

KHUSHWALA KUMUSE : THE RITUAL AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE
AMONG BABUKUSU OF WESTERN KENYA

BY

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*

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my mother Brikita Chaboka and my late father Gabriel Mukhwana who first took me to school. Also to my brother Kresent Mukhwana who paid my fees throughout the education system.

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of the Bukusu funeral ritual known as Khuswala Kumuse. This ritual is normally carried out three days after burial and is only done for dead oldmen from specific clans. The study is based mainly on oral evidence supplemented by documentary evidence. This study was carried out in Kimilili Division of Bungoma District between December 1985 and January 1996.

The purpose of this study was to document the significance of the ritual among the Bukusu community, describe the performer and any mystic powers that may be associated with the ritual and then document any changes that might have occurred in the way the ritual is performed. The study also aimed at establishing the reasons why the practice of Khuswala Kumuse is persistent in the Bukusu society despite the various modernisation processes.

The research included collecting of both primary and secondary data. The primary data were obtained through interviews and direct observations.

The secondary data, on the other hand, were collected or obtained from ethnographic literature by earlier scholars. Data analysis was done using qualitative methods.

The major findings showed that the practice was still prevalent in the community and the ritual plays an important role in perpetuating the culture of Babukusu.

The ritual is an important stabilizer after a death has occurred in society. Babukusu are also able to keep track of their oral history through the institution of Kumuse.

The study further revealed that the institution of Kumuse has survived largely because it is sanctimonious and directly associated with ancestors and their powers.

Oswala Kumuse is regarded as a teacher and counsellor in society and, therefore, Kumuse is a very important agent of socialization in society.

It was concluded however, that the institution of Kumuse has not entirely escaped the ravages of modernization. There were changes in themes of Kumuse today in comparison to the past, and this was attributed to the new socio-cultural values which are sweeping across the district. The major influence on the institution was, however, considered to be the infiltration of christianity in the District. In general it was noticed that a number of traditional attributes of the ritual still persist in society and this was attributed to the flexibility and sensitivity of the ritual to changes. The institution adopt and blends modernity with the past and it does not, therefore, outlive its usefulness.

In the light of the information that was obtained, and analysed, it was recommended that it would be a good idea to make the practice a general practice in society to enable

each and every member in the society to learn something about his/her culture and history. It was further recommended that, it would be useful for the performers not to use obscene words so as to accommodate everybody in the society. Lastly, it was recommended that, it would be useful to have the actual ritual documented visually by use of video cameras for future use, and that it would be important if the fee charged by performer was made affordable to enable poor families, who cannot meet the standardized fee of a cow, also have their dead performed for.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This is a study of a Bukusu ritual known as Khuswala Kumuse. Babukusu are a sub-nation of the Bantu-speaking abaluyia of Western Kenya and constitute the most dominant group of present-day Bungoma district. Bungoma district is one of the six districts which make up the western province of Kenya. The other districts are: Kakamega, Vihiga, Lugari, Busia, Mt. Elgon and Teso. To put the study in proper perspective, the next of this chapter gives information on the geography of Bungoma district and also on some important aspects of the Bukusu community.

1.1 Geographical Setting

Bugoma district is situated on the southern slopes of Mt. Elgon locally known as Lukulu Lwa Masaba. It borders Mt. Elgon district to the north west, Trans-Nzoia district to the north, Kakamega district to the east and south-east, and Teso and Busia districts to the west and south-west, respectively. The district covers an area of 3,046Km². The general attitude of the district ranges from about 1370mm to 1525 above sea-level. It lies between latitudes 0° 28' and 1° 30' North of the equator, and longitudes 34° 20' and 35° 15' East of the Greenwich meridian. (Bugoma District development plan 1994 - 1996 : 1).

Generally, the district is wooded grassland, well drained by rivers and streams such as Chwele, Kuywa, Sosio, Kimilili, Malakisi, Sio, Kibisi, Toloso, Khalaba, Muyayi and Sirare. All of them, excepting Sio, Khalaba, Muyayi and Sirare, have their sources in Mt. Elgon.

"The area forms an undulating plain which gradually slopes away towards the west and slightly also towards the north until it rises again to the foothill of Mt. Elgon" (Wandibba 1972 :1). More resistant inselbergs and ranges stand above the general level forming the Kabuchai hills, Luucho hills, Sang'alo hills, Mwibale hills, Kibabii, and several small ones.

The area has got rainfall throughout the year, except in January and February, with two maxima in April and May (long rains) and in October to November (short rains). The average rainfall for the district is 1270 mm. The district is, therefore, an ideal area for arable farming and animal husbandry. The location of the district on the slopes of Mt. Elgon also mitigates temperatures. "The mean annual temperatures in the southern parts, away from the mountain, are about 21 to 22 degrees centigrade while the mean annual temperatures in northern areas closer to Mt. Elgon are in the lower range of 5 to 10 degrees centigrade because of attitude" (Bungoma District Development Plan 1994 - 1996 :2).

The geology, topography and climate of Bukusuland have combined to determine the soil structure and pattern. The prevailing type of soil is the extremely fertile red soil. However, the fertility ratio varies from place to place and also according to the structure of the soil. De Wolf (1963) notes that the soils consist of dark red clay with a deep humic top soil with carbon content 3 - 7%. This soil is derived from volcanic and basement complex rocks. This type of soils can be found in the area to the east of a line running from Chwele to Webuye. In the west of the district, the soil consists of dark brown sandy loams with a mere 2% carbon content.

This is derived from sediments and basement rocks, partially covered with more humic soils as well as punic soils derived from recent unconsolidated volcanic ash. In many places there are swamps and they consist of dark brown clays with light texture. On the whole, there is sufficient sunshine in most parts of the district and the area is ideal for both farming and animal husbandry.

1.2 The People

Bungoma district is the home of Babukusu. Apart from Babukusu there are some other smaller ethnic groups in the district. These include, the "Iteso, the Kalenjin - speaking groups of Bongomek (Babang'ma), Kony (El Kony) and Bok (Balaku) and Tachoni" (De Wolf 1971 : 10). Babukusu are one of the sixteen "Sub-tribes" of the Abaluyia, among whom Wagner identified four dialects, namely, Lubukusu, Luwanga, Lunyala, and Lulagoli. Thomson, in an earlier work, observed that the Abaluyia were a homogeneous race and identified two district languages. The first one, which he thought was similar to Nilotic, was located in the south while the other, a Bantu dialect similar to Kiswahili and Kiganda predominated in the north (Thomson 1883 : 286). It is, however, thought that "Lubukusu is one nearest in form to the presumed original, ancestral Bantu language. This assumption is based on the fact that it is one of the few present day Bantu languages to preserve docible prefixes" (Barker, 1950 : 4). Most of the recent work on the Abaluyia, however, indicate that despite the common language and culture, Abaluyia are far from being a homogeneous community. They are, in fact, a product of heterogeneous groups which are generally prone to disintegration and formation of new groups (Were, 1967).

According to Nangendo (1994), the early ethnographic literature on Bukusu cultural history has failed to provide an answer to the exact period when Babukusu developed into a district ethnic group. Nor do these sources inform us on how and where this process might have taken place. An example is Simiyu (1991 : 125), who believes Babukusu coalesced into a distinct cultural and political entity from about the fourteenth century and that this happened after separating from the Bagisu in eastern Uganda. However, Babukusu keep track of their geneologies through three social institutions, namely, a process called Khuswala Kumuse which this study concentrates on, circumcision age sets and origin traditions.

1.2.1 Historical Background

The cradleland of Babukusu has not yet been clearly identified. Like many of the people in western Kenya, Babukusu claim to have come from a place called Misiri, which may be associated with Egypt. I am not going to involve myself in this controversy of the origins of these people as it is outside the scope of this survey. Whatever their origins, "Babukusu seem to have first sojourned into their present homeland in Bungoma district about 300 years ago. But their settlement in this area seems to have taken place some time in the 1770's" (Wandibba 1972 :1). However, at the moment, a significant number of these people is also found in the neighbouring districts.

The Bukusu oral traditions also try to explain how this ethnic group came into existence. According to one version which is widespread in Bukusu land, Wele (God) caused heaven (Likulu) and the fertile essence (Waneloba) to unite and procreate the first life and human being, Mundu. Mundu gave forth to Mwambu, the man and Sela,

the woman. These two produced Mubukusu, the eponymous ancestor of Babukusu. All these events are said to have taken place at Sibakala, sometimes referred to by some elders as Misiri. From Misiri, Babukusu are said to have migrated through several places to their present place. However, according to another version of oral traditions, it is said that Babukusu embarked on large scale iron smelting when at Bukusu hills settlement, an area believed to have been somewhere in the northern part of Uganda. Bukusu hills settlements area is also said to have had a lot of fortifications. "Here, some of the most enterprising young-men carried the finished products to the Lake Victoria to sell to some of the Luyia people who had migrated to the region earlier. Since they had no specific name to go by, their customers popularly called them "People of Prices", babandu bebukusi. When they come back to Bukusu hills which must have had an earlier different name, they said, "we are people of Bukusu". The name stuck and became at first a joking nickname. But by and large the name Bukusu was coiled out of it and the name of hills too changed accordingly" (Were, 1990 : 12).

Wherever Babukusu settled during their long migrations from "Misiri" they built forts and practised circumcision among other customs and traditions. However, with regard to circumcision, because of general insecurity due to wars with the Iteso, some clans either suspended or practised haphazard ceremonies, until the turn of the 19th Century when Mango, Omkhurarwa by clan, yet uncircumcised killed a monstrous snake at a place called mwiala. The snake had been devouring people's livestock. When Mango killed it in a feat of bravery, he was circumcised and the rituals re-started everywhere

with a regular system. That age-set was called Kolongolo because the people came from everywhere to undergo the ritual (Bungoma District Socio-cultural profile : 1990 ed.G.S., Were).

1.2.2 Social Institutions

The social organization of Bukusu society at the end of the nineteenth century was marked by the following distinct social institutions, namely, the family, lineage, clan, forms of marriage, patrilineal descent, patrilocal residence and, lastly, by a system of light major cycling age-sets for men. These social institutions are still the principle organizing features of Bukusu social organization today. These sociocultural features bind individuals together and, indeed, compel individuals to adhere to the same norms, values and expectations. Adherence to the same standards for proper conduct, or behaviour which is necessary in Bukusu society as it enables the various descent groups to maintain internal cohesion and stability" (Nangendo 1994 : 108).

Among Babukusu, the family constitutes the basic social group that co-operates most widely and intensely in the activities of everyday life. A characteristic feature of the Bukusu family is its composition. Nangendo (1994) argues that in the older days, each family consisted of people who were closely related by birth as well as through marriage, and each family tended to form extended households. There are two types of families recognized by Babukusu, namely, the nuclear and extended family. The ideal family in traditional Bukusu society was the extended family. According to Nangendo, the nuclear family was usually made up of a man, his wife or wives and all their living as well as deceased children. Members

of nuclear family tended to co-operate most extensively in all day-to-day economic activities. Apart from this economic co-operation, the nuclear family was similarly characterised by occupational differentiation, on the one hand, and clearly defined sexual division of labour, on the other.

The extended family, on the other hand, encompassed the parents of the man, his wife or wives, and all their close and distant relatives. In other words, "an extended family consisted of two or more nuclear families affiliated through an extension of the parent-child relationship rather than of the husband - wife relationship" (Nangendo 1994 : 110). Thus, when a man married he joined his parent's nuclear family to form an extended household with his father as the nominal head of the household. Eventually, two or more of such nuclear and related families became part of a large network of households that were related by both consanguineous (blood relationship by descent and collarity) and kinship ties.

In the Bukusus society, patrilineages are formed by groups of families. Nangendo defines a lineage as follows:-

a patrilineal descent group which comprises all those persons, male and female, who trace their descent to a common grand father or great grandfather. Members in a lineage unequivocally trace their mutual relationship in a direct geneological line. A lineage is differentiated from similar descent group by common reciprocal rights, duties and privileges. Membership in a lineage therefore determines an individual's social, political and economic status in Bukusu Society. Furthermore, a lineage is segmented geneologically and membership is arranged into hierachically arranged groups distinguished from each other by reference to the common patriarch figure in each group and his position in the geneology (Nangendo 1994 : 111).

The clan is a large social institution compared to the two discussed

above. A clan is formed when groups of lineages are joined together. The clan, eKholo (Plural, Chikholo) is the foundation of the Bukusu Kinship system. Wagner (1970 : 77) defines a clan as "a patrilineal exogamous unit, that is, it comprises all persons who trace their descent in paternal line to a common ancestor and who, on that ground, form a community of interests, refrain from inter-marrying, and inhabit a common stretch of land" - Nangendo adds that a clan is differentiated from other clans by common reciprocal rights, duties and privileges. Membership in a clan also determines an individual's social, political and economic status in Bukusu Society. It is also argued that, "the clan is not a closed entity because it is always incorporating and assimilating people from the outside and, infact, because of this attributes, Babukusu commonly refer to themselves as Sianja barende (the welcomers of non-kith and Kin)" (Nangendo 1994 :112). Despite the patrilineal descent and the emphasis on the prominence of the fathers clan in Bukusu society matrilineal descent was equally highly regarded. For example, the most important person in an individual's life is the maternal uncle. Additionally, the commonest way of introduction was and still is, for the individual to mention both the paternal and the maternal clans.

A general prerequisite for obtaining leadership in the clan was advanced age which was socially marked by the institution of circumcision age-grades. Generally speaking, it was always the oldest member of group of Kinsmen whose opinion carries the greatest weight in matters concerning that group. However, the traditional political activities of Babukusu were handled by a council of elder

headed by one elder. Members of the clan corporated on special occasions in some of the more important matters affecting the welfare of the whole clan such as calamities, raids, attacks and other external threats. The clan was also linked to the other clans of the ethnic group by the consciousness of descent from a common ancestor, by the same language and customs and by social and economic bonds.

Another important aspect of the socio-political structure of Babukusu was the age-set system. Altogether, there are eight major age-groups, each of which comprises a period of approximately twelve years. It is a rule among Babukusu that the age-grade could not be used again as long as any of its members were still alive. The first age-set of Babukusu to be initiated through circumcision are the successors of Mango mentioned earlier in the chapter and their age-set is known as Kolongolo. The successors of Kolongolo are Kikwameti who are in turn followed by Kananachi, then Kinyikewi, Nyanqe, Maina, Chuma and Sawa in that order. Each of these major age-groups is again sub-divided into six circumcision groups or Chimbaka (sing. Lubaka), of which again every two years form a pair, the members of which observe certain obligations towards one another.

Members of one age-grade regard each other in a mutually respectable manner and have certain rules of conduct as well as rights and privileges accorded to each other. However, "there is more mutual respect and reciprocity among those who belong to one of the two sub-sets of an age-set and, especially, those who went through the ceremony the same year and "stood" on the same courtyard, Luyia" (Nangendo 1994 : 113). People who belong to a pair of a sub-set

call each other bakoki or Sande and mutually exchange gifts (especially meat) called Lubaka (Plur: Chimbaka) when their children are initiated into adulthood.

Furthermore, people who regard each other as bakoki are required to show each other total respect and are not supposed to abuse, fight or wrestle each other. They are also not supposed to either marry each other's daughter nor sleep with others' wives.

In general, age-sets united together members of different clans which were not otherwise closely related. They ensured the security of the ethnic groups by providing warriors in the case of war raids in the past. In addition, the oldest serving age-sets provided rulers, diviners and other forms of leadership for the community.

Finally, the institution of marriage among Babukusu is seen as a permanent union between one man and one woman or many women (wives) built on mutual love between them. Marriage takes place outside the lineage because of incest taboos that forbid sex between members of the same clan. Traditionally, marriage was seen as an opportunity to bear children who would perpetuate the continual survival of the clan. Marriage was also seen by this community as a means of getting a heir to inherit clan property. Getting boys was not only the family property but also provided the necessary security to the family and the clan. Marriage was also regarded as a source of wealth. For instance, a man who had many daughters was seen as a wealthy man because of the bridewealth that would be paid to him at marriage. Babukusu were, and still are, patrilineal by descent and patrilocal by residence. Polygamy is also common.

Today, it is evident that the traditional, political, social and economic structures plus their associated values, to a degree, have changed. For instance, with the passing of time, the trends of marriage and family institutions have been changed towards monogamy and nuclear families.

1.2.3 Economic Aspects

In pre-colonial Bukusu society, land formed the focus of social relations. Land was the major means of production and was owned communally. In general, land belonged to the whole clan and its allocation and disposal were the responsibilities of the clan. Individual members of the community could only have exclusive rights over portions allocated to them but such rights were restricted to the rights of access and the use of that land. "The collective land tenure system recognized the fact that certain sections of the individual allocations were open to communal use" (Nasimiyu 1984 : 33). These sections included grazing fields, salt licks, forests and their products. In this survey, the author will limit his scope to agriculture and animal husbandry. However, it is worth noting that Babukusu supplemented agriculture and animal husbandry by exploiting forest products. Women and children gathered mushrooms and white-ants. In fact, Nasimiyu (1984) emphasises that certain types of mushroom like bukochwe, buswa, and bukusuma, were a rare delicacy. They were subject to strict rules of exploitation. This was also the case with certain types of termites like chisisi, chinunda and Kamaswakhe.

The rights of access to agricultural land was vested in the clan elder, namely, Omwami we Pokoto. He determined where the clan was to be settled. "Omwami we Pokoto was the head of the fort where the

clan lived. He was assisted in his duties by Babami be Lichabe. The latter were several depending on the number of "gates" on the fort. Each fort had its own portion of land and inhabitants as the fort tilled the area chosen for them by the head of the fort (Wandibba 1972).

At the turn of the century, agricultural production in Bukusu society was already based on iron tools and Nasimiyu explains this as follows :-

The basic Bukusu agricultural tool was the hoe. Babukusu used iron hoes for digging and weeding. The Bukusu hoe was an iron blade attached to an "L-shaped" wooden handle. The hoe was also used for breaking up and preparing the soil for planting. The scythe (engeso) tied on a long stick was used for clearing the bush and trees could be felled by either burning using piles of wood around their base or by cutting them using axes and swords. Digging sticks were made either of Kiminyubuti or Kimatamaywa trees known for their hardness. The digging sticks (kimilo) were used mainly for weeding" (Nasimiyu 1984 : 39)

Agriculture among Babukusu was not only a simple subsistence system but also produced surplus which was exchanged for other commodities. The main crops grown included elusine, sorghum, green-grams, simsim bananas, pea-nuts, sweet potatoes, tobacco and an assortment of vegetables which included pumpkins, Chisaka, litoto, murere, kimiro, and cow-peas. Babukusu also practised shifting cultivation and crop rotation which in most cases depended on the types of crops, the fertility of the soil, and the availability and accessibility of other land.

Animal husbandry was another economic aspect of the Bukusu people. Cattle had both an economic and social value. Cattle belonged to the man and herding was entirely the work of men and young men.

However, it has been suggested that a woman had a theoretical possession of all the cattle she milked. In fact, Nasimiyu asserts that "if a man had more than one wife, his cows were permanently distributed to all of them. These cows literally belonged to the children of the respective wives" (Nasimiyu 1984 : 49). Cattle were also important in society for their provision of milk and blood, both of which were highly valued by Babukusu.

Other livestock reared included sheep, goats and poultry which were usually reared for ritual purposes. Women and girls were not allowed to eat chicken and poultry products. Goats were also useful because their skins were used in the making of clothing for young men and for women. Goats and sheep were also used as items of exchange. Lastly, cattle were also used in payment of bridewealth.

Today, "agriculture accounts for over 75% of the local employment in Bungoma district" (Bungoma District development plan 1994-1996 : 3). Apart from livestock keeping, Babukusu now grow both cash crops and food crops. Some of the cash crops include maize, sugarcane, sunflower, coffee, and tobacco. People also keep both the modern and tradition breeds of cattle.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STUDY

2.0 INTRODUCTION

In this study, I intend to examine a Bukusu traditional ritual known as Khuswala Kumuse. This ritual is normally carried out three days after burial and is only performed for elderly males who have lived to see and witness at least a grandchild circumcised, and only those from specific clans. There are exceptions though. "The ritual can be performed on the basis of one's age (Kamase, Kamakora) and maturity (buangafu) even if one had no male grandchildren" (Nangendo 1994 : 150). However, the ritual is not "performed for deceased women; it is not performed for children and middle-aged persons" (Wanjala 1985). This ritual is only performed by specialists called baswala kimise (singular, Oswala Kumuse) from specific clans. The performer has been variously described in the literature as a public comforter (Makila 1978), and funeral preacher (Wanjala 1985). Oswala Kumuse is believed to be endowed with the power of spirit (Kumusambwa) of performing such rituals. These powers are considered to come directly from ancestors to an individual, and therefore what he says are not his own words and are, thus, taken very seriously by the society.

This ritual begins at eight in the morning and lasts for two to four hours, depending on the weather and age-set of the deceased. In this dissertation, an attempt will be made to show the significance of the ritual to the Bukusu society. A detailed description of the ritual will also be given. Prohibitions associated with Khuswala Kumuse will be examined and messages that are contained in the

ritual enumerated. There are several cultural changes taking place in Kenya today. The author will, therefore, try to show whether these changes have had any impact on the practice of Khuswala Kumuse. The author will also seek to establish why the ritual is persistent in the community and whether the practice only serves traditional functions or it has taken up new functions.

2.1 Statement of The Problem

This study seeks to find out why Khuswala Kumuse still persists among the Bukusu Society despite the present cultural and social changes. Other traditional practices are either practically extinct or have changed as a result of colonial contact and radical changes of modern times. Contrary to this, Khuswala Kumuse is still widespread in the community.

In this study, I shall, therefore, seek to investigate the following issues:

- (i) Why is the ritual persistent in the Bukusu Society despite the social and cultural changes?
- (ii) Who performs this ritual and is it associated with any mystic powers?
- (iii) Are there any noticeable changes in the way in which the ritual is performed?

2.2 The Objectives of The Study

This study aims at describing the ritual of Khuswala Kumuse in terms of who performs it, when it is performed and also changes within its mode of operation. The specific objectives of the study, therefore, include:

- (i) Documenting the significance of the ritual among the Bukusu community.
- (ii) Describing the performer and any mystic powers that may be associated with the ritual.

- (iii) Documenting any changes that might have occurred in the way the ritual is performed.

2.3 Rationale of The Study

Many researches have been carried out on other ceremonies such as circumcision and marriage but only little has been written about Khuswala Kumuse. Examples of such researches are Wagner (1970), Nakabayashi (1982), Wanjala (1985), and Nangendo (1994). In these studies, none has considered the reasons why the ritual has not become redundant. It is envisaged that this study will generate sufficient information which will contribute to the repertoire of knowledge about the practice and, particularly, its persistence.

Khuswala Kumuse is an important ritual in the culture of the Bukusu people and, therefore, understanding it will enable us to appreciate the cultural dynamics of the community. Besides, since the ritual is rooted in the historical tradition, the information obtained is also likely to throw light on the historical evolution of the community.

This study is also hoped to benefit administrators, policy-makers, educators and anybody in need of information on the ritual. This work will also enable us to preserve the Bukusu people's "original" culture which will be of much use both to the present and coming generations. Finally, the available data in this study can be used in comparing and contrasting the Bukusu ritual of Khuswala Kumuse with other mortuary rituals in other Luyia communities. The dissertation can also stimulate further intellectual debates and research.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.0 Literature Review

Many scholars who have written about the ritual Khuswala Kumuse have not sought to establish why the ritual is persistent in the Bukusu society despite the radical changes of modern times. They have instead dwelt mostly on the description of the ritual and the roles carried out by the performer, Oswala Kumuse (Plural, baswala Kimise). The significance of the ritual in the Bukusu society has also not been brought out clearly.

For instance, Wagner (1970) carried out a holistic anthropological study of the Abaluyia but focused on Avalogoli and Babukusu. In a chapter dealing with death and mourning, he has given an analysis of how death is perceived among the two communities as well as its significance. The observances and ceremonies performed after a person's death are also analysed. On the ritual of Khuswala Kumuse, Wagner argues that "it is the duty of Oswala Kumuse (performer) by using convincing words and arguments, to calm down the excited minds reminding them that from long ago it has been the common fate of all people to die and that the misfortune which has come over the clan by the death that has occurred would be increased if the clansmen were now to accuse one another of sorcery or even to harbour thoughts of revenge and retaliation" (1970 : 486). Wagner further argues that Oswala Kumuse, whom he refers to as Omuseni¹, usually begins his harague to the assembled mourners, 10museni, is associated with Khusena (literally brushing of the teeth in Lubukusu. This is different from Khuswala which literally means to step on.

men, women, and the family of the deceased.

Wagner also recognizes the office of Kumuse as a definite office which can only be practised by such elders who, on account of their personality and their unblemished conduct throughout life, have proved their ability to intervene in disputes and quarrels as arbitrators" (1970 : 487). Here, he does not indicate that the power of Kumuse called Kumusambwa comes directly from Wele Khakaba (God) to the ancestors before Oswala Kumuse inherits it from his maternal ^{or} ~~or~~ paternal clan. Wagner does not also mention the fact that only specialists, in this case, men from specific clans perform the ritual. Also, since it was not his aim to describe the ritual perse, he did not delve into an in depth study of the ritual, so the information given is rather scanty.

Makila (1976), in his book dealing with the history of Babukusu, describes some of the important rituals and customs. In the book, Makila has mainly dwelt on original and critical history with a firm belief that accounts of oral traditions recorded therein would provide a basis for recapturing and reconstructing original history themes of the Bukusu people as have been preserved by them throughout the ages in the form of oral traditions. In his third chapter, entitled "Ethnic Composition", Makila has a section on clans that produce performers (Chikholo Chiswala Kumuse), where he names the following clans: Bakitwika (Bakwangwa, Basakha and Bakitang'a), Basang'alo Babuulo, Bachemayi, Bayemba, Bakhwami, Babuya, Bayitu and Babangachi. He asserts that "these clans act as custodians of Bukusu history and culture about which "public comforters" communicate to the audience on the occasion of funeral" (1976 :111).

Wandibba (1972) when analysing the government in the forts, contends that "the quality of being Oswala Kumuse (ritual performer) was Kumusambwa, characteristic of only certain clans" It is further argued that Oswala Kumuse was respected by everybody, but because of the power of his curse, he was feared by many. Thus, Oswala Kumuse derived his power from this impersonal force ...

That is why all the forts in his area had to acknowledge his power. Wherever he passed he was referred to as Omwami" (Wandibba 1972 :38)

Nakabayashi (1982), on the other hand, gives a record of the ritual Kumuse. His research experience in Bukusuland, however, lasted only two months and he admits in his book that he is not sufficiently acquainted with the ritual Khuswala Kumuse and the Bukusu culture in general. He did not therefore give an extensive analysis of the ritual in relation to other customs and traditions of Babukusu. Furthermore, he did this research mainly for the purpose of comparing with the mortuary rituals of Abeisukha (the people of Isukha location, Kakamega district) among whom he worked for a year and half. What he did here was to give the summary of themes in the one ritual he attended and he recorded in written form a full text of the same. This ritual was narrated by Mr. Maruti Kunani from Webuye in Bungoma district. Maruti is an elder of Bakhurarwa clan. The ritual was done for the late maina, father of the former Mp for Sirisia, Peter Kisuya. His clan is that of Bakitwika and his sub-clan Bakitang'a.

Nangendo (1994), in a chapter dealing with the cultural history of Babukusu, gives the office of Oswala Kumuse as the only leadership office which still survives today. He emphasises that Oswala Kumuse

was above all the leaders in the precolonial days. He further indicates that the institution of Kumuse has not, entirely escaped the ravages of modernization and he gives Wanyonyi wa Manguliechi, a performer, as one example of one who is too aware of the forces of modernization and who has therefore, tried to change with modern times. Today, Manguliechi is said to blend modernity with Bukusu traditions in his funeral orations (see also chapter 6). Like Makila, Nangendo also contends that Oswala Kumuse is a major custodian of Bukusu history and traditional culture. He narrates at length the coming of Babukusu from their Cradleland, how and when Babukusu adopted livestock keeping, subsistence farming, trading activities, circumcision, metal-working, the traditional concept of metaphysics, the meaning of death and reincarnation, inter ethnic battles and many other aspects of culture. Since Nangendo's study was dealing with the general culture of Babukusu, he did not give a detailed analysis of the ritual.

The only comprehensive study on the ritual is that carried out by Wanjala (1985). He studied three prominent performers, Bakari Wanami Okhwa Munyifwa, Luka Namulala, and John Wanyonyi Manguliechi. He gives the life histories of the three. He also names the clans which practise the cult and the roles of Oswala Kumuse. He indicates that Khuswala Kumuse is not an automatic legacy to the male elder, even though the elder might come from the clan which performs the ritual. The perspective ritual leader does not struggle to acquire the gift, as one struggles for a political or administrative chair. He is believed to be inspired by God and what he says are not his words but words from above. In fact, Wanjala asserts that "by and large the ritual leaders is not a common man who

its and eats with people indiscriminately. He is a shepherd and a prophet. He looks after the members of the society, and is expected to be discrete in all his manner of behaviour" (Wanjala 1985 :84). Wanjala gives an in depth analysis of the ritual and he has the following sections and sub-topics on the ritual : roles of Oswala Kumuse, clans that practise the cult, becoming Oswala Kumuse, the Khuswala Kumuse ceremony, and Oswala Kumuse as a teacher and counsellor. However, Wanjala looked at the ritual from the perspective of oral literature and not from an anthropological perspective.

Having shown the gaps in the existing literature, it is the task of this study to look into this aspect of the ritual Khuswala Kumuse with available information and to come up with a clear picture of the ritual among Babukusu.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

This study regards Khuswala Kumuse as a traditional custom among Babukusu. It is performed as a way of presenting the dead to God by the performer who is associated with mystic powers. The ritual also plays a role in socialization and integration of the Bukusu society. The members of the deceased are advised by the performer to accept death as ours and has been there from time immemorial.

As a customary practice, Khuswala Kumuse still continues in the community. This confirms that it is cherished by members of the community to whom it serves a useful function. This has necessitated the use of functional orientation to guide the study.

Malinowski started the school of functionalism which assumed that

all existing cultural traits serve the basic, secondary and tertiary needs of individuals in society. He identified the basic needs as nutrition, reproduction, bodily comfort and security. He noted that secondary functions existed to ensure the production of food, its distribution and consumption. On the other hand, tertiary roles, which consist of integrative needs, still help society to cohere. Examples of these are religion and magic. Khuswala Kumuse is under this category because the ritual brings people of different clans together and through the messages contained in it, people are integrated. The oral traditions on the origins of the community, for instance, trace Mubukusu as the first ancestor of all Bukusu people; this gives the people a sense of togetherness. Oswala Kumuse also gives advice to each and everybody in society regardless of age or clan that one comes from; this helps the society to cohere.

A contemporary of Malinowski, Radcliffe - Brown (1881 - 1955), extended functionalism to explaining human social relationships and behaviour. He called it structural functionalism. In this case various aspects of social behaviour exist to maintain a society's social structure. He compared the society to a biological organism whose existence depended on the proper functioning of its constituent parts. He pointed out that to understand change, both diachronic and synchronic studies in society are important. This is in line with the study of the ritual Khuswala Kumuse where the ritual will be analysed from the past upto the present to establish whether there are any noticeable changes in the way it is performed. The ritual will also be analysed synchronically to establish its significance in the society today.

Robert Merton (1942, 1949) agrees with Radcliffe - Brown and Malinowski. He states that each aspect of culture may be beneficial or harmful and it affects other cultural traits. A single cultural trait may have multiple functions in relation to the system in which it occurs. He categorized cultural traits into functional, dysfunctional, and eufunctional. Functional traits are the commonly recognized roles played by the cultural traits. They constitute manifest and latent functions. Manifest functions are always intended while latent ones are unintended but both are displayed in the activities. Manifest and latent functions exhibit both positive and negative qualities. Dysfunctional traits are not acceptable in society, but they exist. They exhibit both manifest and latent functions which also exhibit positive and negative qualities. Eufunctional traits on the other hand, are generally redundant. Even though they may be regarded ^{as} as part of culture, and be used to serve some functions, there are alternative ways of performing such functions easily and fast.

Whereas Bronislaw Malinowski used the functional approach to study ethnography and Radcliffe - Brown used structuralism to study relationships in society, this study intends to use functionalism on an aspect of culture, a funeral ritual known as ³⁴ Khuswala Kumuse, and its significance in the Bukusu Society. When the ritual is analysed using the above functions, the social and cultural roles of the ritual may still be functional and that is why it persists in the society.

Nanda (1991) introduced the aspect of dynamism. The dynamism orientation postulates that culture or a behavioural trait should

maintain social equilibrium and adapt to change. The author pointed out that change is not spontaneous; it may be introduced or accelerated by external intervention. Causes of change in symbolic and behavioural traits should be illuminated because events affect the structure and function of social relationships directly.

The institution of Kumuse has also undergone some changes. The messages and the themes of the orations today are blended with modernity to suit the present society. For instance, one would narrate the past wars of Babukusu and their neighbours and then also comment on the recent wars, for example, the infamous ethnic clashes and advise the community to live in peace with their neighbouring ethnic groups. Another example, is where the youth are advised to use the pen and the book as their weapons compared to the bow and arrow in the past. This shows how institution of Kumuse is sensitive and flexible to changes in society. This has ensured that the ritual continues to be functional in society.

3.2 Hypotheses

Following the research problem posed and the subsequent literature review, the following hypotheses were formulated to guide this study:

- (i) Khuswala Kumuse plays an important role in perpetuating the culture of Babukusu.
- (ii) The institution of Kumuse has survived largely because it is sanctimonious and directly associated with ancestors and their powers.
- (iii) The institution of Kumuse has not entirely escaped the ravages of modernization.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter defines the study site. It also discusses the methodological techniques used in the study, study population, sampling frame, data collecting methods and, finally problems encountered during the study.

4.1 Research Site

The data for this study were obtained from Kimilili Division of Bungoma District. The research took place in the months of December 1995 and in the early part of January 1996. This period was considered suitable because of availability of informants as there was less involvement in domestic and social activities. The author restricted himself to Kimilili Division because of lack of funds and the limited time available for the research.

Kimilili Division lies in the north-eastern part of Bungoma District. It is bordered by Tongaren Division on the east, Webuye Division on the south, chwele on the west and Mt. Elgon District on the north and north-eastern sides. The Division, according to Nangendo (1994), lies approximately between 1,200 and 2,400 metres above sea level. The mean annual temperatures range from 18 to 22 degrees celcius, while the annual rainfall received in the division ranges from 1,200 to 1,800 mm. Since 1966, the seasonal distribution has been 500 to 950 mm during the first long rains and 430 to 800 mm during the second short rains (Joetzold and Schmidt 1982; quoted in Nangendo 1994).

The soils in the division are of various types. They range from dark red clays with deep humic top soil, to dark-brown sandy, and grey loams. These are well drained. The division has a good drainage characterized by the presence of numerous rivers which are permanent. These include: Kibisi, Kimilili, Kamasielo, Kimusinde, and Kamukuywa rivers, all of which originate from Mt. Elgon.

The division has a very long cropping season, divided into a medium to long cropping season followed by a medium to short one, and is characterized by the presence of intermediate rains. The first rains usually begin in early March whilst the second rains come some time in early August. The type of rainfall received is both relief and convectional. Relief rain is influenced by the surrounding raised feature - Mt. Elgon - while convectional rain is influenced by Lake Victoria.

Natural vegetation in the division ranges from bushland to woodland. Much of the "original" vegetation has been depleted by human activities. In most parts of the division, the "original" trees have been replaced by exotic ones such as eucalyptus, cypress and pine.

Babukusu are the dominant ethnic group in the division. Other communities include, the Iteso and Abatachoni. The few Sabaot people who were previously in the division migrated to Mt. Elgon region during the 1992 ethnic clashes. The division has been reduced in size by the recent creation of Mt. Elgon District and, therefore, the exact population has not yet been established. How-

ver, the division is densely populated and exhibits a high rate of population growth.

The main economic activity of the division is farming. Within the district, Kimilili division is rated as one of the zones with a high potential for agriculture, the mainstay of the division's economy. A majority of the people are engaged in small-scale mixed farming, growing both food and cash crops as well as keeping livestock. The main food crops include maize, beans, finger-millet, sorghum, cassava, bananas, cowpeas, sweet-potatoes, yams and simsim. Maize is the main staple food crop but it is a cash crop as well. Beans alternate with maize and are also a cash crop. The purely cash crops are coffee, sunflower and sugarcane. Livestock farming is another activity in the division. The main livestock reared include, cattle, goats, sheep and poultry.

4.2 Study Population

Kimilili Division has a very high population increase as the growth rate is about 6.4 percent yearly. About 75 percent of the population in 1991 was composed of people aged below 25 years. It is projected that 75.32 percent of the population towards the end of this year 1996 will be aged below 25 years (District Development Plan 1994-1996 : 11). Population projection by division 1991, Kimilili had 9.38 percent of the total population of the district. The same trend is expected in 1994 and 1996 unless secondary changes occur between these periods. It is projected that in 1996, Kimilili should have 89,014 out of the total projected population of the district of 945,675 (District Development Plan 1994-96 :13). From the estimation, it is seen that Kimilili division is densely

populated compared to other divisions in the district.

4.3 Sampling Method

From the total population my interest was elders within the community as these are the people who are likely to give information on the ritual. In other words, ^{his} is the group that constituted the unit of analysis. To arrive at the actual respondents it was therefore necessary to sample the population. The author felt that since not everybody would be knowledgeable about the ritual, he would use the purposive sampling technique. In this method, the researcher relies on respondents for the identification of subsequent respondents.

4.4 Data Collecting Methods

The research included the collecting of both primary and secondary data. In this case, primary data constituted the major source of information on the ritual. The data were obtained through several means, namely, interviews, direct observations and library research. The author managed to interview one performer, Wanyonyi Wa Manguliechi, and a number of other elders in the community. Secondary data were collected or obtained from ethnographic literature by earlier scholars. All these contributed much information, especially on the geographical background of the area occupied by Babukusu, their history, origins and culture.

4.4.1 Interviews : Formal Surveys

The author managed to conduct a series of formal and informal interviews with different individuals most of whom were elders in the community. However, some of the respondents did not offer much

on the subject; instead, they referred the author to Manguliechi, the performer who they believed was well versed in the ritual since he is one of custodians of the Bukusu history and culture. The interview method was advantageous because the informants talked freely without having to be asked a lot of questions. The author, therefore, proceeded to ask questions using the themes outlined under the objectives as a guideline.

Most of the questions were directed to establish some principal facts about the contemporary Bukusu funeral ritual of Khuswala Kumuse. However, the interview was accompanied by utilising a semi-structured questionnaire for recording the information gathered (see appendix 2). The questions revolved around such aspects as: origins of Khuswala Kumuse. Information on clans which produce performers and those that have their dead performed for was given. Some questions even sought to establish the significance of the ritual in society and the effects of modernization on the ritual. The questionnaire was prepared in English but since most elders were not conversant with the language, the author translated the questions in Lubukusu when putting them across. However, the questionnaire was not followed strictly because one question raised so many others that had not been written down.

4.4.2 Key Informants

The author's interviews covered people with roles in the society. He selected individuals who were interviewed, the selection being based on occupation, social status, age, and sex. The selection also constituted a number of people and, as mentioned earlier, the sample included circumcisors and traditional healers, but much emphasis was laid on the performers (baswala kimise). This group of people was singled out because of their association with the

Supernatural beings. They are considered to be more knowledgeable in society than anybody else. The author discussed with them issues concerning the origins of ritual, who performs it and its significance in society. he also inquired to know whether or not there are noticeable changes in the way the ritual is performed today.

4.4.3. Direct Observation

The author employed the direct observation technique by attending rituals taking place in the area of his study but others had been witnessed before as the author comes from the community. This technique was very important to this study because it gave the author ample time to study and examine actual behaviour as opposed to what was said, thought or explained by the informants in the field. The author was further encouraged when his observations matched with the oral information gathered. This method also gave the author an opportunity to be able to analyse and compare the recorded details of the ritual with interviews and previous studies.

4.4.4. Library Research

Library research has been a major source of data, particularly at the formulation stage, where literature concerning Khuswala Kumuse was reviewed. The literature review also enabled the author to extract a few research hypotheses as clues to the issue being investigated. Library research also provided a lot of background information to the study itself.

4.5. Problems and Limitations

This study had a number of limitations. First, the time for research was so short that the author could not interview as many people as he would have liked. However, the sample was drawn which represented the whole division. During the period of data collection, the survey method, which was the main method of data collection, had a number of problems. The author was unable to obtain accurate information when questions on sensitive issues were asked. Some elders, for instance were very reluctant to give their life histories: Questions like : How many children do you have: How

many wives do you have? Were not answered easily. The reason may be that it is taboo among the Bukusu community to count people, in this case children and wives.

Another problem encountered was that while the author was interviewing the respondents, other people who came to the home could try to contribute to the on-going interview, thus distorting the respondents' answers. Some people would literally take over and provide all the information required and, in the process, would intimidate the respondents who would withdraw from the conversation. The author attempted to solve this problem by interviewing both respondents separately. However, in some cases, the interruptions assisted in directing the respondent being interviewed. For example, many old men were to be found at beer places where they had friends, so it was difficult to interview them one by one. In such cases, the author felt that chance had arisen for some kind of group discussion. The advantage of these discussions was that other people in the group who listened to the actual informant checked and corrected him whenever he went wrong. The other advantage is that it was teamwork; therefore, the informants could not easily distort facts because of the on-lookers who are ready to correct or criticize where necessary. When the on-lookers detected falsifications, they immediately corrected them.

4.6 Data Analysis

Since most of the data was qualitative, the author used qualitative methods of analysis.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the research findings. It presents the findings in relation to the objectives of the study, namely: Why the ritual is persistent in the Bukusu society despite the social and cultural changes; who performs the ritual and whether it is associated with any mystic powers; and, lastly, whether there are noticeable changes in the way in which the ritual is performed. Besides, it also endeavoured to ascertain the role played by the ritual in society. In order to achieve these aims, study questions were derived from some aspects of the institution of Kumuse, namely origins of the ritual, clans which produce performers, Oswala Kumuse, the Khuswala Kumuse ritual and, lastly, prohibitions associated with the ritual.

5.1 Origins of Khuswala Kumuse

According to most of the informants, Khuswala Kumuse has existed for centuries but the exact time and place where it was first performed cannot be traced, nor can the underlying motives. However, one of the key informants asserted that the first person to perform Kumuse was Mwambu when Babukusu were still living at a place called Situluku (Manguliechi : Personal Communication). Mwambu is believed to have performed the ritual for Samba Sambarani Ngunyi, who is also mentioned as the first Bukusu man to be circumcised. Wanjala (1985) also tries to trace the origin of this ritual where he quotes one of the performers, Luka Namulala, as

saying that "the art of Khuswala Kumuse originated from a house of Musamali, the son of Maina wa Nalukale" (1985:4). Namulala, who is of the Kananachi age-set and Omukitwika Mukitang'a by the clan, emphasises that his clan acquired the staff before it crossed the "Red Sea". He names some of his forebears in the art who include, among others, Samba Sambarani Ngunyi who is also said to have been Omukitwika by clan. Ngunyi is said to have performed the ritual whilst Bakitwika were still living Bukwe (literally, the east), and before they had moved to Silongelo.

The two versions above seem to suggest that Sambarani was the first person either to perform the ritual or to be performed for. It also appears that the ritual started a long time ago before even Ba Bukusu migrated to their present home of Bungoma district.

The power of Kumuse, called Kumusambwa is said to come directly from Wele Khakaba (God). The performer just inherit it from his pertanal or maternal clan. In fact, one of the informants insisted that "this power is in-born and inspired by God. One is not sure of what one is saying but what comes out of one's mouth are words from heaven "(Akembe : Personal Communication). The key informant, Manguliechi, also agreed that this power (Kumusambwa) is inherited and for him, he inherited this gift of Khuswala Kumuse from three clans, namely, his own (Bameme), his mother's (Babuya) and lastly, Babulo, which is the clan of his pertanal grandmother. The clan of Babulo is among the clans that produce performers so Manguliechi believes strongly that if he did not pick the art from Bameme or Babuya clans, then he must have picked it from Babulo.

5.2 Clans which carry out the Ritual

The clans which are traditionally involved in Khuswala Kumuse among the Bukusu Society are said to have carried their staff of office from "Misiri" (literally referred to by some writers as the present Egypt). These clans, according to Wanjala (1985), include Bakitwika Babuya, Babulo, Bakhwami, Bachemayi and Abangachi. Wanjala emphasises that even among the Bakitwika cluster of clans, only Bakwangwa, Bakitang'a and Basakha have their dead performed for, and also perform for their dead. Baluleti and Banambobi under the same cluster only invite ritual leaders to perform for their dead but they do not produce ritual leaders. Babuya are singled out as a clan which not only has its dead performed for but also produces performers. Other clans of Babukusu are said only to have their dead performed for but they do not produce performers. Makila (1978) also named the following clans as the producers of Baswala Kimise : Bakitwika and under this major clan-tree, we have Basakha and Bakitang'a as sub-clans; Babuulo; Bachemayi; Bayemba; Bakhwani; Babuya; Bayitu; Basang'alo; and Abangachi.

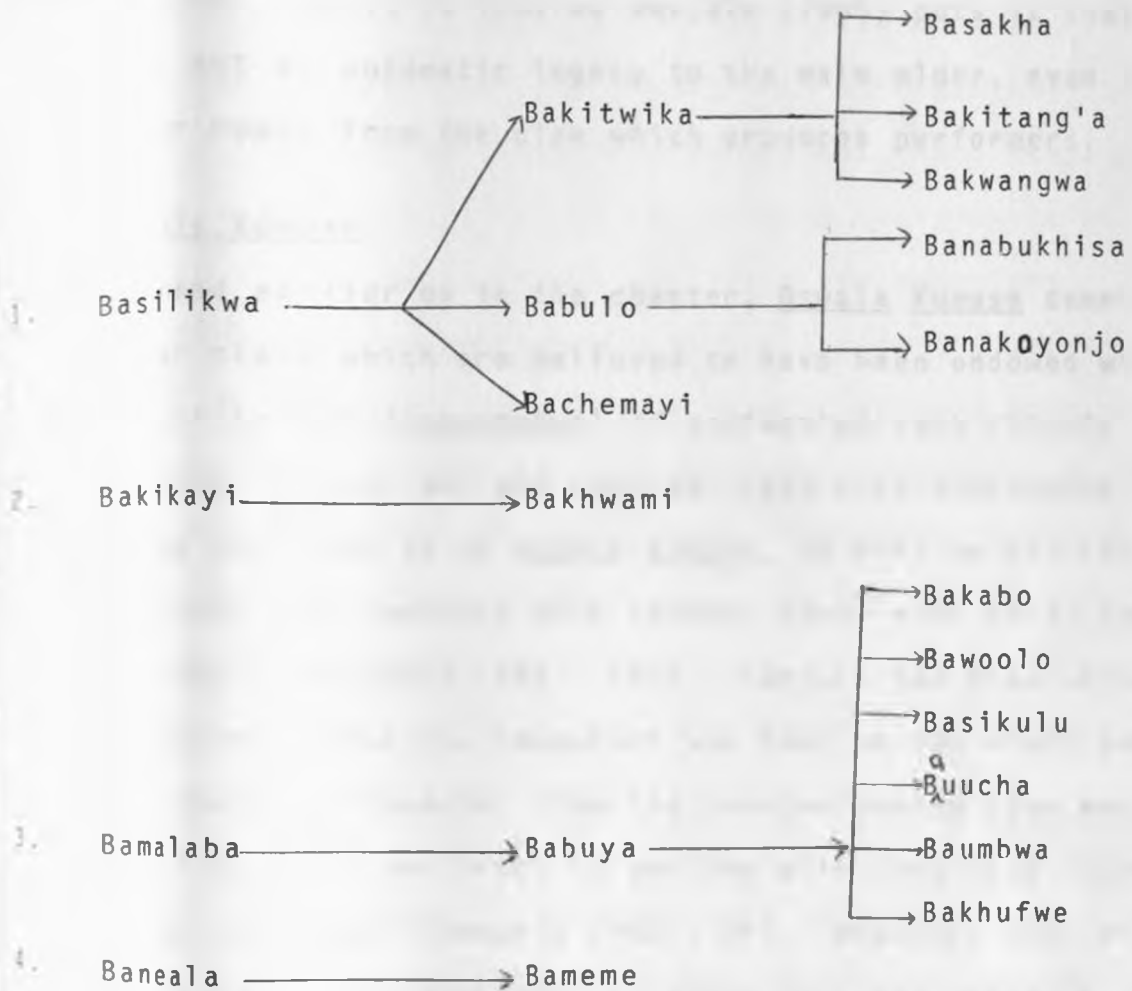
During the oral interview, Wanyonyi Manguliechi gave an elaborate classification of the clans that produce performers and also those that have their dead performed for. According to him, all those clans that produce performers have their dead performed for but not all clans that have their dead performed for produce performers. Only a few clans in the whole society produce performers. Manguliechi fits these clans into the five major groups under which all the Bukusu clans fall. The five groups include Basilikwa, Bakikayi, Bamalaba, Baneala and Bamwalie. Under Basilikwa, we have three sub-groups which are further sub-divided into smaller units

(see table 5.1 below). Bakitwika are divided into five groups, namely, Basakha, Bakitang'a, Bakwangwa, Banambobi, and Baluleti. Of the five, only Basakha, Bakitang'a and Bakwangwa produce performers; the other two only have their dead performed for.

Babulo, on the other hand, are divided into four groups, namely Banabukhisa, Banakoyonjo, Babichachi, and Baweeswa. In this category, only Banabukhisa produce performers. Bachemayi are only one clan (enju ndala) and they also produce performers. Under the Bakikayi cluster, we only have Bakhwami as the clan that produces performers. The Bamalaba cluster has Babuya as the producers of performers. According to Manguliechi, Babuya are further divided into six sub-groups all of which produce performers. The sub-clans include Bakabo, Bawoolo, Basikulu, Bauucha, Baumbwa, and Bakhufwe.

The fourth major category is that of Baneala and under this group, only Bameme produce performers. Bamwalie is the fifth and last major group of the clans that produce performers. Under this cluster we have Abangachi, Abaabiya, Abayumbu and Abasang'alo, as clans that produce performers and also have their deed performed for. From the above classification, it is clear that only a few clans in the Bukusu society produce performers (see Table 5.1). The Bamwalie cluster is left out as it consists clans of Abatachoni and not Babukusu.

Table 5.1 Clans that produce Performers



Even in the above mentioned clans only some individuals are gifted with the art. So it is true as Wanjala (1985) puts it that Khuswala Kumuse is not an automatic legacy to the male elder, even though that elder comes from the clan which produces performers.

5.3 Oswala Kumuse

As mentioned earlier on in the chapter, Oswala Kumuse comes from particular clans which are believed to have been endowed with the power of or spirit (Kumusambwa) of performing such rituals. It is argued that "if any man who does not have this particular Kumusambwa pretends to be Oswala Kumuse, he will be trifling with the ancestors and taunting Wele Khakaba (God) with dire personal consequences" (Nangendo 1994 : 151). Wanjala has also stressed this when he asserts that the imposters who take to the craft are ^{open to sudden} ~~It is~~ believed that an "imposter from the non-performing clan who tries the ritual garb on and tries to perform will drop dead in the arena and die on the spot" (Wanjala 1985 : 84). However, none of my informants gave any **instance** of where this has actually ever happened. In addition, the key informant insisted that the institution of Kumuse is governed by strict rules and regulation. Which are supposed to be observed by Oswala Kumuse himself as well as other people. It is, therefore, very hard for one who does not have this Kumusambwa to perform the ritual. Before tackling the qualities that Oswala Kumuse is expected to have, it might be appropriate to give a brief life history of one of the performer who is also the Chairman of all the performers in Bukusuland, namely, John Wanyonyi Manguliechi.

Manguliechi is the present famous performer in Bukusuland. Many people go in for him to perform for their dead because of his peculiar style and advice-laden orations. John Wanyonyi Manguliechi was born in 1930 at Kumusinga village and was named Wanyonyi, a name given to a baby-boy born during the weeding season. He was later baptized in the catholic church and given the name John. He was the only son among nine daughters who have all passed away and he was a child to a third wife. Manguliechi is his father's name who is ~~Omumeme~~ by clan. His mother's clan is Babuya. Wanyonyi Manguliechi started going to school in 1938 at Kamusinga Primary School. He later transferred to Kibingei in 1945. He was circumcised in 1946 and is therefore Omukinyikewi by age-set. In 1949, he shifted from Kibingei Primary School to Kimilili School but dropped out of school the same year due to lack of fees.

Between 1950 and 1953, he worked in a dairy farm as a clerk. Manguliechi married his first wife in 1956 and they were blessed with a son in 1957. He worked in some factory as a general labourer from 1957-61 when he was elevated to the post of Omunyapara² (overseer). He married his second wife in 1967 and it is in the same year that he resigned from his work. He married the third and fourth wives in 1968 and 1988, respectively. However, at the moment, Manguliechi has only two wives plus twelve daughters and ten sons. His first wife passed away whilst the third wife was divorced.

²Omunyapara - is a corruption of the Swahili word nyapara which means overseer

Manguliechi started his career as Oswala Kumuse at thirty-three years old in 1963. Before that, he said, he did not have many problems as is normally the case before one becomes Oswala Kumuse. He recalled that his Kumusambwa was noticed early and the necessary measures were taken to put everything right. In most cases the prospective performer may have complications such as falling sick, delaying in marriage while others even become mad. It is believed that through such a state (the possession experience), the ancestors bestow him with words which he subsequently utters during Kimise. It is further believed that "this person is usually in constant communication with the ancestors during the duration of the performance" (Kiliswa : Personal Communication). In fact, Simiyu (1991 : 137) argues as follows:

The qualities of and the process of making Oswala Kumuse were so demanding and hard to come by that some clans which were to produce such a leader would not be able to produce one when the reigning one died or retired.

Simiyu gives an example of Babichachi clan where he indicates that since Wachilonga retired in the late 1940's they have not produced another performer. He also gives Babuulo as another example and here, he asserts that since saenyi died in the 1940's they have not had any replacement. The case of Bakolati clan is even more striking. It is said that since the death of Wabule wa Machakhi in the 1850s this clan has not produced any Oswala Kumuse. This shows that Kumuse is a unique art and therefore very hard for somebody who does not have these powers to impose himself as a performer.

Manguliechi names three stages through which one passes before one becomes a full-fledged performer, namely one has to do it while seated, secondly while standing and then he is allowed to walk.

Manguliechi was trained by Simoni Masakha and he had his first performance during the funeral of Sifuna Bwayo at Kabutola village. The dead man was that Omusawa Misiko by age-set. He did it while seated for five years, three years while standing and then started walking. He became a "full" performer in 1976 but was allowed to walk by Luka Namulala in 1980. In 1983, he was requested to have the necessary regalia, which included ekutusi (Colobus Monkey Skin), armband called lichabe, esimbo (the insignia of his spiritual power), the garb (ekutwa) and, lastly, endebe embukusu (the Bukusu traditional stool). He was also expected to look for an animal to be slaughtered during the inauguration day. Wanjala summarises the inauguration ceremony as follows:

After acquiring the required regalia and an animal, the novice invites members of his age-set, babakoki and other elders of the clan to his home. At 5.00 p.m, he is stood by a hut called namwima by bakulo. These are people who enjoy a joking relationship with the novice's clan. A fatted animal of the home is slaughtered and the meat is let to lie there by namwima (Shrine) awaiting slicing into thinner pieces. The novice is dressed ... Omukulo stands up and dictates the rules governing the office of Oswala Kumuse (Wanjala 1985 : 85).

Manguliechi started his career in full swing on 25/11/85 and this was in Uganda. He does not remember the name of the deceased but he was Omubulo by clan. He is the youngest performer in Bukusuland at the moment and the most popular.

Oswala Kumuse in general should observe some rules that govern the institution. These rules will be discussed later in this chapter but it seems appropriate to mention some here. First, the rod which Oswala Kumuse always carries with him is believed to come directly from Wele Khakaba (God). "This rod may not, under any circumstances, be pointed directly at a person unless Oswala Kumuse

is administering a curse. Once this rod is directly pointed at a person it causes the immediate death of that person" (Nangendo 1994 : 151). One of the informants elaborated that, in fact this is the Biblical rod that Moses used to lead the Israelites from Egypt to the promised land. Like in the bible, "it is the rod that Mubukusu who is believed to have been the eponymous father of Babukusu used to lead them from Situluku to Sibakala" (Biketi : Personal Communication). Another rule states that one cannot perform Kumuse if one's first child is a girl and also if one's father is still alive. If one does it, one will kill oneself. In addition, his father or father's age-mate should never find him performing the ceremony; he will die. In a nutshell, Wanjala describes Oswala Kumuse as follows :

A man of tremendous moral integrity, unlike the worldly leaders who have to depend on vulgar popularity. He does not engage in calumny, rumour-mongering, and underhand machinations which go against members of his community. He should not take too much intoxicating liquor and put himself in a situation in which he will utter things that may go against the community and the ancestor. He should not compass or plan the death of others in his community (Wanjala 1985 : 84).

In general, it is evident that Oswala Kumuse is not a common man who sits and eats with people indiscriminately. He is considered to be a shepherd and a prophet as he looks after the members of the society and is, therefore, expected to be discrete in all his manner of behaviour. According to one of the informants, Oswala Kumuse should not be any of the following: "he should not be Omubini (night runner), Omulosi (a witch), We bichubo (one that administers curses) We Chinge (mean), Waria embalu (one that did not endure the pain of circumcision), and Omwifwi (a thief)" (Manguliechi : Personal Communication). He should also not be Omwana wa Nasikoko (a child

born of a woman who had been married before) or Omukhwana (a twin). If one overlooks these rules, a misfortune befalls oneself" (Khaemba : Personal Communication). In short, Oswala Kumuse is a man with good reputation in society and he is respected by everybody. He is picked by others for his trade precisely because of the above mentioned qualities.

5.4 The Khuswala Kumuse Ritual

This ritual normally takes place on the third day after burial. Before the arrival of Oswala Kumuse, mourners are required to be already seated. The mourners sit and form an open circle with women and children on one side and men on the other. The widow(s) and children (of both genders) of the deceased sit on the side of women on the ground with their legs stretched out in front of them. It is argued that "stretching of legs is a symbol of putting right/straight propagation and fertility amongst the deceased's family (Khulungisha Lisaye)" (Manguliechi : Personal Communication). This also straightens the death man's route to heaven as he is presented to the almighty by Oswala Kumuse.

Before Oswala Kumuse starts the oration, in the middle of the audience, he deliberately prepares a path, about eight metres long from the south to the north with his feet by stepping on the grass. Throughout his performance, he paces and sometimes trots in a straight line on this path which is called Kumuse". The Kumuse path is a narrow one and therefore believed to lead to the Kingdom of God. So it leads the deceased to the land of ancestors (emakombe)" (Khisa : Personal Communication). This path should not be crossed by anybody after the oration and because of this, Kumuse is normally

performed away from the compound to avoid children crossing this path after the ritual.

The words of Oswala Kumuse are articulate, stylized, and brief at a time. Frequently, he puts questions, real or rhetorical, to the audience which, in turn, participates in the performance by responding to them. In one of the rituals the author attended, Oswala Kumuse started as follows :

Eee!	Yees!
Lifwa Liqiefwe	Death is ours
Lifwa Likhale, Bawabiswa	It started a long time ago you wabiswa people
Mukhalila ta	Do not mourn
Mukhalila Muli	Do not mourn that
Papa afwile, khocha afwile kuka afwile ta	father is dead, maternal uncle is dead a grandfather is dead
Sali niye onyoyile emokombe ta	He is not the first one in the land of ancestors

These were the opening words by Wanyonyi Manguliechi on 20/8/93 upon the death of Mzee Gabriel Mukhwana Khambakhamba of Bamukoya clan who praise themselves as "Bawabiswa, Bawabili". The deceased hailed from Kamusinde village of Kimilili division in Bungoma district.

Baswala Kimise have different ways of beginning the orations but in general, they all start by talking briefly about the nature of death. They remind people that man is mortal and that death is arranged not by man but by God (Wele). By saying so, he intends to deny suspicion of sorcery or witchcraft, Kamaloko, against the deceased. In his parody, Oswala Kumuse, apart from counselling the bereaved family, preaches against bubeyi (telling lies), bubwifwi

stealing), Kunywanywa (devoursness), and embelekeu (lack of respect for others), among other morals in society.

Performing this ritual is not always an easy task for the performer as it is characterized by bad omens and misfortunes. For example, Wanjala states that :

If the deceased is a clean man, the preacher will not have problems moving a long side Kumuse and preaching. He will unconsciously avoid potholes and stumps of trees that may lie on his way. But if the deceased is an evil man, Oswala Kumuse kneels down, utters a prayer to God, jumps out of the circle, asks for his dues and leaves (Wanjala 1985 : 84).

Wanyonyi Manguliechi has different ways of dealing with such encounters. For instance, he solves the problem of risking performing for people of his age-set by inquiring from whoever comes to call him about all the information concerning the dead. On the other hand, if the deceased is Omukhwana (a twin), Manguliechi puts on Kumukufu (chain of ostrich egg-shells), and he does it while standing in case the deceased is Omukhala Mwandu (the first boy - child born of a widow upon the death of her husband).

When Kumuse approaches its end, normally the performer abandons historical episodes and talks about more practical matters. He starts, for instance, to console the family of the deceased. The last advice is normally to encourage the bereaved family to live peacefully thereafter. He advises them to take care of the homestead now that their father is dead. For example, sons are advised to love one another, to tackle problems together in times of crisis and also to take care of their ageing, and now widowed mother(s). Daughters are, on the other hand, advised to love their husbands so that their family and clan can earn a good reputation and respect.

(Nangendo 1994). In short, Oswala Kumuse encourages stability and good relationship, as it were, in the bereaved family.

Towards the end of his performance, Oswala Kumuse runs three times from one end of Kumuse to the other. This process is called Khusoma (wandering) and since Oswala Kumuse is not supposed to shed tears, this is usually his culturally accepted way of grieving. "Oswala Kumuse finally comes to a stop in the centre of Kumuse and comments, Kumwonyo Kwalila enqo, Mayi Kumwoyo Kwalila enqo. Wele Omundu yuno bona alikhungila kecha mwakanile (my heart is grieving for home, God this person is on his way coming, please welcome him)"

(Nangendo 1994 : 15). In one of the performances the author attended, these words were followed by a brief song which went as follows:

Mukhwana aronye	Mukhwana should drop
Mukhwana aronye Mwikulu	Mukhwana should drop in heaven
Gabriel aronye	Gabriel should drop
Gabriel aronye Mwikulu	Gabriel should drop in heaven.

He further commended as follows: Wele, bisala nebili Mwikuli mia moja, Sia Gabriel sibekho, nebilimo tisa, sia Gabriel Sibekho (God, in case there are one hundred seats in heaven, let Gabriel have one, and in case they are nine, Gabriel should still have one). Oswala Kumuse then finished his oration by the following words:

Busia bufwanane	Morrows resemble
Semanya enyanga niye	I do not know where the
yolile ta	Sun has reached
Basakhulu, enyanga	Elders, the sun
Yakwile	has set

Yolile nono

The day has come

Yinyokha non Mulile

You should now stand

Omundu wenywe

and mourn your person

Inyokha!

Stand!

After the last sentence people stand up at once and that marks the end of the ceremony. The audience is normally careful with these last words because it is believed that if one remains seated while others have stood up, a misfortune befall, oneself. This was also one way to keep the audience alert throughout the long parody which takes hours.

5.5 Prohibitions associated with Khuswala Kumuse

The institution of Kumuse is strictly governed by rules and regulations that have to be observed by both the performers themselves and other people. For convenience, the discussion will start with rules that affect the performer and then move on to those that affect other people.

Oswala Kumuse starts to observe strict rules immediately he is informed of a performance the next day. First, he may not have intercourse with his wife at night if he is to perform Kumuse the following day. On his way to the deceeds home for a performance, Oswala Kumuse, should not greet anybody nor should anybody greet him. However, he may greet another person who is also Oswala Kumuse, although he may only do so using the stave he always carries. He should enter Kumuse while facing the north and should not swallow saliva throughout the oration. He may also not carry the money he was given as a fee to perform the ritual on his person during the ritual. A number of his kin types may also not sit with

the gathered mourners as it is construed that their presence could be harmful to him. For example, the elder brother and the father of Oswala Kumuse are prohibited and even the father of the deceased may not be in the audience.

During the performance, Oswala Kumuse should not under any circumstances, point his rod at a person unless administering curse. It is believed that once this stick is pointed at a person, it cause the immediate death of that person. It is also stressed that one should not perform the ritual if one's first child is a girl. The ritual leader is also not expected to eat flying termites. "If by chance he is sitting on an ant hill and termites shoot out and crawl on him, he should not pick them from his person and throw them into his mouth with the aim of eating them. He must eat white ants only when they are served to him in a container" (Wanjala 1985 : 84).

The ritual leader should ^{not} cut either climb a tree or jump a river because his efforts to do so will fail and he will either fall down or drown, respectively. Reasons as to why the performer should not do the above were not specific as in most cases informants insisted that one can not prosper if one did the above (Saindila ta). In fact, one of the informants asserted that it is committing suicide if the above rules and regulations are not observed.

As regards the general gathering, once seated and Kumuse is in session, nobody is supposed to get up and leave, especially the members of the bereaved family. The gathering is expected to be silent and only respond where necessary. Sneezing whilst the ritual is going on is not allowed and if one does so, one is supposed to march out of the gathering and go away. This act is regarded as

forbiddance (enqani) to what is being uttered by the performer. It is therefore clear that the institution of Kumuse is sacred and governed by strict rules and regulations and this might be one reason why the ritual is persistent in society despite the modern changes.

CHAPER SIX

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter briefly discusses the results and then draws conclusions. The areas to be commended on include, the significance of the ritual, persistence and change. The chapter ends with a conclusion and recommendations.

6.1 Significance of the ritual in Society

Analysi of the data presented in the previous chapter reveals that Khuswala Kumuse Serves important roles in society and that this could be the reason why it is still cherished and ecouraged in the Bukusu society. It is a common thing that when a person dies, the bereaved family becomes confused and is bound to cast and throw all sorts of conclusions about the cause of the death. It might even attribute the death to other people and this, in most cases, creates enmity in society. The ritual of Khuswala Kumuse is a very important stabilizer in this case. Oswala Kumuse through his oration, calms down the excited mind of the bereaved. For example, he reminds them that "From long time it has been the common fate of all people to die and that the misfortune which has come over the clan by the death that has occurred would only be increased if the clansmen were now to

accuse one another of sorcery or even harbour thoughts of revenge and retaliation "(Wagner 1970:486). The orator also reminds the people that human beings are mortal and that death is arranged not by humankind but by God(Wele). This denies suspicion of witchcraft (Kamaloko) against the deceased and the society lives in harmony.

The institution of Kumuse is important in society as a medium through which Babukusu have acquired a sense of unity. In fact, Nakabayashi (1982) states that, the history narrated in the Kumuse is distinguished in the moral character and once it is narrated in public, it becomes a collection of historical episodes from which moral lessons could be drawn. Stories about the Bukusu heroes, the rich traditional economy and even proper social organizations in the past can be emulated by the present society. In the same vein, Kumuse brings together different clans which are identified as Babukusu and thus forms a single ethnic entity which is united with the same customs and traditions. The ritual is also important in the inter-clan cohesion. When different Bukusu clans come together during the performance, they feel they belong to one ancestor who is said to be Mubukusu and therefore they are one community.

During the oration, some important Bukusu Customs are emphasized and if possible their origin traced. An example of such customs is circumcision. The history of circumcision is of great value in the cultural unity

which binds all the people in Bukusuland. Stories about wars against neighbouring ethnic groups represent effectively the morality of unification in the past and this enhances unity at the moment. These stories, whether they are about victory or hardship, intensify the ethnic identity against other groups.

Babukusu are able to keep track of their origin through the institution of Kumuse. Oswala Kumuse, who is the custodian of Bukusu history and culture, is able to relate geneologies and traditions of origin back to Mubukusu, the Mythological ancestor of Babukusu. Another example is knowledge on the origin of circumcision and formation of age - sets. This knowledge has been stored by the institution of Kumuse and passed over from generation to generation until writing came to the community. Other aspects also stored include, the Bukusu migrations to their present home, their leaders and social organisation, marriage systems and wars with their neighbours. It is however, evident from the data presented in the last chapter that Kumuse not only retains historical traditions but also adopts any new elements easily when they are necessary. For example, in one of the rituals the author attended, when narrating war stories, Oswala Kumuse also talked about the recent ethnic clashes of 1992 and advised people to overlook their ethnic differences and stay in peace and harmony with their neighbours.

Such advice ensures peace and stability in society.

Oswala Kumuse is a teacher and Counsellor in society

Wanjala vividly puts this point across when he stresses:

His duties as a teacher and counsellor are very important for the society's stability and social intergration. Oswala Kumuse teaches the society to accept death as inevitable. This will reduce conflict in society due to alleged witchcraft or sorcery. He advises the aged to love other people's children as well as they love theirs. He challenges them to feed their young irrespective of whether the young are their direct descendants or not (Wanjala 1985:96).

With such advice Oswala Kumuse encourages the assistance of the needy and this ensures that atleast each and everybody lives a comfortable life in Society. This could eventually reduce the incidence of crime in society. Wanjala is, however, skeptical on the issue of taking care of step-siders and step-brothers especially in the light of present economic hardships.

Kumuse is an agent of socialization in society. Through the performance, the youth are adviced on various aspects by the performer. For instance, he warns the youth against the dangers of waywardness. Nowadays, the youth spend more time in school than with their children some matters, especially those relating to

sex. It is only during Khuswala Kumuse that such issues are discussed by Oswala kumuse. In their speeches, Baswala Kimise also seek to prevent the youth from falling into problems. They preach against Bubeyi (telling lies), bubwifwi (stealing), Kunywanywa (deviourness) and embelekeu / lack of respect for others). Wanjala has also indicated that the performers criticize young working people who do not clothe their parents, build good shelters for them, and provide food for them. This is geared towards improving the living standards of the society.

Baswala Kimise encourage, equal distribution of resources in society. They insist that the working youth should assist their families in particular and the whole community at large. They even advise the elected members of parliament to be assisting those who elected them to improve the living standards of the people in their respective constituents.

In part, according to Wanjala (1985:89) "Baswala Kimise bemoan the loss of the true sense of leadership in the present Bukusu society, and challenge the community not to vote selfish leaders into parliament". He insists that Baswala Kimise argue like prophets of the old testament where a leader emerges as a shepherd. They condemn close-fisted leaders. This is one of the indications of the influence of Baswala Kimise in politics.

Finally, when Oswala Kumuse advises the youth to hold their new spears firmly, in this case a pen and a book, and behave like the hunter's dog which is endowed with strong scent, this is geared towards improving the level of education in the society as education is nowadays the key to everything. Education puts the society in a good position to compete with others in terms of job opportunities and thereby enhance economic development. From the above discussions, it is evident that Khuswala Kumuse plays important roles in the society and this could be the reason why the ritual is still cherished in the Bukusu society.

.2 Khuswala Kumuse : Persistence and change

The analysis of data reveals that a number of traditional attributes of the ritual still persist in spite of pressures from within and without the Bukusu society. One of the reasons why the ritual is persistent is because of its flexibility to adapt to change. The institution of Kumuse adopts and blends modernity with the past and this has ensured that it does not outlive its usefulness. For example, Nangendo (1990) quotes Manguliethi as one who is only too aware of his tenuous hold unto Bukusu traditions in the face of the forces of modernization. Nangendo asserts that:

Today in most of his funeral orations, Oswala Kumuse tries to blend modernity with Bukusu traditions. Whilst in the past oswala Kumuse could extol the virtues of past warriors in Bukusu society, today he also has to preach about formal education, health care, christianity and cash economy (Nangendo 1994: 101).

It is evident from the above arguments that the institution of Kumuse is under the pressure of the forces of modernization. However, the institution still survives and is widely practised in the society. This could be attributed to its relevant advice to society and to the messages that are contained in the orations.

The fact that most people in Bukusu society believe that their ancestors by and large continue to play a very significant role in their daily life could explain the persistence of this ritual which is also associated with the supernatural powers. It is believed in the society that the spirits of the dead are still capable of exercising considerable power and influence over the affairs of the living and that these spirits are ever ready to use this power (Nangendo 1994). People in society, therefore fear consequences that would befall them if they did not appease their dead by performing the ritual.

The analysis of data has also indicated a change in themes of Kumuse today in comparison to the past. An example is where performers attempt to narrate the biblical story on the origin of death, that is the story of Adam and Eve and the forbidden fruit. This is a clear indication of the infiltration of christianity into the institution in particular and the Bukusu society at large. Traditionally, the story of the chameleon was used to explain the origin of death. It is a story about " a man who refused to give food to a chameleon when he was asked. The chameleon cursed him saying" from now on you shall die". Then the chameleon visited the snake which gave it something to eat. The chameleon blessed the snake with eternal life. When the snake gets old, it merely casts off its skin instead of dying" (Wagner 1970: 487). Other "modern " stories have taken over the above story. In fact, in one of the performance the author attended, the performer used human biology and types of foods to explain the origin of death. He warranted as follows:

People die because they are born with Engobi (Placenta) and Engobi is Likobi (the placenta is a debt) so one has to repay the debt (Likobi) People also die because they have kamafuki blood in their veins and Kamafuki kamafu niko (blood is death). Hence people ^{have} to die. Lastly,

people die because they normally eat buđu (flour), bufu lufu mnilwo (flour is death). So they have to die (Manguliechi; oral performance Kamusinde).

The changes in the institution of Kumuse can also be attributed to the new Socio-cultural values which are sweeping across the districts. The major influence on the institution, however has been that posed by christianity, and Nakabayashi has the following to say on this:

as the protector of the proper customs of Babukusu, Oswala Kumuse is placed in the position of representing the central morality of the society.

If christianity has become an indispensable part of the fundamental morality now, as is exemplified in fighting against sorcery and witchcraft, Oswala Kumuse is ready to and expected to take account of the christianity.

Oswala Kumuse and the church leader are in position of competing each other for the leadership in funerals of Babukusu today (Nakabayashi 1982:10).

This argument tallies with what is happening in the Bukusu society today. In some cases some families have preferred a mass to traditional funeral rituals simply because they believe in Jesus christ who is the way, the truth and the blood that washes away all sin. In fact, some of the so-called saved people in the society even condemn what the performers of Kimise preach as obscene and repugnant to moral descency. In such families, all the funeral rituals are either substituted completely or are blended with religious activities.

The present cash economy has had influence on the performers of the ritual. Today, some funerla orators usually change their fee according to the perceived wealth of the homestead. For instance, "If there are a number of salaried members in the homestead the fee charged tends to be higher than would otherwise be the case (Nangendo 1994:101)

Finally, the introduction of formal education and salaried employment in towns has disrupted the targeted audience as the youth who are the intended group to be advised during Kimise orations are always either in school or working in urban areas. However, the ritual is still widespread in the society and since it is still associated with supernatural powers, there are high chances of its survival in future.

6.3 Conclusion and Recommendations

It is time to draw some broad general conclusions in light of what has been said in this dissertation. It is important to note that Khuswala Kumuse among Babukusu has existed for centuries but the exact time and place where it was first performed cannot be traced. It is however, believed that, the first person to perform Kumuse was Mwambu when Babukusu were still living at a place called Situluku. According to the myth, Mwambu is said to have performed for Samba Sambarani Ngunyi who is also mentioned as the first man to be circumcised.

The clans which produce performers have also been analysed in this dissertation. They fit in the major clusters of all Bukusu clans which include, Basilikwa, Bakikayi, Bamalaba, Ba ^{neala} and Bamwalie. The clans that produce performers include, Basakha, Bakitang'a, Bakwangwa, Banabukhisa, Banakoyonjo, Bakabo, Bawoolo, Basikulu, Baucha, Baumbwa Bakhufwe, Bakhwani and Bameme. We also have a section of Bukusu clans which have their dead performed for but they do not produce performers, examples include Bamukoya, Bakimweyi and Banambobi, among others.

The clans which produce performers also have their dead performed for. However, it is further clarified that even in the clans that produce performers, only some few lucky individual(s) are gifted with the art of Khuswala Kumuse.

In the dissertation, the author has also brought clearly the role played by Oswala Kumuse (Plur. Baswala Kämise). The Kumuse ritual has also been seen to be associated with strict rules and regulations which are to be observed not only by performers themselves but also by the gathering. It is strongly believed that if one overlooks these rules a misfortune befalls oneself. The fact that Oswala Kumuse is believed to be in consistent communication with the ancestors during the duration of the performance attests to the association of Kumuse with the supernatural powers.

The dissertation has emphasized the significance of the ritual in society and it appears that the essence of the ritual, apart from advising the bereaved family is to deliver the deadman to God (wele). In fact, Kumuse (path) is deliberately prepared by the performer for the dead. It is the path that should lead to heaven as it is narrow and it is believed that a narrow path leads to the kingdom of God and abroad one to satan or hell. In the dissertation, it is also shown that Kumuse has a peculiar style as a speech for mourning. It includes various themes such as oral

traditions and explanations of customs.

The Data revealed that the institution of Kumuse is flexible and sensitive to changes and this is one of the reasons why the ritual is persistent in society despite modern changes. However, there were some changes which were noticed in themes of the ritual today and these changes are attributed to penetration of christianity, formal education and cash economy in the Bukusu society.

Finally, it appears from the data analysis that modern changes in the Bukusu society are unlikely to phase out the institution of Kumuse in the society because of its sensitivity and flexibility to them.

In the light of the information that I have given I find it necessary to make the following recommendations. First, it will be a good idea to make the practice a general practice in society to enable each and every member the society to learn something about his/her culture and history.

Secondly, it has been revealed that some christians are against the ritual because of the obscene words used by the performer. It would be useful for the performers not to use obscene words so as to accommodate everybody in the society.

Thirdly, it would be useful to have the actual ritual documented visually by use of video cameras for future use. Finally, it is important that the fee charged by performers be reviewed. It should be made affordable to enable poor families who cannot meet the standized fee of a cow, also have their dead performed for.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: A Table of sample of Elders Interviewed

NAME OF ELDER	AGE AND AGE SET	CLAN
Wanyonyi Manguliechi	65 yrs Omukinyikewi	Omumeme
Masinde Akembe	83 yrs Omukananachi	Omurefu
Didimu Biketi	80yrs Omukananachi	Omukitwika Omuleti
Lasi Kiliswa	75 yrs Omukinyikewi Osimikha	Omumukoya
Patrick Kuloba	68yrs Omukinyikewi	Omukitwika Omuleti
Nicolas Khaemba	71 yrs Omukinyikewi	Omumukoya
Zachariah Nandobe	72 yrs Omukinyikewi	Omuengele
Sabuni	75 yrs Omukinyikewi	Omukitwika Mukwangwa
Wambulwa	70 Omukinyikewi	Omubuya Mukabo

Appendix 2: QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name of the Sublocation.....
2. Village
3. Respondent's age in years

QUESTIONS:

1. Are you aware of the funeral rituals which are performed for the dead in your community?
2. Is the ritual of Khuswala Kumuse Performed in your clan?
3. Why is it (not) performed? Explain.
4. Can you trace the origin of this ritual?
5. Who was the first person to perform the ritual?
6. Which clan did he come from and for who did he perform the ritual?
7. At what time is the ritual performed and why?
8. Who performs the ritual and how does one become a performer?
9. What are the clans that produce performers?.
10. What are the clans that do not produce performers but have their dead performed for?
11. What is the significance of the ritual in the Bukusu society?
12. Is the ritual cherished by members of the society?
13. What is your attitude towards the persistence of the ritual in the society?
14. Are there any prohibitions associated with the ritual? Give them.
15. What happens to the person that overlooks these prohibitions?
16. Are there any profound changes in the way the ritual is performed today? Explain.
17. Is the custom supported by all people of all ages in the society.
18. Is there any future for the ritual in the society? Explain.