THE GENRES OF ACOLI ORAL LITERATURE
VOLUME ONE, ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

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The Thesis gets out to study three main genres of Acoli Oral Literature, namely: folk narrative, the short fixed forms (proverbs, proverbial sayings, similes and riddles) and the sung form. The study focuses on the literary forms and value of the genres rather than on their sociological value which has been emphasised where the oral traditions and literatures of the African peoples have been collected and studied by sociologists and anthropologists. Typical examples of these studies include those of Jan Vasina, the Herskovits and Evans-Pritchard. There are many others who have done similar work though varying degrees of literariness and such work includes that of Ruth Finnegan, and Arewa and Dundes, just to mention a few.

While there is no pretence here that the Thesis deals with all aspects of literary features and linguistic forms of Acoli Oral literature, it should be pointed out that in
a Thesis such as this one, only certain aspects can be dealt with and even then not exhaustively.

Attempts have been made to identify the literary features and linguistic forms in each of the genres dealt with. The core of the study consists of Chapters 3, 4 and 5. In Chapter Three, a structural study of selected samples of the folk narratives has been aimed at. In Chapter Four, the short fixed forms have been evaluated from the study of their forms, poetic features such as imagery, metaphor, alliteration and rhyme. Only proverbs and riddles were subjected to this examination. In Chapter Five, the songs were analysed in detail to find out whether they have any literary features to recommend them as works of art which would point to their literary and aesthetic value. Chapter One sets out to give the background to the research and study, to comment on the methodology employed and to sketch the scope and limits of the Thesis. Chapter Two, which provides the background context for the study,
deals with the Acoli of Uganda and in this is included their history, language, religious ceremonies and their general day-to-day life as indicated in their oral literature.

In the final analysis, the research and study establishes the oral performances as works of art which have aesthetic value and are acceptable as literature, hence the use of the term Oral Literature.