is no excuse why he should deliberately starve his brother. The education, according to the Luo, starts from birth; therefore for a child to grow up to be an upright person and to enjoy blessings of his parents, and of others, he must start to follow instructions he is given by his parents and other older persons. These, as we have seen often come to him in the form of norms and conventions of his society; much of it through sigendini.

By Luo customs, the eldest brother has the first option on building a hut of his own ... it is the duty of this son to help his younger brothers economically to reach the same position if any of the boys obtains a well paid job as a result of his good education, he is expected to send some of his salary home to his father and brothers who are not so fortunately situated. This hospitality and generosity also extend beyond the family. According to Luo customs, no-one is ever allowed to starve as long as there is food to share. A traveller is as free ... and is as a rule welcomed as a great friend and nobody will interfere

with him if he goes into a field to pick maize or bananas to satisfy his hunger ... if he takes more than he can eat, he is contravening the laws of hospitality and he will be considered a bad man... 26

The father of the two brothers, therefore, had cause to be angry and to curse his elder son for having shirked his responsibility and for being selfish. Normally, the punishment is meted out directly on the culprit, but in this sigana, because it is such a basic crime, all the elder son's descendants have carried the punishment to the present time.

The lesson is basic and acts as a warning to all children, but especially to elder ones as well as for those who are in positions of leadership.

The Luo often judge what sort of a person a child would grow up to be by the way he handles himself during meal times and how willing or unwilling he is to share his food with others. Therefore, from this incident the old man has learnt that his first son would not be a good leader since he has proved to be selfish and unwilling to share milk with his brother.

As has already been mentioned, the stories are used symbolically and may not be taken too literally. But if we appear to be rather literal in our examinations of them, it is merely because we are trying to find out and at the

same time to show how the incidents forming the contents of the sigendini are real happenings emanating from experiences of the people.

Story 10: The tortoise and the woman:

The tortoise is not at all socially conscious and would not even render a simple service to the woman without demanding payment. Worse still he chooses a form of payment which amounts to exploitation. The woman's husband kills him because he is a bad influence, irresponsible, corruptive and lacks social spirit. The story is on a delicate topic, yet this is something which could happen even to day. But neither is the woman innocent. She is equally guilty and deserves the treatment she gets from her husband; not so much because she succumbs to the tortoise demands, but rather because she too proves dishonest when she bids her son not to tell her husband about the incident. Moreover, the situation in which she finds herself could have been avoided if she had gone to the well in the company of another woman who could have helped her to put the pot on her head; or alternatively if she had taken a smaller pot to the well to draw the water.

Symbolically, the jungle is like a place full of vices where all the elements with anti-social and negative motives abound. Therefore, it appears that any human being who ventures into the jungle must have proper protection or be faced with difficulties. Most animals which live there are out to exploit human beings whenever they find them in a

compromising situation. The lesson here is that children should not wander alone in the jungle or go unaccompanied to isolated places such as the well and the river; or into the forest to gather firewood. They must refrain from going to such places so as to avoid falling victims to the many vices which seem to be loose in these places. Again, symbolically, the jungle could be taken to represent the other part of man's nature which often tends to bring chaos in the society. This, then would be the traits in man's character which must be socialised as it is that part which now and again rebels and exhibits anti-social actions and behaviours.

Children have to be made aware of the bad and the good that exist in their society. There is no use pretending to them that the world into which they have been born is all pure. The adults such as the women have their weaknesses and would fall victims to villains such as the tortoise.

Story 19: Alala and her parents - also brings out the idea of social responsibility and depicts a properly well developed individual. When Alala is told that her parents have turned into mang'ange she must make a quick decision on what to do. And due to her social training coupled with her filial love; she braves all the dangers which she knows that she may encounter while travelling alone through the jungle - she must go and witness for herself the fate of her family. Her sense of responsibility prevails over everything else and she risks her life-even though she realises that

once her people have turned into mang'ance they would be hostile towards any human beings including herself.

Obong'o in story 9: the girls who were going to visit their boy friends - also exhibits a highly developed sense of responsibility and maturity. His sister, Ndweyi has gone against his directives, yet he does not stop to moralise nor to find fault with her. He hurriedly takes his weapons and runs to go and rescue her. Due to his successful cultural education, he feels that he must be responsible and brave going alone into the jungle to save his sister:

folktales ... were based primarily on day to day happenings. Hence, most of them have close relationship to life. Much of the ethical teaching that children received came from folktales ... virtues such as communal unity, hard work, conformity, honesty etc. were reflected in many folktales...²⁷

Self-development is important for the survival and well being of an individual in his society. From time to time, a person is faced with a difficult situation when his strength of character and sense of maturity are tested. For instance, Nyamgondho in story I is faced with great difficulties. But he does not give up; he perseveres and continues to apply himself diligently going to the lake every day until he succeeds in obtaining some food. It is a fact that he fails to lead a happy satisfactory life to the end

of his days, but this is part of life and the Luo's philosophy and outlook on life caters for such developments: hence the proverb 'inind diere, inind tunc' (page 44).

The story shows how a fully developed individual is able to persist and to endure in the face of difficulties until the problems are solved. 'Perseverance is the battle: kinda e lweny'. is another Luo proverb which advocates development of a strong character.

Sirendini give children a glimpse into life because they are created out of real life situations and happenings, therefore, they are able to see, identify with the characters and make attempts on their own to solve their problems in the same manners that the characters in the stories are able to tackle their own problems.

Self respect as part of an individual development is another idea which runs through many sirendini Luo. When Nyamgondho in Story I prays for food, he is given plenty of it after a lengthy struggle. Now, how he uses this wealth, does not only determine how well developed he is as an individual, but also determines his fate. He has himself lost his sense of direction and self respect and as a result, he respects nobody: not even his aged wife. Initially, when he was still a poor fisherman and starving, he showed marked strength of character in self-respect and generosity. In fact, he exercised control in a most difficult situation when he even had to share his small left-over fish with Nyar-Nam.

Podho in Story 3: The split of the Luo - shows lack of respect for human life when he insists that his brother must go out alone in the jungle to look for the spear. He lacks sympathy, tolerance and love: qualities which are necessary for a leader. He puts more value on the spear than on the safety of his subject, even where the subject happens to be his own brother. Their alienation from each other is caused by their love for material things. Both of them are to blame, for they both lack self respect and are unable to forgive each other. They have grown bitter and inhuman in their behaviour. The story has certain basic educational values which it passes on to the children.

4.2 Awareness of God:

The values of sigendini Luo that put stress on socialization of individuals also have close bearing to those which seek to make a child aware of the existence of a super-natural power whom we refer to here as God-Nyasaye.

The super-natural power which the Luo refer to as Nyasaye, God is explicitly portrayed in Story I:

Nyamgondho the son of Ombare. Nyamgondho is desperate. He is in need of food. When he at last calls on Nyasaye for help in his prayer; he is given abundantly. However, the gifts come to him in a rather round-about manner; through an old/^{woman} whom he fishes out of the lake.

Several ideas emerge here about Nyasaye which are meant for the children to understand. First that Nyasaye

is a power to reckon with and to turn to when one is in dire need of help and therefore, he must be kind and generous. Secondly, that he would give and oblige if a person prays to him genuinely for help and continues to struggle on his own, trying to achieve or to obtain whatever he needs Nyasaye's assistance on. The third point which the story raises is that, this same Nyasaye, who is the giver is also severe in his actions at times, and is capable of robbing and denying a person any gifts that he has given him. Therefore, Nyasaye's gifts must not be taken for granted.

From the story, we see that for an individual to be able to keep, enjoy and thrive through the gifts of Nyasaye, he must watch his conduct in relation to other people around him. This is one way through which one's sense of social responsibility and how well he is developed as an individual is tested. Another idea that comes out from the same source and which the children have to be aware of, is that religion and beliefs on Nyasaye, according to the Luo is something which is lived and practised all the time. ²⁸

The interrelatedness of Nyasaye and man's good conduct towards others is brought out in story 6: The two brothers, the narrator ends his story by saying that, 'a person is blessed or cursed just here in this life according to her or his behaviour towards others'. The Luo believe that a person's godliness can be judged by his attitude towards those with whom he interacts daily. Nyasache. This being the case, it would then appear that one's total

well being, depends on the way one handles oneself and his affairs in relation to other persons since it is through these others that he would be lifted to a position of honour or degradation. Goodness in men, among other things, is only fully manifested and measured through their conducts and attitude towards their fellow men. The idea of Nyasaye, fate and man's moral uprightness, according to the Luo and many other African religious beliefs, is only valid when it is practically integrated into one's day to day involvement with life.

When children listen regularly to these sigendini they are bound to get these basic ideas firmly rubbed into their minds. Granted, the ideas might not be understood right from the beginning, but as they grow and attain maturity; they would gradually come to value the teachings behind the sigendini.

The existence of a supernatural power, Nyasaye is also revealed in story 18: The chief's daughter. The woman speaks to the river saying, 'if you are my ancestral river, please open yourself up so that we may pass to the other side.' The Luo often pray to Nyasaye and the ancestors - kwere machon. Here again, there is this interrelatedness between Nyasaye, whose other names are Nyakalaga, Were Obongo. Like Nyasaye, the ancestors would, according to the prevailing situation, assist in bringing about blessings or troubles and curses on their descendants. The existence of the two and the extent to which they collaborate are well known to the Luo,

but the way they work to cause things to happen, remains a mystery. And due to their might and overwhelming power, they have to be coaxed, prayed to and be offered sacrifices.

Although it seems that a great many people, especially among the younger generation, have lost their faith in Nyasaye, this does not seem to be the case with the belief in the spirit of the dead. Practically all the Luo people including those who are Christians, appear to believe in the existence of these spirits...

The dead person can avenge himself on his grand children if his son failed to carry out his duty to his father in his extreme old age before he died. The revenge for neglect of this kind will often take the form of some illness suffered by the grandchildren...²⁹

Simbi Nyaima story 2, also makes the children aware of the existence of Nyasaye. The villagers and their elder are all mysteriously punished, an action which the Luo refer to as hond piny or hond Nyasaye: God's miracle. The lone kind woman and her children are saved through the same mysterious action. Here once again, Nyasaye does not come directly in contact with the villagers, but makes the contact through Anyango Nyar Gwasi. The idea which we have already propounded is once again evoked in this story which is that: the people with whom one interacts in everyday life are in fact one's Nyasaye.

Under normal circumstances, an old woman would not be a very good representative or messenger of Nysaye, yet in a number of sigendini Luo, this seems to be a common occurrence. The idea is probably meant to train children to accept everyone as they are, and to desist from judging people and objects by appearance and on face value. A person, even an object may embody both that is good and bad and may bestow blessings or curses on an individual according to his or her action and behaviour. The rain that has made it possible for the villagers to realise heavy harvest that they are celebrating, has also been the element that has brought about their destruction. The old woman who saves the village woman and her children is also the same one whose mouth pronounces curse to Simbi. This is also the case in Nyamgondho's story. Nyasaye works through agents such as old women to bring both good and bad luck to individuals and groups of people. These ideas are weighty and would prove difficult and impossible to pass ^{on} to the young children through other methods, hence they are woven into sigendini and are therefore passed on to them in a more plausible manner.

In story 3: The split of the Luo, the old woman who appears to Arua while he is in the jungle also brings out the idea of the existence of a super-natural power: Nyasaye. Once more, an old person has been used to bring help to Arua in the jungle. Yet here again, it is the same woman also who gives him the ^{string of} beads which is the ultimate cause of the

split of the Luo. Children are once more made aware of the fact that what may appear modest on the surface, may embody formidable forces underneath. All these are a part of the Luo belief and religion which is complicated and yet highly practical since it is lived at^a human level, involving the banality of daily life's events from which sigendini are created.

The same idea of Nyasaye and the whole mystery surrounding Luo belief and religion also comes through story 4: Julu. The mysterious voice that calls Julu until she disappears under the ground is surely not an ordinary one. The act is that of hond Nyasaye: God's miracle, for surely, there is no one else who has the power to remove a person from life with such authority! True, a medicine man among the Luo is said to have powers and could at times cause such things to happen, but in this case Julu is ~~all~~ alone by herself in that village. Everyone has died. It therefore must be a voice from Nyasaye.

The story also carries some other complicated ideas. Julu sings that she has killed everyone including her parents and grandparents: in fact all the relatives. In this case, could it be that her removal from life is an act of punishment? Was she a witch or how did she kill the people, or is she only being sceptical seeing that she is the lone survivor of a disaster, possibly an earthquake or an epidemic? As we ask ourselves all these questions, we come to realise more and more the mystery of life. The

importance of the ancestors in the life of a living individual is also raised here once again. When Julu is perplexed and does not know how to overcome her loneliness, or who to turn to, and when she hears the strange voice calling her, she thinks of nobody, but her ancestors. She even thinks that they must be haunting her.³⁰

Lastly, the idea of the existence of a super natural power Nyasaye is revealed to us through story 20: Owuor and Tutu the bird. The bird that saves Owuor from the hut where his father has left him in ^{the} jungle is also the same bird that has been giving his parents grain food and all the other riches. It comes to ^{the} boy's rescue because he is being punished for having accidentally let it free. The idea of Nyasaye as the helper is clearly shown through the story, although once again, it becomes complicated and hard to understand and we therefore observe that SigeNdini Luo raise some issues which are very basic to life and for which there are no ready fashioned answers.

In story 19: Alala and her parents, we see that the girls' parents just turn from being human beings into Mang'ange. These are terrible fierce creatures like hyenas, but with mouths that are flaming red like fire. What power is capable of causing such dreadful transformations to take place? Through this story, the children are being made aware of the existence of a power which is so great that he controls not only non-living things such as the rivers and rain, but also man's entire life and is capable of

changing him into any object he desires. This, as we have already expounded, is what the Luo refer to as hond Nyasaye: miracle of God. The story does not explain why these people make exist from man's world into that one of animals'. Was it as a punishment, or was it merely as a whim of the God: Nyasaye? But since there does not appear in the world of sigendini Luo to be a punishment without a cause, we can merely guess, perhaps wrongly so, that Alala's people may have committed a crime and may have offended someone, an ancestor or Nyasaye himself. The offence could have been so terrible that they cannot be allowed to continue to exist in the world of man; so they must be thrown out of man's world into animal's world changed into mang'ange: Alala can no longer live with them, but must run away.

Yet, it is also possible that the transformation from human beings to mang'ange is used symbolically in the story.

CHAPTER FIVE

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE, VALUE OF WORK AND
MAN'S DEPENDENCE ON HIS ENVIRONMENT.

5.1 General Knowledge:

Some sigendini Luo are useful as a source of information on general knowledge to the children. From them a broad corpus of the people's mode of existence, political life and philosophical thoughts can be learnt. Through the story, the children also have a glimpse of and gain an insight into the nature and the problems of the world in which they live. This is one of the reasons why all Luo children had to pass through siwindhe (pp. 44-50) so that they would be educated in the ways of their people and about the world in general.

The chief purposes of traditional African literature are two: to teach culture to the children or strangers and to teach wisdom. It is difficult to learn any new knowledge. As such our teachers cognizant of that fact, devised entertaining stories for the presentation of certain facts and truths of life...³⁷

When closely examined, story 2: The split of the Luo is found to have information that bears certain historical truths about the Luo as a group. Evidence gathered by historians prove that the Luo migrated from Southern Sudan:

(Vol. II Appendix C(2)). Therefore in accordance with an observation that has been made elsewhere in this study, sigendini are to a people who create them much more than mere tales told for amusement. They are in reality parts of the unwritten chapters on the people's life giving accounts of their past life, achievements and failures and such other related matters.

The reason why the Luo moved away from their original home in Southern Sudan may not have been as a result of a quarrel between the two brothers, Podho and Arua. However, in the story, the reasons and the developments which are supposed to have led to the break up of the group, are well presented and convincingly narrated. From the many motifs of the story, children are able to learn something about their past history and why according to their ancestors the group was forced to break up and to move away from the Sudan.

Apart from explaining the reasons which led to the break up of the Luo into two groups, the story also gives further information regarding the system of their leadership at that particular time. We are told that when Ramogi died of old age, Podho being his eldest son, took over the leadership of the chiefdom. This is another valuable piece of information that adds greatly to the children's knowledge and widens their horizon with regard to their society. We are further told that such a leader was called Ruoth: therefore,

Podho was the Luo Ruoth at the time this incident occurred. He was knowledgeable about the chiefdom's affairs and was at the same time an expert on religious and political matters. He was also responsible and took care of all that pertains to the safety and welfare of the people.

Arua gets into trouble with Ruoth Podho because he throws the chieftain 'bilo' spear at an elephant which wanders into their compound. The elephant escapes with the spear. Symbolically, the spear is like a protective totem of both the chief and the chieftain. It is among the few tangible objects that Ramogi has passed on to Podho his son at his death as an inheritance. The spear is not only an object of protection for the chieftain and the chief, but is at the same time symbol of manhood and maturity for both. Therefore, Podho views its loss as some - thing very grave indeed.

The story further gives information on the Luo traditional worship. The bilo spear that Arua throws at the elephant was planted outside a shrine where sacrifices and worship to Nyasaye and the ancestors were conducted. We know that today this is not the practice among the Luo as they no longer build shrines whercin sacrifices and worship for Nyasaye are conducted. Possibly, they lost the practice on the way as they journeyed southwards into their present land. The Acholi of Uganda who are a Nilotic group with customs and practices ^{similar to} the Luo, still build shrines for sacrifices and worship.³²

From this same story, we are able to learn how the Luo used to live. We are told that the two brothers, Podho and Arua together with other people, lived in a large homestead which was surrounded by high euphorbia hedge. This is still the case today in the Luo land. The surrounding areas of the large homestead must have been bushy, hence the sudden appearance of the elephant on the compound. The area was also inhabited by other species of wild animals; a fact which we learn from the account about Arua in the jungle as he travels in search of the spear.

The type of food and crops that the Luo had are also mentioned in this story. On the eve of his departure to the jungle to go in search of the spear, Arua instructs his wife to make him kuon aniang'a which is ugali cooked in sour milk, some roasted cassava, grilled meat and some gruel. He carries the sour milk and the gruel in gourds. From this information we learn that the Luo were both agriculturalists and pastoralists as well. In this respect, sigendini, oral narratives, have been found to be very useful when it comes to compiling data and other information on the past life of a people. In particular, is this so when it comes to gathering information and facts to construct a history of an unlettered group such as the Luo.

It would appear that by the time the Luo left the Sudan, they had long progressed beyond the stone age and were leading more or less the same type of life as what they

lead today. They had learnt how to work iron, make snares and build houses. These facts make it possible for the historian to work out roughly the time that the group left the Sudan and to fix the date.

The story also throws some light on man's behaviour which is that people will always take sides whenever an incident of some significance has taken place which has ruptured their normal established order of things. The group under Podho breaks up; one group goes with his brother Arua, while the other group follows him.

Story 2: Simbi Nyaima is a more recent story than story 3: the split of the Luo: because it is set in the present Luo land (Volume II page 255). The story gives information and explains why lake Simbi exists where it is and how it came to be there. The information is necessary since environmental and geographical features play such a significant role in man's life. Furthermore, the information enriches the children's mind and adds to their store of knowledge about their world and life in general. It makes them aware of the instability of life and its mysterious forces that would transform even a village full of people into a lake. Within a day, Simbi had been transformed into a lake and had ceased to exist as a large village. The sudden appearance of Anyango Nyar Gwasi in the village, the torrential rain and the death of the villagers, are all interrelated. Nothing is quite independent of those other objects which are found around it or in the universe as

a whole. Death is in the abstract world and invincible to man, yet it is very much in the real world as well. It is seen coming to Simbi disguised by the rain which is brought about by the villagers' rejection of Anyango.

The type of work which the Luo engage in and some aspects of their social life also come to us through the story of Simbi Nyaima. Just as we learnt about the occupation of the Luo from story 3: The split of the Luo, which was set in the Sudan, we now learn from Simbi that the Luo are still agriculturalists and still keep cattle as well. Of their social life, we learn from the story that, they held feasts, especially after harvest³³ when they prepared much food and drinks, and had entertainments such as dancing and singing. (2.4)

Simbi village was probably very much like that other Luo village in the Southern Sudan in which Arua and Podho lived because like the other one, it was large and full of people. Again like this other village it was also surrounded by high euphorbia hedge. It would have been very much like the present typical Luo homestead:

A study of oral literature and tradition is ultimately a study of the society which has produced it. Similarly, African people cannot be fully understood without including a study of their traditions and literature. It is in these two areas that we find the richest deposits of African philosophy, ethics, history, customs,

education and reflection upon the universe in general. These are written not with ink on paper but with tongue on the mind. Literature and the oral tradition are, to take another metaphor, the veins and arteries of the blood which runs through the entire community of the departed, the living and those yet to be born.³⁴

Story 21: Luanda Magere is another story that embodies certain historical facts about the Luo. It is a fact, that from time immemorial the Kipsigis and the Luo have been neighbours. But it is also proven fact that they have not been friendly neighbours. Throughout their history, from the time the Luo arrived from the Sudan, possibly via Uganda and across Lake Sango: (Lake Victoria) the two have waged countless raids against each other. They have raided each other for cattle, for food, land and so forth. This is a historical fact which is well known to the Luo children. But Luanda's story is a special one. First, Luanda is regarded as a hero, a great warrior whom every child wants to emulate, especially the boys. They all wish to grow up to be like Luanda Magere: that is brave, manly fearless and mysterious. Secondly, it is a story that is taken to be based on a true happening and up to now, the stone that was once Luanda the son of Magere still exists and may be seen and be photographed.

When Luanda was sick, he was given treatment by a special ash medicine that was kept in a reed. This is another valuable piece of information since from it the children are able to learn something of the dying out ways of their people and also learn that the Luo had their own ways of treating the sick. Just like in modern time^s, medicine is kept in bottles and jars, in the olden days, the Luo and indeed, many other African groups of people, had their own well prepared medicine; some^{of} which they kept in pots, animal horns and pieces of dry reeds. It was all ready and was made available whenever it was required.

Luanda is killed by a spear thrown at him by a Kipsigis. This means that apart from the Luo, other groups such as the Kipsigis also possessed spears. Again, it would appear that Luanda's Kipsigis wife was not his first wife; he had another wife as well; therefore, from this information, we gather that the Luo even then, practised polygamy. Therefore many aspects of the Luo culture and ways of life come through their sigendini.

A special kind of knowledge which every society must foster is that concerning its own culture. The word 'culture' is used lavishly nowadays, with many different meanings and implications. Here we use it to signify what is peculiarly characteristic of a particular community, (Luo) including its organization, institutions, laws, customs, work, play, art, religion, and so on -

its 'totality'. It is important in any system of education ^{to} impart to each individual a comprehensive insight into his own culture, for this gives him pride, self confidence, and a sense of belonging. Some of this knowledge is transmitted ... in the family, in places of worship and ... literature, however, can often fill in any gaps and weld the whole into a meaningful picture.³⁵

Knowledge that is imparted to children through sigendini such as this one of Luanda, proves most difficult to give through straight talk. For instance it may not be very easy for an old man to tell his sons that it is not advisable for them to marry outside their group or indeed that it is unwise to marry a woman without a jagam. A jagam is someone who has an intimate knowledge of both the girl and the man and that of their respective families as well and who is willing to be a go-between in a marriage. Through a story such as this one, the points are made in a most subtle manner. The story also gives a warning and caution against divulging certain secrets even to those that one may regard as being very close.

Sigendini, as we have already observed, are created out of incidents and events that are important to the people. Due to his folly and of course, human weaknesses as well, Luanda lets down the whole group. Possibly, if he had listened to the advice that he had been given by his

wife and his mother as well, he might not have been betrayed by his Kipsigis wife.

The story also reveals to us another social custom of the Luo which is that each of Luanda's wives had her own house.

People's culture, were developed to an admirable level. They (sigendini) reflected the people's way of life. It was largely orally that the elders transmitted to the young ones the customs, beliefs and expectations of the clan, chiefdom and tribe.³⁶

A part from its moral message, The Bride and cooked blood: Story 5, also gives some valuable information on the customs of the Luo regarding marriage and other things. Riso which is the last marriage ceremony among the Luo is an important one because before it is accomplished, the woman is regarded as not yet being fully married. The significance of refraining from eating flesh including cooked blood is a bit intriguing. My enquiry about its origin and importance, did not meet with much success: nobody seems to be certain why there is this restriction. But it is felt that before the husband kills a bull or a he-goat and takes some of its meat to the home of his bride, the woman is not yet fully welcome in her new home as a full member.

Another piece of information that comes to us through this story is that the Luo used to engage a lot *in* hunting in a grand scale. Perhaps the men go into the wilderness in groups to hunt for security purposes as the jungle is full of wild fierce animals. A hunting expedition is like a war raid.

A number of sigendini Luo have animals as their heroes and heroines or main characters. These animals are depicted in a world that is identical to that of man where they engage *in* duties and carry on an existence which is in every way similar to that of man. As the children become aware of the presence of these other inhabitants of their world they come to realise that since they have been thrown together, they must adjust and learn to live with each other; though not necessarily harmoniously. Children learn much about the characteristics and peculiar ways of the animals through these sigendini.

It is chiefly stories that carry ideas, thoughts, reflections and wisdoms of the people. Since the majority of our people live close to nature, this intimacy between man and nature, permeates much of our literature. Man is part of his environment and the drama of life involves every created and imaginary object. Man observes the habits of the animals and plants around him and he gives meaning to both the world of nature in general and of mankind in

particular ... the different objects of nature are given human characteristics and made to act as people...³⁷

The hare's son cannot get married: story 13, because he has failed to find a suitable woman who would measure up to his standards. He is looking for a faultless perfect wife. Therefore he stays unmarried and carries on with his search. This is an amusing story, and the hare's cynicism is well portrayed. But we are here examining the story, for the information it gives us about the characteristics and traits of the various animals. From the hare's description of the other animals which he has courted and rejected or rather, disqualified due to their shortcomings, we have a clear picture of the physical appearance of these animals, and a good knowledge of their characteristics and behaviours.

The Party, story 15, also gives valuable information and useful knowledge on animals' characteristics, and behaviours. It even goes further to explain how the animals acquired their various characteristics, physical peculiarities and appearances. It corresponds well with story 3: The split of the Luo, where as a result of a quarrel and disagreements between two brothers, the group splits up and moves to different directions. We also observe from story 15 that as a result of a disagreement and disorder that erupts during the party, the animals acquire their various physical appearance, run away and go to lead their own

solitary lives according to their species. Furthermore, the scuffle leaves most of them badly hurt and changed in appearance.

The story and many others carry profitable knowledge on various animals and try to explain how they came to be the way they are today. This knowledge assists the children in adjusting to their environment and to accept things the way they are. Furthermore, the knowledge is functional since from time to time in daily conversation and interactions of people one with the other, similes and proverbs referring to animals are used. These are used referring to animals' physical appearance, characteristics and behaviours. It is not uncommon from time to time to hear people in all sorts of situations making use of animals' ^{characteristics.} One might be heard saying, 'dendi gwa ka dend ng'ech' - you' body or skin is as rough as the monitor's skin'; Otek ka pat opuk - as hard as a tortoise shell; owuor ka ondiek - as greedy as a hyena; ng'ute bor ka ng'ut tiga - the neck is as long as a giraffe's neck, etc. There are many similes and sayings in Luo with animal characteristics and physical appearances. Therefore, apart from other sources, sigendini too provide unlimited knowledge to the children about all sorts of things, animals included. Through sigendini such as these ones, children get to know and to tell who is who in the animal world. Yet, since we are here dealing with literary works of art, we cannot forget that there is much in sigendini which are symbolic and metaphorically

used.

But on a straight forward and humorous level, the animals that appear in the stories can be appreciated and enjoyed for their amusing antics or their vivid portrayal by the narrator. But there is more to be said than this. On another level, what is often involved in the animal stories is a comment, even a satire on human society and behaviours. In a sense, when the narrators speak of the actions and characters of animals, they are also representing human faults and virtues, somewhat removed and detached from reality through being presented in the guise of animals, but nevertheless with an indirect relation to observe human action.³⁸

5.2 Value of Work and Man's Dependence on his Environment.

The value of work and man's dependence on his environment are some of the thoughts that underlie most sigendini Luo and which the children cannot miss to grasp. In fact, existence means work; it is part of life. Man gets satisfaction from various activities in which he engages himself, while he exploits his environment for his livelihood or even for pleasure.

Work in itself has its own intrinsic value and gives satisfactory rewards and a sense of fulfilment. Through work man is able to realise his worth and his creative ability and of course his innovativeness. It is through

work that man builds new things and therefore enriches his life, discovers his ability and achievements. A good number of sigendini Luo have something to do with work or some aspects of work and experiences related to work.

From story 1: Nyangondho the son of Ombare, we learn that Nyangondho the hero of the story is a fisherman and that he goes to the lake every day to catch or to try and catch some fish for his food. Even though he is tired and famished, he faithfully continues to visit the lake daily. In story 8: the widow and her sons, the two sons of the widow are also fishermen. They go early in the morning each day to the lake to catch fish to bring home to their mother. They do not even have time to have some of their meals at home since they spend most of their time at the lake. As a result they have to carry their meal with them to the lake. Akula in Story 11, is also a fisherman who goes to the lake from time to time to catch fish to feed his large family. He must be a good fisherman. The occupation and the type of work these people do, has been determined by the availability of a river or a lake nearby in which fish is found. The people have to work hard to exploit the lakes or rivers for their livelihood: they depend on their environment.

The Simbi villagers in story 2 are farmers. When we meet them, they have just had a good harvest which they are celebrating. From the type of food that Arua tells his

wife to prepare for him. Story 3, it becomes obvious that they too engage on farming and on animal husbandry as well. Owuor's mother in story 20 works hard on her patch of land, and even the little Owuor is not exempted from work; he too must look after the bird when his parents are away. The people exploit the good land and ample rainfall to obtain their livelihood. The value of work is stressed again and again so that the children may grow up well aware of the importance of work to their welfare and existence. The Luo are quick to tell a lazy person that, 'he who doesn't like work doesn't have to eat'.

In story 7: Kasera's leg is broken in the jungle where he and other men from his locality have gone to hunt. This is a form of work, a hard and dangerous one too. The mother in law in story 6 as she runs to go and look for Nyar Wegi who has disappeared, meets groups of men who have been out into the wilderness to hunt and so is Alala in story 19. She also meets groups of men from her home who had gone to hunt.

From these stories we see that the Luo engaged on hunting wild animals for their food and also used the animal skins for ornamental purposes as well. From the work the people engaged on, we are able to tell the type of land on which they live, its ecology and general climate. This information is useful to the children in that it widens and broadens their horizon while it enables them to adjust to their surroundings and to whatever conditions that

may prevail where they live. Further, the children come to realise how dependent they are on their environment and therefore, they must learn to adapt to it and to exploit it before they can obtain their livelihood from it and live in harmony with the other forces that ^{also} operate in it.

The life and the well-being of the people we meet in the various sigendini Luo depend to a large extent, in their ability to tap and 'to overcome the stubborn factors in their environment',³⁹ that is, man must be properly adjusted and socialised (see chapter four) because his physical environment, to an extent determines the nature of his social environment.

More often than not those we meet in sigendini are engaged on doing something; they are either going to dig to exploit the land for their livelihood like is the case in the story of the bride and cooked blood: story 6. The environment is a vital factor in man's existence. Blood, that Nyar Wegi steals and eats which eventually puts her to shame, has been drawn from a bull which is grazed on the grass that grows in the nearby fields and pastures; this shows that there is close dependence of man on his surroundings.

Akula and his wives in story 11, also reveals to us the same dependence of man on his environment and how hard he must work so as to realise or obtain his livelihood. The rain threatens the old man, Akula's father, and as a

result his dove wife must alert him. She must call him to come home so as to escape from the fury of the torrential rain which might cause his death. There is a close interrelatedness between man and his environment which cannot be separated one from the other. Forces that operate around man's environmental spheres, do in reality, constitute and control his world, and from time to time they do turn hostile and wild towards him.

Owuor in story 20 also evokes the importance of work and brings out the idea of the relatedness of objects and people both in the real world that man inhabits and the abstract world. These points are stressed over and over in several sigendini Luo and children are made aware of their significance and the important role these other forces play in their lives. It is while she is engaged on her work which is very ordinary; that Owuor's mother gets to pick up the bird that brings the family riches as well as sorrow when Owuor's father banishes him from home. The world that is understood by man which is that of hard work, trial, pain and problems and the other world of Nyasaye, ancestors and mysterious powers that assumes the form of a bird which plants grass on the patch that Owuor's mother has dug, are all connected.

Although a great many of the folk tales referred to, depict fantastic and incredible events, they reflect just as often beliefs, habits and customs from the living Luo culture. Reference are

often made to agriculture and cattle-raising in these stories. These two means of livelihood have constituted most important bases for the Luo people as far back as the oldest living individual can remember, and even further. Peas, pumpkins, millet are mentioned ... corn is ground into flour with the aid of grinding stone. ... Hunting and fishing occur in (some stories). ... We are also told a certain amount about division of labour between men and women.⁴⁰

The general knowledge that the children glean from sigendini prove useful to them individually at one time or another and is comparable to valuable tools that might one day become handy. This is true too, if we keep in mind that sigendini and some of the situations they evoke are sometimes metaphorically used.

The woman in story 17 is well adjusted to her environment. She has received some valuable instructions and is knowledgeable about her world. She finds herself in a difficult situation and must think fast for a solution that would save her from the hyena. The story shows the gullibility of some members of the society. The hyena pretends to sympathise with the old widow and actually offers to move in with her so as to look after her. The proposal, as she puts it to the widow is very noble and human, but her motives are far from being noble.

Soon she resorts to torturing her in a most revolting manner. The story further evokes the importance of the other inhabitants of man's world. In her desperation, the woman sends a bird to take a message to her sons. Therefore there is a level at which man does not only depend on his environment, but on the other inhabitants of that world as well.

Another observation we can make here is that even though work is so important for the welfare of man, there are incidents when it can be used against man's well being. The hyena works hard in looking after the widow, but the accumulative result of her work goes against the woman's well being.

Alala and her parents: story 19 also shows a well adjusted person who knows her world very well indeed. She knows that if she plays a drum and sings a good ^{ly} sweet song, the fierce mang'ange she meets on the way to her home would not attack her. The story also gives information on one of the Luo customs that has died out, but one which was most commendable and which one wishes could be revived. It was a socially accepted practice that young men and young women who were still courting, could pay visits to each other in their homes (see also story 9).

The chief's daughter: story 18 is one of the most intriguing sigendini Luo. Awuor Awuor is married to Apul Apul which would not eat her, but no sooner *does* her mother

arrive. to pay them a visit than he devours her with much relish! The characteristics of apul apul are well portrayed and from the story we come to realise that there exist men and women (apul apuls) who would exploit others without shame.

Apul apul is a man-eater, but he also engages on hunting. His environment suits his mode of existence since he lives in the bush where other animals also live. In story 16, othin othin also kills other animals to feed his family during famine. Yet othin's case is somewhat different from that one of apul apul. In fact the moral in othin's story is comparable to that which is evoked by a play by B. Brecht, Mother Courage and her Children,⁴ where it is implied that under certain developments, moral standards are dictated by prevailing circumstances and conditions that exist at a particular time in history. The woman, Mother Courage, lives on the misfortunes of men and women caused by the ravaging war. She exploits the situation to sell essential commodities to make a little profit on which her children and herself live. Othin othin also kills his animal friends, not only to save his family from starvation, but to maintain his standard of living in spite of the food shortage. (Vol. II, story, 16, lines 11-1)

The same type of selfish exploitation of others is also the subject matter of story 8, where the widow deliberately

exploits her own sons' labours while, at the same time, she continues to feed them on vegetables. Her action is demoralising and turns her sons into nothing less than productive machines; and they are justified in rebelling against her.

Through these sigendini, children are made conscious of the fact that there are both positive and negative forces at work around them. But that once they have gained the right kind of knowledge and experience, and have a clear insight into their world, they manage to strike a balanced level and to have a peaceful co-existence with those ^{other} forces.

The general knowledge and the information which these sigendini embody, cover all aspects of man's life and touches on his social, moral, political, economic, historical and religious issues. The same sigendini also depict factors on the importance and the relatedness of things in both the physical and abstract worlds and man's relationship to these, regarding his work, occupation and welfare.

CHAPTER SIX

IMAGINATIVE, CREATIVE, EXPRESSIVE
TRAINING AND AESTHETIC APPRECIATION

6.1 Imaginative, creative and expressive training.

These run through all the twenty one sigendini Luo that we examine in this study. As has already been observed, sigendini are part of the Luo oral literature and are treated here in their own right as literary works of art. They compare well with written short stories and as such fulfil certain requirements of short stories, following simple effective techniques. Sigendini are imaginative works of man's mind, created out of the people's experiences. Nonetheless, we have to keep in mind the fact that in most African societies and certainly among the Luo, art is never indulged in for art's sake for the sole purpose of amusement or for aesthetic pleasures, but on the whole is viewed by society as being more important for its functional role.⁴²

As we examine the artistic qualities of sigendini, in this chapter, we should bear in mind the main aims underlying this study which are that some of the sigendini's ultimate functions are educational. We are therefore examining their artistic qualities so as to determine how the children also may learn from them to be creative and to develop aesthetic appreciation which is derived from (reading) listening to good literary works.

Sigendini are created out of incidents which emanate from everyday life. They are artistically created by the use of imagination, through full deployment of language and are made functional by telling and retelling.

Creativity is not however, only in terms of: originating something. It also functions on the level of transmitting what has been created. Otherwise the work of the artists dies out completely and the community is thereby impoverished. Therefore in telling stories, for example the narrator does not simply repeat, mechanically a story he has heard. The story teller retains the structure and plot of the story, but it is his responsibility as a creative transmitter to supply flesh to the skeleton. This he accomplishes through the use of his own words, in his voice and mannerism by inserting jokes if these fit into the story and in the fluency with which he tells the story.⁴³

When we critically examine story I: Nyamgondho the son of Ombare, we find that as an oral story, it fulfils certain recognised requirements and qualities of a short story and that it has enough techniques that go towards the creation of a short story. These qualities qualify it as a 'model' from which children may learn how to tell and create stories of their own.

A traditional story is always set in a particular geographical place and time which may be or may not be named. The setting tends to be in the past, long, long time ago when things were different from what they are today. This is one of the factors that qualifies a story as a work of fiction. Nyamgondho lived in the long ago past and his home was near lake Gwasi. He was a poor fisherman. It would be the case with modern written short story, whatever may appear to be unnecessary details which do not improve the quality or add anything substantial to the story, are left out. For instance, we are not told about Nyamgondho's past life. We do not know if he lived alone or with relatives, neither are we told if he had brothers or sisters. We are only given enough details to give the story credibility and make it plausible. This is because it has to be short, precise and to the point. Therefore, there are certain recognised limits within which a short written or oral story has to operate.

Normally, short stories, novels, plays and other works of fiction, have heroes who are well developed characters, but they also have flat less developed characters as well. Nyamgondho is the main character of his story. And in any works of fiction, the major character such as Nyamgondho in this story often has an obstacle which he has to overcome before he can realise his goal. Now, here poverty is the main antagonist that brings much complexity into Nyamgondho's life. In fact,

it is quite a formidable force which threatens to destroy him and which he must overcome before he can lead a normal life.

The poverty stands between him and the normal life which he wishes to lead, and forms a barrier that he must transcend so as to be able to overcome the unsumountable problems and conflicts in his life. Time and drought here could also be considered as collaborator joining with poverty creating hardships which Nyamgondho must transcend before he is able to have some sort of peace and enough food for himself. Other characters starting from the old lady whom Nyamgondho fishes out of the lake, populate the story, but they all remain flat and stay in obscurity. Nyamgondho is the only instigator of both positive and negative actions. And he develops and unfolds from one motif to the next until he becomes a tragic figure at the end of his story when he turns into a tree, having been driven to this destruction by forces that he can not control. Nyamgondho is real, full and embodies all human traits; both good and bad. He is well developed and would go to any length to obtain his goal and as a result he makes every effort possible to overcome his difficulties. He never gives up to accept defeat by those forces surrounding him.

Everyday, he trails along the dusty footpath to take his trap to the lake. So when the super-natural power: Nyasaye comes to his rescue through the old woman, (Nyar Nam) he really deserves the kind gesture because he has persevered.

What makes Nyamgondho's story a folk one as opposed to a modern written one is that, here, the narrator brings in Nyasaye: the super-natural power to solve Nyamgondho's difficulties, while in the modern written short story, the author would make the hero find solutions to his problems through his own efforts and initiative. He may use scientific and other technological means to do so, but rarely would he employ external forces; leave alone super-natural ones.

As in written short stories, narrator of oral stories also make use of any of the narrative techniques which are the same as those that are made use of by authors of written stories. However, in the oral literature short stories, descriptive narration is the most common method that is utilised with the third person and an omnipresent narrator and an eye witness. The omnipresent narrator, like in some written short stories becomes the conductor who reaches into all the corners and the lives of every character, unfolding and revealing to the listeners all the reactions, inner conflicts and thoughts of the various characters in the story. The narrator changes into first person whenever appropriate. In fact, there are times when he changes and becomes the main character himself (pp. 41-50). Nyamgondho's story progresses chronologically and we follow his development first as a poor fisherman, struggling hard to catch just enough fish for his food to keep body and soul together, up to the time he is a rich important man, unmindful of his dependants.

The content, that is, the subject matter of the story, the plot and the themes which the story evokes are integrated and woven together as the story unfolds revealing more about Nyamgondho and about what follows in sequence, one after the other.

An oral story such as this one of Nyamgondho is a literary work of fiction and as such is a work of imagination; therefore, we do not hope to find exact equivalent for it in real life at every corner although we have to admit that the moral and certain basic episodes are allegorical to life. The language that is used in the stories is often quite ordinary, and similar to that which the people employ in their daily talk and interactions one with the other. Yet since the world of traditional stories is in certain instances strange and mysterious, there are some words and phrases used in them that have become obsolete. Such words and phrases only make sense and have meaning in a particular story, and in songs too, there are found words and sentences that are completely meaningless. This is the more why some of these sigendini should be classified as fiction. Apart from these few dissimilarities, the language that is used in oral narratives is quite common place with symbolism, imagery, sayings and other figurative language employing free use of metaphors.

Sigendini seem to have repetitive sentences, which is a peculiar technique of the African oral narratives. The method is meant to produce suspense to heighten and

intensify actions in the stories. We may also mention here that the language that is used in sirendini is actually determined by the topic and the plot plus the themes. What is meant here is that the plot and the themes of the narrative, do to a certain extent, control the type of words and language that an ~~narrator~~ has to use. In this story of Nyamgondho, words that would express the sentiments on poverty, fishing, famine and so forth have to be employed so as to express the tone and also set the story in its social and cultural background.

Another noticeable difference between folk stories and modern short written stories is that the oral stories often have songs which are part and parcel of the story. A song may be a part of a motif or in some cases; a song is a motif its own right. (pp. 127-9) It may introduce any fresh scenes and ideas into the story. Therefore, while we appraise folk stories as literary works of art, we should at the same time bear in mind peculiarities and dissimilarities which distinguish them from written short stories. When analysing Nyamgondho's story, we have to take a few things into consideration such as text, of the story, characters and their relationship with each other, their problems and messages, the attitude of Nyamgondho towards God - Nyasaye: the super-natural power, the social-physical context of the story and its effects on the characters' behaviour, economic, political, social and moral well being.

Nyamgondho is the main character of his story as we have already observed. From the various elements of the story, we are able to learn about his reaction to the situation in which he finds himself in that particular social and physical or environmental context. He is a poor fisherman, so his main problem is poverty and how he might change and save the situation and better his position; that is, get enough to live on. While he makes concerted efforts to get enough to eat, he also solicits the assistance from Nyasaye through prayers. He asks Nyasaye to 'see him', that is, to look kindly on him and to bless him. As a result of his struggles and prayers, riches come suddenly to him through the mysterious elderly woman, Nyar Nam. Here the lake might be taken symbolically to present the idea of water as the giver of life which is the fore-runner of wealth taking into account that man has to utilise water and all the other things in his environment to obtain his livelihood. (see chapter 5).

An oral story is a work of fiction, and therefore contains factors that seem like exaggerations, but even if these were the case, in this story, the main messages still come out quite clearly and the exaggerated points only go towards enriching the story, making it more appealing and captivating because it is out of the ordinary.

One other worthwhile observation we need to make here is that, modern written short stories lack the freedom that

is enjoyed by oral traditional stories, in that the later being oral in nature, are readily adaptable and free from imprisonment and rigidity of pen and paper, which control and restrict the written short stories and other written works of fiction. Due to their being oral and unwritten, traditional stories, play a more open relaxed role than their written counterparts which are restricted, controlled and conditioned because they have known authors, are copyrighted and are properties of particular individuals. The traditional oral stories can reach a wider audience; both literate and illiterate alike. Nonetheless, in both cases, the authors are able to express themselves as they evoke and mirror problems and experiences which reflect particular issues in their societies. The stories act as a form of entertainment, are also thought provoking at the same time and of course, they transmit and preserve certain values which are the people's cultural heritage.

A folk tale is like a favorite recipe, used over and over again, and handed down from one generation to the next. Because its ingredients are so commonplace and deal with the fundamentals of life, it is universally appealing. The very fact that the same folk tale crops up all over the world shows how basic these stories are to human experiences. The name and characters may vary, a few details may be altered from place to place, but main themes remain the same. These stories, which have lived for hundreds

of years, possess a vitality that is imperishable and immutable. ... They reveal in simple form the interplay of elements with which man has always been concerned, trial and triumph, fear and hope, good and evil, sadness and joy, pain and pleasure, sickness and health.⁴⁴

We note that the introduction to Nyamgondho's story is short and pungent and encourages one to read or to listen to it to the end. It raises one's curiosity. This is one of the devices used by ^{the} story-teller to catch and hold the interest of the readers or the listeners. Moreover, the information about Nyamgondho is short and precise and above all, the plot is woven around events that are common, taking place in an ordinary locality. We get more and more ~~absorbed~~ in the story as it unfolds and reveals the complexity of life. It is due to the careful selection of words and these other artistic properties of a story that make and distinguish it from ordinary accounts of events. It is also these techniques that the children have to observe carefully so that they too would be able to tell and create good creditable sigendini. Once these have been mastered, words and suitable expressions and of course, aims and purpose of the story automatically fall into their rightful places due to the content and the plot.

6.2 Aesthetic appreciation:

In the Luo society, a story or any piece of artistic

work, is often said to be sweet, mamit or good, maber. The two words are used aesthetically and simply mean that which appeals to a person's artistic sense of beauty, admiration and appreciation. It is a sweet feeling of elation that one experiences when one listens to a well constructed and well told story; a well sung song or looks at a well made stool and witnesses the graceful dancers such as the Luo bul or hyangore dancers. It is the aesthetic beauty that is not touchable - mit or ber derived from any type of artistic works. This is the quality of appreciation mit or ber that a child learns to recognise in sigendini as he grows, listens and takes part in telling sigendini year in and year out. The appreciation and that sense of elation is only motivated by artistic works of high standards which are authentic and plausible. It is mit, sweetness that is mit the focus ^{flavour} because it is felt and not tasted.

In story 19: Alala and her parents, her language and her expressions make her song and the story highly appealing to the mind. The sound of the drum beat is imitated in the light sweet tone (Vol. II, page 204-210) The first singing takes place in the jungle, and at the mention of the word jungle, the imagination is set working trying to visualise Alala alone, playing a small drum, surrounded by red mouthed mang'ange: beasts. The creative ability of the narrator becomes more vivid as we look at this sigana more closely. In lines 126 and 127 page 208 the narrator compares the red flaming mouth of Alala's mother

with the redish brown colour of the outside of a churning gourd. Therefore, it is the language and the expressions that the narrator uses which assist to create the mit or ber, appreciation of a story.

The Luo do not have open sessions when children are taught and given instructions on story telling and how to create stories, but the knowledge is imparted to them through listening and observing carefully how adults, especially pim (p. 44-7) tells and makes up stories. This is why it is said that training in the techniques of story telling and creation, go on all the time whenever they are told:

When people listen to the story, they are interested not only in its contents, but also in the manner in which it is told. The story becomes alive or half dead according to ^{the} how it is told... The same can be said about songs and pieces of music. The musicians work dies or lives on depending on how it is handled by those who repeat these in their community. The musician and the creator of stories depend on the mouth and tongue of their fellow men and women, for the dissemination and publication of their works, since in traditional life, there were no books to do the job for them. In that process of entrusting their work in the hands of their community, the artists and their audience

show a mutual trust and relationship the absence of which is ruinous to both groups.⁴⁵

Another technique that is liberally used in combination with others to promote mit in sigendini Luo is satire. This is when an individual or groups action is satirised directly in a story or through an animal character.

The narration form, or sigana in Luo is suitable for traditional oral stories because it allows for a wider variety of techniques to be used within its simple framework and format. Dialogue, reporting, narration and even dramatisation may all be used in one single story. The form also allows more room for intensive and elaborate expression and word usage; therefore permits longer works than is the case with the other traditional forms. Themes, structure, style and setting of sigendini are also more relaxed and detailed than they are in other genres. All these factors assist in creating viable and simple techniques that children have to learn through observation and imitation before they can themselves become competent story tellers.

Rich in symbolism, they portray all fundamental process of life in compact and complete form. Germs of economy, the folk tale needs only a quick turn of phrase to shuttle the reader (listener) to another world. Introductions are short and simple with only enough frame work provided to make the story plausible. Details

are left to the imagination of the listener (reader). The plot usually proceeds in a few logical and easy to-follow steps. Its development is rapid and vigorous interspersed with plenty of suspense, followed by quick climax and a satisfying conclusion.⁴⁶

There are certain animal and human characters in the sigendini Luo which are well known for their notoriety and behaviour which is peculiar to them only and with which they are identified. To be able to create good sigendini Luo, a good narrator must be well acquainted with these stock characters. The commonest of these are animals, although as we have said elsewhere, ^{that} the animals are and may be used symbolically to satirise human beings. There is the famous othin othin which is identical with two other animals, nyagthin and apuoyo, the hare. There is also apul apul which is identical with hyena, ondiek; these are the notorious animal characters of sigendini Luo. In some of the sigendini, apul apul is referred to as a hyena ondiek and vice versa; while in others othin othin is referred to as nyagthin or opuoyo, the hare and vice versa. There is also something mythical about othin othin and apul apul: in fact, no one seems to know exactly who or what they are in real life as we only meet them in sigendini.

Othin othin, apuoyo: the hare and nyagthin are

clever and cunning. They are the tricksters in sigendini Luo and unlike apul apul and hyena ordiek, they are clever and highly intelligent. They are able to operate at various levels and often come out as the winners under any given circumstances. Their success might be attributed either to their being cunning and witty or to their prowess in handling intricate situations. Othin othin is always unbeatable. For instance, when the elephant decides to host a party for horned animals only, excluding hornless ones, oployo or othin othin is determined that although he is one of the unlucky hornless animals, he too must attend the party. He therefore finds some bee-wax and two old horns belonging to a dead buck. He bullies his wife into cleaning and polishing the horns until they shine like new. The following day, he asks the good wife to fix them on his forehead and they fit him as if they were truly his own.

Later on that same day, well groomed and wearing an air of importance, feeling confident and proud, he preens himself as he marches majestically into the party enclosure where he mingles with the horned animals and enjoys himself until he gets too drunk and falls asleep in the blazing sun. When he wakes up in the evening, the wax has melted and the horns are loose. Staggering to get up, the horns come tumbling down at his feet, leaving him hornless and the odd one out. His confidence shattered and pride replaced with embarrassment, he flees away for

his life. But, the main point here is that he has enjoyed himself immensely, and has actually missed nothing. He has been to the party because of his ability to think fast and in ^amost innovative manner.⁴⁷

In most sigendini Luo, othin othin symbolises success, cunning and triumph over difficulties. On the other hand, hyena, ondiek and apul apul, seems to be the commonest victims of tricksters. To an extent, they seem to symbolise death, evil, stupidity, greed, dirt and all that is immoral, ridiculous and base in the Luo society. They are often made to suffer as a result of having been tricked (see pp. 74-90, Vol. II) or at other times, they fail or are defeated as a result of their greed, rash behaviour on certain occasions. It seems that their greatest wish is to be accepted as members of ^{the} human society. But perhaps due to their bestial ways and lack of self control and respect, they do not seem to make it, nor to be able to join the human society. They make stupid and silly mistakes which often disqualify them. Symbolically, at one level, they may be compared with the baser nature of human beings.

The lion symbolises power and authority and high handedness in certain instances, while the elephant on the other hand symbolises energy, calmness and authority. The Luo seem to have deep respect and awe for elephants, perhaps this is as a result of their enormity and size. All the

animals which appear in sigendini Luo are endowed with human qualities and engage on duties and activities which are identical to those performed by human beings. They are able to talk, to live in houses and to marry wives and raise families, to keep cattle and even to till their own pieces of land.⁴⁸ A good Luo narrator of sigendini should have a good knowledge about these animals' physical appearance as well as about their characteristics and behaviours.

Domestic animals do not feature very much in sigendini Luo, and so are birds. However, the relationship between birds and human being characters in sigendini, where they feature, is often cordial. Birds always act as messengers of mercy for human characters in times of difficulties and distress. (5.2, page 84). Whenever human characters find themselves in difficult situations, they often^{en-} list the help of the birds. Often they would call one of the birds which has the ability to sing or talk like a human being, teach it how to sing or repeat the message which needs to be delivered, then when it has learnt it; the human character would send it (stories 19 and 20) to go and deliver the message or sing it to those who may provide help or the rescue that is wanting. The two well known bird characters in sigendini Luo are hudhwe and tutu. There are also others such as the dove, the kite and the hawk in story 14; although, here the two birds are used allegorically and definitely refer to human

beings, possibly to two co-wives. Other birds such as the weaver birds are mentioned too, but these do not feature with prominence with which hundhwe in particular and tutu to an extent feature in the sigendini Luo.

There are also human stock characters and some common symbols such as the old woman. The commonest male stock characters of sigendini are Obong'o, Owuor and Kasera and of course there are others as well. Of the female ones there are Aloo, Awuor Awuor, Ndweyi, and of course the classic Adilero, Adumiro and her step mother, (Adilero's mother) who we might refer to as the Cinderella of Luo oral literature. The female characters seem to be very vulnerable and easily caught in Apul's snare and are also prone to accidents. Things are always happening to the female characters in sigendini. More often than not, they fall victim to hyena or apul's tricks, but amazingly, they somehow manage to escape unhurt (see Vol. II, story 9). They are often rescued from their dilemma through supernatural power or by one of the stock male characters. They always manage to pass a message to a would be rescuer through a bird such as hundhwe. In fact there seems to be more female characters than male ones in sigendini Luo.

Children characters do not seem to fare very well in the Luo oral narratives. (story 20). The punishment which they receive and the treatment that they are given are often too severe and extremely out of proportion when

matched against their mistakes or crimes. This is not what happens in real life. It is therefore very difficult to fathom why it should be so in sigendini. Possibly, this is a deliberate move aimed at scaring children in real life situations from committing any or making mistakes that can easily be avoided, thus teaching them to exercise self control and restraint.

Another rather unusual character of the sigendini Luo is the jungle. There are sigendini Luo in which the jungle, that is the vegetation and even the rocks, can and do actually talk and behave as if they ~~were~~ human beings. They appear from time to time, in different situations, yet it is possible that they are used symbolically to denote mystery and all that man does not understand in his world. It is the jungle that provides a home and protection for characters such as apul apul and a hyena, ondjek, which are two repulsive and mean characters found in sigendini Luo. It is also in the jungle where the cunning othin othin, a mysterious character with a double personality resides (stories 15 and 16).

Lastly, it might be mentioned here that since sigendini are created from man's experiences in life that emanate from his engagement in various activities, all objects, living and non-living are often made use of in the process of creating them and therefore form their content and characters. The creative ability and the aesthetic appreciation are

motivated by ordinary events and activities in which the characters are involved. Therefore, for the Luo children, to learn to be good narrators and be able to appreciate beauty in works of art, they must first of all receive^a certain basic education. The education must be broad and general, starting from birth to death, covering all that goes on around them and about their world in general.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter summarises certain significant points on sigendini Luo which have been discussed in the preceding chapters. Mention is also made of other relevant issues which it is felt highlight the aims and objectives of this study.

7.1 Approach to the study: Material/and Methodology: collection

The educational values of the twenty one sigendini Luo that we have identified and enumerated here, are by no means all that there is to them. It is realised that there is much that has not been gone into due to the nature of the thesis. We have, therefore, selected only those values with aspects of education that supplement other factors in fulfilling goals and objectives of education as perceived by the Luo. Again, the methods and divisions of the educational values that have been adopted here are not ends in themselves, but rather^a means to an end. This is to say that the classifications have been decided upon for convenience in order to enable us to realise the goals of the thesis. Therefore, no hard and fast rules have been employed in this exercise.

The methodology utilised in collecting these sigendini, as stated in the introduction, bear no new techniques. Perhaps a more rewarding method should have been devised, but as it is, under the circumstances, none other than that was used could have yielded the type of results that were the

aims and objectives of this study. By going back home and creating aiwindhe situations and atmosphere (pp. 44- 50) these sigendini were, to an extent, collected under conditions closely identical to traditional ones under which they used to be told.

In fact, the methods that have been used here, are considered most suitable and appropriate for data gathering of any aspects of our traditions. There is a need to go back to our traditional experts and scholars who live in the countryside because to most of them, the sigendini, "are still part of a vivid experience full of childhood nostalgia and they therefore put into the telling of them all their knowledge of life and understandings of human nature."⁴⁹

7.2 Sigendini and their values in education:

According to the Luo, education is for life and is meant to keep on reconditioning an individual to the correct ways of life which are acceptable to his society and beneficial to himself. We have in this study examined those sigendini that embody and depict values that assist individuals to be fully developed and socialised. We have also picked those sigendini that give a broad spectrum of knowledge such as those which an individual should be equipped with in order to be regarded as a well educated member of his society, (4.1., 5.1. and 5.2).

As Mbiti says, "Africans are notoriously religious and there is no department of life which is not given a religious meaning. To be an African (in the traditional society), is ipso facto to be religious".⁵⁰ We have also therefore picked certain sigendini (4.2.) which advance factors that reveal to the children the existence of the Luo Nyasaye - God. In the process of examining these points, many other issues have been touched upon because since sigendini are created from life's experiences of the people, we are unable to draw a sharp boundary between the various issues that are involved in their contents and even plots.

We have also examined the place of imaginative, creative, expressive training and aesthetic appreciation in sigendini Luo and the techniques that are involved in the process of story-telling. (6.1. and 6.2). The Luo oral literature and the general information on the people have also been briefly looked at.

7.3. Sigendini in contemporary situation:

For certain obvious reasons, the Luo oral literature and sigendini are fast losing some of the important roles they used to play in the traditional society. This is because the traditional social set up that was conducive to the story-telling and general perpetuation of oral literature is being out-moded by modern developments. Yet, oral literature and its various functions are still important to the society. Therefore, ways and means of making it available to the youth in a meaningful manner

should be looked into, with a view to changing the methods so as to conform with the social changes and technological advancement. The radio, the television and other mass media devices could be utilised in making oral literature of all Kenya people available to our youth in schools and colleges.

The stories were created as a result of social demands, to fulfil certain roles, one of which was to act as educational media to the youth and children, and also to assist in bringing and maintaining order in the society. Man's desire for better and orderly life has not changed over the years. Societies still design and make available institutions for instructing children and youth, putting much emphasis on certain values which they consider as being important to their welfare.

Sigendini as part of the Luo oral literature are told mainly to children. Today, among the Luo, we find that those conditions which brought the young people together no longer exist. Most young people go out to school, either at home or away to boarding schools. But even those children who go ^{to} schools near their homes often have some school work to attend to at home. Therefore, they do not have time to attend story telling sessions in the evenings in siwindhe (pp 44-50) where some might still exist. Moreover, the social set up is also fast disintegrating, and many families no longer live together on the same

compound with the old people such as grandparents who could tell sigendini to children and young people. Again, due to social and economical changes, a number of families, live in towns and other places away from the ancestral homes. Ironically too, some of the youngsters, do not even speak the mother tongue in which sigendini should be meaningfully told. And of course, there are among us those who are so affluent that they feel that their children would not gain much by listening to the traditional stories. Such citizens, instead, prefer to buy for their children expensive books which perpetuate other people's cultural values. These are some of the problems that confront oral literature and the general perpetuation of some of the African cultural heritage.

The school as an institution has taken over the role of the informal instructors such as pim and other adults in the traditional set up. Therefore some of the educational aspects that children originally received from their society, is now imparted to them mostly from and through school, while the 'society' concentrates on certain forms of normative or informal education. Granted, both home and school exercise marked influence on the children's education; nonetheless, since children spend the better part of their time in school, viable means should be found now of taking into the classroom, the traditional stories of the people.

7.4 Sigendini and the traditional society:

The traditional Luo society realised the invaluable part played by sigendini in education, hence they organised an institution: siwindhe, for promoting and telling them to children and youth:

Education is essential for social control. Its success as a form of social control in a traditional society is due to the existence of a uniform system of education. That is, common policies exist as regards giving instructions that must be accepted. Education was to promote unity by emphasising respect of the system. ... The traditional education stresses the common responsibility for youth by the elders; in turn, due respect must be communicated, not only to the parents, but to all who undertake responsibilities, the lineage members, clan and the tribe. ... The importance of traditional education is heavily stressed from childhood, and all that follows is built upon childhood education.⁵¹

Among the Luo as among the Gikuyu as well, we observe from Jomo Kenyatta's book, Facing Mount Kenya,⁵² that literature is indeed an important tool for propagating certain aspects of education. Certain ideals and the many facets of life with which the children and youth meet through the characters in the stories, songs and proverbs

as well as other genres of oral literature, enable them, when they grow up, to look upon the complexity of life with much greater understanding, insight, tolerance and sympathy, qualities much needed in developing societies, no less than elsewhere.⁵³ Therefore, as youths learn sigendini and other genres of the Luo oral literature, such as dances and songs, their particular steps and rules, they gradually get immersed into their culture and become part of that society. Further, they learn to be self-reliant; to be good listeners and good public speakers, because at an early age, they are given an opportunity to engage in telling stories and to participate actively in every aspect of their social life. They become used to addressing attentive audience, but which audience they must also learn to please, and whose expectations they have to satisfy by telling credible sigendini.

In the informal system of African traditional education, folktales (other genres as well) are used to enforce conformity to social norms; to validate social institutions and religious beliefs, ideas, rituals, to provide psychological release from the society imposed restrictions, and to serve as political weapons.⁵⁴

Traditional education was meant to give the youth all the necessary knowledge and information about their society so that if they were to challenge the validity of some aspects of it, they would do so from a position of strength,

of confident and sure/what they would be disputing over. In this respect, some of the sigendini such as 1,2,3, and 6 carry living lessons which although ^{key} may appear to apply to conditions that are only found in the Luo society, are at the same time highly universal. People everywhere share in some common basic ethical and moral standards and rigorously go in pursuit of knowledge. The value of hard work, diligence and responsibility are repeatedly stressed in some of the sigendini. Some of the motives and wishes of societies everywhere the world over are to create good orderly societies where well behaved youths may be expected to thrive. Therefore, literature acted as one of the suitable media which the Luo employed in instructing their youth on some of the philosophical thoughts, norms and conventions of their society, thus, propagating what the children were expected to be and to know when they attained adulthood.

The process of growing up for the human individual is a very long one, especially where it is concerned with the recognition and appreciation of other people and of course, this is often quite a painful process, involving conflicts, clashes, and friction of many kinds. A successfully educated person is one who has achieved an attitude of respect towards all the other

people in the world, which includes at first his own family, his own village, his own tribe; but then beyond that, all the other tribes; the nations, and races he may encounter in the world.

A mature attitude is based on understanding and expresses itself in tolerance and friendliness. To be effective this understanding must embrace all aspects of the ways of other people, including their behaviour, their customs, their religion. ... Effective understanding of other people can only be based on understanding and appreciation of oneself and of one's own culture.⁵⁵

In my investigations of the Kipsigis and Giriama traditional stories, and oral literature as a whole, I have found that their stories were also meant to instruct youth, and to give them a clear picture of the sort of life they would be expected to lead as adults. The Giriama and Kipsigis oral literature embody their philosophies, ideals and all aspects of their lives.⁵⁶

The stories (literature) also familiarised the youth with some of the most complex factors of life and situations in which straight verbal explanations would prove less comprehensible.

It may also be mentioned here in passing that in the traditional societies, although much emphasis was laid on obeying and growing up to conform and to be part of the

established system, that is; the status quo, there was no rule which prohibited the youth from raising controversial issues regarding the system. There are a number of sigendini in which the status quo, especially in relationship to the rulers, chiefs and elders, have been challenged and highly ridiculed and satirised.⁵⁷ The people were free and could attack any practices which they considered oppressive.

The educational system in different kinds of societies in the world have been, and are, very different in organization and content. They are different because the societies providing the education are different, and because education, whether it be formal or informal has a purpose. That purpose is to transmit from one generation to the next the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the society, and to prepare the youth for their future membership of the society and their active participation in its maintenance^{an} of development.⁵⁸

The indigenous education was ~~meant~~ to 'encourage the development of a proved independent and free citizens'. Yet, whereas in the traditional societies, everything was meant for the good of a single community, composed of one single ethnic group, today, the directives must be aimed at a wider audience which is the nation. We have gathered

from the stories the fact that in the traditional societies, every individual was given an opportunity to develop his talent and personality to the full, as such there was no discrimination. Youths were granted equal opportunity. Therefore, the informal indigenous education was free for all and was unlike the formal education which tends to favour only the well placed in the society, thereby creating class divisions.

"The fact that pre-colonial Africa did not have 'schools' except for short periods of initiation in some tribes, did not mean that the children were not educated. They learned by living... they learned the tribal history, and the tribe's relationship with the other tribes and with the spirits, by listening to the stories of the elders. Through these means, and by the customs of sharing to which young people were taught to conform, the values of the society were transmitted."⁵⁹

Oral sigendini acted as vehicles of cultural values which were the valuable heritage of a people. Therefore the people always sought ways and means of ensuring their continuity and preservation because of the invaluable part they played. Furthermore, educational functions of sigendini cannot be viewed in isolation from the other functions that they perform. As is the case with other activities of man, education is also related^{to} and dependent on those other functions and roles played by sigendini.

The single function of maintaining the stability of culture... Viewed thus, folklore operates within a society to ensure conformity to the accepted cultural norms and continuity from generation, through its role in education, the extent to which ^{it mirrors culture, to the extent folklore,} folklore contrasts with the accepted norms and offers socially acceptable forms of release through amusement or humour and through creative imagination and fantasy.⁶⁰

As we have repeatedly pointed out, sigendini, play many other roles in the Luo society. For instance, they make attempts to explain the world around us and also give information on some of the natural phenomena, thus revealing their origin and making their existence acceptable to the people in accordance to their understanding and the education that they have received. There are certain sigendini which are moralistic and didactic in nature, although to this end, fits most, even those which serve other particular purposes.

Certain facts that come through sigendini create awareness in children and make them knowledgeable and help to keep them in check, that is assisting them in maintaining order and stability in their society. A number of sigendini carry episodes and themes on issues such as learning to live harmoniously with others and recognising and accepting that there are other things that ^{also} share the environment and practically everything else with man.

Sigendini also provided the traditional society with the much needed entertainment and of course, the opportunity for practising creativity, hence for use of imagination, language, and self realisation (chapter 6) 'amusement is obviously one of the functions of folklore and an important one, but even this statement cannot be accepted that beneath a great deal of humour lies a deeper meaning. The same is true of the concept of fantasy and creative imagination.⁶¹

7.5 Songs as part of sigendini:

In chapter six, we mentioned in passing the part that is played by songs in sigendini. To elaborate a little on this point, we may add that songs are very much part of sigendini and play identical roles with them. A story may have more than one song, however, in most cases, Luo stories often have just one song which is sung repeatedly throughout, each time followed by a fresh episode of a motif. Sometimes, a song may form a separate or a fresh motif of the story, or sometimes, it may be repeated so as to hold the interest and provide suspense while preparing the audience for the following motif which would often introduce a new element into the story.

The tunes of the songs in sigendini tend to be the same and repetitive. This is considered as one of the techniques employed by the Luo story tellers to introduce and maintain variety in the story; alternating prose and song poetry if some of the songs may be regarded as poetry.⁶²

A character would often resort to singing while action is pending and climax is hovering; thus creating tense atmosphere and keeping the audience nerves charged with expectation while waiting for the next episode. The story of Awuor Awuor and the hyena (Vol.II,p.84) explains what is meant here. Confronted by the beasts while alone in the jungle, Awuor Awuor begins to sing, fearful, unsure of whether she would survive the hostility of the beast. The song becomes her pass-word until she meets the lone perverted over-sized hyena who ignores the accepted norm, the song words, and swallows her alive and whole.

Songs sometimes act as the vehicle which help to bring relief or salvation to the victim. A lone voice singing in a jungle would definitely draw attention of someone or something to it. The assumption therefore is that songs in sigendini Luo are either sang for joy and as part of the story, or when the character falls a victim to some sly creatures and is in distress, in which case the character would sing to send a message or to solicit help from someone or something. (Vol. II, pp.92-98, 179, lines 43-50, lines 60-63)

Songs in sigendini also hold interest where action is lacking, or pending, keeping the audience interested and in suspense. The story of Alala and her parents story 19 comes to mind here. Rather than engage on complicated verbal explanations, the artist introduces drama and dance. Alala plays the drum, singing and dancing at the same time

enticing mang'ange also to dance with her, thereby diverting their attention from attacking her. The music charms the mang'ange and in each case they allow Alala to go on her way unharmed.

Songs also add to the esteem of a narrator. A celebrated narrator would be a person who, apart from telling stories in captivating manners, is also able to sing beautifully with feeling, using varied tonal expressions and gestures.

The Luo concept of sigana - narration or story is that this can either be in the form of a song, a chant or tale. The nyatiti player (page 39) and all those other groups of musicians, often sing telling sigana or sigendini of one kind or another about life, people and events. While the story teller relates in prose form an event which he considers to be of some significance to the community, the musician might also tell the same story about the same event in verse form, singing and adding artistic jargons to his words and expressions. The paradox and the sequence of events are depicted through the utilisation of both prose and verse form. Although created by different artists, narrator and the musician, the themes and episodes might be identical in both verse and prose. A song in sigana moves the plot forward towards its climax, and is often introduced at a most appropriate moment by the narrator as the voice of the principal character.

apart from creating a platform for meeting and providing a chance for socialization of youth and children, sigendini and songs which are actually part of them, also act as an eye opener to the youth. They throw light on certain mysteries of life; hence we find that even though the language used is often ordinary and common place, some sigendini accommodate archaic language and phrases which sound very unfamiliar. While listening to stories with such archaic words, children might ask the narrator when and where exactly were such words in use if they were ever used at all. Such strange words and phrases in the stories add to the knowledge which comes to the young ones through their traditions. Words such as litete (story 6) are never used in ordinary everyday conversation. It is a taboo word. But in sigendini, the narrator has a mandate and a free hand to use such taboo words. 63

The liberty permitting the artist to use such words allows for a wider scope in creativity where no limitation or restrictions are imposed on the selection of words. The unusual and the ordinary assist the artist in creating an imaginary world of entertainment; a fictitious one into which the audience may escape and exist happily during story telling sessions while freely indulging in their fantasies.

Some of the words in songs of the stories, are strange and obsolete and are completely meaningless and unclear

even to the oldest members of the community who are still alive. The words of the song in story 18: The chief's daughter have little or no meaning at all outside the context of that story.

'Tingli tingli tang' tatwende - tingli tingli tang tatwende x 2
tingli tingli tang' ta twende x 2 - tingli tingli tang' ta twendex2
wendo ma migosi - the esteemed guest
chowe ma - chowe ma;
ot odung' wendo - the house smells, of a guest
chowe ma - chowe ma ...
tingli tingli tang' ta twende - tingli tingli tang' ta twende....

The verse makes little sense, yet it is vital in the story since it is a motif on its own, reached at an important point where there is tension, and someone apul must sing to move the story forward. As a result of his song the mother in law ^{is tempted to} jump out ^{and} dance. Thus the song and the story are virtually one and the same thing; part and parcel of the plot. The strange words are part of the mystery which sigendini portray, evoking the idea of complexity of life, ^{so} that even objects which one may handle with ease, still present ^a mystery to one. In other words, not everything about life can be easily understood by everyone. When the story comes to the end, one says "thu tinda adong adong arom gi yien matok kanera - thu tinda let me grow as tall as the trees behind my maternal uncle's home" - it is the end there is nothing one can

question about it. The stories embody ^{the} wisdom of the past ages which have been tested and handed down from the ancestors, † which youth must just take as they are, add on to their own experiences, ~~not~~ and in the same manner pass on ~~to~~ posterity.

7.6 Certain common characters in sigendini Luo:

As is the case with written literature, there are also stock characters of sigendini Luo. There are both human and animal ones which are well known for their characteristics, behaviour and physical appearance that are peculiar to them alone (6.1). For the Luo children to be able to enjoy and tell sigendini effectively, they needed to have a good knowledge ~~of~~ these characters. This knowledge adds to the children's awareness about their world and makes them able to distinguish the animals one from the other, and also to tell who is who among the human characters such as Awuor Awuor, Obong'o and many others.

Some of the animal characters are mythical in that they really do not exist in real life, but their characteristics, behaviour and physical appearance are identical to those of certain animals that are well known to us in real life. These are apul apul which is like a hyena in all ways, then, there is othin othin or nyagthin which is identical to the hare or rabbit.

7.7 Inter-generic classification of sigendini.

The other issue which might briefly be raised here is in connection with the classification of these sigendini into types. As was mentioned earlier on, in chapter three, the Luo do not categorise their stories into myths, legends and tales; the stories are all referred to as sigendini and serve them as such. The lack of these distinctions do not make any significant difference to the ultimate objectives and goals they mean to achieve by telling sigendini. Stith ^hTompson when discussing this issue on classification and categorisation of traditional stories has this to say about it:

The scholar must realise that he is dealing with a folk art and that if the unlettered story-teller and his audience have little regard for distinctions that may seem to him important, they may well insist upon their own distinctions which may seem quite arbitrary and illogical. ⁶⁴

On the same topic, the Herskovits have this to say: For it is the essence of scholarly investigation that while one holds as closely as possible to the lines drawn by the data, one also uses these as ^a frame within which more refined levels of classifications are to be reached. ⁶⁵

With the facts as they stand which are that the Luo do not have clearly defined inter-generic categories for

their stories, we should at the same time realise that ^{work} within the frame/that we have established, there exists a flexibility which would permit further sub-classifications and inter-generic categorisations. Due to the varied functions and nature of the stories, it is rather limiting to have to categorise them all under one class - sigendini. The suggestion being advanced here is that, we might, at a later date move out of what the Luo themselves recognise and accept. We would do this so as to try and categorise these sigendini following certain theories that have been developed and carried out by folklorists and oral literature scholars on the traditional stories of other people in Africa and elsewhere.

Lastly, we may summarise by concluding that we have made a concerted attempt to come up with some common educational values embodied by the twenty one sigendini Luo that we have analysed in this study. We have seen that the sigendini are about people and that they depict people's experiences at different levels in the society, covering the many facets of life. Whether the stories involve animals or people and supernatural powers, they deal with some of the development which come up as a result of man's interaction with each other and with some of the influencing forces in his life. Sigendini are important as vehicles for transmitting certain values that are educational in form which are necessary in the

development and socialisation of children and youth. Therefore, since our main concern at this juncture is with the education of children and youth through traditional stories; perhaps our next move should now be to collect and make available to our youth who are in schools and other institutions of learning, the traditional stories of the various Kenyan peoples.

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