

**ORAL NARRATIVE PERFORMANCE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF  
BUKUSU PERCEPTIONS ON COMMUNAL COEXISTENCE**

**BY**

**JOSEPH JUMA MUSUNGU**

A PhD Thesis Submitted in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy in Literature, University of Nairobi

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## DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented to any other examination body.

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Joseph Juma Musungu

Date

This thesis has been submitted with our approval as University of Nairobi supervisors.

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1. Dr. Joseph Muleka

Date

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2. Dr. Godwin Siundu

Date

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3. Prof. Helen Mwanzi

Date

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my late parents: Michael Wekesa Musungu and Lenah Nafula Musungu.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## ABSTRACT

This study set out to examine how oral narrative performance suggests the construction of Bukusu perceptions on communal co-existence. The study was informed by the fact that previous studies such as those by Makila (1978), Namulunda (2005) and (Bulimo 2013) were mainly concerned with collecting and recording Bukusu oral narratives. The present study specifically examines oral narrative performance and analyses the nuances that suggest Bukusu perceptions in these narratives. Such kind of study has not been conducted at this level. The study aimed at achieving four objectives: to examine context and meaning of Bukusu oral narratives, examine performance and meaning of Bukusu oral narratives, analyse special language of narration and how it suggests meaning in Bukusu oral narrative performance and examine how meaning in oral narrative performance contributes to the Bukusu perceptions of other people. The hypotheses of the study are that the meanings deciphered from the Bukusu oral narratives are subtly suggested in the context of performance of these narratives; performance of Bukusu oral narratives is significant in suggesting meaning; Bukusu oral narratives employ specialised use of language to communicate Bukusu perceptions on communal-coexistence and meaning in Bukusu oral narratives perpetuates Bukusu perceptions on communal co-existence.

In theoretical framework, the study has employed an eclectic model in which hermeneutics and performance theories have been used. Whereas hermeneutic orientation provided the entry point of the meaning of Bukusu narratives, the performance orientation was used to extend this further by examining the context within which these narratives are performed. The study has also used ethnopoetics which has proved vital in understanding of the significance of aural and visual features like mimicry, gestures, and facial expressions in suggesting Bukusu perceptions as envisioned in oral narratives. This combination is grounded in modern folkloristic perspectives which call for viewing of oral texts as representations of collective thinking. In research methodology, the collecting oral narratives and other relevant information consisted of participation, observation, digital recording and oral interviews. Our analysis of individual narratives has been guided by an analytical framework comprising a set of pertinent questions.



Some of the key concerns in these questions included the way the Bukusu perceptions are constructed using oral narrative performance as well as the way major issues are portrayed in these narratives.

The study has established that context and performance are vital because they supplement verbal articulations in constructing Bukusu perceptions. It has also been established that Bukusu oral narratives extensively comment on both the Bukusu and other neighbouring communities. The study has also established that whereas some of the narratives construct “the other” negatively as treacherous, deceptive and ungrateful; there are others, however, which acknowledge the value of these people for the continuity of society through intermarriages. The study has equally established that through Bukusu oral narrative performance, the community has designated certain roles and duties based on gender differences. Finally, the study has established that Bukusu oral narrative performance employs a wide range of language devices such as opening and closing formulae, diminutive and augmentative language, coded songs, symbolism and imagery as well as strategic repetition to construct Bukusu perceptions on communal co-existence.

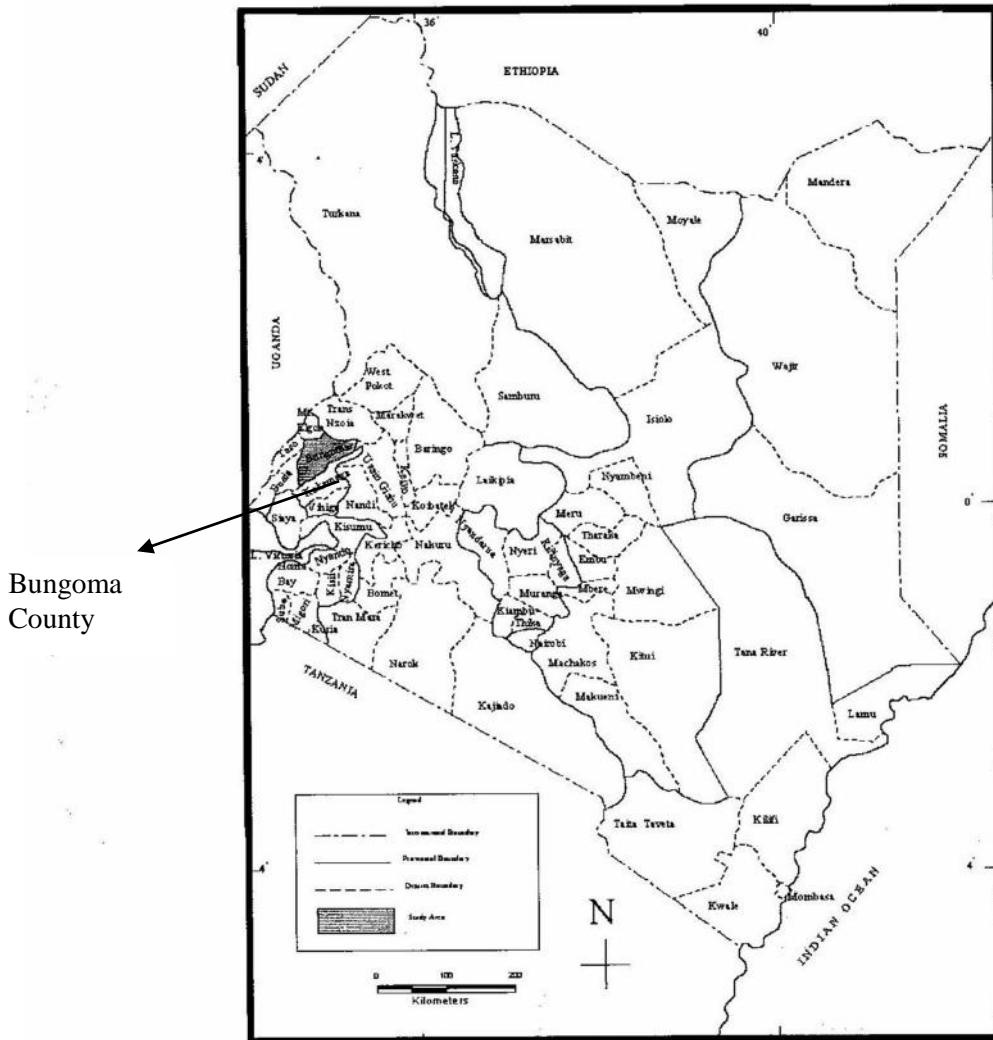
## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.0 Background to the Study**

The Bukusu are a sub-ethnic group of the larger Abaluhya community that live in western parts of Kenya. According to Gideon Were (1967), Fred Makila (1978) and Shadrack Bulimo (2013), the Bukusu are part of the Abaluhya community who belong to the Bantu group. Bulimo (2013:352), posits that “the Bukusu are the most populous of the Abauhya sub groups forming about 17-20 percent of the estimated six million Abaluhya. They are composed of more than two hundred clans.” The Bukusu live mainly in Bungoma but a large number spill into Kitale, Trans Nzoia County and Lugari in Kakamega County. Pockets of the Bukusu also live across the border in Uganda’s Mbale District specifically in Yembe and Cheptui divisions. Other Abaluhya communities are Tiriki, Maragoli, Banyore, Bakhayo, Bamarachi, Banyala, Basamia, Isukha, Idakho, Bakisa, Batsotso, Kabras, Tachoni, Bawanga, Bamarama and Batura. It is worthy noting that within the Abaluhya speaking community, there are obvious existing cultural distinctions. Nevertheless, there appears to be an established set of attitudes which allows members of the various sub groups to perceive themselves as belonging to a single cultural entity while at the same time acknowledging the existing internal distinctions.

This study focuses on the Bukusu who presently occupy Bungoma County that neighbours Kakamega to the south east, Busia to the south west, Trans Nzoia to the north and Uganda to the west, as shown in map 1.2.



This chapter only gives relevant information necessary to introduce the community whose oral narratives are at the centre of this study to the reader. It is worthy stating that the Bukusu live with people from different communities both in Bungoma County and in other places. For instance, some of the notable communities that either neighbour or coexist with the Bukusu include Sabot, Teso, Tachoni, Banyala, Bawanga, Batura among others. Overtime, the Bukusu have had to look at themselves as a complete entity

different from these other communities. The relationship that the Bukusu have with these people is evident in some of the oral narratives that are examined in this study.

Map 1.2 below shows Bungoma County and the neighbours.

**MAP NO. 1. 2**                      **BUNGOMA COUNTY MAP**



**Source: Kenyatta University Geography Laboratory (2013)**

Makila (1978) opines that the earliest known ancestor of the Bukusu called Mundu is believed to have lived at a place called Esibakala, a country which had very few rivers. The Bukusu are believed to have moved from Esibakala through the Sudan and Uganda

before settling in their present regions in most parts of western Kenya. Reference to Bukusu migrations is significant to this study in the sense that several oral narratives either directly or indirectly allude to the origin and migration of the Bukusu community.

According to Makila (1982:4), "...the Bukusu, in their migration to Kenya are believed to have first settled in the fertile highlands of Silikwa, named after one of their leaders." Silikwa is the forefather of the present day Basilikwa clan among the Bukusu. This place lies in the present day Uasin Gishu County. During their sojourn in Silikwa, the Bukusu intermarried with various tribes, especially the plain and highland Nilotes. This culminated in the formation of many clans. Population movement among the Bukusu can be attributed to search for fertile land, a factor that cuts across many other communities in Kenya. For example, according to Yieke Felicia (2010:11), "since the 1920s, political and economic factors have encouraged the movement of populations within Kenya's national borders, often to zones where they constitute ethnic minorities." Such movements have often resulted in ethnic tensions and even war. This perhaps explains why Bukusu migrants sojourned for some time at Matungu and Bunyala in Kakamega County and later occupied Bungoma and parts of Busia Counties. Later on, a number of them shifted to Trans Nzoia County in search of fertile farming land.

Historically, Were (1967:83) provides an account of the origin of the Bukusu when he posits that "like the majority of the sub tribes of the Abaluhya, the Bukusu regard Egypt as the original homeland of their ancestors." He argues that the Bukusu were forced to move from their ancestral land in search of pasture and fertile agricultural land. Later, they migrated from the dispersal area in western Uganda into their present abodes due to constant feuds with neighbouring communities, especially the Teso. Shadrack Bulimo

(2013:351) equally traces the origin of the Bukusu to Egypt. He posits that “oral stories about the origin of the Bukusu like other Abaluhya sub nations, point to *Misri* (Egypt) as the land of the primeval ancestry. From Egypt, they moved southward and did not become a distinct grouping until at the very earliest, the late eighteenth century.” Bulimo argues that the Bukusu later journeyed through Ethiopia and Sudan before settling in northern Uganda and Kenya around Lake Turkana. It is from Lake Turkana that they settled at Embayi, said to be somewhere in Karamoja before moving to Silikwa. Their stay at Silikwa was disturbed by constant attacks by Kalenjin and Maasai tribes leading to another wave of emigration. This reference to the encounter between the Bukusu and their Kalenjin neighbours has featured greatly in some of the oral narratives in this study.

From the above accounts on the history of the Bukusu, it emerges that Egypt is believed to be the cradle land of the Bukusu community. Egypt, and all it stands for, appears to belong to the realm of myth and the remote incomprehensible past. Nonetheless, it refers to a country or countries from which the ancestors of the Bukusu came. To the Bukusu, Egypt seems to represent the beginning of time. A look at some Bukusu oral narratives reveals that they are about the origin and history of the community.

According to one of our informants, who is also a narrator, John Wafula Natembeya, oral narrative performance in Bukusu traditional community was a daily preoccupation. As soon as darkness engulfed the villages, children would quickly retreat to their grandmothers’ or mothers’ huts in readiness for story telling sessions. In most cases, these stories were told by grandmothers and mothers to the children. Men, on the other hand would be meeting other men to talk about war escapades and other related stories as they slowly drank their local brews. Generally, a single individual was assigned the duty

of performing a story for the rest. To reveal the cumulative nature of the narratives, the narrator may probe the audience to suggest the kind of narrative they wanted performed. He/she could then go ahead to pick on one but promise to perform to the audience many more narratives. This is a clear revelation of the myriad oral narratives that characterise the Bukusu cultural setup. Through these oral narratives, many aspects of life touching on the Bukusu and the entire humanity are communicated.

To ensure that these oral narratives remained alive, they were retold again and again. During this process, the materials of the narratives naturally undergo several changes and adaptations. A similar story by the same narrator can be told differently on different occasions depending on the composition of the audience, the context of performance, the intention of the performance among others. This is the creative and dynamic aspect that characterises oral literary genres. In her comments on the flexibility of oral literature, Finnegan (1970:2) stresses the significance of the performer when she notes that the definition of oral literature indeed depends on the performer who formulates it in different words on specific occasions. This then calls for creativity on the part of the performer who has to cleverly tailor his performance to meet the dictates of each occasion. The present study agrees with Finnegan on the significance of the performer in that it sets out to examine how meaning is suggested in oral narrative performance.

The Bukusu practised (and still practise) male circumcision. It is believed that they adopted the practice from contact with the Kalenjin neighbours at Mount Elgon. In ceremonies that are spaced about two years apart, young boys of a particular age (usually about 14 years of age), on getting the go-ahead from their parents, invite relatives and friends to their homes. This provides an opportunity for the guests to witness the initiates

“face” the knife. The initiation is a public event and the initiates are expected to go through the operation without showing any sign of pain. This is thought to be an indicator of bravery for the initiate. Once circumcised, an initiate becomes a member of a particular age-group. Circumcision ceremonies are accompanied by various forms of oral literature among them songs, sayings and oral narratives all of which are aimed at educating the initiates on the values of the community. Through these forms of oral literature, the young initiates are socialised to understand different aspects of Bukusu perceptions.

Marriage is yet another cultural practice that is at the centre of Bukusu community. Among the Bukusu, marriage gives a man prestige and influence. Not only does a married man enjoy a wider circle of relationships but it also gives him room to exert his presence in society more forcibly if he is blessed with many children. Sons, in traditional community, were given preference over daughters because they were believed to be sources of security in the community surrounded by many enemies. To date, some families still hold on this believe so dearly that failure to bring forth male children may bring unnecessary tension in the family. These and many other factors are likely to affect the nature of the narrative subgenre in the sense that some narratives generally allude to some communal practices like circumcision, marriage, family size, religion among others.

Indeed, Bukusu oral narratives are at the core of the communal way of life. In her introductory remarks on Bukusu oral narratives, Florence Namulunda (2005:15) argues that the Bukusu narrative genre forms “...the heart of the Bukusu way of life.” She likens it to the very soul of their culture. Many issues and the concerns of the community are



revealed in the oral narrative genre. It can be concluded that oral narratives form a crucial avenue of communication among the Bukusu, through which the community communicates its virtues and vices, likes and dislikes as well as its strengths and weaknesses. The way of life of the Bukusu and the way they relate to other people are clearly captured in the oral narratives. It is through these narratives that the Bukusu community is able to construct its perception on communal coexistence. It is, therefore, prudent to examine Bukusu oral narrative performances in order to unravel the role they play in constructing Bukusu perceptions on communal coexistence.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Bukusu oral narratives have attracted a lot of attention from different researchers and scholars. Most of these pioneer works focused on collecting and examining the aesthetic elements of Bukusu oral narratives. However, this was done without much engagement with the process of performing those narratives; yet any attempt to derive meaning from oral narratives without focusing on the performance of those oral narratives being analysed can only result in superficial interpretations. There is, therefore, need to carry out an analysis of not only the oral narratives but also the performance of oral narratives in its entirety: the narrator, who is the performer, the audience and the context in which the performance is taking place. This constitutes a gap that needs to be filled as any study of oral narratives that excludes an examination of the language of narration, the context and paralinguistic dynamics of performance in suggesting meaning in the narratives cannot be fully described as adequate.

The need to accurately interpret and understand the meanings represented in oral narratives is critical given their popularity in society. Among the Bukusu, oral narrative

performance is a systemic engagement through which and from which the people's perceptions of different aspects of life become evident. In our pursuit of meanings in Bukusu oral narratives, specific attention is paid to the way language is used to refer to both Bukusus and non Bukusus who live and interact with the Bukusu community. This study is cognizant of the fact that the Bukusu, as a community, has on several occasions had conflicts with their neighbours, thereby posing a threat to communal coexistence. It is the view of this study that the relations leading to such conflicts are detectable in both the people's ordinary conversation and in their literary performances, oral narratives in this case. Therefore, a study of the community's oral narrative performance enables the researcher to decipher the meanings in oral narratives as a way of determining whether these narratives could serve to fuel or diffuse the tensions occasioned by the kind of conflicts aforementioned. Such a study has not been conducted at this level.

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

The study sets out to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To discuss the context and meaning of Bukusu oral narratives.
- ii. To examine performance and meaning of Bukusu oral narratives.
- iii. To analyse the special language of narration and how it suggests meaning in Bukusu oral narrative performance.
- iv. To assess how meaning in oral narrative performance contributes to the Bukusu perceptions of other people.

## **1.3 Research Assumptions**

The study is guided by the following assumptions:

- i. The meanings deciphered from the Bukusu oral narratives are subtly suggested in the context of performance of these oral narratives.
- ii. Performance of Bukusu oral narratives is significant in suggesting meaning.
- iii. Bukusu oral narrative performance employs specialised use of language that suggests meaning
- iv. Meaning in Bukusu oral narratives is significant in capturing Bukusu perceptions of other people.

#### **1.4 Justification of the Study**

The study focused on Bukusu oral narrative because this is one of literary genres that carries the norms and values of the community. The study is predicated on the premise that Bukusu oral narratives provide a sieve for understanding of issues pertinent to the understanding of Bukusu perceptions on communal coexistence. The overall purpose of this study is to contribute towards the understanding of how the Bukusu construct their perceptions through oral narrative performance.

The present study also adds to the criticism of the oral narrative as a genre of oral literature in addition to filling the gaps left by other researchers and scholars like Makila (1986), Namulunda (2005) and Bulimo (2013). These earlier scholars focused on the aesthetic values and form of Bukusu oral narratives. The present study is different in the sense that it focuses on how Bukusu oral narratives can be used to understand Bukusu perceptions of other people. The choice of the Bukusu community is justified on the grounds that the researcher is able to speak the native language of the research community, *Lubukusu*. As an insider, the researcher was able to access the information easily because he could comfortably interact with the oral artists without any form of

suspicion. The researcher was able to overcome the pitfalls of insiderism by adopting an objective perception of the narratives collected during fieldwork. The researcher had to compare the views of different narrators on Bukusu oral narratives so as to come up with an objective assessment. In addition, the researcher had to compare the messages in Bukusu oral narratives with existing secondary sources which were readily available in libraries and even archives.

### **1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

The Bukusu community is replete with oral narratives ranging from myths, legends; human tales among others. The present study focuses on twenty oral narratives performed by members of the community living in Bungoma County. The selected twenty oral narratives were done with special attention on the strength of each oral narrative to communicate information on Bukusu perceptions of other people. The oral narratives were analysed for the purpose of understanding the construction of Bukusu perceptions on communal coexistence. Interviews were also conducted and their results have been incorporated in the analysis of the collected oral narratives. The final products of the oral narratives are attached to the thesis as appendices.

### **1.6 Literature Review**

This section offers a review of literature related to the research area. It has been organised along important components beginning with studies on African oral narratives. The section also focuses on studies conducted on Abaluhya oral narratives as well as Bukusu oral narratives. It also reviews literature on interpersonal relationships and finally offers a conclusion on the major works reviewed.

### **1.6.1 Studies on African Oral Narratives**

A number of oral literature studies from different literary scholars have been conducted in Africa and Kenya. Ruth Finnegan (1970:335) observes that some of the original works on African oral literature have come from Africans. These writers, she argues, "...have drawn attention to many aspects which the earlier scholars, particularly anthropologists and functionalists tended to ignore." In reference to the oral narrative tradition of some West African communities, Finnegan emphasises that the phenomenon of audience behaviour such as "spontaneous exclamation, actual question and emotional reaction to the development of yet another parallel and repetitious episode are sources of beauty in oral literature" (p.335). Finnegan rightly underscores the significant role played by the audience in oral narrative performances. The stress on the significance of the audience in oral performances reveals Finnegan's preoccupation with the question of dynamism in oral literary genres. The significance of the audience is relevant to the present study given that this audience is at the centre of performance. The audience in Bukusu oral narratives plays a significant role in performance by either joining the narrator in the narration as the situation dictates or even asking some pertinent questions related to the oral narrative in question.

In her later works, Finnegan still captures the dynamism that is associated with oral literary performance. For example, in her study of Limba oral art, Finnegan (1992:27) argues that, "one of the striking elements of much Limba oral art was in fact the scope for verbal variation on different occasions and among different exponents and the creative qualities brought to it by the immediacy of situation based performance." She argues that among the Limba, there is evidence that neither literacy, nor an acquaintance with written

literature necessarily interfere with oral composition and performance. This is virtually true of many oral genres. Nonetheless, it is significant to note that in a number of oral literary performances, the context of performance has virtually changed with the changing times. Among the Bukusu, the original context of oral narrative performance which used to take place at the fireplace is no longer viable. The present study is therefore cognizant of such factors and the role they play in meaning making.

Okpewho (1990) is yet another scholar who studies African oral narratives. He underscores the significant role of the narrator when he observes that the narrator's ability to use his voice and body to convey the emotions of characters and comment on specific actions of such characters is basic for achievement of initial aesthetic harmony with the audience. This view places the narrator at the centre of oral narrative performances. Okpewho appears to suggest that without the narrator, the narrative performance would be an exercise in futility. This position should not be misconstrued to imply that the narrator is the most significant component in oral narrative performances. There is need for this narrator to work in harmony with the other components of narration, among them the audience. In the present study, the researcher focuses on the role of the narrator and other components of oral narrative performance in determining meaning. This is because the narrator in Bukusu oral narratives is faced with an active audience that is likely to influence his or her performance.

Okpewho further captures the centrality of songs in oral narratives when he posits that "music plays an inestimable role in the oral narrative performance; and some bards sometimes have a tendency to indulge the musical feeling which the song interludes within the tale tend to enhance" (p.120). In this case, Okpewho clearly articulates the role

of songs in oral narratives. These songs are mainly employed to enhance the narration exercise. In examining performance of Bukusu oral narratives, this study also focuses on the manner in which these narratives are delivered. Songs form part and parcel of Bukusu oral narrative performance.

From the foregoing, it is evident that oral narratives have attracted a lot of attention in Africa. It is also worthy stating that Kenya is one of the African countries that have witnessed a lot of research work in oral narratives. Most of the research and studies on this genre have been conducted among different ethnic communities. This is revealed in a review of research conducted among the Abaluhya community that gives rise to the Bukusu community.

### **1.6.2 Studies on Oral Narratives among the Abaluhya of Kenya**

There are notable studies which have been conducted on the oral narrative among the Abaluhya of Kenya. To start with, Jane Nandwa (1976) studies the oral narratives of the Abaluhya. She discusses how, when and where the stories are told and examines the tales according to institutions such as political, economic, religious and military. Nandwa's study is vital in providing knowledge to the general reader as well as researchers who wish to conduct more specific studies based on different communities. Nandwa's study is generally broad in the sense that it deals with the Abaluhya community in general yet this is a community that boasts of distinct sub-ethnic groups with obvious cultural and social differences. Again, although Nandwa takes a linguistic approach in her study of Abaluhya oral narratives, this is a community that does not exist as a homogenous group in western parts of Kenya. This region has other resident communities in addition to the native communities. As a result, this is likely to influence the kind of literature as

different communities mingle freely within the same region. The present study focuses on oral narratives from a specific cultural and linguistic background. This way, some generalisations about the oral narrative genre are minimised in the sense that different communities have distinct forms of oral literary materials that should be analysed from their original background. The idea of communal differences in terms of oral literariness is significant to the present study in the sense that the researcher finds an avenue to establish the role of such differences in suggesting the perceptions of the Bukusu.

Anderson Pike (1981:47), in his study of stories and storytelling among the Kabras who neighbour the Bukusu, argues that “storytelling is not about recalling a story but the spontaneous creation of an idea.” His stress on creativity is laudable in explaining the transformation characteristic in oral narratives. It suffices that Pike argues that oral narratives among the Kabras basically involve high levels of creativity. It is worthy stating that though made in a different social background, Pike’s argument finds validation in Bukusu oral narratives which have undergone transformation over the years. This change has been occasioned by creative narrators who twist the stories to achieve relevance over time. The creative narrators have a critical role to play in the final appraisal of the oral narratives. The present study focuses on the elements of creativity in Bukusu oral narrative performance.

The present study also reviews Egara Kabaji (2006) who sets out to identify the gender related themes in Maragoli oral narratives to determine how gender is constructed in the Maragoli community. He examines dominant themes, characterisation, images and formulaic patterns and formalities of composition in the Maragoli narratives at the time of performance. He underscores the role of the audience and context in constituting



meaning in these narratives. The present study pays special attention to context in suggesting meaning hence Kabaji's view is vital. In the present study, the researcher also focuses specifically on the concept of Bukusu perceptions as revealed in oral narratives. Such specificity gives the researcher a chance to delve into the specific details of a work of art. This is a sure way of understanding and appreciating the finer details of a given work.

It is evident from the above discussion that a number of studies have been conducted on oral narratives among the Abaluhya of Kenya. It is also evident that these studies have either focused on several Abaluhya communities or one given community. However, the present study specifically focuses on Bukusu oral narratives and narrows down to examine the role of these narratives in constructing the Bukusu perceptions on communal coexistence. The next section examines studies and researches conducted on Bukusu oral narratives.

### **1.6.3 Studies on Bukusu Oral Narratives**

Among the Bukusu, a number of studies have been conducted on the oral narrative subgenre. Fred Makila (1986) collects and records popular oral narratives from Bukusu community. In his introductory remarks, Makila (1986:1) poses that basically, folktales reflected the panorama of the habitat from which the storyteller drew his raw stuff. He argues that animal characters represented in the tales were mainly those that were observed and studied very closely within a particular environment. From Makila's argument, it suffices that the oral narrative genre is deeply rooted in the cultural background of the community that gives rise to it. Inasmuch as Makila's argument is true, the present study seeks to establish the extent to which Bukusu oral narratives can be

instrumental in the interpretation and understanding of the existing personal and communal relations.

The oral narratives collected by Makila can be broadly divided into four categories. There are those narratives about animal characters like Hare and Elephant and those about fantastic creatures like ogres. Ogres, it should be noted, are imaginary creatures which are neither human nor animal but are able to exhibit either characteristic at different times. There are also narratives about the interaction between humans and animals. For example, hyena and the woman who protects her from hunters; and those in which the protagonists are exclusively humans like the step mother who attempts to kill her step son. A close scrutiny of these narratives reveals an embodiment of a wide range of values. Through these narratives, the Bukusu extol virtues like bravery, generosity and hard work while ridiculing vices like cowardice, selfishness and laziness. Some of the values and vices alluded to in Makila's study have also been discussed in our later chapters of this study. However, the present study differs from Makila's in the sense that it examines the role of performance in suggesting meaning in these oral narratives. This is something that Makila does not do.

Namulunda (2005) argues that apart from commenting on the day to day relationships in the society, most Bukusu oral narratives depict the triumph of the weak such as orphans and neglected wives over those who abuse power or good fortune. Namulunda's views castigate greed for power and misuse of good fortune. Her views on the less fortunate members of the community find semblance in Helen Mwanzi's works (2005:31), which refer to the less endowed characters in narratives as the "lowly". Mwanzi argues that their portrayal in oral narratives is symbolic of our lives where we choose to treat the lowly

with awe because we do not understand what led to their plight. The views of both Mwanzi and Namulunda with regard to the weak are unconvincing especially in the contemporary society where the mighty, more often than not, have their way regardless of what happens to the less privileged. Nonetheless, the position adopted by the two is exhibited in many Bukusu oral narratives which juxtapose the less privileged members of the community with the highly endowed group where the former always emerge victorious. It is worthy observing that this is many a time possible in the world of storytelling. However, the fact that the less privileged individuals are seen to overcome all odds to eventually emerge as heroes and heroines in these oral narratives could possibly be a pointer to the human desire to overcome personal limitations that are likely to curtail our success in society. All these studies have, without stating so, adopted a discussion on personal and communal relationships. The present study focuses on how Bukusu perceptions affect such relationships.

#### **1.6.4 Oral Narratives and Interpersonal Relationships**

The present study is based on the assumption that Bukusu oral narratives play a significant role in the understanding of Bukusu perceptions. Through these narratives, members of the community are able to appreciate the existing cultural similarities or differences among the Bukusu and neighbouring communities. On the significance of interpersonal relationships, Anthony Appiah (2007:1), in a different context, notes that: “even in our unquestionably variegated world of clashing ideas and norms, there is a great verisimilitude that transcends imaginary or real boundaries that we seem more inclined to prefer and promote.” In essence what Appiah implies in this assertion is that the differences in societies, notwithstanding, there are more binding similarities in a

united world than differences. Appiah stresses that people in far flung places are the same in that: “they have gods, food, language, dance music, carvings, medicines, family lives, rituals, jokes and children’s tales...” (p.13). According to Appiah, what we take to be right or wrong is simply a matter of customs. He envisions a society where people from different backgrounds are able to live and relate amicably. It is worthy noting that Bukusu oral narratives are vital in the construction of Bukusu perceptions on personal and communal relationships.

The artfulness of oral narratives is not entirely found in folklore text as conventionally conceived but in life performances. In his comments on performance in Africa, Okpewho (1990:7) argues, thus: “when a literary scholar investigates an oral narrative event, he should of course explore the social circumstances as an aid to contextual insight, but he is really more interested in probing the aesthetic basis for the effectiveness of the devices used in performance.” In exploring social circumstances in performance, a literary scholar is concerned with aspects of context like time and place of performance as well as audience composition. The present study focuses partly on the overall effect of contextual aspects in suggesting Bukusu perceptions. This is predicated on the premise that aspects like place and time of performance, the narrator as well as audience composition are all vital in the final interpretation and understanding of meaning in Bukusu oral narratives.

From the foregoing, it has been established that oral narratives in general and Bukusu oral narratives in particular have attracted a lot of attention from different researchers and scholars. Some of these studies have been quite general while others more specific to particular communities and genres. In Bukusu oral narratives, it emerges that these narratives are vital in the construction of Bukusu perceptions on communal coexistence.

## **1.7 Theoretical Framework**

To understand the dimensions of Bukusu oral narratives, the study utilised an eclectic approach in which a number of theoretical tools are employed. The major ones include hermeneutics theory, performance and ethnopoetics. In its most general sense, hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation. Its main goal is to discover the meaning of the text. It is instructive to observe that although hermeneutics theory owes its origin to religion, the present study found it valid and instrumental in the interpretation of oral texts given that this study was focusing interpretation of meaning. Morris Patton (1990:84) defines hermeneutics as "...a theoretical and philosophical perspective aimed at the study of interpretive understanding of meaning with special attention to the context and original purpose." He posits that to meaningfully understand and interpret a text and any other work of art demands for an understanding of the author's intentions, intended meanings and to place documents in their historical and cultural context (p.85). This then calls for an earnest and concerted search for possible meanings of the text or the work under investigation. In the current study, an examination of Bukusu perceptions essentially entails an understanding of meaning of the oral narratives in their context. In this study, there is need to understand the oral narratives and the way they suggest Bukusu perceptions. This can be realised by attending to the narratives performed in their original context.

Patton's view on the significance of context is worthy considering with regard to the interpretation of Bukusu oral narratives. In most cases the context sets the stage for a particular mood and determines the performance in general. This explains why similar oral narratives performed under different contexts may be interpreted differently.

According to Patton (1990: 15), “Friedrich Schleiermacher was the first scholar to seek a universal theory of interpretation applicable to other texts, not only the religious ones as was the case with ancient hermeneutics.” He argues that Schleiermacher’s psychological interpretation of acts of speech or writing may occur by means of either a divinatory or comparative method. The divinatory method is a means of understanding spoken or written language by trying to understand the motives of the speaker or writer. The comparative method is a means of understanding spoken or written language by trying to compare the statements of the speaker or writer with statements which might be regarded as universal. Borrowing from these views, it can be argued that an interpretation of Bukusu oral narratives entails an understanding of the intentions of the narrators in the performance as well as comparing their performances to what transpires in the narrative genre in general.

Essentially, hermeneutics seeks to construct reality by examining a wide range of evidence and situations that can lead to a better understanding of what was to be communicated. As Patton (1990:85) writes “hermeneutics argues that one can only interpret the meaning of something from some perspective, a certain stand point, a praxis or situational context whether reporting on one’s own findings or the perspectives of the people being studied.” Patton, thus, underscores the significance of context in interpreting a work of art. Although Patton’s views do not specifically target the Bukusu, it is worthy noting that the interpretation of Bukusu oral narratives is not a preserve of the performer. To effectively interpret these oral narratives, other factors like the audience and context have to be considered. For instance, during the performance of narrative one or N1, *Simbi and Nakitumba* as will be referred to in this study, the significance of context is brought to

the fore. In the course of narration, the performer posed to demonstrate the way the ogres struggled to fetch water in a wicker basket as demanded by Nakitumba. The folly of these ogres was clearly revealed when they persistently tried to fetch water without realising that indeed what they had set out to do was unachievable. In this narrative, the audience joined the narrator in laughing at the ogres for displaying open gullibility. To this end, the role of context in suggesting the meaning of oral narratives is revealed.

Bukusu oral narrative performances can be likened to stage productions characterised by an immediate interaction of the narrator and audience. The two components play complementary and supplementary roles in the final appraisal of meaning in the narratives. Just like in stage productions which rely on the performers and audience, it would be difficult to arrive at an exhaustive interpretation of the narratives without engaging the critical role played by these two components.

Culler (2002:14) advances two accounts of hermeneutics thus: a hermeneutics of recovery and a hermeneutics of suspicion. Hermeneutics of recovery seeks to reconstruct the original context of production (the circumstances and intention of the author and the meaning a text might have had for its original readers). Hermeneutics of suspicion, on the other hand, seeks to expose the unexamined assumption on which a text may rely (political, sexual, philosophical, and linguistic). Whereas hermeneutics of recovery celebrates the text and its author as it seeks to make an original message accessible to readers today, hermeneutics of suspicion deemphasises the authority of the text. Culler, however, notes that these associations are not fixed and can well be reversed. Hermeneutics of recovery in restricting the text to some supposedly original meaning remote from our concerns may reduce its power, while hermeneutics of suspicion may

value the text for the way in which it engages and helps us re-think issues of the moment. In doing so, it may sometimes subvert the assumptions of the performer.

The weaknesses of hermeneutics of suspicion lie in its stress on the deeper meaning. It neglects the specificity of the object and looks at it as a sign of something else. Whereas the symbolic meaning is crucial in literary works, it should not be overemphasised at the expense of the literal meaning. This way, its reliability in interpreting oral narratives is watered down. The present study circumvents this weakness by examining both the literal and literary meaning of the oral narratives under study.

Nonetheless, the two accounts of hermeneutics of recovery and suspicion have been useful in this study. The two complement and supplement each other in appraising the construction of Bukusu perception on communal coexistence. Whereas hermeneutics of recovery has been used to situate the Bukusu oral narratives in their original context of performance, hermeneutics of suspicion was vital in interpreting the perceptions of the Bukusu through a deeper analysis of these oral narratives. This is pegged on the fact that many Bukusu oral narratives indeed have deeper meanings apart from their normal surface meaning. Hermeneutics of recovery was particularly useful in cases where the researcher had to attend the original contexts of oral narrative performance through fieldwork. This way, the researcher came face to face with oral narrative performance in their original state.

Hermeneutics theory has therefore been used in this study to address matters of content. In examining content, the researcher focused on components like time and place of narration, intention of the narration and the audience composition. The theory has been



applied in the present study to locate Bukusu perception on personal and communal relationships. It has also been used to probe the community's understanding and interpretation of Bukusu perceptions through oral narratives. This theory is, however, not exhaustive in capturing meaning in Bukusu oral narratives. The fact that these oral narratives are performed in certain contexts calls for a theory that caters for aspects of context in the analysis of meaning. This then necessitates the adoption of performance theory.

Performance theory in its most general sense is concerned with interpretation of texts based on the context within which they are delivered. This implies that meaningful interpretation of oral texts can only be arrived at after attending the context within which they are performed. In examining context, the main focus is on aspects like time and place of performance, audience involvement as well as the intention of oral literature texts. This theory, therefore, draws heavily from the actual performance of oral literature texts. In his comments on performance, Schechner (2002: 11) states that: "the moment the individual 'performance' begins, this area becomes marked off in some way: there is suddenly a new 'inside' and an 'outside'. 'Outsiders' observing this are aware that the 'insiders' are involved in a separate delineated activity." In essence, Schechner lifts the role of the performer above board in oral performances. The present study, though different from Schechner, captures the significance of performance in suggesting meaning in Bukusu oral narratives.

In the present study, performance has been viewed in terms of the relationship between the performer and the audience where the former has the responsibility of displaying communicative skills to the audience. The assumption in this case is the existence of a

given context where performance takes place. In a different context, the significance of the narrator and audience in oral performances is clearly captured in Okpewho (1990:141) when he posits that “after the narrator’s beautiful voice, skilful use of language and effective manipulation of his body have attracted the attention of the audience to the narrative experience, the narrator still needs to retain or hold this attention till the end of the story.” What emerges here is the fact that both the narrator and the audience play significant roles in the final interpretation of meaning in oral performances. On a similar note, Richard Bauman (1992:35) argues that “...performance makes one communicatively accountable in the sense that it assigns the audience the responsibility of evaluating the performer’s accomplishment.” This implies that oral literature performances are not the preserve of an individual. To understand the meaning in these performances calls for an understanding of the different components that they emanate from. From Bauman’s argument, it can be deduced that the narrator and the audience both play significant roles in oral performances. This position was witnessed in a number of oral narratives in the present study. In N2, *Nasio and her brother*, for example, both the narrator and audience had to join hands in the song that Nasio’s brother used to sing whenever he returned from herding cattle. This singing proved vital in bonding the narrator and audience thus facilitating meaningful interpretation of the oral narrative.

Performance theory is vital with regard to interpreting Bukusu oral narratives for meaning. Essentially the artfulness of Bukusu oral narratives is not entirely found in folklore text as conventionally conceived, but in live performances. Performance theory has been used in this study to exemplify aspects of form in oral narratives. Form can only be realised through attending the actual context where the oral narratives are performed.

This then provides an opportunity for us to interact with the Bukusu oral narratives through fieldwork. Through this interaction, the researcher was able to penetrate, understand and analyse the meaning of Bukusu oral narratives. The two theoretical tools of hermeneutics and performance are vital to the present study in the sense that they complement and supplement each other in the final interpretation of meaning.

The study also employs ethnopoetics which focuses on the aesthetic and poetic structuring of oral art. According to Anttonen (1994:113), “its methodology and theoretical foundations lie in pragmatics, phenomenology, sociolinguistics, ethno methodological conversation analysis, the ethnography of speaking and the performance approach in American folklore studies.” One branch of this approach is developed by Dell Hymes (1982) who argues that works of verbal art are subtle organisations of lines and verses. According to Hymes, the lines and verses are organised in ways that are not only poetic, but also a kind of rhetoric of action in that they embody an implicit cultural schema for the organisation of experience. In the United States where it originated, this approach emphasises the oral nature of texts and the dependence of the organisation of the texts upon lines. This approach equally advocates for fieldwork where it is argued that all the material studied must have been collected and transcribed by the researcher studying it. The stress on fieldwork finds relevance to the present study where the researcher had to collect oral narratives from the field and conduct interviews with narrators and other informants.

In Dennis Tedlock’s ethnopoetic approach, emphasis is placed on the patterning of the texture, which must also be shown in the transcription. Anttonen (1994:113) posits that in the presentation, “each line is put forth in such a way as to render its fullest available

charge of texture: rhythm, nuance, phrasing and metaphors-factors which may depend on relation to other lines by parallelism, redundancy, and grouping.” According to Anttonen, “the text is arranged into lines according to the pauses in the oral performance. Each new pause indicates the end of one line and the beginning of another...the transcription shows the variation in pitch, volume, vowel length and presents the text as it was heard in performance.” Ethnopoetics approach stresses that aural qualities in performance are central to the organisation of speech and, in the words of Mills (1991:25) “...they convey to the listener a sense of the relative importance of propositions and their connections with each other, which are essential aspects of meaning.”

Hymes and Tedlock provide a convergence-divergence interface to interrogate the message embodied in oral narratives, which in the case of the present study is oral narrative performance and the construction of Bukusu perception on communal coexistence. In other words, the strength in these two scholars is that they emphasise interrelated dimensions of ethnopoetics, which cumulatively provide a richer analytical framework. While Hymes emphasises on written text, Tedlock concentrates on the oral performed text. He stresses the need for fieldwork to provide a basis for rich interaction (between the researcher and study community) and interpretation of the oral texts. But the two lines of thought on ethnopoetics find convergence in looking for meaning, whether the texts are written or performed.

The present study employs ethnopoetics to appreciate the significance of aural and visual features like mimicry, gestures, and facial expressions in suggesting Bukusu perceptions as envisioned in oral narratives. The researcher had to examine the way the narrator artistically employs such features and the overall effect this kind of performance brought

out. This approach has equally been vital in the transcription of Bukusu oral narratives from *Lubukusu*, the language spoken by the Bukusu to English language. In N2, *Nasio and her brother*, for example, the narrator, would vividly capture the difference between ogres and Nasio's brother through mimicry. Through use of song, the narrator was able to depict ogres as possessing rough and scaring voices as compared to Nasio's brother whose voice was brought out as soft and appealing to the ear. This apparent difference made it easier for Nasio to escape being eaten by the ogre at the onset when the latter came conflated as Nasio's brother.

This study has benefited greatly from an eclectic model in the sense that an examination of oral literature texts aims at revealing both covert and overt meanings embedded within the language of the texts while at the same time paying close attention to the construction of Bukusu perception on communal coexistence. Aspects of several theoretical perspectives have been drawn upon to come up with the culturally acceptable meaning of Bukusu oral narratives. It is this meaning that the study builds on to derive the construction of Bukusu perceptions through oral narrative performance.

### **1.8 Research Methodology**

This section explains the methodology that was employed in the field. Field research is a vital tool in filling up gaps in knowledge and verifying existing oral texts. John Hocking (2003:5) poses: "...field research entails asking appropriate questions based on theoretical understanding of communication then collecting and analysing data in such a way as to advance our knowledge of how humans communicate." From this definition, it can be inferred that research involves an attempt at authenticating existing realities in the society. This view is captured by Jan Jonker and Bartjan Pennick (2010:11) when they

posit that “research entails the deliberate and methodical search for (new) knowledge and insights into questions that have been formulated in advance.” Pennick stresses the need for formulating questions beforehand for the success of field research. According to Clough and Nutbrown (1981), methodology refers to the process of arriving at decisions and justifying them. (p.17). This suggests that all aspects of research fall under methodology. In this study, methodology has been taken to mean all the decisions made concerning the study thus: the methods and techniques employed to perform the specific tasks, the layout of the research process and the entire research experience.

This section explains how data was collected and analysed and the relevant information to address the research theme. The nature of the research problem and theoretical orientation led the researcher to select relevant research design, sampling frame, research instruments, methods of data collection as well as methods of analysis and interpretation of the oral narratives collected. The section equally looked at scope and limitations and the research area of the study. The study involved both primary and secondary data. Secondary data was obtained from the review of documents both published and unpublished. These documents included monographs, dissertations, manuscripts, books, articles in journals as well as a review of commentaries and anthologies of oral narratives. It also included repeated visits to libraries and other institutions like Kenya National Archives among others. For primary data, the researcher went to the field. This stemmed from the understanding that oral narratives are live engagements realised through performance and that the full impact of these narratives can best be captured through live experiences. The study, thus, adopted a methodology that would facilitate an intra-community interaction and dialogue as the key to accessing oral narratives as well

as unraveling the meanings in these oral narratives. It was, therefore, not just enough that the researcher collects the oral narratives and analyses them. The research team had to take part in the live performances and also conduct in-depth interviews with informants.

### **1.8.1 Research Design**

In this section, we focus on the general organisation and execution of the entire research process. Keith Punch (2005:62) defines research design as: “all issues involved in planning and executing a research project from identifying the problem through to reporting and publishing the results.” The present study used both descriptive and analytical research designs. It involves a set of questions which each oral narrative addresses itself to. These questions help the researcher to get meaningful information on the construction of Bukusu perception on communal coexistence. The questions which were aimed at realising the objectives of the study have been labeled Interview Schedule and appear in (Appendix 2).

Using the questions in the Interview Schedule, the researcher conducted interviews with twenty respondents some of whom doubled up as narrators in order to gather information on the general background of the Bukusu community and oral narrative performance in particular. By listening to the oral narratives, participating in the oral narrative sessions and observing the performances, the researcher was able to collect oral narratives from individual respondents who were knowledgeable in the art of narration.

### **1.8.2 Sources of Data and Sampling Procedure**

During field research, we collected twenty oral narratives, which for the benefit of reference for the reader are presented in the appendices section together with their English translation. The researcher attended twenty performances of oral narratives from

across Bungoma County. These performances were mainly induced given the fact that the original performance of Bukusu oral narratives has greatly changed. These performances were particularly helpful given that on a number of occasions, the researcher had to request the narrators to repeat where he needed more clarification. In this study, the researcher set out to collect as many oral narratives as possible but in the process it was realised that most of the narrations were repetitive. This apparent repetition was suggestive of the scope of Bukusu oral narratives that are locally known. Having collected the oral narratives and corresponding information that would adequately facilitate this study, the researcher critically analysed the content, context and meaning of these oral narratives by collating the findings with the responses of interviewees. The researcher then interpreted the findings, made conclusions and predictions based on the findings and compiled reports.

In the sampling frame, the research took cognizance of the fact that not everyone can possibly be a narrator. The researcher, therefore, used a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Donald Kombo and Delno Tromp (2006:82), describe purposive sampling as involving a situation where "... the researcher purposely targets a group of people believed to be reliable for the study." In the present study, purposive sampling was employed by the researcher to identify respondents who could perform oral narratives. The views obtained from respondents were useful in validating the idea that Bukusu oral narratives form a basis upon which the community constructs its perceptions on communal coexistence.

When it was realised that some of the respondents were not in a position to answer all the questions, the researcher requested them to refer us to other respondents who could



possibly answer these questions. This way, we found ourselves in snowball sampling. Through this process, the sample grew to encompass people from different parts of Bungoma County. This kind of sampling was expected to guard against the dangers of subjectivity which may arise from purposive sampling. It was therefore vital in complementing information derived from purposive sampling.

### **1.8.3 Methods of Data Collection**

The approach used to collect Bukusu oral narratives and other relevant information consisted of participant observation, digital recording and oral interviews with narrators and other informants. The researcher also took notes during interviews. Since this study uses ethno poetics as one of its theoretical approaches, the researcher was required to engage in meaningful interaction and dialogue with the community under investigation. It called for the researcher's participation and direct observation of live performances. The researcher, therefore, attended twenty oral narrative performances where he recorded them by using digital videos, taking camera pictures and taking notes in the notebooks. During discussions and interviews with oral artists, the researcher used questions prepared in advance as his guide. When interviewing individual artists, the researcher preferred engaging them in informal conversations which helped establish and maintain rapport with the respondents. Whenever the researcher wanted to get a particular perception of the Bukusu in a given oral narrative, he would ask the respondents to explain to him.

### **1.8.4 Methods of Analysing Research Data**

When the oral narratives and other relevant information collected from interviews had been assembled, the researcher embarked on processing the data. The oral narratives

collected in *Lubukusu* were transcribed, and then translated into English by the researcher and his assistants, Susan Masika and Ronald Wangila. The researcher repeatedly and critically read the oral narratives in their original form and the English translation to identify the construction of the Bukusu perceptions on communal coexistence. The translated narratives were subjected to verification by requesting some of the informants who were proficient in both *Lubukusu* and English to confirm the accuracy of the translations. The researcher further double checked the proximate accuracy of the translated oral narratives with native speakers and with his supervisors. The researcher further examined the notes taken during field interviews to identify major issues like thematic concerns in Bukusu oral narrative performance.

In the analysis of individual narratives, the researcher was guided by an analytical framework comprising a set of pertinent questions. Some of the key concerns in these questions included the construction of the Bukusu perceptions through oral narrative performance as well as the major themes in these narratives. Besides, the questions focused on the place and role of both the narrator and audience in oral narratives. The researcher subjected each of the oral narratives for analysis to each of these sections in the analytical framework as is indicated in the appendices. This instrument helped establish the way every single oral narrative responds to the construction of the Bukusu perceptions on personal and communal relationships. This enhanced the validity and reliability of information determining the results presented in this study. What the oral narrative revealed was collated with the information from interviews, documents and observations during live performances in order to come up with an interpretation and draw conclusions with reference to and comparison with research hypotheses.

The analysis and interpretation of Bukusu oral narratives, therefore, involved personal interpretation of the narratives by the researcher as well as the evidence from the documentary sources available. This is informed by Keith Punch (2005:194) who argues that: “there is no single right way to do qualitative data analysis – no single methodological framework.” The researcher therefore used more than one criterion essentially to triangulate the information thereby corroborating the sources in an attempt to build an inter-subjective consensus concerning the construction of Bukusu perceptions through oral narrative performance. Triangulation is vital in ensuring reliability and validity of the study. After analysis, we then presented findings in form of statements, examples and illustrations as well as analysis.

### **1.9 Ethical Considerations**

This study involved getting a research permit from the relevant authorities. Given that the the research was largely based in Bungoma county, permission from local authorities had to be sought so as to authenticate the research. The researcher also validated the research by ensuring that the information gathered during various interviews as well as during live performances remained confidential with the sole purpose of enriching this study. Informants had to be assured of this confidentiality in order to remain objective during the interviews.

### **1.10 Conceptual Definition of Terms**

**Community:** In this study, the term community refers to a group of people identified with a particular region and sharing similar characteristics like a common ancestry and cultural background, who in this study are the Bukusu. These people also have shared

beliefs and customs like circumcision, marriage and funeral rites. Communities can be likened to building blocks that allow a given people to make sense of the world, in which they live, participate and share experiences.

The concept of community is shrouded in contentious definitions. Wendell Berry (1992:2) defines a community as “a physical place we share where people have values, beliefs, needs and interests that connect them.” He posits that the term community can also be used to describe a group of people with a common affiliation, not necessarily linked by geography. (p.3). According to him, a community identifies itself by an understood mutuality of interests. From Berry’s definition, it can be deduced that community is a distinct group that boasts of certain uniformities in the day to day activities.

Benedict Anderson (2008:15) defines a community as “a social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality and often has a common cultural and historical heritage.” What emerges from the above definition is that communities have common beliefs and are bound by the same geographical links. However, it is instructive to note that with the changes that have been occasioned by technological advancement, it is increasingly becoming untenable to confine a given group of people together and call them a community based on geographical connections. In the contemporary world, communities are as varied and individual as its members in the sense that people belong to two or more communities which range from family, education, business, work, religion to cultural.

Nonetheless, these communities provide a sense of identity and purpose, a sense of being a part of and belonging to the community. This is realised through championing common interests of the people belonging to a given community. It should be pointed out that community generally entails the interdependence of a particular group of people in the society. It is through this interdependence that different groups emerge in the society. The existence of different communities is vital to the present study in the sense that it provides a platform upon which the researcher can study the construction of the Bukusu perception on communal coexistence.

**Bukusu:** In this study, the term Bukusu refers to a sub tribe of the Abaluhya community that speaks *Lubukusu* dialect. They are mainly found in Bungoma County as well as parts of Trans Nzoia County and Lugari District in Kakamega County. Bukusu community is basically a conglomeration of about two hundred clans and each of these clans seems to claim a different ancestry. Evidence of these differences is revealed in some minor cultural differences especially during burial ceremonies. In most cases, the deceased is buried with the head facing the clan's presumed direction of origin. Other differences are along gender, age or class lines. This works against the perception of the Bukusu as an autonomous group with a unique way of life. Nonetheless, for the purposes of this study, the Bukusu are viewed as a homogeneous group with a lot of shared practices. This position borrows from Gayatri Spivak's (1990:15) concept of strategic essentialism where she argues that "...essentialism presupposes that a group or a category of objects/people share some defining features exclusive to the members of this particular group or category." Although Strategic Essentialism is often discussed together with the

questioning of categories like race and nation, in a more pragmatic level, it can be applied by groups and individuals to realise certain effects.

**Worldview:** This refers to the way people live, act, think, work and relate. In this study, worldview refers to the communal perception of reality. Generally, it maps out the community's cultural, religious, economic and political views and relationships. These relationships affect not only the Bukusu but also other neighbouring communities. Jan Vansina (1985:133), defines worldview as "...a representation of ultimate reality in all aspects visible and invisible." He rightly argues that worldview includes views about the creation of the world, about the kinds of beings that are in it and their taxonomies, on its layout and functioning. In this study, the main concern is on how the Bukusu construct their worldview through the oral narrative performance.

**Perceptions:** In this study, perceptions refer to the way people interpret a number of issues surrounding them in the society. Perceptions can be personal or communal and are bound to change over time. In the case of this study communal perceptions are evident where the Bukusu would want to distinguish themselves as different from other communities whereby these other groups are considered as strangers in the midst of the Bukusu. When perceptions are held over a long period of time, they constitute a people's worldview on a number of issues among them communal coexistence.

**Performance:** It refers to the use of aspects of communication style like language and manipulation of the body to realise certain effects. Richard Schechner (2002:4) defines performance as "a mode of behaviour, an approach to experience, it is play, sport, aesthetics, popular entertainment, experimental theatre and more." From Schechner's point of view, it emerges that performance is a multidimensional process with the

potential of eliciting different meanings at different times. This study looks at performance as a means of communication that is essential in the construction of meaning. In discussing performance, the study also takes into consideration the exact place where the events in the narrative take place.

**“Barendé”:** The definition of *barendé* in this study arises from cultural perspectives hence it is more of a concept than an actual reference to particular individuals. In Bukusu cultural setup, *barendé*, a term situated in oral histories which refers to immigrants who moved to live among the Bukusu can be equated to “the other” in English language. Commenting on oral histories, Vansina (1985:12) observes that: “the sources of oral historians are reminiscences, hearsay or eyewitness accounts about events and situations which are contemporary, that is, which occurred during the lifetime of the informants.” Borrowing from Vansina, it can be inferred that “the other” or *barendé* in this study are those people who have settled among the community but their histories can still be remembered. The length of stay among the Bukusu does not matter as long as we have oral histories of the origins of these *barendé*. Reference to *barendé* in this study, therefore, juxtaposes the Bukusu who consider themselves as autochthons or natives of Bungoma County with other groups of people who have moved to live among them. It is instructive to note that there are bound to be differences between such groups. However, the concept of *barendé* is not just limited to non-Bukus. All those people or groups of people, both within and outside the Bukusu community, who do not subscribe to the Bukusu way of life fall in the category of “the other” or *barendé*.

## **1.11 Conclusion**

This chapter has been an expository one, presenting an exposition of the material to be used in the subsequent chapters. The chapter has presented the background to the study by elucidating the study objectives, research questions and the study area. It has also provided the justification of the study, literature review, theoretical framework, research methodology and limitations of the study. The chapter has also given the conceptual definition of terms commonly used in this study. In the next chapter, the study will focus on performance and the role it plays in suggesting meaning.



## CHAPTER TWO

### Performance and Meaning in Bukusu Oral Narratives

#### 2.0 Introduction

The previous chapter has been largely an expository one providing an introduction to the study. The focus in the present chapter is on performance of Bukusu oral narratives indicating how elements of performance are vital in suggesting meaning. This chapter is informed by the fact that the artfulness of Bukusu oral narratives is not entirely found in oral texts as conventionally conceived but in live performances. Aspects of performance such as form can only be realised through attending the actual occasion in which they are performed. This provides an opportunity for the researcher to interact with the research community. It is through such interaction that the researcher was able to penetrate, understand and analyse the meaning of Bukusu oral narratives. The question answered in this chapter is how performance contributes to the interpretation of oral narratives especially with regard to the construction of the Bukusu perception on communal coexistence. The discussion is based on information derived from syntheses of literature, interviews and observations during fieldwork.

Some of the oral narratives examined in this chapter include: N1, *Simbi and Nakitumba*, N2, *Nasio and Her Brother*, N4, *Lemata and Katamba*, N6, *Apelu*, N8, *The Old Woman and her Deformed Son*, N10, *Hyena Ate His Protector*, N11, *Ngoli and His Daughter*, N13, *The Teso Who Ate A dog*, N15, *Bukusu Circumcision*, N16, *Wanakhatandi*, N17, *Mwambu and Sela* as well as N18, *Nabwile*. In these oral narratives, the researcher has examined the role and place of performance in assigning meaning with special regard to the construction of Bukusu perceptions. In examining these oral narratives, the researcher

has paid close attention to aspects of performance like audience involvement, place of performance, verbal and nonverbal features among others.

The chapter is cognizant of the fact that performance takes place within a given context hence it captures the close relationship between context and performance. It is vital to understand the context within which Bukusu oral narratives are performed in order to have an informed appreciation of how Bukusu perceptions and general worldview are constructed in these oral narratives. This chapter is of great significance to the thesis in the sense that it attempts to demonstrate how Bukusu oral narratives can provide an especially rich focus for the investigation of the relationship between oral literature and social life. This is because part of the special nature of oral narratives is anchored in human events which unfold in a given context of performance. This view is exemplified by Bauman (1986:2) when he posits that: “oral narratives provide an especially rich focus for the investigation of the relationship between oral literature and social life because part of the special nature of narratives is doubly anchored in human events.” From Bauman’s standpoint, oral literature genres are set in given social backgrounds and they reflect the livelihood of the communities that give rise to them. There is, therefore, need to understand the performance aspects of these subgenres as a vehicle to appreciating their meaning in totality.

The centrality of performance is further exemplified by Na’aalah (1997:45) when he takes a more assertive position on oral literature performances by arguing that African oral forms cannot be adequately interpreted from; “... the swinging chairs in academic offices or chalkboards in university classrooms.” Rather interpretation and understanding can occur only through direct participation in the oral performance. Na’aalah poses that

understanding of oral works depends upon an appreciation of the totality of their historical essence. To him, transcripts of oral texts are no adequate substitutes for the complex narrative in a live multidimensional performance. In reference to historical essence Na'aalah seems to focus on particular details, such as spontaneous composition and performance. He also looks at the textual content rendered in vocal utterances, communal participation, for example narrator and audience in narrative session as well as the place and time of performance. All these must be taken into consideration in oral literature performances. The chapter is organised into six subsections with each subsection geared towards a clear understanding of the Bukusu perceptions as suggested in oral narratives.

## **2.1 Place and Role of Context of Performance in Bukusu Oral Narratives**

In examining context of performance, this study highlights the place or surrounding within which these oral narratives are performed as well as the composition of the audience. This is aimed at interrogating the role a given context plays in suggesting Bukusu perceptions. This emanates from the fact that Bukusu oral narratives are performed within established contexts which play significant roles in suggesting the meaning of these oral narratives. The concept of context has attracted the attention of several scholars. Notable ones include Richard Bauman (1992: 59) who defines context as: “the physical, mental and social surrounding which an oral narrative depends on.” He argues that oral narratives provide an especially rich focus for the investigation of the relationship between oral literature and social life because part of the special nature of narratives is doubly anchored in human events (p.65). From Bauman’s views, it can be inferred that reference to context entails an earmarked place where an event takes place

as well as the social and mental surroundings. These are indeed vital aspects of defining context in oral literature genres like narratives. This is because many oral literature genres reflect the livelihood of the communities that give rise to them. In the present study, context of performance entails the surrounding and circumstances within which Bukusu oral narratives are performed.

A close examination of N1, *Simbi and Nakitumba*, for example reveals the role of context in suggesting Bukusu perceptions on pertinent issues like marriage as well as personal and communal relationships. In this narrative, Simbi, who works on the farm everyday, turns down several offers for marriage from different men. When she finally decides to get married, her would be husband is indeed an ogre. Simbi is not ready to listen to her step sister, Nakitumba, who is able to see through the deceit of the ogres comflaged as handsome men. It is ironic that at the end of the narrative, Simbi and her entire bridal party are saved from these dangerous ogres by the despised Nakitumba. In our field research, it was evident that this oral narrative is mainly told to young women who are almost getting married. This is aimed at psychologically preparing them on the intrigues that appear evident in choosing a partner in marriage. That Simbi turns down fellow human beings who desire to marry her and ends up accepting ogres is a pointer to the vanity in physical appearance. Simbi is driven by the physical outlook of the ogres and fails to perceive their true identity. This oral narrative socialises both young women and men to be wary in their choice of marriage partners.

In this narrative, Nakitumba observes some mannerisms which are not befitting of prospective in-laws. Whenever these ogres come to woo Simbi, they would not only eat the food provided but also swallow the utensils. The narrator says of the ogres: “*buli enga*

*balichanga, basamanga kiminwa lukali mala bamila buli sindu nechilimo chisaani chana*” (every time they ate, they would open their mouths wide and swallow everything including utensils.) At this point in the performance, the narrator suggestively looked at the audience who returned a similar look as if in agreement that indeed Simbi’s suitors were not human beings. It is naturally expected that in-laws should remain civil all the time especially when they visit their parents-in-law. It is therefore shocking to witness Simbi’s suitors exhibiting such mannerisms. The context within which this oral narrative is performed enables the audience to appreciate the significance of exercising sobriety in selecting a marriage partner. One is left wondering why Simbi fails to see through the deceit in these ogres. In this narrative, the narrator juxtaposes vanity and reality in Bukusu community. What emerges is that appearance can be deceptive. Whereas Simbi is presented as beautiful and Nakitumba as ugly due to her deformity, it later turns out that while Simbi is shallow in her reasoning, Nakitumba is deep in character. She, Nakitumba, is analytical, sensitive and kind. It is clear from this narrative that the community extols depth of character as revealed in Nakitumba and detests the vanity displayed by the Simbis of this world. To this end, communal perception on vanity and reality is clearly articulated. In this narrative, verbal and non verbal communication between the narrator and the audience play a vital role in constructing Bukusu perception on marriage and other pertinent issues.

The episode where the ogres are duped by Nakitumba is quite dramatic and captivating. In this instance, Nakitumba dupes the ogres to bring her water from the lake carried in a weaver basket. The narrator says: “*Nakitumba kanja khukhweumila ne luno waloma ali kenya kamechi ke munyanja mala batayila musiyonjo. Mala enyanja yaba aleyi lukendo*”

*lwe silo simufu. Ne siyonjo Nasio siaba silume poo khutaa kamechi. Kho kiminani kiaba ne biise bilume khutaa kamechi.*”

Thus, “Nakitumba started whimpering and this time said she wanted water from the lake carried in a weaver basket. The lake was far, a whole night walk and the weaver basket could not carry water. So the ogres had difficult times trying to fetch water.”

It was during this episode that performance elements like dramatisation were brought to the fore. The narrator, taking up the role of ogres, tried to fetch water in a weaver basket unsuccessfully. He was so infuriated that he eventually threw away the imaginary basket and decided to go back to the house and eat up the girls starting with Nakitumba, whom the ogres blamed for their current predicament. This episode is so dramatic that the audience cannot resist laughing at the folly of the ogres. This is something that cannot be realised unless one attends the actual context of performance. The struggle by ogres to fetch water in weaver baskets demonstrates the stupidity of the ogres and by extension *barende* among the Bukusu community. To this end, the hermeneutics theory which stresses the significance of context of performance finds entry point into the analysis of Bukusu oral narratives. It is clear from this episode that the narrator and the audience are playing significant roles in constructing Bukusu perception on ogres whereby these creatures are depicted as both destructive and gullible. Their gullibility is brought out when they unquestioningly believe what Nakitumba tells them.

To appreciate the relationship between the narrator and audience in this narrative calls for a close reading of Okpewho (1990:1) on the study of performance in Africa when he posits thus:

The text, of course, is extremely important, but without the context it remains lifeless...the interest of the story is vastly enhanced and it is given its proper character by the manner in which it is told. The whole nature of the performance, the voice and the mimicry, the stimulus and the response of the audience mean as much to the natives as the text... What emerges from Okpewho's argument is the significance of context in interpreting meaning. This context is so central that any attempt to interpret a given text outside its original context is likely to be misleading.

The significance of context in suggesting meaning is exemplified in Foley (2002: 61) who defines context as "...a living space unconsciously marked out by the performer and the (often actively participating) observers – often as part of the wider conversation." He then argues that "to appreciate a work on its own terms, one must attend the event in the proper arena, the same place (with same limits) in which it has always been performed." (p.69). In Foley's view, there is need for the researcher to engage the work of verbal art in the context in which tradition and individuals from the community have located it. He stresses the significance of the arena as a conducive setting in which a variety of techniques are meaningfully and purposely employed to communicate the message.

This argument found validation in our research where the narrator and the audience had to take active roles in the performance of oral narratives. In N2, *Nasio and Her Brother*, for example, our narrator, Michael Lubekho, took up the role of Nasio's brother in singing a song every evening when he arrives home from herding livestock. This song was meant to alert Nasio to open the gate to let her brother and livestock in. On the other hand, the audience of four including the researcher joined the narration by taking up Nasio's role and responding thus: "Ayiiih-yi-yi-yiiih! Ayiiih-yi-yi-yiiih!" *Chayaya chalota*" translated as, "Hurrah! Hurrah, hurrah! There comes my brother's herd." This

audience-narrator relationship ensured a common understanding and interpretation of the oral narrative. This is something that could not be realised in written texts. Adopting Foley's line of thought, therefore, it can be argued that the arena provides a setting in which a variety of techniques are meaningfully and purposely employed to communicate the message. This places the concept of context of performance at the centre of oral narrative performance in that it contributes greatly to the interpretation of meaning.

From the above discussion, it emerges that context is indeed a complex concept which involves a number of components among which are space, the audience and the narrator. All these work towards the realisation of meaningful interpretation in oral literature genres. The present study aims at examining the role of context of performance in constructing Bukusu perceptions. In this study, the researcher reached the actual arena where narratives were performed. This enabled him to capture some of the techniques like body movements, facial expressions and tonal variations among others that are employed in the performance and how they contribute to the final interpretation of meaning in Bukusu oral narratives.

This chapter attempts to reveal how the world of the narrator in Bukusu oral narratives is largely defined by the context within which the narratives are performed. This is predicated on the premise that in performing the narratives, the narrator draws on the world he or she knows, whether as reality or fantasy for plot, setting and characterisation. This lays the base upon which Bukusu perceptions are suggested in oral narratives. The chapter presupposes that oral narrative performance is part of how the Bukusu construct their perceptions on a number of issues. This is because Bukusu oral narratives are characterised by an immediate interaction of the narrator and audience. These narratives



are performed within different forms of context which contribute to the final interpretation of meaning.

## **2.2 The Social and Cultural Context of Performance in Bukusu Oral Narratives**

In examining social context of performance in Bukusu oral narratives, the study focuses on the environment within which Bukusu oral narratives are performed. For instance, it considers relational issues like the function of bringing together different groups of people for the purpose of learning about society. It also deals with the way different groups relate in the narratives as well as societal expectations of individuals in their day to day interactions. The social groups in Bukusu oral narratives involve; children, women and men. These form part of the audience and they all play significant roles in constructing Bukusu perceptions through oral narrative performance.

Ideally, Bukusu oral narratives are embedded in the social fabrics which call for a deliberate effort on the part of the narrator to evoke the atmosphere in which these narratives flourish if any meaningful interpretation has to be realised. This is the social background that gives rise to the narratives. In Bukusu oral narratives, the narration involves a turn-taking performance where the audience is equally actively involved in the actual performance. The narration exercise is not a preserve of a given group of people in the sense that each member of the community is capable of telling a story. In the actual narration, the audience may at times intervene with a question, make a contribution or even seek some clarification as the narration unfolds. In narrative one or N1, *Simbi and Nakitumba*, told by Khamala Matakala, a member of the audience had to interject with a question: “*siyonjo nisio sina?*” loosely translated as “what is a weaver basket?” Before the narrator could even explain the meaning of *siyonjo* or weaver basket, another member

of the audience had already done so prompting the narrator to continue with the narration. This makes the performance of Bukusu oral narratives an all inclusive process hence a lively exercise.

Verbal and non verbal cues play significant roles in constructing meaning in Bukusu oral narratives. In N2, *Nasio and her Brother*, for example, the narrator, Michael Lubekho mimicked the singing of the ogre which was different from that of Nasio's brother. In this narrative, ogres eat all the people and animals in Bukusu land except two siblings, Nasio and her brother. As a result, Nasio and her brother devise mechanisms that are to enable them live in this land full of ogres. Nasio's brother goes to the fields to look after livestock and always comes back late in the evening. Whenever, he comes back, he sings a particular song in a rehearsed manner for Nasio to know that indeed it is her brother before she opens the door for him. This goes on for some time until eventually, an ogre that has been spying on them notices this. The ogre then sets out to eat Nasio. Although his initial attempts fail, he eventually succeeds in eating her. This prompts Nasio's brother to make a daring journey to the land of ogres where he finally kills this ogre and saves Nasio and the entire community.

In this narrative, whereas Nasio's brother sings in a relatively soft voice, the ogre's voice is hoarse which makes Nasio to realise the difference. It is instructive to note that in this narrative, the narrator and the audience engaged in a soloist-chorus pattern which made the performance colourful thus:

Narrator	Audience
Nasio	Nasio Nasioo Nasio
Chamakhung'eng'a	Nasio Nasioo Nasio
Musilongo sina	Nasio Nasioo Nasio
Sie Wabutubile	Nasio Nasioo Nasio
Yikula chinune	Nasio Nasioo Nasio

Thus,

Nasio	Nasio Nasioo Nasio
They have been licking	Nasio Nasioo Nasio
From which saltlick?	Nasio Nasioo Nasio
Wabutubile's saltlick	Nasio Nasioo Nasio
Let out the calves to suckle	Nasio Nasioo Nasio

In this song, the narrator and audience are engaged in a conversation which captures the relationship between Nasio and her brother. What emerges in the song is that the siblings are so close that Nasio's brother has to always alert his sister about his daily chores and request her to open the gate and let the calves out to suckle. On singing this song, Nasio would always welcome his brother by ululating and praising him for returning home safely. In the actual performance of this narrative, the audience would join the narrator in ululating whenever the narrator reached the point where Nasio was to open the door for her brother. When eventually Nasio was duped into opening the door for the ogres, the audience and the narrator alike sighed at the naivety displayed by Nasio. A section of the audience was heard exclaiming "tawe! tawe!" or simply "no! no!" when Nasio went to open the door for the ogre. When she was at last swallowed by the ogre, there was an atmosphere of gloom as the audience and narrator looked at one another as if in agreement that Nasio had herself to blame for her predicament. This, perhaps, captures the Bukusu construction of women as people who can be easily duped. It is no wonder,

therefore, that ogres find it easy to play tricks on women in a number of oral narratives in this study.

From the above episode, it can be inferred that Bukusu oral narratives take place within a given social context. It is this social context that influences the kind of messages and meaning derived in Bukusu oral narratives. This social context is equally significant in bringing out the identity of the Bukusu as a distinct group living among other communities. This is the context that informs the community's perceptions on a number of issues among them personal and communal relationships.

Foley (2002:60) equally captures the significance of social context when he posits that:

Any oral poem, like any utterance, is profoundly contingent on its context. To assume that it is detachable – that we can comfortably speak of “an oral poem” as a free standing item – is necessarily to take it out of context. And what is the lost context? It is the performance, the audience, the poet, the music, the specialised way of speaking, the gestures, the costuming, the visual aids, the occasion, the ritual and myriad other aspects of the given poem's reality.

In Foley's view, one cannot interpret the meaning of an oral poem outside its context. To him, the audiences, verbal and other nonverbal cues all play significant roles in the final interpretation of meaning. Although Foley's argument is based on oral poems, our study takes cognizance of the myriad components that combine to realise the intended meaning in Bukusu oral narratives.

The cultural context of oral performance in which human communication occurs is perhaps the most defining influence on human interaction. Culture provides the overall framework wherein humans learn to organise their thoughts, emotions, and behaviour in relation to their environment. It is worthy noting that people are born into a culture which

conditions one how to think and instructs one how to act, especially how to interact with others—in other words, how to communicate. Several scholars have defined culture differently. For instance, Brown (1991:40) posits that “culture consists of the conventional patterns of thought, activity, and artifact that are passed on from generation to generation.” According to Brown, it can be argued that if a society demonstrates a recognisable pattern of activity, such as rice production, that is part of its culture. In the present study, some of the cultural practices that are evident in Bukusu oral narratives include circumcision and marriage. Hofstede (2010:1) defines culture as: “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.” He argues that culture is a collective phenomenon because it is partly shared with the people who live or lived within the same social environment where it was learnt. In the present study, an examination of culture is guided by the values that the Bukusu community attaches to their way of life. These values guide the community in differentiating right from wrong as well as distinguishing between the Bukusu and other communities.

A close look at N15, *The Bukusu Circumcision*, reveals that this oral narrative can draw mixed reactions from different cultures. In this narrative, Mango, the main character is regarded as having been instrumental in reviving the Bukusu circumcision. The narrative suggests that many people including the Sabots who neighbour the Bukusu are killed by a dangerous python known as *yabebe* in *Lubukusu*. This goes on until one day the python kills Mango’s daughter. He is so infuriated that he vows to kill the python. At first, this sounds laughable especially to the Sabot warriors who have failed to kill this python. However, when Mango eventually actualises his dream, his critics decide to circumcise

him as a mark of bravery and acceptance. This marks the beginning of Bukusu circumcision. To the Bukusu community, traditional circumcision is a mark of bravery since it calls for one to withstand the pains of the knife without any slight show of fear. Among the Bukusu, therefore, this narrative captures the communal perception of bravery as exhibited in Mango's action. This is evidenced in the actual performance where the narrator paused and nodded his head probably in approval of Mango's killing of the python and his subsequent circumcision. In this narrative, the narrator vividly captured the actual killing of the python through the description of Mango's walking where by he tiptoed to the cave and placed a tree stump near the entrance to the cave. The young audience in this narrative could be seen shivering at the thought of Mango inside the cave waiting for the python. The narrator tellingly looked at the audience as if to suggest that what Mango was about to do was indeed the best measure for bravery. When eventually the python started coming near the cave, the narrator would describe the movement as being so terrific that even rocks were shaking and trees falling. The narrator said, "*Endemu yino yaba embofu po po...nekenda erengisia kimirongoro nende kamabale.*" thus, "the python was so huge...whenever it moved trees and rocks would shake." Yet despite this frightening atmosphere, Mango did not display any sign of fear until he eventually killed the ogre. A non Bukusu person, who does not value circumcision, may not be quick to draw a link between what Mango does and the significance attached to circumcision. What emerges from this narrative is that the Bukusu perception and worldview on circumcision is aptly revealed. It can be argued that the community attaches a lot of significance to this practice which not only extols bravery as a value but also gives the Bukusu a feeling of identity.

Bukusu oral narrative performance enable us to observe and behold, as though through telescopic eyes, such people's patterns of beliefs and their customs. The eyes of characters in oral narratives can make one discern how people react to social pressures in their environment. The different voices of the narrator in a narrative, for example, provide the means for us to share the moral precepts and principles guiding a people's social interaction. In N4, *Lemata and Katamba*, the narrator captures the attention of the audience through tonal variation. In this narrative, Lemata and Katamba are friends and do many things together until one day the latter loses Katamba's spear to an ogre when the two have gone out hunting. This marks a turning point in their friendship with Katamba demanding that Lemata returns the lost spear. It therefore forces Lemata to follow the ogre and bring back the spear. He succeeds in bringing back the spear but later the ogre follows him to his home, disguised as a beautiful woman, and Lemata is duped to accompany king ogre to the forest oblivious of the fact that his life is in danger. At this point, the narrator lowered his tone as if alerting the audience about the precarious situation that Lemata had found himself in. The audience, quite aware of the predicament facing Lemata, groaned in pain as the ogre started cutting down the tree that Lemata had climbed. When the benevolent pigeon appeared and flapped its wings on the dent that the ogre had cut on the tree, so that it did not fall, some members of the audience sighed with relief and even joined the narrator in playing Lemata's role whereby the latter was singing to sermon his dogs. The song went thus:

Asa asa mbwa chase, kutubi na mwikho  
 Asa asa mbwa chase, kutubi na mwikho  
 Nanu olimua mwalia, kutubi na mwikho?  
 mwikho?

Come, come my dogs kutubi and mwikho  
 Come, come my dogs kutubi and mwikho  
 Who will give you food, kutubi and  
 mwikho?

In this song the audience assumes the role of Lemata in attempting to escape from the danger of being destroyed by the ogre. The fact that the audience is quick to assume this role reveals Bukusu perception on social pressures. It can be argued that the Bukusu prefer a life free from social pressures like the one Lemata finds himself in. This explains why the audience unites in their attempt to find a solution to this problem. When eventually the ogre is defeated, the narrative ends on a happy note as the audience celebrate the killing of this ogre. In essence, the killing of the ogre signals the defeat of evil forces that are bound to disrupt peace in the community. The ogre, in this narrative, is regarded as that evil force that comes to disturb the hitherto peaceful environment.

Some Bukusu oral narratives like, N13, *The Teso Who Ate A Dog* and N18, *Nabwile* are deeply rooted in *Lubukusu* language which is an embodiment of their meaning, significance and function. Narrators creatively use language to communicate significant information touching on the relationship between the Bukusu and other communities. For instance, in N13, the narrator uses language metaphorically to bring out the relationship between the Bukusu and the Teso. The “*eating of a dog*” or “*khulia embwa*” as used in this narrative is metaphorically tailored to imply the ceremony performed between the two communities as a mark of making peace after many years of fighting over resources. To an outsider, this may sound outrageous yet it simply refers to an act of making peace. In N18 still, the narrator advises Nabwile, a Bukusu girl to sleep “*nying’inyi*” or “*alert*” since she lives among strangers. This narrative is presented in form of a song thus:

Nabwile Nabwile	Nabwile Nabwile
Nabwile olikona nying’inyi	Nabwile you should not sleep soundly
Nabwile, Nabwile	Nabwile, Nabwile
Nabwile olikona nying’inyi	Nabwile you should not sleep soundly
Wamenya mubarende	You live among strangers
Nabwile olikona nying’inyi	Nabwile you should not sleep soundly



Nabwile, Nabwile  
Nabwile olikona nying'inyi

Nabwile, Nabwile  
Nabwile you should not sleep soundly

When asked for comment, John Natembeya, the narrator, argues that mention of *barende* in this narrative is with regard to the Sabot neighbours who were constantly embroiled in feuds with the Bukusu. It is, however, instructive to observe that the narrator does not refer to these people by name. He simply refers to them as *barende* hence capturing Bukusu perception on other people whom they know little about. From this narrative, it can be argued that the community advocates for caution in dealing with “the other.” The narrator accomplishes this by simply advising Nabwile to always remain alert even when sleeping. This is possibly because of the communal fear of the presence of “the other” in their midst.

Bukusu oral narratives are also embedded in communal myths, beliefs, attitudes and historical factors that define societal norms and moral obligations. The cultural context is important in the oral narratives in that the performer mostly draws on the images from the source community to deliver his/her message. It is significant to note that these oral narratives perform real cultural functions in promoting and/or sustaining various forms of communal life and their corresponding modalities of social relations and matrices of meaning. In other words, Bukusu oral narratives, which are a product of culture, can be quite instrumental in promoting and/ or undermining personal and communal relationships.

Bukusu oral narratives provide a springboard upon which the community attempts to assert its cultural values especially with regard to non Bukusu people. It is a model or a pattern for construction or recognition of societal truths. These oral narratives present the

images, ideas or patterns of thought which are universally present in memory in all individuals within this cultural setup. In essence, all the characters within the oral narratives, their thematic content, common patterns of the oral narrative structure and even the narrative itself are typical examples of the Bukusu way of life.

An examination of some Bukusu oral narratives reveals a number of beliefs that find expression in oral narrative performances. Some of these narratives focus on the institution of marriage and the intrigues and challenges associated with it. In N6, *Apelu*, the main character, Apelu, sets up an impossible task for anyone who wishes to marry his daughter, Namikasa. Being a stranger in Bukusu land, he does not mix freely with the locals. He demands that anyone who wants to marry his daughter be able to reveal his name at a public gathering. This he does while aware that no one may be able to unravel this difficult task. In the event that one succeeds, he must be a respectable personality. He does not conceive of Hare accomplishing this difficult task. So when he realises that Hare has beaten him at his game, he opts to flee from the village so as to save his daughter from getting married to Hare. This is an act of deception and abuse of hospitality that the community detests in this narrative. His plan to stop Hare from marrying Namikasa fails when the latter sneaks back and begs Hare to accept her as a wife, and the two move to live in the heavens which in this case symbolise a place of comfort where all the human needs are met. This oral narrative clearly captures the Bukusu perception on integrity in that the audience is socialised to respect other people and always stand by what they say. It emerges that the stranger, Apelu, who enjoys the hospitality of the Bukusu community turns out to betray this honour. He lacks integrity which makes him fail to stand by what he promises. The narrative, therefore, points out to the evil in deceit.

The story of Apelu also points to the way secrets work in the society. It is worthy noting that secrets permeate every level of society and they have existed throughout time. According to Evan Black (1998:2), “secrets are kept or opened for many complex motives, from self-serving abuse of power to altruistic protection of others.” He argues that secrets give people false illusions of invisibility. Many a time, people develop some unfounded hope that their activities are not known to the rest. This is what happens with Apelu. This illusion is, however, burst when Hare reveals the secret to the bewilderment of Apelu.

In N8, *An Old Woman and her Deformed Son*, the old woman equally uses deceit to get his deformed son a wife. She intentionally refuses to disclose to the bride the truth about her son and always tells her that the young man has gone out to work in order to raise money for bride wealth. In the actual sense, the young man is ever hidden in a drum and only creeps out of it during the day to perform some chores in the house. He always does so while singing to disparage the folly of women. This goes on until the bride chances on the truth regarding her would-be husband. It is shocking to the bride that her would have been husband is deformed; possibly explaining why the mother has kept it a secret from the young woman. This revelation, coupled with the social stigma associated with the physically challenged people drives the girl into killing her would have been husband in rage. At the core of her actions is her pride which cannot allow her to get married to a deformed husband as this would make her a laughing stock of the community. What should not be lost in this narrative is the kind of language the young man uses in form of a song which goes thus:

Khaneyuye munju mwange, khaneyuye munju mwange	Let me busy myself in my house, let me busy myself in my house
Mikhasi nekikhali misilu, mayi kakuombelesia	Aren't women foolish? Mother fooled her
Musecha kacha khuchuma, abele khuchuma nacha sina?	"Your husband has gone to work." How could I go to work?
Menyile mukhang'oma, kurumba kuli khumukongo	I just live here in my little drum because I have a hunch in my back.

In this song, the young man's attitude towards women as simple-minded is brought to the fore. He dismisses women as fools citing the bride's inability to question his continuous absence from home on the pretext of working on the farm. It is ironic that this man condemns all women as fools while considering that his mother is playing a crucial role in hiding his true identity from the bride. Despite his deformity, the young man still has little regard for women by dismissing them as being easy targets of deception. It is perhaps this apparent show of little regard for women that drives the bride to kill this man when he chances on him singing this song. Nonetheless, the killing of this young man is an unacceptable act that raises condemnation from the community. In the course of narration, the narrator, Fosca Namalwa, stared at the audience who groaned in astonishment when the young man was eventually killed by his would have been wife. When the narrative ended, a member of the audience wondered loudly why the young woman killed this man. The entire audience remained silent perhaps suggesting disapproval of what had just happened. To this end, the Bukusu community is presented as one that values the sanctity of life and does not approve of killing. In the same vein, the narrative warns those out to deceive others that such actions are likely to result into untold ramifications. Communal perception on deceit is therefore clearly articulated.

In N11, *Ngoli and his Daughter*, Ngoli is equally deceitful when he demands that whoever wants to marry his daughter should be able to cut down a tall and huge tree in the midst of his compound. This exercise proves difficult to potential suitors among them; Ogre, Hyena, Antelope, Rabbit and Hare. It is, however, ironic that the winner in this game is Hare whom the community despises because of his small size. Again, the question of communal perceptions is brought to the fore. When Hare's opportunity to cut down the tree comes, the narrator says of him: "*lumalilisi bise biola bie Wanakhamuna. Babasie bakhachacha bali nikho khatiti busa sekhalanyala khurema kumusala tawe.*" thus, "eventually, Hare's chance came. His friends started laughing at him arguing that he was too small to cut down the tree." What emerges from this instance is that Hare is looked down upon just because of his size. This is indeed retrogressive and reveals the way the community fuels divisions both within the Bukusu and without. One would expect the community to treat everybody with the respect they deserve. It is from such negative perceptions that Hare's competitors and Ngoli himself take offence at his fortune. This prompts the other competitors to conspire with Hare's new bride to kill him. However, Hare's wife dies in the process of executing her conspiracy. Her death is yet another pointer to the consequences of deceit.

Unlike in N8 above, the narrator and audience in this narrative simply nodded their heads while stealing glances at one another as if in agreement with what happened to Hare's wife. Her death deals a big blow to those members of the community out to employ deceit to achieve their selfish ends. In this narrative, communal regard for intelligence is equally revealed. This is one of the virtues held in high regard by the community. It is evident that unlike his competitors who boast of might, Hare delights in the power of

intelligence and good fortune. One wonders how he manages to cut down the tree that has defeated bigger animals.

A common issue that emerges in the above oral narratives is that the Bukusu people regard marriage highly since it is one way through which the Bukusu community is guarded against extinction. It is evident that despite the reservations that the Bukusu hold towards non Bukus, they are willing to integrate with these people through intermarriages as evidenced in N6. This is a significant move touching on the culture of the community. Perhaps to appreciate the Bukusu regard for marriage calls for a closer reading of Lena Nekby (2010) who analyses the social integration of immigrants and natives in Sweden using nine social measures among which marriage is extolled. She posits that “an analysis of marriage patterns (international marriage, intra-national marriage, divorce and cohabitation), suggests a high degree of social integration across generations.” (p.23). What emerges from Nekby’s observation is the fact that people from different cultural backgrounds easily integrate through marriage. This is a significant scenario with regard to the much yearned for social cohesion. Although Nekby’s study was carried out in Sweden, it is imperative to capture the significance of marriage in many African communities among them the Bukusu.

In his comments on the choice of a marriage partner among the Abaluhya of Kenya, Bulimo (2013:385) writes, “besides physical attraction, other factors which influence spousal choice include cultural similarities, economics, geography and age referential.” In this argument, Bulimo captures the significance of cultural similarities in choosing a spouse. This is of great significance to the present study in that the question of culture is indeed vital in the construction of the Bukusu perception on marriage. Despite the

challenges associated with it, marriage is seen as a vehicle through which the Bukusu can nurture lasting cohesive relationships with other groups of people.

This section has captured the relevance of social and cultural context in the interpretation of meaning in Bukusu oral narrative performance. It has emerged that some Bukusu oral narratives are culture- specific in the sense that they draw their material in form of images, symbols, allusions among others, from their immediate environment. This is vital in the sense that members of the Bukusu community can easily understand the messages embedded in these narratives given their familiar background. This makes it easier for the Bukusu to develop some sense of belonging to the community and sharing similar cultural practices.

### **2.3 Oral Performance and its Contribution to Meaning-Making**

Performance of oral narratives is employed in the Bukusu community as a way of channeling communal expectations. Without performance, the very nature of Bukusu oral narratives may be doubtful. In oral performances, the linguistic items used by the performer are normally tied to their contexts. This calls for a sharing of the same code between the performer and audience. In other words, in artistic performance of this kind, there is something going on in the communicative interchanges which according to Bauman (1986:29): “interpret what I say in some special sense; do not take it to mean what the words alone, taken literally, would convey.” This position may lead to further suggestion that performance sets up, or represents, an interpretative frame within which the messages being communicated are to be understood.

In a different but related context, Joseph Muleka (2009:40) writes that “oral performances often involve composition – the process of selecting, organising and developing, which the oral artist carries out during the realisation of performance.” The above observation underscores the significance of composition in oral performances. It suggests that oral literature works are generally creative processes which can only be fully realised and appreciated through live performances. This is what accounts for the uniqueness that abound among different performers of oral literature genres in general and Bukusu oral narratives in particular. It is this element of composition that contributes to the creativity that is evident in Bukusu oral narratives.

The creative aspect of performance calls for an astute narrator who is able to make use of a particular context to clearly and artistically meet the expectations of the audience. In Bukusu oral narrative performance, for instance, the audience may join the narrator in singing, or it may remind the narrator of some events in the narrative all of which point to the critical role the audience plays in the entire performance. In narratives which have songs with a soloist and chorus such as N17 *Mwambu and Sela*, the audience sings the chorus and the narrator sings the soloist’s part. The narrator sings:

*Mbilimbili Nyanja Icha undie...*      Mbilimbili Nyanja come and eat me...

The audience would then respond in a chorus thus:

*Sale lomaloma...*      Sela say it...

The song in this narrative was sung by our narrator, Simon Wamalwa. In this song, Sela is resigned to fate as she sings asking the ogre to come and eat her so that her community can be saved from famine. She cuts an image of a victim of circumstances out to be sacrificed to save the community. On the other hand, Mwambu comes out strongly as



Sela's saviour when he sings reassuring her that he would be there for her to ensure nothing goes wrong. This song during the actual performance marks an anticlimax as both the audience and narrator wait with bated breath for the next turn of events. The tense moment in the narrative was captured when the narrator said thus: "*kunani oli kukana khumila Sela, Mwambu kakupa embalu ya lueni, kwakwa asi chimbeni chabalukha balukha, sisilima siatila. Oli khubise bititi, kamame kefula kanja khumonya ne kunani kufwa.*" "When the ogre was just about to swallow Sela, Mwambu hit it with a magic sword. As the ogre collapsed, there was lightening and then darkness. After a short while, there were rain drops and the ogre died." The tension that had piled in the course of narration eventually fades when the ogre dies.

From this oral narrative, one can argue that some Bukusu oral narratives are generally creatures of patriarchal thought patterns, and so reflect and sustain the patriarchal ideologies that in turn rule much of the community to the disadvantage of women. In this narrative, women are depicted as "the other" in a dominantly patriarchal setup and are epistemologically belittled and diminished even in artistic imagination where they are commodified and imagined in terms of exchange value mechanisms that seek to restore dominant patriarchal social architecture. It is therefore no wonder that the ogre demands for Sela as a sacrifice in order to release the rains. Nonetheless, it is instructive to observe that the ogre, an outsider from the Bukusu community, is killed by young Mwambu who comes to defend Sela. From this narrative, the young audience, especially the boy child, is socialised to appreciate the role of defending the community from outside aggression. As the young men grow up, they are to be aware of the existence of outside forces that may pose a threat to the peaceful coexistence. Consequently, they should always be ready

to combat such forces whenever the situation demands so. It is, however, worthy stating that the role of providing security has long changed and today it is the responsibility of the national government to ensure that its citizens are safe.

A closer examination of Bukusu oral narrative performance reveals that the narrators are cognizant of communal expectations and strive to attain them. In N10, *Hyena Ate his Protector*, for example, the narrator employs great use of metaphoric language. Whereas the society expects us to be cordial in our relations with others, we still need to exercise a high sense of responsibility in our dealing with different people, especially those we are not quite familiar with. In this narrative, a woman is digging on her farm when Hyena appears running from hunters. He pleads with the woman to hide him from the hunters and she does so without questioning. When the hunters eventually arrive at the scene and ask whether she has seen Hyena, the woman denies. They go away warning her that it would be dangerous to for her to conspire with Hyena. Soon after they have left, Hyena pounces on the woman and eats her up. In this narrative, Hyena symbolises greed and ingratitude in the society. It can be inferred that the Bukusu community generally condemn greed and ingratitude as witnessed in the character of Hyena hence the narrative is a warning to the entire community to desist from such vices which may be detrimental to cohesion in the community. This condemnation is clearly revealed in the way the audience wonders aloud at the thought of the woman hiding Hyena. The entire audience interjected the narration wondering loudly when the woman reached the point of hiding Hyena from the hunters. This already points to the audience's disapproval of the woman's actions in condoning evil. Both the narrator and audience seemed to agree that what the woman had done was a big mistake that could only be committed by those

people who do not subscribe to the Bukusu way of life or *barende* for that matter. To show that the narrator agreed with the feeling of the audience, he posed to let the gravity of the woman's actions be digested by his listeners before he continued with the narration.

In this narrative, still, Bukusu perception of naivety and gullibility is brought out. Both the woman and hunters are ridiculed for exposing tendencies of naivety. In the first place, the woman is ridiculed for falling easy prey to the antics of the greedy Hyena. She unsuspectingly conceals evil and in so doing meets her untimely end. The hunters are not spared either. One would have expected them to trace the whereabouts of Hyena but they fail. The death of this woman can partly be blamed on these hunters' naivety. Consequently, the Bukusu community is socialised to rise above such forms of naivety that are likely to cost the community dearly.

Clear interpretation of meaning in oral performances calls for an understanding of the different components in these performances. In oral narratives, some of the notable components include the narrator and the audience both of whom play significant roles in the final construction of meaning. With reference to fieldwork, Peter Wasamba (2005:3) captures the significance of oral performances when he posits that "... the researcher, the audience and the artist actively discourse and learn from each other. All actors grow as the performance process unfolds and progresses." In his study, Wasamba underscores the significance of performance and argues for the preservation of African heritage through fieldwork. The emphasis on fieldwork is significant to this study where the researcher had to collect oral narratives from the field.

In examining oral performance, the study focuses on aspects of communication style like language use and manipulation of the body to realise certain effects. Oral performance hence provides a unique experience for transmitting the meaning of oral narratives. An understanding of performance aspects is vital in the final interpretation of meaning in Bukusu oral narratives in particular and oral literature genres in general. Bukusu oral narrative performances can be likened to dramatic performances in that they centre on a dynamic of the central active narrator and less active audience. A less active audience should not be misconstrued to imply that this audience takes back stage. These narratives equally involve various elements of visual context. The narrators, in these oral narratives, have at their disposal non verbal and verbal cues like gestures, body movements, songs and mimicry which they can exploit to embellish their narration.

In Bukusu oral narratives, it can be argued that the use of nonverbal cues play a significant role in the final analysis of meaning in that these non verbal cues advance a multi-channeled form of communication. They ensure that what the narrator fails to capture verbally is eventually realised. For instance, through facial expressions, mimicry, tonal variation, gestures body movements, dramatisation among others, the narrator is capable of revealing the mood of the narrative. A close examination of the narratives in this study reveals that these features are heavily employed by both the narrator and the audience. In N2, *Nasio and Her Brother*, for example, the narrator imitates the hoarse voice of the ogre when it tries to sing thus: “Naasio Nasio Nasio Nasio.” In the actual performance, our narrator, Michael Lubekho, clearly captured the difference between the ogre and Nasio’s brother in terms of voice which he articulately brought out through mimicry. Whereas, Nasio’s brother sings in a soft and comforting voice, the ogre’s voice

comes out as hoarse and frightening to Nasio and the audience. This explains why at the beginning, Nasio is able to discern the difference and scoff at the ogre thus: “*cheyo ewe kunani soli wandaye wange tawe*” thus, “go away you are an ogre but not my brother.” To this end, the effect of mimicry has aptly been brought to the fore.

In N4, *Lemata and Katamba*, the protagonist, Lemata raised his tone and increased the pace of singing as he called for his fierce dogs, *Kutubi* and *Mwikho* to come to his aid when he realised that the “girl” he had accompanied to the forest to fetch firewood was indeed an ogre out to kill him. In N17, Mwambu and Sela, the narrator imitated the singing of Sela while the audience took part in imitating the response given by Mwambu.

The narrator sang thus:

<i>Mbili mbili Nyanjia icha undie</i>	Mbilimbili Nyanja come and eat me
<i>Mbili mbili nyanjia icha undie</i>	Mbilimbili Nyanjia come and eat me
<i>Omukhana wo omwami efula ekwe</i>	The king’s daughter so that it may rain
<i>Mbili mbili nyanjia</i>	Mbilimbili Nyanjia

The audience would then respond:

<i>Sela lomaloma</i>	Sela say it
<i>Mukoye mulala lomaloma</i>	You whose life and mine are intertwined into a single string, say it
<i>Nyanga chilikhulia chilindia</i>	The day they eat you they will also eat me
<i>Mbili mbili Nyanjia</i>	Mbilimbili Nyanjia

In this narrative, whereas Sela sings in a resigned tone, Mwambu interjects by singing in a reassuring voice that he would stand by Sela and challenge any force that was intend on destroying her. In the actual performance of this narrative, the tension that was

occasioned by the presence of ogres among human beings was brought to the fore when the narrator sings in support of Sela. At the end of the narrative when the ogre was finally killed by Mwambu, both the narrator and the audience nodded their heads as if in agreement with what had just taken place. The significance of aural features in Bukusu oral narrative performance is informed by the ethnopoetics theory which captures the centrality of such features in the interpretation of oral texts.

In N16, *Wanakhatandi*, the narrator captures the pain that Wanakahatandi goes through by use of dramatisation. In this narrative, Wanakahatandi deserts his wife and ten daughters and opts to live with his barren wife. One day, he is cornered by ogres who want to eat him. Out of fright, he requests them to spare his life but promises to give them his wife and ten children. This news really devastates his family as the ogres start coming to get their promise. However, Wanakhatandi's wife cleverly arranges to defeat the ogres by cooking for them banana stems and even hides from dead animals every time the ogres come. The gullibility of these ogres is revealed when they unquestioningly "eat" Wanakhatandi's family. After the ogres have eaten all that belongs to Wanakhatandi, they demand that he cooks himself. This really worries him as he struggles to come to terms with how his entire family has had to be eaten by these ogres. He is at pains to jump into a pot of boiling water and "cook" himself the way his wife and children did. He keeps rushing to and fro the boiling pot as he sings thus:

*Wanakhatandi khetekhe ndiena?*      Wanakhatandi how will I cook myself?

*Babana bange betekha bariena?*      How did my children cook themselves?

*Omukhasi wange ketekha ariena?*      How did my wife cook herself?

At this point in the narration, the narrator stood and started pacing up and down revealing the agony that Wanakhatandi was going through at the thought of cooking himself for the ogres. This pain is worsened when the daughters and wife who are hiding in a tree trunk mercilessly laugh at him. Members of the audience frowned at this callous attitude from Wanakhatandi's family. At long last, one of the daughters, overtaken by sympathy, prevails upon her mother to save Wanakhatandi from the ogres. When this happens and Wanakhatandi is eventually rescued from the ogres, both the audience and narrator looked at each other suggestively as if in agreement that Wanakhatandi had learnt his lesson and should never try to abandon his family anymore.

Generally, in oral narratives which have ogres like the ones mentioned in this section, the narrators always imitate the speeches of ogres which are depicted as different from those of human beings. Whereas, human beings are presented as gentle and caring, ogres are shown as cruel and uncaring even in the way they speak. In all these oral narratives, both the narrators and the audience are physically distressed everytime ogres are posing danger to human beings. In the same vein, the narrators and audience rejoice when ogres suffer at the hands of human beings. All this is revealed through nonverbal cues.

The centrality of nonverbal cues in Bukusu oral narratives finds semblance in Livo and Rietz (1986:25) when they posit that: "as regards features of the visual aspects, the most fundamental features which are inseparably linked to the presence of the story teller are their spontaneous and synchronised gestures and facial expressions." They argue that these features interact with each other to represent elements of the story and encourage desired responses from the audience. A similar position is adopted by Sobol *et al* (2004:18) when they argue that, "features of narrative performance greatly contribute to

the actualisation of the narratives by enhancing audience's appreciation of the narrative as it is developed during a live performance." An examination of the dynamics of narrative development uncovers how the audience can be led by well coordinated verbal, vocal and visual features to make certain connections or interpretations in oral narrative performances.

In a different but related context, Bauman (1986:176) captures the significance of oral performance when he observes that "features of verbal and visual aspects work in concert also to create various narrative effects that seem to promote emotive responses from the audience." Borrowing from Bauman's observation, it can be reiterated that it is indeed true that in Bukusu oral narrative performance, as the narrative approaches the climax, increasingly detailed verbal representation of the characters' actions synchronises with increasingly faster pace and louder volume. This is visually complemented by a series of mimic gestures representing moment- by -moment actions of the character. A typical example is in N4, *Lemata and Katamba*, where Lemata is faced with the danger of being eaten by an ogre. During the performance of this narrative, the narrator imitated the singing of Lemata to alert his dogs about his predicament. The result of this was an emergence of a sense of urgency and excitement in the audience. The audience waited with bated breath as the ogre cut a deeper in the tree that Lemata had climbed as the narrator increased his pace in singing to sermon Lemata's dogs. When the dogs arrived to save Lemata, the narrator reduced his pace and the mounting tension subsided as the dogs descended on the ogre tearing it into pieces.

Several other scholars have equally argued that performance is a complex activity involving a number of aspects that contribute to the interpretation of meaning. For



example, Jakobson (1974: 17) argues that: “performance as an act of communication is distinct from other speech acts because of its expressive or poetic functions.” Jakobson, thus, stresses the way of expressing messages in performance. From Jakobson’s viewpoint, there is need to keep in mind that this form of expression uses poetic language of which the body is the vehicle that gives the form to which one wishes to communicate. Bukusu oral narratives generally employ verbal and non verbal cues to embellish the narration. Many a time, the audience is able to decipher messages from the oral narratives based on these cues. This puts performance at the centre of Bukusu oral narratives.

From a different perspective, Foley (1995:4) still comments on performance when he posits that

the structure of the social roles, the relations and interactions; the oral literary text and its meaning and structure of the event itself are all emergent in performance. The collective, the communal, the conventional are not forsaken here rather the individual and the creative are brought up to parity with tradition in a dialectic played out within the context of situated action...

Foley is clearly advocating for all inclusive oral performances. Accordingly, these performances are primarily meant to serve the needs and aspirations of the entire community. This explains why the social roles, relations and interactions as well as the collective and individual are factored in the performances. This makes them all-inclusive and gratifying to both the performers and the audience. It therefore calls for a high sense of creativity on the part of the performer to articulate all these in a performance context. This is the essence of oral artistic aspect that characterises oral narratives and other oral literature genres. Borrowing from Foley, it can be argued that a look at some Bukusu oral narratives in this chapter reveal that indeed they are meant to communicate communal values and aspirations.

From the foregoing, it is evident that oral literature performance calls for a closer relationship between the performer and the audience. Bauman (1986), for example, argues that the performer is answerable to the audience that is keenly following the performance. Borrowing from Bauman's argument, meaning in Bukusu oral narratives is best interpreted with the role of the narrator and audience in mind. Both the audience and the narrator are like equal partners in Bukusu oral narrative performance in the sense that the audience understands just as much as what the narrator does about the issues being articulated in the narratives. This shared knowledge between the narrator and the audience is quite significant in promoting communal values and issues affecting the community like relationships with other groups.

This section has established the role of oral performance and its contribution to meaning-making. What emerges is that oral performances take place within given contexts where the narrator and the audience play significant roles. Both the narrator and the audience enjoy some degree of shared knowledge about the role of narrative performance in constructing Bukusu perception on a number of issues. It is this shared knowledge that makes oral narrative performance much more than a mere piece of entertainment. It has also emerged that Bukusu oral narrative performance makes great use of verbal and visual features to enrich its content delivery. Each act of performance is reflective, creating an experience while reflecting upon the experience at the same time. These verbal and visual features of performance greatly contribute to the actualisation of the oral narratives as they enhance the audience's appreciation of the narrative as it is developed during a live performance. An examination of the dynamics of Bukusu oral narrative development reveals the way the audience can be led by well coordinated verbal

and visual features to make certain connections or interpretations in narrative performance. A look at these performance features is vital to understanding Bukusu perceptions as suggested in the oral narratives.

#### **2.4 Audience Involvement in Bukusu Oral Narrative Performance**

The audience plays an integral part of the creative act in oral performances. Without the audience marking out the space, there would be no storytelling performance. Ruddock (2001: 16) describes the audience as, “prime movers” responsible for the volume and pace of performance.” Ruddock’s position reveals the centrality of the audience in different types of performances. By describing them as prime movers in performance, Ruddock implies that the audience is an indispensable lot in oral performances. In the present study, the audience is composed of the people, besides the narrator, who are taking part in the performance of oral narratives. These people, not only listen to the oral narratives, but they also influence the events in these narratives either through their questions, comments or even joining the narrator in the performance if the situation demands.

The audience may, for instance, join the narrator in singing a song or even mimicking certain characters in the narrative. In the present study, for example, the researcher, who formed part of the audience, had to pose a number of questions or seek clarifications from the narrators during the narration exercise. This ensured that he remained actively involved throughout the oral narrative session. This relationship between the narrator and audience is vital in the construction of meaning. For instance, in N1, *Simbi and Nakitumba*, the researcher interjected the narrator by asking: “*Namakanda lili nende bukhala sina mu Babukusu?*” thus, “what is the significance of Toad in the Bukusu

community?” This question was prompted by the action of *Namakanda* swallowing all the girls so as to save them from the ogres. After a short pause, the narrator then asked the audience if anyone knew the significance of Toad. When the audience was still engaged in murmurs, the narrator stated that *Namakanda*, is a mythical creature in the Bukusu history associated with good fortune. This is best explained in this narrative when it safely delivers the girls to their homes.

In typical oral literature performance, the audience plays a core role in the sense that it generally exerts a dynamic influence on the performer’s work. The audience is often aware of some narratives that have previously been told. Sometimes the audience is equally privy to a number of things about the private lives of the narrator that are likely to add extra meaning to the present choice of narratives or particular choices of words or images that they use. For example, in N15, *The Bukusu Circumcision*, a majority of the male audience showed awareness of the narrative even before it was told. In this narrative still, our narrator, Joseph Nangendo, happened to be a traditional surgeon who is highly respected in the community. This perhaps explains why he attaches a lot of significance on bravery as exhibited in the killing of the python by Mango. To him, it is bravery and not the death of Mango’s daughter that matters in this narrative. He is quick to point out the need to circumcise all male children traditionally as a mark of identifying with Mango, the father of Bukusu circumcision.

In a different context, Bukenya *et al* (1994: 31) observe that “the narrative discourse is a highly interactive event in the sense that communication between the audience and the narrator takes place when the narrator’s moves elicit responses from the audience.” In the present study, the audience quite often joined the narrator in singing particular songs in

the narratives or even probed the narrator to explain certain key elements of the narrative, especially those that related to the history of the community. In N15, for example, the narrator was interrupted several times to clarify some details on the history of circumcision among the Bukusu community. In particular, the audience wanted to know whether circumcision among the Bukusu really began with the killing of the python by Mango or whether it had been there before. A member of the audience asked: “*nono embalu ye Babukusu yachakila abwenao namwe yabao khukhwama khale?* (Did Bukusu circumcision begin from that time or it had been there before?) The narrator posed and looked at the audience as if expecting an answer from any member. When there was no response, he explained thus: *Babukusu bakhebananga khale Mango nakhebulwa tawe. Ne khubela kamaye ne khuuya, embalu yecha yatiba biise bileyi. Lakini khukhwamila khu Mango, sikhebo sikhelakho enyuma tawe. Kakila Babukusu baloma bali Mango niye wanjisia embalu.*” The Bukusu used to practice circumcision much earlier before Mango. However, because of wars and migrations, this practice vanished for quite some time until Mango reintroduced it. Since then, circumcision has remained among the Bukusu. That is why the community regards Mango as the founder of circumcision). This engagement between the narrator and audience embellished the performance. This demonstrated the symbiotic relationship between the performer and the audience. The performer has to be constantly in touch with the audience and craft his or her performance in such a way that he or she meets the expectations of the audience while at the same time sticking to the rubrics of oral literary performances. Audience involvement is significant to the present study in the sense that the concept of construction of Bukusu perceptions and worldview is something that needs to be internalised with the audience

for the benefit of the wider public. The need for active audience involvement is validated by the fact that indeed the essence of performance in Bukusu oral narratives goes beyond mere entertainment.

It is worthy mentioning that the audience and narrator in Bukusu narratives have a common perception of the world. It is from such common perception that the Bukusu are able to create the 'us' and 'them' or *barende* concepts in the narratives. In narratives with ogres as in N1, *Simbi and Nakitumba*, N2, *Nasio and her brother*, N4, *Lemata and Katamba*, N16, *Wanakhatandi* and N17, *Mwambu and Sela*, the narrator and audience seem to agree that ogres are the "the other" among the Bukusu. In all these narratives, there were always sighs of relief and nodding heads when eventually ogres were defeated or killed. This brings out a mutual understanding between the narrator and audience on the need to eliminate ogres from our midst. The othering of ogres is given in terms of distance whereby they are said to come from far-flung places only referred to as the land of ogres. These ogres also possess supernatural powers in that they are able to transform themselves into either human beings or ogres. In these narratives, ogres are equally othered by being referred to as *kiminani*, an argumentative form of *kamanani*. It is worthy mentioning that reference to ogres as *kamanani* is already full of negativity. Consequently, arguing this only compounds the distance that exists between the Bukusu and ogres.

The significance of audience and narrator in interpretation of meaning is equally exemplified by Okpewho (1990:161), who states that "there is no division whatsoever between the narrator's perception of the world of the narrative and that of the audience." Okpewho's views, though remotely related to Bukusu oral narratives in terms of context,

are significant in elucidating the significance of the audience in oral performances. Among the Bukusu, the the narrator is a member of the community of which the same audience is part. The shared values and aspirations between the audience and the narrator are vital to the creation of “we” and “they” concepts that are evident in many Bukusu oral narratives.

It can be argued that the success of performance in Bukusu oral narratives is judged fundamentally by the degree to which these oral narratives are able to construct the Bukusu perceptions. The narrator-audience collaboration is so vital that in the event the narrator commits a gaffe, or seems to deviate from the storyline, the audience will simply accept the event as an aberration to which the rest of the society is liable and thus save the narrator the unnecessary embarrassment of a correction. In a different context, Pellowski (1990:12) observes that traditionally, “a storyteller carried the images of not only an entertainer but also a sacred functionary, a historian, a teacher or a healer for both young and old of society.” It is indeed true to assign these roles to the narrator in the sense that storytelling at its basic level is primarily meant for entertainment. This then calls for a narrator to perform the narrative in a way that is not only educating but also entertaining.

From an examination of Bukusu oral narratives in this section, it emerges that both the narrator and the audience have shared knowledge and common perceptions about the world. To reveal the close relationship between the audience and the narrator in Bukusu oral narratives, the narrator may probe the audience to suggest the kind of narrative they want performed. The narrators could then go ahead to pick on one but promise to perform to the audience many more narratives. It is significant to note that Bukusu oral narratives

in particular perform real social functions in that they are at the core of the construction of the Bukusu perception on communal coexistence.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has focused on the significance of performance in suggesting meaning in Bukusu oral narratives. The chapter has examined works done on performance and drawn on such works to locate the place of performance in Bukusu oral narratives. This is predicated on the fact that performance plays a significant role in the final interpretation of meaning in Bukusu oral narratives. Talking about the construction of Bukusu perceptions through oral narrative performance calls for a clear understanding of the performative aspects that characterise these oral narratives. Therefore, to effectively interpret meaning in these oral narratives calls for an understanding of the performance arena that gives rise to them. This then validates the present chapter. The next chapter focuses on the recurrent themes in Bukusu oral narratives.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Recurrent Themes in Bukusu Oral Narrative Performance**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, the study focused on performance of Bukusu oral narratives indicating how elements of performance contribute to meaning-making. This chapter focuses on six major themes prevalent in Bukusu oral narratives. These are: heroism, social justice, friendship and honesty, generosity and hospitality, love and affection as well as hatred and jealousy. These themes form the bulk of the issues that appeared in a number of oral narratives in this study. The significance of examining themes is informed by the fact that Bukusu perception on communal coexistence is indeed suggested by the kind of themes recurrent in oral narratives.

#### **3.1 Heroism**

Heroism is a good and thoughtful deed committed by someone who acts on his or her instincts to bring some desired change. Conventionally, heroism entails the ability to acquire public approval through excellent performance. Most heroic acts are exhibited in satisfying a high purpose or reaching a noble end. These heroic deeds are mainly committed by heroes and heroines in the society. In her comments on heroes and heroines in Bukusu narratives, Namulunda (2005:4) posits that “heroes and heroines in these narratives are basically ordinary farmers, shepherds/herdsmen, husbands or orphans all of whom represent familiar social roles.” An examination of many of the oral narratives in this study depicts heroes and heroines who sometimes bring wealth to the family or rescue lost girls or even the entire community. This is a recurrent motif in many Bukusu oral narratives. The audience identifies with the protagonist in these narratives. The

Bukusu children listening to these oral narratives are in essence socialised to understand that they belong to a given community which they are bound to protect and nurture. This ideally instills the sense of “ours” and “theirs” among the young audience who keenly follow the events as they unfold in the narratives. This creation of “them” and “us” is vital to the present study in that it plays a significant role in interpreting the kind of relationships that exist between the Bukusu and other communities.

In N2, *Nasio and Her Brother*, for instance, Nasio’s brother braves the dangers associated with the ogres to save his sister and the entire village from the ogres. This is prompted by the cruelty of the ogre that has swallowed many people in the village and eventually swallows Nasio. Nasio’s brother, therefore, vows to avenge the killing of his sister and sets out to the land of ogres. In his resolve to avenge his sister’s killing, the narrator, assuming the role of Nasio’s brother angrily retorted: “*ese ndonda khusiamulia omwana wa mayi. Siamulia silicha khundia sesi*” thus, “I will follow whatever ate my mother’s daughter. Whatever ate her will also eat me.” This is a daring act given the fact that the young boy is hardly armed as he faces the ferocious ogre. One appreciates this form of courage from a young fellow with unknown identity. It is worthy observing that hitherto, the narrator has not bothered to reveal to the audience the name of Nasio’s brother. This renders the young man inconsequential in the narrative prior to the events that lead to his killing of the ogre. He single handedly traces the ogre to its residence and kills it using a magical sword. Before the ogre dies, it lets out Nasio and many other people that it had swallowed. This marks a turning point in the life of Nasio’s brother. Henceforth, the identity of Nasio’s brother is transformed from a little known young man to a respectable person in the Bukusu community. This is as a result of his heroic deeds. He is no longer

the unknown person but the hero who has saved his sister and the entire community from extinction.

In N4, *Lemata and Katamba*, Lemata finds himself in a similar situation in pursuit of Katamba's ancestral spear. He travels to the land of ogres and braves the dangers associated with such an endeavour. When he eventually comes back home with Katamba's spear in addition to King Ogre's tail, he wins accolades from the audience and the community in general for bravely destroying the ogre. It should be reiterated that conventionally, the ogre is regarded as "the other" being that comes to destroy the existing peace. Bukusu oral narratives, therefore, construct the ogres as such hence destroying these ogres is considered heroic in the community. Lemata's decision to follow the ogre right into the land of ogres is indeed an act of heroism. One shivers at the thought of Lemata coming face to face with ogres far away from fellow human beings. The vivid description of the cutting of ogre's tail is quite heroic. The narrator says of Lemata thus: "*oli musilo akari kamanani khakayirira, Lemata kenyokha munungo kalaa nende embalu yewe nakhala kumusiembe kwe linani...*" thus, "in the middle of the night when the ogres were snoring, Lemata came out of the firewood rack and cut off ogre's tail..." At this point in performance, the narrator stood and dramatised the tiptoeing of Lemata towards the imaginery unsuspecting ogres in the house. The audience, on the other hand, held their breath as if anticipating trouble for Lemata. Indeed, it calls for courage to be able to accomplish what Lemata accomplishes in the land of ogres. On returning home, Lemata is accorded a hero's reception by members of his community while Katamba is ridiculed for subjecting a fellow kinsman to such a harrowing experience. In the narration, the narrator happily looked at the audience and ended his

narration thus: “*Babukusu bafwala Lemata lichabe ne khumukhola omuruki wabwe. Katamba naye bandu bamualaba khukhwamila abwenao khu niko kakholela owasie.Nalukano lwase luwelao.*”(The Bukusu fitted Lemata in a traditional armlet and made him their leader. Katamba, on the other hand was isolated for what he had done to a fellow kinsman.) The fact that the narrator is happy and the ending arouses applause from the audience demonstrates Bukusu regard for heroism. Lemata, in the present circumstances, is the indisputable hero.

In his comments on the presence of ogres in Maragoli oral narratives, Kabaji (2006: 108) posits that: “in all relationships where the ogre appears, the element of evil creates disharmony and hence its symbolic significance as the villain who is always ready to commit evil.” Kabaji, therefore, argues that ogres in Maragoli community are sources of evil and should be shunned by human beings for smooth running of the society. On the whole, it can be argued that the ultimate aim of the ogres in Bukusu oral narratives is to execute fatal crimes. The ogres are cast as greedy since they destroy everything in sight once they have their way. In this narrative, Lemata is nearly destroyed by the ogre that has comflaged itself as a beautiful girl before the unsuspecting Lemata.

In N15, *Bukusu Circumcision*, the killing of the python by Mango saves the Bukusu and their neighbours from possible extinction. It should be pointed out that this python had defeated many people including valiant warriors from the neighbouring Sabot community. Its killing by Mango makes him the hero of the narrative. News of his heroic deed spread across the land and to mark his courage, the Sabots circumcise him so as to attain a full warrior status. Henceforth, he is treated with respect both from the Bukusu and other communities who had hitherto paid little attention to his existence. To capture

Mango's bravery, the narrator stated thus: "*yabebe yino yaba embofu nekenda erengisia kimirongoro nende kamabale. Lino likila onyala wauka bunyindafu bwe babandu nga Mango.*" Thus, "this python was so huge that whenever it moved trees and stones would shake. This makes one wonder at the bravery exhibited by people like Mango." Indeed, the fact that valiant warriors from the Sabot community had failed to kill this deadly python makes Mango a hero when he manages to kill it.

An examination of this narrative reveals some degree of symbolism in the sense that it touches on communal search for unity. In his comments on Bukusu circumcision, Shadrack Bulimo (2013:304) posits that "in Bukusu, double-bladed knives are used with each knife cutting four initiates – one side chopping two older boys while the other side cuts the young ones." Bulimo argues that this forges a bond among the four initiates and it becomes a strong symbol of brotherhood from that moment onwards as the initiates refer to one another as *bakoki* or those who shared the knife. It is instructive; at this point to comment on the symbolic significance of the two young and two older boys who share the circumcision knife. The message in this scenario is communal desire for continuity whereby the older boys are expected to hand over responsibilities to the young ones. This ensures that communal values and general way of life continue to be passed from one generation to the other. It is, however, imperative to note, though sadly, that the practice of using one blade on different initiates has forthwith changed due to biomedical reasons. It is sad because the symbolic significance of circumcision, which in most cases was vital in forging communal unity has been watered down in the process of adopting modern methods of circumcision.

From the above discussion, it emerges that the Bukusu community has adopted the circumcision narrative to reveal the imagined differences between the Bukusu and their Sabot neighbours. This is because the Bukusu take pride in playing a significant role in killing the python that had defeated the Sabots. Consequently, young people listening to this narrative are socialised to imagine they are superior to other neighbouring communities. To appreciate this position calls for a close reading of Freud (1930:114) who argues that “it is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love, so long as there are other people left over to receive the manifestations of their aggressiveness.” Precisely it is communities with adjoining territories, and related to each other as well, that are always engaged in constant feuds and in ridiculing each other. From the narrative, *The Bukusu circumcision*, it is clear that heroism among the Bukusu is not just about circumcision; it is also about the circumstances and mode of circumcision. This explains why Mango’s action of killing the python is juxtaposed with the Sabot warriors who had failed to do so. It is imperative to state that the mode of circumcision among the Bukusu gives them courage to perform impossible actions like killing the dreaded python. This makes them different from their Sabot neighbours who could not think of killing the python.

In N17, *Mwambu and Sela*, Mwambu kills the dangerous ogre and saves both Sela and the community from constant danger posed by this ogre. In this narrative, the entire Bukusu land is faced with famine for a long period. In trying to establish the cause, it is found out that the sea ogre is responsible and he wants Sela, the king’s only daughter, in exchange for the rains. This is a difficult task but the king accepts to sacrifice Sela for the sake of the community. Mwambu is the only young man who comes out to challenge this

inhumanity by facing it off with the sea monster and eventually kills it. This is a rare show of courage. Bukusu children, especially boys, are socialised to grow up quite aware that they have the responsibility of not only providing for the family but also protecting it from potential enemies.

The consistent picture that comes on the mind of the young audience, especially the boys listening to these narratives and learns from them through the process of identification is that they are expected to be courageous, brave and adventurous. This is necessary in order for them to protect those around them and create wealth for their families. Bukusu boys, therefore grow up with this kind of attitude into adulthood. The female audience in these narratives looks up at men as symbols of authority given the role they play in protecting their families and community at large.

In many Bukusu oral narratives such as N2, N4 and N17, heroes are boys and men who are detached and independent. These heroes depart from home while girls operate from their domestic domains. They go out to wander in the wilderness to bring wealth to their families and protect the community from external destruction. In N2, Nasio's brother is the one who takes out livestock every morning and returns at sunset in a world full of ogres. Later, he leaves home and pursues the ogre that has killed his sister. When he finally catches up with it, Nasio and the rest of the community are rescued. In N4, Lemata leaves home and follows the ogre that has escaped with Katamba's spear. He does this without fearing the consequences. Similarly, in N17, Mwambu is isolated from the rest of the community when he goes out of his way to save Sela from the ogre. What looks like a bizarre affair at the onset eventually bears fruit when the ogre is killed thus saving Sela and the rest of the community. Male heroes are presented so to show the

necessary risk that all aspiring heroes are bound to undergo. Heroes in these narratives are to a great extent expected to be risk takers.

Although highly vulnerable, the heroes in Bukusu oral narratives are presented as capable of reaching distant, highest goals. They are capable of withstanding tension. Many a time, they reach their goal after struggle with powerful forces. They are saviours of the women folk and destroyers of evil. Ironically, these heroes are in most cases assisted by benevolent powers as seen in N2 and N17 where both Nasio's brother and Mwambu use magical swords to kill the ogres. Similarly, in N4, Lemata receives help from pigeon and his dogs. It can be concluded, from the above examples, that a number of Bukusu oral narratives extol heroism in the community. What emerges from these oral narratives is that heroic deeds do not go unrewarded in the sense that they not only benefit an individual but also the entire community. In N2, for instance, the action of Nasio's brother saving his sister from the ogres not only elevates his social standing in the society but also rids off the entire community the constant danger posed by these ogres. The audience listening to Bukusu oral narrative performance is socialised to appreciate heroism as a central quality to the Bukusu community at large.

### **3.2 Social Justice**

The question of social justice is one of the most artistically depicted in Bukusu oral narrative performance and one in which the narrator takes a stand particularly on the side of the less privileged members of the community or victims of injustice. This lot who include children, women, the physically challenged and orphans are ultimately raised above societal expectations. This position finds semblance in Mwanzi (2005: 11), who, in a different context, discusses the paradox of the lowly in oral narratives. She suggests that



“the portrayal of the lowly in our oral narratives is symbolic of our innermost fear of a replication of their plight in our lives. Because we do not understand what exactly led to their plight, we choose to treat them with awe.” It can be inferred that Mwanzi argues for an elevation of this group above the rest; they have to automatically outshine their well endowed counterparts later in life. This is aptly summarised as reversal of roles where the physically acceptable members of the community are challenged by the less acceptable ones.

Mwanzi’s assertion is best exemplified in N1, *Simbi and Nakitumba*, when Nakitumba, the physically challenged rises above her physical deformity and saves the rest of the bridal party from being eaten by ogres. She is juxtaposed with her step sister, Simbi, who although endowed with physical beauty, she suffers deficiency in discerning right from wrong. This is blamed on her pride which makes her feel better than other people in the community. In the same narrative, the barren woman who is hitherto unknown to the community because of childlessness is elevated when she happens to be the one who welcomes Toad that has saved the girls from the ogres. Fortunes change for her when these girls eventually get married and bring wealth to her home in form of bride wealth.

A similar scenario is replicated in N16, *Wanakhatandi*, where the protagonist, Wanakhatandi, abandons his wife and ten daughters. In this narrative, Wanakhatandi does not seem to attach any value to his wife and ten daughters. When the ogres catch up with him and threaten to eat him, he quickly offers a solution thus: “*eeh!eeh! mukhanjira tawe. Ndamuyeta munyole chinyama chingali. Namusima mukhanjira tawe.* Thus, “Please! please! Do not kill me. I will help you find more meat. Please do not kill me.” In the actual performance, the narrator posed and looked at the audience as if wondering how a

man who is charged with the responsibility of providing security to his family could be the same person offering to surrender the very family to ogres. The tension in the narrative was captured when the audience exclaimed “*Waaah!*” at the thought of what Wanakhatandi was just about to do. In this instance, reference to more meat suggests Wanakhatandi’s wife and children. One wonders at this callous nature of Wanakhatandi. To him, his promise to the ogres is meant to save his life at the expense of his family that he has little regard for. Nevertheless, at the end of the narrative, the despised wife and children are the ones who come to his aid when he is almost being eaten by the ogres. The neglected wife and children emerge as the heroines of the narrative as the haughty Wanakhatandi is humbled.

In this oral narrative, social justice is seen to prevail when Wanakhatandi’s evil is punished. That the ogres nearly eat him up serves as a wake up call to all those who condone evil that such evil practices are bound to be punished. The harrowing experience that Wanakhatandi goes through and the way he asks for help from his hitherto despised family is in itself humiliating and punishment enough. In the performance, the agony that Wanakhatandi goes through was brought out when the narrator sadly assumed the role of Wanakhatandi and sang thus:

*Wanakhatandi khetekhe endiena?*      Wanakhatandi how shall I cook myself?

*Babana bange betekha bariena?*      How did my children cook themselves??

*Omukhasi wange ketekha ariena?*      How did my wife cook herself?

At this point in narration, there was mixed reaction among the audience with some sympathising with Wanakhatandi while others, especially men, blaming him for

displaying cowardice. The narrator ends this narrative by noting that Wanakhatandi eventually goes back to his “*nabulobe*” or despised wife and they live happily together. It is instructive to note that Wanakhatandi goes back to his despised wife a dejected person. This is a humbled man who needs love and understanding from his wife and family at large. He is ready to subscribe to the dictates of the hitherto despised wife and daughters. This oral narrative deconstructs the accepted view that men are the ones charged with the responsibility of protecting their families.

In N12, *A Beautiful Proud Maiden*, the audience is treated to yet another narrative on social justice. In this narrative, the young woman sets up a difficult task for anyone who wants to marry her. She demands that anyone to marry her must be able to thread a complete waistband of beads using his teeth. Many suitors fail but one man whose body is covered in scabies succeeds. When this man initially appeared on stage during the oral performance, some members of the audience giggled while others whistled as if wondering about what really motivated him. So when he finally succeeds, the young woman is shocked but again sets up another task demanding that the man goes down the lake and brings a single feather guarded by the lake ogre. This new demand set the audience grumbling at the apparent display of pride from the maiden. Murmurs of “*aaah! tawe!*” or “*aaah! no!*” could be heard from the audience. These murmurs were meant to empathise with the man whom the audience felt was being subjected to uncalled for suffering. However, undeterred, the man moves on, and when he accomplishes this task, he gets cleansed in the process. The two get married. At the end of this oral narrative, social justice prevails in the sense that the man has fulfilled his part of the bargain and therefore deserves to marry this proud maiden. The fact that the proud maiden agrees to

get married to this man is another level where social justice is realised in this performance. The maiden has lived to her word and the audience applauds when she gets married to this young man who has accomplished what most men could not.

One can rightly argue that the Bukusu attach a lot of significance on social justice. In N1, for example, Nakitumba's perception of the ogres is beyond our understanding. Despite her physical deformity, she is depicted as possessing the power to see through deceit. This is something lacking in the beautiful Simbi. Nakitumba is equally determined to ensure that ogres do not succeed in killing the bridal party. She secretly follows Simbi to her marital home and manages to lead the girls to a safe escape from the ogres. This is an act of both determination and sacrifice. In N12, the act of the man with scabies going down the lake in search of a single feather guarded by the sea ogre is indeed a daring act that the faint-hearted cannot even make an attempt. Eventually, his cleansing is something beyond our comprehension. Probably, this is as a result of some benevolent powers. In N16, Wanakhatandi's wife is driven by personal resolve to save her children from the ogres. One wonders how this despised woman single-handedly dupes the ogres into believing that they have consumed her entire family.

From the foregoing, it can be inferred that the Bukusu community hold social justice in high esteem. This form of justice, however, comes with a lot of sacrifice and determination. Through oral narrative performance, the community is enlightened on some forces out to eliminate social justice. Nonetheless, members of the community are socialised to remain focused in their endeavour to realise social justice in the society. This calls for a sense of commitment, sacrifice and determination.

### 3.3 Friendship and Honesty

Generally, Bukusu oral narratives underline routes to be taken, and routes to avoid. A number of these narratives comment on friendship and its impact on personal and interpersonal relationships. What begins as friendship may eventually degenerate into hatred, betrayal and desire to revenge. In N4, *Lemata and Katamba*, the two friends, Lemata and Katamba, live together happily and share a lot of experiences in common. The two are said to be even competing in marrying many wives. This goes on until Katamba's son accidentally swallows a bead belonging to Lemata's wife. This sets the stage for a major conflict resulting to Katamba killing his son and removing the bead from his belly so as to appease Lemata's wife. This seemingly contemptible deed by Katamba marks a major turning point in the relationship of the two friends. Henceforth, things will never be the same. What one does not pose to ask is why Katamba had to flog his son to death. Matters get worse when Lemata loses Katamba's ancestral spear in pursuit of ogres. The latter, driven by the urge to revenge, demands to be given his original spear. This prompts Lemata to make a herculean journey to the land of ogres to get back his friend's spear.

In the process of performance, the narrator, acting the role of Katamba, angrily pointed at the audience and declared: "*nenya lifumo liange. Lifumo nilio baba kandekhela.*" or "I want my spear. The spear which was handed down to me by my father!" This points to Katamba's resolve to get back his spear without considering the consequences of such a demand from a friend. What emerges in this narrative is Lemata's ability to not only come back with the spear but also bring king ogre's tail, which is a mark of bravery and

wealth given that he had withered all the risks involved in facing ogres. The fact that Katamba insists on being given his original spear smacks of high level of hypocrisy in a seemingly friendly relationship. Katamba is brought out as quite insincere in his friendship with Lemata. This is one friendship that has been built on falsehood on the part of Katamba. Lemata, on the other hand is presented as being sincere and honest in his friendship. This is revealed when he unquestioningly takes the dangerous step of following the ogres to retrieve Katamba's spear. He does this hoping to appease his friend so that their friendship may thrive.

From this oral narrative, the audience is encouraged to be wary of the kind of friends that one makes since we have those who thrive in falsehoods. This narrative is crucial in capturing Bukusu perceptions on friendship in that it enlightens the community on the need to live peacefully. From this narrative, the audience and the Bukusu community in general is socialised to embrace honesty in dealings with those we relate with; not because we anticipate some form of assistance but because it is a virtue worthy emulating.

In N20, *Hen and Hawk*, the two are friends and do many things together. One day, Hawk comes to visit Hen. After a brief discussion, Hen asks Hawk to lend her a razor blade so that she could shave her children. Hawk agrees on condition that her friend does not lose the razor blade. Hen shaves the children and keeps the razor safely in the house. The next day, she wants to use it but she does not trace it. She remembers Hawk's warning and it sends worries in her. She goes round the house once more looking everywhere to no avail. She even goes outside where her children are playing and scratches the ground just in case one of her children has gone outside with it. She, however, completely fails to get

the razor blade. This sets the stage for a confrontation between the once bosom friends. Hawk threatens to be taking Hen's chicks for as long as her razor blade is still missing.

In this oral narrative, the question of gullibility and dependency in friendship is brought to the fore. The narrator brings out Hen as possessing both characteristics. She is gullible in the sense that she fails to understand the fact that their friendship is bound to fail given that Hawk is indeed a predator while she, Hen, is a prey. Consequently, their friendship is built on falsehood. Hen is equally depicted as being dependable when she relies on Hawk for some basics like razor blade. From this narrative, it is clear that the Bukusu community discourages dependency and gullibility in friendship. True friendship should be symbiotic unlike the one witnessed in this narrative. The audience is equally socialised to understand the kind of friends who come our way. People should always question the intentions of their friends before fully committing themselves.

An examination of this narrative reveals the need for communal sharing. The audience is socialised to be ready to help one another especially those who are in need. This is a clear revelation of the existence of communalism alluded to by Appiah (2007:14) when he writes that "...a lot of what we take to be right or wrong is simply a matter of customs". Appiah observes that from the positivist slant, what is custom is linked to values, which in the end, "guide our acts, thoughts and our feelings."(p.25). It is in this context that he states that being kind is an attribute of experience more than any other variable since "people learn to be kind by being treated kindly and noticing it." Inasmuch as Appiah stresses the need for values that guide the society, it is instructive to observe that such values only count where people are willing to learn from one another. However, this is not always the case. In N20, the question of communal relationships is clearly captured

when the narrator appeals to the audience to be wary of the kind of friends they make as some of them may cause more misery than joy as is the case between Hawk and Hen in this oral narrative.

From the above narratives, it emerges that in the Bukusu community, people come together driven by shared goals or simply the desire to help one another. Nevertheless, this relationship is sometimes exploited by those people with malicious intentions. The audience is therefore socialised to be wary of the existence of such malicious people in their presence who may pose potential threats to personal and communal relationships. Generally, the Bukusu perception on friendship and honesty is clearly captured in these narratives.

### **3.4 Generosity and Hospitality**

Bukusu oral narratives also extol generosity and hospitality as some of the core values in the society. The two are vital for peaceful personal and communal relationships.

Commenting on the significance of generosity, Makila (1978: 109) observes:

generosity and tolerance were and are still regarded as mandatory qualities of a good leader. Future leaders were as a result groomed from amongst the youth who naturally displayed a generous disposition and courteous behaviour. Those who indulged in malicious gossip, behaved rudely, lost temper easily and proved selfish were automatically disqualified from assuming honourable titles in the community.

Makila's position reflects the values of the Bukusu community with regard to generosity.

It is instructive at this point to observe that indeed the community still attaches a lot of significance to this important virtue. A close scrutiny of N3 *Hare Steals a Hen*, N6, *Apelu* and N7 *Three Men Meet a Strange Old Woman* reveals that the Bukusu community holds the two interrelated virtues in high esteem. In N3 for example, the two friends, Hare and



Leopard, live together and share whatever resources they have amicably. The two are ready to sacrifice whatever they have for each other. It is this generosity and hospitality that Hare takes advantage of to exploit Leopard. He feigns sickness to avoid working on the farm. This leaves Leopard working alone as Hare stays home to cook. He eventually steals a hen from Tortoise and prepares a delicious meal for his friend, Leopard. Later, Tortoise finds out who the thief is and Hare is apprehended. However, the cunning Hare still manages to escape unpunished. He easily dupes the two thus: “*Wuuuuuuuwi, Mukhanjira ta ... namwenya mundekhe bulayi, munde muningilo embofu mala muremo chikhanu lundi mukhala mumaika chikhu chingali tawe. Likhutu nende Engwe bakhola nga nebabolelwe.*” thus, “*Wuuuuuuuwi*, don’t kill me...but if you want to cook me then put me in a big pot containing simsim relish on dying ambers.” This episode left the audience in laughter at the thought of a person who is on the wrong deciding the mode of punishment. The humour in it was even heightened when both Leopard and Tortoise unwittingly accepted Hare’s proposal.

In this narrative, Hare attempts to prove his generosity by stealing from Tortoise so as to appease Leopard and thus maintain their friendship. This earns him punishment. It is therefore evident that through this oral narrative, the Bukusu community appears to be suggesting that generosity should go hand in hand with hard work. This explains why Hare is punished for refusing to work and pretending to be generous. He is punished for his hypocritical tendencies hence the community is warned against condoning this evil.

In N6, the Bukusu community is depicted as one that values generosity and hospitality. It should be noted that Apelu is a stranger who enjoys the good will and hospitality of the Bukusu community despite his apparent pride. He comes unnoticed and settles in a

Bukusu village where he rarely mingles with the local people. Despite this open show of disregard for the locals, the Bukusu still allow him to settle in their midst. They are even ready to allow their sons to woo, Namikasa, Apelu's daughter. This is the kind of society that is advocated for in Bukusu oral narratives; a society where regard for human dignity overrides communal and ethnic background. Nonetheless, Apelu is depicted as someone out to abuse this hospitality from the host community. When he realises that Hare is going to marry his daughter, Namikasa, he escapes from Bukusu land. In the actual narration, this episode attracted some sense of sympathy from both the narrator and the audience as murmurs of disapproval could be heard from the audience. The narrator says of Apelu, "*Oli silo Apelu kapurukha kacha mwikulu niye kama sikila sekenya omwana wewe abeyisibwe nende Wanakhamuna tawe.*" thus, "at night, Apelu flew to the heavens where he had come from because he did not want his daughter to be married to Hare." This is abuse of hospitality that the narrator and the Bukusu community at large join hands in condemning.

However, generosity among the Bukusu should not be taken to imply that the community has a soft ground for laziness. Indeed, there was and still is no room for such a vice in the community and those who obviously display such characteristics are publicly ridiculed. Musungu (2011:31) posits that "in the traditional Bukusu community, the mechanism of sharing societal benefits ensured that the community reciprocated individual contribution." This implies that every member of the family had to play his role and fully cooperate with other members effectively. This mutual social responsibility which began at family level was extended to the entire community.

In N7, the narrator presents a situation where three men meet a strange old woman. This narrative presents a situation where there is high regard for the elderly irrespective of their background. It is worthy observing that one of the three men takes compassion on the old woman and offers to assist her cross the flooded river. However, after crossing the river, the old woman refuses to disembark from the man's back. At nightfall, the strange woman disembarks from the man's back to eat meat. This gives the three men a chance to escape. Later Hyena that has sensed meat appears and the strange woman jumps on his back mistaking him for the man. The frightened Hyena speeds off and drowns in the sea with the woman still firmly perched on his back. In this oral narrative, the audience wonders at the man's show of compassion on a person hitherto unknown to him. This is a generous and hospitable heart that is lacking in the two other men.

This oral narrative reveals communal perception of dependency and ingratitude. The strange woman is depicted as exhibiting the two ills. It is because of her dependency that she clings on the man's back and eventually Hyena's leading to her death. The narrative, therefore, captures communal disapproval of dependency. The old woman is equally ungrateful when she refuses to appreciate the hospitality accorded her by the man who does not know her. In the actual narration, the narrator and the audience exclaimed when the strange woman refused to disembark from the man's back. There was a tense mood in the sitting room of Martin Makhanu, our narrator, as both the audience and the narrator pondered on what would befall this gentle man at the hands of the seemingly ungrateful woman. In this narrative, members of the Bukusu community are encouraged to embrace gratitude whenever they receive assistance from all sources.

From the above examples of Bukusu oral narratives, it can be deduced that the Bukusu community upholds generosity and hospitality. These are important virtues needed in the contemporary society for self sufficiency and peaceful relationships both at personal and communal levels. The two values, it should be noted, go hand in hand with hard work since there is no room for laziness in the Bukusu community. Nonetheless, the audience is warned of the presence of some impediments to these noble virtues in the name of those out to take advantage to exploit others. Such people should not be given an opportunity to derail the community from these age long virtues that hold the fabric of the Bukusu community together.

### **3.5 Love and Affection**

There are several Bukusu oral narratives which demonstrate vividly the presence of love and affection either among the Bukusu as an autonomous group or between the Bukusu and other people. Most oral narratives on love and affection are characterised with a lot of self sacrifice for the common good. Love, in most of these narratives is advanced at two levels thus; filial and erotic. Whereas filial love involves sibling to sibling or children and parents, erotic love is concerned with emotional feelings especially sexual. Some notable oral narratives where these forms of love have been captured include: N1, *Simbi and Nakitumba*, N2 *Nasio and Her Brother*, N15, *The Bukusu Circumcision*, N16, *Wanakhatandi* and N17, *Mwambu and Sela*.

In N1, for example, Nakitumba is driven by filial love in her endeavours to save her proud sister from the ogres. Driven by arrogance and pride emerging from her sterling beauty, Simbi is not willing to listen to her hunch back step sister, Nakitumba, about the possibility of getting married to an ogre. She is completely lacking in the wisdom that

Nakitumba exhibits. With all the abuses she hurls at Nakitumba, the latter does not lose heart in her resolve to save her step sister from the ogres. She opts to follow Simbi to her marital home to her sister's chagrin who thinks Nakitumba is a source of embarrassment to her because of her physical deformity. It calls for selfless love on the part of Nakitumba to stomach all these abuses from her step sister and still forge ahead to help her. This is a courageous move that involves risking her life in the face of ogres. From this narrative, it can be argued that Bukusu oral narratives are vital in underscoring the need for selflessness and courage in our endeavours to demonstrate our love.

In N2, Nasio's brother equally makes a great sacrifice to save his only sister. Prior to the striking of the ogres, the two young people are presented as living together peacefully. They really love each other and indeed live for each other. This explains why the young man is really pained at the death of his sister at the hands of the ogre. He resolves to trace the ferocious ogre to its hiding place without considering the dangers involved. One would have expected him to run for his life at the thought of these dangerous creatures that have wiped out the entire village. This, however, does not dissuade him from pursuing the ogre until he kills it and avenges the death of his sister. When the swallowed people including Nasio come back to life, it is all jubilation in Bukusu land. The audience in this narrative is reminded of the need to embrace genuine love for those we interact with. It is this love coupled with heroism that leads to the boy's success. A deeper examination of these oral narratives reveals that the magical resurrection as witnessed in N2 points to some hidden forces that support the underprivileged.

The end of this story climaxing with the killing of the ogre and the resurrection of the entire village also signals the end of fantasy exploration. The fantastic journey by Nasio's

brother to the land of ogres to face the ferocious creatures produces a mature Bukusu man ready to ensure peace and harmony prevails not just within the homestead but also the entire Bukusu community. It is even more telling that the father of the hero is not even mentioned at the end of the narrative. This is intentionally crafted to pass over the mantle of leadership to the young man. The killing of the ogre who is a symbol of evil forces that threaten the Bukusu community should be seen as a signal to the communal desire to subdue and overcome all forces that threaten their peaceful coexistence. The community feels the urgent need for the young people to take up the responsibility of ensuring peace prevails in the community.

This is similar to N17 where Mwambu is ready to sacrifice his life in order to save Sela from the greedy ogre who has demanded her as a sacrifice in order to release the rains. In both stories, the two young men kill the dreaded ogres using magic swords. Most of our male respondents seem to concur that the magic swords symbolise some form of authority inherent in male members of the community. This drives us into the other domain of the Bukusu which is predominantly male dominated community. It is no wonder that in most ogre narratives, it is the young men who emerge to challenge the ogres.

N15 and N16 equally provide examples of selfless love at family levels. In the two narratives, parents exercise a lot of sacrifice in their endeavour to save their loved ones. In N15, for example, Mango is able to kill the dreaded python single-handedly after it has swallowed his daughter. This is a snake that has caused a lot of untold suffering in the Bukusu community and its neighbouring Sabots. It has swallowed; people and livestock alike thus threatening the livelihood of the affected communities who rely mainly on

animal husbandry. This, however, does not deter Mango from confronting the deadly python. His success in killing the python is symbolic of the communal success in the face of evil.

In N16, this selfless love lacks in Wanakhatandi but it is in his wife. Driven by love for her children, she cannot come to think of giving them up to the greedy ogres without putting up a spirited fight. She devices means of duping the ogres into believing that they are feasting on her family members when in reality they are being fed on banana stems. At the end of the narrative, the audience feels some sense of relief when this woman, through incomparable wit, manages to outshine the ogres. This wins her praise and her hitherto uncaring husband is lost for words as it dawns on him that the very woman he has always looked down upon is indeed the one who has saved his life and that of his entire family. The motivating factor for this heroic deed is love for her family. In N17, Mwambu is driven by his love for Sela to kill the ogre that has threatened to annihilate the entire community through continued famine. This love eventually yields fruits when he is married to Sela upon killing the ogre.

From the above examples of oral narratives, it emerges that love and affection are held in high esteem among the Bukusu. Many people are found to be displaying these characteristics to their loved ones at different levels. It is significant to observe that true love and affection calls for selflessness and determination among the parties that are involved. The audience listening to the above narratives comes face to face with the challenges that people go through in their quest to exhibit acts of love and affection. The audience is, however, socialised to acknowledge the value of these two virtues since they are at the centre of communal relationships.

### 3.6 Hatred and Jealousy

There are a number of Bukusu oral narratives which clearly articulate the aspects of hatred and jealousy. In some narratives, girls exhibit unimaginable jealousy toward one another. This jealousy is sometimes as a result of sheer envy of the physical beauty of some of the girls. In N19, *Girls Who Went to Harvest Fruits*, for instance, the girls are driven by hatred stemming from sheer jealousy to their friend whom they feel is more beautiful and probably more loved than themselves. Their hatred is so intense that they take advantage of being away from home and abandon her in the forest to perish. They succeed in their evil deeds by duping her to close her eyes as they pick fruits while they keep their eyes wide open. Upon realising that she has not picked ripe fruits, she requests her friends to accompany her back to the forest but they flatly refuse. This prompts her to go back to the forest alone and in the process gets arrested by an ogre.

The success of these girls is, however, short lived when the rejected girl finally finds her way back to the village. She eventually gets married in a pompous wedding while her friends are shunned by all potential suitors in the village. What should not be lost in this narrative is the fact that these girls venture into the forest which is regarded as home for ogres and other dangerous creatures. It is only the brave who can venture there and come back alive. This view is vividly brought out when the narrator, Maureen Masika, slowed her pace of narration as she talked about the young woman deciding to go back to the forest alone. There was some moment of suspense as she temporarily paused to look at the audience of four people who in turn shook their heads in a manner suggesting disapproval of what this young woman had decided to do. Regarding the forest as a dangerous place is corroborated by Kabaji (2006: 86), who posits that the forest in



Maragoli folktales is "...a symbol of evil forces which are destructive to human beings." The fact that the forest is home to ferocious ogres points to the dangers associated with it. It is therefore imperative to note that the chances of the girl in our narrative coming out of the forest alive are too minimal. However, poetic justice turns against the wicked girls when their colleague is miraculously saved from the ogres in the forest and comes back to the village.

In N9, *The Cruel Step Mother*, the audience is exposed to yet another show of jealousy exhibited by women in Bukusu oral narratives. In this narrative, the step mother plans to kill her step son without success because every time her plans are revealed to the innocent boy by the woman's own son. However, one day, she inadvertently kills her own son after the trap she has set for her step son turns tragic on her own child. Her hatred towards the step son emanates from the feeling that he is likely to snatch her own son family property. In this narrative, the audience is treated to the fruits of hatred and jealousy. The narrator and audience alike are warned on the dangers of harbouring uncalled for hatred. Inasmuch as the woman's son becomes a mere victim of hatred, the community in general is socialised to refrain from such unbecoming behaviour. The audience groans in pain at the death of the woman's son but praise the act of her husband sending the cruel woman back to her parents. This clearly captures communal disdain for such evil deeds. Through the process of listening and performing this narrative, the female performers and audience in general are able to cleanse themselves of such forms of hatred and treat their step children fairly. This narrative therefore serves as a cleansing agent and provides a cathartic effect at the end when the step mother is punished. At the same time, it can be argued that this narrative questions the continuous absence of men

from their homes and warns that this is bound to bring trouble as witnessed in this oral narrative.

An examination of oral narratives on hatred and jealousy reveal the Bukusu perceptions on these vices. Many of them end with the defeat and/or punishment of wicked people. In N9, the cruel step mother is punished for displaying inhuman characteristics which are against the spirit of communalism. Her evil tendencies are symbolic of the existence of evil in the society. The destruction of these evil forces paves way for peaceful personal and communal relationships as revealed in the closing formula of people living happily thereafter. This is the ideal society that the Bukusu community in particular and the rest of the society aspire to realise. The existence of an ideal society, however, remains a challenge in the sense that conflicts will continue to be manifested at all levels in any given society. This view is clearly articulated by Wachtel (1998:2) who argues that “no matter how similar a group of people appears to be on the surface, there is sure to be some level at which differences appear.” Wachtel’s position seems to suggest that differences are indeed real even in communities that claim to be homogeneous. Conversely, no matter how heterogeneous a group of people might appear, to an observer, there is a level at which its members could choose to see each other as belonging to one nation. These views are significant to the present study in the sense that they guide the researcher in examining both what unites and divides different people or groups of people in the society.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has captured some of the dominant themes in Bukusu oral narrative performance. Some of these themes include: heroism, social justice, friendship and

honesty, generosity and hospitality, love and affection as well as hatred and jealousy. It has been established that many of these narratives focus on themes deemed to be affecting members of the community in their day to day activities. These themes are critical in the construction of Bukusu perceptions on personal and communal relationships. A close look at the narratives in which these themes are suggested reveal the presence of Bukusu perceptions on a number of issues at the core of Bukusu way of life. For instance, it has emerged that the Bukusu community demands for self sufficiency and condemns over dependency at all levels. At the same time, the community advocates for gratitude whenever we receive any form of assistance from those we interact with. Similarly, vices like ingratitude and laziness are frowned at and those who exhibit such characteristics are considered as outsiders since they fail to live according to the Bukusu way of life. The next chapter focuses on the use of language in Bukusu oral narratives and how this language is significant in constructing Bukusu perceptions.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Language Use and Construction of Bukusu Perceptions on Communal Coexistence**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

The previous chapter examined some of the dominant themes that emerge in Bukusu oral narrative performance and how they contribute to the construction of Bukusu perceptions on personal and interpersonal relationships. This chapter focuses on the use of language in Bukusu oral narratives and how this language is significant in constructing Bukusu perceptions. The major language devices examined include opening and closing formulae, imagery and symbolic language, diminution and augmentation, coded songs as well as strategic repetition.

This chapter is informed by the fact that language is the main medium through which oral artists convey their messages to the audience. In every society, the meaning of a given genre depends upon cultural conventions and this is often indicated by the fact that a name for each genre exists in a local language. Therefore, for a researcher to capture the local meaning assigned to an oral text and place emphasis on the contextual factors, he or she should focus on the communal conception of the oral literature genre and its specific character. This puts language at the centre in the analysis of oral literature performances. Skilled performers manipulate their language in such a way that they are able to psychologically and physically transport their audience into the world of performance. In her comments on the significance of language in literature, Finnegan (1970:55), states: “African literature, like any other, rests on the basis of language...it is so important for the appreciation of African oral literature.” The potentiality of language includes its large and remarkably rich vocabulary at the disposal of artists. This vocabulary can be

exploited by different oral artists to achieve desired effects in oral performances. The rich vocabulary also implies the existence of a variety of language uses in different oral literature subgenres.

This chapter is informed by the fact that oral narratives, like other literature forms, have certain characteristics unique to the oral narrative genre. In most of these narratives, one is likely to encounter the use of a variety of language devices which are employed to communicate Bukusu perceptions. A discussion of these devices is significant in establishing the kind of relationship between the Bukusu and their neighbouring communities. This is due to the fact that through these devices, the Bukusu communicate a lot of information about other communities that neighbour them. This view finds semblance in the works of Anderson (1991) when he argues that language is the main ingredient in the mixture that glues a “nation” together and creates group consciousness. To him, it is language that tells history, evokes images and produces social cohesion. However, the same language tool can be used to draw distinct lines between those who “historically” belong to the nations and those who are “outsiders” and intruders. Anderson rightly captures the significance of language in communal identities. It is true that language plays a major role in disseminating ideas and unifying people with imaginary links. The present study examines the different ways through which the narrator uses language to construct Bukusu identity as different from other groups.

#### **4.1. Opening and Closing Formulae**

The opening formula simply refers to the starting point in oral narrative performance. This formula draws the audience from other preoccupations into the world of narration. Bukusu oral narratives are not complete without the opening formula. In these narratives,

the most popular way of calling the attention of the audience is by the opening remarks: “*yabao khale*” thus “a long time ago.” This is followed by a brief explanation of the events marking that particular time. It could range from ogres eating up the entire humanity in Bukusu country to family or communal differences at some point in history. In N2, *Nasio and Her Brother*, for example, the narrator starts of the narration thus, “*Yabao khaale, kamanani kalia babandu boosi musibala sie Babukusu.*” thus, “Once upon a time, ogres had eaten all people in Bukusu country.” This opening formula is significant in the sense that it draws the attention of the audience who would be eager to learn about what transpired in the past. These views which signal the centrality of the audience in narrative performance find semblance in Miruka (1994: 154) who equates the opening formula to a verbal contract between the narrator and the audience where the former seeks the permission of the latter. The latter’s consent launches the two into a business of narrating and listening. The formula also directs the attention of the audience to the narrator.

In her comments on the value of the opening formula in oral narratives in Africa, Finnegan (1970:380) posits that “the opening formula serves to rouse the interest of the audience, sometimes eliciting a formal response from them as well as setting the mood for the start of the narration.” According to Finnegan therefore, the opening formula is basically an introduction to the narrative session in the sense that it simply prepares the audience for a narrative session. In the present study, the researcher is interested in the significance of the opening formula in underscoring Bukusu perceptions of strangers and how such perceptions impact on communal coexistence. In N2, *Nasio and Her Brother*, like in many other oral narratives on ogres, the narrator sets off by highlighting the

destructive nature of ogres in the face of humanity. Since ogres represent human beings, most likely from enemy communities, such references are critical in capturing Bukusu perceptions of other groups of people. The fact that these groups of people can be likened to ogres reveals the negative perceptions held by the Bukusu towards strangers. The Bukusu probably have certain communities in mind which they associate with ogres. Such perceptions are likely to fuel tensions between the Bukusu and these communities. It is worthy mentioning that what emerges in the opening formula is a pointer to the fact that the community does not exist in isolation. This is core to the present study which seeks to establish the way the Bukusu construct their perceptions on communal coexistence.

Other Bukusu oral narratives still begin by showing the relationship that existed between people in the community. A good example is N4, *Lemata and Katamba* which starts thus: “*Yabao khaale, khwaba nende basale babili mulala bali Lemata nokundi Katamba*” thus, “a long time ago there were two friends; Lemata and Katamba.” This opening formula is critical in signaling the value of friendship which is at the centre of communal way of life. It is worthy stating that the Bukusu live in the community where they relate with other people; both Bukusus and non Bukusus on almost daily basis. The way they relate with one another is vital in capturing the existing personal and communal relationships.

A close look at the significance of the opening formula among Bukusu oral narratives reveals that it is equally useful in capturing the aspect of timelessness that is associated with oral narratives. These narratives have been in existence for as long as humanity itself. This explains why the narrator is not able to situate them in a given timeframe. During our field work, it emerged that the opening formula in Bukusu oral narratives is

not fixed. At times, the narrator may start off the narration with either riddles or proverbs which are aimed at initiating the audience into full participation of the narratives. The narrators may even start with a short song and invite the audience to join them in this song. All these are aimed at making the audience mentally and physically alert for the interesting narrative session in the offing.

From the above discussion on the opening formula in Bukusu oral narratives, it can be inferred that this formula is critical to communal coexistence. This is validated by the fact that the narrator, in the opening formula, introduces the existence of other group identities. This presents a scenario where the Bukusu are in some sort of relationship with different groups of people. The kind of perceptions that the Bukusu have about their neighbours are revealed in the opening formula of the narratives. Such perceptions, whether positive or negative, are bound to influence the way we view one another in the wider society. This makes the opening formula a vital component to the present study.

In most cases, the closing formula in Bukusu oral narratives is “people living happily thereafter.” When asked to comment on the significance of this closing formula, some of our informants, Khamala Matakala, explained that it is the wish of the community to live happily and trounce evil. Our close examination of the oral narratives in this study reveals that in a number of them, the Bukusu community is fighting evil forces in the society ranging from ogres to those ills perpetuated by fellow human beings. For instance, N1, *Simbi and Nakitumba*, N2, *Nasio and her brother* and N17, *Mwambu and Sela* all present a situation where human beings are threatened by ogres. In N2, and N17, the narrator ends by saying “*Khukhwamila ao bandu bamenya bulayi po.*” thus, “from that time henceforth, people lived happily.” Perhaps this could be a pointer to human



desire to eliminate evil from their midst. It should be mentioned that in all the relationships where the ogre appears, the element of evil is eminent. This creates disharmony and hence its symbolic significance as the villain who is always ready to commit evil.

It is imperative to note that a close examination of Bukusu oral narratives reveals that many of these narratives indeed have in mind a given ogre community or communities. To explain the presence of the ogre community even more calls for an examination of N16, *Wanakhatandi*. In this narrative, the language of the ogres is totally different from Bukusu language as exhibited in the following song by the ogres:

Lelo nduurire endiriri,	Today I bagged a heavy one,
mukamba ndarure eye bubwoya	Tomorrow I will bag a hairy one.

The above song is translated from one of the Abaluhya dialects that is different from *Lubukusu*, the language spoken by the Bukusu. This clearly reveals that the ogres in Bukusu oral narratives are from a different community. The fact that these ogres are in constant feuds with the Bukusu community points to communal differences witnessed between the Bukusu and other communities. At this point, it can be argued that ogres are not only strangers to the Bukusu, but they are actually humans of a different community; not from the supernatural or mythical world.

The closing formula in Bukusu oral narratives points to the human desire to overcome all evils that abound in the society and live happily. As a community, the Bukusu are wary of potential enemies who have to be kept at bay by all means. To appreciate this position calls for a closer reading of Sigmund Freud (1949:31) who, in a different context, talks about the Narcissism of Minor Differences. He posits that in Greek mythology, Narcissus was a vain and beautiful hero whom the goddess, Nemesis condemned to fall in love with

his own image as reflected in a pond. He uses the term narcissism as “an expression of morbid self-love,” According to Volkan Vamik (1986: 182), by Narcissism of Minor Differences; “Freud originally meant a special kind of morbid self-love that builds upon an exaggerated notion of how the person differs from people around him/her.” What emerges from this observation is that relations are built based on similarities and differences between groups of people. It suffices that members of a particular group or community embrace their group with an excessive love because they see it as totally different from other groups. Bukusu oral narratives generally employ the opening and closing formulae to reveal communal ties. In most cases, the opening and closing formula are imbued with aspects of peace and the Bukusu community living happily thereafter. Many a time, the peace and tranquility that is expressed in these formulae suffers disruption with the emergence of strangers in the community.

From the above argument, it emerges that it is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love so long as there are other people left over to receive the manifestations of their aggressiveness. It can be rightly argued that the main sociological function of Narcissism of Minor Differences increases cohesion within a given group by directing aggression towards outsiders. However, a significant point to note with regard to Bukusu oral narratives is that outsiders are not necessarily non Bukusu people rather those who do not subscribe to communal values and customs.

Many oral narratives end with the defeat and/or punishment of wicked people like in N9, *A Cruel Step Mother*. This punishment is a pointer to the need for peaceful communal coexistence. The cruel step mother is punished for displaying inhuman characteristics which are against the spirit of communalism. Her evil tendencies are symbolic of the

existence of evil in the society. The destruction of these evil forces paves way for a peaceful communal coexistence as revealed in the closing formula of people living happily thereafter. This is the ideal society that the Bukusu community in particular and the rest of the society aspire to realise. The existence of an ideal society, however, remains a challenge in the sense that conflicts will continue to be manifested at all levels in any given society. This view is clearly articulated by Wachtel (1998:2) who argues that “no matter how similar a group of people appears to be on the surface, there is sure to be some level at which differences appear.” Wachtel’s position seems to suggest that differences are indeed real even in communities that claim to be homogeneous. Conversely, no matter how heterogeneous a group of people might appear, to an observer, there is a level at which its members could choose to see each other as belonging to one nation. These views are significant to the present study in the sense that they guide the researcher in examining both what unites and divides different people or groups of people in the society.

It is evident from the discussion on use of opening and closing formulae that Bukusu oral narratives normally begin on a good note where everyone is living in peace. However, the situation gets complicated along the way with the introduction of a conflict. Such a conflict can be personal or communal. In L4, *Lemata and Katamba*, the protagonist, Lemata is involved in a personal conflict with the ogre while in N17, *Mwambu and Sela*, the entire community suffers famine which has been caused by the ogre who wants Sela as a sacrifice before the rain falls. What emerges at the end of these narratives is the defeat of evil. The narrators in both narratives end by capturing the happiness that ensues after the defeat of evil forces. It can, therefore, be inferred that both opening and closing

formulae are used to serve specific functions in Bukusu oral narratives. The next section focuses on the use of imagery and symbolic language in constructing Bukusu perception on communal coexistence.

#### **4.2 Imagery and Symbolic Language**

The nature of communication or the exchange of ideas in oral narrative performance may be similar to other processes of communication in which the communicator transfers some message to his or her listeners. To understand the messages in oral narratives, there is need to pay attention to how the images and symbols in these narratives reverberate within us. Generally, imagery in this study refers to those language devices that elicit pictures in the mind of the audience. They include metaphors, similes and personification. Alembi (2002:32) defines imagery as “anything in a work of art that makes one form mental pictures.” From Alembi’s definition, it emerges that reference to imagery generally entails using the mental pictures to decipher meaning in works of art. Symbolism, on the other hand refers to something that stands for another thing. Basically, it entails using the name of one thing to represent another. For instance, Okumba Miruka (1994: 33) writes that “in folk tales, hyena is a symbol of greed and is always portrayed as a foolish or bad character. Hare, on the other hand, is a symbol of intelligence and wit.” The images and symbols in oral narratives and other oral literature forms allow us to experience, perceive or understand something hitherto unknown to us. It is only by attending to what is evoked within us that we are able to appreciate the oral narrative images and symbols.

A close examination of Bukusu oral narratives reveals that some of the words and titles employ heavy use of imagery and symbolism. The images and symbols employed in

these narratives are products of the immediate environment of the narrator and the audience. A good example is N10; *Hyena Ate His Protector*, which is not just restricted to oral narrative performance but is also used as a saying to warn those who go against the dictates of the community. In this oral narrative, the title in itself symbolises naivety where people embrace an idea or ideas that can destroy the community unquestioningly. This interpretation is informed by hermeneutics of suspicion which form part of our theoretical orientation and argues for examining the deeper meaning of oral texts. Hyena, in Bukusu oral narratives, stands for evil, mystery and foolishness. This narrative, therefore, warns the Bukusu against shielding evil and condoning foolishness. In the narrative, it is suggested that some *barende*, like Hyena in this case, only come to seek refuge in the hour of need but end up abusing the hospitality accorded to them.

The narrative therefore draws the audience to the fact that those people who willingly collude with such *barende* are likely to encounter untold suffering if they continue working against the dictates of the community. Any person who flirts with some seemingly dangerous issues is quickly reminded that “hyena ate his protector.” This in itself helps in instilling a sense of communal unity and discourages individualism as people strive to work for the common good. It can be argued that the symbol of hyena is basically employed to articulate Bukusu perception of deviant behaviour. Those people who display tendencies of greed and selfishness are basically reminded of the greedy hyena that ate even the person who had protected him from the enemies. In doing so, the community condemns such tendencies and instead calls upon people to embrace peace and good neighbourliness.

In cultivating communal perceptions of *barende* negatively, the Bukusu are inadvertently fuelling tensions between themselves and other groups who are regarded as minorities or “the other” in Bukusu land. Imagery and symbolism can be used even in the presence of non- Bukusu people given that such people do not understand Bukusu idioms. This form of language use by the Bukusu is, however, significant in shaping communal perceptions towards non-Bukusu people. This negative perception of “the other” in Bukusu oral narratives finds semblance in the works of Appadurai (2006:45) who comments on the existence of minority groups, thus: “it is difficult to know who might emerge as the target minority, the ill-feted stranger. In some cases, it seems obvious, in some less so. And that is because minorities are never born but made, historically speaking.” What Appadurai appears to be suggesting is that minorities are mere creations of certain groups of people out to discredit others. Such creations are likely to impact negatively on the existing communal relationships.

N15, *The Bukusu Circumcision*, provides a good example of symbolic use of language in Bukusu oral narratives. This is a legendary narrative that is regarded to be a true reflection of Bukusu experiences with their neighbours. Its main focus is the origin of Bukusu circumcision which the narrative traces to the killing of the python, *yabebe*, by Mango. After this daring act, the Sabot neighbours who had despised the Bukusu on the grounds of circumcision decide to circumcise Mango. To the Sabots, such acts as exhibited by Mango, can only be accomplished by circumcised warriors. Mango, therefore, becomes a legend for succeeding where many could not. Mango’s circumcision symbolises the adaptability and flexibility in human relationships. The fact that the Bukusu community easily embraces a foreign practice of circumcision from their

neighbours signals the readiness and willingness of the community to coexist with other groups of people.

From this oral narrative, it emerges that Mango, the main character, symbolises strength, dignity and courage of the Bukusu community. By killing the python which has defeated valiant Sabot warriors, Mango is raised above these warriors by being brought out as a very courageous person. His courage and strength are displayed by facing the python without fear and eventually killing it. His dignity on the other hand is found in his resolve to do everything possible to avenge the killing of his daughter and many other people in this village. These are very vital virtues needed by members of the community so as to make them distinct from other groups. At the end of this narrative, the audience and members of the Bukusu community are socialised to uphold dignity and courage all the time.

The narrator intentionally juxtaposes Mango, an uncircumcised Bukusu man, with valiant Sabot warriors. Circumcision, in this context, symbolises new birth and acquisition of new identity. Mango, for example, emerges from this practice as a courageous person ready to defend his family and the community at large. The fact that Mango excels where these warriors have failed is a pointer to the desire of the Bukusu community to excel and defeat other groups of people. What emerges here is that the Bukusu glorify pain endurance as the medium through which heroes and heroism are constructed. This brings out the Bukusu as a community that glorifies itself before other communities. This emanates from the perceptions of other communities as minorities and therefore inferior to the Bukusu. This narrative has been considered a legend among the Bukusu community in the sense that it provides what is believed to be a true story that happened

in the Bukusu community. The significance of legendary heroes is perhaps best captured by Okpewho (1999: 138) when he posits that “legendary narratives are inevitably marked by a tone of self-projection of a more or less combative kind... which partially, at least explains the self-serving hyperbolism of heroic lore.” From Okpewho’s argument, it emerges that legendary narratives serve the purpose of highlighting the achievements of particular personalities and communities. Such narratives are likely to depict certain communities as being superior to others. The fact that the narrative above touches on the relationship between the Bukusu and Sabots is of great concern to this study in capturing personal and communal relationships.

A common saying that the Bukusu have consistently employed with reference to the Teso is the infamous “*Khupa omumia akhulindile kamamela*” translated as “beat the Teso soundly and he can mind your elusive sprouts.” This form of language is revealed in N13, *The Teso Who Ate a Dog*. This reference to the Teso depicts them as an inferior community to the Bukusu. Such reference is likely to impact negatively on the relationship that the community has with other people. Among the Bukusu community, the role of minding elusive sprouts was assigned to the children and the physically weak. In this narrative, the Bukusu and the Teso are said to have been engaged in many feuds and fighting over fertile land and property in general. This went on until the latter were defeated forcing a peace agreement referred to as “eating a dog” or “*khulia embwa*.” This was a humiliating encounter to the Teso but they had to undergo it nonetheless. In this narrative, “eating the dog” refers to some ritual among the Bukusu involving slaughtering a young heifer and asking a person from the enemy community to lie in its intestines before the rest of the members are asked to eat the same meat. This ritual is similar to



administering an oath and it ensures that those who partake in it remain faithful to the dictates of what they have set out to do. For the Teso, therefore, accepting to “eat the dog” implies total surrender and readiness to embrace peaceful coexistence with the Bukusu. Members of the Bukusu community are therefore socialised to feel superior to their Teso neighbours.

The constant feuds between the Bukusu and Teso are captured by Were (1967), where he observes that the Teso constantly posed a threat on Bukusu frontiers for a long period of time. The Bukusu therefore felt the need to subdue these aggressive neighbours. After frequent feuds and fighting, the Teso were forced to engage in a peace agreement after being defeated by the Bukusu. It is instructive to observe that this situation has changed drastically and the two communities can now boast of cordial relationships, their cultural differences notwithstanding. Nonetheless, the Bukusu still refer to the Teso diminitively as *Bimia*. Most of our informants concur that these references are meant to depict the Teso as “man eaters.” This is a stereotype that depicts the Teso negatively, hence elevating the Bukusu community above them. Such perceptions about other communities are likely to ignite animosity and even violence if not checked in time.

Perhaps the Bukusu perception of other communities as inferior stems from the feeling that the neighbouring communities are indeed minorities who are bound to compete with the Bukusu over the limited resources. The Bukusu, therefore, have to belittle such communities and make them appear like outsiders out to grab from the Bukusu community. This view is shared by Appadurai (2005: 34) when he posits that “the tip over, into ethno nationalism has much to do with the strange inner reciprocity of the categories of ‘majority’ and ‘minority’ which produces anxiety of incompleteness.” He

argues that the sense of incompleteness can drive majorities into states of violence against minorities. Borrowing from Appadurai, it can be argued that the Bukusu perception of the Teso as “man eaters” and therefore a group that should be subdued is tantamount to igniting some sort of violence. It is instructive to note that the message in the saying “*khupa omumia akhulindile kamamela*” or “beat the Teso soundly and he can mind your elusive sprouts” is fundamental in the sense that it directly touches on the relationship between two different communities. This is central to this study in articulating issues of communal coexistence.

From the foregoing, it can be inferred that Bukusu oral narratives employ the use of imagery and symbolism in their performance. In most cases, these devices are used during narration and even in ordinary communications. The significance of such devices is to bring out the Bukusu as a community that is independent of other communities and has its way of life that is sometimes infiltrated with “the other.” In most cases these devices have been employed to capture the kind of relationship that exist between the Bukusu and other groups of people hence their centrality to communal coexistence.

#### **4.3 Diminutive and Augmentative Language**

Language is the main medium through which oral artists convey their messages to the audience. In every society, the meaning of a given genre depends upon cultural conventions and this is often indicated by the fact that a name for each genre exists in a local language. Therefore, for a researcher to capture the local meaning assigned to an oral text and place emphasis on the contextual factors, he or she must focus on the communal conception of the literary genre and its specific character. This puts language at the centre in the analysis of the oral literary performances. Diminution and

augmentation are some forms of language that are employed by narrators in Bukusu oral narratives to enrich their performance. Diminution basically refers to the reductionist use of language. It involves reducing certain things or people and making them sound small so as to convey meaning. On the other hand, augmentation implies making something or somebody larger or stronger than usual. The two forms of language use are strategically used in Bukusu oral narratives to achieve certain effects.

In his comments on the use of African languages, Ngugi (1986: 15) argues that, “the choice of language and the use to which language is put are central to a people’s definition of itself in relation to its natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe.” In Ngugi’s words, language expresses and carries the culture of a people. It is like a store house of its images, ideas, wisdom, experience and history. From Ngugi’s description, it can be deduced that language ties the people to their communities and shapes how they look at the world and themselves. A close look at some Bukusu oral narratives discussed in this chapter reveals that the narrators use language diminutively where characters or people are meant to appear small or insignificant. In other narratives, language is used argumentatively where people and characters are enlarged to make them appear ogre-like. This form of language use is likely to impact on the relationship that the Bukusu have with neighbouring communities especially where these forms of language are used to refer to non Bukusus.

In a number of narratives, the narrator refers to Hare diminutively as *Wanakhamuna*, instead of *Emuna*. In N3, *Hare Steals a Hen* and N6, *Apelu*, reference to Hare is in diminutive form. In N3, for example, the narrator says of Hare: “*Wanakhamuna khabolela Engwe khali banje khutekhela alala...*” thus, “Hare told Leopard that they start

cooking together...” In this extract, Hare is diminutively projected as small in body size. The narrator juxtaposes Hare with Leopard, a relatively bigger animal but still Hare manages to play tricks on Leopard. In this narrative, Hare refuses to go to the field to work all the time feigning sickness. At the end of the narrative, the narrator elevates Hare above Tortoise and Leopard when this small animal manages to outwit the other two and escape unhurt despite the fact that he has stolen Tortoise’s hen. The moral in this narrative is the significance of intelligence. Indeed, Hare is depicted as using his wit to save himself from the wrath of his adversaries who are out to kill him. In this narrative still, the folly of gullibility is brought to the fore. One is left wondering about the way both Leopard and Tortoise are easily duped by Hare into believing that they can cook him on dying ambers. Listening to this narrative, the audience is socialised to remain focused and guard against gullibility.

The same case applies to N6 where *Wanakhamuna* again manages to perform the difficult task that Apelu has set for those who wish to marry his daughter, Namikasa. In this narrative, when Hare rises to try his luck at resolving the difficult task set by Apelu, the narrator says: “*babandu bachekha Wanakhamuna khubela nikho khakhandu khatiti. Bung’ali salio wabarakho ali Wanakhamuna khanyala khamanya lisina lio omundu omukeni oyo tawe.*” thus, “people laughed at Hare because of his small size.” The truth is that nobody knew Hare would know the name of that strange person.” What is clear from this episode is the misconception that people have about physical appearance. Hare is despised not because of anything else but simply because of his small size. In both N3 and N6, the audience is left wondering how Hare is able to outwit the rest of the animals and people and emerge at the top irrespective of his shortcomings. In these narratives, the

narrator captures Bukusu perceptions on the power of intelligence. What the narratives appear to present is the view that we should not judge people based on their physical size or appearance rather by their ability to intelligibly handle issues they are faced with in life.

In some oral narratives still, the Bukusu single out certain communities by referring to them diminutively. For instance, the Wang'a, Teso and Sabot neighbours are all diminutively referred to as *Biwanga*, *Bimia* and *Biyobo* respectively. For example, in N13, *The Teso Who Ate a Dog*, the narrator refers to the Teso diminutively when he states that “*ekholo ya Bimia yalia chinyama chino khukhwekesia kumulembe...*” thus, “the Teso community ate this meat as a sign of peace...” The diminution in this case emanates from reference to the Teso as *Bimia* the diminutive form of *Bamia* which is in itself derogatory. This amounts to belittling the entire Teso community in the eyes of the Bukusu. The Bukusu audience listening to this narrative is socialised to look down upon the Teso community as inferior to them.

Similarly, in N15, *The Bukusu Circumcision*, the Sabots are referred to as *Biyobo* which is both diminutive and derogatory. The narrator comments about the Sabot's failure to kill the python thus: “*Biyobo bibiekholanga khuba bianamaye sebianyala khukhwira endemu yaba nerera liliayaya mulimenya liabio tawe.*” Thus, “the Sabot who pretended to be war-like could not kill the python that had brought a lot of suffering in their life.” In this narrative, the Bukusu community is depicted as looking down upon the Sabot just because the latter could not kill the python. This derogatory reference to other communities captures the prevailing relations among these communities. This kind of demeaning could have a direct bearing on the construction of non Bukus in the

community. The fact that the Bukusu regard their neighbours in the negative sense is a pointer to the perceived differences between the Bukusu and the communities in question. It is instructive to observe that such differences could be bordering on some historical, political or even economic backgrounds. It can be concluded that the use of the diminutive language freezes the victims in permanent, undesirable positions where their individuality is disavowed and misunderstood, or rendered irrelevant. Given the superiority attitude that the Bukusu assume, they inferiorise the other communities by belittling them, not bothering to understand them.

The perception of other communities as revealed in the use of diminution in Bukusu oral narratives is best exemplified by Michael Ignatieff (1999:15) when he states that “there are many other factors that contribute to the existing conflict and suspicion between different groups of people in the society.” He singles out status anxiety and fear of economic competition as some of the factors that cause animosity between different groups. Although Ignatieff’s views emanate from a totally different background, a close examination of Bukusu oral narratives reveals that in most cases, the fear among the Bukusu is that the neighbouring communities may eclipse them socially and economically. This fear, though it may sound spurious to an observer, plays a significant role in shaping the relationships between the Bukusu and neighbouring communities. This may be a possible explanation to the negative perceptions that the Bukusu have adopted towards some of their neighbouring communities as well as non Bukus within the community. The fact that Apelu, *omurende*, in N6 has amassed a lot of wealth among the Bukusu emphasises his status as *omurende*, doubly alienating him.

Besides using the diminutive, the Bukusu also use augmentative language in reference to certain people or animals to construct intended meaning. The ogre, in most oral narratives, is referred to in the augmentative form as *Kunani* to reveal its ferocity and destructive nature. In N1, *Simbi and Nakitumba*, N2, *Nasio and Her Brother*, N4, *Lemata and Katamba*, N11, *Ngoli and His Daughter*, N16, *Wanakhatandi* and N17, *Mwambu and Sela*, the ogre has been referred to in the argumentative. In all these narratives, the ogres are the ultimate losers and always suffer at the hands of hitherto unknown people. In N1, for example, the narrator intentionally comments about the ogres thus: “*nga kiminani kimisilu nekiatima khucha khuenja kamechi, Nakitumba kenyosia bakhana bwangubwangu nebarakikha lukendo lwe khukhwilukha*” thus, “as soon as the foolish ogres ran to look for water, Nakitumba woke up the girls quickly and they started escaping.” In this oral narrative, ogres are depicted quite negatively in the sense that they are not only referred to as *kiminani* but are also regarded as foolish. This kind of reference points out to the dislike the community harbours against ogres. As if to prove the “foolishness” of these ogres, the narrative juxtaposes these creatures with the young Nakitumba who eventually defeats them in their plan to eat Simbi and her bridal party. Their defeat is a pointer to the desire of the Bukusu community to conquer and subdue these dangerous creatures and all they stand for.

In N2, the greedy ogre is still defeated by Nasio’s brother, a young man whose name is not even given. In this oral narrative, the narrator comments of Nasio’s encounter with the ogre thus: “*Nasio nga kaulila kunani kuno ne kwimba, kachekha po khubela kumumilo kwakwo kwaba ne kimichelesi*” thus, “when Nasio heard the ogre sing, she laughed a lot because its voice was very hoarse.” Perhaps the narrator intentionally

presents the ogre as having a hoarse voice so as to bring out the negativity that the Bukusu associate ogres with. It is no wonder that this ogre is eventually destroyed by Nasio's brother.

From the above examples, it is worthy noting that in most oral narratives of this kind, the presentation of ogres in the augmentative is strategically designed to make them fail before human beings. This explains why in N4, the ogre suffers at the hands of Lemata despite the fact that it is the latter who initially cuts ogre's tail. In N11, the ogre is defeated by yet smaller animals like Hare in his attempt to marry Ngoli's daughter while in N16, the greedy ogres suffer another blow at the hands of Wanakhatandi's despised wife. In all these narratives, ogres suffer greatly irrespective of their guilt or innocence. The defeat of ogres is perhaps a pointer to communal desire to eliminate the evil from both within and without so as to live comfortably. That the community can augment the ogre character is a clear revelation of perceived enemies to the community.

This perception of ogres in Bukusu oral narratives finds semblance in Kabaji (2006) when he refers to ogres as real embodiment of evil out to commit villainous acts. To him, the prevalence of these ogres in Maragoli narratives is vital in exploring moral ambiguities of social life and examining the themes of bravery and cowardice, loyalty and deceit, generosity and greed as well as kinship and individual male ambitions. A close look at Bukusu oral narratives where the ogre appears reveal that this creature is associated with evil that comes to create disharmony in the community. Perhaps this explains why the community arguments the ogre by making it appear like a dangerous thing that every person should strive to get rid off.



It can be deduced that the use of diminution and augmentation is an important language device in Bukusu oral narrative performance in the sense that it guides one in appreciating the existing communal relationships which are as a result of the differences in perceptions among different communities. These perceptions are nurtured and conceived in Bukusu oral narratives and vividly brought out in performance of oral narratives. An analysis of this language device has the potential of suggesting the existing relationships between the Bukusu and other groups of people.

#### **4.4 Coded Songs in Bukusu Oral Narrative Performance**

Bukusu oral narratives more often than not employ songs in their rendition. Many a time, narrators use songs before the narration and during the narration exercise. This study partly focuses on the significance of such songs in the construction of Bukusu perceptions. This is based on the assumption that such songs are not mere pieces of entertainment but contain vital information that can guide literary scholars in appreciating the construction of Bukusu perceptions on a number of issues among them the existing personal and communal relationships.

Nasio and her brother, in N2, for example, resort to the use of song to communicate in a world full of ogres that have threatened to annihilate the entire humanity. The song they adopt reveals a close bond between the siblings who are the only surviving human beings in the Bukusu country.

The song goes thus:

Nasio-oo, Nasio, Nasio-oo Nasio  
Chamakhung'eng'a, Nasio, Nasio-oo, Nasio  
Musilongo sina? Nasio, Nasio-oo, Nasio;

Nasio, Nasio, Nasio,  
they have been licking  
Which salt lick? Nasio



boundaries between the Bukusu and other communities. Such boundaries are vital in establishing the relationship that exists between the Bukusu and their neighbours. Through this song, the Bukusu perception on personal and communal relationships is clearly revealed. The audience and the Bukusu community in general are socialised to remain united and focused in relating with other people. It is through such focus that Nasio and her brother are able to live in a land where ogres have eaten many people. Failure to remain focused is likely to cause problems as it happens when Nasio is eventually swallowed by the ogre.

To appreciate the song in this narrative, one needs to read Miruka (1999:21) who sums up some of the main functions of songs as, “separating episodes, lengthening the narrative, setting the mood and for general entertainment.” From Miruka’s point of view, these songs serve different purposes in different narratives. The main concern to this study is the use of songs in communicating coded information. Symbolically, the use of song in coded language points to the existence of different groups living within the same environment. As in N2 above, the song is meant to exclude the ogres from the day to day activities of Nasio and her brother. This is perhaps a manifestation of communal desire to retain identity in a multiethnic establishment. This is vital in the sense that it excludes other groups from understanding what is only meant for the Bukusu. What emerges out of such a scenario is the existence of the “them” and “us” concept that highlights the imagined differences among various communities and groups of people.

In N4, *Lemata and Katamba*, Lemata resorts to singing when he is faced with the danger of being swallowed by the angry ogre in an act of revenge. Having climbed up a tree which the ogre is busy cutting down, the hopes of Lemata surviving this ordeal are indeed

very slim. As tension is mounting, Lemata sings to alert his fierce dogs about the lurking danger. The song goes, thus:

Asa asa mbwa chase, kutubi na mwikho	Come, come my dogs kutubi and mwikho
Asa asa mbwa chase, kutubi na mwikho	Come, come my dogs kutubi and mwikho
Nanu olimua mwalia, kutubi na mwikho?	Who will give you food, kutubi and mwikho?

In this song, Lemata does not directly point to the danger awaiting him at the hands of the ogre. Instead, he informs his dogs what is likely to befall them in the event of his absence. It is possible that the ogre may not necessarily understand what Lemata is driving at in this song. Nonetheless, the dogs are aware of the lurking danger and rush to rescue their master. Ultimately, the coded song has achieved the purpose of alienating the ogre who doubles up as the outsider in the Bukusu community.

The audience waits with bated breath as the ogre cuts deep into the tree while Lemata sings without ceasing. At the centre of this oral narrative is a conflict surrounding the ogre's tail. This conflict emanates from Lemata's action of cutting ogre's tail when he follows the ogres to retrieve his spear. It all starts with the ogre escaping with the spear thrown at him by Lemata. The spear happens to belong to Katamba hence Lemata is forced to follow the ogre to its place of abode so as to retrieve it. The ogre's action of pursuing restitution from Lemata is met with a lot of resistance from the latter. This perhaps explains communal perception of outsiders. It is worthy mentioning that the ogre, in this case, is the outsider who has to be kept at bay for the interest of individual members of the community and the Bukusu community in its entirety.

Such perception of outsiders finds semblance in Arjun Appadurai's (2006) works on Elementary Sociological Theory where it is argued that "the creation of collective others

is a requirement through the dynamics of stereotyping and identity contrast for helping set boundaries and mark off the dynamics of the we” (p.50). What emerges in this theory is the question of identity where people are separated in distinct groups that make them look at others as different from them. This perhaps explains why Lemata and the entire Bukusu community feel the ogre is an outsider who should remain as such.

The song in this oral narrative is only common to Lemata and his dogs but quite strange to the ogre. The use of this song is meant to technically lock out the ogre from what is transpiring. That the ogre does not understand human language is important to the present study in that it reveals the existing differences in the society. In most cases, the ogres, who represent evil, also come from perceived enemy communities. That such communities cannot share a language with the Bukusu is then vital in capturing the aspect of “them” and “us.” From the above, it can be argued that the Bukusu uses the power of coded language to communicate hidden messages in the presence of perceived enemies. This form of language is vital in that it brings out the Bukusu as people who share certain values that make them emerge as distinct. Through this song, the major enemy of the Bukusu, the ogres, are brought to the fore. In the contemporary society, ogres remain those people or groups of people who do not subscribe to the Bukusu way of life; hence, they remain the enemies of the community. These people could be both from the Bukusu community as well as those from other communities.

This section has highlighted the significance of employing coded songs in Bukusu oral narrative performance. It has been established that these songs are not used just for the sake of it but they communicate vital information with regard to the construction of Bukusu perceptions on other people. It has emerged that through these songs, members of

the Bukusu community are socialised to embrace what unites them as an entity while at the same time being on the look out to ensure that they protect their families and the community in general from external forces that may destroy the existing order.

#### 4.5 Strategic Repetition

According to Alembi (2002: 158), repetition refers to “the recurrence of a certain mood, idea, sound or word in oral literary works.” Many forms and genres of literature are recognised because they are repeated. Repetition is not intended to bore the audience but rather meant to highlight certain salient issues in a literary work. In oral narratives, repetition creates in the narrators a sense of belonging to the oral narrative as they perform familiar functions. In Bukusu oral narratives, the most repeated features are songs, words, actions and episodes. Apart from giving oral narratives some musical element, strategic repetition is a signal that tells the audience that there is more in the narratives which calls for the attention of the audience in order to appreciate the deeper meanings in these narratives. Examples of strategic repetition are evident in the songs found in a number of narratives. For example, in *Nasio and Her Brother*, N2, the narrator and audience join hands in singing a repetitive song. Parts of this song which are repeated include the following:

Nasio-oo, Nasio, Nasio-oo Nasio	Nasio, Nasio, Nasio,
Chamakhung’eng’a, Nasio, Nasio-oo, Nasio	they have been licking, Nasio, Nasio-oo,
Nasio	
Ayiiih-yi-yi-yiih! Ayiiih-yi-yi-yiih	Hurrah! Hurrah, hurrah!

In this song, Nasio’s name is repeated severally to bring the audience to the centrality of this character in the oral narrative. This repetition captures the close relationship that Nasio has with her brother who has to call her name every evening he returns home from

herding livestock. To appreciate this closeness, Nasio always responds by a repetitive ululation. Similarly, in N14, *Kasawa and the Forbidden Pumpkins*, the narrative has repeated words in the song which include:

Nje, nje, nja mumbo, nje, nje, nja mumbo  
Nje nje  
Nja khulanga wa Kasawa nje nje,

Am going to the farthest west  
am going am going  
to tell Kasawa, am going am  
going

In this song, the action of going to the farthest west is repeated severally. Perhaps, this is meant to bring out the resolve by the benevolent pigeon to take the sad news of the death of Kasawa's children to their father who has gone to the farthest west to search for food. Pigeon plays a significant role in relaying the message to Kasawa following the calamity that befalls the latter's children. He succeeds in delivering the message where the rest of the animals have failed. Pigeon, therefore, is associated with benevolence and peace in Bukusu oral narratives. It can be inferred from this narrative that pigeon basically stands for benevolent individuals both within and outside the Bukusu community. Most songs found in the narratives analysed in this chapter and elsewhere in the thesis have employed the use of strategic repetition. In these narratives, certain words in the songs are repeated many times with the intention of strengthening the emotional feelings of the audience. The ultimate effect is to inspire the audience to make value judgment on a particular situation.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has focused on the use of language in Bukusu oral narratives. In the analysis of language used, the researcher has relied on the oral texts as far as their style of performance is concerned. Since Bukusu oral narratives are meant to be performed orally, a study of the language used as is the case in this chapter is significant in the final

interpretation of meaning. It has also emerged that quite often; the narrator juxtaposes different characters or communities to achieve certain effects. This clear categorisation and unmistakable identity of the characters and communities make it easy for the transfer of communal ideology. The distinct attributes of each character and community leave unforgettable images in the minds of the audience. The vivid images of the different communal attributes play a major role in the socialisation processes in the Bukusu community where the world of the Bukusu and other communities are clearly demarcated. The next chapter focuses on the way different identities are constructed through oral narrative performance.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Bukusu Oral Narrative Performance and the Construction of Identities**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

Chapter four examined the use of language devices in capturing communal perceptions. In this chapter, the study provides an in-depth examination of Bukusu oral narrative performance and their role in constructing identities. Identity designates the attempt to differentiate and integrate a sense of self along different social and personal dimensions such as gender, age, race, occupation, socio-economic status, ethnicity, class, nation state, or regional territory. A variety of identities are manifested in Bukusu oral narratives. Some notable identities are based on individual basis whereby different people have different identities. Others have communal background where the Bukusu are contrasted with other communities while others still take forms of gender or even generational ones like young and old. This chapter examines the identity of the Bukusu as a community, their differences in terms of gender and the identity of “the other.” This is vital in understanding the existing personal and communal relationships.

#### **5.1 Who is a Bukusu?**

Bukusu oral narratives provide one of the communication systems through which the community interacts within and without its borders. The narratives are like a mirror of life through which the Bukusu reflect on what they do, what they think and how they live as well as the aspirations they hold. The structures and values in Bukusu oral narratives affirm their communal identity drawing on familiar words and expressions. It is instructive to observe that the Bukusu have partly retained certain unique characteristics due to the feeling of belonging that runs deep in the community. An examination of some

Bukusu oral narratives reveals the existence of a cultural set with pertinent elements that hold the community together. There are a number of universal values among them hard work, social justice, generosity and hospitality that have over time been associated with the Bukusu community. It is worthy mentioning from the onset that Bukusu identities are derived from a patriarchal standpoint whereby male members of the community are regarded as the ones carrying an embodiment of Bukusu identity. In other words, without male members, there would be no Bukusu identity. This position has, however, been deconstructed in a number of narratives in this study where female members of the community have equally played very significant roles in championing the interests of the community.

Some of the oral narratives which exhibit the identity of the Bukusu as a community include N1, *Simbi and Nakitumba*, N6, *Apelu* and N15, *The Bukusu Circumcision*. In N1, for example, the significance of social justice among the Bukusu community is brought to the fore. Through the punishment of ogres and the humiliation that the proud Simbi goes through at the end of the narrative, communal perception on social justice is revealed. Those who perpetuate acceptable norms like selflessness and hospitality as is the case with Nakitumba and the barren woman are ultimately rewarded. For instance, at the end of the narrative, Nakitumba's social standing in the community is elevated just like the barren woman who saves the bridal party.

In N6, the Bukusu community is brought out as one that advocates for hospitality especially to non Bukusus. This is revealed through the kind of treatment accorded Apelu, who comes to stay among them. The narrator, Rael Mukhwana said, "*Babandu bama chimbeka na chimbeka becha khwibonelakho nekakhali sebachichanga mungo*

*omwo tawe bemilanga atayi. Batiti nibo bengilanga mungo omwo lakini nende buri.*” thus, “people could come from different places just to see the person they knew little about though they did not enter the homestead. A few, however, entered though with fear.” This statement clearly captures the hospitable nature of the community. The fact that the community allows an unknown person to live among them attests to this. The community, however, does not condone abuse of hospitality. When Apelu abuses this hospitality by denying Hare the right to marry his daughter, Namikasa, he is forced to flee from Bukusu land to avoid meeting the wrath of the community. To this end, it can be argued that community holds hospitality in high esteem and expects that those whom this gesture is extended to should reciprocate by dealing fairly with the Bukusu community.

In N15, the question of Bukusu identity with regard to bravery is revealed. Through Mango’s circumcision and the killing of the python, the community comes out as one that values bravery and resilience. Mango is fearless as he faces the deadly python that has caused a lot of suffering to both the Bukusu and neighbouring communities. At the end of the narrative, Mango’s social standing in the community is elevated because of this great show of bravery. It is instructive to note that the Bukusu regard for bravery is still encouraged to date when the young men who are about to be circumcised are called upon to display this quality openly. The pain endurance that the young initiates are forced to go through serves to prepare them for the challenges of life. This clearly captures communal perception of bravery.

It is evident from the foregoing that the Bukusu, as a community, have in place certain perceptions about who they are as a distinct group. As a community, it has emerged that

the Bukusu have some core values that bind them together hence developing a sense of identity. Some of these values include social justice, resilience, hospitality and bravery. Through oral narrative performance, members of the community are socialised to embrace these values which not only bring out the Bukusu as a community but also help in the way the community relates with people from other communities. This is vital to this study in articulating the question of communal coexistence.

## **5.2 Construction of Gender Differences in Bukusu Oral Narratives**

The term gender in its general sense signifies differences in biological make-up of human beings in general in terms of sex as either male or female. The interpretation of gender in terms of masculinity or femininity mainly arises from the socialisation process of individuals and the community. Every society has its own socialising agents that transfer gender ideology. One such agent is the oral narrative. In Bukusu oral narratives, examples abound where men are presented as superior to women and they always come in to save women in moments of danger. Perhaps this position is informed by the fact that the Bukusu traditional society was patriarchal, where authority was generally in the hands of men. Consequently, oral narratives have been used to perpetuate patriarchal ideologies that regard women as fully dependent on men.

In this chapter, a number of narratives have been highlighted to bring out the gender ideology in the community. Some of the notable narratives include: N1, *Simbi and Nakitumba*, N2, *Nasio and Her Brother*, N5, *The Secret of a Murderer*, N6, *Apelu*, N8, *The Old Woman and Her Deformed Son*, N11, *Ngoli and his daughter*, N12, *The beautiful proud maiden*, N14, *Kasawa and the Forbidden Pumpkins*, N16, *Wanakhatandi*, N17, *Mwambu and Sela*, N19, *The Girls Who Went to Harvest Fruits* and

N20, *Hawk and Hen*. The main features of these narratives have been examined to explain the Bukusu perception on gender differences.

It is worthy mentioning that the question of gender differences is not a preserve of the Bukusu community. Writing from a different context, Mineke Schipper (1991:2) captures the relationship between men and women thus: “the superior size and superior physical strength of men and the fact that women are the birth-givers have had far-reaching consequences for the gender history of mankind. In many ways, the male sex has made use of its physical size and power for its own gain and benefit.” Schipper argues that men are presented as superior to women in almost all spheres of life. She does so by citing proverbs from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. However, it should be borne in mind that language and culture are not static despite what these proverbs would want us to believe. Schipper’s views perhaps explain why in a number of Bukusu oral narratives, men are presented as superior to women. Nonetheless, in most of these oral narratives, the narrators and the community in general glorify intelligence but not physical strength. A close examination of Bukusu oral narratives reveals that the community has designated certain roles and duties based on gender differences. Consequently, through these narratives, the audience and the entire community is socialised to appreciate these existing differences.

### **5.2.1 Role and Place of Women**

A scrutiny of some Bukusu oral narratives reveals that the image of the woman is in line with the roles assigned to her. Women, as used in Bukusu oral narratives refer to the entire female gender comprising of girls as well as married and unmarried women. The woman has been assigned roles which affirm her place in the hierarchical arrangement of

the society. One of the basic elements that define the female gender is its vulnerability and susceptibility in a world where physical strength matters a great deal. A number of Bukusu oral narratives depict women as standing in very precarious positions ready to be devoured by ogres or being destroyed by other forces beyond their control. In N1, Simbi is duped into getting married to ogres after turning down potential husbands. She is later saved by Nakitumba; her step sister whom she has little regard for because of the latter's deformity. In N2, Nasio is confined to the home and house by her brother to avoid being eaten by ogres. She is later tricked and eaten. It once again takes the efforts of her brother to rescue her from the ogre's stomach. In N16, Wanakhatandi's wife hides her children in a tree trunk to avoid being eaten by the ogres while in N17, the ogre demands a girl, Sela, in order to release rain to the society. It therefore appears that within Bukusu oral narratives, women are presented as being in a vulnerable position. In the above examples, women are exposed to the danger of being destroyed by external forces beyond their control. Their situation is depicted as being so delicate that in most cases, it calls for benevolent forces to save these women from being destroyed.

Bukusu oral narratives also talk about young girls preparing to get married and become wives. In N1, for example, Simbi's resolve to get married is unstoppable. This eventually lands her in the hands of ogres. She is probably being driven by desire to be a wife and bear children since this is what the society dictates. In the same narrative, the barren woman is despised for her status and is only counted important when she saves Simbi and her bridal party and ends up adopting these girls. In N19, the girls who go to harvest fruits have their eyes fixed on marriage where they expect to play their roles as wives. When they realise that their friend is more beautiful than them, they decide to leave her in

the forest, possibly to be eaten by ogres so that they can have all the possible suitors to themselves. With a combination of cleverness and external support, the girl escapes from being destroyed by ogres. In this narrative, the act of these girls cheating their colleague reveals the selfishness and unreasonable nature of girls. This is a dominant perception of what girls are capable of in a male dominated society. N6, *Apelu*, N8, *The Old Woman and Her Deformed Son*, N11, *Ngoli and His Daughter* and N12, *A Beautiful Proud Maiden*, all present girls out to get married and the intrigues that surround such arrangements.

In some of these narratives, the absence of a male figure portends destruction for women characters as is the case in N2 and N17. The ideological underpinnings in these narratives are that women are dependent on their male counterparts. This ideology reinforces the confinement of women to the domestic chores. It is therefore easy to understand women's fear to undertake certain tasks as resulting from such process of socialisation. Some other narratives depict women as being rebellious and stubborn. However, such women end up bringing calamity to their families. In N14, *Kasawa and the Forbidden Pumpkins*, Kasawa gives specific instructions on what his wife should cook for their children in his absence. He allows his wife to cook all the pumpkins in the home except one. However, the wife goes against these instructions and cooks the one she has been prohibited from cooking. This results into the death of the entire family except one girl who refuses to eat the forbidden pumpkin.

It is worthy stating that even in oral narratives where animals are used, these animals are meant to disparage women by presenting them as irresponsible people who should always be guided by their male counterparts. In N20, *Hen and Hawk*, for example, mother Hen

borrowed a razorblade from Hawk but she is not careful enough to take care of it hence ends up losing it. She brings a curse upon her family when Hawk vows to continue taking away Hen's young ones. This narrative mirrors the general perception about women in mythology. There are many African narratives and proverbs that view women as sources of evil in the society. This view is exemplified by Schipper (1991) when she posits that a number of traits are generally attributed to women in proverbs across cultures. She argues that the only group of women favourably referred to in proverbs is that of mother who is presented as unique, loving, reliable and hard working. The perception of women as sources of evil is not only limited to African mythology but also found in holy books like the Bible. In the book of Genesis, for example, Eve, the first woman is perceived as being the source of evil in the human generation.

From the above examples, it is evident that whereas some women and wives are presented negatively as being jealousy of one another, others are depicted as unable to live peacefully without the influence of their male counterparts. It appears that some women possess an underlying desire to destroy one another which makes them easy targets of external forces. Some of these women destroy others out of sheer malice. It can be argued that some of these narratives serve like indoctrinating agents that compel the female gender to resign to the perception that women cannot measure up to the attributes of men. Through such narratives, the audience and the community in general is socialised to accept the existing gender differences which are meant to elevate men above their female counterparts.

Nonetheless, an examination of narratives like N1, and N16, reveals a reversal of roles whereby the woman is lifted above societal expectations. In N1, the despised Nakitumba



is the one who single handedly saves the bridal party from being eaten by ogres. This is despite the fact that she is a young woman whose situation is made worse by her physical deformity. She is able to see through the deceit of ogres and tactfully leads to entire bridal party to a safe and daring escape. In N16, the despised wife of Wanakhatandi stands tall at the end of the narrative by managing to dupe the ogres and eventually save her entire family from being swallowed by ogres. In this narrative, Wanakhatandi's wife emerges as an intelligent and caring woman ready to protect her family from external aggression, a role that should be taken up by her husband, Wanakhatandi.

### **5.2.2 The Nature and Role Men**

Bukusu oral narratives, as one of the primary means of socialising children abound with the images of male heroes for emulation. Male figures in these narratives are depicted as heroes and daring fortune-hunters who bring wealth to their families and are responsible for salvaging their families and communities from danger. In N2, Nasio's brother saves his sister and the entire community from the destructive ogre. When Nasio comes out of the ogre's stomach, she is followed by a trail of other people whom the ogre had swallowed. In N5, *The Secret of A Murderer*, a man murders a neighbour unnoticed and throws his body in the bush. Soon after, hyenas come and eat up the dead body and leave the skull alone. Out of arrogance, the murderer goes around boasting about this callous act every time he passes the scene of his crime. One day another neighbour overhears him boasting and reports this to the sons of the deceased man who then avenge their father's death by way-laying and killing the murderer. They feel this act will go a long way in appeasing the spirit of their dead father. In N14, Kasawa saves his family by resuscitating all his children who have died because of his wife's carelessness. Finally, in N17, it takes

Mwambu, a young man, to save Sela and the entire community from the ogre that is just about to swallow Sela.

A clear look at some of these oral narratives reveals that men are presented as not only breadwinners but also protectors of women. Generally, boys and men are depicted as controllers of the destiny of the community and are capable of changing the course of history. The interest of boy-centered oral narratives is to show the heroic deeds of boys and men. Boys and men are therefore portrayed positively and are worthy emulating in the society. However, this is not always the case as witnessed in N16, where Wanakhatandi abdicates his role of protecting the family. It takes the hand of his despised wife to save the family from being wiped out by ogres. This is reversal of roles where the despised are given a voice in the society.

Nonetheless, through a number of Bukusu oral narratives, boys and men in general are depicted as superior to women and they are the ones who come in to protect both their families and the community in general in the event of external forces that are bound to bring disharmony. Through listening to these oral narratives, the audience, especially boys and men are socialised to internalise the Bukusu perceptions on the place and role of the male gender.

### **5.3 Construction of “the Other” in Bukusu Oral Narrative Performance**

The communal construction of “the other” is clearly captured in a number of Bukusu oral narratives. The argument being advanced in this chapter is that literary works invite reciprocity in the sense that they always involve people in reciprocal relationships of sensitivity toward others. This then calls for an objective approach in an attempt to

analyse the meaning of many oral literary forms, among them Bukusu oral narratives. It is a fact that the Bukusu live with other neighbouring communities with whom they have a day to day interaction. It is, therefore, not unusual to come across some oral narratives that comment either directly or indirectly on these communities. Through these oral narratives, the Bukusu perception and worldview on “the other” is clearly captured. This is quite significant in facilitating communication across differences and also strengthening communities.

A look at Bukusu oral narratives like N13, *The Teso Who Ate A Dog*, N15, *The Bukusu Circumcision* and N18, *Nabwile* reveals that they either directly or indirectly comment on non Bukusu communities. A critical evaluation of the messages in such narratives is significant in appreciating the existing personal and communal relationships. An understanding of Bukusu oral narratives is significant in appreciating the existing similarities and differences between the Bukusu and other communities. In the above examples of oral narratives, communities neighbouring the Bukusu are depicted as aggressors or “the other” out to disrupt the serenity enjoyed by the Bukusu as a community.

In N13, for example, it is believed that the Teso, who neighbour the Bukusu in Bungoma County, were the outsiders fighting to snatch the Bukusu community land and other property that rightfully belonged to the Bukusu. As a result, the latter were forced to put up strong resistance that saw their Teso neighbours plead for peace, thus “eating a dog.” It can be argued that the Bukusu who predominantly occupy Bungoma County consider themselves as the majority in this county hence the construction of other communities that neighbour them as minorities. In this narrative, the narrator and the audience seem to

concur that indeed; the Teso neighbours are a minority group in Bungoma and should be the ones to remain submissive. This explains why the Teso eventually seek peace with the Bukusu. It is instructive to note that at the centre of Bukusu oral narratives is an audience hence the more dramatic the performance, the more readily the audience come to believe the values of the community as well as the attitudes of the Bukusu towards other communities. An understanding of the Bukusu perception towards “the other” ultimately paves the way for the audience internalisation of the Bukusu perception on communal relationships.

Similarly, in N15, the Sabots are still depicted negatively whereby the narrator makes a mockery of them as people who could not even kill a python despite boasting of valiant warriors. In N18, *Nabwile*, the same Sabots are depicted as unfit to intermarry with the Bukusu community. In this narrative, the narrator warns Nabwile thus: “*okona mubarende, Nabwile olikona nying’inyi*” thus, “you sleep among strangers, Nabwile, you should sleep while alert.” The *barende* being referred to in this narrative are the Sabot neighbours. Perhaps, all this is meant to bring out the differences between the Bukusu and other communities by singling out the latter as an autonomous group not ready to preserve its identity.

However, in order to identify a group’s separate and unique background, the members often have to in some way find themselves certain features which can distinguish them from other communities. Language difference is commonly cited as proof of communal autonomy. It can be argued that the very majority of our social life depends on the use of language; and the use of different languages naturally separates people into different groups, each not being able to understand the others. Lacking channels of

communication, we typically identify others as being different from us. This is what makes language such a prominent objective factor in defining communal differences. Perhaps, it is the question of language differences in the above narratives that make the Bukusu community to consider itself different from other neighbouring communities.

In his comments on differences in the society, Appiah (2007) argues that the most pernicious ideas have sprung from the myth that we are necessarily separated and segregated into groups that are defined by criteria like gender, language, race, religion or some other kind of boundary. According to Appiah, it is easy to see that these boundaries are a major cause of conflict. He therefore argues for cosmopolitanism as a dynamic concept based on two fundamental ideas. The first idea is that we have responsibilities to others that are beyond those based on kinship or citizenship. The second states that just because other people have different customs and beliefs from ours, they will likely still have meaning and value. We may not agree with someone else but mutual understanding should be a first goal. What emerges from the above is that Appiah calls for a harmonious relationship in the society based on mutual respect among different groups of people.

For quite some time, in multi-communal backgrounds, communalism has been used in the negative sense as a source of conflict among different communities. However, it is worthy stating that peaceful personal and communal relationships can still thrive in multi-communal setups. As Felicia (2010:11) rightly observes: “in a situation in which feelings of insecurity, uncertainty and fear arising from adverse circumstances do not exist, social groups are less inclined to pay much importance to their communal identity. However, when such a situation arises, communalism becomes a shield, a rallying point or a

protective mechanism for members of social groups.” Among the Bukusu, oral narratives provide an avenue within which communal issues are articulated.

To appreciate Bukusu perception on communal identities also calls for a closer examination of Wole Soyinka (1976) who analyses the interconnecting worlds of myth, ritual and literature in Africa. He examines the ways in which an African world perceives itself as a cultural entity. In an attempt to demonstrate how the Yoruba mythology and mythmaking could actually create an “African World”, he argues that: “Africa is a cultural entity, a world by itself with its history, its social neuroses and value systems; a world which has produced a body of myths and a literary tradition of its own.”(p.23). This position taken by Soyinka sounds hyperbolic in the sense that he basically uses the Yoruba community of Nigeria to generalise about the entire African continent.

Nonetheless, what emerges from Soyinka’s argument is basically a motivation for identity and belonging to a given group. Such feelings are echoed by Anderson (1983: 51) when he talks about imagined nations. He argues that “it is imagined as a community because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.” Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings. It is imperative to note that communal identities are constructed in large measure by the histories they share and the stories they tell. It can be inferred that Bukusu oral narratives provide a springboard from which the community is able to identify itself as a distinct group. These identities are vital in articulating issues of communal coexistence.

It should, however, be noted that the way we perceive others only creates the platform upon which we are equally perceived by the others. This explains the existence of different perceptions held by different groups about “the other” in the contemporary society. Ricoeur (1984) argues that since we live in a temporal world, we need to create narratives to bring order and meaning to the constantly changing flux. Not only do we create oral narratives about the world but also narratives are central to how we conceive of ourselves and our identities. Indeed, it is through narratives that we not only construct a particular connectedness in our actions but also distinguish ourselves from others. According to Ricoeur, we each seek to provide our scattered and often confusing experiences with a sense of coherence by arranging the episodes of our lives into stories. In most cases, the narratives we create depict the weaknesses of “the other” but extol the “we.” A clear understanding of this position calls for a close examination of Vamik Volkan (1986:185), who likens such to “the unconscious defense mechanism by which individuals project their own internal characteristics, particularly the bad ones, onto the outside world and onto other people.” When they later come across a person with these characteristics, they no longer recognise them as their own. According to Volkan, such externalisations help a child attain a more cohesive self-representation and more consistent internalised representation.

It can be argued that an attempt to single out one particular group and insist that it exists as a completely different entity is both misguided and misleading. In the contemporary society; it is almost impractical to conceive of the existence of a homogeneous group. The Bukusu as a group, for example, have over time moved and settled in many parts of the country. In the same vein, several other groups have settled among the previously

Bukusu dominated regions like Bungoma County. This has somewhat affected the cultural set up that the Bukusu as a community used to take pride in. Nonetheless, the question of Bukusu identity is something that cannot be wished away. The Bukusu community has over the years continued to define itself in terms of shared goals and aspirations. Generally, the Bukusu have had to gloss over their differences and create an image of a united community. This apparent show of unity notwithstanding, there are as many differences as can be witnessed in the many clans that form the Bukusu community. Perhaps a clear appreciation of this position calls for a closer reading of Spivak (1990: 17) who argues that: “essentialism entails that a specific entity contains a set of characteristics common to all entities of that kind.” Although Spivak’s argument is basically based on nationalism, strategic essentialism can be applied to locate smaller groups like the Bukusu community in the wider social fabric.

Furthermore, it is instructive to note that the changes that have been experienced as a result of integration with other communities have not totally altered the social fabric of the Bukusu as a community who have continuously depicted elements of commonality. This group attachment, which is replicated in many different communities, is best summarised in Appiah (2007:132) when he posits that “the greater truth of our humanity is our ability to imaginatively think new thoughts, to reconsider plans of life, to fashion new worlds of possibility while acknowledging that each of us has a home that we should cherish, improve, perfect and defend.” Appiah’s position clearly captures the significance of personal and communal relationships. Although he acknowledges the existence of group identities, he still observes that such identities should not override societal interests. Failure to check the excesses that may be occasioned by such identities may



possibly result in communal tensions that are occasionally witnessed in the contemporary Kenyan society.

It can be argued that Bukusu oral narratives are used to construct communal identities. Through these narratives, the Bukusu are depicted as an autonomous community that lives and relates with people from different communities. What emerges in most of these oral narratives is that the Bukusu community extols itself before the rest of the communities by exposing the shortcomings of other communities while at the same time glorifying the achievements of the Bukusu as a community. This othering process is meant to socialise members of the Bukusu community to embrace the values that unite them as an autonomous group. These oral narratives have been used to construct “the other” negatively as revealed in the following subsections.

### **5.3.1 Construction of “the Other” as Deceptive and Treacherous**

This section provides an in-depth examination of Bukusu oral narratives that comment on the relationships among members of the Bukusu community and how the same narratives are creatively crafted to comment on “the other.” It is important to reiterate that “the other” is not a naturally occurring individual, but is constructed depending on moral, ethical or cultural circumstances. Bukusu perceptions and worldview generally rest on a moral economy that determines who can be a Bukusu and who is estranged, depending on how close they subscribe to the Bukusu ethics.

In examining Bukusu construction of “the other”, the study is guided by the view that in oral performances, the elements and values most vividly remembered are the images and ideas stressed and emphasised by the narrator. These images are drawn from the socio-cultural environment that the narrator shares with his audience. Among the Bukusu, just

like in many other communities, the narrator in an oral performance is a creative ideologue creating meaning from a clear ideological framework. The primary purpose of the narrative is therefore to persuade the audience to accept a particular way of thinking. In these narrative performances, the narrator merely acts as the mouthpiece of the community by articulating the values and issues so dearly held by the community through narration.

A close look at Bukusu oral narratives reveals communal construction of “the other” as exhibiting deceptive and treacherous tendencies. Typical examples in this study include, N1, *Simbi and Nakitumba*, N2, *Nasio and Her Brother* as well as N6, *Apelu*. In N1, for example, the narrator and the community in general wonder loudly at Simbi’s decision to turn down all potential suitors only to settle for the ogres who constitute a group of “the other” in Bukusu community. It is no wonder that Simbi’s predicament at the hands of these ogres hardly elicits sympathy from the audience. From the onset, the narrator presents these ogres as “the other” when they exhibit strange mannerisms of eating all the food provided and eventually swallowing the utensils. Such actions are unheard of among the Bukusu community and this makes Nakitumba realise the difference between these ogres and human beings. The narrator says that “*Nakitumba kakhaka khukania wandaye wewe khualikha khu manani kano mala Simbi naye kabelela nabara ali Nakitumba wakholile busa libuba.*” thus, “Nakitumba tried to stop her sibling from getting married to these ogres but Simbi thought Nakitumba was just being jealous.” The othering of ogres in this narrative is also manifested in the distance. On the day of marriage, the bridal party walks until nightfall before reaching the ogres’ home. The fact that ogres live far away from Bukusu land is already a mark of the differences between them.

In this oral narrative, the ogres are presented as treacherous and deceptive in the sense that they are able to turn themselves into handsome men out to woo Simbi. It is this deception that drives Simbi into accepting their proposal. Little does she know that these are indeed ogres. The intention of these ogres is to dupe Simbi and the rest of the bridal party with the aim of ultimately eating up these girls. When these ogres realise that they have been duped by Nakitumba who has led the other girls into a daring escape, they resolve to pursue the girls with the intention of eating them up the moment they find them. All this stems from deception and treachery. That the ogres fail in their endeavour to destroy the girls points to Bukusu perceptions on treachery and deception. These vices are bound to meet a dead end in the community that upholds strong values that unite its members. Such values are shared by both the narrator and the audience in oral narrative performance when the predicament of the ogres elicits laughter from both the narrator and audience.

In a different though related context, Okpewho (1990: 142) writes thus “in any instance of narrative performance, the narrator and his audience are not only concerned with the examination of dominant values of their community but are also interested in the encapsulation of such discourse in an aesthetic form.” From Okpewho’s point of view, it can be deduced that the narrator and the audience both play supplementary and complementary roles in realising intended meaning in the narratives. In Bukusu oral narratives, the narrator is directly answerable to the audience in the entire narrative session. This is clearly captured in the way they share common knowledge during the narration exercise.

In N2, *Nasio and Her Brother*, the deceptive and treacherous nature of ogres is still brought to the fore. The ogres are said to have eaten up all the people in Bukusu land and Nasio and her brother have just survived miraculously. In this narrative, the ogre hears Nasio's brother singing to alert his sister to open the door for him every evening. Out of deception and teachery, the ogre starts scheming on how he will succeed in destroying Nasio. His plans eventually bear fruit when he sings and Nasio unsuspectingly opens the door for him then he eats her up. However, he leaves behind the bones and Nasio's brother is able to bring his sister back to life by using a magical stick. When the ogre realises that Nasio is back to life, he still organises and comes back to eat her. His treachery is revealed when the narrator says of him, "*kunani kuno kwamulia mala kwalia ne bikumba*" thus, "this ogre ate her and also ate the bones as well." The reason why the ogre eats the bones is to ensure Nasio does not come back to life. This is the highest level of treachery. It is no wonder that the ogre's evil tendencies are punished at the end of the narrative when Nasio's brother kills him and all the people who had been swallowed come back to life. To this end, communal desire for the defeat of evil has been revealed.

It can be argued that Bukusu oral narratives which have depicted "the other" as being deceptive and treacherous stem from deep-rooted attitudes nourished over a long period of time. Such attitudes could be emanating from cultural, economic and even political dynamics of the Bukusu. Perhaps N6, *Apelu*, provides a typical example of such economic disparities in the contemporary society. In this narrative, Apelu, who is an equivalent of "the other" among the Bukusu is brought out as wielding economic power in a strange land. This narrative provides an example of communal relationships with

regard to the Bukusu and “the other.” In this narrative, the Bukusu community willingly allow Apelu, whom they know little about, to live in their midst; at one stage he conducts himself in a deceitful and exploitative manner. He has not bothered to make himself known to the Bukusu and when time comes for his daughter, Namikasa, to get married, he sets out a difficult task that demands a possible suitor to Namikasa must pronounce his name in a public gathering. Apelu does so while pretty aware that chances of any Bukusu suitors resolving this difficult task are very minimal. When Hare finally manages to resolve this task, Apelu is shocked at the turn of events. Despite the generosity and hospitality accorded him by the Bukusu, Apelu is hardly satisfied and is not ready to allow his daughter to get married to Hare. This change of heart by Apelu can be attributed to the reservations that abound with regard to inter-communal marriages in the society. To date, it is not surprising to encounter people who still cannot approve of such marriages.

The narrator brings forth the presence of deceit and betrayal in this narrative. Through the presentation of characters in N6, it emerges that the narrator advocates for shunning of deceit and treachery. This perhaps explains why Hare miraculously escapes the suffering occasioned by these vices. It is through good fortune and natural justice that he is able to marry Namikasa at the end of the narrative. Apelu’s deceptive nature notwithstanding, the Bukusu community has been willing to accommodate him in their midst and young men from this community are even ready to marry one of his daughters. The presence of Apelu could also be symbolic of the presence of “the other” within the Bukusu community who need not necessarily be non- Bukusus. The fact that Apelu has lived

among the Bukusu unnoticed could be a signal to people among the Bukusu community who may not be working for the common good of the community.

It can be inferred that the message in this narrative is the need for the community or group of people to learn to appreciate all people, irrespective of their economic status or cultural background. What matters in life is not how much material wealth one has acquired but the ability to live and coexist peacefully with others. Hare, in this narrative, symbolises intelligence that the Bukusu community prides in. It should be noted that Bukusu oral narratives, just like many other East African narratives, symbolically use Hare to represent intelligence that the Bukusu associate themselves with. He is also renowned for using unconventional means to succeed where others have failed. It is instructive to state that the audience, in this narrative, associates with the protagonist, Hare, hence his triumph symbolises the triumph of the community in the face of “the other.”

In N6, still, the Bukusu community is brought out as taking pride in accommodating “the other” as revealed in the words of the narrator referring to the Bukusu as “*siyanja barende*” or basically “lover of the other.” This brings us back to the power of images in Bukusu oral narratives. These images are at the core of oral narrative performances in that through them, the narrator is able to achieve his goal of creating the desired emotions in the audience. According to Harold (1978:71), “images are felt actions evoked in the imagination of the members of the audience by verbal elements arranged and controlled by the performer.” The image of “*siyanja barende*” presupposes shared knowledge between the narrator and the audience with regard to communal perception of “the other.” It is instructive, at this point, to note that reference to the Bukusu as “*siyanja barende*”

fits in the myths which are invoked to imagine the essence of being Bukusu. The image depicts the Bukusu as a people who are quite accommodating and welcoming to non-Bukusu people much more than they do with their fellow tribesmen. This certain show of hospitality is what drives the community into allowing Apelu, to live among them and even play deceit on them. That the Bukusu accommodates a seemingly arrogant and deceitful person like Apelu reveals their endeavour to coexist peacefully with other communities.

The position adopted by the Bukusu towards their neighbours perhaps stems from the historical differences that characterise the Bukusu and other communities in Kenya. In a different but related context, Were (1967:131) captures such differences when he writes that “relations between the peoples of western Kenya – the Abaluhya, Luo, Teso and Kalenjin – were generally bad owing to the prevalence of raids and counter-raids.” From this argument, it emerges that many Kenyan communities have at some point in history had frosty relations with their neighbours which are mainly associated with the continuous struggle for limited resources. This struggle has resulted into communal perceptions about “the other” with different communities looking at one another as out to threaten their identity. Such differences have over time been expressed in oral literature genres like the case with Bukusu oral narratives in this study. It is from this background that the Bukusu have had differences with neighbouring communities.

This story of Apelu finds a semblance to N12, *A Beautiful Proud Maiden*, where the “the other” hears of a beautiful, proud maiden, ready to get married but whose ambition has made her declare that the man to marry her must thread a complete waistband of beads using his teeth rather than his hands. This makes her father’s home a busy place as suitors

flock in to try and woo her. One by one, different men come, try and fail. It is, however, ironical that the man who finally wins is not only “the other” but also one whom the proud young lady could not have accepted under normal circumstances. He is given the opportunity just because no one expects him to succeed after all since his hands are ever busy scratching his body which is infested with scabies. When he succeeds, the young woman is shocked, but she has to comply though she sets another dangerous task that requires the young man to go down the lake and bring home a single feather guarded by the lake monster. The young man does so and gets cleansed in the process so that when he appears next, there are no signs of scabies on him. The two get married.

What emerges from this narrative is that marriage transactions are usually held in a climate of suspicion and mutual denigration of the respective in-laws. The young stranger in this case is disparaged just because of his outward appearance. It is worthy stating that marriage is highly regarded in the Bukusu community so much so that it would be unfathomable to conceive of a beautiful maiden like the one in this narrative getting married to a man whose background is unknown. The message in this narrative is that the Bukusu are ready to coexist with other people as long as those people are ready to embrace the Bukusu way of life. The fact that this “other” undertakes to accomplish all tasks set before him is a pointer to the willingness and readiness of “the other” to coexist with the Bukusu. The position adopted by the Bukusu is likely to jeopardise the much yearned for personal and communal relationships due to its subjectivity. The view that it is only “the other” to submit to Bukusu way of life is quite parochial and a barrier to healthy personal and communal relationships.



It also emerges in N12 that the Bukusu community use women's beauty to affirm their nationhood. The maiden in is narrative is depicted as not only proud but also beautiful. Consequently, it is the desire of males to conquer and subdue this beauty. A young audience listening to this narrative is quick to visualise the triumph of the young man before a supposedly proud maiden. This view can be validated by a close reading of Kabaji (2006:117) who, though from a different context, states that "wives and girls are dependent on men and boys generally...it is this ideological position that reinforces the confinement to the domestic domain of women and girls." What emerges in Kabaji's position is that Maragoli folktales present women as people who are fragile and can only perform simple domestic chores as their male counterparts engage in more demanding tasks. It is imperative to observe that inasmuch as Kabaji's argument is vital in assigning gender roles, there are certain issues which have since been overtaken by events due to the economic realities in the contemporary society. Today, it is not surprising to encounter both men and women engaging in similar chores as long as they are able sustain their families.

This Bukusu construction of women and "the other" by extension, in the negative sense also emanates from their desire to paint a picture of a unique group that can only be corrupted through interaction with people from unknown backgrounds. This feeling can be taken to be a universal perception held by different cultural communities across the divide. This is exemplified in Eddy (2003: 14) when he posits that:

often discussions that deal with the personal identity issues whether about race, gender, religion, or nation, descend quickly into an 'us' and 'them' opposition that ceases to do productive work and poisons the hopes of any participant for a satisfying resolution of conflict.

Eddy's argument points to the existing differences in the society where different communities struggle to identify themselves as distinct from others. The sources of these differences are varied and range from gender, religion, race, nation or even language. Such differences are quite instrumental in reflecting the kind of relationships that exist among these groups of people. Eddy rightly observes that such differences are likely to impact negatively on the existing peace. Ideally, peace can be nourished by the different groups accepting and appreciating the existence of the peculiarities that differentiate them from others and putting such peculiarities to good use.

It has been established in this section that Bukusu oral narrative performance provides an avenue through which the community constructs "the other" as both deceptive and treacherous. More importantly, it is evident that "the other" is not necessarily from non-Bukusu communities; they encompass all groups of people especially those who fail to adhere to the Bukusu way of life. However, a close examination of the narratives where "the other" is depicted in this negative sense reveals that such total condemnation is unconvincing given that many other factors could contribute to what transpires in the narratives. It therefore calls for an objective analysis of these narratives before perceiving "the other" negatively. An examination of N6 and N12, for example point to the significant role of "the other" in highlighting communal coexistence. In N6, for example, Apelu who is othered is depicted as giving an opportunity to Bukusu young men to woo his daughter, Namikasa. This gesture is vital in capturing the readiness of Apelu to live and coexist with the Bukusu community. Similarly, in N12, the man whose body is described as having been covered in scabies displays some form of resilience and courage that is worthy emulating by Bukusu young men who are about to get married. He is ready and

willing to fulfil all the tasks set by the proud maiden earning himself accolades from the audience. When he eventually marries the proud maiden, the audience is nearly moved to joyful tears at this apparent realisation that those who remain forthright are bound to be rewarded irrespective of their cultural background in the society. This is quite vital to this study in articulating issues of communal coexistence.

### **5.3.2 Construction of “the Other” as Ungrateful**

A look at some Bukusu oral narratives reveals the extent to which “the other” is constructed as ungrateful. N10, *Hyena Ate His Protector* is perhaps one of those narratives that warn the community to be wary of “the other” for they may be ungrateful. In this narrative, Hyena uses lies to win the woman’s sympathy. He dupes her that he would spare her life if she protects him from the hunters who are pursuing him. The woman conceals him from the hunters only for Hyena to turn round and eat her up after the hunters have left. The othering of Hyena is brought out through augmentation where the narrator refers to Hyena as “*kunamunyu*,” the augmentative form of *namunyu*. In the actual performance of this narrative, the narrator paused and looked at the audience suggestively when the woman decided to shield Hyena from the hunters. It is like both the narrator and the audience knew that the woman was committing an abomination by deciding to dine with “the other.” It is no wonder, therefore, when Hyena turns round and eats this woman despite the role she has played in saving her life. This is the highest level of ingratitude. This narrative has been told repeatedly in the Bukusu community to warn people against evil practices that can be detrimental to the existing social order in the society.

The ingratitude of Hyena in this narrative is best exemplified through a close reading of Okumba Miruka (1994) when he states that the hyena in many East African narratives is regarded as a symbol of greed and foolishness. These are some of the vices that the Bukusu community and the rest of the society are likely to avoid at all costs. It is this greed that drives Hyena into eating up the woman who has just saved him from hunters. It can be inferred that this narrative warns the audience and the Bukusu community to desist from condoning evil and come out openly to condemn such practices at both individual and communal levels. This will guard them from falling victims of deceit and betrayal. Those who willingly go against the dictates of the community are regarded as social misfits and whenever calamity strikes, they are held personally responsible. This is the ideal society that this narrative and many others advocate for.

N7, *Three Men Meet a Strange Woman*, equally presents to the audience with the ungrateful “other.” The three men meet an old woman who needs help to cross the river and one of them offers to assist her by carrying her on his back. This is a charitable act given that he does not know the person he is carrying. This willingness to assist can only be exemplified in the already alluded to respect that the Bukusu community accords “the other.” More importantly, young people are expected to unquestioningly respect the elderly members of the community. The act of crossing the river is symbolic of a risky undertaking that this man may set out to work on. Unlike in the previous narratives where the Bukusu regard “the other” with suspicion, in this narrative, the man exhibits hospitality to *omurende*. This could be a pointer to the earlier alluded to perception of the entire Bukusu community as being hospitable and generous.

On reaching the other side of the river, the old woman refuses to disembark from the man's back. She remains clinging on the man's back despite his plea to be allowed to join his colleagues. This prompts the other two men to leave their friend behind and go on to look for an animal to come and slaughter. On coming back, they erect an arbour within which they roast meat. When the meat is ready, they ask the woman to let go of their friend so that she could eat but she adamantly refuses to come down and demands to eat from his back. The men refuse to share the meat with her. So they eat until they are satisfied. When darkness sets in, they sleep by the fireside. No sooner does the old woman see them sleeping than she jumps down and starts eating the roasted meat greedily. But it does not take long before she too is overcome by sleep. While she is still sleeping, the man who had been carrying her all along wakes up feeling very light. He then immediately wakes his friends up and the trio stealthily walk out leaving the old woman still sleeping. Long after the men have gone, Hyena who has scented meat comes to the scene and starts eating the remains. While it is thus busy gleaning the enclosure of every bone, the old woman wakes up from her sleep and jumps on his back thinking that it is the young man who has helped her cross the river. Hyena gets so frightened that he takes off with great speed, running aimlessly without stopping. When he eventually plunges into the sea where he drowns, the old woman is still firmly perched on his back. Thus the greedy Hyena and the ungrateful woman both meet their tragic end.

In this oral narrative, this old woman lacks mercy and is quite ungrateful. What emerges here is the comparison that the narrator draws between the two. As already pointed out in this chapter, Hyena is a symbol of greed and foolishness in many Bukusu oral narratives. While N7 presents Hyena as greedy, N10 depicts the same Hyena as both greedy and

ungrateful. These same vices are replicated in the old woman. She is greedy in the sense that she begins salivating the moment she sees the men eating meat. She even demands to be allowed to eat while still perched on the man's back. When her request is not granted, she waits until the men are asleep then jumps off the back of the tired man to eat the remaining meat. It is this folly that eventually leads her to jump onto Hyena's back mistaking him to be the man who has been carrying her all day. It is clear that the narrative has presented this female character as being both untrustworthy and ungrateful. The old woman is equally dependant and is not ready to live her life. The narrative has vividly brought out the cost of these vices. Those who indulge in such are bound to face severe ramifications.

This woman has been othered because of the kind of behaviour she displays before the three men. Her refusal to disembark from the back of the man who has been carrying her all along smacks of ingratitude and something unheard of in the Bukusu community. It is instructive to note that the man who offers to help her cross the river is driven by the communal regard for elderly people. In the same vein, the community does not expect the elderly to oppress the young the way this old woman does. Her actions are as a result totally unacceptable and can only be explained by othering her. This is one person who is not subscribing to the Bukusu values and general conventions of life.

This section has examined the role of Bukusu oral narrative performance in constructing "the other" as ungrateful. This has been realised through objective analysis of the narratives where the Bukusu are contrasted with "the other." It is clear that a number of these narratives provide a platform upon which other people are compared with the Bukusu. These oral narratives present some of the people who do not subscribe to

Bukusu way of life as exhibiting ungrateful tendencies even where they are expected to appreciate the hospitality accorded them by the Bukusu. To this end, Bukusu perception on ingratitude has been captured.

### **5.3.3 Construction of “the Other” as Naïve and Gullible**

A number of Bukusu oral narratives have depicted “the other” as displaying high levels of gullibility and naïvety. Notable ones include N1, *Simbi and Nakitumba* and N16, *Wanakhatandi*. In both narratives, the ogres are othered and presented negatively when pitted against the Bukusu. In N1, for example, the gullibility of ogres is brought out when they unwittingly swallow plates on their initial visits to Simbi’s home. This is the initial mistake that exposes them and Nakitumba is able to discern that these are indeed ogres. Upon swallowing plates, the narrator paused and suggestively looked at the audience before giving Nakitumba’s observation thus: “*Nakitumba kalolakho kimima kikhali kimilayi tawe mu bakeni bataru bano.*” (Nakitumba observed some unbecoming mannerisms in these three strange visitors). This initial mistake by ogres exposes them to scrutiny by the clever Nakitumba and eventually works against their evil plan of eating up Simbi and company.

Later in the narrative, the folly of these ogres is still brought to the fore when they unquestioningly believe Nakitumba and opt to use a quail cage made of grass to fetch water from the sea. Their gullibility is so evident that the narrator aptly refers to them as “*Kiminani kimisilu*” or “the foolish ogres.” These ogres do not pause to ponder on how water can be carried in such a cage. When they belatedly realise that Nakitumba has really duped them, they decide to chase after her and the entire bridal party to no avail. Their gullibility is still captured when they come across the Toad that had swallowed the

girls. The clever Toad eats mud after swallowing the girls so when the ogres ask her to vomit the contents of her tummy, she starts with mud. This annoys the ogres and they easily give up the chase. They are not critical enough to analyse the seemingly overstretched belly of Toad. This exposes ogres to ridicule as naïve and gullible.

In N16, the ogres once more are juxtaposed with human beings. In this narrative, Wanakhatandi's wife easily dupes the greedy ogres into believing that they are eating up her entire family. This, however, is not true given that these gullible creatures are being fed on hides from dead animals which Wanakhatandi's wife and children collect every morning. In the actual performance, the narrator brought out the naivety of ogres thus:

*Mayi oyo kanja kangala bikumba, kamasielo ke chisang'i chafwa kecha kara muningiro katekha biaola. Enge kamanani kecha, Wanakhatandi kakoekesia eningilo ali,"luno endekhile omukhana wase omukhulu."* (That woman collected bones and hides of dead animals and cooked them in a pot until they were soft. When ogres came, Wanakhatandi showed them the cooking pot saying: "today I have cooked my eldest daughter.")

Unsuspectingly, ogres burst into song and dance thus:

*Lelo ndurire endiri,*

Today I bagged a heavy one

*Mukamba ndarure eye bubwoya*

Tomorrow I will bag a heavy one

After this dance, they would then settle down to eat thinking it was their adversary's daughter. This is a clear display of gullibility in the sense that ogres fail to comprehend the possibility of one cooking his daughter and sitting to watch her eaten by ogres. In the narration, the audience burst into laughter as the ogres greedily devoured the meat meant to be Wanakhatandi's daughter. From the above two oral narratives, it is evident that ogres have been othered and depicted negatively as being naïve and gullible. What



emerges from these narratives is that behind their apparent naivety and gullibility, these ogres are motivated by greed and selfishness in relating with members of the Bukusu community. This greatly contributes to their failure seen through the tricks that Nakitumba and Wanakhatandi's wife play on them. It can be argued that the predicament of these ogres at the hands of the two is indeed self inflicted.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the construction of identities in Bukusu oral narratives. A look at some Bukusu oral narratives in this chapter has revealed that they provide a platform upon which members of the Bukusu community are socialised to construct "the other" as different from them. Such constructs are not limited to non Bukusos alone but include members of the Bukusu community who do not subscribe to the way of life of the community. It has also emerged that "the other", apart from displaying negative tendencies like treachery, ingratitude and gullibility; he or she equally displays some considerable degree of admiration worthy emulating. For instance, "the other" is portrayed as resilient and forthright as in N12. Similarly, "the other" is credited with reintroducing circumcision rite among the Bukusu as in N15 and being at the centre of communal coexistence through intermarriages as evidenced in N6. It is worthy stating that such constructs are likely to influence the kind of personal and communal relationships that exist in the community. It has emerged that Bukusu oral narratives also construct different identities based on gender differences where men and women are assigned different roles in the community. The next chapter provides a summary and conclusion of the major findings of the study.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Conclusion**

#### **6.0 Introduction**

This chapter provides a brief summary of the entire study where it highlights the objectives of the study, hypotheses, and instruments of research as well as theoretical framework. The chapter equally focuses on major research findings, general conclusion and suggestions for further research.

#### **6.1 Summary**

This study set out to examine oral narrative performance and the construction of Bukusu perception on communal coexistence. It specifically focused on how Bukusu oral narratives can be instrumental in suggesting different perceptions hence influencing personal and communal relationships in the society. The study focused on twenty oral narratives from the Bukusu community. These narratives were studied to uncover the meaning in relation to the construction of Bukusu perceptions. The study focused on five objectives, which were: to examine context and meaning of Bukusu oral narratives, to examine performance and meaning of Bukusu oral narratives, to analyse the special language of narration and how it suggests meaning in Bukusu oral narrative performance and examine how meaning in oral narrative performance contributes to the Bukusu perceptions of other people.

The study was equally guided by four hypotheses, thus: The meanings deciphered from the Bukusu oral narratives are subtly suggested in the context of performance of these oral narratives, performance of Bukusu oral narratives is significant in suggesting meaning, Bukusu oral narrative performance employs specialised use of language that

suggests meaning and meaning in Bukusu oral narratives is significant in capturing Bukusu perceptions of other people. The study follows an eclectic model in which a number of theoretical approaches are employed. The main approaches are hermeneutics, performance and ethno poetics. Hermeneutics theory has been used in this study to address matters of content and meaning while performance theory is used to exemplify aspects of form in the narratives. Form can only be realised through attending the actual context where the narratives are performed. The study has equally relied heavily on ethno poetics orientation specifically in interpretation of aural features of the narratives. This combination is basically grounded in modern folkloristic perspectives which call for viewing oral texts as representations of collective thinking. A lot of attention has also been paid to contextual information in the analysis of the texts. The approach that has been adopted in the field in collecting oral narratives and other relevant information consists of: participation, observation and interviews. The hermeneutics, performance and ethno poetics perspective that forms the basis of this study requires the researcher to engage in a meaningful interaction and dialogue with the community under investigation.

## **6.2 Research Findings**

Research findings in this study were basically guided by the hypotheses upon which the study was founded. The study established that Bukusu narratives are vital in expressing communal views on several facets of life. The study equally acknowledges the vital role played by these narratives in suggesting Bukusu perceptions on a number of issues. Some of these issues affect both the Bukusu as well as other people who live among the Bukusu or neighbour them. As a result, Bukusu perceptions in these narratives are vital in capturing both personal and inter communal relationships.

From the contextual information gathered in Chapter Two, it has been revealed that the oral narrative performer is largely influenced and defined by his/her culture as well as the prevailing social-economic, geographical and historical conditions. The narratives are therefore created out of the narrator's observation and assessment of his or her cultural milieu. Bukusu oral narratives serve as a mirror of the producing community reflecting the hidden desires and aspirations of the community. It has equally been established that oral narrative performance constitutes a major source for the liberation of the imagination. Bukusu oral narratives provide a medium through which this society inducts new generations into its life flow. In addition to acting as a mirror of social realities, Bukusu oral narratives are at the same time a medium through which the Bukusu construct their perceptions and general worldview on different facets of life.

It has also been established that a number of Bukusu oral narratives comment either directly or indirectly on "the other." The study has further revealed that Bukusu oral narratives define what the community regards as right and expects members of the community to subscribe to what is right. These oral narratives, it has emerged, construct "the other" or *barende* negatively when this group is pitted against the Bukusu. It has also emerged that reference to "the other" in Bukusu oral narratives is not limited to non Bukusu communities but equally applies to those members of the Bukusu community who do not subscribe to the Bukusu way of life. Such people are normally othered and treated as *barende*. There are some oral narratives which have depicted especially *barende* in the negative sense as being deceptive and treacherous. Such attitudes could be emanating from cultural, economic and even political dynamics of the Bukusu. These are the necessary pillars in constructing Bukusu perceptions and worldview. It has been

established that such negative references in Bukusu oral narratives are likely to create tensions between the Bukusu and their neighbours. Through these oral narratives, the perception of the Bukusu on themselves as a perfect group that only gets ruined by mixing with *barende* is revealed.

However, this position has been deconstructed in some oral narratives where “the other” comes in strongly in perpetuating continuity through intermarriages. A notable example is in N6, *Apelu*, where the other is willing to allow his daughter get married to Bukusu men. This is a sure way of sustaining personal and interpersonal relationships. In some narratives like N15, *The Bukusu Circumcision*, “the other” is given credit for reintroducing the practice of circumcision among the Bukusu. It is this practice that the Bukusu come to associate with communal identity. In other oral narratives, “the other” has displayed admirable characteristics like resilience and courage in exceptional conditions. In N12, *A Beautiful Proud Maiden*, “the other” manages to fulfil all the difficult tasks set by the proud maiden before marrying her. It is instructive pointing out that many Bukusu men could not dare attempt what this man does before he gets his reward. This objective presentation of “the other” is vital to this study in the sense that it perpetuates peaceful personal and interpersonal relationships.

Bukusu oral narratives also provide avenues within which the community constructs differences based on gender. It has emerged that some narratives present men and women differently where the former are depicted as superior hence at the core of major happenings in the community. In most cases, it is men who are charged with the responsibility of not only providing and protecting their families but also extending the same to the entire community. In most oral narratives with ogres, for example, male

members of the community are at the forefront of fighting to wade off the danger posed by these ogres. Their triumph over these ogres signals the victory of the community. Women, on the other hand, are presented as dependent on men and people who are unlikely to create much impact if left alone. In some oral narratives, women have equally been depicted as people who harbour jealousy and are out to destroy one another. It, therefore, demands for intervention from their male counterparts for them to stay peacefully. Nonetheless, this negative presentation of women has been reversed in some oral narratives and women emerged as useful members of the community. In some of the narratives, for example, women have taken up the responsibilities of men like protecting their families as is the case in N16, *Wanakhatandi*. In other oral narratives, women have been presented as insightful, intelligent and daring. This makes them succeed in unexpected circumstances. In N1, *Simbi and Nakitumba*, for example, the young and despised Nakitumba manages to defeat the ogres and save her step sister, Simbi and the entire bridal party from being eaten by ogres. This is indeed reversal of roles in Bukusu oral narratives.

Finally, it has been established that Bukusu oral narratives employ specialised form of language that makes them relevant to specific occasions. These language devices are either advertently or inadvertently employed by the narrators to pass across important messages. Because oral narratives are primarily meant to educate the community on various aspects of life, narrators in Bukusu oral narratives, more often than not employ the use of special language of narration like opening and closing formula, symbolism, imagery, diminution and augmentation, coded songs as well as strategic repetition to communicate pertinent issues touching on the Bukusu and other communities. Through

these language devices, the perceptions of the Bukusu on communal coexistence are subtly suggested.

### **6.3 Suggestions on Further Research**

Having presented the findings of the study, it is imperative to make a few suggestions on further research in cultural discourses in African communities. From the review of literature in Chapter One, it is evident that little research has been conducted specifically on oral literature discourses on personal and inter-communal interactions yet these oral forms hold a key to our understanding of a people's philosophy of life. Findings from this research are as a result critical in helping us alleviate modern problems, especially those regarding personal and inter communal relationships. This then calls for more intellectual inquiry into the field of folklore. Apart from oral narratives which have received considerable attention, other oral literature genres like proverbs and riddles are yet to be given more critical attention. At the same time, folkloristic materials created in order to cope with the changes arising from technological advancement require specific attention. These issues provide fertile grounds for academic research.

### **6.4 Conclusion**

The study was mainly concerned with examining how Bukusu oral narrative performance is vital in the construction of Bukusu perceptions. In examining these perceptions, the study was guided by the fact that the Bukusu do not exist in isolation but live among other communities with whom they cannot avoid a day to day interaction. It was also informed by the view that Bukusu oral narratives are not only confined to the Bukusu as a community but also comment on non-Bukusu people, especially those neighbouring

them. An understanding of these narratives is therefore vital in appreciating the kind of relationship that exists between the Bukusu and other groups of people. Unlike many other studies of this nature which have majorly dwelt on the aesthetic and general performance of the narratives, this study has narrowed down to specifically examine the functionality of Bukusu oral narratives by focusing on how different perceptions that emanate from the narratives contribute to the existing personal and inter communal relationships.

It has been established that the Bukusu community, like many other African communities, use the narrative to preserve their sense of social order in the society. The narratives express hidden meanings especially with regard to the Bukusu perceptions on a number of pertinent issues. Through oral narrative performance, the audience experiences the pleasure of a symbolic nature. This is occasioned by the symbols in the narratives which are configured to discuss Bukusu perceptions. It has been established that the context within which Bukusu oral narratives are performed plays a significant role in meaning-making in the sense that many narratives are affected by different contexts. It has also emerged that performance of Bukusu oral narratives is quite vital in constructing Bukusu perceptions. The manner in which these narratives are performed is indeed quite central to the construction of meaning. The study has also found out that Bukusu oral narratives are full of commentaries touching on both the Bukusu and “the other.” In some narratives, “the other” is depicted negatively while in some positively especially with regard to promoting continuity through intermarriages. Finally, the study has established that Bukusu oral narratives employ a wide use of language devices in their performance.



These devices are artistically employed to construct Bukusu perceptions on communal coexistence.

From an analysis of the chapters, it has emerged that the Bukusu oral narrative performance is a sophisticated practice that imparts the ideological inclinations of the society to the audience. In a sense, the narrator is a mediator between the Bukusu and their literature and discusses the conflicts within the society. The Bukusu oral narrative process constructs the cosmic consciousness of the Bukusu with regard to the construction of their perceptions and general worldview.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

#### **Bukusu Oral Narratives Collected.**

This section provides the narratives that have been analysed in this study. These narratives were rendered in *Lubukusu*, the native language of the Bukusu which is provided. The English translation provided here was arrived at after translation by the research assistants in collaboration with the researcher.

#### **Narrative 1**

##### **Simbi and Nakitumbe**

**Narrator: Khamala Matakala**

**Location: Mukuyuni**

*Yabao khaale, omukhana kabao bali Simbi. Omukhana yuno kaloba basolili boosi babechanga khumuselela. Ne khubela kakholanga ekasi emukunda, babechanga khumuselela barumikhilanga wandaye wewe, Nakitumbe we sikufu okhakholanga ekasi ye emukunda tawe lundi niye bandu boosi balekelesia khubela buleme bwewe. nalimo. Kakhaba kario, Nakitumba kaaba ne kamakesi lundi omukwalafu kumoyo. Buli khase, enga bakeni bechanga, kabakhesianga bulayi na atima emukunda khuyilila Simbi burume.*

*Abulala Simbi kechanga engo khulola bakeni bewe lakini bise bikali kekelanga busa na achililila ne kimilimo kiewe emukunda. Kachililila ari khu bise bileyi mala lumalilisi kumoyo kwamukwa enyuma wa khubona basani bataru. Kakhaba kario, Nakitumba kalolakho kimima kikhali kimilayi tawe mu bakeni bataru bano. Buli enga balichanga, basamanga kiminwa lukali mala bamila buli sindu nechilimo chisaani. Enyuma wee balola bali Nakitumba wababoene, bapaanga kamasemu ne bafuchulula chisaani chana. Basani bano bachichakana khukendelela Simbi khu bise bileyi ne buli nga bechanga, Nakitumba kabonanga kimima kimibi kiabwe. Lumalilisi Simbi kabakhilwa khu basani bano khulondekhana nende kumwima kwe Babukusu. Nakitumba kakhaka khukania wandaye wewe khualikha khu bandu bano mala Simbi naye kabelela nabara ali Nakitumba wakholile busa libuba.*

*Endalo ye siselelo yamala yola nio Simbi akhoyela khuelekisibwa mungo mwewe muya. Khulondekhana ne kumwima kwe Babukusu, bakhana babao bee khumuelekesia. Simbi karobora bakhana bano mala walekha Nakitumba nabola ari Nakitumba alamurerera chisoni sikila safwaa ebweni wa bakeni tawe. Nakitumba kekomba ache ne wendaye wewe lakini Simbi wakhaya taa. Enyuma wee khumulekha, Nakitumba kalondakho khu bandu bano bwikisi. Lumalilisi wola mungo muya mwa Simbi asilo. Simbi wabona bubi lakini omusakhulu wewe wamukaya nabola ari mulamwa wewe Nakitumba ali Bulekhule sikila bung'ali omusani yuno kaaba kunani mala kamanya busa ali Nakitumba alaba siakhulia siabwe asilo. Kho asilo nga bakhana bano boosi baba nebakonile, kamanani kakaaba nekekhole babandu kekalukhasia kekelo kamanani ne kanja khurusia chimjasi nekenya khumila bakhana baano. Bise bino, bakhana bosu babaa bakonile nakhali Nakitumba owanja khukhweumila kolane khukosasia kamanani. Kamanani nge kaboono kario kekalukhasia bwangu ne kekelo babandu lundi. Nge kamureba sifunane, Nakitumba wabakobosia ali kenyile khunywa kamechi. Silo siene sino kamanani kakhilwa khulia bakhana bano. Nga enje ne bwasia, Nakitumba kabolela babasie niko kalola musilo kakhaba kario salio wamurekelesia tawe. Simbi ne babasie babili bamubolela bali niye namaroro. Kakhaba kario bakhana babandi babili baloma bali bwakhabele bulaye bamurekeresia Nakitumba. Asili nga ola, bakhana babili bano sebakona tawe ne khuliesindukha liabwe, babona koosi niko Nakitumba kababolela. Nga kamanani kano nekasama kiminwa kiabwe, Nakitumba kanja khukhweumila ne luno waloma ali Kenya kamechi ke munyanja mala batayila musiyonjo. Mala enyanja yaba aleyi lukendo lwe silo simufu. Ne siyonjo Nasio siaba silume poo khutaa kamechi. Kho kamanani kaaba ne biise bilume khutaa kamechi.*

*Nga kiminani kimsilu ne kiatima khucha khuenja kamechi, Nakitumba kenyosia bakhana bwangubwangu nebachaka lukendo lwe khukhwilukha. Nebakhalekukha tawe, Nakitumba karema kamarakich ke kamatore mala wara mubulili kalolekhana nga babandu bakonile. Bakhana bano bakenda bise bileyi lumalilisi bola khuluchi lwichule. Banyola buri bukali po. Nebasili neburi buno, likhele Namakanda liecha nio bali mala liabola lili linyala khubayeta. Liamila bakhana bano sia mulala ne lilakilisia mbo lilabayila engo wabwe. Enyuma wee khumila bakhana bano Namakanda kalia liloba liosi. Khu bise bikekhe linani liaba nililondile khubakhana bano liola nio Namakanda kaba ne kekhale ne limurakho arusie biosi bili munda mwewe. Namakanda keyama lakini karusia busa liloba nende chinjukha. Linani liabona bubi mala liakobola engo. Lumalilisi Namakanda kola mulokoba lwe khuranga wanga bakhana bano. Buli munju niwo kengila bumutimasia ne khumukhoma. Lumalilisi kakhaka mungo yoo mukhasi omukumba mala kengila. Omukhasi yuno kasinga lundi kamuakha Namakanda kamafura. Nga kabona kumoyo kumulayi kuno, Namakanda kabolela omukhasi yuno koosi niko kaba nako. Omukhasi yuno katima khulanga bandu boosi ne bacheesa bewe beche babonekho. Khu bise bititi enju yewe yechula bamayi ne babandu baenja babana babwe babatiba. Buli sia mulala nebalimo bamayi be bakhana ata babatimasianga Namakanda babamo khebalila. Nga Namakanda kanja khufuchulula bakhana bano sia mulala mulala narakikha nende Nakitumba, bikalakala biakwa musirekere. Enyuma wee kamakhuwa kano, omukhaye omukumba yuno wabukula bakhana bano mala wamenya nabo ne nabo bamukhola busa nga mayi wabwe.*

*Khukhwamila aho, enju yo mukhasi mukumba yanyola luluya. Bandu bamua riria khu lwenga kaonia bakhana bano. Simbi ne bakhana bano bososi bamuwa luyali po. Bakhana bano lumalilisi bacha kamalia mala barerera omukhasi mukumba yuno kimiandu kimikali po.*

*Lukano lwase lwawela abwenao.*

### **English translation**

A long time ago, there lived a beautiful girl called Simbi who turned down countless suitors who wished to take her as a bride. Since she worked in the fields, all her suitors had to depend on the service of a hunchback half sister of Simbi called Nakitumba who could not work in the fields due to her condition and was despised by everybody because of her deformity. Despite her disability, Nakitumba was very intelligent and kind hearted. Each time visitors dropped in, she greeted them warmly and ran to the fields to pass the message to Simbi.

Sometimes Simbi would come home to attend to her suitors but in many cases she just ignored them and remained in the fields until she was told they had gone. This went on until one day her heart was conquered by some three young men. However, Nakitumba noticed some strange habit in the visitors. Whenever they ate, they opened their mouths wide and swallowed down plates and all. On realizing that Nakitumba was watching them, they would exchange glances and quickly regurgitate the utensils. The visitors paid several visits and Nakitumba noted this peculiar habit every time even after Simbi was formerly betrothed to her hero according to Bukusu customs. Nakitumba tried to dissuade her step sister from her impending marriage to no avail. This greatly disturbed Simbi who felt her step sister was simply driven by jealousy occasioned by her deformity which may limit her chances of ever getting married. She threatened her half sister reminding her that she was not the one responsible for Nakitumba's deformity.

The wedding day came when Simbi was supposed to be escorted to her bridal home. As was the custom in the Bukusu community, maids were chosen to escort the bride. Simbi chose four girls to escort her and excluded Nakitumba arguing that the latter was so ugly that if she accompanied the bridal party, the groom might be upset and perhaps even cancel the marriage. In spite of her pleas, Nakitumba was ordered to stay home as the rest of the party proceeded on the ceremonial journey.

Having been left behind, she resolved to secretly follow the bridal party while fully aware that this was a dangerous venture. Eventually, Nakitumba reached the bridal home at night fall to the disappointment of Simbi. However, the bride groom, who was indeed an ogre, did not mind her presence ostensibly because she only meant more food for the greedy ogres. During the night when everybody was sleeping, the ogres who had been disguised as human beings turned into their original shape and started emitting sparks of fire ready to swallow the girls. At this point, all but Nakitumba are asleep. She came in timely by whimpering so as to divert the attention of the ogres. She succeeded in her plan when the ogres took the form of human beings once more. Asked what the matter was, she requested for drinking water. Thus the ogres failed in their mission to eat the girls. When morning came and she reported to the bridal party, Simbi and her two friends dismissed her as a day dreamer. However, two of the girls sided with her and decided to

keep vigil the following night and to their utter shock they realised that Nakitumba's fears were nothing short of truth. As soon as the ogres opened their fiendish mouths, Nakitumba groaned and this time demanded for sea water which should be carried in, *musiyonjo*, a wicker basket. In the first place, the sea was miles away and it would take the ogres a whole night's walk to fetch the water. In the second place, the wicker basket referred to by Nakitumba was specifically designed as a bird cage for keeping domesticated birds such as fowls, quails and guinea fowls. Its framework would therefore not hold water. Definitely the ogres were going to waste a lot of time on a long fruitless journey.

As the foolish ogres raced towards the sea, Nakitumba led the girls in a daring escape from the snare of ogres. Before leaving, Nakitumba directed the girls to cut banana stems and cover them to make them look as if they were sleeping persons. When the ogres returned home, they mistook the banana stems for the girls. Meanwhile, the girls walked for a long time until they came to a flooded river. This diminished their hope of ever crossing the river. In this moment of despair, a gigantic frog called *Namakanda* hopped towards them and offered to help them by swallowing all of them one by one. She promised to deliver them to their homes.

Having gobbled all the six girls, the frog ate soil and some worms. When eventually the ogre who had mounted a chase after the girls caught up with frog, he demanded that she vomits the contents of her unusually large stomach. *Namakanda* complied but only vomited the soil and worms. This rebuffed the ogre who gave up his chase and returned home disappointed and thoroughly frustrated. The hour of reckoning came when *Namakanda* finally reached the first homestead in the village. Into every house she tried to enter, she was chased out with insults. One woman even set children upon her asking them to drive the "dirty, scaly frog" away. For a brief moment *Namakanda* found herself unwanted in the homes of the girls she had so compassionately rescued. She was hungry, lonely and cold. Finally, she tried one more door and to her joy she was let in. Her host, a barren woman, not only provided *Namakanda* with shelter and food but she also washed her and smeared her body with ghee which acted as a liniment for curing her pain. Overwhelmed by this rare kindness, *Namakanda* broke the news to her host who in turn ran to relay the same to the villagers who had assembled at a beer party in an adjacent house. Soon, the barren woman's house was filled with mothers and relatives of the lost girls. Everyone was crying with joy including the mean women, some of whom were real mothers of the girls. When at last, *Namakanda* vomited the girls one by one starting with Nakitumba, jubilation engulfed the entire village.

Henceforth, the home to the barren woman was no longer a lonely one. She now commanded respect not only from the girls whom she saved their lives but also the entire village. Simbi and her friends regarded her as their god mother for the rest of their lives. The barren woman adopted the maidens and subsequently got company and later bride wealth from the men who married them. The bride wealth boosted the old woman's status in the society.

## **Narrative 2**

### **Nasio and her Brother**

**Narrator:** Michael Lubekho

**Location:** Ndivisi

*Nasio nende wandaye wewe*

*Yabao khaale, kamanani kalia babandu boosi musibala sie Babukusu. Barama bafupi babili omukhana nende omusoleli. Babana bano baba ne chikhafu chingali po nicho papa wabwe kabalekhela. Omukhana bamulanganga bali Nasio. Buli ndalo omusoleli yuno kasamusiana chikhafu ne omukhana naye asikala engo khukhola chikasi che mungo. Limenya lie babanabano liaba litinyu nekhulondekhana mbo bamenyanga alala ne kamanani. Bulinyanga engo omusoleli yuno nekaruranga engo khusamusia chikhafu kabolelanga omukhana wabwe ali kekaleo kimiliango kiosi nesilibwa khukhingilila kamanani khukhwingila munju.*

*Bulinga kakobolanga akoloba nekama mubwayi omusoleli yuno kembangalulwimbo khumukhebusia Nasio ali kolile engo. Kembangari.....*

*Nasio-oo, Nasio, Nasio-oo, Nasio*

*Nasio-oo, Nasio, Nasio-oo, Nasio*

*Chamakhung'eng'a, Nasio, Nasio-oo, Nasio*

*Musilongo sina Nasio, Nasio-oo' Nasio*

*Sie wabutubile, Nasio, Nasio-oo, Nasio*

*Bulinga kembangalulwimbo luno, Nasio karuranga munju nesikalakala*

*Ayiiih-yi-yi-yiih! Ayiiih-yi-yi-yiih*

*Chakhaya chalota*

*Enyuma we bikalakala bino, wandaye wa Nasio kakhama chikhafu ne Nasio ang'ona siakhulia sie akoloba. Nebakhama barrio nabacha bakona balinda endalo elondakho. Bibindu biachililila bulayi khubise bileyi. Akhumalilikha kunani kwaba nakumenyile alukongo kwaulila koosi niko Nasio nende wandaye weewe bakholanga. Mala kunani kuno kwqbara nisio kunyala kwakhola nio kumulie Nasio. Kwacha kwang'ona kumumilo kwenya khufwanana nende kwa wandaaye wanasio. Nekwakhama kurio, kwalinda nga wandaye Nasio kasamusie chikhafu, nekwicha khwimba.*

*Naasio, Nasio, Nasio*

*Musilongo sina Nasio*

*Sie wabutubile Nasio*

*Nasio nga kahulila kunani kuno ne kwimba, kachekha po khubela kumumilo kwako kwaba ne kimichelelesi kimakali po. Kakubolela ari "cheyo, ewe kunani soli wandaye wange*

tawe.”Kunani kuno kwacha mala kwabara sana.Enge wandaye Nasio nekecha akoloba Nasio kamubolela niko kaaba nabone.Wandaye kamutinyilisia ali akhebilila kekulayo endalo ekindi tawe.

Kunani kuno sekwaluwilila tawe.Kwacha kwabasa kumumilo.Wandaye Nasio kaba nelilisindukha lukali po mala khubise bikekhe kayanga chikhafu aambi ne mungo narire ali kunani kuno kunyala kwakobola mala kwalia omwana wabwe.Wandaye Nasio enga kabona ali kunani sekwicha lundi tawe, kela mukhusamusia chikhafu aleyi lundi.Sekamanyakho ali kunani kuno kwaba nakumwailisia tawe.Nga nekwamanya kuli wandaye wa Nasio kachile aleyi,kwecha lundi mala luno kwemba kumwenya bulai po.Nasio kauka busa ali wandaye wewe.Enge kekulao na kunani kumulia mala kwalekha bikumba biong’ene.

Ekoloba enga yola wandaye Nasio kecha kema siara.Enyuma we khukhwimba bise bilei,kafuna kumuliango kengila munju.Aaah!niko kabona kamuukia po.Wandaye wewe kaba bikumba busa.Omusoleli yuno kalila lukali ne enyuma wa khulila,kaenja lufufu mala kara alala bikumba bia Nasio nakhupakho lufufu luno,liekhuukia Nasio kenyokha mubafu.Omusoleli yuno kamutinyilisia Nasio ali khukhwamila endalo eyoo akhoyela abe omurekerefu po.

Bise biachililila ne kunani kuno kwicha lundi kwaulila Nasio ne wandaye nebemba.Kwabara sana,kuli aaah!omukhana yuno fwana namulia!kwaabola mumoyo kuli namanyile sie ekhakhole luno.Kwalinda endalo ekindi nekwicha lundi kwimba bulai po.Nasio kekulao lundi kumuliango mala kesindukha lukali.Kunani kuno kwamulia mala kwalia ne bikumba biosi.

Wandaye Nasio enga kecha ekoloba kabona kakekholekhe kauka sana mala kaloma ali “ese ndonda khusialia omwana wa mayi.Sisiamulia silicha khundia sesi.”Endalo yalondakho mumabwibwi karekukha mungo nende bulwani bwewe bwoosi nalonda khukunani.Khungila kakanana kunani kulala nekemba “sisialia yaya khasibire simalilile.”Kunani kuno nga kwabona bulwani bwo musoleli yunokaba nabwo kwesindukha ne kumukobosia kuli “wanangali wa kulecho,amenyile khukisumo,niye wamulile,ese pebee,ese pebee.”Omusoleli yuno kachililila nende lukendo lwewe na buli nga kakanananga ne kamanani,kembanga lwimbo lwewe nako kamukobosia nekamulakilisia kunani kwalia wandaye wewe.Lumalilisi omusoleli yuno kola mungo mwe kunani kuno.Kunani kuno nga kwamubona kwanja khurusia chinjasi.Omusoleli yuno naye kachukucha lifumo kwamila,kachukucha lilindi kwamila nekwicha aambi kwasama kumunwa kwenya khumumila,omusoleli yuno kachukucha embalu ya lueni mumunwa mwe kunani kuno mala yakukhala ekokopilo kwakwa asi kwachalala.Nekukhafwa tawe, kwamubolela kuli akhalekho lulwala lwako lutiti lwe khusikele balebe bewe barure munda.Omusoleliyuno kakhola ario Nasio kaba wakhuranga khurura munda mwekunani kuno kwamilanga.Omumalilisi khururamo kaba omuloosi omukofu.Enyuma we bise bititi kakoobola munda mwe kunani nabola ali kebililemo kunaka kwewe.Enga kamala kakobolamo,ne kunani kwikalayo lulwala lwako.Nekulila kuli kufwe nomuloosi mulala yuno nasili munda.

Nelukano lwase luwela.

### **.English translation**

Once upon a time, the ogres had eaten all people in Bukusu country except two orphan children, a boy and a girl, who inherited a big herd of cattle from their father. The girl's name was Nasio while the boy's name was not given. While the boy went out to look after cattle, the girl remained behind to do housework. Life was so precarious that the survival of the two children almost depended more or less on instinctive discipline. Each day the boy left home to go to the pastures, he asked the girl to lock herself up in the house to avoid falling prey to the notorious monsters. On his arrival from the grazing fields in the evening, the boy used to sing a special song to alert his sister. It was important to observe that the girl should not only know the words of the song but also be able to recognize her brother's voice. The song went:

Nasio, Nasio, Nasio,  
They have been licking  
Which salt lick? Nasio  
Wabutubile's salt lick  
Nasio let the calves out to suckle.

Whenever, the girl heard her brother sing, she opened the door and dashed out to receive him while ululating:

Hurrah! Hurrah, hurrah!  
There comes my brother's herd.

After milking the cows, Nasio prepared the evening meal after which the two children slept till the following morning. Things went on smoothly till one day an ogre who had been moving around the area made a plan to kidnap the girl. He decided to imitate the boy. So one day, when the boy was still at the grazing field, the ogre came and sang outside the house in a very horse voice. On hearing that, the girl laughed and dismissed the ogre as a clumsy creature pretending to be her brother. This greatly disappointed the ogre who went away but vowed to make a comeback. When the boy brought the cattle home, Nasio narrated to him her encounter with the ogre. The boy praised her for behaving well but warned her to be extra careful since the ogre was more likely to come back.

The next day when the boy had taken the cows to the fields again, the ogre came and sang much better than the previous day but still the girl was able to detect a flaw in his voice. The ogre therefore did not fulfill his mission. When the boy came home and Nasio narrated to him this encounter, he was the more worried. He wondered what would happen to him in the event his only sister was swallowed by the ogre. Nasio was the only human being in his world after the ferocious ogres wiped out the entire country. He resolved to graze the animals around henceforth so that he could be constantly on the lookout.



Whenever the ogre failed in his mission, he varied his next visit, coming at odd times, so as to beguile Nasio into believing that he had disappeared from the village. He also spared more time on his impersonation drills. For the next few days when the boy decided to graze within the vicinity, the ogre did not show up. Naturally, the boy assumed the ogre scare was diminishing and consequently began to take his herd to distant pastures as was the case previously. When the next opportunity arose, the ogre came and imitated the boy so perfectly that Nasio responded to the song dashing out very confidently only to fall into the hands of the hungry ogre. He greedily devoured her leaving bare bones in the house. On his return, the boy called at the door to no avail. When he eventually broke into the house, he stumbled on her sister's bones. He ran out to collect a branch of a healing shrub called *lufufu*.

On coming back, he arranged Nasio's bones in the proper order then tapped it with the healing stick. Suddenly, Nasio revived and came back to life. The boy then strictly warned Nasio to be extremely wary next time. The next day he grazed the animals nearby and when he came back, he sang the usual song and Nasio opened the door. This went on for some time until the ogre came to learn that the girl he did eat was still living. Thus when the ogre got her unawares on the next occasion, he ate her completely without leaving a single bone around. When the boy reached home in the evening, he discovered that there was nobody to welcome him. He entered the house to check whether he could find his sister's bones but they were nowhere to be seen. There was equally no clue to her disappearance. He could not tell whether the ogre had kidnapped his sister or simply eaten her up. He vowed to revenge the disappearance of his sister saying: "whatever ate my sister will also eat me." Before sunrise, he set out armed with all manner of weapons to look for Nasio. He traveled day and night crossing many rivers and making a thorough search of every place he came to. Finally, the boy arrived in the land of ogres. He met the first ogre whom he confronted and asked whether he was the one who had eaten Nasio. On seeing the kind of weapons the young man was carrying, the ogre quickly replied: "the one who ate her stays up the hill. I am not the one. I am not the one." So Nasio's brother continued with his hunt for this ogre until he arrived at the ogre's residence. He challenged the ogre to produce his sister or he kills him. The ogre came out breathing fire. The young man aimed his spear at the ogre but it was easily swallowed. He aimed another one which was also swallowed as the ogre kept advancing toward him. Eventually, the young man released a magic sword direct in the ogre's mouth as the latter was preparing to swallow him. The ogre collapsed but before it could die, it asked him to cut off his little toe and Nasio would come out. So the boy chopped off the toe and true to the ogre's word out came a line of people starting with Nasio closely followed by her parents, siblings and several relatives and neighbours. The last to come out was a very old woman who later decided to go back to collect her tobacco pipe. However, no sooner did she re-enter the ogre's belly than the ogre cried out requesting to die with this old creature. Thus when the boy finally killed the ogre, the old woman was still stuck in the belly. That is the end of my narrative.

### Narrative 3

#### Hare steals a hen

**Narrator:** Agnes Nasambu:

**Village:** Mbakalo

#### *Wanakhamuna keba Engokho*

*Yabao khaale,khwaba nende Wanakhamuna nende Engwe chamenyanga alala.Yabao endalo ndala Wanakhamuna khabolela Engwe khali banje khutekhela alala khukhwokesia bulala.Engwe yafukilila bwangu “yeee” mala banja khuyetana chikasi che munju.Yabao endalo ndala bise bia khubiala,Engwe yabolela Wanakhamuna bache mwisamba babiale chimaito lakini wanakhamuna kaloba naramo bubacha ali khalwala .Engwe yamala khucha emukunda nelekha Wanakhamuna engo niombo neyukha khukhwama emukunda Wanakhamuna alaba katekhile. Kuno kwekela kumwima kukwachililila mubise bioosi biekhumicha biakhulia.*

*Chindalo che khukhwakila biakhulia enge chola,wanakhamuna kaboleda Engwe lundi ali niye omulwale arame engo natekha .Engwe seyaba nende nisio enyala yakhola tawe nakakhali yacha emukunda khulima yong’ene.Wanakhamuna kaboleda Engwe ali niye kharama engo ayenje engokho batekhe,Engwe yafukilila khangu khuulila erio.Engwe nge neyakobola ekoloba yany’ola Wanakhamuna katekhile engokho bulayi esanja busa.Engwe yasaaba kamakhono yamala nebukula sipapulo siengokho silala neyanja khulia. Mubise bititi,neulila chindiri enje. Yabola eli: “Aaai!! Wanakhamuna chololekho enje nanu khokenda wakana omwifwi kenya khwiba chimaito emukunda.”Wwanakhamuna kaloba naboola baali aba Engwe kheungukhila khubela enjala.*

*Engwe yaboola eli: “ta nakhaulila kumooyo kumukeni enje” mubise bititi, Engwe Nekhamala khulomaloma ta, Likhutu liengila liasutile kamafumbo kengokho neliloma lili, “Musale, nabone watilile sipapulo siengokho,ofwana niwe olamalanga chingokho chase?”Likhutu liareba Engwe.Engwe yaambwa nende birengo yanja khukhwikana eli niyo seli enjifwi ta ne lundi seliniyo etekhile tawe.Likhutu sieliasubila niko Engwe yaloma tawe ne liloma lili lienya khulanga Esimba limubolele.”Wooyi,”Engwe yanja khurenga sipapulo siengokho siama mukhono siakwaasi. Nga baaba basilomaloma, Wanakhamuna khelukha kalaa oli balola sebabona tawe khane kachile elusiro khukhwekisa. Engwe nende Likhutu khubona bario bamanya bali Wanakhamuna niye wibile engokho. Likhutu nende Engwe babolela Wanakhamuna bali benya bamuchinje balipisie chingokho chalichanga.*

*“Wuuuuuuuwi,Mukhanjira ta.”Wanakhamuna khanja khulila nakhasaba silekhelo lakini mbao wakhaulila ta. Enge nebaloba khukhaulila nakhabola khali namwenya mundekhe bulayi,munde muningilo embofu mala muremo chikhanu lundi mukhala mumaika chikhu chingali tawe.Likhutu nende Engwe bakhola nga nebabolelwe.*

*Engwe nende Likhutu bekhala,baruma omwana bali ache asente mumaika.Omwana nga kolayo asenda mumayika nafungula eningilo alole enga enyama kheya. Kekhuikia, kabona enyama emukhomola,”Ng’oo mpara muli mulandiakho,” Omwana kesindukha na kanja khukukula,”waaaaaayi,” enyama kheyikhomola.”Engwe nende Likhutu sabasubila niko omwana oyo kaloma tawe. Engwe yafuka busuma oli yamala nebolela Likhutu eli yomola chiny’eny’I chefwe nono khunyolekho siambe. Bali nabache bomole*

*chinyenyi Wanakhamuna kharuka khukhwama muningilo.Eeh! enyama khuno nayakenda?.Likhutu nende engwe banja khwirebana. Wanakhamuna khakhacha.Bongakho chimbilo nabakhaombelesia kheme bakharongekho busa lakini khabakhomola nakhababolela khali “Ng’ooo,samwene senikhomba”.Engwe nende Likhutu bongakho balua nebakobola. Khukhwola abwenao Wanakhamuna yakhaba nakhenyekhana bakhali khamala nekhelukha.*

*Lukano lwase lwawela abwenao.*

### **English translation**

Once upon a time, Hare and Leopard lived together as good neighbours. One day, Hare suggested to Leopard that they start preparing their meals and eating together as a show of unity. Leopard readily agreed and soon the two friends started helping each other in many house hold chores. One day, during the planting season, Leopard suggested to Hare that they both go to the fields to plant groundnuts but the latter completely refused claiming to be ill. He however, offered to remain home and prepare a meal so that when his friend returned, he would find something to eat. So Leopard went to the fields alone. This became the routine until the planting season was over.

So when the weeding season came and Hare brought out the same old tricks, Leopard had no option but to go on with the weeding. This time round, Hare promised to remain behind and look for chicken to prepare a nice meal something to which Leopard readily agreed. When Leopard arrived home in the evening, he found Hare having prepared a very delicious chicken stew. He washed his hands and sat down to have a bite but just as he picked up a piece, he heard footsteps outside. He then asked Hare to go and find out who was hanging around the barns assuming it could be a thief tiptoeing towards the groundnut barn. Hare, however, flatly refused claiming that Leopard was suffering from hallucinations probably as a result of hunger. Leopard, however, insisted that there were strange noises outside which he could hear very clearly. Within a moment, before Leopard finished speaking, Tortoise appeared at the door carrying with him feathers of a hen. He said to Leopard: “My friend, I can see you holding a piece of chicken. You seem to be thief who has finished all my chickens.” Leopard was perplexed as he tried to explain to Tortoise that he was not a thief and was not even responsible for the cooking. Tortoise was not convinced with Leopard’s pleas given that the latter was still holding a piece of chicken in his hands. He therefore threatened to call king Lion to come and arbitrate. When Tortoise mentioned king Lion, Leopard was so perplexed that the piece of chicken he was holding in his hands dropped to the ground. Hare, on the other hand, sneaked away in panic and hid in the bedroom. This aroused suspicion in Tortoise who exchanged glances with Leopard and the two agreed that Hare must be able to explain.

The two then seized Hare and threatened to slaughter him for the chickens he had been eating. Hare yelled and pleaded with them not to kill him. He however offered them an alternative on how they should go about cooking him in a big pot containing simsim relish on dying ambers. The argument was that in case they killed him, he would taste very bitter as this was the peculiarity with all the Hare folk. Thus Leopard and Tortoise agreed to cook Hare in the manner he had chosen believing that whichever way he was cooked, they would still chew him with their teeth. Meanwhile, they sent a young boy to keep checking on the fire to ensure it was not too much as Hare had requested. But

everytime this young person went to check on the fire, he opened the pot from which Hare was “cooking” and the latter would make faces at the young boy asking, “you fools think you will eat me?” The young was so perplexed that the supposed “meat” was talking. But when he tried to report to Leopard and Tortoise, they dismissed him as a daydreamer. So Leopard prepared ugali and when it was ready, he emptied the contents of the pot onto a plate. No sooner was Hare dished out than he leapt out of the house and fled. His whole body was completely covered with the simsim relish. Leopard and Tortoise chased after him pleading with him to stop so that they may only lick the nice relish to no avail. Thus the cunning Hare was able to vanish unpunished despite the ills he has committed. That is the end of my story.

## Narrative 4

### Lemata and Katamba

**Narrator: Emmanuel Soita**

**Village: Nasusi**

*Lemata nende Katamba*

*Yabao khaale,khwaba nende basale babili mulala bali Lemata nokundi Katamba.Babili abo baaba nende bibindu bie bakholelanga alala enga khuaya chisang'i che munda,khunywa kamalwa nende khukelesiana khubeyisia bakhasi bakali.Khubela khusimana khwa Katamba nende Lemata,babaana babwe bosi basimana bulinyanga benyailanga alala. Endalo ndala omwana omusoleli wa Katamba kaacha wa Lemata kanyola omukhasi wa Lemata khang'ona bibiuma mala yesi kekhala kanja khumuyeta.Bang'ona! bang'ona! bang'ona! Bali bakana khumala noomusoleli yuno khulekha khumanya kamila sisiuma silala. Likhuwa elio liamubelesia omukhaye wa Lemata nakenya omusoleli oyo arere sisiuma sisindi.Likhuwa elio liaba nalirera bulomani.*

*Omusoleli kaacha engo khalila mala kabolela basasi bewe.Katamba nende omukhaye wewe baenja bibiuma bibindi bamuyilile omukhaye wa Lemata mbo manya afwa kumwoyo mala sekanyalikhana tawe. Omukhaye yuno kachililila khubola ali niye kenyabusa sisiuma siewe. Katamba sekaba nende nilio anyalalakakhola tawe. Nelirima likali, kamupa omwana wewe ekhumalilikha kamwira ne amala kara munda narusiamobukula sisiuma esio nayilila omukhaye wa Lemata.Yeeeh! yeeeh! Omwana wase.Omukhaye wa Katamba kalila khubise bileyi po khubela lifwa lio omwana wewe. Kamakhuwa ako enga kamala kawao,Lemata nende Katamba bacha khuaya. Oli balikhungila khabakobola engo,Lemata kabona linani mala kachukucha lifumo lwewe khulira lakini kunani kuno kwatima buusa ne lifumo elio.Lemata kasaba lifumo lia Katamba. Uruuuru! Kachukucha. Kunani kwamala kwilukhe ne lifumo elio liosi. Enga basani bano bakobola engo, Katamba kema keramba ali, "lifumo lino namia khu bakuka base wandaye neny olikobosie."Lemata kamubolela Katamba ali alalonda khulinani akhake enga anyala akobosie lifumo lia Katamba. Lemata kachaka lukendolwe khucha khuenja linani.*

*Lemata kakenda, kakeenda kakeenda silo nekumusi ekhumalilikha kola musibala sie kamanani. Lemata kewa kumwoyo nakengila munju mwa kamanani."Eeeh! khane kamanani sa kakhwira?Lemata kapara sana khubona omukhana mulala niye kamanani kaaba nekamenya naye. Omukhana yuno kabolela Lemata ali kamanani kachile khuaya ne kakobolanga akoloba. Kho nekamunyola Lemata kanyala khumulia. Katekhela Lemata siakhulia kalia mala kamukisa khunungoye chikhu. Akoloba kamanani kecha kasutile enyama.Omukhana kakatekhela kalia nga kamala nakakona.*

*Oli musilo akari kamanani khakayirira,Lemata kenyokha munungo kalaa nende embalu yewe nakhala kumusiembe kwe linani mala karekukha khukobola engo. Enga enje nebwasia mabwibwi kamanani kenyokha kabona bunyifu. linani lilala liabolela kakasie,"Omwami winyalile,omwami winyalile" linani liliami khuulila lirio*

*lialoba,"Khale khosi ninyalanga,khalekhosi ninyalanga." Kamanani bali kalola bulai nekalola kumusiembe kwomwami mbakho.Linani liamenya nalililanga kumusiembe kwaolio. Enga kwaola nalirekukha licha khuenja nalikenda khungila nalimba:*

*Engeya yange engeya,yama mumbo engeya*

*Yacha likwe engeya,wakhakibolela engeya*

*Seulilanga engeya*

*Linani liembanga busa nalikenda lumalilisi liola khukewa lianyola babana nabaya chikhafu.Linani lianja khureba siemulala wabwe."Ewe baba woo kerakho sina? "Ese baba kera enduyu",omwana wakhuranga kalikobosia. Kunani kuli "ewetawe".Omwana mulala kaloma ali "ese papa kacha mumbo kakhala kumusiembe kwelinani," "Baaaaaasi, ewe niwe omusale wase,baba wowo niye omusani wa ng'ali ,onyala wambila ewenywe?" Omwana kasangala khuila engo wabwe linani liaba nelikalukhane khuba omukhana omulayi.*

*Linani liola mungo mwa Lemata balingisia munju bali likhale. Oli lilola mungaki nalibona engeya yalio. Enga ekoloba neyola chisa chakhukona Lemata kang'ona bulili bakona.Oli silo Lemata khayirila,"omukhan" kekela linani kenya khulia Lemata. Mungo mwa Lemata mwaba ne chimbwa chibili, Kutubi nende Mwikho. enga chimbwa chabona munju mweseng'eng'ile nachanja khuulukhuma. Linani liakhilwa khulia Lemata sikila chimbwa chamwinyosia mwilo.Linani liakhola lirio kamakhabi kataru nalikhanyala khulia Lemata tawe lumalilisi enje bwasia.Oli asubuhi mabwibwi linani liabolela Lemata lili 'Nabone lukhu lulwomu abundu sakhucha khwarema'Lemata kafukilila bwangu po,oli nabenya khurekukha na linani libolela Lemata oboe chimbwa chewe 'Kutubi nende Mwikho'mala barekukha.Bakenda khubise bilei mala bola mumusiru.Kunani kwokesia Lemata kumusala kanja khunina, oli kola akari kabolela kunani kukwaba nakwikholile omukhana ali kumwakanisie eyaywa lakini kwamubolela kuli' isenda ndakhwakanisia abwenaa ayembi busa. Oli Lemata kola khumusala emusie,na omukhana yuno kekela linani na kanja khurema kumusala.Linani liabolela Lemata lili 'ewe niwe wakhala engeya yase khulia nio kawe'*

*Lemata sekaba nende liakhola tawe kanja khukhwimbba nalanga chimbwa chewe;*

*Asa asa mbwa chase,kutubi na mwikho*

*Asa asa mbwa chase, kutubi na mwikho*

*Nanu olimua mwalia kutubi na mwikho*

*Linani liarema kumusala bali kukana khukwa na khausi nikho karekura nakhaaambibwe nende kumureko khecha nakhapa khumusala kuno liteki nakwisibilisiana.Linani liabona bubi nalianja khutimasia liusi lino lialiosia atai na likalukha lianja lundi khurema, oli lundi kukanakhukwa na khausi khecha lundi khapakho liteki nakwisibilisiana mala khabolela Lemata khali 'Nakhuyetile nolile ao nabone linani lino lilanjira' kunani lundi kwatimasia khausi kwakhosia llundi atayi na kukalukha.Khane nga Lemata kembang, chimbwa chewe chaulila mala chakhala kiminyololo nachifunga bichenje bibiaba*

*mwikosi bilekhe khusakaya na chirekukha. Bali kunani kuno kwanja lundi khurema na chimbwa chola. Enga nakwabona chimbwa na kukalukhanaka kwikela omukhana. Ne kubola kuli, "mbele ekhukhakakho busa bolela chimbwa chikhanduma tawe." Lemata abolela chimwa ali mulume, chimbwa chakusasakula na Lemata kekha khukhwama khumusala nabukula chimbwa chewe bela engo. Lemata kolengo kabola nga kamakhua nakabele bandu bauka po. Nalukano lwase luwelao.*

### **English translation**

Once upon a time, there lived two friends; Lemata and Katamba. The two men had a variety of common interests including hunting game, drinking together and even imitating each other in acquiring more wives. Being next-door neighbours, the families of the two friends interacted almost on daily basis and lived so harmoniously that one would easily think they belonged to one big family. One day Katamba's son visited Lemata's house and found one of Lemata's wives stringing beads. He sat down and joined the exercise of stringing beads. This went on for a long time. When the work was almost over, the boy picked up a bead and accidentally swallowed it. This really infuriated Lemata's wife who demanded that the boy produces the same bead. This set the stage for the conflict that marked a turning point in the relationship between the two families. So the boy went home crying and broke the sad news to his parents. Katamba and his wife collected other beads and took to Lemata's wife variety after variety of beads in order to placate her to no avail. She was not ready to take any other bead apart from her original bead. Katamba got so annoyed that he beat his son to death. The boy had sown seeds of discord between the two families which had hitherto been enjoying cordial relationship. After killing his son, Katamba operated on his belly and removed the bead which he had swallowed and handed it back to Lemata's wife. Katamba's wife bewailed the death of her son for a long time, vehemently deploring her neighbour's attitude which largely contributed to the predicament.

Long after the incident, Lemata and Katamba went out hunting together. On their way returning from their hunting expedition, Lemata lunged at the ogre with his spear upon which the beast pulled out the spear and fled with it. Lemata asked Katamba to lend him a spear to kill the ogre so that it does not escape with his spear to which Katamba readily accepted.

So when Lemata got up with the ogre, he threw the second spear but the ogre deftly grabbed it and continued running. When he came back without the spear, Katamba demanded his original spear insisting that it was an ancestral spear which he could not afford to lose. This greatly disturbed Lemata who quickly discerned that his friend was out to settle old scores. He therefore grudgingly promised to follow the ogres and bring back Katamba's spear. So he set off on this herculean journey to recover the lost spear.

After travelling for many days and nights, he arrived in the land of the ogres. Through exhaustive inquiries, he was able to locate a house in which the ogre of parallel description was said to be living. He gathered all the courage and entered the house. To his surprise, he found in there a girl who had previously been kidnapped by the ogres from his own village. This was the last person he expected to meet since back home they had given her up for the dead after many days of fruitless search. Her parents and

relatives had duly organized funeral rites for her as per the Bukusu customs since it was believed the ogres had indeed eaten her up. She was equally surprised to see Lemata whom she reminded of the lurking danger in case the ogres who had gone out hunting find him around. She therefore quickly prepared a meal for Lemata and hid him in the firewood rack. In the evening, the ogres came in carrying their meat. The girl cooked for them and after eating they slept.

Late in the night when the ogres were dead asleep, Lemata collected all the spears from the rack and went out to hide them. Shortly afterwards, he returned with a razor sharp sword and cut off the tail of king ogre. He then collected the spears and set off on his journey back home. Early in the morning each ogre discovered that he was wet. On close examination, it was discovered that king ogre's tail had been chopped off. King ogre mourned for his tail for quite some time.

King ogre was confined on bed for many days nursing the injuries. When his wound was healed, he vowed never to rest until he found his assailant and avenges his mutilated tail. Thus on one fateful day, he set out determined to achieve his goal irrespective of the outcome. On the way, he sang as he walked thus:

My tail, my tail

It left the East, my tail

And reached the West, my tail

However much I warned my tail

It never took instructions, my tail

He walked for many kilometers wandering from place to place like a hermit. At long last, he came to an extensive meadowland where herds' boys often gather to graze their cattle. On approaching the herds' boys, the ogre assumed the form of a pretty girl. King ogre then asked each of the boys what his father boasted off when he was drinking. One boy after the other jumped up and said what his father boasted of. Some talked of their fathers killing lions, others elephants and still others wolves. This did not please the ogre. Eventually one boy jumped and said: "my father went to the west and cut off king ogre's tail." This really touched the ogre who ululated, danced around and caressed the boy saying that the boy's father was the most courageous and requested to be taken to him. The boy was so delighted and happily led the ogre to his father's home smiling all the way at the prospects of his father getting a very beautiful wife to marry.

On arrival home, the ogre saw his own tail being dried at the sacrificial hut. Lemata on the other hand, on seeing the disguised ogre was very excited as he casted lustful eyes at "her." He persuaded her to stay for the night and she readily agreed. At night when everybody was sleeping, the beautiful girl changed into an ogre and began emitting red sparks ready to eat up Lemata. As he was dead asleep, Lemata did not know what was going on. However, the guard dogs which were sleeping by the door side, *Kutubi and Mwikho*, were alarmed by the red glow that flickered on and off as the ogre opened his mouth from time to time. They barked and growled until the commotion awoke Lemata



from his deep sleep. When he jumped up instinctively, the ogre changed back into a girl and laughed derisively and claimed that she only wanted to go out to attend to the goal of nature. After two more unsuccessful attempts, the ogre gave up.

In the morning, she requested Lemata to accompany her to the forest to cut down a dry tree that she had spotted the previous day so that they could use it for firewood. She however asked Lemata not to come with the dogs which she described as fierce. She cunningly asked him to chain the dogs until after they had returned from the forest. Lemata unknowingly chained his two fiercest dogs; *Kutubi* and *Mwikho* and coaxed the others not to follow him by giving them some meat. He then took the axe and accompanied the ogre to go and look for firewood in the forest. When they had gone deep in the forest, the ogre came to some tree and asked Lemata to climb up and leave the axe with the ogre. Without any suspicions, Lemata climbed up the tree. When he was high up, the ogre stripped naked and suddenly changed into an ogre and started shouting at Lemata reminding him of his mutilated tail. Lemata was really shocked as the ogre began striking at the tree with the axe while threatening to eat him up. Instinctively, Lemata began shouting for his dogs to come. He sang:

Come, come my dogs Kutubi and Mwikho  
Come, come my dogs Kutubi and Mwikho  
Who will give you food, Kutubi and Mwikho?

Meanwhile, whenever the ogre cut a deep dent into the tree, a pigeon came and flapped its wings on the dent so that the tree did not fall. In this way, the dent filled up prompting the ogre to start cutting the tree afresh again. In the mean time, the dogs heard Lemata calling and struggled to free themselves. As soon as they broke loose, they rushed straight to rescue their master. When the ogre saw them approaching, he changed back into a girl and tried to reassure the shocked Lemata that she only meant to tease him and pleaded with him to stop the dogs from biting her. Lemata was not ready to hear any of her pleas. He urged the angry dogs to bite the ogre a job they accomplished with a lot of ease. Lemata then slowly descended the tree and hacked his carcass into pieces. That is the end of my story.

## Narrative 5

### The Secret of a Murder

**Narrator:** Nyongesa Ronge

**Location:** Kimilili Rural

#### Esiri yo Omwiri

*Yabao khaale ,khwaba nende omundu mulala omwiri. Omundu yuno kera omuchesa wewe namwata kumubili mubichakha nio bandu bakhabona tawe.Kumubili okwo kwamanya mubichakha niyo kwamanya bise bikali po. Lumalilisi kwalibwa nende namunyu. Khubela Namunyu ali ne kumuliungo, karamisia busa sianga sio omundu yuno khuliresi(sisili sie kamake). Omundu yuno nge kabiranga bali khusamusia chikhafu,kabiranga khusili esio nasokosia sianga nasireba ali, “ewe, nanu okhabule esiri yange?” Sianga esio siamukobosianga sili, “sisindu sikhabule esiri yoo kuli kumunwa kwoo.” Omusani yuno kachililila na kukwima okwo buli enga kabiranga nio sianga sino, kemanga arebe sisianga esio kaba bali sikhabule esiri yewe Nasio siamuchibanga na silakho bali kumunwa kwewe nikwo kukhabule esiri yewe.*

*Endalo ndala yabao,omuchesa waba nakechile khurema chisala ang’onekho chisekhe kamuulila nakhareba sianga esio mala kesindukha.Endalo yalondakho,omuchesa kecha mabwibwi kekisa mubibale aembi nende sianga esio nio abone kaba bali omundu omwiri yuno alelamo kamakhuwa kalomanga. Sakalinda lukali tawe. Omusani omwiri kecha enga chinyanga chichindi,kasokosia sianga kanja khusireba kaba bali sikhabule esiri yewe,lakini sianga siamuchiba busa nga chinyanga chichindi.Omundu yuno khuulila ario karekukha kachengo kabolela babana basoleli ba omundu niye bera warusie chikhafu chibili nio abokesie omundu wera baba wabwe. Aaa! Kano matinyu. Basoleli ba omundu wafwa balia emonyo ne bafukilila kamakhuwa ko muchesa yuno.*

*Endalo yola bacha bekisa enyuma wa sisili. khubise bikekhe omundu omwiri kecha nechikhafu,kasokosia sianga kanja khusireba “Nanu okhabule esiri yase?”Sianga sesialinda tawe,siamuchiba,”kumwuna kwoo kumwene nikwo kukhahubule ,“Basoleli enga baulila bario barura nio baba na bekisilile ne khumupa omundu omwiri oyo ne khumukhonya.. Na lukano lwase luwelao.*

#### English translation

A long time ago, a man once killed his neighbour and secretly disposed off his body in a thicket. After he had committed this act, hyenas came and ate up the body leaving only the skull lying on the path side near an anthill that was overgrown with shrubs and twines. In the days that followed, the murderer would stop at the anthill when taking his cattle to the pastures and when certain that no one was watching him, he would tap at the skull mocking him and saying: “you skull, what will ever let out my secret?” The skull would then reply to this insult thus: “what shall reveal your secret shall come from your own mouth.” The murderer continued with this sadistic behaviour whenever he passed by the

skull until his antics developed into an irresistible ritual. One day, a neighbour who had come to cut sticks for making drinking pipes overheard what the murderer was saying and became curious. The next day, the neighbour concealed himself behind the undergrowth and waited keenly to see whether the murderer would pass there again and repeat his antics. After waiting for a while, the murderer came and tapped the skull muttering the same ritual words and the skull replied routinely as before. On confirming the murderer's habitual recitations, the neighbour resolved to do something about the whole saga.

He went home and asked the sons of the deceased man to give him two cows so that he could disclose to them information leading to the capture of their father's killer. "Ahh! This is strange," the sons to the deceased thought. Nevertheless, after some consultations among themselves, they complied to this request and thereupon, the neighbour told them to arrange and hide in the thicket beside which the murderer had formed the habit of stopping while taking his cattle to the pastures and mockingly tamper with their late father's skull. They would thereby be able to witness for themselves the weird behaviour of the sadistic murderer and decide on what course to take against him. The following day, the young men did as prearranged with their neighbour and hence concealed themselves in the undergrowth behind the anthill. It did not take long before the murderer came round and started tapping the skull and asking it what power would ever reveal his secret and as usual the skull replying that his own mouth would indeed betray him. Soon, the sons who had been secretly watching the scenario dashed out and speared the murderer to death thereby avenging the death of their father. That is the end of my story.

## Narrative 6

### Apelu

**Narrator: Rael Mukhwana**

**Location: Chetambe**

### Apelu

*Yabao khaale, endalo ndala musirekere sie sibwami mubandu balangwa Wabutubile, bandu benyokha asubuhi mala babona omundu niyebakhamanyile tawe. Omundu yuno kaba kombakhe enju yaba abundu nio sindu sikhakho tawe. Enyuma we echikoni yewe kaba nende litala lia chikhafu nende kamakhese. Bibiayo ebio buli mundu kabikomba khubela bumiufu bwabio. Kamakhuwa ko omundu omukeni yuno kaukia bakali musirekele sia sibwami. Babandu bama chimbeka na chimbeka becha khwibonelakho nekakhali sebachichanga mungo omwo tawe bemilanga atayi. Batiti nibo bengilanga mungo omwo lakini nende buri.*

*Khubise bititi, babana basoleli musirekere omwo banja khuselela omukhana wa mungo omwo. Omukhana yuno kaaba karoba pepe. Likhuwa elio liakila omundu omukeni musirekere omwo kalanga babandu ba musirekere esio balia chinyama, banywa kamalwa oli musilo akarikari naboleta babandu ali oyo wanya omukhana wewe akhoyele ang'one sisikhasio mala mulala wabwe abole lisina liewe. Bandu bacha babolela babasie kamakhuwa koo mundu yuno. Basani baba nebolile khunyola jimju chabwe banja khukanakana kamasina niko bakhache khubola. Wanakhamuna khuulila kamakhuwa kano mala nakho sekhenanakho tawe. Khalinda silo siola nekharekukha khacha mungo mwomundu omukeni oyoo. Eee! khasani khano khakhaya. Mungo omwo mwaba ne chimbwa chindfu bubu. Wanakhamuna makesi mangi khasuta enyama mala enga chimbwa chachaka khusama, nekhamwatayo enyama nechisila. Nga chamaya chasila, Wanakhamuna kabukula kubale kuboofu nakhachukucha khunju ye chikhafu paaa! Kubale okwo kwanja khupiringikha khukhwama khunju khungaki. Chikhafu chaayaya muno. Kuunwa kulala kwatima niyo chichindi chili eyi nekutolola. Bise bienebino, omukhaye wo omundu omukeni kesindukha nalanga ali, "Eeh!, Apelu, Apelu, Apelu inyokha babefwi khabeba bibiayo enje. Apelu inyokha." Wanakhamuna khaba khemile khumuliango kharekeresie. Enga Apelu kenyokha nakhelula.*

*Silo esio Wanakhamuna sakhakona tawe, khembanga busa lisina, Apelu nakhelilamo. Enga enje bwasi, babandu bacha mungo mwo umundu omukeni oyo, kabukula endbe yewe ya bubwami kekhalakho mala kafwalile ekutusi. Bise bia basani benyanga omukhana wa omundu omukeni oyo biola. Buli mundu katacha kamasina na kamasina, lakini omundu omukeni oyo kasisikhanga busa kumurwe khukhwekesia mbo ako sakali kamasina kewe tawe. Babandu baba nabechile bamanya busa bali mbao manyile lisina lio omundu oyo tawe.*

*Babandu baloma balua na Wanakhamuna khenyokha kalaa. Babandu bachekha Wanakhamuna khubela nikho khandu khatiti. bung'ali salio wabarako ali Wanakhamuna khanyala khamanya lisina lio omundu omukeni oyo tawe. Enge bandu basila khuchekha, Wanakhamuna khalanga lisina lio omundu oyo "Apelu". Omundu omukeni*

*oyo waba nachekha kasila chuu. Mala babandu besindukha. Omundu omukeni oyo kenyokha kabolela bandu ali bung'ali lisina liewe bali Apelu. Babandu baaka po po.. buli siamulala kenyokha nebakalukha muchingo chabwe nabelung'ulung'unya.*

*Oli silo Apelu kapurukha kacha mwikulu niye kama sikila sekenya omwana wewe abeyisibwe nende Wanakhamuna tawe. Wanakhamuna khukhwicha mabwibwi babandu munju sebalimo tawe. Wanakhamuna kanyola balekhilemo kunaka. Khamaya kabukula kancha nakwo. Babandu bachekha Wanakhamuna khubeyisia kunaka badala ye omukhaye. Mayi wa Wanakhamuna kabona bubi po po. Endalo yalondakhao mabwibwi, omukhana bali Namikasa kama mukunaka okwo naboleta Wanakhamuna amubeyisie eyi nasaba silekhelo khukararawe, Apelu, kakhola. Mayi wa Wanakhamuna kaaba nende busangafu, babandu bosu musirekere becha khukhwibonelakho omukhana wang'ona yuno. Bakali besindukha lukali muno khulinga Wanakhamuna khaaba nende ekhaabi. Na lukano lwase lwawela awo.*

### **English translation**

One day, in the quiet, peaceful village of Sibwani, across the meadowlands of *Wabutubile*, people woke up in the morning to find that there was a stranger among them. A good-looking house had come into existence where previously there had been no house. Next to the kitchen was a cattle kraal. The cattle and sheep of the stranger were so healthy and beautiful that people wondered how such good animals could have grazed within their vicinity without their notice.

A story went round about the strange happenings in Sibwani and out of curiosity many people came there to see things for themselves. Although the stranger communicated with the inhabitants in their own language, people feared to come into close contact with him and simply contented themselves with feasting their eyes from a distance. Occasionally, a handful of village elders dropped in for a chat; but they likewise showed constraint in the presence of the stranger, and their talks were brief and casual. Soon, young men began to show interest in the stranger's only daughter. Several intending suitors started approaching the stranger seeking his daughter's hand in marriage. In view of the offers coming from numerous suitors, the stranger decided to do something unusual so as to abate growing anxiety on the part of his hosts. He decided to invite villagers to his house entertaining them with plenty of beer and meat. In the midst of the entertainment, he asked them whether they knew him by name to which they all replied in the negative. He then declared that whoever was interested in his daughter must first tell him at a public gathering he was due to hold what his name was. This left the village elders dumbfounded. However, they went home and spread the news to their respective villages. Aspiring suitors could not sleep a wink. They sat up throughout the thin hours of the morning trying to unravel the riddle. One fellow who did not bother to crack his head over the riddle was Hare.

On the eve of the great occasion, Hare visited the stranger's homestead at night. Quite aware that there were fierce dogs which might attack him, he carried along with him some meat to placate the dogs in the event they barked and snarled at him. Thus,

whenever a dog barked, he threw a piece of meat at it making it to settle down to feast. The commotion outside the stranger's house arose his wife from sleep and she frantically tried to awaken her husband who was too sleepy to bestir. She kept on listening keenly for some time but when the dogs stopped barking, she went back to sleep. However, before she could even sleep a wink, Hare hurled a large rock into the kraal causing the cattle to stampede round and round in the kraal creating such a disturbance that she woke up once more. One restless bull, charged at the other animals wildly causing a stir, which seemed to break down the wooden enclosure. She shook her husband vigorously calling loudly; "Apelu. Apelu, please wake up...enemies are breaking into the kraal! Apelu...Apelu...Apelu..." While the woman was calling her husband, Hare was standing at the door listening keenly. As soon as Apelu jumped out from sleep and headed for the door, Hare bolted and escaped.

Hare did not sleep a wink that night; he kept on singing the name Apelu repeatedly until the break of dawn. In the morning, a huge crowd of people gathered at Apelu's house for the purpose of unraveling the riddle. Apelu took his royal stool and went to sit atop a nearby mound while the audience spread itself on the flat ground below from where they gazed at him in awe. His mesmerizing personality convinced everyone present that he was either a prince or a king from unknown land. He was for the first time appearing in royal apparel in public, wearing, *ekutusi* and waving a flywhisk made from a buffalo's tail.

Prospective candidates therefore stood up in turns and one by one called him all sorts of conceivable names: names of animate and inanimate things; names of heroes and gods of the Bukusu and names of clan founders. Each time someone stood and shouted a name, the stranger shook his head in denial. Thus, the situation appeared completely hopeless. When the prospects of unraveling the riddle were completely dwindling, Hare the smallest fellow in the crowd, pushed his way to the mound where the stranger was sitting. Everyone broke down laughing at the sight of the slovenly dressed, diminutive fellow braving his way out. His first words were drowned in a peal of laughter. As soon as calm was restored, Hare shouted out the name of the stranger. Apelu. The stranger's charming smile disappeared completely and the rest of the people were left in shock. The stranger rose and announced to the bewildered crowd that his name was indeed Apelu. Hare had therefore won the bet. The crowd dispersed and people went home gossiping among themselves about the triumphant little sloven. The deceitful stranger decided to escape with his family to heaven from where he had come from so as to avoid the embarrassment of marrying off his only daughter to such worthless fellow. In the morning, Hare came to the house and to his utter shock, the house was empty. After searching the house, he came across a beautiful tobacco pipe which he decided to carry home as a source of consolation. His friends ridiculed his action of "marrying" a tobacco pipe instead of a woman. Hare's mother lamented her son's fate and equally castigated what he did in bringing home a worthless object. This did not deter Hare. The following morning, however, Namikasa the beautiful maiden appeared and pleaded with Hare to marry him while apologizing on behalf of her father, Apelu. The rest of the people who were laughing at Hare were shocked when they realised that Hare had eventually married this beautiful girl. That is the end of my story.

## Narrative 7

### Three Men Meet a Strange Old Woman

**Narrator:** Martin Makhanu

**Location:** Maeni

*Basani Bataru Bakanana Nende Omulosi Wekhuukia*

*Yabao khaale,basani bataru bacha khuatula chikhafu khubasiku. Khungila nebakobola engo,bola khuluchi nebanyolakho omulosi mulala waba nakhililwe khukhwambukha. Omulosi yuno kabasaba bamuyete khumwambusia luluchi. Basani babili khubasani abo baloba lakini mulala keyama kamumema khumukongo kamwambusi. Oli nga bola engelekha, omulosi yuno kakhayila khumukongo kwo omusani yuno.Babasi babili bacha baenja sisiyayo bera bali wakana omulosi yuno arura khumukongo khwo omusani oyo.*

*Basani bano banjia khukhwosia chinyama balie. Oli bamala,balanga omulosi oyo keche alie lakini kaloba khukhwikha nabolabali kenya alie busa nali khumukongo.Basani balboa khumuwa enyama bali wakana akhola ariokekha khumukongo mala sakamala kekha tawe.Bekhalao sisilima siatila. “Khukhola khurie?”Basani bano bakanakana lukali mala sepanyola lichibu tawe. Ekhumalilikha, boosi bakona amulilo. Enga omulosi yuno nekabona bosi lilo liabatilile, kekha khumukongo kalaa nekanja khulia chimyama bwangubwangu khubela kaba nende enjala. Enga kamala khulia na yesi lilo limuamba.Omusani wabanamumemile oli kenyokha mwilo abona kangue. Ali kano maroro namwe si? Kenyosiaka babasi na belukha bamulekha omulosi oyo. Khubise bititi,Namunyu kwecha khubela kwaba kwaunyile enyama.*

*Namunyu bali kusilia bikumba na omulosi yuno kenyokha mwilo nasuna khumukongo kwa Namunyu puu! Kaba kaukile ali omusani waba namumemile.Namunyu kwesindukha nakhurekukha chimbilo bila khumanya nio khakucha. Namunyu kuno kwatima lukali mala kwola khunyanja nekusunamo kuli fwana omulosi oyo arura khumukongo lakini sakarurakho tawe mala besikha boosi.Namunyu khubela bulianga bwakwo kwamala nekufwa nende omulosi oyo khumukongo. Nalukano lwase lwawelao.*

### English translation

A long time ago, some three men who had gone out to raid cattle from their enemies were returning home. On their way back, they came upon an old woman who was stranded by the riverside. She was so weak that she could not cross the river by herself so when she saw them walking towards her, she was so grateful and begged them to carry her across the river. Two of the men flatly rejected saying that it was not their duty to carry old women like her on their backs. The third man, however, overpowered by compassion for the old woman offered to help her cross the river. He asked her to jump on his back and managed to cross the river with her. On reaching the other side of the river, the old woman refused to disembark from the man's back. She remained clinging on the man's back despite his plea to be allowed to join his colleagues. This prompted the other two

men to leave their friend behind and go look for an animal to come and slaughter. On coming back, they erected an arbour within which they roasted meat. When the meat was ready, they asked the woman to let go off their friend so that she could eat but she adamantly refused to come down and demanded to eat from his back. The men refused to share the meat with her. So they ate until they were satisfied.

When darkness set in, they slept by the fireside. No sooner did the old woman see them sleeping than she jumped down and started eating the meat greedily. But it did not take long before she too was overcome by sleep. While she was still thus sleeping, the man who had been carrying her all along woke up feeling very light. He then immediately woke his friends up and the trio stealthily walked out leaving the old woman still sleeping. Shortly after the men had gone, a hyena which had scented meat came to the scene and started eating the remains. While it was thus busy gleaning the enclosure of every bone, the old woman woke up from her sleep and jumped on his back thinking that it was the young man who had helped her cross the river. The hyena got so frightened that it took off with great speed running aimlessly without stopping. When he eventually plunged into the sea where he drowned, the old woman was still firmly perched on his back. Thus the greedy hyena and the ungrateful woman both died with the old woman hanging on hyena's back. That is the end of my story.



## **Narrative 8**

### **An old woman and her deformed son**

**Narrator:** Fosca Namalwa

**Location:** Webuye Township

*Mayi ne Omwana Wewe we Sisani Wesikufu*

*Yabao khaale,khwaba nende mayi mulala nie babana bewe bafwa bosu karama nende omusani mulala yeng'ene wesikufu.Mayi oyo kaba kasima omwana wewe lukali po. Nekakhali sekenyanga babandu babone khumwana wewe tawe khubela chisoni.Omusani oyo kekalibwanga mung'oma bise biosi akhecha kabonekhana khubandu tawe.Limenya lio omusani oyo liaba busa mung'oma ata bise bia sikhebo nga biola,kakhebwa sikhebo sie Babukusu.Enga ako nekawao,omusani oyo kabolela mayi wewe amuyete anyole omubwani.Mawe kesindukha lakini lundi kaba ne busangafu sikila omwana wewe kenyile enju.*

*Chindalo charakho mayi karekukha khucha khuenja omukhana onyala katekhela omwana wewe.Khungila kakanana nende omukhana mulala wamusimisia mala kamoombelesia omukhana yuno lukali muno. Sisindu nisio mayi yuno akhabolela omukhana oyo tawe sili sie buleme bwo musoleli wewe. Mayi yuno kachililila khuombelesia omukhana yuno eyi namubolela bulayi bwo omusoleli wewe. Enyuma omukhana yuno kumwoyo kwamukwa nabolela mayi yuno ali kenyebwa eche wanga mukhana amanyisie babebusi bewe. Mayi oyokakhola bwangu sana narera wanga mukhana kimiandu kikienyikhane khulondekhana nende lilaka lie Babukusu.*

*Omukhana keyama mala kabolela mayi wo omusoleli ali nono kenya abone omusoleli wenya khumuyila.Mayi womusoleli kamubukula bacha khubona omusoleli.Bakenda,bakenda,bakenda lumalilisi sisilima siatila nabakhola tawe.Enga nabola, mayi womusoleli kabea omukhana ali omusoleli aliobusa alikhwicha.Omukhana kalinda abone omusoleli khumubonata,enga chisa chakhukona chola,mayi kabolela omukhana ali omusoleli alikhale mububulili khakona na omukhana bamua bulili bwewe munju ekindi khumala nabonakho omusani oyo tawe. "Makhuwa si kano?" Omukhana yuno kabara lukali. Mumakhelebende, omukhana kareba mayi womusoleli amwokesie omusoleli wenya khumubeyisia lakini mayi kamubolela ali karurire khale kachile khuenja kimiandu kie bukhwe. Mayi nende omukhana barekukha khucha khukhwaka mumatore nenyuma omusoleli arura mung'oma kanja khukhweya munju nende khusinga bibindu nakemba:*

*Khaneyuye munju mwange,khaneyuye munju mwange*

*Mikhasi nekikhali kimisilu,mayi kakuombolesia.*

*Musecha kacha khuchuma,khuchuma nacha sina?*

*Menyile mukhang'oma,kurumba kuli khumukongo.*

*Omusani oyo engenekaba nakemba, omukhana oyo kaulila mala sekaba namanya lulwimbo olwo lubola sina tawe. Kachilila khulima nakema narekeresia. Sikholwa esio siachililila busa khuchindalo chingal. Akhumalilikha, omukhana yuno Kenya khumanya kamakhuwa kkmusoleli kembanganga enganga kabola. Omukhana yuno endalo ndala bacha emukunda oli bakoloba, kabona bibindu munju basingile, beyile munju mala kapara lukali. Endalo ndala kabolela mayi womusoleli ali khacha khwiweta, enganga mayi kacha katimba, omukhana kakobola enganga chimbilo ne kekisa arekeresia. Kema khumuliango khubise bititi nabona omusoleli kama mung'oma kanja khukhwimba nasinga bindu. Omukhana kesindukha khubona omusoleli oyo nende sikufu. Omusoleli oyo kamala kela mung'oma nomukhana acha.*

*Endalo ekindi omukhana kabolela mayi womusoleli ali, "Mayi ewe luno oche orenye chikhu weng'ene ese endikhonja emukunda." Mayi keyama bwangu. Omukhana yuno kaba ne lirima likali po. Enganga mayi katimba, omukhana keche enganga kema khumuliango karekeresia omusoleli oyo engakemba nakeya munju. Omukhana oyo kema khumuliango khubise bititi mala kabona ali kengile busa munju kape omusoleli oyo. Mulirima likali, kengila munju na omusoleli atima kela mung'oma. Khubela kurima nikwo omukhana oyo kabanakwo, katila eng'omeyo kakibaasi kakiaramo. Omusoleli oyo kamala nafwa. Nalukano lwase lwawelao.*

### **English translation**

There was once an old woman whose children died in infancy and only a deformed son survived to grow into adulthood. The boy was a hunchback. Although the old woman loved her hunchback son, she was secretly ashamed of his physical appearance. She was so ashamed of her son that each day she was on the lookout for visitors who might come round lest they see her son. To keep him away from the public eye, she confined the boy in a drum most of the time. So right from childhood, the boy grew up in the drum. He was only taken out a few times during the day when the old woman was sure that there were likely to be no intruders around.

When the boy attained the age of circumcision, he was duly circumcised according to the Bukusu customs. Thereafter, he asked his mother to get him a wife to marry. The mother was pleased to hear this and promised to do her best to get her son a wife. By and by, she went out to look for a suitable wife for her son. Eventually, she approached a very pretty girl and asked her if she would be willing to marry her son and the girl promised to think about it. Without disclosing her son's physical defects, the old woman set out wooing her intensively. She brought all sorts of gifts to her mother according to Bukusu customs. She helped the girl collect firewood and even assisted her work on the farm.

Reluctantly, the girl gave in and thereupon asked the old woman to make the necessary arrangements so that she could meet her future husband to which the old woman cunningly replied that the girl should accompany her to her house where she could be able to see her future husband. The old woman lived a long way from the girl's village. On the appointed day, the girl walked until the sun set before reaching the old woman's home. On arrival, the old woman pretended that the young man was around and would

soon appear. The girl waited for the young man to appear to no avail. At bed time, the girl was told that the boy was already in bed sleeping. She was shown a separate place to sleep hence denying her an opportunity to either see or talk to her future husband as would have been expected of people who were planning to marry. Early in the morning, the girl asked the old woman to show her the boy to which the woman replied that the young man left very early in the morning to go and work in a neighbouring village so as to earn something for bride-price. Although the girl was visibly disappointed, she tried to conceal her anger and appeared to be at home with everything around the house. The old woman and the girl went out to cultivate in a banana grove. While they were away, the boy jumped out of the drum and started attending household chores while singing:

Let me busy myself in my house, let me busy myself in my house  
Aren't women foolish? Mother fooled her  
"Your husband has gone to work." How could I go to work?  
I just live here in my little drum because I have a hunch in my back.

So when the boy sang this song, the girl heard her from a distance but it was so faint for her to comprehend the meaning of the song. However, out of curiosity, she stopped from time to time to listen. This went on for several days until she started to guess the meaning of the words in the song. On getting the message home, she was really disturbed. Her suspicion was strengthened by the fact that each morning they left for the farm without sweeping or washing utensils but on their return, they found everything tidy about the house. One day, she deceived the old woman by telling her that she was going to attend to the call of nature while in fact her intention was to discover what was exactly going on in the house. As soon as she disappeared behind the bushes, she tiptoed to the house and stood listening keenly at the door. Soon the boy got out of his drum and repeated his usual rhetoric about women. The girl was so upset with the boy's derogatory song and lamented bitterly at heart at the thought of her "husband," a hunchback confined to a drum. No young woman in her right senses will ever think of getting married to such a fellow.

One morning she said to the old woman: "Mother, today you will go to look for firewood while I go to the plantation alone." The old woman readily agreed because she had become so much used to the girl to imagine of any mischief. She had also become fond of the girl's cheerful and friendly manner and had been thinking that she would not mind staying with her son even if she came to learn of his deformity. Indeed, she had been contemplating making a revelation to her. So on this fateful day, each went her separate way. But as soon as the old woman vanished from sight, the girl dashed back and stood at the door which had now become a familiar ground for her spying on the hunchback. She listened briefly as the boy sang mischievously inside the house. Then she stole a quick glance peeping through a side hole. To her amazement, she saw that the boy was a real hunchback! Quite oblivious, the boy went on sweeping the floor and singing. The girl felt she could no longer stand it and broke into the house suddenly with intention of beating up the mischievous fellow. But before she could get hold of him, he dodged nimbly and slipped back into the drum. Nonetheless, the girl fuming with anger picked up the drum and smashed it on the floor. A pool of blood started oozing from the broken drum. The poor hunchback was dead. That is the end of my story.

## Narrative 9

### The Cruel Step Mother

**Narrator:** Daria Naliaka

**Location:** Misikhu

*Mayi Omuro*

*Yabao khale, papa mulala omukhaye wewe kafwa nakerusiakho mala kalekha omwana omusinde. Khusise sititi papa yuno karera omukhaye okundi. Omukhaye yuno yese kecha kanyola omwana wa sisoleli. Nono basoleli bano bakhula ne khusimana lukali po po. Kakhaba kario, mayiyuno keulila kabonanga ali kimiandu kio omusakhulu wewe kienyebwa kiche khumwana wew. Khwako, kachaka kuenjelesia engila ya khurusiao bulamu bwa omwana wa wangoye oyo. Kekhuukia omwana yuno naye kaba kamusima mawe yuno po. Basoleli babili bano baba nebaya chikhafu khubwasio. Mayi oyo kaulilishana nende omukholi wengo khukhwira omusoleli oyo mukhura buchiba mu syakhulia. Kakhaba kario, nga kaba napara sikholwa esio, omwana wewe kaulila ne nga wandaye kalota ekoloba, kamukambila ali akhanywa kamabele niko kasima nekhali alie kamapwoni khubela esio sili ne buchiba.*

*Biachililila birio khu bisee mala omusoleli oyo namukania biakhulia ne khumubolela kosi kamabi niko mayi kaba namwenyela. Nga mayi kamanya ali alio omundu olabolelanga omusoleli oyo liliyenya liewe kabukula engila ekindi. Kayaba lilo ho lileyi ne khubimbakho liafu na khurakho siakhulia sinulu po. Nga omusoleli oyo kecha ekoloba, kapara ali alacha abukule siakhulia khukhwama khumureko. Khu bisee bititi, omwana omwene wa mayi yuno kabona biakhulia enje narekukha acha khubukula arerere wandaye wewe. Sekamanyakho ali kwaba kumureko tawe. Omusoleli yuno kakwa mwilio nafwa. Mayi yuno enga nekabona ali kerire omwana wewe, kapamo luungu nalila lukali po po nakhubola nga kerire omwana wewe. Banamasika besindukha khuulila kano. Enyuma we kamasika ko omwana yuno, omusakhulu woo omukhaye yuno kamura khungila ne khumukalusia ewabwe khubela kukwima kubi kuno. Lukano lwase lwawelao.*

### English translation

There once lived an old man. This man's wife died at child birth and left him with a young baby boy. Soon, the man married another wife who was also gifted with a baby boy. The two boys grew up and became very fond of each other. However, the woman felt that it was her son who was entitled to the family property and therefore secretly planned to kill her step son who ironically loved her and treated her as her biological mother. The two young men went out to look after cattle in turns. The woman therefore conspired with her house help to kill him through poisoning his food. However, as she planned to carry out this malicious act, her son overheard and when his brother arrived late in the evening, he was warned not to drink milk, his favourite, but to eat potatoes because the former was laced with poison. This went on and the boy revealed the plan to his step brother on each occasion advising him on what to eat and what to avoid.

When the woman was almost convinced that someone must be revealing her plans to the boy, she took a different option. She dug a deep hole which she covered with a cow hide and placed a delicious meal on it. When the boy came in the evening, she expected him to go and pick the food from the trap upon which he will fall in and die. However, that evening, the young man arrived home feeling unwell and the step mother asked him to get his food from outside the house. In the course of their conversation, however, the woman's son saw the covered food and rushed to see the content upon which he fell head long in the deep hole and died instantly. Soon when the woman got out and realised what had happened, she was so distraught and cried as she lamented the killing of her own son. The husband who had gone very far to hunt came back and was shocked at the turn of events. He was even more shocked when he listened to what his wife was saying as she moaned the loss of her son. It became apparent that she was indeed responsible for the demise of her son. After the burial of his son and all the funeral customs related to the Bukusu community, he summoned the relatives of his wife and handed them back their daughter vowing never to live with a witch. That is the end of my story.

## Narrative 10

### A Hyena Ate His Protector

**Narrator:** Japheth Sipingili

**Location:** Sitikho

*Namunyu Kalia Wamukisa*

*Yabao khale omukhasi kaba kaka kamapwoni musilundu siewe. Nasili khulima, Namunyu kwecha nekutima na khumwikongochela akuyete. Kaba nakesemulila ne khurenga sana. Mayi kesindukha ne khutima ne kakhaba kario Namunyu kwamwikongochela kuli akhatima tawe sikila kwaba nekwilukha baayi babenya khukwira. Namunyu kwamusaba akukise khubasiku bakwo. “Nosima njete. Benya khunjira mayi. Sesi ndikhuyeta.” Namunyu kelocha. Bila khuloma liosi, mayi waba nakeendekhelele kabukula sikapu sibofu na khusifunikhila Namunyu. Khu bise bititi, baayi bola na khumureba kaba kabonekho Namunyu nabira lakini mayi kekana burafu po naloma ali niye ekasi yewe eli khulima.*

*Baayi bacha ne khumukambila bali buli bubi sana khukisa biumbwa nibio akhamanyile nga Namunyu khu baayi. Bamubolela bali akhoyele amanye ali Namunyu anyala wamukalukhanakho bise biosi nekhumulia. Nga baayi bamala bacha ,omukhasi kainula sikapu esio lubeka lulala ne khureba Namunyu kaba bung’ali bali anyala kamulia. Namunyu kamukalusia ali yesi yesi; okhalonda niko abolelwanga niye wenyekha khulibwa. Mayi oyo kesindukha na khukhilwa liekhuloma. Nga Namunyu kamanya ali baayi bachile aleyi ne sebabonekha ta, kamwata sikapu, katila mayi ne khumulia. Ne lukano lwase luwela abwenao.*

### English translation

Once upon a time, a woman was digging up sweet potatoes in a garden when a hyena came by running and approached her with pleas for help. He was panting and sweating profusely. The woman was startled and almost took to flight but the hyena begged her not to run away since he was only running away from hunters who wanted to kill him. He therefore requested the woman to protect him from his adversaries. “Please help me. I will also help you one day.” Hyena begged. Without saying a word, the frightened woman took up a large basket and covered it over the hyena thereby concealing him completely. Shortly afterwards, hunters arrived and enquired from her if she had seen the mischievous hyena pass by to which the woman denied. She even said that her work was to dig not to watch what goes on around her.

So the hunters went their way warning her that it would be foolhardy to conceal a dangerous creature like hyena from the hunters since it could easily turn against the same woman and eat her up. When the hunters had gone, the woman lifted the basket on one side and asked hyena whether it was true that it could eat her up. Hyena replied callously that any person who ignored sound advice like her indeed deserved to be eaten up. The woman was shocked beyond words. Soon after the hyena had been assured that the hunters had gone far out of sight, he threw off the basket, seized the woman and started eating her up despite her screams and pleas for mercy. That is the end of my story

## **Narrative 11**

### **Ngoli and his daughter**

**Narrator: Khamala Matakala**

**Location: Mukuyuni**

*Ngoli nende Omukhana Wewe*

*Yabao khale,kwaba nende omusakhulu mulala nie balanga Ngoli. Ngoli kaba nende omukhana mulala yeng'ene. Lundi kaba nende kumusala mulala mungo mwewe kumubofu mala kumulei. Omukhana wewee oyoo kaba kasimisia basani bakali.Endalo yabao Ngoli kabolela babandu benyanga omukhana wewe ali okhanyale khurema kumusala kuli mungo mwewe niye okhabeisie omukhana wewe. Likhua elio liolela bakali nakhulimo;kamanani,chinjofu, chikhisi, namunyu, chinduyu nende chimuna.Endalo nga yola, boosi becha mungo mwomusakhulu Ngoli.Waba wakhuranga khukhwanja khurema kwaba kunani. kwanja khurema nakwimba;*

*Ndema kumusala, ndema kumusala*

*Ndemela omukhana wa Ngoli*

*Nekulakwa ndayila omukhana wa Ngoli*

*Nekulekha ndalekha omukhana wa Ngoli*

*Kunani lkwemba lwanyuma kwalua kumusala nakukhakwa tawe. Namunyu naye kerakho kanja khurema,karema,karema nakemba lumalilisi yesi kalua kalekha. Chisang'i echo choosi chakhakakho chakhilwa,lumalilisi bise biola bia Wanakhamuna. Babasie bakha chakha bali nikho khatiti busa sekhalanyala khurema tawe.Wanakhamuna sekharia tawe. Khanja khurema nakhemba oli bise bititi kumusala kwakhaka tatatatata...ta! kwenya khukwa ne Namunyu kamayo chimbilo asindikha Wanakhamuna, "nyokhayo ese ndeme kukwe."Bali Namunyu kanja khurema ne kumusala kwililisia kuba nga kubele ne Namunyu akhilwa khurema. Liaba embo buli siamulala wabwe akhakekho lumalilisi.Boosi bakhaka siara mala bise biola bia Wanakhamuna.Enga Wanakhamuna khanja khurema khubise bititi ne kumusala kukwa.*

*Bandu babao boosi besindukha lukali po.. Papa womukhana sekasangala omukhana wewe khubeisibwa nende Wanakhamuna tawe.Babakhilwa khurema kumusala boosi babona bubi banja khubolana nga bakane bere Wanakhamuna mala babukule omukhana oyoo.Endalo yabao omukhana wa Ngoli kakenia babebusi bewe nende basale bewe nakhulimo babakhilwa khurema kumusala.Banja khubolana nga nebacha kwira Wanakhamuna. Liaba embo omukhana nakobola ewewe asute lususi khumurwe bali kola engo alange Wanakhamuna amurure,enge kecha naba amumwata khumurwe lususi afwe. Khane bise biababolananga bario, Wanakhamuna, makesi mangi, khaba khayaba lilo khukhwama ewakho liacha wanga mukhana.Kamakhua niko baloma busa kosi Wanakhamuna khaulila mala khela engo khulinda omukhaye wakho.Omukhaye wa Wanakhamuna enga kola nalanga,"Musakhulu,icha undure." Wanakhamuna kharura*

*munju nakhaloma khali, "somwatasi."Wanakhamuna khaloba khwicha khumurura. Omukhaye wakho kalekhula lususi khukhwama khumurwe lwamupa lirango liafunikha. Kamafuki karura lukali lumalilisi kafwa.Omukhana oyo nende basani baaba nende likhendekha bakhilwa mubikholwa biabwe bimaanu. Lukano lwase lwawelao.*

### **English translation**

There once lived an old man called Ngoli. This man had a very beautiful daughter who attracted the attention of many young men in the village and beyond. There was a huge and tall tree that stood in the midst of the man's compound. To keep off unnecessary disturbances from numerous suitors to his daughter, Ngoli set up a difficult task by demanding that the person who would marry his daughter must be able to cut down this huge tree. Word spread very quickly like bush fire and many young men and animals including, ogre, antelope, hyena, rabbit and hare arrived at Ngoli's home. They came each carrying his axe in readiness for this important exercise.

The first to make an attempt at cutting the tree was the ogre. He embarked on this tedious exercise as he sang:

Am cutting the tree, am cutting the tree  
Am cutting for Ngoli's daughter  
If it falls, I will marry Ngoli's daughter  
If it doesn't, I will leave Ngoli,s daughter.

The ogre sang as he cut the tree until he was exhausted but there was even no dent in the tree. He eventually gave up and hyena took over. The rest of the suitors repeated the usual song as they cut the tree to no avail. At last it was the chance for Hare to try his luck. The other suitors looked at him with contempt mainly because of his lack of physical strength. They even loudly wondered how Hare could imagine of cutting down the tree that had defeated the giants like ogre and hyena leave alone marrying such a beauty. They therefore derided him for making a fool of himself.

This however, did not dissuade Hare from his resolve to cut down the tree and marry Ngoli's daughter. He therefore embarked on this cunning assignment as he sang the usual song. Soon, the tree started to fall *tatatata..ta* upon which hyena that was known for greed and selfishness rushed in, pushed squirrel aside and tried to take advantage of the falling tree to claim Ngoli's daughter. To his surprise, the tree soon went back to its original shape. The other suitors tried their chances once more to no avail. Eventually, it was Hare's chance to try his luck and to everyone's shock and disbelief, the tree fell very easily hence making Hare the indisputable winner in the contest for Ngoli's daughter. His competitors, the bride and even Ngoli accepted this bitter truth begrudgingly. None of them ever imagined of a lousy fellow like Hare emerging victorious. But since Ngoli had sworn before people, he had to swallow his pride and let go his daughter. The rest of the suitors however, planned on how they would outsmart their now common enemy, Hare.



Sometime after Hare's marriage, Ngoli's daughter came home to pay a visit to her parents and relatives as is the case in Bukusu traditions. She happened to meet her old suitors who chided her for getting married to a lousy fellow who was not even able to provide the basic needs to her as evidenced in her apparent lack of strength. They conspired to kill Hare so that she could be free to get married to a man of her choice. It was therefore agreed that on her way back to her matrimonial home, she carries a heavy grinding stone on her head and when she reaches home she would call her husband to help her unload the stone upon which she would throw it on him thus killing him instantly. It was however; quite interesting that Hare had dug an underground tunnel from his house all the way to his in-law's home. So when his wife left for her parental home, Hare was able to follow her and capture all her discussions. So he was able to capture the conspiracy that his wife had with his adversaries. On arrival home, the wife called out Hare to assist her unload the grinding stone to which the Hare coldly replied while singing: "Why can't you throw it down?" When it was apparent that Hare was not coming to help the wife, she decided to let go off the load and it fell on her thigh crushing her leg completely. The woman bled to death. That is the end of my story.

## Narrative 12

### A Beautiful Proud Maiden

**Narrator:** David Nasong'o

**Location:** Kituni.

#### *Omukhana Welola*

*Yabaho khale, kabao omukhana welola lukali muno ata kaloba khucha lilia. omukhana yuno kecha kabolela bandu ali omusoleli olimumubeya akhoyela ang'one sisiuma sia musibuno khurumikhila kameno khukhila kamakhono. Lino liakila mungo mwa papa wewe mwaba nga kumusinga kwe njukhi nende babandu bamwenya khukhwama chimbeka choosi khukhaka ekhabi yabwe. Buli siamulala we babandu bano kakhakanga chingila choosi mala bakhilwa. Mala liakhuukia, omusecha mulala kecha. Wase, omusecha yuno kaba keyakala mala weyakala! Nomulola nekamasika karura mumoni. Bung'ali omusecha yuno abale Sali niye omukhana yuno anyala keyamai ta. Kekhuukia omusani yuno kabirirao busa kung'ona sisiuma ne kameno. Omukhana welola oyo kesindukha mala kenyekhana alonde niko omwene karao. Enyuma wako, kamala karao lundi skiingi sisindi ali omusani oyo ache munyanja arere lifumbo lilala nilio kunani kwa munyanja kwalinda. Bandu bauka lukali khumwima kwo omukhana yuno ne bamubolela omusani oyo bali alekhane nende omukhana welola oyo sikila kumurwe kwewe kwabiya. Omusani yuno kewa kumwoyo mala kakhola ario ne khubirira khungila eyo kaba nang'ona kumubili kwewe, mala nga kakalukha sekaba nekeyakala lundi tawe. Babeisiana ne omukhana welola oyo mala bamenya bulayi. Ne lukano lwase luwelao.*

#### **English translation**

Once upon a time, there lived a beautiful proud maiden who was ready to get married. This girl, because of her pride, she set a difficult task demanding that any man to marry her must be able to thread a complete waistband of beads using his teeth rather than his hands. This made her father's home a beehive of activities as suitors from different places flocked there to try their luck. One by one, different men came, tried and failed. It is however quite ironical that the man who finally won was the one that the proud young lady could not have accepted under normal circumstances. My friends, this man was quite unsightly he had scratched and scratched his body. He was given the opportunity just because no one expected him to succeed after all since his hands were ever busy scratching his scary body. When he succeeded, the young woman was shocked out of her wits but she had to comply though she set another dangerous task that required the young man to go down the lake and bring home a single feather guarded by the lake monster. All potential suitors wondered at this kind of madness. They even told the man to stop engaging in such a dangerous act since the girl was mad after all. But this did not deter him. He resolved to go down the lake as the girl wanted. When he finally brought the feather, he was also cleansed so there were no signs of scabies on him. The two got married and they lived happily thereafter. That is the end of my story.

## **Narrative 13**

### **The Teso who ate a dog**

**Narrator:** John Natembeya

**Location:** Namarambi

*Bamia balia Embwa*

*Chindalo chakhabira enyuma eyo ekholo ye Babukusu baaba muliye ne bachesa babwe Bamia khubise bileyi po. Bachesa bano bakhanganilanga kamayiilwe nende bulime bwe engakha. Liye lino liachililila khubise mala liechukhana bali Kumulembe kubeo. Babukusu baba ne bulwani nga kama fumo ne babasie baba ne chirungu chiong'ene liliakhola Babukusu khuba ne kamani khukhila Bamia. Khubela kano, Bamia bareba Kumulembe.*

*Babukusu bera khaunwa na khureba omumia khukona mumala ke khaunwa khano. Ekholo ya Bitesio bialia chinyama chino khukhwekesia kumulembe khu chikholo chibili echo. Khukhwamila khusikholwa esio ,Babukusu bang'ona lusimo bali 'Bamia balia embwa! nende "Khupa Omumia akhulindile silundu."*

### **English translation**

Sometime back the Bukusu engaged in continuous fighting with their Teso neighbours. The two communities were fighting over fertile land and grazing fields. This war went on for quite some time until it became apparent that there was need to make peace. The Bukusu were equipped with spears while their adversaries only had clubs which made the former a stronger and more formidable force. Consequently, the Teso sought to make peace. The Bukusu therefore slaughtered a young heifer and asked one Teso man to lie in the intestines of this slaughtered animal. The entire community was later asked to eat this beef as a mark of peace between the two communities. This was a humbling exercise that the Teso undertook without faltering. From this incidence, the Bukusu coined the saying: "Bamia balia embwa, and "Khupa omumia akhulindile silundu," or simply the Teso ate the dog and beat up the Teso to take care of your garden respectively.



*Nje nje nja mumbo nje nje nja mumbo nje nje*

*Nja khulanga wa Kasawa nje nje*

*Ndi khaondo khawaraka nje nje*

*Khamalile bana nje nje*

*Ekhumi ne munane nje nje*

*Babandu munju baaba banywa kamalwa mala basila nekhubolanila bali khurikeresie liusi elio bali lulwimbo olwo lwabelekho neburengo. Kasawa yesi waba namelile kayukha munganakani chewe: "Eeh babana base." Kalila nekhukhwanja lukendo khulonda khu nyuni eyo niye echila. Nga kola engo, kanyola mbo kali busa nga liusi lilomile. Kasawa kabuta lusala lwe khuonia bali lufufu. Kala bikumba bie babana bewe mala kapakho nga esambo. Mulala khu mulala babana bano basisimukha. Mala Kasawa kakambila babana ali mukhechukhana lundi mwatila khu khaondo bali Wanandalo tawe. Khukhwamila aoo bamenya bulayi po. Lukano lwase lwawelao.*

### **English translation**

There once lived a man called Kasawa and he had a beautiful garden in which grew two types of pumpkins; one called *namikasa* and another called *wanandalo*. When famine broke out in the country, Kasawa told his wife and family of eighteen children: even if all food is finished in the country, please don't eat the pumpkin called *wanandalo*. Eat only *namikasa*. If by mistake you eat *wanandalo*, you will die." He then left for *mumbo*, (the farthest west) in search of food. After some time, the family ate all the grain in the barns. They then ate all the bananas and all the cassava in the field until it was finished. But the famine was still raging. This really worried the mother who was not ready to eat the pumpkins. She therefore decided that they eat any edible roots and leaves that the family could gather from the riverside. So every morning, the family would go out to look for wild roots and leaves. Everyone put in an effort to ensure that the family did not starve.

When eventually it looked like all efforts to save the family from starvation were waning, they resorted to eating the *namikasa* pumpkin. After clearing all these pumpkins in the garden, the children approached their mother saying: "we are hungry and there is nothing else we can eat. Let us try that pumpkin called *wanandalo*." The mother could however not accept their request fearing the warning from her husband. In her absence, seventeen of her eighteen children went ahead and ate the pumpkin upon which they all died. The surviving child said to himself, "what shall I do now?" While he was thus thinking aloud, he saw a hawk passing. "Aah, he said, I will ask Hawk to go and call my father. He then called him and said, if I send you to the farthest west to call my father, what would you tell him when you get there?" Hawk answered "chulululuuuu!" the young man chased him away for he felt Hawk could not communicate clearly. Next he called Crow and asked him the same question upon which he replied: "caw, caw, caw, caw!" the young

man was not satisfied so after Crow had flown away, Pigeon came. When he was asked the same question, Pigeon sang:

Am going to the farthest west  
to tell Kasawa  
the pumpkin which he grew  
has finished all the children

The boy was very pleased to hear the pigeon's song. He therefore scattered elusive grains in the courtyard for Pigeon to eat. After eating the grains, Pigeon flew away. He flew and flew until he reached the farthest west. On arrival, he perched on a tree near the house of a person called Masifwa and started singing:

Am going to the farthest west  
to tell Kasawa  
the pumpkin which he grew  
has finished all the children

People in the house were drinking beer but they were all startled. They called on one another to listen to Pigeon who sang again and again and left everyone wondering. Even Kasawa who was a bit tipsy came back to his senses. "Oh my children!" he cried and took off immediately following the directions of the bird as it kept on flying ahead of him. On arrival home, he found everything exactly as Pigeon had informed him. Kasawa picked up a stick of healing herbs, *lufufu*. He then arranged the bones of his children together and tapped each skeleton ceremoniously. Suddenly, one by one, the children rose from the dead. He advised them never again to touch the pumpkin known as *wanandalo*. From that time, they lived happily. That is the end of my story.

## Narrative 15

### The Bukusu Circumcision

**Narrator: Joseph Nangendo**

**Location: Sikhendu**

*Embalu ye Babukusu*

*Yabao khale endemu bali yabebe yarikhirisia khumalao ekholo ye Babukusu. Endemu yino yabolekhana khumila chikhafu ne babandu bakali po po. Endalo ndala, endemu yino yamila omwana omukhana yeng'ene wa Mango nachile eluchi khutaa kamechi.*

*Khu bise bino, Babukusu baba balomana nende bachesa babwe Bayobo. Lie khuukia mbo Biyobo bibiekhola khaba banamaye sebianyala khukhwira endemu yaba nelera liliangaiko mulimenya liabio tawe. Mango nge kechuba khurungia lifwa lia omwana wewe omukhana, Bayobo bamukholela sienya meno sikila kaba omusinde nebaloma bali omusinde sekera endemu yakhaya banamaye be bise ebioo tawe. Mango sekafwa kumwoyo tawe. Karumikhila chindalo kumusi ne silo naakala embalu yekhukhwakanana nende endemu eyo.*

*Endalo ye kamaraba,kekisa lubeka lwe lubina lwe endemu eyo yalotanga buli ekoloba,kara sichikhi sie kumurongoro emunwa we libina ne khutila embalu mukhwirekekhelela yabebe. Endemu yino yabai embofu nekenda erengisia kimirongoro nende kamabale.Lino likila onyala wauka bunyindafu bwe babandu nga Mango. Nga yabebe yola nekhura kumurwe khusichikhi esio eole,Mango kalaa kalaa kasuta embalu yewe nekhurema kumurwe mala yaba lumalilisi lwe silongwa sino ne chitabu che Babukusu ne Bayobo. Yabebe yamala nefwa ne kamakanya kech kechusia libina liosi. Embakha ya Mango yakenda mubandu nge kumulilo musichakha. Bayobo babukula Mango nebamukheba eyi nebaloma bali kabele omusani sikila kakholile sikholwa sie basani. Khukhwamila abwenao, basani Babukusu boosi bachaka khukhebwa. Ne lukano lwase luwelao.*

### English translation

Once there was a giant python that threatened to completely wipe out the Bukusu community. It is said to have swallowed both animals and human beings indiscriminately. One day, this dreaded creature swallowed Mango's only daughter when she had gone to fetch water. This infuriated him so much that he swore to kill the python by all means. At this time, the Bukusu were freely intermingling with their Sabot neighbours who used to practice circumcision.

It is, however, interesting to note that the Sabots, who boast of valiant warriors, had not been able to kill this python which was posing a great challenge to their very existence. When Mango, therefore, vowed to avenge his daughter's death, the Sabot warriors ridiculed him because they could not conceive of an uncircumcised man killing a snake

that had defeated the most reputable warriors of the time. Mango was however not dissuaded from his resolution. He spent days and nights sharpening his sword in readiness for the impending showdown with the python. On the fateful day, he strategically took cover next to the cave where the python always retired to at the end of the day. He placed a tree stump at the entrance to the cave and held his sword at ready. It is said that the python was so huge that when it moved, trees could sway and some rocks could roll down the mountain. Soon afterwards, the signs of the python were evident as the rocks began rolling down the hills. Eventually, when the python arrived and rested its scaring head on the tree stump, Mango swiftly raised his sword and chopped off the head marking the end of the misery that this creature had subjected people to. This news spread like wild fire in the bush. The Sabot elders who previously held their Bukusu neighbours in disrepute because of circumcision decided to circumcise Mango and crown him the status of an elder because he had accomplished a difficult task. This then marked the onset of circumcision among the Bukusu.



## Narrative 16

### Wanakhatandi

**Narrator:** Julius Wanjala

**Location:** Chwele

#### *Wanakhatandi*

*Yabao khaale, khwaba nende omusani mulala niye balanganga bali Wanakhatandi. Omusani yuno kaba nende babana bakhana bong'ene mala likhuwa elio liakila limenya liewe nende omukhaye liaba liabulomani bukali po. Nga nemumanyile bana omwana mubukusu kasima omwana wesisoleti muno. Liaba busa ambo engabalomananga nende omukhaye wewe, Wanakhatandi kauyilanga wo omukhaye wewe omutiti waba omukumba. Namwe lundi nacha khuaya karereranga enyama omukhaye wewe omutiti nakemana omukhulu khubela kebula bakhana bong'ene.*

*Bise biabao bienjala buli abundu mala omusani yuno kamaya kauyila wo omukhaye wewe omukumba. Omukhaye wewe wa babana kanja khukendanga nasaba biakhulia, abulala niye nebabana bewe banja nabakenda mumusiru nabaenja kamatunda nende kamasafu ka kimisala chingano ne chingano nabalialia. Balebe. Makhuya sina kano? Bakholanga busa bario lwanyuma enjala yawa. Kekhuukia, Kamanani nako kecha musirekere omwo nekanja khulia babandu bababa nende enjala engali khukhwolana khukhilwa khukenda.*

*Endalo ndala kamanani kecha engo wa Wanakhatandi wo omukhaye wewe omukumba...enga kabona kamanani karenga lukali naloma ali, "eeh!eeh!, mukhanjira tawe, ndamuyeta munyole chinyama chingali, namusima mukhanjira tawe." Chinyama chingali nicho Wanakhatandi kalakilisia kamanani yaba omukhaye wewe na babana. Kamanani kaulila bulayi sana khulinga Wanakhatandi kakalakilisia ario. Kamanani kano kamubolela Wanakhatandi kali niye nalulwibulo lwewe lwoosi kenebetekhenge buli ndalo kamanani nekabalialia. Wanakhatandi kaulilisia na kamanani mala kacha kabolela omukhaye wewe kamakhuwa niko kaba nanyolekhane nako.*

*Likhuwa lia mayi khulekha babana bewe balibwe ne kamanani liamusindusia mala kalomela mumwoyo ali sakera babana bewe tawe. Mayi wa babana kaenja engila ya khuonia babana bewe mala kacha kayaba ekhombe mumusala kumubofu nakisamo babana bewe. Mayi oyo kanja kangala bikumba, kamasielo, chisang'i chafwa kecha kara muningiro katekha biaola. Enge kamanani kecha Wanakhatandi kakoekesia eningilo ali, "luno endekhile omukhana wase omukhulu." kamanani kanja khukhina nakemba,*

*"Lelo ndurire endiri,*

*Mukamba ndarure eye bubwoya*

*Enge kamala khukhwimba kekhalasi kanja khulia kauka kali khakalia omukhana wa Wanakhatandi. Kamanani ako kakholanga busa kario buli ndalo anyuma bise biola*

*biakhulia Wanakhatandi omwene. Wanakhatandi kataa kamechi kechusia muningilo kara khumaika kenya khwitekha. Kamechi enga kasela, Wanakhatandi kecha bali ketekhe. Oli kola aembi ne eningilo na bukhafulu bumurisia, "Wu!", akukula nakela enje nakanja khukhwimba:*

*Wanakhatandi khetekhe endiena?*

*Babana bange betekha bariena?*

*Omukhasi wange ketekha ariena?*

*Sikholwa esio siasinya babana nende omukhaye wa Wanakhatandi baba mumusala mukhombe nabalolanga Wanakhatandi nakhola sisa. Omukhana wewe omukhulu sakasangala papa wewe nakhola sisa tawe mala kabolela mayi wewe ache ayete Wanakhatandi. Mayi wa bakhana sakenya khucha khuyeta Wanakhatandi tawe. Enyuma we bise bikali, omukhana wa Wanakhatandi kamukhaya mawe mala bacha khuyeta rarawe. Omukhaye wa Wanakhatandi kabukula kamasielo ke bibiayo biafwa nawelesia Wanakhatandi bara muningilo nach amukisa. Kamanani enga kecha kalia kamasielo ako nekamanya kali bwatoto kalile Wanakhatandi ne lulwibulo lweve lwoosi. Kauya musibala omwo kacha abundu aandi. Khukhwamila endalo eyo, Wanakhatandi kakobola niyo omukhaye wewe nabulobe kaaba nelundi sekelakho wo omukhaye omukumba oyo tawe. Bamenya bulayi. Nalukano lwase lwawelao.*

### **English translation**

There was lived a man called Wanakhatandi who was blessed with many daughters but no sons. As you know, my friends, the boy child is highly regarded among the Bukusu community. What was worse for Wanakhatandi was that even his first born child was a girl. Therefore Wanakhatandi's family circumstances became the source of strained relations between him and his wife. Everyday, there were brawls in his family and whenever this happened, Wanakhatandi ran to seek consolation from his other wife who was barren. When he went out to hunt, he brought all the game to the childless woman as a punishment to his first wife who had many unwanted mouths to feed.

When famine broke out in the land, he completely deserted his family and went to stay with his childless wife. His first wife was therefore subjected to the life of a beggar. She went out with her children on daily basis to collect leaves and fruits of various wild plants in order to procure a day's meal. This went on until another disaster broke out; ogres invaded the land and the human race was threatened with extinction. The ogres moved from door to door eating up hunger stricken folks who had no strength left to flee for their lives. One day, the ogres came to Wanakhatandi's house. On seeing them, he trembled and cried with fear pleading: "...spare my life; I will help you to get more meat. Oh, please do spare my life." The more meat that Wanakhatandi referred to in this case were his wife and daughters. He therefore struck a deal with the ogres to offer his entire family to them starting with his first born daughter. He unfeelingly broke this shocking news to his bewildered wife.

The idea of having a mother kill her own children struck her as quite astonishing. She resolved not to kill her own children. Nevertheless, the despised woman could not dare reason with Wanakhatandi, her heartless husband any more. Fully aware that her husband may betray her to the ogres in case she planned an escape, she feigned cooperation. Satisfied, Wanakhatandi went back to live with his barren wife and only made regular visits to check on what his wife had cooked for the ogres. Wanakhatandi's wife had to quickly devise a mechanism that would see her defeat the ogres and salvage her family from death.

Having silently rejected her husband's selfish demands, she secretly located a hole in a giant tree where she hid her children. She collected bones of dead animals, skins and decomposed carcasses which she boiled in a big pot until the stuff was tender and tasty. Whenever the ogres came, Wanakhatandi showed them the big pot saying: "Today I have cooked my big daughter." At the yard, ogres would sing and dance thus:

Today I bagged a heavy one,  
Tomorrow I will bag a hairy one.

After this dance, they would then settle down to eat thinking it was their adversary's daughter. This went on until it was the time for Wanakhatandi to cook himself. The greedy ogres, in their quest to satisfy their insatiable desire for human flesh were not ready to spare the life of poor Wanakhatandi even after "consuming" all his daughters and wife. Wanakhatandi overwhelmed by self pity filled the pot with water and put it on the fire ready to cook himself.

However, every time he came near the boiling water, he ran back more terrified than before. He then burst into a song thus:

Wanakhatandi how shall I cook myself?

How did my children cook themselves?

How did my wife cook herself?

This so amused the family that was watching the drama from a tree trunk that they could not help laughing derisively at him. However, his eldest daughter was the least amused. She empathised with her father and prevailed upon her mother to rescue him. Upon several pleas, the mother agreed to help her husband and she gathered hides of dead animals and cooked for the ogres. She then took Wanakhatandi and hid him. When eventually the ogres came and ate the food, they were satisfied that they had finally eaten Wanakhatandi and his entire family. They then moved away from that village never to come back. From that day, Wanakhatandi went back to his family and never thought of his barren wife again. He lived happily with his family. That is the end of my story.

## Narrative 17

### Mwambu and Sela

**Narrator:** Simon Wamalwa

**Location:** Kibingei

*Mwambu nende Sela*

*Yabao khaale musibala sie Babukusu, efula yecha yatiba khubise bilei babandu bakorwa bakhole bariena tawe. Bakimba boshi bakhaka khurera efula siara. Babandu basaya Wele Khakaba siara. Enyuma we khukhaka chingila choosi, bacha khumung'osi omukhulu wefula kababolela ali, "khuli nende linani niliobalanga bali Mbili Mbili Nyanjia limenyile likwe munyanja nilio lilakilanga efula nekhakwa tawe. Linani lino lianywa efula yosi nono lienya likholebwe kumusango nefula ekwe." Omwami we Babukusu karuma babandu bewe bache balole linani elio lienya sina musibala sie Babukusu.*

*Basani babukulwa khucha khuenja linani elio barekukha bakenda, bakenda, bakenda, bambukha chinjikhi choosi oli lumalilisi bola nio linani elio liamenya. Liaba liamenya akarikari we enyanja nio abele nelikenda khunyanja nesibala siosi sirenga, chimbeni nacho chibalukha, omundu yesi yesi sakemanga aembi natio tawe. Babandu ba omwami bemela atayi banja khulireba nisiolienya. Linani elio liarusia chimbeni na mumbeni omwo omwana wo omwami, Sela, abonekhelamo. Makowe...babandu bano bauka. Sifuno mbo linani lienya babukule omwana wo omwami baliwelesie nga kumusango nio lilekhule efula ekwe.*

*Basani abo barekukha bakobola wo omwami ne kimioyo kimisiro lukali po. Omwami enga kaulila kamakhuwa kano sekesindukha lukali tawe. Khubela busime bwewe khubandu, kapara ali nabulayi omwana wewe omusime afwe khukhila bandu bafwe boosi. omwami enga kaulila sekabakho nende lilindi liakhola tawe. Khwako, karakho bakhaye bewe bakoye kamalwa kamakali babandu becha khunyuwa nabamuyeta khukhwingsia linani elio musibala sie Babukusu. Endalo ya linani lienyekhana liche, babandu barelila omwami bibindu bikhabalika tawe: chingokho, kamakhese, chikhafu, biakhulia, bakhaye balala bareranga bibiuma na bafwala Sela khuba omukhaye wa linani. Babandu bekhala enyanga yesenda banja khubona bibindu biokesia ambo linani khalicha.*

*Khubasani baselelanga Sela, mulala wabwe kenyokha bali Mwambu. Kenyola khubela busime nabola ali, "bulaba bulayi efwe nende Sela khukhila embone nabukulibwa na linani." Mwambu kanina musikulu nisio Sela kaba nalindile linani. Oli kolao ne Sela kanja khwimba nalila:*

*Mbili mbili nyanjia icha undie*

*Mbili mbili nyanjia icha undie*

*Omukhana wo omwami efula ekwe*

*Mbili mbili nyanjia*

*Mwambu naye achiba ali:*

*Sela lomaloma*

*Mukoye mulala lomaloma*

*Nyanga chilikhulia chilindia*

*Mbili mbili nyanjia*

*Khubise bititi ne linani lianukha likwe lianja khukhwicha niye Sela ali. Chimbeni chabalukha balukha. Sela khubona ario kanja khurenga nakemba. Mwambu naye bwireke khukhwirana ne linani lino. Kachukucha lifumo aliniokere linani elio lakini liamila lifumo elio. Kachukucha lilindi, kunani kwamila. Mala nekukhola kurio khakurusia chimbeni chikhali mbeni tawe. Olikachukucha kama fumo kawa, kabukula buingo bwosi kalasa linani liamila bwosi. Kachukucha chiyaywa, chichupa linani liamilabusa nakhalicha niye bali. Mwambu karama nende embalu ya lueni yabulimundu kaba sakimanyile tawe. Linani oli likana khumila Sela, Mwambu kalipa lueni, linani liakwa asi chimbeni chabalukha balukha, sisilima siatila oli khubise bititi, kamame kefula kanja khumonya ne linani lifwa. Buwanga bwakobola na efula yanja khukwa mala yakwa paka sibala sianoka. Oli chindalo nditi, babandu becha khukhola esambo. Omwami we Babukusu kamuelesia Mwambu Sela abe omukhaye wewe. Khukhwamila ao bamenya bulayi po. Lukano lwase lwawelao.*

### **English translation**

A long time ago, the rains disappeared from Bukusu land and left people wondering what to do next as a result of the long drought that ensued. The future of the entire community looked quite grim. Rain makers were from time to time consulted but none of them was able to bring a drop of rain. People prayed to the great God, *Khakaba* to no avail. Finally, it was decided that the greatest diviner in the land be consulted so that he could see into the calamity that was threatening to devastate all the life in Bukusu land. To everyone's awe, the diviner revealed that an ogre by the name *Mbilimbili Nyanjia* that lived in the sea of the far west was responsible for the current drought. This ogre, it was claimed, had drunk all the rain and must be appeased before the rain fell. The king had to send a delegation with immediate effect to go and establish what exactly the ogre needed from the Bukusu people.

The king selected a band of strong men to carry out this difficult task. The men walked day and night, crossing many rivers before they finally reached the confines of the ferocious ogre which had its confines in the abode in the central of the ocean. Whenever he moved about in the ocean, the earth trembled and there were thunder and lightning in the sky. In fact no ordinary person could dare approach the ogre face to face. The men who lead the delegation from the king therefore stood a long distance away and simply shouted out their representations at the top of their voices. The response they received from the ogre struck them like lightning; the treasured daughter of the king, Sela, had to be offered as a sacrifice in order for the ogre to release the rains. This was indeed a shocking revelation given that Sela was the only daughter of the king.

The men therefore returned to the king with heavy hearts. The way of breaking the sad news to the king was a hard nut to crack. The king, however, received the news with surprising calmness. He asked his wives to brew a lot of beer and welcome all clan elders to come and assist him in making preparations for welcoming the ogre to Bukusu land. On the fateful day, when the ogre was expected to come and demand his bride, people brought the king countless gifts in form of grains, poultry, sheep, cattle and many others. Women even brought beads and ornaments and decorated Sela as they sang wedding songs which symbolically portrayed her as an unwilling bride of the ogre. The assembling of the multitudes at the king's kraal started at dawn and as the sun moved higher and higher in the sky, more people could be seen hurrying to the scene. By midday, it looked like the whole village was gathered yet more people were still streaming in. Signs of tension were noticeably visible on each face as every individual anxiously waited for the climax to come and melt away into oblivion like a bad dream.

Sela was very charming; she was really beautiful and every young man around aspired to court her. However, of all the young men who aspired to court her, Mwambu stood out tall. His love had no bounds. He swore that he would rather die beside Sela than watch her taken away at liberty by the ogre. Against all sane advice, Mwambu climbed a hill and sat beside the weeping bride. Sela burst into a song:

Mbilimbili Nyanja come and eat me  
The king's daughter  
So that it may rain.  
Mbilimbili Nyanja

Mwambu would respond in the chorus:

Sela, say  
You whose life and mine are intertwined into a single string, say it  
The day they eat you They will also eat me,  
Mbilimbili Nyanja.

Slowly, the western sky grew somber and the ogre left his abode and moved ponderously towards Sela. There were frequent lightning flashes in the sky followed by rumbling of distant thunderstorms. Everyone was so scared of the impending drama that even the bravest warriors retreated from the scene when the ogre finally appeared on the threshold. Here indeed was death incarnate! Sela's voice trembled as she continued chanting her dirge. Mwambu shot a succession of arrows which the dragon simply swallowed up and kept on moving menacingly towards Sela. Having exhausted the contents of his quiver, Mwambu turned to spears which he threw until they were all finished. He threw bottle axes and the dragon gobbled them all. Finally, he was left with a magic sword, *embalu ye lueni*, the lightning sword. Apparently, nobody in Bukusu land was aware that Mwambu had this sword and none had seen it in use. Mwambu had concealed his secret weapon very closely.

As the ogre collapsed, there was a blinding flash of lightning, followed by a deafening clasp of thunder which was reechoed by all the hills in the country. Dark, low-lying clouds floated in the sky and soon drops of rain began to fall. The dragon writhed, wriggled and hissed and eventually died. The heavens opened up and torrential rains

poured down furiously roaring like a pride of hungry lions. The entire sky was lit with frequent flashes of lightening and the earth shook with prolonged peals of thunders. It continued raining for many days until fields were flooded and all rivers overflowed to their brims. Thus, after Mwambu had killed the ogre, rain returned to Bukusu land. People rejoiced and the king married Sela to Mwambu in a pompous wedding. The two lived happily together. That is the end of my story.

## Narrative 18

### Nabwile

**Narrator:** John Natembeya

**Location:** Namarambi

#### *Nabwile*

*Chindalo che khaale, Babukusu baba bamenya simbi nende Bayobo. Babandu babili bano sebakwananga tawe khubela babechanga nebulomani bukali po akari wabwe. Bulomani buno bwamanananga nende kamaloba ne kimiandu kikindi. Khukhingilila likhuwa lie khukhwana, Babukusu bakayanga bakhana babwe bababa. nebolile kamalia khurumikhila lukano lwa babembelanga bali:*

*Nabwile, Nabwile*

*Khasinja olikona nying'inyi*

*Nabwile Nabwile*

*Khasinja olikona nying'inyi*

*Wamenya mubarende*

*Khasinja olikona nying'inyi*

*Lulwenolo lwaba lukano lwe Babukusu.*

### **English translation**

Long time ago, the Bukusu who lived next to their Sabot neighbours did not approve of intermarriage between the two communities. This is because the two communities were ever fighting over land and other property. To make sure that they prevented their daughters who had reached marriageable age from getting married to the Sabots, they used to warn them in a narrative which was in form of a song thus:

Nabwile, Nabwile,  
Khasinja you should not sleep deeply.  
Nabwile, Nabwile,  
Khasinja you should not sleep deeply.  
You live among strangers  
Khasinja you should not sleep deeply



## Narrative 19

### Girls Who Went to Harvest Fruits

**Narrator:** Maureen Masika

**Location:** Kimilili Township

*Bakhana Bacha Khubuta Kamatunda*

*Yabao khaale, khwaba nende bakhana bacha khubuta kamatunda. Khubakhana abo, mulala wabwe kaba nelukondo nilwo basoleli bakali musirekere bekomba po po. Endalo ndala, omukhana yuno karekukha nende bakhana basie bacha mumusiru khubuta kamatunda. Bakenda, bakenda lundi bakenda koo. Akhumalilikha bola mumusiru. Ebweneyo, bakhana babandi bano babona bali kenyekhana bakhole etolondo enga banyala bamurusia musirekere siabwe omukhana wang'ona yuno manya wakana bosi baselelwa nende basoleli. Enga benya khwanja khubuta kamatunda nababola bali buli mundu afunyikhilile nabuta. Enga banja khubuta na nibo bamoka banja khubuta kamarobe enga bamala nabarekukha.*

*Oli bola khungila omukhana oyo kabona kabutile kamabisi kong'ene mala kabolela babasie bamwisieyo abute karobire mala baloba. Omukhana oyo kakalukha mumusiru yeng'ene abute kamatunda karobire. Balebe, kano kakhoyela we kumwoyo nekakila mumusiru muno kamanani kosi kamenyamo. Omukhana yuno nasili khucha atayi ,khungila kakanana nende linani liamuamba na kamani liacha naye ewalio. Omukhana oyo enga kola engo walinani, kanyolayo omulosi waba yesi waba nabukulwe ne linani. "Eeh! kukhu okhola sina ano?" Omukhana oyo kareba omulosi oyo mala naye kamubolela enga nakechao. Omulosi oyo katilibwa ne kamanani nasili mukhana mala sayi kakofula. Silo na kumusi kanjanga khukanakana nga ne kana ayete omukhana oyo kelukhe. Akhumalilikha, omulosi yuno kanyola endalo ndala niyo kamanani kaaba nekachile khuaaya atayi namwokesia omukhana yuno engila ye khukhwilukha eyi namubolela ali akhebilila kalolakho enyuma tawe nesikila kamanani kanyala kamunyola kamulia.*

*Bakhana babachengo abo nabo babola bali sebacha nende omukhana wang'ona oyo tawe. Barusia bubeyi bali niye kasikala engo nakhola kia munju. Babebuli nende basoleli baselelanga omukhana oyo balila khutiba khwo omukhana oyo musirekere.*

*Enge bandu bosi barusiakho kumwoyo bali omukhana oyo lundi sakecha tawe ata bakhana bamulekha bosi bamanya busa bali kamanani kamulia. Bali basiloma bario no omukhana oyo aulukha. Kanja khubolela babebuli bewe nge kamakhuwa nakaba. Embakha eyo yakenda buli abundu, basoleli benyanga khumubeyisia bosi becha khukhaka ekhabi yabwe. Lumalilisi kanyola omusoleli kamubeyisia mala bamenya bulayi po. Na bakhana babandi abo babandu bababiila lukali. Sebamala banyola basecha musibala esio lundi tawe. Lukano lwase lwawelao.*

## English translation

Long time ago, a group of girls went to harvest fruits. One of them was so beautiful and all the handsome young men in the village admired her and looked at her as the best bride one would get. This made her a target of envy especially from her peers. One day, she accompanied a group of girls to go and harvest fruits in the forest. The rest saw this as an opportunity to fix their competitor once and for all. So when the time came for picking fruits, they unanimously agreed that they should pick fruits while closing their eyes. The unsuspecting girl did so and ended up picking raw fruits only as the rest picked ripe ones. On their way home, she requested her friends to take her back so that she could pick ripe fruits but they rejected her request. This forced her to go back to the forest all alone. My friends, this action requires the strong-hearted since forests are homes for ogres. On the way, she met an ogre who took her by force to his home. She was so terrified to resist. When she reached ogre's home, she found an old woman who had been captured long before. This really shocked her and she arranged on how to help the girl. Day and night, she planned on how she would finally help the girl to escape from the jaws of the greedy ogres. Her patience eventually bore fruit on the day when ogres had gone hunting very far. She arranged for this girl to escape warning her never to look behind as she would be found and eaten by ogres.

Meanwhile, the other girls had arrived in the village and reported that their friend did not accompany them to the forest. They claimed that she had come back home to attend to some personal issues. The parents to the girl, her potential suitors and the entire village mourned the disappearance of the village beauty for days. When it was almost apparent that she would never be found alive and the other girls were sure that they had eventually fixed the imposter, she suddenly appeared. She narrated her ordeal at the hands of her friends and the ogres to the shocked villagers. The news of this beautiful girl spread like bushfire and soon very handsome and able young men came to try their luck in marrying her. She later got married in a pompous wedding and lived with her husband happily thereafter. The rest of the girls were shunned by the villagers and even prospective suitors.

**Narrative 20**  
**Hen and Hawk**

**Narrator:** Francis Murere

**Location:** Sirembe

*Engokho nende Kisilili*

*Yabao khaale, Engokho nende Kisilili baaba basale lukali. Bindu bikali bakholelanga alala. Endalo ndala Kisilili kakeniya Engokho. Khubise bititi nabakhamala khulosia, Engokho yasaba Kisilili lubeko abekile babana bayo. Kisilili keyama khuyeta mala kabolela Engokho ali, “khekuwa lubeko lwase mala okhatibia tawe.”*

*Engokho yacha yabeka babana bewe mala yabikha lubeko bulayi munju mwayo. Endalo yalondakho Engokho yenza khurumikhila lubeko mala bali elola nio yara khubona tawe.” Eeeh! lubeko lwa bene,” Engokho yesindukha. Mala yakhebulila enga Kisilili na kakibolela. Engokho yakhaka khuenja lundi buliabundu munju mala khunyola tawe. Yarura enje khutakhula nio babana benyailanga khunyola tawe.*

*Endalo yalondakho Kisilili kecha khubukula lubeko lwewe. Enga kareba, Engokho yamubolela eli yebilile nio yarere lubeko ne elikhoeenja. Kisilili khuulila ario, kalola bubi mala kabolela Engokho ali, “muchuli nanicha obe nonyolile lubeko lwase, namweta, khabukule babana boo khulipisia lubeko lwase.” Kisilili nga kaloma ario narekukha alekha Engokho nelila.*

*Enge bwasia makhelebende, Kisilili kecha lubeko lwewe. Enga kanyola selulio tawe, nabukula omwana mulala we Engokho. Endalo erakho yosi Kisilili kecha kabukula omwana we Engokho. Kisilili kechanga busa nabukula babana be Engokho lumalilisi bawa.*

*Kisilili kabolela Engokho ali, “khabukulenge babana boo buli lwosi nosilikhunyo lubeko lwase tawe.” Khukwama endalo eyo, Kisilili kanja khulia babana be Engokho. Ne Engoko nayo echililanga khutakhula asi neenja lubeko lwa Kisilili. Nalukano lwase lwawelao.*

**English translation**

Once upon a time, Hen and Hawk were friends and did many things together. One day, Hawk came to visit Hen. After a brief discussion, Hen asked Hawk to lend her a razor blade so that she could shave her children. Hawk agreed on condition that her friend did not lose the razor blade. Hen shaved the children and kept the razor safely in the house. The next day, she wanted to use it but she did not trace it. This really worried her. She remembered Hawk’s warning and it sent shivers down her spine. She went round the house once more looking everywhere to no avail. She even went outside where her children were playing and scratched the ground just in case one of her children had gone outside with it. She, however, completely failed to get the razor blade.

The following day, Hawk arrived and asked for her razor to which her friend replied that it was misplaced but she was looking for it. On hearing this, Hawk was so infuriated and warned Hen that she would come the following day and if she failed to get her razor, she would have no option but to take Hen's children as compensation. With this said she went out and left Hen weeping bitterly. She continued with her search in all corners without success. The next morning, Hawk arrived and true to his word, she took away one of Hen's chicks when the latter failed to produce the razor. The next day she came and did the same. This went on until the entire Hen's chicks were finished. Hawk then promised to be taking Hen's chicks for as long as her razor blade is still missing. Since that day, Hen is still scratching the ground in search for the lost razor blade and Hawk is always eating her chicks. That is the end of my story.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Interview Schedule for informants**

This section provides a set of questions for informants.

1. Who performs narratives in Bukusu community and why?
2. When and where are these narratives performed?
3. Has the context of performance undergone any changes? Explain.
4. Do Bukusu narratives have any messages touching on non Bukusu people?
5. Do these narratives comment on day to day activities? Explain.
6. Comment on the historical and cultural values of Bukusu oral narratives.
7. What is the audience composition in Bukusu oral narrative performances?
8. Does the composition of the audience in (7) above contribute to the understanding of the narratives?
9. What are some of the issues commonly brought out in Bukusu narratives?
10. Do these narratives comment on the way the Bukusu relate with other communities?

## **Appendix 3**

### **Analytical Framework**

This section provides general questions which were helpful in the analysis of the narratives. Our analytical framework was guided by the following questions:

1. Who performs oral narratives in the Bukusu community?
2. What is the composition of the audience? Does this audience affect the narration in any way?
3. Does the context of narration have any effect on the meaning of Bukusu oral narratives?
4. Does the narrative comment on non Bukusu people?
5. What possible response does each narrative hope to elicit?
6. What aspects of the narrative are likely to elicit the intended response in (5) above?
7. Does the narrator contribute to the general understanding of the narratives?
8. What are some of the verbal and nonverbal cues employed by the narrator to enrich his/ her narration in Bukusu narratives?
9. Which issues are mainly handled in Bukusu narratives?
10. What is the role of the audience in the Bukusu oral narratives?
11. What is the significance of the Bukusu narratives in the contemporary society?

## Appendix 4

### Analytical Table

The section provides a table which helped in the analysis of individual narratives.

<b>Title of Narrative</b>	<b>Target Audience</b>	<b>Social Function</b>	<b>Thematic Concerns</b>	<b>Perceptions on Communal Coexistence</b>
1. Simbi and Nakitumbe	Young women about to get married	Need to shun pride and arrogance	Marriage Presence of evil	Respect other people irrespective of their social standing.
2. Nasio and Her Brother	Young men and women	Encourage bravery and responsible behaviour.	Courage and responsibility	The “Other” is destructive and evil. People should be courageous so as to defend their community from evil.
3. Hare Steals a Hen	General audience	Be honest with our friends. Discourages laziness.	Friendship and Betrayal.	Need for hard work. Be honest with others.
4. Lemata and Katamba	General audience.	Conflict resolution.	Friendship. Revenge.	Be wary of the friends we have. Avoid revenge.
5. The Secret of a Murder	General audience	Embrace good neighbourliness.	Societal norms.	Shedding of human blood is highly prohibited.
6. Apelu	General audience	Encourage integrity.	Marriage. Communal relationships.	Encourage intercommunal relationships through intermarriages.
7. Three Men Meet a Strange Old Woman	General audience	Encourages respect for elderly people.	Greed and ingratitude.	Be careful when dealing with strangers. Ingratitude does not pay.

8. An Old Woman and her Deformed Son	General audience.	Encourages honesty. Need for self appreciation.	Deceit.	Deceitful tendencies in relating with others are discouraged.
9. The Cruel Step Mother	General audience.	Reinforce acceptable societal norms by ridiculing unacceptable ones.	Family relationships. Hatred and Jealousy.	Members of the community are expected to uphold certain core values like taking care of the orphans.
10. A Hyena Ate his Protector	General audience.	Societal norms. Be cautions with strangers.	Ingratitude and greed.	We should avoid greed and ingratitude in our relationships.
11. Ngoli and His Daughter	General audience.	Point out the intrigues involved in marriage. Discourage deceit and betrayal.	Deceit and betrayal. Jealousy.	Avoid deceitful tendencies.
12. A Beautiful Proud Maiden.	Young men and women about to get married.	Encourage young men that marriage is a sacrifice. We should be couaregeous.	Marriage Resilience	Marriage is a responsibility that demands a lot of sacrifice. The “Other” is acknowledged for demonstrating resilience.
13. The Teso Who Ate a Dog.	General audience	Conflict resolution mechanism.	Inter communal relationships. Conflict.	Need to live and relate well with others.
14. Kasawa and the Forbidden Pumpkins	General audience	Sensitise people on the need to follow instructions especially from those senior to us.	Family relationships. Fruits of disobedience.	Need to take instructions especially from those above us.
15. The Bukusu Circumcision	Bukusu men	Carving a superior niche	Bravery. Communal	Circumcision is a mark of



		for Bukusu men	customs.	identity among the Bukusu. Acknowledge the Sabots for re-introducing circumcision among the Bukusu.
16.Wanakhatandi	Married men and women	Encourage responsible parenthood.	Family relationships. Gullibility.	The “Other” is destructive but gullible.
17.Mwambu and Sela	Young men and women	Encourage young men to embrace selfless love and be courageous.	Love. Presence of evil.	We should be ready to defend our dignity at all costs. Be prepared to fight evil forces in our midst.
18.Nabwile	Young women about to get married	Encourage young women to be perceptive in choosing marriage partners.	Communal relationships. Centrality of marriage.	Warns young women especially from the Bukusu community to be careful when dealing with non Bukusu men.
19. Girls who Went to Harvest Fruits	Young women	Sensitise young women to be wary of deceit.	Hatred and jealousy	Hatred and jealousy does not pay. We should appreciate one another.
20.Hen and Hawk	General audience	Discourage dependency.	Dependency	We should work hard and avoid over dependency on other people.

## **Appendix 5**

### **Research Permit**

This section contains a letter from the University of Nairobi allowing the researcher to proceed on field work for data collection. This permission is contained in a letter signed by the then chairperson of the department of Literature. It also has a letter from the local authorities allowing the researcher permission to conduct research within Bungoma.



**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**  
**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE**

P.O. Box 30197-00100,  
GPO Nairobi, Kenya  
E-mail: [literature@uonbi.ac.ke](mailto:literature@uonbi.ac.ke)

Telephone: (254-020) 318262  
Fax: (254-020) 245566

JOSEPH JUMA MUSUNGU  
C80/83201/2012  
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI  
DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

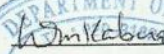
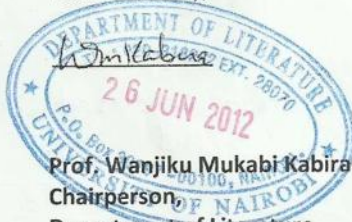
**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT FIELDWORK IN WEBUYE DISTRICT**

The above subject refers. Mr Musungu is a Ph.D. Student in the Department of Literature. He is conducting his study on "The Construction of the Bukusu worldview on communal co-existence through Oral Narrative performance." He is set to conduct his research in Webuye District in the month of July.

The Department kindly requests that he be accorded the necessary support to accomplish his research.

Thanks.

Yours faithfully,

  
  
Prof. Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira  
Chairperson,  
Department of Literature

**REPUBLIC OF KENYA**



**OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT**

Telegrams: "DISTRICTER" BGM EAST  
TELE: 020-2119678  
Please quote

**DISTRICT COMMISSIONER  
BUNGOMA EAST DISTRICT  
P.O. BOX 20-50205  
WEBUYE**

REF: ACR/ 15/22/VOL.1/42

2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

**PERMIT TO CONDUCT RESEARCH:  
JOSEPH JUMA MUSUNGU: C80/83201/2012**

The above referred student is undertaking his PhD in the Department of Literature University of Nairobi.

Permission is hereby granted to him to carry out research on "*Oral Narrative Performance and the Construction of Bukusu Perceptions on Communal Coexistence.*"

Please accord him the necessary assistance.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'M.K. Musundi'.

M.K. MUSUNDI (MRS)  
FOR: **DISTRICT COMMISSIONER  
BUNGOMA EAST DISTRICT**

## Appendix 6

### Photographs Taken During Performances and Interviews

The section provides some of the photographs taken during oral performances and interviews.

#### Michael Lubekho (third left) narrating *Nasio and Her Brother*



Photo by Anthony Wabwoba August, 2012

**Joseph Sipingili after performing the narrative *Hyena Ate His Protector***



**Photo by Anthony Wabwoba**

**John Wafula Natembeya being interviewed after performing *Nabwile***



**Photo by Joseph Musungu**

**Khamala Matakala, one of the narrators and informants**



**Photo by Joseph Musungu**