

MYALI SONGS: SOCIAL CRITIQUE AMONG THE KAMBA

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by

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ABSTRACT

The study covers a sample of Akamba myalĩ songs (singular, mwalĩ) through a careful demonstration of how imagery and allusions portray ideas.

Though fast disappearing, mwalĩ is a major component of the Akamba literature as is apparent from the field interviews and the songs studied. Besides entertaining listeners, mwalĩ conserved traditions and defended historic truths. Unlike other song types, mwalĩ is thematically very eclectic. Multiple themes occur in a single text. The extensive use of allusion makes mwalĩ difficult to understand but popular at the same time. Listeners are challenged to decipher the meanings of things, places and people alluded to. The imagery drew upon the immediate environment. The names given are symbolic, and inanimate objects are personified or animated. Akamba sayings also occur in myalĩ songs. After transcription and translation, the songs were therefore analysed according to their themes, allusions, imagery, personification, and Akamba sayings. This study begins to unveil the wide scope of the complexities within the myalĩ songs.