

THE AMBIGUOUS NATURE OF
FREEDOM IN THE LUHYA
RITUAL CEREMONY SONG TEXTS

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next page

A B S T R A C T

The title of this thesis is "The ambiguous nature of freedom in the Luhya ritual ceremony song texts". It has an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, an appendix containing the song texts in their original Luhya dialects and in free English translation and a glossary. The analysis given is based on collected and documented song texts taped during fieldwork research conducted between August and October 1984 among the Bukusu, Maragoli, Idakho and Isukha communities in Western Province.

It is stated in the introduction that the analysis aims at showing how the Luhya ritual ceremony song texts freely comment upon subjects in an ambiguous and contradictory manner. To demonstrate this further, the analysis in the first chapter illustrates how the Luhya display a range of different moods during the circumcision and marriage ritual ceremonies.

Further evidence is adduced from the song texts in chapters two and three to reveal how these ambiguities and contradictions are also manifested. In the second chapter the analysis shows how the song texts operate in an indecorum manner by concentrating on undermining the social order. Chapter three is essentially an illustration of how the song texts, against all expectations, also seek to affirm the social order by criticising those who break society's conventional moral laws.

Besides, it is argued in the fourth chapter that freedom of expression in Luhya ritual ceremony song texts is not complete freedom. It is restricted in terms of time and space, as well as through indirection and humour. In the final analysis, therefore, the discussion concludes that real meaning in song texts lies not in the freedom to express issues but in the ambiguities and contradictions.