Ezekiel Alembi

The Construction of the *Abanyole* Perceptions on Death Through Oral Funeral Poetry
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Cover picture: Road from Eluanda to *Ekwanda*. (Photo by Lauri Harvilaiti).
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my late parents: Papa Musa Alembi
Otwelo and Mama Selifa Moche Alembi

and

to my late brothers and sisters:
Otwelo, Nabutsili, Ongachi, Ayuma and George.
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PROLOGUE

I was introduced to the Folklore Department of Helsinki University through the Nordic Institute of Folklore (NIF) publications in which I read and appreciated the work of scholars like Anna-Leena Siikala. I longed to meet and interact with the scholars and, if possible, study under them. In 1997, I attended the Folklore Fellows Summer School in Lammi. I saw this as an opportunity for me to enquire on whether I could be registered as a Dr. Phil. student in the Department of Folklore. At the end of the school, I approached Siikala and mentioned to her that I was keen to pursue doctoral studies at Helsinki University. My academic journey in folklore studies had begun.

Prior to joining Helsinki University, I had studied and worked in the Literature Department at Kenyatta University in Nairobi. My master’s thesis was on children’s poetry and I had done research on different topics in oral literature. I had not, however, studied folklore as a subject. I saw the Helsinki opportunity as a chance to study folklore as a discipline while at the same time utilizing my previous knowledge in oral literature.

A study of this magnitude is not possible without a lot of people making sacrifices. It is difficult to express full appreciation of the sacrifices these people have made and their support during my fieldwork and in the writing of this dissertation.

My supervisor, Lauri Harvilahdi, deserves distinguished mention and gratitude for his guidance, encouragement, patience and criticism of this work from its inception. This has greatly contributed to the improvement of the quality of the dissertation.

Special word of gratitude goes to Meleckidzedeck Khayesi, Regina Bendix, Eric Aseka and Bo Nilsson for offering good suggestions on the drafts of the dissertation. This led to substantial corrections of the work. Raimo Harjula and Kaija Heikkinen (inspectors of the dissertation), thanks for reading and giving critical comments to the manuscript. If, finally, we have in here a focused study, you have greatly contributed to it.

My appreciation goes to Leila Virtanen for her support. I valued your effort at copying and sending useful literature from Helsinki. Dennis Tedlock, Roger Abrahams, Greg Urban and
Regina Bendix, thanks for the books. A word of thanks is also due to the staff of Helsinki University Library, Kenyatta University main Library and Kenyatta University Literature Department Resource Centre. You were so supportive! Thanks.

Studying without a scholarship can be a difficult undertaking. I therefore acknowledge with gratitude the financial support I received from Dilys James and my wife, Patricia Alembi. For my travel and stay in Finland between July and October 2002, I received funding from the project: **Ethnopoetics, Processes of Textualization and Cultural Dynamics** headed by Lauri Harvilahti.

I convey my sincere gratitude to the Faculty of Arts of Helsinki University for giving me an opportunity to register and study for a doctorad degree in folkloristics. Sincere gratitude, too, to Kenyatta University for giving me permission twice – in 1998 and 2002 – to travel to Finland to meet and work with my thesis supervisor. Special thanks to three officers at Kenyatta University: George Eshiwani (Vice-Chancellor), Jude Ongon’ga (Deputy Vice Chancellor in charge of Academic Affairs) and Martin Etyang (Registrar in charge of Administration). I greatly appreciated your support.

Very sincere gratitude to Jane Khayesi, Sarah Wambia, Lorna Gathage, Pamela Anyange, Mary Njiru and Reba Shavisa for typing the first drafts of the dissertation. Many thanks to Pirjo Rautiainen for typing the last version. Many thanks too to Mitja Harvilahrti for preparing all the pictures used in this book.

To the many people in *Bunyore* that I held discussions with concerning my research topic, I say: *hembwo! Khandi hembwo muno!* This study would not have been possible without you.

To all the people who gave me permission to use their pictures and those of their dead relatives in this study, *hembwo. Omwami abe nenywe mwesi!*

Ezekiel Alembi
August, 2002
Figure 1.1: Location of Kenya in Africa.
PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a reawakening interest in African folklore. A quantity of literature has appeared revisiting and exploring the nature of folklore as expressed verbally and speculating about its role in the future. Therefore, I have undertaken the present study in an attempt to offer an insight into the role of the enduring African oral traditions and artistic forms by focusing on the construction of the Abanyole perceptions on death through oral funeral poetry. The Abanyole are one of the ethnic groups of the Luhya people who occupy present day Western Province of Kenya. The language spoken by the Abanyole is called Olunyole. I have shown the position of Emuhaya and Luanda divisions in Vihiga District in Fig. 1.2 below. In Fig. 1.3, I show the study area (Luanda and Emuhaya Divisions).

Figure: 1.2. Vihiga district administrative boundaries (inset: location of vihiga district in Kenya). (Cartographic work done by Belta Makato).
In this part of the dissertation, I provide details on the background to the study by outlining the research theme, significance of the study and theoretical orientation (Chapter 1) and review of literature (Chapter 2).
1.1 Theme and Significance of the Study

1.1.1 Focus and Scope

I shall deliberate on the following question: What is my central concern in this thesis? This question is intended not just to spell out the specifics of the research problem but to show the weaving thread in the entire study. My primary aim is to filter and scan death through the lenses of poetry. In other words, I am elucidating a basic conceptual and empirical question: What does poetry tell us about what the Abanyole think and understand about death? I am bounding, mapping out and structuring death as presented through traditional oral funeral poetry. This is the poetry I have referred to as oral funeral poetry in the entire study. Essentially, I am looking at an understanding of the expressions and proclamations of oral funeral poetry on death. That is why I am defining my fundamental task in this thesis to be the construction of the Abanyole perceptions on death through oral funeral poetry. This is the traditional poetry of the Abanyole performed on the event of death. In this poetry, there are three genres namely: laments (performed by women and girls), chants (by men) and lyrics (some performed by men and boys, some by men and women while some performed by women and girls). Details of the modes of performance of the different genres are presented in Chapter 7.

The analysis is predicated on the premise that oral funeral poetry provides a sieve for some understanding of mythology and issues surrounding death, especially society’s experiential understanding of its causes and effects. My overall purpose in the analysis is to contribute towards the interpretation of death through oral funeral poetry among the Abanyole.
I have covered four main issues in this study. The first is an analysis of expressions and statements in the poems that reveal the socio-cultural causes of death. The second is a description of the effects of death on individuals and the community. The third is a description of the performance and interpretation of the poems. The fourth is an analysis of the poetic features of oral funeral poetry.

This research is limited to the study of traditional oral funeral poems among the Abanyole. The circumstances surrounding funerals and mourning as well as burial rites were carefully studied to give the context to the meaning of death in this community. I have utilized ethnopoetics as the guiding analytical framework and have employed an interactive methodology, which has enabled me to interrogate members of this community on issues related to death as presented through oral funeral poetry.

1.1.2 Research Questions

The following are the research questions that I have addressed in this study:

(a) What socio-cultural causes and effects of death are expressed through oral funeral poetry?
(b) How does the performance of oral funeral poetry contribute to the understanding and interpretation of the meaning, causes and effects of death?
(c) How does the style enhance the interpretation of oral funeral poetry as a commentary on death?

1.1.3 Motivation for Studying Oral Funeral Poetry

There is a growing body of knowledge on African oral literature. A number of pioneer studies on this theme however tended to cover many communities and groups in one study. Among the pioneer scholars are Finnegan (1970), Nandwa (1976) (one of the pioneering Kenyan female folklorists), Mutswairo (1978) and Okpewho (1979, 1984, 1994). Due to large spatial units, social groups and area coverage, there are disturbing generalizations made by these scholars on the oral poetry of a number of African communities. While the
contribution of the pioneer scholars in showing the place of African folklore in human knowledge cannot be denied, their generalizations and distortions cannot be allowed to escape a severe judgement by the critical analyst. Hence the need to redress this problem by undertaking insider-informed micro level studies.

The generalizations, distortions and simplistic interpretations of African reality were also promulgated by the colonial sponsored and systematically, ideologically and politically tutored elitist Africanists. These scholars were part and parcel of the imperialist expansionism that sought to conquer and dominate the so-called primitive peoples of the world (p’Bitek 1971:4-5). The Africanists had to provide the rational justification for colonial domination. They had also to provide information to help the colonial office in deciding how best to govern the “primitives.” These practical roles of the Africanists gave rise to the science of anthropology whose main concern then was to study the life of the primitives and thus build a useful database for the colonial venture.

In their zeal to satisfy the appetites of their masters, the Africanists and some early anthropologists overdid their assignment by providing outsider western theories on African and other “primitives” of the world. These people also played a critical role in the training of the first generation of African scholars, many of whom trained at their feet in European Centres of learning, notably the school of Oriental and African studies at the University of London and the Anthropology Department of Oxford University where one of the most influential African scholars, p’Bitek, trained under the tutorlege of Evans-Pritchard and Godffrey Lienhardt (see p’Bitek 1986:6-7).

The trainees, on returning home, took up the challenge of writing and interpreting the reality of African and other “primitives.” Some of them made a genuine effort to correct the generalizations and distortions made by earlier scholars. However, a good number were faithful to their mentors by providing uncritical and superficial assessment of the African situation. This partly explains the shortfalls that have already been mentioned in the works of pioneer African scholars. It is therefore not unusual to read and hear such generalizations in groundbreaking works like African Religions and Philosophy (Mbiti 1969) and Facing Mount Kenya (Kenyatta 1938) - Kenyatta was founding president of Kenya. These works have been heavily criticized by Mwanzi (1972).
There is a need at the moment for scholars of African folklore to extend their research beyond that of pioneers of African studies. This can be done, for example by studying the oral literature of specific communities as argued by Finnegan (1970:82). An even greater necessity is the need to study this literature at a micro-level as well as on specific genres. Even within such a specific category as folk poetry, there is a need to investigate poems pertaining to specific events like birth, marriage and death for the purpose of gaining a deeper insight into the system of genres, as well as the phenomena to which they are applied.

It is within the above context that I have formulated this study to gain a deeper understanding of the Abanyole perceptons on death as presented through African oral poetry. I am therefore extending the frontiers of investigation by focusing on the Abanyole oral funeral poetry. I am using this study to fulfill the need for a micro-level analysis that is specific to a selected genre (funeral poems) and an experienced phenomenon in the community (death). This way, I hope to be able to come up with a study that will form a broad body of knowledge that can be used as a basis for generalization.

I have chosen the methodology used in this study appropriately in view of the research questions and the guiding theoretical orientation. Rather than remain at the level of a distant and detached observer, I have employed an interactive and dialogical methodology to unravel the Abanyole perceptions on death. This methodology has enabled me to avoid the impositions of the armchair critic and scholar on a rich social phenomenon thus keeping a priori pre-judgements to the lowest minimum. Hence the use of in-depth interviews, observation and tape-recording. In addition, I discussed the research report with the respondents to enhance the interpretation of the information collected.

The methodology utilized in this study has therefore contributed towards advancing the case for interaction between the researcher and the community as well as the phenomenon (see in detail Chapter 4). A major weakness in a number of graduate, post-graduate and post-doctoral studies in African oral literature is the superficial approach in which researchers have been known to rush to the field with nothing but questionnaires for short periods of time in the hope of collecting data on a phenomenon that requires long periods of interaction and observation. There has also been a tendency for research reports to be written and submitted for examination without the benefit of appraisal from the respondents of the
community concerned. Whereas one appreciates that the supervisors and members of the
defence committees shed useful light on the research, one cannot help feeling that a richer
discourse may be produced if the respondents are given a chance to read and comment on
the draft before submission. This in effect extends the ownership and stake holding in the
research report. Unfortunately, this has not been the case in the past and this is why I
decided to present a draft of the research report to a group of respondents to validate its
content. Also, on December 18, 2001 I organized a forum in which the findings of the draft
of my thesis were read to 120 members of the Abanyole community. The purpose of this
forum was to allow the Abanyole an opportunity to validate this draft before I submitted it to
the Faculty of Arts of Helsinki University. Details of what happened on this day are found in
Appendix 5.

1.2 Conceptual Model

1.2.1 Choosing from the Contested Theoretical Terrain

A challenge that faces doctoral candidates is to select an appropriate theory or set of theories
from the various perspectives contending on the theoretical terrain. I have not been an
exception to this challenge. A study of folk poetry, as in my case, lends itself to a number of
theoretical possibilities and this can present a quandary for the doctoral candidate who is
still grappling with the theoretical landscape.

An important yardstick that has guided me in the selection of a theoretical orientation has
been the need to derive concepts and ideas that link the research to literature and the
gathering of empirical evidence. In brief, I have been guided by the need to maintain a close
problem-theory-method linkage in selecting the framework for the present study.

In order to establish a suitable one, I have undergone the demanding and time-consuming
process of sifting through a wide spectrum of theoretical territories. For example, I have
thoroughly studied structuralism to performance studies. These theories looked relevant to
my research. On examining each of these theories in the context of the problem-theory-
method linkage, however, I realized that none of them could be considered as grounded
enough to provide a comprehensive framework within which to probe the meaning, causes and effects of death, as constructed by the Abanyole through oral funeral poetry.

Faced with such a challenge, a common solution resorted to by a number of researchers, including graduate and postgraduate candidates, is to go eclectic. While I am aware that eclecticism has its strengths, I wish to point out that it can easily end up leading a study in different directions, and may fail to get to the core of the research problem. At first I fell into this easy option of adopting an eclectic conceptual model but realized that the various components of my study were not coming together. I consequently undertook further exploration of the theoretical terrain by additional reading and consultation with the thesis supervisors. As I saw the need to maintain the problem-theory-method linkage, I began to narrow down to specific theoretical traditions based on hermeneutics and phenomenology. However, I was still conscious of the lack of a binding theoretical thread to enable me to link these traditions to my research focus when constructing the Abanyole perceptions on death through oral funeral poetry.

As I continued with the search, consultation and reflection towards identifying of a suitable theory, I got interested in a conceptual model known as ethnopoetics and plunged into extensive reading and discussion on this. I soon realized that it had a number of elements relevant to my research theme, particularly analysis of infracultural elements of performance and spoken word in oral funeral poetry as a way to unravel the meaning of death. I describe this theoretical tradition in the paragraphs that follow and then derive a conceptual model that guides the analysis in this study. The description is based on Anttonen (1994: 113-115).

1.2.2 Ethnopoetics

Ethnopoetics focuses on the aesthetic and poetic structuring of oral art. “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” (Anttonen 1994:113).

One branch of this approach developed by Dell Hymes is based on the idea that works of verbal art are subtle organizations of lines and verses (Hymes 1982). Therefore, “these expressions are founded upon a socially constituted poetic structure that is presented both in the organization of experience as well as in the organization of reports on that experience”
(Anttonen 1994:113). According to Hymes (1982), the lines and verses are “organized 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 organization of experience.”

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) 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, grouping” (Tolken and Scott 1981:65). The approach stresses that aural qualities in performance are central to the organization 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.”

1.2.2.1 Strands of Ethnopoetics

In the United States where it originated, this approach is advanced along two lines of perception or orientation by two prolific researchers of texts collected from American Indians. Below are the features of the two approaches beginning with the one by Dennis Tedlock.

a) Emphasis is placed on the oral nature of texts and the dependence of the organization of the texts upon lines.

b) Transcription of texts is based on two factors:

i. “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”(Anttonen 1994:114).

ii. “The transcription shows the variation in pitch, volume, vowel length and presents the text as it was heard in performance” (Anttonen 1994:114).

c) Emphasis is on fieldwork, i.e all the material studied must have been collected and transcribed by the researcher studying it.

Dell Hymes’ strand of ethnopoetics on the other hand has the following features:
a) “Emphasis is on the notion that many things in narratives revolve around a pattern number or a sacred number or some multiple of it” (Anttonen 1994:114). Hymes observes that the form, “which is based on a culture-specific pattern number, brings rhythm to a story” (Anttonen 1994:114). According to Anttonen (1994:114), “the evaluation of the completeness of a narrative is based on the successful elaboration of this patterning.”

b) “Focuses on the stylistic and grammatical features in order to find the formal poetic structure of a text, the underlying rhetorical form in the texture” (Anttonen 1994:115).

c) “Employs a structural method and is an application of the elementary principle of structural linguistics. It is based on the pragmatic study of language, in which signs and texts are studied in terms of their use in communication. Semiotically speaking, meaning is studied in terms of the relationship between a sign and its user, and it is this approach that distinguishes ethnopoetics from formalism and structuralism” (Anttonen 1994:116).

d) Texts analysed are available only as written documents. This means that Dell Hymes and his followers do not lay emphasis on observing and recording of live performances, as is the case with Tedlock and his followers.

Contributing to the ethnopoetics perspective in Finland are scholars such as Anttonen and Harvilahti. Harvilahti lays emphasis on ethnopoetic substrates, culture-specific meanings contained in oral texts. These substrates serve as culture-specific mental models representing a network of specific multilevel ethnocultural characteristics of each particular tradition (Harvilahti 2001:67-68, 74).

After presenting the main strands of ethnopoetics, I am faced with a crucial question to clarify: Do these seemingly different strands present a collision of concepts and irreconcilable contest on the theoretical terrain? A critical reflection on this question has led me to look at the different strands not so much as diametrically opposed to each other but rather as representing a progressive point of departure. What I mean by this is that these strands provide a convergence-divergence interface to interrogate the message embodied in folklore, which in the case of my study is the construction of death through oral funeral poetry. In other words, the strength I see in these strands is that they emphasize interrelated dimensions of ethnopoetics, which cumulatively provide a richer analytical framework. While Hymes emphasizes 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. Even Harvilahti’s emphasis on culture-specific interpretation of texts still points to the need to look for meaning within the perceptions of the study community.

In summary, going back to the question raised above, I am of the opinion that the seemingly different strands of ethnopoetics have a synergy, which can be tapped to investigate interrelated layers in a research theme. I now move on to derive the conceptual model of this study based on ideas from Tedlock, Hymes and Harvilahti.

1.2.3 Infracultural Model in Folklore Analysis

I have put my ideas for a conceptual-analytical framework under the name infracultural model (I got this term through a disussion with Harvilahti in Nairobi in December 2001). The term is used in this dissertation to mean interpretation of words and actions within specific cultural contexts. This in essence means that the meanings of the words and actions can only be located within the perceptions of the study community. The phenomenon I am analysing is death. The infracultural dialogue I am employing seeks to bring together researchers and the study communities in a reflective process to gather information on a phenomenon and interpret it together as partners.

I strongly advocate entry by researchers into the rhythm of life of communities as a good basis to learn and experience their beliefs, expectations, fears and perceptions. I am of the opinion that there is need to transform researchers from the prevailing status of “teachers” of society (self-appointed, highly qualified experts with answers to almost every question presented) to empathetic students of communities. In this way, I see a greater opportunity for researcher-students to gain a deeper understanding of the ways and values of the communities they are studying. They will thus have a sound base on which to claim authority of knowledge about the communities and phenomenon they present as their areas of specialization. In essence, I am calling for infracultural interaction and dialogue as a key to unlocking the meanings wrapped up in folklore. I also stress that researcher-students should undertake meticulous description of folkloristic translations accompanying the performance events and arena. This then explains my deep concern that students and
supervisors should move away from the tendency of being ivory tower and armchair critics to active participants, to the extent of entering the dedicated arena of the communities and phenomena under study. Such an entry will give credence to assessment of dissertations and questions asked at defence meetings and related fora.

In summary, the conceptual-analytical framework I have used in this study has the following key features:

a) The need for insider analysis and interpretation of works of art and a given reality of a community. The word insider is used broadly to include persons who care enough and are committed to getting into the inside of a community or phenomenon. They need not necessarily be members of the community in question but this definition excludes armchair scholars, newspaper-oriented and rumour-based scholars (Murunga 2001).

b) Interpretation of oral texts within their cultural contexts: there is recognition in ethnopoetics that oral texts are deeply rooted in the culture and tradition of the performer. Thus, the linguistic items used by the performer are normally tied to their contexts. This requires that the performer and the audience must share the same code. Interpreting words outside of this code can easily lead to serious misunderstanding of the message. Richard Bauman (1975:292) has brought out this point by emphasizing: “Performance represents a transformation of the basic referential uses of language. In other words, in artistic performance of this kind, there is something going on in the communicative inter-change which says to the auditor, ‘interpret what I say in some special sense; do not take it to mean what the words alone, taken literally, would convey.’” This may lead to the further suggestion that performance sets up, or represents, an interpretive frame within which the messages being communicated are to be understood, and this frame contrasts with at least one other frame, the literal one.”

c) Examining narrative patterns beyond mere concern with stylistic features and other formal elements of the surface structure to using these features to elucidate the theme of study (Harvilahiti 1998:194).

d) Deep involvement in dialogue and interaction to understand the structural and underlying issues surrounding a phenomenon and a community (Melhuus 1995:97).
e) Significance of the performed and given meaning. The assigning of meaning to oral
texts is defined by the culture and traditions of the performer and audience. Foley
(1995:9) observes: “Transferring to the performance arena of traditional oral and
oral-derived poetry, we could observe that the interaction of item and context mutes
the denotative force of traditional units of utterance and foregrounds the special
metonymic, performance based meaning selected by the situated word.” The arena
thus provides a setting in which a variety of techniques are meaningfully and
purposely employed to communicate the message. Foley underscores the importance
of the arena when he observes: “Outside this forum for exchange, the signals will
lack their implied content, and will necessarily ‘read’ according to a code other than
that employed by the performer in generating them” (Foley 1995:49).

f) Co-operative entry into the performance arena by the performer, audience and
folklorist for the focused way of speaking to become a focused way of meaning. It is
through the equal and cooperative entry into the arena that the text or performance
becomes a fully experienced event. Thus, admission into the performance arena
provides a unique experience for transmitting the meaning. Towards this end, Foley
(1995: 48-49) posits: “to appreciate the work on its own terms, one must attend the
event in the proper arena, the same place (with the same limits) in which it has
always been performed and received; in other words, one must engage the work of
verbal art in the context in which both tradition and the individuals involved have
located it. Only then can metonym modulate into meaning, only then will the
empowering cognitive categories come to play.” This explains why I attended
funerals with the Abanyole, held discussions with them and even took the
dissertation draft back to them to validate its content (see Appendix 5 for details).
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present a review of literature. This review indicates trends and issues in African oral literature in general and funeral poetry in particular. The review is based on critical examination of books, monographs, dissertations and articles published in English.

2.2 Trends and Issues in African Oral Literature

2.2.1 Conceptualization

The definition of the term oral literature has raised a lot of controversy as shown by Finnegan (1970:15-17). However, most scholars have agreed on the creativity in the unwritten genres. As Finnegan (1970:16) observes, there is no clear-cut demarcation between written and unwritten literature. Literature cannot only refer to the written material. The view that literature refers only to the written material was emphasized by Western scholars who viewed their literature as superior to that of other people. Okot p’Bitek cited in Bukenya and Nandwa, 1983:1\(^1\) defines oral literature generally as “All works of man expressed in language.” Bukenya and Nandwa (1983:1-2) define oral literature as “all utterances whether sung, recited or performed and which use to an appreciable degree the spoken word.” All definitions of oral literature stress on creativity in the use of language.

\(^1\) The Late Jane Nandwa is one of the first female folklorists in Kenya. She made a big contribution to the study and teaching of oral literature in Kenyan schools and universities. Some of her publications appear in the references at the end of this dissertation.
2.2.2 The Pioneer Phase

The study of oral literature in Africa can be divided into three phases. The first phase, which began in the mid 19th century, can be called the Missionary Era. This phase saw the collection of African materials for preservation. Until the mid 19th century there was no available evidence to refute the popular European image of Africa as totally without literary pretensions (Finnegan 1970:27). European study of oral literature in Africa by this time was characterized by prejudice, ignorance and the various theories that saw Africans as still in the early stages of evolution. The material collected by the missionaries was meant to help in their evangelization mission (Finnegan 1970:28).

By the mid 1850s, African linguistic studies were emerging as a specialist and scholarly field and this in turn led to a fuller appreciation of the interest and subtleties of African languages. Finnegan (1970:28) observes that the main motive of many of these linguistic studies was to aid the evangelization of Africa, as grammars, vocabularies, dictionaries and collections of texts were produced by the missionaries. The result of these various influences was the publication of lengthy collections of African texts and translations in the second half of the 19th century. For example, Bleek 1864 (Hottentot), Gallaway 1868 (Zulu), Steere 1870 (Swahili), Christaller 1879 (Twi), Schon 1885 (Hausa), Theal 1889 (Xhosa), Jacottet 1895, 1905 (Sotho), Taylor 1891 (Swahili), Chatelain 1894 (Kimbundu), Junod 1897 (Ronga), Velten 1907 (Swahili), Casalis 1841 (Sotho), Koelle 1854 (Kanuri), Schlenker 1861 (Temne), Burton 1865 (a re-publication of the collections of others). There was little attempt to relate the texts to their social context, elucidate their literary significance, or describe the circumstances of their performance.

During much of the first half of the 20th century, it was the anthropologists who monopolized the professional study of African institutions and culture. These anthropologists included:

a) E. Durkheim (1915): The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life
b) P. Radin (1938): Primitive Religion
c) R. Allier (1929): The Mind of the Savage
d) E.G. Parrinder (1954): African Traditional Religion
The aim of all these anthropologists was to civilize, educate and raise the savage African. Other anthropologists included: Gunter Wagner who wrote a lot on different aspects of African anthropology. Among his numerous publications is the article *The Abaluhya of Kavirondo*, published in 1954 in *African Worlds. Studies in the Cosmological Ideas and Social Values of African Peoples*. This is a general study that seeks to interpret the dominant beliefs and attitudes of the *Abaluhya*, a Bantu group occupying present day Western Province of Kenya. The group, however, is so diverse that to write about it as Wagner does is quite misleading. The *Abaluhya* consist of the *Bukusu, Tachoni, Khayo, Marachi, Banyala (in Busia), Banyala (in Kakamega), Wanga, Marama, Kisa, Isukha, Idakho, Marachi, Maragoli, Tiriki, Banyore, Kabras, Batsotso* etc. There are many differences between these people that the blanket term *Luhya* used for all of them is actually irrelevant. In any case, the term *Luhya* is a creation of the colonialist to refer generally to the people who occupied what the colonialist referred to as North Kavirondo (Wagner 1954:27).

Other anthropologists who contributed to this volume include: Mary Douglas who wrote about *The Lele of Kasai*, and Kenneth Little who wrote about the *Mende* in Sierra Leone. Evans-Pritchard did field work among the Nilotic and other peoples in the Sudan and East Africa. Godfrey Lienhardt studied and wrote on the *Dinka*. John Beattie wrote on the *Nyoro* of Uganda. The last three anthropologists later taught p’Bitek, one of the pioneer anthropologists in East Africa, at the University of Oxford between 1960-63 (p’Bitek 1986:6-7). These scholars’ world was divided into two: civilized West and the rest. According to these scholars, those from the rest of the world were savages, primitive, uncivilized, crude, rude, unprogressive etc. (p’Bitek 1986:7).

These scholars, and the others in the departments and institutes of anthropology had to see the rest of the world in this light because they had a clear agenda. This has been clearly articulated in the biographical sketch of p’Bitek (1986:7): “Of course, it had not occurred to Okot that the institutes at Oxford and Cambridge and departments of Social Anthropology in other Universities in Britain and also in other colonialist countries including the U.S.A. were training grounds for future administrators in the colonies. They had to be convinced of the superiority of the metropolitan culture and the inferiority of the colonial.”

A number of theories that held sway at this time were almost fatal to the serious study of African Oral literature. That is why I have pointed out earlier that these scholars were part
and parcel of the imperialist expansionist enterprise that sought to conquer and dominate the so-called “primitive” people of the world.

The rise of the evolutionist and diffusionist schools attempted to deny creativity in the African peoples. Speculative pseudo-history and totally unverified assumptions were asserted as proven fact (Finnegan 1970:35). These were hinderances to the study of African culture. As Okpewho (1983) observes, most of these theories ignored the creative imagination of the Africans.

2.2.3 The Era of African Elaboration and Formulation

However, from the 1960s to the 1980’s, there dawned what we can call the second era in the study of African oral literature. This was the phase of nationalism in Africa. Africans began taking an interest in their own folklore. Scholars like Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Taban lo Liyong, Okot p’Bitek among others championed this enlightenment in Kenya.

In 1969, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, Owuor Anyumba and Taban lo Liyong, strongly argued for the introduction of African literature and languages in the teaching programme at the university and schools in Kenya. It must be noted that prior to this, teaching of African literature was prohibited at the university. The ideas of these scholars are contained in a paper authored by them entitled, On the Abolition of the English Department (1969). In the English Department, only English language and literature were taught. The trio argued that English Department be abolished. In its place, they proposed a more broad based Department called African Literature and Languages. In the paper, they argue:

“The aim, in short, should be to orientate us towards placing Kenya, East Africa, and then Africa in the centre. All other things are to be considered in their relevance to our situation, and their contribution towards understanding ourselves” (Quoted in Wa-Thiong’o 1972:146).

The scholars point out clearly what the duty of any Literature Department is. They posit: “The primary duty of any literature department is to illuminate the spirit animating a people,
to show how it meets new challenges, and to investigate possible areas of development and involvement” (Quoted in Wa Thiong’o 1972:146).

In the words of Ngugi Wa-Thiong’o, Owuor Anyumba and Taban lo Liyong: “This debate resulted in the establishment of two departments: Languages and Literature. In both, African languages and literature were to form the core. In the case of the Literature Department, Caribbean and Black American literature were to be emphasized. It thus represents a radical departure in the teaching of literature in Africa” (Quoted in Wa-Thiong’o1972:150).

Underlying the struggle to dismantle the English Department at the University was the knowledge that the Department was still propagating the culture of the British. The understanding here is that language and literature carry the values of a people. Accepting a Department of English meant also accepting the values that were propagated in the English language and literature that were taught in the Department. This was a form of colonialism.

The language question in African literature, theatre etc. has continued to attract African scholars (see Ngugi wa Thiong’o: Home Coming (1972), Writers in Politics (1981), Decolonising the Mind (1986), Okot p’Bitek: Africa’s Cultural Revolution (1973), African Religion in Western Scholarship (1971), Artist the Ruler (1986). These scholars see language as an important tool in determining how people think, relate and do things. Controlling the language the people use therefore means controlling the life of the people.

These scholars championed the introduction of literature into the African universities and schools. This was conceived of as a fitting response to the need for an African literature syllabus which would serve to orient the students towards a heritage that had been affected under colonialism. Taban Lo Liyong, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o and Owuor Anyumba, for example introduced the study of African literature in the University of Nairobi curriculum in 1969. According to Lo Liyong cited in Okombo and Nandwa (1992:6), the reasons for this introduction were: “We decided that African Oral Literature must form the core of a Literature Department in an East African University for the primary duty of any Literature Department is to illuminate the spirit animating a people, to show how it meets new challenges and to investigate possible areas of development and involvement.”
Thus, these scholars saw the new literature syllabus as entailing a cultural renaissance. According to p'Bitek in Okombo and Masinjila (1983:126), “The aim of the African-oriented literature syllabus is to introduce the student to his African consciousness and cultural heritage, and to equip him with the linguistic tool to express himself creatively and meaningfully to his East African social group.”

Other scholars have contributed to the development of African folklore. These are: Nkетia who in 1955 published *Funeral Dirges of the Akan People* and E.B. Idowu who published *Olodumere: God in Yoruba Belief* in 1962. Idowu’s and Nketia’s works were, however, less known until the publication of Mbiti’s *African Religions and Philosophy* in 1969 and Ruth Finnegan’s *Oral Literature in Africa* in 1970.

The 1960s and 1980s enlightenment saw the collection of materials in indigenous languages for preservation. As Finnegan (1970:43) observes, some of the original work on African oral literature has come from Africans. These writers have drawn attention to many aspects, which earlier scholars tended to ignore or overlook either because of their theoretical misconceptions or because they were strangers to the cultures they studied.

The second era of the study of African oral literature being characterized by nationalism, had also its shortcomings. First, the scholars inherited some of the misconceptions held by the functionalists and most of them did not go beyond recording for preservation. Most of their works were characterized by bare recordings and translations. They did little to study or formulate a theory in which African oral material could be studied. Nevertheless, their contribution lay in their recognition of African oral literature as a field worthy of study, as a subject in its own right.

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2 Okoth Okombo and Masheti Masinjila are Kenyan academicians and researchers who have made significant contribution to the study of oral literature.
2.2.4 Consolidation and Charting the Future

The third phase in the study of African oral literature can be said to be the modern or recent one, perhaps beginning in the late 1980s. Recent trends are characterized by fieldwork in an effort to understand the oral material. Most scholars have stressed the need for research. However, the old tradition of putting emphasis on bare prose texts at the expense of poet/performer and the social and etymological backgrounds is still evident in some recent studies. In fact most of the researchers only record texts and then translate them. A book usually opens with an introduction, followed by a general discussion on the importance of the material collected with a stress on its function in the community of origin.

Most of the scholars have assumed that the texts found in the field are usually original and must be preserved. Naomi Kipury (1983) in her preface says that her book is an attempt to record and hence preserve the rich Maasai heritage before it is completely forgotten. She adds that the material is arranged according to functions. Indeed, most of the material of the late 1980s and even the most recent ones still harbor such sentiments as seen in those of late 1970s and early 1980s.

The stress on preservation ignores the dynamic nature of oral texts. Contrary to the assumptions of many writers, the likelihood of narratives having been handed down from generation to generation word for word is in practice very remote. One of the main characteristics of oral literature is its flexibility. An oral text changes with time, audience and performance. The flexibility of poetry and folktales to adapt to change accounts for their survival.

The study of African oral literature has lacked a definite theory and framework formulated by Africans themselves. Most of the African researchers have resorted to Western theories.

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4 There is little analysis in works such as: *The Oral Literature of the Maasai People* by Naomi Kipury (1983), *Oral Literature. A School Certificate Course* by Kichamu Akivaga and Asenath Bole Odaga (1982), *Oral Literature for Schools* by Jane Nandwa and Austin Bukenya (1983). (Except for Austin Bukenya who is a literary scholar and folklorist from Uganda, all the others are Kenyan literary scholars and folklorists).
and as Masinjila in Okombo and Nandwa (1992:9) says, while useful for comparative purposes, the going back to Western theories: “…has a limitation in the fact that most of them have their basis in fieldwork carried out among European communities, whose findings are subject to their understanding of oral literature.”

More research is therefore needed in the field of theory so that we can discard some of the chronic misconceptions that have continued to be perpetuated by African scholars themselves. But credit should also be given to the theories by Western scientists for opening up new inquiries in this field. Indeed, as Okpewho (1983) says, structuralism has provided by far the most challenging approach to understanding of the most fundamental issues in cultural scholarship.

After structuralism, researchers have used theoretical approaches such as stylistics approach (see Mwikali Kieti 1988, Ezekiel Alembi 1992). This is based on the ideas of Geoffrey Leech (1966) and Emmanuel Ngara (1982).

Many African scholars, however, have since argued for an interdisciplinary approach (see Okpewho 1983, Wa-Gachanja 1987, Kabaji 1992, Okhoba 1995, Wainaina 1998). Their basic argument is that a work of art has many facets to it and that no single approach can exhaustively bring out all these facets.

Whereas this may seem an easy way out, interdisciplinary approach has limitations. For example, the use of many approaches may pull the study in different directions. The researcher could mix ideas or get confused all together. I believe that the use of one approach, which is selected on the basis of its suitability in relation to the purpose and method of the study, is more ideal. This may have the advantage of leading to the production of a more focused study.

I would add that whatever approach one may pick on while studying African material, it must be one that will put into consideration the African psychology and aesthetics. I argue that theory should be grounded in a cultural specificity since both theory and criticism are material practices that are ideologically motivated and historically positioned.
2.3 Trends and Issues in African Oral Poetry

2.3.1 The Controversy on African Poetry: Does Africa have Poetry worth Studying?

According to Okpewho (1985:3), “European anthropologists who studied African societies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries held the view that there was nothing of true poetic merit in African oral literature. Poetry, those scholars argued, is a mark of an advanced culture or civilisation and the business of men of specialized skill and training who devote their time to observing and commenting on life with beauty and seriousness. Traditional African societies were, in their view, still groping in the dark with elementary problems of existence and had not yet attained the level of achievement whereby men could indulge in the pursuit of poetic excellence, besides, their languages were not yet sufficiently developed to cope with the complex techniques of poetic expression.”

Later scholars in the field of oral literature in Africa have challenged the above view. Studies by Finnegan (1970), p’Bitek (1974), Nandwa (1976), Mutswairo (1978) and Okpewho (1979, 1985, 1994), among others, have sought to demonstrate that Africa has a rich oral poetry tradition.

Finnegan (1970:81-110), in an elaborate work that covers all genres of oral literature in Africa, discusses the unique position of the poet in Africa. She describes the different types of poetry and demonstrates that the poems serve specific functions in the different communities that make up Africa. p’Bitek (1974:vii) in his study of the poetry of the Acoli people of northern Uganda notes: “Here is the poetry of the Acoli people: their lullabies and love songs, their satirical verses, their religious songs and chants, their war songs and funeral dirges. Going through them we may get a glimpse of what these people think and believe what life is all about, their moral values, their sense of humour, their fears and joys are presented in those songs.”

Without belabouring the issue, Finnegan (1970), Mutswairo (1978) and Okpewho (1979, 1985,1994) have marshalled evidence to counter the view of the pioneer Western anthropologists that no worthwhile poetry existed in Africa. Okpewho (1985:3-10) argues strongly that oral poetry exists in Africa and accuses the nineteenth and early twentieth century scholars of African culture of having little feeling for the languages and customs.
they met. Some of them did, of course, try to understand the basic grammatical systems of the languages and even learn some patterns of speech but their understanding of these languages could not be compared to that of the native speakers for whom the words have meanings and implications that go far beyond the ordinary patterns of words.

In the light of the foregoing discussion, it is evident that oral poetry exists in Africa. The nineteenth and early twentieth century anthropologists who studied African societies either did not take time to study and understand African oral poetry, or they approached the issue with a preconceived view that they were not poems, if they did not follow the pattern of Western poetry.

2.3.2 The Thrust and Dynamics of Research on African Oral Poetry

I started by collecting and reviewing a large number of documents on African Poetry. I critically examined the documents to identify those that were relevant to the research theme.

After reading through and analyzing the documents, it became apparent that the most appropriate way to review them was by covering themes, which I identified as follows:

- Nature of oral poetry
- The Epic in Africa
- Composition of oral poetry
- Performance in oral poetry
- Social significance of African Oral Poetry
- Function of oral poetry

Each of these is discussed below.
2.3.2.1 Nature of Oral Poetry

A synthesis of studies reveals a number of features on the basic nature of oral poetry. These features are summarized in Table 2.1 and are discussed below.

Table 2.1: Basic Features of Oral Poetry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEATURES</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal art: sung, chanted, declaimed</td>
<td>Babalola (1981: 3-16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fixed length of performance, varied contexts (birth, initiation,</td>
<td>Alembi (1992: 1-25 and 31-80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wedding, death)</td>
<td>Finnegan (1970: 81-110)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Okpewho (1985: 3-10)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miruka (1994: 89 and 108-112)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Olajubu (1981: 72-73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accompaniments: sticks, jingles, drums, horns, lyre, wooden gongs,</td>
<td>Miruka (1994: 89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rattles, hand – clapping</td>
<td>Olajubu (1981:72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Okpewho (1985:9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>words</td>
<td>Okpewho (1985:3-10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finnegan (1970:129-137)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miruka (1994:90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition and training of oral artists</td>
<td>Finnegan (1970: 2-12 and 81-110)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Babalola (1981: 3-16)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Olajubu (1981: 71-85)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miruka (1994: 91-95)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Okpewho (1985: 3-10)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(This table presents a summary of the basic features of oral poetry. These are drawn from studies by different researchers on African Oral Literature published in English).

Oral poetry is described as being a verbal art. The basic idea is that in its composition and performance, oral poetry is delivered by word of mouth. Nandwa and Bukenya (1983) argue that the audience responds to the oral performance.

Thus, the performance of oral poetry is an interactive enterprise where the poet performs before a participating audience. In a paper on composition of the Ijala among the Yoruba, Babalola (1981:7-11) suggests that oral poetry is a dynamic art form. By suggesting that oral poetry is a dynamic art form, Babalola may be referring to a number of meanings. Firstly, I have said above that it is produced in a dynamic context where the artist and the audience freely interact to produce an effective and lively performance. It is important to note that in Africa, this audience as Alembi (1993:4-5) notes may be physically present. For example an artist may perform to a group of young men and women or even a group of worshippers who are physically present in a religious worship. On the other hand, the audience may not be
physically present, but may exist only in the mind of the performer. In such cases, it may be one singing to an absent lover, a warrior preparing to go to war, or a worshipper addressing a deity. Whether physically present or present only in the mind of an artist, the audience serves an important role in oral poetry production. Without it, there would be no performance.

Alembi (1993: 2), Finnegan (1970:82-105), Okpewho (1985: 8), Olajubu (1981:72-73) and Miruka (1994:111) argue that there does not seem to be a passive audience in Africa. The audience and the artist interact to such a degree that in many performances, there is no clear dividing line between them.

This poetry can also be said to be dynamic because it has no fixed length of performance. The length of any verse is determined by a number of factors pertaining to the audience and the physical circumstances surrounding the performance. For example, if the audience is interested and eager to listen and dance to a particular song, the artist will prolong it by frequent repetition. Alembi (1995:95) notes that if the audience is bored and uninterested, the artist shortens a performance. Miruka (1994:90) and Okpewho (1985:9) explain that repetition in African verse is intended to serve useful purposes such as:

- Prolonging a performance
- Stressing on main points and pressing issues of the verse
- Adding rhythm to the performance
- Contributing to the structure of the poem

Accompaniments are an important feature of oral poetry in Africa. In African performance, accompaniments could take the form of sticks, jingles, harp, drums and flute. The combination of singing and instrumentation produces music that has a greater impact on both the artist and audience (Olajubu 1978:24-25, Okpewho 1985:9, Miruka 1994:8, Finnegan 1970:481-499).

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5 Okumba Miruka is a prolific Kenyan researcher in the field of oral literature.
With regard to poetic devices, African poetry contains features which make it easy and attractive to sing. These features are repetition, rhyme, alliteration and careful choice of words (Miruka 1994:90, Finnegan 1970:239, Okpewho 1985:9).

The training of poets is also done orally. This is true of all the categories of singers in Africa: court poets, free-lance professional poets, semi-professional and general poets. The training takes place when people are working, drinking, burying the dead, praying and entertaining members of the royal families. Africans sing, chant and declaim on these occasions, thereby providing an environment for informal learning through observation and doing (Finnegan 1970:1-25, 81-110; Babalola 1981:4-9, Okpewho 1985:6-7).

2.3.2.2 The Epic in Africa

An epic is almost always a very long composition. It comprises great deeds and acts, such as battles and long journeys involving heroes and large numbers of people, sometimes whole nations.

Finnegan (1970:108-109) appears to argue that there are no epics in Africa. She thus writes: “The term epic appears in the titles of several collections or discussions of African oral literature (perhaps partly because of the common expectation that it is likely to be a widespread art form). But almost all these works in fact turn out to be in prose, not verse- and often only brief prose tales at that. There is only a very few in verse form. Many of the lengthy praise poems, particularly those in South Africa, do contain some epic elements and provide the nearest common parallel to this form in Africa. Nevertheless, as will emerge in the following chapter, panegyric poetry concentrates far more in the laudatory and apostrophic side than in the narrative and cannot really qualify as ‘epic’ poetry in the normal sense of the word.”

Clearly, Finnegan is suffering from the problem of ethnocentrism (read Eurocentrism) and intellectual bigotry as she tries to conceptualize the African-epic in Western terms. The Eurocentric looking glass underlying her analytical framework comes out clearly when she states: “The variability typical of oral literary forms has tended to be overlooked by many writers. This is largely because of certain theoretical assumptions held in the past about
verbatim handing down of oral tradition supposedly typical of non-literate societies. The mode of written literature has been misleading in this context, with its concept of act transmission through manuscripts or printing press” (Finnegan 1970:9).

The views of Eurocentric scholars such as Finnegan have been countered by scholars such as Seydou who strongly argue that the epic exists in Africa. Seydou (1990:30) advances her discourse as follows: “For a long time, Europeans have ignored, if not denied, the existence of African epics. This misperception has now been corrected by the publication of a large number of African epic narratives, and for a number of reasons, I believe they can be an excellent base for better understanding of the meaning and function of this genre as a whole.”

As Seydou has correctly observed, the large number of studies that exist on this subject is proof that the epic exists in Africa. These studies include Boelaert (1949), Knappert (1990), Biebuyc (1969, 1978), Okpewho (1979), Seydou (1990).

Boelaert (1949, 1957 and 1958 quoted in Finnegan 1970) concentrated on collecting and documenting the Lianja epic in Zaire. The first such documentation appeared in 1948. Subsequent publications of the same epic in 1957 and 1958 are improvements on length and detail. Boelaert’s efforts lead me to conclude that in performance, an epic can be compressed or lengthened, depending on the prevailing circumstances. Knappert (1958) observes that each performance is a new creation propelled by prevailing circumstances during a performance such as the size and type of audience. This may explain why Boelaert collects different lengths, and I must add, versions, of the same epic. This is why, in my view, Knappert, in another paper on the epic in Africa, goes wrong when he observes that the performer makes mistakes during his presentation (Knappert 1990:388).

I disagree with Knappert’s views on epic performance because an African epic performer does not reproduce a text verbatim. Rather, he/she re-creates it to suit the audience and the circumstances surrounding the production. If a performer omits a line or adds a stanza, these are not mistakes. If anything, they represent innovations and creativity on the part of the artist in response to the circumstances of the presentation and the requirements of the audience.
Knappert’s suggestion that the “mistakes” can be corrected by going back to the original manuscript is not only misleading but also a futile undertaking. The recording of the manuscript was done under different circumstances (cf. the Kalevala by Elias Lönnrot). In any case, the recorded script may not be an honest version of the oral epic as it is infected with the collector’s influence. The input from the editor adds more bias to the manuscript. The collected and recorded version therefore belongs to its own time and circumstances and should not in any way be taken to be an authentic and pure form. It will therefore benefit scholars such as Knappert to heed the observation by Finnegan (1970:10) that each version of an oral text is authentic in its own right.

Knappert (1990: 389) doubts that there are epics in Africa. When commenting on Sunjata and the Mwindo epics, Knappert (1990:391) revisits Finnegan’s fears that a lot of the epics in Africa are in prose. On reading Knappert’s article, one is led to ask: “Are these songs or narratives?” On analyzing the prosodic features of Nyanga epics, Biebuyck (1969) wonders why the songs are printed as verse, while the body of the narrative is printed as prose. Innes (1974:17) is confronted with the same problem when analyzing the Sunjata Epic. He posits: “As will be seen, the texts are set out in short lines in the manner of verse, but there does not seem to be any regular metrical pattern; at least if there is, it has not been determined. In the song mode, the division into lines is easy. The tune gives a quite unmistakable guide to the lines. In the recitation mode, the division into lines is quite clear, though not as unambiguous as in the song mode. But in the speech mode it is sometimes difficult to decide where the end of a line should come, and the main criterion which has been used is the breath group. A line represents a breath group. The speed of utterance varies very considerably throughout all the performances.”

The conclusion emerging from the different views on the African epic is that this is a loaded art form with many performance modes. In summary, therefore, the African epic can be described as an art form that has poetic language, great length, narrative style, heroic content and multigenre qualities.
2.3.2.3 Composition and Performance

There is a group of scholars of African poetry who have in the past argued that there is no specific composer of oral poetry. These scholars insisted that oral poetry belongs to the whole community (Babalola 1966, Olajubu 1977:3). For example, Babalola (1966:46) posits: “No hunter can vividly claim the authority of an ijala piece, which he is the first to chant. The god Ogun is the source and author of all ijala chants; every ijala artist is merely Ogun’s mouthpiece.”

To say the least, such views are erroneous, misleading, and vague. A careful examination of various texts of African poetry and the circumstances of their performance compels a keen scholar to reject such views. In a paper on composition of ijala poetry among the Yoruba, Olajubu (1981:78) advances the position that although it may not be possible to identify the actual composer(s) of a piece of oral poetry, such pieces must have been composed by someone. There is of course uncertainty about the time of composition. Some questions that may be raised are: Is the poem composed at one point and performed at a different time? Is the composer also the performer? Alternatively, are they different artists?

Studies in oral poetry of the Zulu and Bantu tribes of central and southern Africa seem to provide some answers to these questions. In a study on the Zulu and Bantu of South Africa, Schapera (1965:4-5) reports that among the Tswana, individuals, including chiefs, compose special poems about themselves to mark special occasions of initiation, conquests and ascension to the throne. Praise poems are also composed about cattle and crops. Such poems are later recited by the composers themselves or by others at beer drinking parties or when working with their fellows and at wedding feasts. Schapera (1965:2-5) further notes that before the advent of Western culture in the area, the task of composing such poems was imposed upon all boys going through initiation rites. Each one of the boys was expected to compose an oration in praise of himself, and to be able to repeat it with sufficient fluency during the rites.

Sanders and Damane (1975) report similar instances among the Sotho. Chiefs and important people composed their own praise songs, which they imposed on their followers and professional artists to sing at special festivals. It may be difficult to accept the views of these
European Africanists because they did not have working knowledge of the language of the people whose verbal art they studied. They must have worked with interpreters or with translated material, all of which present problems. For example, working with an interpreter means that the researcher is at the mercy of this person who can decide to give the translation he/she thinks will please the scholar. This may include distortions and selective presentation. The researcher is therefore at a disadvantage. Translated material may also carry the biases of the people involved. It is possible for a translator to make the text “agree” with his/her own opinion, depending on the purpose of the translation. It is known that through translation, a work of art loses its impact/vitality as many nuances are lost in the course of the translation.

Talking about the Yoruba ijala composition, Babalola (1966:46) observes that all the informants agreed that a pupil ijala-chanter has to do a great deal of strenuous work before she/he fully produces a piece of art for inclusion in his repertoire at actual performances. He notes that the ijala composer does not compose a new ijala piece as a result of logical reasoning and conclusion. It comes spontaneously, while he is alone at work, on his farm, or while he is on the long walk from his hometown or village along forest paths to his distant farm. It is at such times that the ijala-chanter, bursts into utterances, which are the beginning of his compositions.

Thus, Babalola adds evidence to the view that Yoruba ijala is composed at one time and performed at another. Writing about poetic composition in the same community, Olajubu (1970 58-61, 1974:36, 1978) differs sharply with Babalola’s standpoint. He states that Yoruba folk poetry, like most forms of African verbal art, is composed as it’s performed. He argues that the artist composes his lines in the presence of his audience. He further observes that the two cannot be separated. He goes on to argue that there is no room for rehearsals or prepared/composed poems as suggested by Babalola. He points out that for various reasons, no Yoruba oral artist can make a repeated performance of poems he has performed in the past, as each attempt he makes to repeat an old chant yields different words.

Given the two apparently conflicting views on the composition of African oral poetry, it is prudent for me to conclude thus: while not ruling out completely the possibility that the poem may be previously composed, the form the poem takes is essentially a product of performance. A performer can adapt an existing poem and modify it to suit the context of
the performance. This therefore explains my strongly held view that performance is central
to the actual composition of poems.

Commenting on the dynamics of composition, with examples from the Yoruba community,
Olajubu (1981:80) insists that while the Yoruba oral artist takes pains to learn the prescribed
and set texts by heart, he does not learn them by rote. His means of communication is oral,
not written and therefore he has no means of learning it as one learns The Lord’s Prayer or
Shakespeare’s Seven Ages of Man. What the artist learns, according to Olajubu, are the
salient facts, which he identifies or gleans by listening to master chanters who are his
teachers. The closest example of the nature of what the oral artist learns are the tables,
formulae and codes learnt in science and mathematics. Olajubu stresses that while the pupil
has to learn these basic elements, he does not have to recite each table or rule verbatim from
A-Z. The oral performer is free to select and order the facts of the set verbal items he has
learnt to suit the situation or task before him. What he cannot do is alter or falsify the facts.
This implies that even where initial compositions exist, they have to be modified according
to the demands of the current performance.

Lord (1960:13) adds useful comments to this discussion. He observes that the Singer of
Tales is not a mere carrier of oral traditions but a creative artist. He is not a mere performer
who reproduces by rote what someone else or even he has composed. He is a composer and
a poet in his own right. This view is also shared by Harvilahiti (1994:91). In essence, a
Singer of Tales is a creator. It is while pursuing the preceding line of argument that I
rejected Knappert’s (1990:388) view that the artist goes wrong when he introduces new
items into a known text. My position based on synthesis of various cases is that each
performance is new and unique depending on the audience and circumstances that lead to its
production. In a special sense, the audience and circumstances are new. Every audience is
different. Even when an artist performs to the same audience twice, he will produce two
different texts. This may explain why Boelaert comes up with three different (at least in
length and detail) versions of the Nsong’a Lianja Epic of Zaire, which he records and

Finnegan (1970:9) makes useful comments that can guide the present discussion on
composition when she writes: “The scope of the artist to improvise or create may vary, but
there is almost always some opportunity for composition. It comes out in the exact choice of
word or phrase, the stylistic devices like the use of idiophones, asides, or repetitions, the ordering of episodes or verses, new twists to familiar plots or the introduction of completely new ones, improvisation or variation of solo lines even while the chorus remains the same - as well, of course, as all the elaborations and modifications to which the musical aspect is subject. Such additions and changes naturally take place within the current literary and cultural conventions but what is involved, nevertheless, is some degree of individual creativity. With only a few exceptions, this process is likely to enter into the actualization of any piece of oral literature, which thus becomes in one sense a unique literary work - the work rendered on one particular occasion.”

The questions: “Who performs poetry in Africa?” and “Where is this poetry performed?” have occupied many scholars of African poetry. Finnegan (1970:81-110) identifies five categories of performers in Africa. These are court poets, religious poets, professional freelance and roving poets, part-time poets and general poets (the many men and women, girls and boys who sing as they play, work, at funerals, at beer parties and during the birth of a child).

1) The court poets were found in many pre-independent African kingdoms such as Buganda where they were in the service of the royal families and their guests. Their function was mainly entertaining, informing and cleverly criticizing their employers when they indulged in excesses. For example, if they denied people justice and there were dissenting voices in society, the poet had a duty to communicate this to the royal family in a way that would not earn him the wrath of the king. Hence, he has also to be a diplomat. Finnegan(1970:81-110) adds that even lesser chiefs sometimes hired the services of court poets. Reading into Finnegan’s text, it appears that the court poets were a mark of prestige for these leaders. Indeed, Smith (1957:560-562) supports this view in his paper on the social function and meaning of the Hausa Maroka (praise singer). This singer is a mark of prestige, which poorer people could not afford. Among the Hausa, the competition to keep the most refined Maroka is so keen that a lot of resources must be expended on them. As a result, the king (obviously the most economically powerful person in the land) maintains the most refined singers, followed by the district and ward leaders in that order.
Through the institution of the Maroka, Smith provides a kind of looking glass into the Hausa community. For example, we can see the social stratification of the society with the poor being treated as second-class citizens. The Maroka do not associate with the poor citizens. Hypocrisy on the part of society is revealed through the Maroka. The rich are quick to lavish the singers with elaborate gifts so that they can sing of how generous they are while the poor go unattended in the same society. In effect, the Maroka are guilty of corruption. They are bribed to praise. Because court singing goes with prestige, the performers must be well rehearsed. Preparation and training of the performers was by apprenticeship (Finnegan 1970:81:110, Okpewho 1985:6). The students were attached to established performers and they learnt by observing and doing what these established artists directed.

2) Another category of African poets is what Finnegan (1970:167-205) has erroneously called religious poets. I use the word erroneously deliberately because, firstly, the word religious seems to derive here from the Christian concept of religion i.e. one God entitled to obedience or worship. Africans also had belief systems and these differed from one ethnic group to the other. For example, the differences between traditions in Coptic communities in Ethiopia and the Muslim ones in East and West Africa are marked. To classify the belief systems of such diverse categories of people as one system under ‘Religious Poets,’ as Finnegan does, will not only be too general a classification but also misleading.

It is my hope that scholars and Africanist students of different communities in Africa will take up the challenge and study at a micro-level, the poets who compose and perform on different issues pertaining to the belief systems of Africa. This kind of study will not only bring out specific details pertaining to this genre but will also reveal how the diverse peoples of Africa regard the variety of poets who compose and perform poems in this category. This will minimize generalizations such as we find in Finnegan’s work.

Seeds for this kind of discussion have been sown by the study on the art of composing and performing oral poetry among the Yoruba by Babalola. In this study, Babalola (1981) makes reference to the ijala poets. These are cult poets whose main
aim is to win the favours of the god *Ogun*. They are mainly women who are referred to as *Lya Ologun*. Some men also perform and are called *Baba Ologun*.

3) Professional freelance or roving poets have been identified as another category of oral performers in Africa. Finnegan (1970:92-98) discusses at length the characteristics of these artists. Unlike the court poets, they are not attached to any single patron but are wandering minstrels, seeking people who are ready to pay for their service. This category of poets lives off poetry and will do anything, including intimidating patrons, to get rewards from rich landowners. Finnegan (1970:94-95) gives a moving account of how such an artist arrives and starts making demands. The artist employs strategic business skills. He knows when to attack to maximize profits. For example, he turns up in the morning before people leave their homes for work or in the evenings after work, when he knows that there is an audience. He also knows that he cannot sing about everybody. So he names one of the rich people in the area and starts singing about him. If the rich person is flattered and rewards the performer, then he will be praised. If, on the other hand, he does not reward the singer, innuendoes follow. It is important to mention that the performer makes it his business to investigate the person he names and knows what to say to earn a reward. Other performers turn up on market days, which again, ensures a ready audience. It is this audience that the property owners fear. They do not want the audience to hear derogatory remarks sung about them, so they will be prepared to pay anything to make the performer sing positively about them.

Smith (1957) notes that praise singers among the *Hausa*, who are also the roving artists in this community, perform at weddings, pre-weddings and at funerals. It appears that in this community, the *Maroka* (praise singers) are divided into two groups - those who are attached to important people such as the king and district and ward officials (court poets) and the wandering artists (freelance poets).

The preceding description by Finnegan and Smith on the roving performers in Africa lead one to conclude that poets’ reliance on their art for a livelihood affects the subject matter of their work. Overbegging, innuendo and even threats towards individual patrons are more marked in this poetry than in the praises associated with court poets. Freelance poets may also be found in many African communities but are
most common among the *Hausa, Mande, Senegalese, Nzakara* of Sudan and along the East African Coast.

4) Another category of performers, not as specialized as the court and professional freelance poets but nevertheless significant, is that of the part-time poets. Finnegan (1970:98-105) portrays them as artists who live off farming, trading and other income-generating activities, and only perform part-time as a hobby (to pass time), or to earn a little income to supplement their regular earning. These artists perform in a wide range of contexts such as funerals, competitions, general entertainment and weddings. The *nyatiti* player among the *Luo* of Kenya is famous for performing at funerals where he is well fed and lavished with gifts of money and clothes. The *nyatiti* player does not need invitation. As soon as he hears of a funeral, he takes his harp (wind instrument) and proceeds to perform. The deceased in one way or the other will be connected to the performer as a village-mate, brother, cousin, friend or some such relationship. The *nyatiti* player is also famous for playing at beer parties, political rallies and during general entertainment sessions in the *Luo* community.

In Somalia and Tanganyika, this category of poets was well known for performing at competitions. Such competitions in Tanganyika were organized by the Sultan. Among the Akan people, the hunters would perform at the Hunters’ Association and at funerals of fellow hunters.

This category of poets exists among the *Abanyole*. In this community, they perform at funerals, political rallies and during *obukoko* (see Chapters 7 and 8 for details on this). They are also invited to perform on the eve of memorial services. At the eve of the major *obukoko* for William Nabutsili, Jane Ongachi Nabutsili and Janet Ayuma on July 29, 2000, a team led by Rovina (also lead singer), was invited to perform (see Chapter 7 for their pictures).

Often, these artists perform for free. This is when the deceased, in the case of a dead relative and also in the event that the *obukoko* or memorial service is for somebody closely related to the leader or some of the performers. If they are to be paid, however, this ranges between gifts of food and drinks to a few thousands of shillings.
In Chapter 7 of this dissertation, I have provided details on the performances at funerals. This is similar to what happens on the eve of the major obukoko and memorial service for a dead relative. For political rallies or installation of a chief or assistant chief, the structure is different and largely depends on the venue of the performances. Often, the performances take place in the playing fields. Here, the artists have ample space and they freely move forwards and backwards as they sing praises to the political leaders or chief or assistant chief. The leader whose praises they sing may be carried shoulder high etc. The praises will be more if the leaders or their aides or relatives offer gifts of money, alcohol, cigarettes or items of clothes to the performers. Of all the gifts, these artists seem to be quite attracted to the highly potent illegal alcohol called chang’aa.

In the case of the major obukoko, funeral or on the eve of a memorial service, the performances normally start at 9.00 pm and end just before sunrise. In case the deceased was a popular rich person - woman or man, the performances may begin late afternoon and run till the following morning. In this case, the artists must be treated to a lot of chang’aa, food and gifts of money.

Performances at political meetings and at the installation of a chief or assistant chief, are normally controlled. A programme is therefore necessary and the length of performance is dictated by this. Often, these artists escort the politicians or administrators up to their homes after the official programme. Here, performances continue and everyone joins in. This may continue up to two or more hours later depending on how much the artists have been paid and the availability of the illegal brew.

In all these contexts, the role of the part-time artists is to entertain and console. In the event of a political rally, the artists are used as a campaign tool. They sing the praises of the politician as well as announce to the public the agenda of the politician. They are also used to brainwash the audiences by offering one-sided information about the politicians.

The musical instruments used by these performers included: box guitars, shakers, kayamba (in the family of shakers) and jingles. Although they perform an important
role in the community, these part-time artists are not greatly respected. This may be explained by the fact that many of them smoke a lot of marijuana and consume large amounts of alcohol. As a result, many of them are either conmen or common liars in the village.

The above shortcoming notwithstanding, these artists play an undeniably important role in this community. There is no major function where they fail to perform. They may therefore be the necessary evil that the Abanyole must live with.

5) Finnegan (1970:98-105) identifies the fifth group of performers as poets who have no specialization at all. This is true of all those women and men, boys and girls who sing as they work, play, pray, at funerals and in many other contexts where poetry is composed and performed. This category of poets reveals that Africans are avid singers. Unlike in the West where some people are designated as poets, everybody in Africa is virtually a poet. What is different is the level of specialization and the purpose of performing.

I must quickly clarify that the different categories of poets discussed in this section should not be taken to mean that some communities had professional free-lance poets only while others had the other types. Except for court poets who were found only in kingdoms, the other categories of oral poets live side by side in all African communities. In old kingdoms, a variety of the other categories identified lived side by side.

2.3.2.4 Social Significance of African Oral Poetry

Virtually all scholars who have studied African oral poetry come to more or less the same conclusion that this art form serves important roles. Singing for the sake of singing is not therefore a feature of an African artist. Equally, poetry for its own sake is not a feature of African poetry.

Finnegan (1970:167-205), Olajubu (1981) and Babalola (1981) discuss oral poetry in rituals. Among the Yoruba, for example, the devotees of Ogun use poetry to win his favours.
Before planting among the Abanyole, prayers were offered through song and chants for the same reasons as the ijala performances among the Yoruba. The songs were also used as a form of thanksgiving to God and the ancestors for such blessings as bumper harvests, children and livestock. Oral poetry thus offers the worshippers an important channel to communicate with God through the ancestors. This can be compared or are similar to performances in other African communities.

Oral poetry has also been considered as an important facility through which the different forces, contradictions, and fears in society can be seen. Through Smith’s (1957) discussion of the Hausa praise singer, we are able to see that society is stratified into the rich and the poor. Further reading into the institution of the Maroka (praise singer) reveals the hypocrisy that exists in this society. The rich pay heavily - in fact - bribe the singers to sing about how generous these rich people are whereas many of them are in fact selfish. Further evidence of the rich literally buying off the singers is revealed in Finnegan’s (1970:93) description of the professional roving poets in Africa. These poets are normally silenced by elaborate gifts, otherwise, their songs will consist of innuendo about the rich persons they have identified as their targets.

According to Finnegan (1970:83), one of the functions of oral poetry in Africa is to record history. This is especially so in old kingdoms where the history of the kings, rich chiefs and any other leader with pretence to power was recorded and sung on special occasions such as the coronation of a chief, burial of a king or an important public gathering. On such occasions, the history might be exaggerated as a means of indoctrinating the people to respect and even fear the king and the dynasty.

Finnegan thus seems to suggest that poetry serves a political role in Africa. Indeed, in a world where there were no newspapers, radio or television (pre-colonial Africa), oral poetry seemed to be an appropriate medium of spreading information. Whether this information was positive or negative was less important than its appeal to the ear and emotions. In a special sense then, oral poetry acted as some form of mass media in Africa.

In his study of the Abanyole children’s oral poetry, Alembi (1992:108-128) identifies the function of socialization as being the key in these poems because they socialize children into
becoming acceptable members of this community. For example, they teach children the acceptable level of behaviour: they must not steal, they must be proud of themselves as members of this community and they must maintain a certain level of cleanliness so as not to attract jiggers and skin diseases such as scabies. Cultural identity and maintenance of the same are therefore inculcated in the young from a very early age. In a study of the Marachi children’s oral poetry, Okhoba (1995) identifies similar functions.

When discussing the Abanyole children’s poetry, Alembi (1992:108-128) identifies environmental education as another role that this poetry serves. For example, through the poems, children learn about rivers (especially the dangers of flooded rivers), important plants (especially those that can be used as food) and harmful pests, such as rats. With this knowledge, children are able to grow up knowing what in their environment is beneficial or harmful.

Kabira and Mutahi (1988:10-41)⁶ while discussing the functions of oral poetry in a students’ guide to oral literature based on the Kikuyu community of Kenya, see oral poetry as serving such functions as teaching, warning, informing, entertainment, promotion and transmission of culture and advising and training. Okpewho (1994), in a general textbook on African Literature, sees poetry as serving similar roles to those identified and discussed by Kabira and Mutahi. In a Ph. D. thesis on the oral literature of the Zezeni people of Zimbabwe, Mutswairo (1978) also identifies and discusses more or less the same functions as those outlined above. There is therefore a general consensus that African poetry serves important functions. I restate that there is no poetry for poetry’s sake in Africa.

A review of funeral poetry is presented in the next section to confine the present study to a narrower scope.

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⁶ Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira is a Kenyan literary scholar. She has done research and written on oral literature. Karega Mutahi is a scholar in linguistics. Both have taught at the University of Nairobi for many years.
2.4 Funeral Poetry and Related Issues

Funeral songs have received very limited analysis by both African and European scholars of oral poetry and yet they deal with an important subject, death, as explained in the introduction to part one. This section therefore raises issues for research in funeral poetry rather than reviewing studies on this theme. Death is an important facet of African cultural studies and the analysis of funeral songs will enrich an understanding of the meaning of death as presented especially through the images and symbols in the songs.

2.4.1 Trends and Issues in Funeral Poetry

Of all the documents read and reviewed in this chapter, only four studies examined aspects related to death. These are Finnegans (1970:147-166), p’Bitek (1974) Nandwa (1976:21-24) and Akivaga and Odaga (1982). p’Bitek (1974) offers a general discussion on funeral rites and dances among the Acoli people of Northern Uganda. Using the example of the death of a man to discuss this subject, p’Bitek notes that when a man is critically ill, his eldest son is called to sit by his death bed so that he can listen to his last wishes. As soon as the man dies, women start wailing. Relatives are called in. The men who are responsible for the burial dig the grave. Singing and dancing are very important components of mourning in this community. Dancing is often accompanied by drumming and the scrubbing of large half-gourds on planks of wood.

Although p’Bitek offers some discussion on the theme of death, his discussion is too general. For instance, he has not mentioned the different performances that occur in the event of death. This may be because he only discusses the death and mourning of men. Even on the death of a man, there are various performances by different groups of people at different times. In a sense, p’Bitek’s discussion is an unacceptable overview of a complicated phenomenon.
Table 2.2: Funeral Poetry in African Oral Poetry Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUTHOR</th>
<th>ASPECTS COVERED</th>
<th>MAIN FINDINGS</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
<th>METHODOLOGY</th>
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| Finnegan (1970:147-166) | General treatment of the theme of death in African poetry | • Funeral poems have received insignificant academic attention.  
• They are less elaborate in performance compared to other categories of oral poetry especially panegyric poetry.  
• The performers are less specialized than those of panegyric poetry.  
• Funeral poems are a reserve of the womenfolk in Africa i.e. men do not engage in funeral songs in Africa. | • A very general discussion. There is no clear analytical framework guiding the analysis.  
• The findings of the study are supposed to be generalized for the whole of Africa. The examples, however, are mainly drawn from the Akan people. This is not representative enough for Africa. | Synthesis and interpretation of documents |
| Nandwa (1976:21-24)   | Collection of poems                                 | No analysis                                                                   | • Not a very useful work for a scholarly study as no analysis is presented of the poems. | Fieldwork                          |
| Akivaga and Odaga (1982: 78-83) | Collection of poems                             | No analysis                                                                   | • Not a very useful work for academic studies as no analysis is presented of the poems. | Extraction of poems from other studies. No synthesis. |
• The songs/poems are performed by both men and women.  
• The performances are quite elaborate and occupy an important position in the sociocultural life of the Acoli people. | • There is no clear theoretical framework guiding the analysis. Perhaps it is because this is a guidebook for secondary school students of oral literature. | Fieldwork                          |

(This table presents a summary of studies I have read on funeral poetry in African Oral Literature. These studies are largely macro unlike the present study, which is micro).

Finnegan (1970:147-166) discusses elegiac poetry in Africa, drawing most of her examples from the Akan people of West Africa. In an introduction to this theme in her book Oral Literature in Africa, Finnegan observes that this category of poetry has attracted little attention from poetry scholars. She attributes this to the fact that this poetry is less specialized and points out that there are only two studies that deal at some length with this category of African poetry.
Although Finnegan’s observation that funeral songs have received insignificant academic attention is largely true, the reasons she attributes to this are unconvincing. From research among the Abanyole, leading performers in okhukoma (a funeral performance for the males of this community who must have at least one son) are highly specialized and respected artists. There is no performance that is more elaborate than okhukoma in Bunyore. There are usually more than one hundred men involved. They are armed with spears, shields and sticks. Usually they are adorned in twigs and their faces in multi-color make-up. They drive herds of bulls adorned with bells and twigs. They play drums and horns etc. This is a very lavish performance. Since Finnegan relied mainly on library and archival material, she had no access to information on these rich performances unless they were included in the materials that she read during her research. Finnegan, however, makes some useful observations concerning African funeral songs.

Many of the songs sung on occasions of death are typical and ephemeral. They are composed for use at the funeral of a specific individual and relate to him/her only. Many of these funeral songs are full of praise for the dead. In some of the songs, there is resignation and acceptance of death as being inevitable.

Nenola-Kallio (1982:6) in a study on Ingrian laments offers very useful insights on poetry and death. She defines a lament as an improvised song of complaint drawing on a traditional stock of linguistic and musical expression usually performed in the context of rituals connected with death and marriage. In this study, she identifies four categories of laments: dirges, wedding laments, recruit laments and occasional laments. She attributes these laments to women and calls them a “woman’s tradition” and part of women’s culture. Studying them therefore sheds important light on the socio-cultural structures and categories represented by the tradition bearers.

Even though Nenola-Kallio’s work comes from a different culture, her observations on the performance and meaning of the laments show a lot of similarities with the Abanyole laments category of the oral funeral poetry. Like the Abanyole laments, Ingrian laments are performed on solemn occasions and involve the use of paralinguistic features and expressive language (1982:34). In lamenting a deceased person, those present are guided towards a collective feeling of grief and loss, as is the case in the performance of womens laments in Bunyore.
Writing about death, Nenola-Kallio argues that “death had to be adjusted to life, death had to be recovered from, death had to be found a meaning” (1982:99). The lamenter builds up her sympathy with the deceased through her lament. She argues that death is not seen as something to be feared. In fact, she continues her discourse, that in “certain cases it is preferable alternative to a life full of suffering and humiliation” (1982:99). She argues that the Ingrians generally believed that the fate of the deceased in the other world depended decisively on how he/she was prepared for the grave and where and how he/she was buried.

Nenola-Kallio concludes that as a tradition, Ingrian laments represent the women’s culture of a patriarchal rural society. She writes: “These women were, despite their cultural superiority, politically, socially and often also economically subordinated” (1982:261).

Through the laments, one learns more about the Ingrian view of death, their culture and other social structures. She argues for the study of other people’s cultures in which collective mourning rituals support the bereaved and help him/her to stand the loss. Her findings share a lot of similarities with those of the *Abanyole* oral funeral poetry in general but more specifically with the women’s laments. Thus, her work is significant to me as many of the traditions discussed are similar to those of the *Abanyole*.

From the preceding discussion, it is clear that the meaning of death as communicated through poetry in Africa has not received significant academic attention. Without belabouring the point, the issue being raised is that African funeral poetry needs to be researched.
PART TWO

THE ABANYOLE COMMUNITY, RESEARCH STRATEGY AND STUDY PROCESS
CHAPTER 3
THE ABANYOLE COMMUNITY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the study community with respect to its origin and present location. I have kept this chapter short, giving only the basic information necessary to introduce the community under study to the reader. Longer write-ups on the history, sociology, religion, philosophy and geography of the people and the area they occupy are beyond the scope of this study but are readily available in books and journals, some of which can be found in the reference list at the end of the dissertation.

3.2 Who are the Abanyole?

The Abanyole are a sub-ethnic group of the Luhya people of Western Province of Kenya who belong to the Bantu group (on pages 12-13, I have provided maps to show the location of Vihiga District within Kenya. I have also provided a map to show the location of Bunyore within Vihiga District). Like most of the Bantu people, it is commonly believed that the Abanyole as part of the larger Abaluhya community came from the Niger-Congo region in West Africa (Osogo 1966; Were 1967a, 1967b). They are believed to have entered the Eastern African region through Sudan. From Sudan, they entered Uganda where they settled for a while before crossing Lake Victoria into Kenya. They settled around Maseno region until pressure on land and war with the Luo community who occupied the neighbouring Lela region caused them to disperse to areas which form present day Bunyore.

The Abanyole society is patriarchal. Thus, inheritance, identity, power and influence flow through the male members. The society is in fact named after their founder forefather, Anyole, while the clans that form the Abanyole society are named after his sons. These clans are Abatongoi, Abasyubi, Abasiloli, Abamuli, Abalonga, Abasakami, Abayangu, Ababayi,
The stress on sons in ensuring the continuity of society is reflected in important rituals performed by members of the community. In funeral rituals, men who have at least a son receive a grand send off through the *okhukoma* category of the oral funeral poetry performances (Otwelo 1998:12). This is never performed for women. Nor is it performed for men who have not contributed to the said continuity, identity and power through siring at least a son. Besides the *okukhoma*, the funerals of such men are marked with more elaborate singing by individual men and women and also by group performances during the night (see Chapter 7 for details).

**3.3 The Family**

This is the basic social unit among the *Abanyole* that makes up the inhabitants of a homestead. Each homestead comprises a household head (husband), his wife or wives and the children. The head of the homestead makes important decisions after consultation with his family.

In *Bunyore*, husband and wife are not recognized as a family until they have children. In fact, children are so central to a family that without them, a man is allowed to marry other wives in order to beget him children. In pre-colonial days, if it was proved that a husband was impotent, a brother or cousin was allowed to sire children for him. According to Mbiti, this practice appears to have been true to most Africans (Mbiti 1969:145). Today, if a man is proven to be impotent, elderly members of the clan especially the women, may encourage the man’s wife to secretly conceive children with another man preferably within the same family. This underscores the importance of children among the *Abanyole*, which is influenced by the desire not only to fight death but also to defeat it.

**3.4 The Clan**

Different families that are related by blood come together to form a clan. The oldest senior elder heads clan members. Important clan decisions are made by this elder in consultation with other elders. Clan members support each other in difficult as well as good times. For
example, if one family has a lot of harvesting or planting to do, they invite other clan members to help. During difficult times such as funerals, clan members support the bereaved family. Often, they supply foodstuffs that are eaten during the three days when the body lies in state before burial. Sometimes, and this depends on the status of the bereaved family, clan members contribute money to buy the coffin. If the family is well off, however, they pay for the coffin themselves. The peak of the clan spirit is experienced during preparation for burial. Often, the young men will start digging the grave at midnight and by 4.00 a.m., it is normally expected to be ready. Women are not allowed to dig graves. The *Abanyole* dead are buried in their homesteads in the afternoon. Men do the burial.

Family graveyard. Men are buried to the left of their wives (facing the direction of the rising sun – east). In this arrangement, the man’s grave is more to the outside of the homestead in relation to that of his wife. The belief is that even in death, men must continue to protect their wives and families in general from any outside attack. Notice that there is a fence immediately after the man’s grave (near sisal plant). The fence is the physical boundary between this homestead and the next (in this case, considered outside – for an enemy could easily come through from this direction). *(Photo by Lauri Harviluhti).*

Thus one may conclude that digging of the grave and burying of the dead are male activities in this community. In a clan, therefore, members are expected to co-operate in making life pleasurable for all.
Community members involved in burying the remains of Janet Ayuma in September 1999 gently put to the ground the coffin containing her body. Church ministers must read more scriptures and say prayers before it is lowered into the grave. *(Photo by Ezekiel Alembi).*

The casket has just been lowered into the grave. Soon, the pit will be filled with dust. *(Photo by Ezekiel Alembi).*

Nevertheless, all is not always well in the clan. Far from it. Clan members often quarrel and even fight. The clan leaders inquire into such cases, punish offenders and sometimes counsel them depending on the nature of the offence.

### 3.5 The Belief System of the *Abanyole*

The cosmology of the *Abanyole* is characterized by a belief in a supreme being, ancestral spirits and human agents with supernatural powers. A high God is said to have created everything and is referred to as *Were* or *Nyasaye* (Wagner 1954:28). *Were* means ‘the friendly one’ while *Nyasaye* refers to the one to whom prayers are directed. These two names for God are commonly heard today in christian contexts. This God is conceived of as a spirit of goodness and very powerful.

Ancestral spirits are important in every aspect of life of the *Abanyole*. They operate positively in a protective capacity but when offended, they withhold their favours and allow evil to befall their descendants. The ancestors who died earlier are known as *emisambwa*. In
pre-colonial Bunyore, every clan had *ulusambwa* (a meeting point between the living and the ancestors) - *(Mzee Wellington Masatia Tambwa - Appendix 4, number 78)*. This is a pole, about four feet long and three centimetres wide. It is obtained from an *olusiolia* tree. One foot of the pole is covered underground leaving three feet in an upright position. Two stones - one on each side, are placed near the pole. Usually, this pole is not decorated. In the event of a clan meeting, however, *lilannde* (a creeper) is tied round the top of *ulusambwa*. *Lilannde* is not, in the strict sense of the word, a decoration *(Mzee Wellington Masatia Tambwa)*.

*Lilannde* (Creeper). *(Photo by Lauri Harvilahti).*

This plant is also used in the *okhukoma* category of the *Abanyole* funeral poetry. Information gathered from interviews especially with *Mzee* Wellington Masatia Tambwa, a medicine man and clan head, indicated that *lilannde* repels evil spirits. In this sense, one may understand why it was tied on the *ulusambwa* on occasions of clan meetings. Malevolent spirits that may disrupt the meeting are repelled.

*Mzee Wellington Masatia Tambwa. (Photo by Lauri Harvilahti).*
A close examination of the positioning of *olusambwa* reveals that it links two worlds. The part (one foot) that goes underground symbolically means that it goes to the world of *emisambwa*. The blood of sacrificial animals was let to sip into the ground, thereby feeding these spirits. The part (three feet) that remain upwards symbolically means that it operates at the level of the human world. This way then, *ulusambwa* links the world of the spirits and that of the human beings. Through this linkage, the clan members were able to interact with their *abakuka* (ancestors who had died recently) and *emisambwa*. In fact my informant on this, Masatia, stressed that *ulusambwa* was a kind of communication system between the living and the dead. The *abakuka* and *emisamba*, for example, communicated through this all important messages regarding individual clan members scattered throughout the village. The messages were relayed to the keeper of *ulusambwa*, the senior most elder, who often possessed supernatural powers. Some of the keepers of *ulusambwa* were actually medicinemen as was the case with Tambwa Mang’ula, the father to Wellington Masatia.

*Olusambwa* was found in the centre of a homestead of a home of a man that the *abakuka* and *emisambwa* had ordained in the clan. Subsequent keepers of the *ulusambwa* would then come from the sons of the family of such a man. In the event that an *ulusambwa* keeper died, the spirits of the departed members of the clan sent information through dreams on which one of the sons would become the next keeper of *ulusambwa*. Often, it was the deceased’s most favourite son for it was such a son that would have been taught the family and clan secrets (*Mzee Wellington Masatia Tambwa* - Appendix 4, number 78).

Even though *Ombiti* (keeper of *Olusambwa*) was supposed to be the dead man’s most favourite son, in the event that such a son was not old enough - a man with a family, the
position of Ombiti would go to another son, who must have been close to the father. In case the deceased did not have a son who qualified for this role, the spirits of the dead members of the community then passed it on to the dead man’s brother’s son. This one must have also been close enough to the dead uncle. It is important to note that Ombiti was a pious man. He was not to be a drunkard nor an abuser of drugs. He was not to be an adulterer or a witch (Mzee Wellington Masatia Tambwa).

From time to time, the clan members came together for a drink of an alcohol called olumela (Mzee Apollo Oyondi Keria - Appendix 4, number 7). This is an alcohol beverage made from millet and maize flour. It is prepared in the following way: Maize flour is placed in a pot. Water is added to it to form a slurry. The mixture is covered and placed near a warm place (fire place) for 4-5 days to ferment. After fermentation, the slurry will turn sour, oozing out the smell of alcohol. The fermented slurry is fried dry on a big pan to form roasted globules (ball like) rolls of fermented flour. The roasted fermented flour is placed in a big pot of water. To this is added germinated millet which acts as yeast. The germinated millet will catalyze the alcohol formation. The process takes 24 hours and the olumela will be ready for drinking (Mzee Apollo Oyondi Keria – Appendix 4, number 7).

This was not just an occasion to indulge in alcohol. It was a time for the clan to purify itself. Every clan member was expected to attend this occasion. Walking into the ombiti’s home only through the gate, every adult male and female would walk straight to the olusumbi (the big pot) full of olumela. This was placed at the olusambwa. They would, in turns and using olutsekhe (traditional straw), drink from the pot. If anybody came through the fence the other members immediately knew that he/she had violated societal rules. This person was not allowed to drink the alcohol until he/she had confessed and repented. Anybody who pretended to have drunk the alcohol was easily discovered by Ombiti who was endowed with powers to detect and expose such liars. It is instructive to note that anybody who drunk this alcohol when he had done anything wrong against the clan like witchcraft, adultery with a brother’s or father’s wife etc., died immediately (Mzee Wellington Masatia Tambwa - Appendix 4, number 78). After everybody had drunk from the big pot at olusambwa, another big pot was set before the clan’s people outside the main house of Ombiti.

An extensive range of human agents attempting to control spiritual forces account for the constant struggle between good and evil. Some of these agents particularly witches and
wizards are greatly feared, but priests, rainmakers, herbalists and diviners are regarded as positive agents. This cultural heritage pervades the life of the Abanyole. Virtually every phase of life has a religious interpretation, and every human activity is carried out religiously lest the spirits and Were should be upset and decide to punish individuals, families or the whole society. This acts as a restraint to the Abanyole who must remain on good terms with their God to win his favours.

### 3.6 Where do the Abanyole Live?

The Abanyole occupy Emuhaya and Luanda divisions of Vihiga District (Figs. 1.2 and 1.3).

| Table 3.1: Basic information on Emuhaya and Luanda Divisions (Republic of Kenya 1997) |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Size                            | 160 Square Kilometres                                                                                                             |
| Rainfall                        | 1400-1800 mm per annum                                                                                                             |
| Economy                         | Agriculture, bakeries, shops, carpentry, workshops, bars, hotels, flour mills, lodgings, butgeries, bookshops etc.              |
| Altitude                        | 1216-1374 metres above sea level                                                                                                   |
| Temperatures                    | 26-32°C (mean maximum) and 14-18°C (mean minimum)                                                                                 |
| Neighbours                      | Luo, Kisa, Marama, Idakho, Maragoli                                                                                               |
| Soils                           | Well drained, dark red friable soils; alluvium, loamy, stony or clay along the rivers                                             |

The basic data on Emuhaya and Luanda is provided in Table 3.1. Emuhaya and Luanda Divisions cover an area of 160 square kilometers (Republic of Kenya 1997:3-16). They are within the Southern hill belt of Vihiga District and have an altitude of 1216-1374 meters above sea level (Republic of Kenya 1997:3-6). The land surface is largely made up of hills, ridges and valleys. It is dotted with rock outcrops and inselbergs or granite tors. Some of the outstanding hills in Bunyore are Ebuhando (also referred to as Bunyore Hills), Ebusiekwe and Ebuyangu.

Being situated in the Lake Victoria Basin, Emuhaya and Luanda Divisions experience fairly high temperatures and rainfall. Mean maximum temperatures are between 26°C and 32°C and mean minimum temperatures are 14°C – 18°C. The annual rainfall averages about 1400-1800 mm.
The soils in Emuhaya and Luanda Divisions are well-drained, dark red, friable soils derived from both volcanic and basement complex rocks. Along the rivers, the soils are either alluvium, stony, loamy or clay. The soils have lost much of their fertility due to leaching and overcultivation. The varied ecological base (temperatures, rainfall, rocks and soils) has been an important factor in determining human activities such as settlement.

Maize farm. Flour from maize is used to cook ugali, the staple food of the Abanyole. (Photo by Lauri Harvilahiti).

Typical landscape in Bunyore (hills and valleys). The land in the foreground lies fallow. The owner will probably till it the next farming season. It may be more fertile then. (Photo by Lauri Harvilahiti).

and farming. Bunyore is one of the areas in Vihiga District with a very high population density. In 1988, its population was estimated at 156,451, giving a population density of 923 persons per square kilometer (Republic of Kenya 1989). This has brought about a lot of pressure on land and social amenities leading to migration to other places and towns in Kenya. Some of the Abanyole have migrated to South Nyanza, Tiriki and the settlement schemes (Lugari, Lumakanda, Soy, Ndalu and Turbo). Agriculture is the main economic activity in the area. This is made possible due to high temperatures and rainfall. Crops
grown are maize, beans, sorghum, bananas, cassava and millet. Some farmers also keep cattle, poultry, sheep, goats and pigs.

Other activities in *Bunyore* include sand harvesting along riversides and quarrying to make ballast for construction purposes. There are also commercial activities located mainly in market and urban centres such as *Luanda, Esirulo, Kima, Ekwanda, Emuhaya, Esibuye* and *Emusire*. These centres are dominated by businesses like shops, bars, hotels, butcheries, flourmills, bakeries, lodgings, carpentry workshops and bookshops. Some *Abanyole* make baskets and pots.
CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH STRATEGY AND STUDY PROCESS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will explain how I collected and analyzed the relevant information to address the research theme. The nature of the research problem and theoretical orientation have led me to select relevant research design, sampling frame, research instruments, methods of collection, methods of analysis, and methods of interpretation of the material, and its presentation. I describe all these aspects in the sections that follow. In addition, I describe the challenges and problems that I encountered in the development and execution of my research project.

4.2 Research Design

I have two main research purposes to achieve in the present study. The first is to describe the phenomenon of death as presented through the oral funeral poetry of the Abanyole. The second purpose is to interpret and analyze contexts, symbols, images and performances as a basis to arrive at the meaning of death as presented through oral funeral poetry.

4.3 Sampling Frame

The sampling frame I have used is a combination of personal enquiry and self-selection sampling techniques. I sought out informants I knew, who compose and sing funeral poems. I used the first or initial group of informants to identify and lead me to others. I also sought out funerals I could attend and to collect funeral poems (dirges). In total, I talked to 72 informants (Appendix 4) and attended 20 funerals (Appendix 3).
In addition to the fieldwork data that I collected, I made an effort to collect funeral poems from documents. I reviewed a wide range of manuscripts in my search for recorded funeral poems from the Abanyole.

4.4 Collecting and Analyzing the Research Material

The approach I have used in collecting funeral poems and other relevant information consists of the elements:

- Participation and observation,
- Interviews
- Review of documents

I am going to explain each of these below.

4.4.1 Participation and Observation

The ethnopoetics perspective that forms the theoretical basis of this study requires the researcher to engage in meaningful interaction and dialogue with the community under investigation. This implies that the researcher should in one way or another enter into the spirit of the community and participate in its daily rhythm of life. This enables him to closely observe the phenomenon of his exploration. It is within this context that I employed such means to collect funeral poems and complementary information to aid in analysis and interpretation of the data.

Beginning from September 1997 up to August 1998 my research assistant and I participated in funerals where oral funeral poetry was performed. As the funerals took place at different times and places, the research team had to keep abreast with them from time to time. My research assistant and I attended a total of twenty funerals during which we recorded details of the context, songs, persons attending, and nature of performance.
4.4.2 Discussion Interviews

Interviews were carried out on selected respondents in order to gather information on the following aspects of the oral funeral poetry: context (history, geography, religion, family, political and economy), performance and meaning. The participants were identified through personal enquiry and self selecting sampling techniques. I started the exercise by inquiring from a small group of acquaintances from my village in Bunyore about funerals and dirges that are sung. I then asked these people to identify other persons who could offer information on the Abanyole oral funeral poetry as well as sing or perform funeral poems. Through this process, the sample grew to include persons from villages in different parts of the Abanyole community. In addition, the sample identified turned out to be made up of people of different socio-economic statuses, religion, sex, age, education (formal, non-formal) and trade. In total, a sample of seventy-two persons was identified for in-depth discussion interviews.

Ezekiel (author) discusses with Mama Mauwa Likhutsa, perhaps the oldest person interviewed for this study. At the time of her death in June this year (2002), she was estimated to be one hundred and ten years. Sitting on her right (in a white hat) is her last born son, Olilo Safari Likhutsa. Also in the picture is their neighbour. They all contributed actively to the discussion. (Photo by Lauri Harvilahti).

I collected information from the respondents through oral discussion. My research assistant and I carried out these interviews together from September 1997 to August 1998. We took notes as the interviews progressed. We also asked all our interviewees to sing for us the dirges they had either sung at some point or learnt from other members of their community. Through this process, we were able to collect a number of dirges to complement those we were able to collect at funerals. We also collected some dirges that we had not heard at any of the funerals, for example 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25 and 27 (see Appendix 1 and 2). This reveals that it is unlikely for the entire repertoire of the Abanyole funeral songs to be sung in one single funeral. It also reveals that the entire spectrum of the Abanyole funeral
songs cannot be collected by one method alone and that is why my research assistant and I attended funerals where we recorded songs and interviewed people who constructed funeral songs for us. We also extracted more songs from books and journals. This combination of methods resulted in the rich collection of songs that are contained in this study.

4.4.3 Review of Documents

I examined a number of documents both published and unpublished, to assemble oral funeral poetry that had been written and stored, and get an interpretation and analysis of the Abanyole oral funeral poetry and related aspects done by other researchers and writers.

The documents which I have examined included:

- Monographs
- Government reports
- Dissertations
- Manuscripts and personal files
- Articles in journals and review commentaries
- Anthologies of oral poetry

I secured these documents from libraries, individuals and institutions. Throughout the entire research period, I continuously searched for relevant documents by visiting libraries as well as writing and contacting a wide range of persons and institutions. The main sources that I used were the Kenya National Archives, Kenyan Public Universities, University of Helsinki Ethnological and Folkloristic Library and the University of Helsinki Library. The libraries in Helsinki were particularly useful on folklore and anthropological studies done in Finland, America and the Pacific. I collected additional material from the personal library of my thesis supervisor, professor Harvilaiti. With a combination based on the fieldwork and the perusal review of documents, I managed to collect forty-nine funeral poems that form the core texts for analysis and interpretation in this study. Of the forty-nine poems, six came from documented sources while the rest came from fieldwork.
4.5 Methods of Analyzing the Research Material

4.5.1 Processing the Material

After assembling poems from documents, I made an effort to critically read and identify messages on death as well as aspects on socio-cultural causes of death presented through them. I then moved on to process data collected from fieldwork. I transcribed the tape-recorded information from Lunyore to English and examined the notes taken during in-depth field interviews, observations and participation to identify the major issues. I next concentrated on assembling together all the information collected and putting it in forms that enabled me to carry out analysis and interpretation.

4.5.2 Methods of Analysis and Interpretation

The analysis and interpretation of the Abanyole oral funeral poetry involved the people I had observed participating in funerals, my own analysis of the funeral situations and the accompanying poetry and documentary sources available.

I used more than one criterion essentially to triangulate the information, thereby corroborating the sources in an effort to build an inter-subjective consensus concerning the perceptions on death as presented through the Abanyole oral funeral poetry. The triangulation involved multiple information sources, multiple personnel in information collection and multiple analysis and interpretation (respondents, researcher, assistant, resource persons and documentary evidence) and as I believe, enhanced the validity and reliability of the information determining the results presented in this study. Furthermore, the initial draft of the research report was discussed by a number of persons familiar with the Abanyole community and its customs to verify details, words, concepts, events etc. Each poem was studied to identify and interpret:

- Presentation of death by looking at images and tropes. A list of these images was developed as a basis for analysis and interpretation (see Table 4.1 for illustration of the matrix used for analysis)
- Causes of death (see Table 4.2 for illustration of the matrix used for analysis)
- Effects of death (see Table 4.3 for illustration of the matrix used for analysis)

Apart from the poems, I studied performances critically to get an understanding of the movements, symbolic actions and costumes in their portrayal of death and its meaning.

Table 4.1: Framework for Identification and Interpretation of Images and Pictures of Death

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Interpretation of meaning based on community’s beliefs and understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>nth</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(I have used this framework to identify and analyze poems that have formed the core of the discussion in this study).

Table 4.2: Framework for Identification and Interpretation of Aspects of Socio-Cultural Causes of Death Presented Through Oral Funeral Poetry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>Aspect Mentioned about the cause</th>
<th>Relevant Socio-cultural Domain</th>
<th>Clan belief relations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(I have used this framework to identify aspects of socio-cultural causes of death in oral funeral poetry).

Table 4.3: Framework for Identification and Interpretation of Effects of Death Presented Through Oral Funeral Poetry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>Aspect Identified of Effects of Death</th>
<th>Main Socio-cultural Domain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(I have used this framework to identify effects of death presented in oral funeral poetry).

This interaction brought forth comments and suggestions on the validity and reliability of the analysis presented. I also organized five sessions in which the report was read to the persons who had provided the information and their interpretation of the poems. The overall interpretation of the poems however, remained my responsibility after drawing on the various criteria.

I presented the report in form of statements, figures, photographs and tables.
4.6. Focusing the Study

My initial survey of literature carried out between September 1997 and July 1998 revealed that little research attention had been paid to the study of African oral poetry. I particularly noticed that little had been done in the area of funeral poetry. This largely explains why I first planned to study the entire corpus of the oral poetry of the Abanyole. In fact, the initial title submitted for my research project was “The Abanyole Oral Poetry: Form, Process and Change.” I presented a draft with this title to Anna-Leena Siikala and Lauri Harvilahiti in September 1998, besides discussing it with my colleagues at Kenyatta University. I was convinced that I would be able to produce an informative study. What followed is actually what I called my “intellectual crisis and reversal.” The comments I received revealed that I had carved out too broad an area. Put bluntly, the verdict was: slash for quality or continue for generalized study. It was not easy for me to accept this verdict. I kept on wondering why one could not set out to discuss the oral poetry of the Abanyole when there was no such study. On further reflection and consultation, it began to dawn on me that narrowing the scope was going to give a far more focused and meaningful study. Hence, finally, I settled on oral funeral poetry.

Another reversal I went through was in theory and research methodology. My research orientation had been towards the use of stylistics and functional paradigms. Following the refocusing of my theme to oral funeral poetry, the relevant theoretical framework turned out to be ethnopoetics, a framework I had never used before. This then required me to engage in extensive reading and discussion. Overall, I can say that the reconceptualization I went through was beneficial in that it produced the present focused study and grounding in ethnopoetics.

4.7 Fieldwork Constraints

Between September 1997 and August 1998, I conducted field research among my study community, the Abanyole. I used two major field techniques to reach the people who provided primary information for this study. These were purposive and self selecting sampling techniques. Some of the respondents identified lived as far as forty kilometres
(round trip) from the research base, Ebwiranyi village. This involved many hours of walking for my research assistant and I, as none of us owned a car. Few of the villages could be reached by any other means. These villages included Ebulonga Esiamayai, Ebustyubi Eluchieyo, Ebwiranyi Khwiliba, Ebwiranyi Esitsimi, Emmuli Emmaloba, Emmuli Ebutuku, Emmuli Emuranga, Ematioli, and Ebulonga Etwenya. All the walking that had to be done caused delays and fatigue. I sometimes got too tired to effectively get involved in the live oral funeral poetry performances or to interview members of the community. Even the villages that could be reached by bus or matatu (a mini bus that has a carrying capacity of 18. There are some bigger matatus that can carry 30 people), presented problems. Except for market days in Luanda (Mondays and Thursdays) when it was easy to travel by matatus to many parts of Bunyore, public transport presented problems. Even on market days, matatus fill quickly to overloading with so many regular travellers between the surrounding villages. These were business people, others who had come to buy provisions from the market where they were cheaper than elsewhere, and some who had come to meet and socialize. For one reason or other, market day is the day when people congregate in Luanda to meet by appointment or by sheer chance. Thus, it was not easy to travel because of the large number of commuters. On non-market days, however, with fewer commuters, the matatus took a long time to fill and would not leave until they were full. This caused delays in the research schedule. Sometimes we were forced to wait for as long as three hours. Consequently, it was often preferable to walk on non-market days.

Shadrack Irili, my research assistant, partly solved the transport situation by providing his bicycle on which we rode to different places in Bunyore. This means of transport also had its problems. The months of March, April, and part of May are the rainy season in this area of Kenya and the narrow village paths were muddy and frequently impassable for bicycles. Sometimes, the rivers, especially Ekhalakhala and Esitsie, were flooded. Hence, villages like Ebulonga, Ebutuku, Esitsimi, Emmaloba and Ebwiranyi Etwenya were cut off except if one took long roundabout routes, to reach them. This was often a tiring and time wasting exercise. Having overcome the mud and floods, we had to contend with excessive heat, especially between September 1997 and February 1998. This made pedaling an arduous undertaking for Shadrack especially in the afternoons. On such occasions, we had to spend more time pushing the bicycle than actually riding it.
I am, however, pleased to report that despite these field challenges, it was possible to collect a large stock of songs and information about oral funeral poetry and death in general among the Abanyole. Our fieldwork difficulties were actually minimized by the co-operative and enthusiastic informants we met, who were ready to answer research questions even at funerals.

4.8 Financial and Resource Constraints

Most of the writing of this dissertation was done at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, where I faced constraints with respect to availability, quantity and quality of reference material. Firstly, Kenyatta University does not have a folklore department, so the folklore section in the library is meager and mostly composed of out-dated titles published in the 1970s. Secondly, the literature section of the library was equally inadequate, with very few titles that were relevant to my study. This meant that I had to contrive to purchase the relevant material. I was not on any scholarship grant and my salary was too small to cover the necessary costs. At this point, friends at Kenyatta University, especially Khayesi and Aseka generously provided whatever relevant reference material they saw was of use to me from their personal libraries. The term relevant is used here deliberately. These friends are scholars from different academic backgrounds. Khayesi comes from the Department of Geography, while Aseka is from the Department of History. Interestingly, their reference materials turned out to be relevant to my study, especially in theory and methodology. My supervisor provided more useful reference material while a colleague and friend, Leila
Virtanen, offered me the use of her personal library. I got more reading material from Harjula, Urban, Abrahams and Bendix. I came to realize that studying at the Dr. Phil. level without a scholarship is a very challenging undertaking. In addition to the above constraints, I also faced time constraints. Being a lecturer, I had to fulfill my teaching requirements while trying to fit in time for my research project, which suffered from delays in consequence.

Despite all these setbacks, considerable information was accumulated which is analyzed in this study.
PART THREE

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I devoted Parts One and Two to a discussion of the theoretical, contextual and methodological background of this study. I am now moving on to present the findings of my investigation in this part. In Chapter 5, I discuss the socio-cultural causes of death. In Chapter 6, I discuss the effects of death while in Chapter 7 I analyze performance of the oral funeral poems. In Chapter 8, I discuss the poetic devices of oral funeral poetry.
CHAPTER 5

PERCEPTION OF SOCIO-CULTURAL CAUSES OF DEATH PRESENTED THROUGH ORAL FUNERAL POETRY

5.1 Introduction

One of the disturbing issues when death comes is to explain or seek to determine its cause: why did she/he die? This is a question that hangs in the air. Even when a medical examination report is presented to explain the cause of death, people try to find a “proper explanation.” I discuss in this chapter the perception and assessment of death as presented through oral funeral poetry. The first part particularly considers the mystic-socio-cultural causes of death that are major ones I discerned from a reading of the oral funeral poetry. Even when such natural causes as lightning and old age are plausible explanations, the Abanyole community will not readily ascribe to them. Rather, as was revealed through the oral funeral poetry, an explanation is sought as to where the lightning came from.

Evans-Pritchard (1972:18) learnt that among the Azande, as in Abanyole community, the belief in mystical powers especially witchcraft is common. There is no misfortune that comes on its own. There must be a human agent behind it. He posits: “…there is no nichier or corner of Azande culture into which it does not twist itself. If blight seizes the ground-nut crop it is witchcraft; if the bush is vainly scoured for game, it is witchcraft; the women laboriously bale water out of a pool and are rewarded by but a few small fish it is witchcraft. If termites do not rise when their swarming is due and a cold useless night is spent in waiting for their flight it is witchcraft; if a wife is sulky and unresponsive to her husband it is witchcraft; if a prince is cold and distant with his subject it is witchcraft.”

Thus, every negative thing is explained in terms of mystical powers. And as Evans-Pritchard (1972:19) further notes that witchcraft is so intertwined with everyday happenings that it is part of Azandes’ ordinary world. This is very true also of many other African communities. For example, Beidelman (1963:63) says the same about the Kaguru people of Tanzania. The analysis in this study reveals that according to Abanyole lore, there are two broad causes of
death namely, (a) death through mystical powers and (b) death through murder. Of the two, death through mystical powers is the most popular conclusion as will be explained below.

The information used to build the analysis comes from a synthesis of views from discussion interviews, documents, feedback from the organized reading of the text to members of the Abanyole community and the poems. Thus, the analysis and interpretation meet the requirement of the methodology set in Chapter 4 and the theoretical orientation contained in Chapter 1.

In this chapter, I use literature on other communities. I use these comparative materials as examples in order to show that there are some similarities in the beliefs between Abanyole and other people in the world.

5.2 Death Through Mystical Powers Among the Abanyole

The majority of deaths among the Abanyole are blamed on people exercising mystical powers (Mzee Johnston Okang’a Abukutsa - Appendix 4, number 38). People who use evil mystical powers are greatly feared and hated in this community. So great is the hatred that the sons and daughters of such people often fail to get suitors from among the Abanyole for marriage. They then marry from distant ethnic groups or families within Bunyore or outside of it with the same characteristics.

A similar belief exists among the Azande people of Sudan (Evans-Pritchard 1967:5). The Azande insist that death is due to witchcraft and that those behind the death must be punished. The punishment could take the form of slaughtering of the witch, accepting of compensation or hitting back by the most lethal magic. Among the Abanyole, if it was confirmed that one had killed by magic, the person, together with his family, were isolated. This was a very big punishment, a curse. For example, the home of an old magic worker who was accused of killing the chief of South West Bunyore in June 2001 was burnt to ashes in accordance with the Abanyole customs. His family was also excommunicated. All this was in an effort to rid the community of the spirit of killing that was believed to have possessed the murderer. Also, the murderer and his family are believed to be contaminated by the act
of killing fellow community members. Expelling him and his family is one way of avoiding contamination of the rest of the community.

Among the Kisii, Bantu ethnic group in Nyanza Province of Kenya, there have been many incidents where such people have been beaten up or even killed. The argument for such a drastic action has been that whenever they are taken to court, these witches are often set free due to lack of evidence. I have indicated later in this chapter that it is difficult to bring evidence against witches. Because members of the community know these witches, they argue that the best way to deal with them is to beat or kill them. Beidelman (1963:71-72) records similar treatment of witches among the Kaguru people of Tanzania.

In poem (19) below, for example, the death of Omwana wa Anjichi (child of Anjichi) is blamed on Inyumba esimbanga ‘The jealous house.’

```
Omwana wa Anjichi                      Child of Anjichi
Ukholle mbwena?                        What have you done to me?
Sese wa Anjichi                         Sese of Anjichi
Ukholle mbwena?                        What have you done to me?
Nangwe mbwena?                         What shall become of me?
Nandeletenge khulusina bane?           On what shall I lean?
Omwana wa Anjichi                      Child of Anjichi
Ukholle mbwena?                        What have you done to me?
Ye, ye, ye, ye                         Ye, ye, ye, ye

Sindi nomulembe bana befwe              I have no peace My people
Otemba oboye mukoloba ye, ye            Otemba only said yesterday
Inyumba esimbanga                       The jealous house
Khuliakana iyo                          We shall meet there
Inyumba esimbanga ye                    Oh jealous house
Inyumba esimbanga ye!                   Oh jealous house!

Murebe Emuseno                         Enquire from Maseno
Murebe Emuseno                         Enquire from Maseno
Murebe Emuseno                         Enquire from Maseno
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Tsia murebe Anjichi
Find out from Anjichi

Emuseno
at Maseno

Omwana wanjie wandatola
My child who I got
bululu bane
With pain
Rebanga butswa Anjichi
I am asking you Anjichi
Waikholle mbwenya eh?
What have you done to me?
Ye, ye, ye, ye
Ye, ye, ye, ye
Sindi nomulembe bana befwe
I have no peace
Otemba oboyeye mukoloba ye, ye
Otembo only said yesterday
Inyumba esimbanga
The jealous house
Khuliakana iyo
We shall meet there
Inyumba esimbanga ye
Oh jealous house
Inyumba esimbanga ye!
Oh jealous house!

Murebe Emuhaya
Enquire from Emuhaya
Murebe Emuhaya
Enquire from Emuhaya
Tsia Murebe Oluhano Emuhaya eh
Find out from Chief Oluhano at Emuhaya
Omwana wanjie wandatola bululu bane
The child I got through pain
Rebanga Anjichi waikholle mbwenya?
I’m asking Anjichi what did you do me?
Ye, ye, ye, ye!
Ye, ye, ye, ye!
Sindi nomulembe bana befwe
I have no peace My people
Otemba oboyeye mukoloba ye, ye
Otembo only said yesterday
Inyumba esimbanga
The jealous house
Khuliakana iyo
We shall meet there
Inyumba esimbanga ye
The jealous house
Inyumba esimbanga ye!
Oh the jealous house!

In the last three lines of each stanza, the mourner repeats the blame threatening in each third last line of the stanza Khuliakana iyo ‘We shall meet there.’ It is not clear how the jealous house killed child of Anjichi but we can infer that it is through witchcraft, a common method.

7 The name Emuhaya comes from the name of a tree called omuhaya. When the first chief was installed in Bunyore, he used to precide over cases under this tree which had a big shade when it was hot. In time, the place took the name of the tree. The tree still stands there but is old and most of the branches fallen off.
of using mystical powers in Bunyore. The jealous house in this poem stands for the enemy family that is blamed for killing child of Anjichi. The enmity is caused by jealousy. We can infer from the poem that the son of Anjichi was wealthy. For instance, the person cries singing: “On what shall I lean?” (line 7 of the first stanza). This means the deceased supported the mourner materially. The deceased was also famous. For example, he was known to chief Oluhano (fourth line of stanza three), one of the most important and influential people in Bunyore. He is also known in Maseno (the first three lines of stanza two). Maseno is a very old mission and education centre in Bunyore. The fact that the deceased is known in Maseno may mean he is either highly educated (from Maseno high school and more recently a Teacher Training College and University college) or a prominent religious person or both. The family that killed the son of Anjichi is likely, therefore, to have had ill feelings about him because of his achievements displayed by the fact that he was famous and that he appears to have been a relatively well off person.

The deaths of an old man and his wife in 1997 in a village in Bunyore led to widespread view that the man’s cousins had bewitched them. At the funerals, people wailed throwing vailed attacks at the cousins whom they blamed for the deaths. The medical reports at Maseno hospital, however, indicated that the couple had died of dysentery. The husband died first and was followed a week later by the wife.

Among the Abanyole there is no belief that dysentery that kills can be caused by infectious diseases. It is believed that there must be an agent, a person manipulating mystical powers who played evil tricks on the two old people. This view is similar to that of the Tiriki, also a Luhya sub-clan (see Sangree 1966:41). Evans Pritchard (1972:18) observes the same attitude among the Azande of Sudan. In a study on the Kaguru of Tanzania, Beidelman (1963:63) also observes the same belief. Deaths are therefore to be traced to some external force in nature that controls life.

The above discussion does not discount the fact that the people are aware of the different ailments in their environment. Discussion interviews with some Abanyole revealed that they are well aware of illness such as malaria, typhoid, dysentery, fever, measles, menengitis and

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8 I collected this information in 1997 before I started working on my Dr. Phil. dissertation. I attended this funeral because the couple were my relatives.
now, AIDS. Studies on other African communities also reveal that the Meru of Tanzania and the people of Mberengwa District in Zimbabwe, for example, are also aware of the existence of illnesses. For example, in a study based on a Meru medicine man, Harjula (1980:67-73) points out clearly that Mirau has not only good knowledge of the different ailments that afflict the Meru people but he also knows their causes and cure. Dahlin (2001:178-184) reveals that the Mberengwa people are also well aware of the illnesses, their causes and remedy.

On the event of death among the Abanyole, however, a medical explanation on the causes of malaria would not be readily accepted. The question everybody asks is, who brought the malaria? According to the Abanyole beliefs, malaria can be cured. The malaria that kills is engineered by either spirits or magic workers.

In June 2001, there was an incident in South West Bunyore Location which adds weight to the view above. The chief of the location died. Medical reports indicated that he had died of menengitis. The villagers however disputed this saying he had been bewitched. In July of the same year, a medicineman from Bungoma in Kenya was invited into the area to establish the cause of the chief’s death. This medicineman has power to make witches come out and confess of their bad deeds. This is what happened. An old magic worker came out and confessed to have killed the chief. He also brought to the medicine man a book in which he had recorded the names of all the people in Bunyore that he had killed including that of the chief. The police from Luanda police station were called in and they arrested the old man. The book with the names of people who had been killed was locked up at the police station as exhibit in this case. The old man, however, died in police custody before the ruling of the case. The book still lies at the police station in Luanda (this account was given to me by Mzee Wellington Masatia Tambwa - Appendix 4, number 78 and Dinah Amimo Otwelo - number 37). They witnessed the murderer confess. They also saw the book with the names of the people who were killed.

Influenced by the belief that the cousins had killed his parents, the couple’s son wailed chanting poem (9) reproduced below:

\[
\begin{align*}
Owera papa & \quad \text{He who killed dad} \\
Owera papa alkgilanya & \quad \text{He who killed dad wails in the valley}
\end{align*}
\]
In this poem, though the boy is currently mourning his mother, it is the death of the father that really moved him and he still has not recovered from the shock caused by it. In this song he expresses the belief that the father’s death was brought about by evil people. He chanted Owera papa alakailanga khulubanda munanguba ‘He who killed father wails in the valley at Munanguba.’

According to Abanyole beliefs (Mzee Joshua Amukonyi - Appendix 4, number 60), it is evil spirits that wail in valleys mostly at night and in darkness. Evil spirits in this community are associated with darkness, forests, deserted places etc. This will explain, why there is a belief among the Abanyole that they are mostly at large at night. It is believed that sick people experience more pain at night, because these spirits come to torment them before retreating into their living quarters by daybreak. There is no scientific evidence to support this but it is a deep cultural belief that cannot easily be taken away by scientific knowledge.

This boy is not saying that the person accused of killing his parents is literally crying in the valley, nor is he saying that evil spirits killed the parents. What he is saying is that the accused person is as evil as the evil spirits that cause so much suffering to so many people and their property in this community. The boy is thus using allegorical techniques that are frequently used and highly appreciated at funerals in Bunyore. The point I am driving at is that funeral poems are steeped in peoples' culture and one needs to have a good understanding of the idiom to understand and appreciate what the boy’s message is. He would be foolish to attack the accused directly as the accused would take the matter to court and the family might suffer another tragedy when the boy is jailed (See Beidelman 1963:73).
Kaguru do not also like open conflict on matters such as witchcraft. On pages 70-73 he, however, tends to contradict what he has already said.

I have already noted that manipulation of mystical powers is an extremely furtive and mysterious activity. It is almost impossible to bring evidence against anybody in such circumstances. The relatives of the deceased may suspect the accused but they cannot produce palpable evidence to bring a case against such a person. Maquet (1954:172) has observed a similar situation in Rwanda.

This explains the use of heavy symbolism, allusion and imagery common in this and similar songs. It is important to note that among the Abanyole, direct confrontation in art is neither accepted nor appreciated. There is no power in direct reference. For example, if the boy in the above poem mentioned the names of the people he suspects to have killed his father, it would not be as effective as when he projects them as evil spirits into the minds of the audience. Because this association makes such people dreaded, the boy presents a stronger case by use of metaphorical language. What is more, it keeps him on the right side of the law as nobody can accuse him of implicating personality. By this means, he is operating within culturally acceptable limits of singing oral funeral poetry.

Another poem I collected blamed the death of the deceased on witchcraft perpetrated by Aberanyi, a clan in southwest Bunyore.

Solo: Enimba omukhana
All: Enimba omukhana

Sindakhatekha Ebwiranyi would not be married in Ebwiranyi
Aberanyi nabalosi Aberanyi are witches
Aberanyi nabalosi Aberanyi are witches
Balokananga nabarende They bewitch their neighbors

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9 This was found to be also true among the Kaguru. Beidelman (1963) gives a detailed account on how difficult it is to prove that one has employed witchcraft on somebody else. See also Gray (1963:162).

10 Mzee Ibrahimu Otukho (Appendix 4, number 8). This respondent is a great orator, a respected art form among the Abanyole. My interview with him was recorded on video by Harvilathi on the morning of Monday, June 24, 2000. We must take his observations here seriously because he was not only responding to questions. He also believes in the power of word. Being an adviser, arbitrator and judge in this community, his words gain even more power.

11 Name of a village in SouthWest Bunyore.
12 Inhabitants of Ebwiranyi.
This poem is sung by the young people at their night performances in the event of a death in *Bunyore*. Note that this song is not sung at a particular funeral but in many funerals where the young people turn up to mourn with the rest of the community (see Chapter 7 for more details on this aspect of the oral funeral poetry). Any other clan that is blamed for the death of whoever is being mourned, can replace *Aberanyi* in this song. What the poem is implying is therefore the popular belief that death in *Bunyore* is caused by someone or a group of people playing tricks (witchcraft) on others.

An even more interesting example to support the point I am making is to be found in poem (18), reproduced below:

*Abasyubi bakhola emisango*  
*Batsila Akunda nafwa*  
*Eee ee*  
*Akunda wakwa amaloba*

This is another example of poems performed by secular groups of young people at their night performances on the occasion of death. The version of the text under study was collected in 1994. At his death, my grandfather was estimated to be 120 years old, yet in this song it is said that: *Abasyubi bakhola emisango batsila Akunda nafwa* “*Abasyubi performed rituals that caused Akunda’s death.*” This implies that Akunda did not die a natural death or, despite his great age and the fact that he was then partially deaf and blind, he did not die of old age. *Abasyubi*, his clansmates, are blamed for playing tricks on his life that led to his death. To the *Abanyole*, therefore, the concept of natural death or dying due to

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13 I collected the song and information when attending the funeral of my late grandfather, *Mzee* Zakayo Akunda Monde in 1994.
old age is not readily accepted. In studying death among the Tiriki, another Luhya sub-ethnic group, Sangree (1966:41) agrees with this view when he observes that: “No one in Tiriki, either young or old, is felt to die simply because his or her time has come. At every death, a human agent is suspected.”

In poem (25), Omenya’s mother-in-law is blamed for the death of the members of her family. It appears that she was deceived by a manipulator of mystical powers into taking a drug that eventually caused the deaths of all the members of her family (lines 3 and 4). The mourner sings:

*Niwina owakata nyakhusala Omenya*  
Who cheated Omenya’s mother-in-law

*Ole omusala*  
To take a drug

*Nakila abandu babe*  
That caused her family

*Bahuela mmaloba*  
To die

*Ooo - nyakhusala Omenya*  
*Ooo - Omenya’s mother-in-law*

Men among the Abanyole commonly believe that women are easily deceived into doing things that cause disaster to their own families. For example, women have often been accused of accepting potions, which they administer to their husbands as aphrodisiacs. Several cases have been reported, initiated by men, to show the effects of these drugs. For example, they claim there are some men who have been turned into half-fish and half-human, half-snake and half-human, stupid, violent or even mad by such potions. Some of the stories are exaggerated with the aim of instilling fear into the women from using such drugs. It must be restated that this is a male-dominated society where the men want control over the women. Such control is perpetuated by institutions such as polygamy. Through this institution, men own women and they can marry as many as they want, even when they are unable to adequately cater for them. The use of potions may make a man love one woman and remain close to her. Such a woman may then begin to have control over the husband, thereby interfering with the power structure mentioned above.

The accusation that Omenya’s mother-in-law is the bearer of the drug that has caused the family so much suffering should be treated with caution. It may be one of the stories initiated by the men to humble the women. If, however, it is true that she ever took the drug
that has finished her family, then there is a warning in the poem that people should avoid
drugs that have not been scientifically certified and could result in untold suffering of
individuals as well as whole families.

5.3 Death Through Murder

Murder is a very serious offence among the *Abanyole* (Alembi 2000:37) as indicated by the
fact that the penalty for anybody committing murder is extremely high. Firstly, the offender
is arrested and presented before a court of law. Sometimes justice is done and such offenders
are given life sentences or even the death penalty. Often, however, families of such
offenders bribe the authorities to have the person released for “lack of evidence” or on a
lesser penalty of manslaughter that could incur only a short imprisonment. Whichever way it
goes, the perpetrators and their families are stigmatized and are either ostracized or evicted
and their homestead burnt to ashes (Mama Violete Ogaye - Appendix 4, number 61). This
action is meant to cleanse the society because allowing such murderers to freely mix with
other members pollutes them. Consequently, the heavy penalties that murderers might suffer
deter potential killers.

Very few poems exist on murder as a cause of death among the *Abanyole*. Out of all the
poems I collected on the theme of death, only two mentioned murder as the cause. The two
poems are not exclusive on this cause of death. They have also been performed in cases
where it has been claimed that somebody has died from witchcraft or sorcery. The two
poems, (4) and (24) in this order, are reproduced below.

*Omwana wa Angose omwoyo*
Child of Angose this wailing is for

*nokukwo*
you

*Muyonga ubeleye muno*
Muyonga is very sad

*Mwana ninzikhaye hamuliango*
When I’m sited by the doorside with

*nasiba*
a dagger

*Sianje mmukhono*
In my hands

*Nakholenge mbwe etalanyi*
What shall I do the strong one

*Muyonga ubeleye muno wee*
Muyonga is very sad

*Baremakile omusala kwo*
They have cut down the tree that provides
The death of the person in poems (4) and (24) is blamed on the cruel acts of human beings. The expression *Baremakile omusala* ‘They have cut down the tree’ in the seventh line in poem (4) and line three in poem (24) symbolically imply that the deceased was murdered. *Baremakile* ‘They have cut’ is a violent act. Again, like in poem (19) above, the deceased appears to have been killed by jealous people. Note that the deceased was a very helpful person, symbolized by the “shade tree.” This means that people in the community with different problems would seek help from the deceased. We can conclude that because he was such a useful person in society, he must have been loved by many, to the chagrin of a section of members of that community. The disgruntled people may have been responsible for the deceased’s violent death. Jealousy as an incentive for the killing of an African is supported by Mbiti (1969) and Shisanya (1996).

### 5.4 Other Causes of Death

There are other causes of death in this community that do not come out through the poems. *Tsisila* (this is a Lunyore word that has no English equivalent. I have, however, described it in this section) is one of them (*Mama Mauwa Likhutsa - Appendix 4, number 77*). This condition affects mainly babies. It is instructive to note that if either of the spouses has extra-marital sex, this affects the baby. On holding the baby, the offending spouse also infects it with *tsisila*. Consequently, the baby becomes sickly, thin and eventually dies. The adulterous spouse may avoid infecting the child by taking a bath or giving the baby a gift (say a coin etc) before holding/carrying it. Gifts and washing therefore remove the impurity caused by the immoral act. Frequent bathing and dishing out of gifts to the baby, however,
raises suspicion with regard to the fidelity of the offender. This may end in tension in the family and even divorce.

_Ebiila_ (It has no English equivalent) is another condition that is believed to cause death in _Bunyore_ (Mama Mauwa Likhutsa – Appendix 4, number 77). This condition is contracted through casual sex – especially sex with close relatives. _Ebiila_ takes several forms. Firstly, _ebiila_ may kill instantly, for example, if a man has sex with a brother’s or cousin’s wife, he is prohibited from eating the ritual meat of a bull or he-goat that is slaughtered on the occasion of the death of the man who has been offended. If the offender (adulterer) eats such meat, he dies on the spot. About three years ago, for example, a man who had committed such an offence in _Ebwiranyi_ village choked on a piece of ritual meat and died instantly (Mzee Wellington Masatia Tambwa - Appendix 4, number 78).

There are times when clan members may want to expose a man who has been involved in an incestuous relationship. At this time, they would ask the member to pierce the ruminant of a bull slaughtered for the dead brother or cousin. If the man is guilty and knows the _Abanyole_ culture, he would decline. The necessary rituals would be conducted and he would be clean again. If the man, however, stubbornly proceeds to pierce the ruminant without going through the purification process, he is believed to die immediately.

The worst form of _ebiila_ is contracted when a man has sex with a father’s or uncle’s wife (a step mother). In this case, the offender becomes sick and starts growing thin. He coughs frequently. This type of _ebiila_ is very similar to AIDS. In fact for a long time members of this community believed that AIDS was actually _ebiila_. Many of them to date still believe so (Mzee Wellington Masatia Tambwa).

What emerges out of this discussion is the fact that the _Abanyole_ place a big premium on morality. One is expected to have sex only with a husband or wife. Outside of this, a man risks infecting their baby with _tsisila_ and himself with _ebiila_. As result of the harsh natural penalty, would be adulterers are scared when it comes to sex with close relatives.

Curse is another cause of death in _Bunyore_. In this community, only older people can curse, the kind of curse that can cause a death. See Chapter 7 for details on evil spirits as agents of death among the _Abanyole_.

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5.5 Summary

From the analysis in this chapter, it is evident that natural death or even death due to old age does not exist in the minds of the Abanyole. Even when one is struck dead by lightning, it is believed that the lightning must have been inflicted by someone. Dysentery or even malaria cannot be accepted as sole causes of death. There must be somebody or some force responsible for any diseases that kill.
CHAPTER 6
EFFECTS OF DEATH

6.1 Introduction

My discussion in this chapter is focused on the effects of death to members of the Abanyole community with the aim of answering the question: what effects of death are expressed through oral funeral poetry. The analysis and information in this chapter are taken from a review of literature from documented sources, interpretation of the collected poems, interviews and reading of the text to members of the Abanyole community who gave me useful comments (see Appendix 5).

I have divided my discussion into four parts. These are:

- Death robs the community of its central resource, children
- A mother: Simpleton when alive, heroine in death
- Simpleton in life, heroine in death: Effects of death of wives on husbands
- Death of a father and its effects on children

I present these parts on the pages that follow.

6.2 Death Robs the Community its Central Resource, Children

Children are very important among the Abanyole. In fact, a marriage is incomplete without them (Mama Rubai Ainea - Appendix 4, number 54). Children keep alive a people’s lineage. I have further indicated that a man is allowed to take other wives if his first wife fails to give him children. I must restate that if a man is impotent, the wife is encouraged to beget children with other men, preferably from the husband’s clan. That through children, the threat of the family or even the community being annihilated by death is countered. This explains why children are central to the community.
In poem (1) below, the last point above is reinforced. In this poem, the mourner sings:

- **Baluhya basianje**, Fellow clans people
- **Baluhya basianje**, Fellow clans people
- **Obukhala ni sina?** What is important/beneficial?
- **Obukhala nomwana** A child is important/beneficial
- **Olamuruma omullo** You can send her for fire
- **Na matsi** And to fetch water

Some of the reasons why children are treasured in this community is the fact that they undertake such tasks as fetching water and firewood as mentioned in this poem. Losing a child in *Bunyore* therefore means losing a helper. That is why this mourner saw everything else as being worthless.

The future of a community lies in its children. Families exhaust their energies struggling to bring up their children, so that in old age the children will in turn support them. The majority of the *Abanyole*, who are not in government or company employment, do not have the benefit of pensions and living in a country where social security does not exist, the alternative is to invest in children. For instance, parents get bride price for their daughters. This is paid in terms of cattle and money. The boys, on the other hand, have a duty to support their parents whenever they are able to secure gainful employment. This is why the persona in the above poem cries that a child is priceless because she or he can be sent to fetch firewood or water.

It is significant to note that firewood and water are symbolic of all the help that a child will offer to the parents (Joel Otundo Olasya - Appendix 4, number 59). When parents lose a child, they see themselves as useless or worthless. This fact is well illustrated later in the same poem:

- **Omwana we Inaya** One unced at *Inaya*
- **Ise mbula obukhala hango** I am useless/worthless in this home
This poem also points to the value of a woman: she is only “useful” if she can bear children. Without a child she sees herself as “useless/worthless.” In poem (23), the argument I am making finds more support:

Omwana wanje utsiye  My child has gone
Baluhya ise lelo   Fellow clans people, today
Sikaye butswa,  I have remained alone
Ise ndilibwa na machungu  I’ll be eaten by rats

The feeling of loss, aggravated by the fact that the mourner in the above poem has lost somebody who would have helped him/her, is clear. In the last line, there is a very sad image of one being eaten by rats when she/he dies. Again, this tells us that children are supposed to take care of their parents at all times, especially in old age, when sick and up to their time of death. Children are expected to give their parents decent burials. The Abanyole believe that parents live in their children, which explains the general belief that a dead person is still alive so long as she/he has living children.

This community tends to believe that when children give their parents decent burials, the dead parents feel proud that they have left behind strong, orderly and respectable children who will continue to represent them on earth.

Ndilibwa na machungu ‘I’ll be eaten by rats’ is an expression in Lunyore meaning that there will be nobody to bury the dead who leave no offspring with the result that rats, dogs and other carnivorous animals might chance on the body before people come to know of the death. There is some hyperbole here, because there will always be someone in the community to bury a dead member. However, the point being stressed is that the dead feel honored when their own children bury them. Furthermore, it is not just the question of burial that concerns this mourner but the possibility of being forgotten immediately he/she dies. Mbiti (1969:159) observes that whoever has children dies gradually (it takes time for her/him to be forgotten although they are physically gone). But whoever does not have children dies immediately. This is the saddest thing that can happen to any African.
The thinking in the above argument may have strongly influenced the institution of polygyny in Africa. The length of one’s life in this world after physical death depends on the number of surviving children. In claiming the lives of children, therefore, death is a cruel enemy.

The effect of death on a person as a result of losing a child is further demonstrated in poem (19). In this poem, the mourner laments:

\[
\begin{align*}
Nandeletenge khulusina & \quad \text{On what shall I lean} \\
Omwana wa Anjichi & \quad \text{Child of Anjichi} \\
Ukholle mbwena? & \quad \text{What have you done to me?}
\end{align*}
\]

The image of a child as support to the parents comes out in the line \textit{Nandeletenge khulusina}? ‘On what shall I lean?’ The bitterness of the mourner at losing his/her support is exemplified in the repetition of the above line throughout the poem to emphasize the loss. The death of ‘child of Anjichi’ completely devastates this mourner. In the line \textit{Sindi nomulembe bana befwe} ‘I have no peace, my people’ it is clear that the mourner is overwhelmed not only by the loss of a loved child but also by the loss of the material and emotional support the child symbolizes.

The mourner in poem (24) appears to be similarly affected and, it appears, for more or less the same reasons as those in poems (19) and (23). In poem 24, the deceased appears to have been useful not only to the parents but also to the other members of the community. This poem is normally performed in \textit{okhukoma} (see Chapter 7 for details). The deceased in the poem is referred to as a shade tree, which, used symbolically, refers to all manner of support that the deceased used to provide (\textit{Mama Maritsa Akute} - Appendix 4, number 6). Such support might include money, clothes, food and basic necessities for survival of human beings.
6.3 A Mother: Simpleton When Alive, Heroine in Death

The effect of the death of a mother on her children comes out strongly in the poems I collected. I have already observed that mothers in this community work a lot to support their families. Because they are involved in the basic things that sustain life such as feeding and clothing families, mothers are close to their children. Writing about the Igbo of Nigeria, Aba Mere cited in Wilentz (1992:xix) comments on this aspect of the role of women in society. She notes: “Women are the most primary and constant agents of child socialization.” In poem (17), for example, the mourner laments:

\[
\begin{align*}
Oufukilanga \, obusuma^{14} & \quad \text{The one who cooks ugali for me} \\
Ndelo \, nandie \, hena? & \quad \text{Where shall I eat from?} \\
Ounjikullanga \, omuliango & \quad \text{The one who opens the door for me} \\
Ndelo \, wina \, owanawikule? & \quad \text{Who will now open for me?} \\
Mama \, ufunuye \, esiekenye & \quad \text{Mother, you have exposed my nakedness} \\
Ndelo \, kho \, nabanjekhe & \quad \text{People will laugh at me}
\end{align*}
\]

Clearly, this mourner will be denied a lot on the death of the mother. For instance, it is the mother who appears to have been feeding and also opening the door for him/her. These two are symbolic of the sustenance that the mourner has been receiving from the deceased. Evidently, the deceased means much more to the mourner than just a mother. That is why she/he expects to face or be exposed to difficulties as a result of the death of the mother.

Exposed, in the sense in which it is used in the poem, suggests that the mourner has been so dependant on the mother that she/he may not be able to survive without her. The mourner has employed the use of hyperbole here but the point is clear: this mourner is greatly disturbed by the mother’s death. This poem clearly shows the importance of a woman in society although this is denied when she is alive. Writing about the Ingria, Kallio (1982:201)

\[14\] Obusuma is the staple food of Omunyole. It is stiff poridge made from maize flour and hot/boiling water. Obusuma is served with vegetable or meat.
observes a similar situation when she states that, despite their cultural superiority, women were socially, politically and economically subordinated.

The role of a mother and women in general has not been fully appreciated in Bunyore because it is a patriarchal society (Dinah Amimo Otwelo - Appendix 4, number 37). Through this society’s folklore, especially the oral narrative, the woman has been portrayed as a witch, living off what man makes - depicted as some sort of parasite, incapable of understanding and implementing instructions and totally lacking in intelligence as demonstrated by the fact that she easily falls prey to the ogres and has to be rescued by males including small boys. Similar views are not uncommon in other cultures. Writing about the Finnish and Karelian culture, Timonen (1998:214) observes that the largest group of songs about women are oppressive in tone and reveal the limited freedom accorded these women.

The negative portrayal of women is evident even in day-to-day discourses and cultural practices. It is not uncommon to hear comments like: “Women are useless,” “You can cheat all the women,” “Women are foolish,” and “Women only feed, they cannot produce.” Such negative comments are aimed at lowering the self-worth and esteem of women (Alice Otundo - Appendix 4, number 9). Men have even used folklore in the fight against women. For example, a proverb like Omukhasi neingubo ‘A woman is a dress’ could be understood at two levels. First it means that a good dress makes a woman beautiful. Secondly, and this is how men have used it when they want to bring women down, it means that all that a woman wants in life is a dress. This way, a woman comes out as somebody who does not aspire for greater things in life. She is like a child who is easily pleased by gifts of clothes.

Another proverb used by men to lower the dignity of the woman is Omukhasi neinda ‘A woman is a stomach.’ This means that all that a woman cares for is food, ‘her stomach.’ This may mean that a woman is unable to think beyond food. Indeed this seems to be the thinking of most men. For example, at marriage, a woman is said to be going to cook (atsitsanga okhutekha). It is common to hear expressions such as: Watekha ‘She went to cook,’ Etekho yiye eli nomunyakhano ‘Her cooking is in trouble’ – they mean her marriage is in trouble,’ Ayatekha sibamuyanza tawe ‘People don’t like her where she is cooking’ etc. Therefore a woman is a cook, a servant, not a wife. This is the popular belief.
Women who succumb to this kind of psychological warfare, and the majority of them do, carry feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. Men who want to dominate women even when many of them, as I will argue shortly, fall far short of the women in ability, use this psychological strategy. Finnish and Karelian women’s songs also describe men as aggressive. Timonen (1998:215) observes that “his cruelty is so fierce that standing in the cottage the wife feels as if she were on the executioner’s block.” This should be seen as men’s psychological strategy to dominate women.

Cultural practices that denigrate women include the institution of marriage where many families have considered daughters merely as sources of income (Dan Atulo Okwanyo - Appendix 4, number 69). There are, for example, lengthy negotiations over bride price. Once a man pays a fortune for a woman, he feels that he must own her, body and soul. She, in effect, becomes his property. Women are thus looked upon as items of trade, which is of course an abuse of a well-intended cultural practice. Bride price is supposed to cement a relationship between the bride’s family and that of the groom. At best, it is an expression of appreciation by the groom’s family and not a source of wealth. Because of this male chauvinism, many women feel estranged in their husbands’ home. This situation is similar to that reported by Timonen (1992:216) when she notes that: “Smaller in number but clearly crystallized and vibrantly expressive is the group of those themes which depict the wife’s feelings of estrangement and ‘otherness’ in her husband’s home.”

Another practice through which women can be humiliated is the way they are often misused by a second husband after becoming widowed. Traditionally, such a man was supposed to be a brother or a cousin to the deceased. As has been earlier stated, this was intended to keep the dead man alive by begetting children in his name. This gives the community a feeling of victory over death.

The woman is misused and I must add, abused, through the institution of remarrying, because often her feelings do not count. Whether she wants to be remarried or not, she must co-operate to fulfill the above requirement. The man’s responsibility, however, remains to his first wife and children. To the wife of a dead brother and or cousin, his obligation is merely to raise children. This reduces the woman to a lower level - to satisfy the demands of man and the society. Again, such men might have plundered the property of the deceased to such a degree that his family is left in need. In a novel on the Luo community of Kenya,
Margaret Ogola (1995:91) is very critical of this institution that puts the woman in a disadvantaged position.

It is as if there is an intention to break the woman psychologically and, in most cases it succeeds. Such women work without complaining, while the men, especially those not in salaried employment, sit and expect to be supported. In fact, the untold story is that it is the women who run the homes in Bunyore. This situation appears to be similar to that experienced by the Ingrian women. Writing on the situation of the Ingrian women, Nenola-Kallio (1982:261) observes that: “The women bore the heaviest burdens and experienced in themselves both their own sufferings and those near ones.”

The true value of the Omunyole woman that is never allowed to be projected in her lifetime seems to come out when she dies. Poem (17) gives one of the best illustrations of this. A mother is projected as the pillar of a home. The mourner in this poem is overwhelmed by the mother’s death because she/he does not know how she/he will cope with life without her. The line Mama ufunuye esiekenye ‘Mother you have exposed my nakedness’ best summarizes the point I am making.

More evidence on the above point can be found in poem (26). The children in this song, sung by the young people at their night performances are again overwhelmed by the death of their mother, and almost break down when they see her being laid in the coffin. In poem (13), which is also sung by young people at their night performances, the children mourn the death of their mother lamenting:

\[
\begin{align*}
Kalaba omusiele aliyo & \quad \text{If mother was alive} \\
Khane khuhulilanga obuyanzi & \quad \text{we would be happy}
\end{align*}
\]

Although not substantiated, this intense sense of loss can be explained by the role the woman played in the family. Taiwo (1984:1) has enumerated the various roles played by African women in a traditional set up. These include socialization of the children, education, economic role as a provider etc. But as Olandele (1984:1) correctly observes, these crucial roles have not been appreciated in the patriarchal societies.
From the foregoing, it is evident that mothers, unlike the negative portrayal in other forms of folklore, play a central role in the raising of families in *Bunyore*. The true identity and worth of the mother, therefore, comes out through oral funeral poetry.

### 6.4 Simpleton in Life, Heroine in Death: Effects of Death of Wives on Husbands

As I have argued in the preceding paragraphs, a woman occupies a central position in most families in *Bunyore* although this fact is denied by men. It is only when death occurs, that the true identity and role of a woman are established. Through oral funeral poetry, it becomes clear that she is in control. In poem (5), for example, *Lukhoba* son of *Malanda* is utterly devastated by the death of his wife. He feels so helpless that he begins to envy those with wives. The line:

\[
Omullo kulisamba \quad \text{Fire will burn me}
\]

has a deeper meaning more than can be taken from the surface interpretation. It means that *Malanda* must now cook for himself, a thing that a typical *Omunyole* man considers beneath his dignity.

Right from when their children are young, men who hold the traditional view of life teach their sons never to participate in “womens” domestic chores pertaining to caring for homes and children.\(^{15}\) *Lukhoba*’s lament should be interpreted against this broader background. The definition of traditional roles in African society does not only appear in folklore but also from books written by African women. In the introduction to *Women Writers of Black Africa*, Lloyd Brown (1981:21) says: “These writers emphasize that the experience, identity, and role of a woman are all distinguishable from a man’s in culturally definable terms.” The bereaved husband will now have to perform “humiliating women’s tasks” and so laments: *Abali nabakhasi bahulila obulai* ‘Those who have wives feel good.’

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\(^{15}\) I collected this information from my grandfather, the late Mzee Zakayo Akunda Monde, in 1994.
The suffering that a man goes through when his wife dies is further projected in poem (6), which runs as follows:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Omusungu yapimile Ambiyo} A white doctor examined Ambiyo \\
\textit{Siabira muluno} She will not survive this one \\
\textit{Olietuti Mayai} Olietuti Eggs \\
\textit{Siabira muluno} She will not survive this one \\
\textit{Ambiyo natsiye musiro} When Ambiyo goes to the market \\
\textit{Manyanza butswa} I feel happy
\end{quote}

In this poem, the role of a woman as provider comes out. The mourner chants: \textit{Ambiyo natsiye musiro manyanza butswa} ‘When Ambiyo goes to the market I feel good/happy.’ Mondays and Thursdays are market days in \textit{Luanda}, the main urban centre in \textit{Bunyore} where many people flock to the market to buy and sell goods. Families in \textit{Bunyore} look forward to market days because this is when women buy and prepare the choicest of food. It can therefore be understood why men get so affected by the death of their wives. It means they have lost not only a companion but also a provider, a double tragedy for the men. Sometimes, the death of wives causes men such anguish that they wail as they chant only their names.

The mourner in poem (6) provides a good example of this. That women are more appreciated after death than when they are alive can be attributed to male Chauvinism and the fact that the \textit{Abanyole} men will always want to be seen as the head of the house and the “doers.”

6.5 Death of a Father and its Effects on Children

The \textit{Abanyole} do not seem to have a large body of poems that bring out the effect of death on children when their father dies. Out of all the poems I collected on the theme of death, only two are relevant to this section. This is quite an insignificant number compared to the poems on the effects on children of death of a mother. This may be due to the fact that most
children are closer to their mothers than they are to their fathers. While most men spend time away from home, either working or on leisure, mothers are left to manage the affairs of the homes so it is understandable that their death moves children much more than that of their fathers.

Poem (27) is sung by children on the event of the death of a father. The children are lamenting that the farms are neglected because the person who may have bought an oxen plough (the father) is dead. Note the *Abanyole* view of the jobs a man can do, as it emerges from this poem. Men are supposed to do masculine jobs like buying an oxen plough and ploughing. This contrasts sharply with the “feminine” roles discussed earlier. Through oral funeral poetry, therefore, gender roles are defined. Women in *Bunyore* may till land using a hoe but they cannot use an oxen plough (*Mama Eunice Omusionza - Appendix 4, number 65*). There is no written law against this, it is the way the people have been conditioned to act. In African traditional set ups, roles were clearly defined. Conflict of roles rarely existed. Taiwo (1984:219) has commented on the nature of women’s defined role in family and community socialization. Poem (12) shows how children and the whole community grieve when a father dies. This is an expression of their sense of loss. Like in the Ingrian laments (Nenola-Kallio 1982:105), death in the oral funeral poetry is described, above all, as the bereavement of those left behind.

6.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the effects of death on the individual and on families. I have noted that death affects families in different ways and for different reasons. For example, parents are affected when their children die because there is fear that their names may not be continued and because children are seen as a source of security to parents, especially in old age. Children, on the other hand, particularly when they are still young, are dependent on their parents. Losing a mother spells disaster as it often means that a child has to fend for himself/herself with distressing results. The effect of death on a man who loses his wife has also been discussed. It emerges from this discussion that mothers hold the pivoting position in their families so that their children and husbands depend on them for sustenance. The positive image of a woman as it emerges from oral funeral poetry sharply contrasts with the
negative image of inferiority that has for centuries been assigned to her in this male-dominated society.

The oral funeral poems are not therefore only about death but also about life. Indeed, children listening to the poems will learn what society expects of them and the parents listening to the poems will realize what their children’s expectations are. The poems therefore offer a powerful looking glass through which one may peer into the complex world of an *Omunyole* psyche.
CHAPTER 7

PERFORMANCE OF ORAL FUNERAL POETRY

7.1 Introduction

My focus in this chapter is on the performance of oral funeral poetry indicating how elements of context, sound, props, costumes and make-up contribute towards an understanding of the Abanyole perceptions on death. Also discussed in the chapter is how members of this community learn oral funeral poems. The question answered in this chapter is: how does the performance of oral funeral poetry contribute to the understanding of the meaning, causes and effects of death? The discussion is based on information derived from syntheses of literature, interviews and observations during fieldwork.

7.2 How Is Oral Funeral Poetry Learnt?

Funerals are characterized by deep feelings that are partly expressed through poetry. Thus, poetry performances become useful avenues to let out pent up emotions that could easily be harmful to the health of the bereaved. Contrary to what Finnegan (1970) records in a general discussion on elegiac poetry in Africa that wailing and singing is solely a characteristic of feminine mourning, all members of an Abanyole community: girls, boys men and women alike wail and sing at a funeral. Funeral rites in Africa vary from one ethnic group to another. Therefore to talk of African elegiac poetry collectively as Finnegan does is not only unacceptable but grossly misleading because meaningful details that are unique to individual groups are either glossed over or ignored.

If everybody in Bunyore is involved in oral funeral poetry performances, how is this art form learnt? As with the Yemeni people (Caton 1990:51), there is no formal instruction of this art form among the Abanyole - a different situation from, for instance, that of medieval Ireland where instructions in verse composition were highly formal (Williams 1971:85-135).
From early childhood, the Abanyole observe and participate in oral funeral performances. As a result of this, they naturally develop into effective abakomi (mourners). This does not mean that all oral funeral poetry is a uniform general performance. One category calls for high individuality and this is where, again, I disagree with Finnegan (1970) when she observes that this genre as a whole is less specialized and that that is why it has attracted little academic attention. This category is called okhukoma, mistakenly referred to as shilembe by Mbiti (1969:154) and esilemba by Nandwa (1976) and Otwelo (1998). This category is led by experts in the art. Thus, it is a more organized and specialized part of the larger body of oral funeral performances. Nevertheless, the training of the artists even in this sector of performance is still informal.

7.3 The Contexts of Oral Funeral Performances

As already noted in Chapter 1, in this thesis I am concerned with the analysis of oral funeral poetry performed by the Abanyole between the time of death and the day of burial. This period normally lasts for three days although it may take longer in special cases. For example, if an Omunyole dies far away in a town, it may take sometime for the clan to raise funds to transport the body to the rural home for burial. For all that time, oral funeral poetry will be produced and performed at the place of death and the rural home. For purposes of our discussion in this dissertation, I will take up the normal funeral duration of three days.

As soon as a person is pronounced dead, wailing and singing commence. This marks the first context of oral funeral performance. Men, women and children in general wail as they sing to announce that death has occurred. Subsequently, there are sporadic outbursts of wailing and singing and this characterizes the entire mourning period.

Another context of poetic performance during the funeral season is the last two nights before the deceased is buried. During this time, beside sporadic wailing and singing, more organized singing and dancing take place: such as christian hymns sung by christian groups and traditional singing and dancing of Abanyole oral funeral poetry. The latter, which is the focus in this chapter, is normally performed by a group of young men and women. Instruments such as guitars, shakers, bells and drums usually accompany the performance.
The third context describes performances that take place at the funeral service. On this occasion, mostly Christian tunes are sung. Although this is not our focus in this study, I describe what happens at this time to give the reader a wholistic picture of performances in the event of a funeral in Bunyore.

The fourth context of performances takes place on the morning of the last day before interment. On this day a dance drama that is staged for men with at least one son, is performed. This dance drama (okhukoma), which is the most specialized of all oral funeral poetry performances, is staged by males of the community who must have been circumcised.

The fifth and last category of the performances happen during the burial and after it. The performances and accompanying rituals offer further insights into the meaning of death to members of this community. Again, I am only interested in the traditional elements of this phase of a funeral. The description of the Christian features is aimed only at showing the whole funeral ritual.

The nature, organization and functions of each of the performances in the three contexts outlined above are discussed in the next sections.

7.4 Performance of the Abanyole Oral Funeral Poetry

7.4.1 Performance on the Day a Death Occurs and on Subsequent Days Before Burial

As soon as death occurs, men and women burst into wailing and singing. As mentioned earlier, this serves as an announcement that death has occurred. As neighbours and passers-by hear the commotion, they turn up to see and join in until eventually the homestead fills with people mourning and attending to funeral issues. Women wail as they sing and move in and out of the house where the deceased lies before being moved out into a tent that is specially made for this occasion and demolished soon after the burial. They also sing as they move around the house. As they do this, their hands are placed on either the head, back or the stomach. This is an expression of intense sorrow and loss.
A mourner, overcome with grief, brings her hands and upper body to rest on a coffin bearing the body of Monica Osieko in July 2000. She is wailing and singing as she does so. It is night and the small lantern lamp provides light in the tent. (Photo by Lauri Harvilahki).

When the body is lying in state in the tent, women wail and sing around it while their hands remain in the above-mentioned position. Sometimes they carry along items such as clothes belonging to the deceased and a picture of her/him as they sing. These items remind them of the good times they had with the deceased when she/he was alive. The actions of the female mourners illustrate their intense emotions. For example, a closer observation of the performers revealed that they constantly went back to look at the deceased. They would look at his/her face, hands, feet and burst out into fresh sobs sometimes becoming so overwhelmed that they fell down and rolled on the ground. Similar emotions are reported in Nenola-Kallio’s (1982:22) study of the Ingrian laments.

As for the men, as soon as the death is announced, those who were not present arrive on the scene, often carrying sticks or clubs, which they use to strike the ground as they wail and chant. This is a symbolic action of cursing death for its cruelty. By bearing arms, they are also symbolically threatening death physically. Death is to them an enemy.

The major differences between the male and female performances lie in the fact that women sing while men chant. Another difference lies in the details of performance. Men carry sticks and clubs as they chant while women sing as their hands are folded on their heads, backs or on their stomachs. Whereas oral funeral poems among the Abanyole are performed by everybody in the community, among the Ingrians, they are basically a woman’s tradition, a women’s culture (Nenola-Kallio 1982:19).

This stage of mourning goes on for some days even after burial, although its intensity/magnitude will have gradually diminished. As relatives and friends continue to arrive for the funeral, there are occasional intense mourning and wailing sessions. The
singing, wailing and chanting serve important psychological and social functions. Psychologically, it provides emotional support to the bereaved family who must know that they are not alone in their grief. Socially, therefore, mourners express solidarity with the bereaved family. At the individual level, singing, wailing and chanting help in releasing tension and pent up emotions which if suppressed could hold health risks for the mourners. The Abanyole do not therefore put on these performances for fun. There are sound reasons behind the actions.

7.4.2 Night Performances

There are basically two broad loosely defined categories of night performers. One is the category staged by christians while the other is composed of men and women who perform “secular” tunes. This categorization should not be taken to mean that there are strict boundaries between people labeled christians and those who perform songs that are referred to as “secular.” It is interesting that a good percentage of the people who perform “secular” tunes are in fact christians. As it will be noted later in the discussion, christians often join in and dance with the people performing “secular” songs and then go back to their station. Also, both the groups sing many similar tunes. Even when christians sing a known hymn at this time, they “Lunyorerize” it, thereby making it highly danceable. I have coined this term from the word Lunyore. Lunyore is the language spoken by the Abanyole. Used in this context, the term means that the women and men perform these hymns in such a way that they come out as if they belonged to Abanyole. Funeral hymns are often solemn and slow. Performed in the Abanyole style, however, they are fast, cheerful and highly danceable. In fact listening to the performances, one would conclude that the performers are partying. This is very consistent with the Abanyole beliefs that the dead person has been born into the world of spirits, emakombe. Hence the need to party! (Dan Atulo Okwanyo - Appendix 4, number 69).

When this happens, those singing “secular” songs temporarily abandon their camp, join the christians and dance away with gusto before going back to their location. The boundaries erected between the christians and those performing “secular” songs therefore appear to be artificial. Who, then, are responsible for mounting these artificial boundaries?
In the discussion under night performers who sing “secular” tunes, I have observed that some of the artists engage in anti-social activities like *okhunywa omusala* ‘drinking medicine’ or *okhuremaka emisala* ‘cutting trees’ - (local terms for smoking marijuana or bang) and *okhwesaba mmoni* ‘washing faces’ or *okhunywa amatsi ka Jeremia* ‘drinking Jeremiah’s water’ or *okkhola oburembo* ‘to be fashionable’ - (local terms for drinking a highly potent illegal alcoholic beverage called *chang’aa*). About ten years ago, the words *okkhola oburembo* had a negative connotation. They meant that a woman was a prostitute. These days however they are used to mean fashionable. The people (men and women) who drink *chang’aa* are therefore loudly saying that what they are doing is fashionable.

Used in the former sense, these are examples of words that were used to lower the dignity of the women. Notice that it is only women who would be referred to as prostitutes yet it takes a man and a woman to prostitute.

The performers who indulge in such drinks and drug taking often become a nuisance. Christians are reluctant to identify themselves with such behaviour. But celebration, of which drinking and drug taking are a part, is an important part of the rituals of sending off the departed members of this community into *emakombe*. The christian members of the community know this. Needless to stress that the *Abanyole* are born and socialized into accepting this reality.

The christian members of this community therefore seem to have a dual personality that makes them suffer on the event of death. Many of them want to “behave like *Abanyole*” but the christian personality restrains them from expressing themselves that way. Shisanya (1993) shows how this category of the *Abanyole* live contradictory lives especially when death occurs. They are suffering from identity crisis and ambivalence. She goes into details on how they perform most of the traditional *Abanyole* rituals associated with death in secrecy and express themselves as non-traditional, christians, in the open. For example, they slaughter animals (she goat or heifer on the event of the death of female member, or he goat or bull on the event of the death of male member). The blood that comes out of the animals is supposed to sip into the ground thereby linking the living and the dead, a fellowship that is important when death occurs. Meat from the slaughtered animals is also supposed to provide food for the dead in the next world. This is not a christian practice at all yet nobody in *Bunyore*, christian or non-christian, will bury their dead relations without slaughtering an
animal. There is widespread fear – on the part of christians and non-christians alike, that if the living members do not slaughter an animal, the spirit of the dead relative will come back to haunt or even kill them.

Another example of the things done secretly is the *olubeko* (the ritual shaving of hair). In pre-colonial *Bunyore*, this was done two or three days after the burial of the deceased. Today, it may be done a day after burial because some of the relatives may want to go back to their stations of work away from home. Shaving of the hair symbolically means that one phase of life has ended. But the hair will grow again and this means the beginning of another phase of life. Overall, shaving in *Abanyole* belief system means that death is not the end of human life. Again, this ceremony has nothing to do with christianity although the *Abanyole* still do it secretly in fear that if they do not do it, again, the spirit of the dead relative will haunt them.

There was the practice among the *Abanyole* in pre-colonial *Bunyore* that if a member died away from home, the relatives would visit the place where he/she had died a few days after burial (in the event that the deceased died away from home). This was called *okhuila esinini* which may loosely be translated as (taking back the shadow - spirit). The belief here was that the spirit will not be at peace unless it has been taken back to visit for the last time, the place where the deceased lived. This is therefore not a christian belief. Today, when a *Munyore* dies away from home, the living relations return after a few days or months later to the place where the deceased lived. This could be in Nairobi or Mombasa or even Kisumu or Kakamega. They stay in the house overnight and return home the following day. The belief is the same that the spirit of the deceased will not be at peace until it has been taken back to the place where the deceased lived.

This further brings out the ambivalent nature of the life that the *Abanyole* christians must live. They are at great pain to satisfy their dual personality. In fact Shisanya (1993) points out that in this sense, christianity becomes a burden to them. She proceeds to argue that there is need for inculturation for christianity to be made more appealing. It is difficult in my view to envision how this suggestion would be implemented. There are many christian denominations in *Bunyore* with varying practices and principles that to make them agree on which traditions to accept and which ones not to accept will be a big problem.
Below is a discussion on night performances beginning with those by christians.

7.4.2.1 Night Performances by Christians

These performances involve both men and women, boys and girls. Women, however, mostly outnumber the men. They dress in warm clothes often jackets, coats, long dresses, hats of different types and sizes and headties.

Christian night performers at the funeral of Monica Osieko. The performance is just beginning. Soon there will be a large crowd of enthusiastic dancers and audience. (Photo by Lauri Harvilahit)

Many of the performers that I talked to (Alex Okuku - Appendix 4, number 68, Dan Atulo - number 69 and Thomas Ateku - number 5 among others) concerning this mode of dressing argued that nights in Bunyore are normally cold and that they dress this way to be warm. A closer examination of the dressing and especially the way some pulled the head ties and hats closer to their faces revealed that they were trying to hide something. I am arguing in this chapter that there is little difference in the dancing styles and mode of singing between the christians and “secular” performer who is already intoxicated with different types of substances. The performers start arriving as early as eight o’clock in the evening. Some may already be in the home when night falls. They have no specific time of the night when they start their performances. Mostly, however, they start performing between 9 and 10.
7.4.2.1.1 Structure and Meaning of Night Performances by Christians

The group chooses a suitable place, often near the tent where the deceased lies in state. The place must be lit with lantern or optimus lamp. If the family of the deceased is "rich," there may be gas, electric or generator light.

A critical examination of what happens at funerals reveals hypocrisy on the part of many of the members of this community. For example, people are known to neglect their economically disabled relatives and parents, who are forced to live miserable lives. There have been cases where some did not even have lamps, food and other basic items of life. As soon as such a relative or parent dies, however, a son or daughter turns up with gas or generator light. There is a case of an old woman who did not have a bed and she slept and covered herself in rugs. When she died, her sons bought a new bed, matress and linen. The mourners who did not know her, believed she had lived an affluent life.

On one hand, this may reveal the level of dishonesty by some members of this community. It is absurd to buy a bed and linen for a body to lie in when the deceased lived in abject poverty and destitution. At another level, it reveals that the Abanyole gain a higher and mystical status when they die. The living members fear them. They must therefore do everything possible to "please" the dead. This includes buying an optimus lamp to light the home where death has occurred when the deceased did not have the cheapest of lamps when they lived.

At yet another level, it is possible to see that many of the living members who neglected dead relatives often have a loaded conscience. They are guilty that they did not fulfil the duty of taking care of their parents and other relations. This forces them to do strange things in an effort to show the multitudes of mourners that they are "responsible." This may mean that it is difficult to know how affluent or less affluent one was when they lived on the basis of a funeral that is put up for them. However, the songs, stories, proverbs and jokes told at this time offer a good opportunity to the mourners to know the truth about the deceased. For example, a mourner may look at the deceased and say: Kata abaraibula balitsanga 'Even those without children still eat.' This proverb is loaded with meaning that may guide a mourner to understand the life that the deceased lived. By using this proverb to summarize
the deceased’s situation, this mourner is saying that the deceased has many children who did not take care of him/her. That it were better if he/she did not have any children at all.

As soon as the group assembles, they start to sing. The Pentecostal groups play drums and bells as they sing. The non-Pentecostals often start singing without the drum and bells. As the performance picks momentum, however, they somehow find drums and bells. Both the Pentecostal and non-Pentecostals start with slow tunes.

The slow and reflective singing does not last long. Soon, the performance picks up. The soloist takes up a tune sang by the night dancers who sing “secular” songs. the performers clap heartily. The drums vibrate and the sounds of bells fill the air. Below is an example of the song they may sing.

\begin{verbatim}
Solo: Luwweye okhulanga papa
   Luwweye bane
All:   Luwweye okhulanga papa
   Luwweye bane

Solo: Luwweye khubanabe
   Luwweye bane
All:   Luwweye khubanabe
   Luwweye bane

Solo: Luwweye mulitala
   Luwweye bane
All:   Luwweye mulitala
   Luwweye bane

Solo: Eh papa wefwe
All:    Eeeh eeh eeeh

Solo: Eh papa wefwe
All:    Liloba litsia okhumina
    omwana wa mama
\end{verbatim}
Solo: Eh papa bane  
Solo: Eh father

All: Eeeh eeh eeeh  
All: Eeh eeh eeh

Solo: Eh papa bane  
Solo: Eh father

All: Liloba litsia okhumina  
omwana wa mama  
All: The earth will squeeze  
my mother’s child

The performance hits its peak. The performers dance as if possessed by some spirit. It is at times like this that the performers singing “secular tunes” abandon their station and join them.

The success of the performance largely lies with the soloist who is supposed to be very versatile and resourceful. He or she must be a good singer and dancer and must strive to manipulate the emotions of the singers by taking them through a variety of singing and emotional landscapes. While in this emotionally charged mood, the performers may dance in and out of the tent where the dead person lies in state. The known christian tunes which may be Lunyorerized to suit this occasion include:

Ise menyanga hatinyu  
I stay in a fort

Inyumba yanje yatinya  
In a solidly built house

Siyombokhwa khumuyekhe  
It’s not built on quick sand

Yombokhwa khulwanda  
It’s built on a rock

Yombokhwa khulwanda  
It’s built on a rock

olwanda olutinyu  
A hard rock

Siritsanga olucheka  
I do not fear a storm

Yombokhwa khulwanda  
It’s built on a rock

Nolwa esibi sikhupanga  
When problems come

Singa imbutsa ingali  
Like a strong wind

Ndamanya owa ndasubila  
I know whom I believe in

Ndombokhwa khulwanda  
I’m built on a rock
When the singers get into the tent housing the body of the deceased, the relatives of the departed join in the singing and dancing. They then perform until they get tired.

Other songs sang by these performers include:

(1)

**Solo: Omenyenge nomanyile ko!**  
Solo: As you stay in the world beware!  
**All: Musibala oli omucheni**  
All: You are a visitor in this world  
**Omenyenge nomanyile**  
Stay in the world with the knowledge  
**musibala oli omucheni**  
that you are a visitor

**Solo: Ochende nomanyile ko!**  
Solo: As you stay in the world beware!  
**All: Musibala oli omucheni**  
All: You are a visitor in this world  
**Ochendenge nomanyile**  
Walk in the world with the knowledge  
**musibala oli omucheni**  
You are a visitor in this world

**Solo: Wikhalenge nomanyile ko!**  
Solo: Stay with the knowledge that!  
**All: Musibala oli omucheni**  
All: You are a visitor in this world  
**Wikhalenge nomanyile**  
Stay with the knowledge that you  
**Musibala oli omucheni**  
at are a visitor. You are a visitor in this world
Yohana yaulila omwoyo  
John heard a voice

Nikubola obumenyo  
That promised life

Bwa Nyasaye buli nabandu  
In God’s people

Naye alamenya nnabo  
And he will dwell with them

Yalola elikulu liyyia  
He saw a new heaven

Khandi neliloba eliyia  
And a new earth

Lia Omwami  
That the Lord

Yabikhila yabo  
Had reserved

Abalobole babe  
For his people

Yalola litala liniu  
He saw a beatutiful city

Yerusalemu imbia  
A new Jerusalem

Likhanga okhurula mwiku  
Descending from heaven

Lierechekheywesio omweya  
And people ready for it as if for a bride

Solo: Abene balena  
Solo: Where are the family

Abene balena  
Where are the family

All: Abene balena bakinge omusalapa  
All: Where are the family

Solo: Papa alena  
Solo: Where is father

Papa alena  
Where is father

All: Papa alena akinge omusala  
All: Where is father to carry this
The stress in the performances may seem to focus on the enjoyment that the performers derive from it and the dancing that accompanies it. Indeed one interviewee observed that the purpose of these performances is to entertain and console the bereaved family and friends (Alice Otundo - Appendix 4, number 9).

I must however add that one cannot fail to see the role of the christian message in the songs sung in a funeral set up. For example, the possibility that the deceased has gone to heaven – a new Jerusalem, a beautiful city (see song 2 above) consoles the bereaved family. It means that the deceased has gone to enjoy. The mourners may envy the deceased and even look forward to dying so that they too can go to the beautiful city, heaven. This drastically lessens the tensions in the mourners and pain of loosing a loved one.

7.4.2.2 “Secular” Night Performances

“Secular” night performances occur mainly on the last night before burial, although for prominent people such as chiefs and other leading personalities in the area, such
performances may take place for the duration when the body remains in state. The questions that may arise at this point are: Why do these performances take place at night? Is it by design or by chance that they happen at this time? People interviewed on this issue gave contradicting views. Some think that the young people who are the key players engage in anti-social behaviour as they perform (Mzee Joseph Osuka - Appendix 4, number 1, Mzee Ibrahim Otukho - number 8, Mama Fronica Iriri - number 34, Mzee Stanly Obukwa - number 22 and Mama Grace Abnery - number 28). It was pointed out that these young people consume huge amounts of chang’aa and smoke of marijuana. Once intoxicated, they become a nuisance, a characteristic that would be most undesirable in the daytime. Hence they perform at night when their unruliness is more easily disguised.

Other people: (Mama Mauwa Likhutsa - Appendix 4, number 77, Mzee Apollo Oyondi Keria - number 7, Kanini Maywaka Mandu - number 33 and Mzee Zakayo Mukhunyi - number 27) held a different view. They argued that night performances have been going on for years. These performances are supposed to raise the spirit of the bereaved family and distract attention from haunting dreams during the long lonely night.

This group argued that what was referred to as anti-social activities is in fact acceptable behaviour at funerals and that it is deeply rooted in the Abanyole culture. Alcohol and food are part of the ritual of sending off the departed person into the world of the living dead.

I observed that the young men carried weapons such as short spears, small axes and sharp machetes as they danced. The people interviewed argued that these weapons are used to scare away the evil spirits which are believed to have caused the death of the deceased. The Abanyole believe that such spirits appear mainly at night when it is dark. The presence of the armed youths is an assurance that despite death having struck, the community is still ready to defend itself.

The performances also communicate the Abanyole belief that death is caused by evil spirits. There is no poem, of all the poems collected, where the spirits are given as agents of death, yet spirits have been identified by various scholars as agents of death in Africa. These are the spirits of departed ancestors who may be angry because the living members have let them down in some way, or that they have done something wrong and so must be punished.
Gehman (1999:8) points out that death may be caused by the angry ancestors who are unhappy with something that was or was not done. Shisanya (1996) reports that among the Abanyole, it is believed that if the living-dead are not appeased, more deaths will follow. Among the Hottentots, it is reported that death is often caused by the ghosts of the dead, who chase living people or come to them in dreams and try to drag them off to the grave (Shapera 1930: 358). Commenting on death among the Madi people of Uganda, Williams (1949:202) notes: “The whole life of the people (the Madi, a Nilotic people of Uganda) is built around the belief that their ancestors survive after death as spirits (Ovi), who are able to intervene in human affairs. Both good and bad fortune is believed to come from them, the latter if they are neglected. In fact, every misfortune is attributed to the anger of some spirit because he has not received offerings of food, and is therefore hungry, and whenever one of the family falls sick or suffers an accident of any sort a witchdoctor is immediately consulted to find out which ancestor is causing the trouble.”

This explains why Mbiti (1969:156) observes that the living must strive to give the dead a decent burial and that all burial rituals must be observed for fear that the dead person will be angry and his spirit will come back to take revenge on the living. Even long after burial, the wishes of the deceased must be respected lest their spirits punish the living. Nenola-Kallio (1982:99) stresses the same points. She argues that how the corpse is prepared for burial, where it is buried and how it is buried are significant because of the Ingrian belief that it all has a bearing on the fate of the deceased in the next world.

Although it is a strongly held belief that spirits are one of the many causes of death in Africa, if the analysis in this study had relied on the poems alone, this cause of death could have been omitted. That is why I selected a broad based methodology, gleaning information from a variety of sources.

7.4.2.2.1 Structure and Significance of the “Secular” Night Performances

The performers arrive singing and dancing in the compound where the deceased is lying in state. They trot straight to the tent in which the body is lying and perform there for a while. Normally, as soon as they get to the tent, the performers strike a slow tune which signifies their feeling of loss as they pay their last respect to the deceased. This tune is played for a
few minutes without any dancing. They then quicken the tempo as they move out of the tent to dance around it with renewed energy. This means that death does not mark the end of life. If anything, it is the beginning of a new life, both for the deceased and the living. The deceased will continue to live in the world of spirits while the living must produce more children to replace him/her who now joins the ranks of the living dead (Mbiti 1969:152). I must add that through the young people who perform these rites, the Abanyole are asserting the fact that death does not mean the end of society. The presence of the energetic young people is evidence that society is still very much alive. This inevitably brightens the mood as everybody, young and old, joins in the dancing. It is no longer a gloomy situation, but rather, a celebration.

“Secular” night performers at work. This picture was taken in early evening on the eve of the major Obukoko for William Nabutsili, Jane Ongachi and Janet Ayuma in July 2000. The artists performed the whole night. (Photo by Lauri Harvilahti).

Rovina, leader of the above band, during the above mentioned performance. (Photo by Lauri Harvilahti).

After making a few circuits round the tent, they choose an appropriate space in the front-yard and continue singing and dancing with even more frenzy, adapting the old songs to the new situation. Normally, they sing about the deceased: his/her virtues, relatives, friends and the village but rarely do they refer to his vices. It must be restated that once dead, the
Abanyole assume a higher status. They become spirits and the living dare not besmirch them for fear that it will bring the wrath of the spirits on their heads. Sometimes the words of the songs reduce the family members to tears. Sometimes the family and friends become so inspired that they reward the performers with food, money and alcohol.

The dance is stopped from time to time by the performers and the audience when they want to demonstrate their prowess. For example, one may stop the dance and start boasting thus:

Nise Ja Uganda\textsuperscript{16} I am Ja Uganda
Mbullanga orundu rundi I hear there are some useless people
Ruli hano Here
Orwelangaa elira ilio Who use this name
Nyenyanga rulole hano esaino I want to see them here now

There will be a moment of silence. If nobody comes forward, the performer on the floor may continue:

Ilio silli elira litoro tawe That is not a simple name
Ndanyakhana okhulinyola I suffered for it
Rakhaulla imbwa yoyosi No “dog” whatsoever
Niyelanganga elira ilio tawe Should call himself that
Runanga munyembele I would like you to sing for me
Olwembo ollayi a good song
Ne lutsie khu: It is dedicated to:
Eyasulwe nali Emakunda Star from Emakunda
Gagi nali Ebuyalu Gagi from Ebuyalu
Jebino nali Esitsimi Jebino from Esitsimi
Olukanga nali Mukhalakhala Olukanga from Mukhalakhala
Rasia nali Esitsimi Rasia from Esitsimi

He will then drop five or ten shillings in the box guitar. Other performers are curious to know how much he is contributing so he must announce it for all to hear. As soon as the

\textsuperscript{16} This means man from \textit{Uganda} in \textit{Dholuo}, a language spoken by the \textit{Luo}, a Nilotic community in Kenya. This is a nickname and does not necessarily mean that the bearer of the name is from \textit{Uganda}. 
announcement has been made, the guitarist who doubles as the soloist starts singing the selected song. This may not however last long because soon, either a member of the crowd or another active performer, will start boasting.

*Nyakhanne mmakani mbu*  
I am disturbed that

*Obukhana bунyala okhusinjisibwa*  
This performance can be stopped

*Nende ebitinga singa Ja Uganda*  
By fools like Ja Uganda

*Khulwessilingi likhumi tsionyene*  
For ten shillings only

*Khuinywe bosi abali hano*  
For everybody who is present here

*Niwina oramanyile?*  
Who does not know me?

*Umeme nilio elira liakhollanga*  
Electricity is my name

*Uyyie obulai amera kano:*  
Listen carefully to the names I am going to call:

*Kabala, Adijango, Mswaili, Khonje*  
Kabala, Adijango, Mswaili, Khonje

*Bebeto, Njuki, Stua nende Bidii*  
Bebeto, Njuki, Stua and Bidii

*Nyenyanga abandu yaba bosi*  
I want to see these people

*Hano bwangu*  
Here immediately

The named persons move to the centre where space will have been created for them. The performer then continues:

*Omwami ommpeni*  
Mr. band leader

*Mbananga essilingi*  
I am giving

*Likhumi nende tsirano*  
Fifteen shillings

*Nyembele obusi*  
Sing for me a song

*Abandu bali hano*  
people who are here

*Bonyene nibo abetsa*  
Are the only ones to

*Okhusina obukhana yibu*  
Dance this tune

He then drops fifteen shillings into the box guitar. The soloist strikes and sings the tune requested and a few people pick it up, dancing away with all their might. But this does not last long because somebody else will take up the challenge.

*Nise ofiye*  
I am Ofiye

*Omukhana Wesitukho*  
Daughter of Esitukho
Ofiye siali omusino tawe  
Buli mundu hano  
Umanyile mbwo  
Ofiye niye ammondo  
Kata kenyekhanga  
Munange Ofiye ammondo  
Omukhana Wesitukho  
Sikhunyalla okhwikhala mmbusindu  
Ne abandu batti babukula obukhana  
Suye akene yakho  
Essilingi amakhumi kataru  
okhurula khu  
Mukhana Ammondo

Ofiye is not a joke  
Everybody here knows that  
You are aware also  
That I have money  
In fact you should  
All start calling me Ofiye Money  
Daughter of Esitukho  
We cannot just sit in the cold  
While few people dance  
I say no to this  
Here, thirty shillings  
From  
Miss money

At this point, the crowd cheers wildly as she continues:

Buli mundu asine  
Ommpeni khwenyanga khusine  
Nikhubotokhana hango hano  
Nyenyanga mbulle elira  
Liomuchendi liullikhanga  
Runaa mbulle ekita  
Tsing’oma nende amanyanga  
Biralanga elira ilio  
Buli mundu okwola aliulle  
Khutsie!

Everybody must dance  
Mr. band leader we want to dance  
Round this home  
I want to hear the name  
Of the decased pronounced clearly  
Let the guitars  
Drums and shakers  
Clearly spell it  
Let everybody hear it  
OK, lets go!

(This is based on what I actually heard at the funeral of Mzee Atingo in 1997).

The performers will sing and dance round the home till some other person comes forward thus changing the direction of the performance.

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17 This is a nickname. Ofiye means the dead one. The bearer of the name is openly boasting that he is as powerful as a dead person. I have said elsewhere in the dissertation that a dead person immediatly becomes powerful. The living fear him/her. This is the sense in which the name has been used here.
Clearly, these night performers, like the Yemeni balah (Caton 1990:79), are like a game. If performed to culturally accepted specifications, they are supposed to lessen tension, and make the night an enjoyable one thus relieving the minds of the deceased’s family and friends from the pain of bereavement. These night performers thus serve a very important psychological and social function. On this point Nandwa (1976:224) observes: “At night as the wake keeping continues, a kind of organized group of singers dance to entertain the deceased and his relatives. They take up the dirges that have been sung during the day and add new words to them. Today they use guitars and organize a kind of local nightclub during these funeral celebrations and sing songs to entertain the people of the deceased.”

7.5 *Okhukoma* Performances

*Okhukoma* is a category of the lyrical genre of the oral funeral poetry performances that are put up only for male members of the community who have at least one son. Of all the genres of oral funeral performances, this is perhaps the most elaborate. This is why I disagree with Finnegan (1970:147) when she notes that funeral performances in Africa are not particularly elaborate. Contrary also to what Finnegan observes about performers being unprofessional, lead artists in *okhukoma* are highly specialized and skilful as will be exemplified in subsequent sections.

Scholars who have researched on the *okhukoma* performances have only treated one scene of it, *esilemba*. In fact, they have erroneously referred to the whole performance as *esilemba*. These scholars include Mbiti (1969), Nandwa (1976) and Otwelo (1998). My research on this topic reveals that there are three more scenes that have not previously been written on. These are: *okhuchesia* which literally means to walk somebody/something around, *okhuhuliana* meaning moving around aimlessly and *likopo* whose name seems to have been taken from the lead instrument used in the performance, tins stuffed with stones.

The use of the title *okhuhuliana* (moving around aimlessly) in the third scene of *okhukoma* may mislead the reader. Members of this community, however, know that the movements and actions are functional, that they are aimed at chasing away the spirits of death that are believed to be responsible for the death of the deceased.
7.5.1 The Scenes of *Okhukoma* Performances: *Okhuchesia, Esilemba, Okhuhuliana, and Likopo*

*Okhukoma* dance is like a one act play that is divided into four scenes. These scenes are: *Okhuchesia, Esilemba, Okhuhuliana* and *Likopo*. The four scenes are described below beginning with *Okhuchesia* (I got these names and explanations from discussions with *Mzee* Johnston Okang’a Abukutsa - Appendix 4, number 38 and Shadrack Iriri Amutsama - number 11. More information came from observing performances at my father’s funeral in 1986 and at the funeral of Erick Edward Khasakhala in July 2000).

*Okhuchesia*

*Okhuchesia* is the first scene of *okhukoma*. It starts about six o’clock in the morning on the day when the deceased is buried. The performers dance gently as they sing. They walk round the village visiting the places frequented by the deceased. Death thus cuts a person off from physical life and *okhuchesia* (meaning to walk somebody/something around) is aimed at taking the spirit of the deceased to bid farewell to his favourite places for the last time henceforth, it will join the world of the living dead.

*Esilemba*

After the performers have visited the deceased’s favourite places they start walking, then trotting, and finally, running at full speed as in a battle charge, towards the deceased’s home. This scene is known as *esilemba*. As they run, they blow horns, sing, drum loudly and utter war cries. When they enter the home, the widow of the deceased welcomes them if she was faithful. However, if the widow had ever been guilty of *okhulia* tsimbeba “committing adultery,” it is believed that she would die on the spot.

*Okhuhuliana*

Upon entering the compound, all singing stops. The horn blowers move to the centre of the compound and completely take over instrumentation while the dancers go wild as they run round the compound spearing the air and “defending” themselves. This scene is called
Commenting on this part of the performance, Nandwa (1976:222-223) notes: “They then entered the home with great force and treading upon anything before them. All children had to be removed from their way, for they could be trodden under foot. If there were any crops growing in the home, they cut them down and destroyed them completely.” Alembi (1993:17) adds: “They visit his farm and grazing land then move to his compound, brandishing spears, clubs and twigs. Here, they go berserk, running to all corners and cutting down plants.” Completely worn out, they regroup at the centre of the compound, ready for the last scene.

Important points regarding death can be noted in this third scene. I have noted earlier in this chapter that the Abanyole believe that evil spirits are one of the causes of death. The “war” in okhuhuliana (translated as moving blindly) is a fight with the malevolent spirits that are believed to have caused the death of the deceased. These spirits must be defeated and expelled from the compound for the bereaved family to feel safe and secure. This point is supported by Alembi (1993:17) when he observes: “This is a sign that life in that compound has come to a standstill and the ritual is performed to drive evil spirits away from the home for these same spirits may have been responsible for the man’s death.”

The slashing of the plants as the performers dance is symbolic. It means life has temporarily come to an end but will resume as the plants regenerate. This shows that the Abanyole, as I have pointed out in Chapter 5, do not believe that death is the final end of human beings. They will live again in the next world. At another level, it means that society does not end with the death of an individual. Society, through procreation of its members, will continue to thrive. This last point is well captured in Kariara’s (1981:63) poem as follows:

If you take my child Lord
Give my hands strength to
dig his grave
Cover him with earth
Lord, send a little rain
For grass will grow
If my house should burn down
So that the ashes sting the nostrils
Making the eyes weep

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Then Lord send a little rain
For grass will grow
But Lord do not send me madness
I ask for tears
Do not send me moon - hard madness
To lodge snug in my skull
I would you send me hordes of horses
Galloping
Crushing
But do not break
The yolk of the moon on me

Clearly, death is not totally dreaded for after it grass will grow again. This means that if the living are in good health life continues after death for the deceased is still living in the next world as a spirit while the living procreate to keep the torch of life, to echo Mbiti (1969), burning.

There is therefore a relationship between death and birth in the Abanyole belief system. Birth ensures continuity. Birth, however, is a product of marriage. But marriage comes after initiation through circumcision of the male members. Through this ritual, the young men are prepared for marriage. Death is therefore at the centre of all rites of passage in the Abanyole community. This explains the status accorded to it in this study.

**Likopo**

The last scene of okhukoma is known as likopo. This is a very relaxed performance as the dancers are already exhausted after the energy-draining okhuhuliana. In this scene, the dancers walk along the main road and footpaths near the deceased’s home as they sing, paying their last respect before he is buried.
Okhukoma performers in action at the funeral of the late Hon Erick Edward Khasakhala in July 2000. This is part of the elikopo scene of the performance. In the foreground is Johnstone Okang’a Abukutsa, leader of the group and a man who gave me a lot of information on okhukoma. (Photo by Lauri Harvilahit).

7.5.2 Musical Accompaniments

The main instrument in an okhukoma performance is the horn. There are two types of horns used, the short horn called essilipa and the long one known as olwika. Essilipa is mainly used to spice the performance while the long horn is used for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is generally used to inform members of the community of the death of an adult member - male or female. In okhukoma however, it is used to control the performers. In the four scenes of this performance: okhuchesia, esilemba, okhuhuliana and likopo, the long horn is used to regulate the movement of the dancers. For example, in okhuchesia, it is only occasionally used while in esilemba it is frequently blown as people jog towards the home where the deceased is lying in state. In okhuhuliana, the blowing of the horn reaches its peak as the people run around the homestead. In likopo, it subsides to an occasional blowing as the dancers move out of the homestead and walk gently around the village, singing. There are other instruments used in this performance. They include Omutindi ‘the small drum,’ jingles, sticks, fiddle, guitar, and big drums.

7.5.3 Costumes, Make Up and Props

The principal artists in this presentation, the musicians and lead-singer, dress differently from the other dancers. They wear shorts beneath sisal skirts, which are supposed to facilitate easy dancing. They also wear light tops like vests and T-shirts. On their heads, they wear bands adorned with feathers. On their faces they wear make-up from coloured soil or chalk. This assists in portraying their characters as okhukoma dancers. Some wear masks
of leopard or lion faces, which signifies that the deceased was a warrior. On the ankles, they wear jingles. Wearing of shoes is discouraged as it hampers footwork. Those who must wear shoes are encouraged to use sandals. The other dancers wear normal dress. On their heads, however, they wear twigs. Few of them wear shoes. Again, they must be as light on the feet for easy movement as possible. The bulls, besides being adorned in twigs, have bells round their necks which ring as they run.

The dancers carry spears and shields and wield them in mock battle as if they were in real war. Costume, make-up and props are highly symbolic in this performance. If the dead person was a warrior, prominent farmer, landowner or businessman, the presentation is more elaborate with bright colours, more dancers, more bulls and more make-up. On the whole, a performance for a prominent person is richer. It is as if the community is aspiring to afluence. Writing on the importance of costumes and make up in this performance, Alembi (1993:17-18) summarizes this discussion when he notes: “Costume and make-up are worn for this performance. If the deceased was a warrior, most of the participants will wear war dress comprising a leopard skin to show that the deceased was a fearless fighter who could even face a leopard, one of the fiercest animals of the jungle. Some might wear leopard’s facemasks. They would also carry appropriate spears and shields. On the other hand, if the deceased was a rich landowner with many wives, children and cattle, they would dress accordingly for his okhukoma.”

7.5.4 The Social Significance of Okhukoma

There are laws, regulations and taboos that must be strictly adhered to by the leading okhukoma performers and all male members of the community who desire that okhukoma be performed upon their death. These regulations must also be respected by the women who wish to welcome okhukoma performers upon the death of their husbands.

A lead omukomi ‘mourner,’ the leader of the performance, is expected to live a pious life. For example, if he steals or commits adultery, he dies on the spot, when he tries to lead the performers. This reveals the seriousness with which rituals connected with death are handled. The event of death links the living and the dead through the details of the rituals. I have already stated, for example, the belief that the bull slaughtered on the burial day of an
adult male is supposed to bring the dead and the living into communion. The blood that comes from the animal and seeps into the ground feeds the spirits of the departed ancestors. The living members only eat the meat - and it must be roasted or boiled to clear the blood. If any blood is eaten, it must be boiled. Fresh blood is reserved for spirits.

Proper conduct must therefore be observed by anyone who participates in any of the death rituals. Otherwise, the spirits will be annoyed and often take revenge by punishing the offender. Punishment may take the form of death.

In the *esilemba* scene of the performance, the widow of the deceased is expected to welcome the performers into the home. The widow cannot, however, perform this duty if she was unfaithful to her husband for fear that she might die on the spot. Nandwa (1976:222-223) supports this point when she observes: “The wife of the deceased had to meet them carrying her husband’s spear. But she had to be an upright woman or else she would fall dead and die before the great company of warriors. If a woman knew that she had been unfaithful to her husband, she ran and hid herself as the *esilemba* came in the home. It must be noted that it is a great shame for a widow not to welcome the performers, as this will tell everybody present that she had lived an unfaithful life with her husband.”

*Okhukoma* is performed only for male members who have fathered a son and lived an upright life. Men who lived unfaithful lives were not honoured with this performance. Every member of the community must therefore be careful on how they conduct their social life, as this will greatly influence the kind of funeral rituals they will have when they die. In this regard, it can be said that death dictates the kind of life members of this community must lead.

### 7.6 Performances at the Funeral Service

There is no specific time when the funeral service should begin. Often, however, it starts between 10.00 and 11.00 in the morning. The mourners assemble in the house where death has occurred. Church ministers and the women’s leader accompanied by the choir goes to the house where the mourners are assembled. The women’s leader organizes the mourners
into two lines in which the procession of mourners walks out as the choir sings. One of the songs sung at this point is:

*Procession of mourners during William Nabutsili’s funeral in September 1999. In front is Esther Nemia, the women’s leader in Ebwranyi Church of God. (Photo by Ezekiel Alembi).*

\[\begin{align*}
\textit{Nderundanga khumarunda} & \quad \text{I am tossed about on the waves} \\
\textit{Khunyanza ya marunda} & \quad \text{on a stormy lake} \\
\textit{Ah ah ahahah} & \quad \text{Ah ah ahahah} \\
\textit{Oluheni Luhenukha} & \quad \text{Lighting flashes} \\
\textit{Khunyanza yamarunda} & \quad \text{on a stormy lake} \\
\textit{Ah ah ahahah} & \quad \text{Ah ah ahahah} \\
\textit{Imbumbuyeka nehutsa} & \quad \text{A strong wind blows} \\
\textit{Khunyanza yamarunda} & \quad \text{Across a stormy lake} \\
\textit{Ah ah ahahah} & \quad \text{Ah ah ahahah}
\end{align*}\]

As the procession nears the designated place for the service, the crowd which had already assembled here, rises. This is a sign of respect for the mourners. It should be noted that even at this time, the body still lies in the tent. It will remain here until the end of the funeral service when those involved in burying will go and carry it.
When the procession of mourners has taken seats, everybody sits. The choir may sing another number or the chairperson of the service may call for a general song—a song for the whole congregation. After this, there will be singing sessions spread through the programme. For example, there will be a song or songs by family and friends as a sign of farewell for the deceased, a song or songs to welcome the speaker, a song(s) for offertory etc.

At the end of the service, the casket bearers are invited and prayed for. They then go to carry the body for it must be brought where the mourning relatives and friends are now lined up to start the procession to the grave site. Led by a minister, the procession starts marching towards the grave as the choir sings.

**7.7 Performances During and After Burial**

After the funeral service, a minister leads the procession of mourners to the grave site. As they slowly match, the choir, composed mostly of women, sings slow and reflective christian tunes.

Through such singing, the sense of loss is emphasized. The atmosphere is normally tense and the mood sad. As the procession moves on, some mourners break down and they must be supported. Some are so weak that they are carried into the house where they will rest until they are strong enough to join the others. The women’s leader is responsible for taking care of the weak. She works with the support of assistants. From time to time the procession
is stopped and the minister reads scriptures from the Bible or other holy scriptures used at funerals.

The solemn atmosphere is disturbed from time to time. A mourner who may have received information concerning the death late or who for some reason was unable to come in time arrives. He/she wails loudly and may come and even demand that the burial be stopped. Strong men of the village must run and restrain him/her from interfering with the funeral programme.

A mad man may run into the line of mourners forcing them to scream and some to run for safety. Peace is however quickly restored by the strong men who remain vigilant throughout the mourning season.

When they reach the grave, the casket is placed on the ground. The people who had carried it, who are the same people responsible for the burial, kneel down beside the grave. This is a sign of respect. They remain in this position until the time of lowering the casket into the grave.

Prayers are said after which more scriptures are read. The body is then lowered into the grave. Family and friends are invited to respectfully throw handfuls of dust into the grave. More scriptures are read and prayers said. This is followed by covering of the grave as the choir sings.

*Church ministers read scriptures from the Bible during the burial of Janet Ayuma. (Photo by Patricia Alembi).*

From now on, most of the songs sung are similar to those sung at night and the aim is to create a relaxed mood. The choir sings and dances around the grave. The meaning of this is
that life must go on despite the disruption caused by death. It may also mean that the dead, who has now disappeared physically, has actually been born in a new world.

When the grave is about half way full, fresh poles or sticks are placed in a standing position one in each of the four corners. Normally, the poles are supposed to be from olusiolia tree. Because these trees are becoming rare, poles from other trees are now used. Olusiolia is an important tree in the mythology of the Abanyole. I have explained in chapter three that the pole used in making olusambwa is from this tree. Used in the four corners of the grave, the poles are supposed to mark the site of the new grave. I must stress that when dry, olusiolia poles are hard and therefore durable. It is unlikely that they can be quickly eaten and destroyed by ants which are common in Bunyore. At a mythological level however, the four poles are supposed to link the dead and the living. This way, close contact through dreams, especially, is maintained between the spirit of the dead person and the living friends and relatives.

These end of burial procedures raise a number of questions:

Do the people celebrate because the spirit of the dead person has gone to heaven or emakombe? It is instructive to note that most of the songs sung at this time are either fully traditional songs or adaptations of the christian songs. This situation leads to a second question: Why are these songs preferred over those with christian words? Would christian tunes not adequately capture the feelings and mood of the time? The four poles erected one in each corner of the grave, of what christian significance are they?
A close analysis of funeral procedures reveal that on the event of death, the *Abanyole* go back to their traditions.

The songs sung at this time include:

(1)

**Solo: Khabile njonyele**

Solo: I’ve searched everywhere and now I’m tired. Son of my mother

*Omwana wa mama khabile njonyele*

I’ve searched everywhere and now I’m tired

*All: Khabile njonyele*

All: I’ve searched everywhere and now I’m tired. Son of my mother everywhere and now I’ve searched I’m tired

**Solo: Khabile njonyele**

Solo: I’ve searched everywhere and now I’m tired. Son of my father

*Omwana wa papa khabile njonyele*

I’ve searched everywhere and now I’m tired

*All: Khabile njonyele*

All: I’ve searched everywhere and now I’m tired. Son of my father everywhere and now I’ve searched I’m tired

**Solo: Naumboe omukoye munda**

Solo: You’ll console me

*Omwana wa mama naumboe omukoye munda*

Son of my mother you’ll console

*All: Naumboe omukoye munda*

All: You’ll console me

*Omwana wa mama naumboe omukoye munda*

Son of my mother you’ll console

(2)

**Solo: Lwenyanga si**

Solo: What does it want

*Lwenyanga si olumbe*

What does disaster want
Lwenyanga si
What does it want
Lwenyanga si
What does it want
Lwenyanga si olumbe
What does disaster want
Lwenyanga si
what does it want

All: Lwenyanga si
All: What does it want
Lwenyanga si olumbe
What does disaster want
Lwenyanga si
What does it want
Lwenyanga si
What does it want
Lwenyanga si
What does disaster want
Lwenyanga si
what does it want

Solo: Lienyanga si
Solo: What does it want
Lienyanga si elifwa
What does dying want
Lienyanga si
What does it want
Lienyanga si
What does it want
Lienyanga si elifwa
What does dying want
Lienyanga si
what does it want

All: Lienyanga si
All: What does it want
Lienyanga si elifwa
What does dying want
Lienyanga si
What does it want
Lienyanga si
What does it want
Lienyanga si elifwa
What does dying want
Lienyanga si
what does it want

Solo: Murabelela
Solo: Do not be sad
Murabelela abasiefwe
Do not be sad our people
Murabelela
Do not be sad
Murabelela
Do not be sad
Murabelela abasiefwe
Do not be sad our people,
Murabelela
Do not be sad
All: Murabelela
All: Do not be sad
Murabelela abasiefwe
Do not be sad our people
Meanwhile the men who buried the dead wash their hands and legs. After this they walk straight to their homes. There are two meanings to this activity. One, it is believed that carrying fresh soil from the grave into a home will be inviting the spirit of death into that home. Two, one phase of life has ended and the living members must now get into the second phase. Ritual washing therefore marks boundaries. Death only disrupts life, it does not stop it. After burial, life must continue as normal.

The men involved in burying the dead must walk straight to their homes. They must not divert into anybody else’s home. The Abanyole have a strong belief that if a man who has been involved in this activity passes through somebody else’s home, he brings the spirit of death there.

After dancing a few times round the grave, the choir continues to sing as the mourners are led into the house where a death had occurred. This is in the case of adult members. In the case of young people who did not have houses of their own, the mourners are led into their parents’ house. There is a lot of dancing and ululation when the party enters the houses. This is to signify that new life begins and this must be celebrated. A church minister prays and the house is swept to emphasize the point on newness. The old, symbolized by the dirt, is swept out to leave a clean new house. It is significant to note that once death occurs in a home, dirt is not swept out of the houses in that homestead. Each time such houses are cleaned, dirt is heaped in a corner until the day when ritual sweeping is performed.

7.8 Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter I have established that the Abanyole oral funeral poetry performances are quite elaborate and involve both men and women. I have also established that the performances serve important functions among these people from which, I have made the following points about death:
Death causes deep sorrow to members of the bereaved family and friends. These performances help to console such members. Death is believed to be caused by, among other things, evil spirits. *Okhukoma* (the category performed only for the men with at least a son) serves to expel such spirits of death and assure that members of the bereaved family can live in peace and security. Death is believed to be a transition from the physical world to the world of spirits - the world of the living dead, the world of ancestors. As the living will not have another opportunity to see the deceased in the physical form again, these performances are a way of bidding them farewell.

Through death, the life a man lived is revealed. I have noted that *okhukoma* category of the performances is not put up for men who did not live culturally acceptable lives. A qualifying person failing to get this performance raises questions. Anybody who is familiar with *Abanyole* culture will infer that the deceased had not lived according to the rules and regulations governing the community. This is the worst thing that can happen to anybody in this community for it affects not only the dead person but also the whole family who have to live with this shame for a long time. I have also noted that a woman who had committed adultery could not welcome *okhukoma* performers when her husband died. This would also bring great shame not only upon the woman but also to her parents who would be blamed for not raising her properly. Every family in *Bunyore* hopes to avoid this shame, which stigmatizes such a family. Note that if the woman tried to cover her misdeeds and welcomed the performers, she died immediately (*Mzee* Johnston Okanga Abukutsa - Appendix 4, number 38). This is a cultural belief that is deeply rooted in the people’s psyche. In a way, therefore, *okhukoma* is a regulator of social life in the community.
CHAPTER 8

POETICS OF ORAL FUNERAL POETRY

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss poetics in oral funeral poetry. This is because, on defining oral poetry, I am bound to acknowledge that it is infracultural poetic features more than anything else that give it its identity. I believe, therefore, that a discussion of the construction of the Abanyole perceptions on death will be incomplete without incorporating ideas from the infracultural poetic elements used when communicating the meaning of the poems.

Elements of ethnocultural characteristics are deeply rooted in the culture of the Abanyole. The implication of this observation is that an analysis and interpretation of the poetic devices has to take into account the setting in which they have been developed. It is with this understanding that I sought the knowledge of members of the Abanyole community on the meaning of the oral funeral poetry. To further enrich my interpretation of the techniques used in the poems, I attended twenty funerals in which I was able to get further insight into the images through the interpretation of the actions. This is how ethnopoetics became useful to my analysis.

The use of this theoretical approach provided a flexible basis for me to collect information from documented and field-based sources. Thus, the analysis and information in this chapter come from a variety of sources. These include relevant literature from documented sources, analysis of the collected poems, interviews and reading of the text to members of the Abanyole community who gave me useful comments.
8.2 Poetic Elements of Oral Funeral Poetry and Their Significance

The infracultural poetic devices make oral funeral poetry appropriate at funerals. For example, at funerals, people express deep feelings about their loss, hence the use of imagery and symbolism. As the mourners coin image after image, they often find it necessary to stress and emphasize the feeling of loss, hence the use of repetition. Because death is a very emotional subject, some mourners even exaggerate the loss, hence the use of hyperbole. Stylistic features and traditional elements of music render the oral funeral poetry singable and danceable, making them even more appropriate at funerals. Performers strike the ground, cursing the spirit of death as they sing. Sometimes they walk around, jog or even run as they sing. It is therefore necessary that in its structure, poetic register and other elements, this poetry caters for all these possibilities. I start the discussion by examining the euphemisms used to describe death.

8.2.1 Euphemism

The euphemistic words and expressions used in the poems can be divided into two categories. These are:

- Those that make death come out as a powerful and cruel monster
- Those that make it appear mild

Below is a discussion of each one of these categories.

8.2.1.1 Euphemisms that Bring out Death as Cutting and Squeezing Activity

Cutting activities are common in the Abanyole society. For example, people cut trees for construction of houses and for fuel. People also cut ropes, grass and meat. In rituals, there is the cutting of the foreskin for boys at circumcision. When children are born, the umbilical cord is cut to separate the child from the mother. The basic message in all the cutting activities is to bring about a disconnection, an end or a loosening. For instance, cutting of
the foreskin at circumcision symbolizes an end to childhood. From now onwards, the initiate is an adult and must strive to behave like one as not to do so is a sign that he is failing according to the set rules of the society. This is about the most humiliating thing that can happen to anyone in the community. Such a person is openly despised. The cutting of the umbilical cord at birth signifies the end of confinement. From now on, the child is not part of the mother, but belongs to the whole community. It should be noted that in rituals, cutting does not mean an end to life but signifies transition - one stage in life is ended and the person moves onto the next, higher, status in life, i.e. from confinement to membership in wider/larger society as in birth or from childhood to adulthood as in circumcision. Cutting of inanimate things, however, marks an end to life.

The euphemisms of death as cutting and squeezing function in more or less the same way in Abanyole poems. Cutting creates the image of violence, destruction, hurting, pain, cruelty and separation. Squeezing tends to give a picture of suffering, pain and destruction. Seen in the light of these two images, death is perceived among the Abanyole as causing a lot of suffering and pain, both mentally and physically. The pain and suffering apply at two levels. Firstly, the dying person feels much physical pain. The thought of burial and being squeezed by the earth, also causes psychological pain to the dying person. Secondly, those left behind feel much mental pain as they ponder over the separation brought by death. These persons dwell on a number of questions as they wait for their own death: what does it feel like to die? Where do people go to when they die? What does it feel like to be squeezed by the earth in the grave? These questions bring about tension and anxiety. The reflection on the questions, coupled with the mental suffering as a result of losing a loved one, often leave the mourners devastated. It is largely these fears that cause the Abanyole to regard death as a cruel monster. Many communities in Africa share similar views on death (p’Bitek 1963, Mbiti 1969:158, Gehman 1999: 6).

While discussing the theme of death among the Acoli of northern Uganda, p’Bitek (1963:20) captures the cruelty of this monster through the poem below:

Fire rages at Layima
It rages in the valley of river Cumu
Everything is utterly destroyed
Oh, my daughter
If I could reach the homestead of
Death’s mother
I would make a long grass torch
If I could reach the homestead of
Death’s mother
I would utterly destroy everything
Fire rages at Layima

In this poem, death is presented as a fire that consumes human beings reducing them to dust. The angry nature of death as it approaches its victim is captured in line two - “Death rages.” In line three, the result of the cruel act of this raging monster is presented: “Everything was destroyed.” The point, however, is made. Death has utterly destroyed the physical nature of the deceased. I say physical nature here deliberately. When discussing the euphemism of death as movement/freeing, I will give another interpretation of the meaning of death to this community - that it is not the final end of human beings.

In another poem in the same study, p’Bitek (1963:20) shows the fight between human beings and death. Below is the poem:

Behold Oteka fights alone
O men of the lineage of Awic
What has the son of my mother done to you
That he should be deserted
Behold the warrior fights single-handed
My brother is armed with bows and barbed headed arrows
He fights alone, not a single helper beside him
My brother fights alone
He struggles with Death

In the poem above, it is evident that Oteka puts up a good fight but he must at the end succumb to the strong arm of death. It is made clear that death must be faced on an individual basis: Oteka fights alone. This fact is repeated for emphasis in lines 1,2,6,8 and 9. The fight between Oteka and death is vividly described leaving nobody in any doubt of the might of this great monster that separates people and causes untold psychological torture.
Mbiti (1969:158) summarizes these observations well when he notes: “Thus, death is a monster before which man is utterly helpless. Relatives watch a person die and they cannot help him escape death. It is an individual affair in which nobody else can interfere or intervene. This is the height of death’s agonies and pain, for which there is neither cure nor escape as far as African concepts and religions are concerned.”

Four poems offer examples of euphemism that brings out death as cutting and squeezing activity. These poems: (2), (4), (11) and (24) are reproduced below in this order.

Liloba yili
This earth

Neliloba kooo
It is real earth

Liamina Abwanzo
It squeezed Abwanzo

Omwana wesiminywi
Child of a chick

Namaraba kooo
It is really dangerous

Liamina Abwanzo
It squeezed Abwanzo

Liloba yili
This earth

Neliloba kooo
It is really earth

Liamina Abwanzo
For it squeezed Abwanzo

Omwana wa Angose omwoyo
Child of Angose this wailing

Nokukwo
is for you

Muyonga ubelee muno
Muyonga is very sad

Mwana ninzikhaye
When I’m sitting

hamuliango nesibabi
By the door side with a dagger

Sianje mmakhono
In my hands

Nakholenge mbwe etalanyi
What shall I do the strong one

Muyonga ubelee muno wee
Muyonga is very sad

Baremakile omusaala kwa
They have cut down the tree that provides shade for

Ommonyo
Ommonyi

Yekamanga mwo Ekampala
In Kampala
Solo: **Luwweye okhulanga papa**
Solo: This is the end of calling *papa*

_Luwweye bane_

Solo: Oh yes it is the end

All: **Luwweye okhulanga papa**
All: This is the end of calling *papa*

_Luwweye bane_

Solo: Oh yes it is the end

Solo: **Luwweye khubana babe**
Solo: This is the end for his children

_Luwweye bane_

Solo: Oh yes it is the end

All: **Luwweye khubana babe**
All: This is the end for his children

_Luwweye bane_

Solo: Oh yes it is the end

Solo: **Luwweye mulitala**
Solo: This is the end in this homestead

_Luwweye bane_

Solo: Oh yes it is the end

All: **Luwweye mulitala**
All: This is the end in this homestead

_Luwweye bane_

Solo: Oh yes it is

Solo: **Eh papa wefwe**
Solo: *Eh* our father

All: **Eeeh eeh eeh**
All: *Eeh eeh eeh*

Solo: **Eh papa wefwe**
Solo: *Eh* our father

All: **Liloba litsia okhumina**
All: The earth will squeeze

_omwana wa mama_

Our mother’s son

Solo: **Eh papa bane**
Solo: *Eh* our father

All: **Eeeh eeeh eeeh**
All: *Eeeh eeeh eeeh*

Solo: **Eh papa bane**
Solo: *Eh* our father

All: **Liloba litsia okhumina**
All: The earth will squeeze our mother’s son

_omwana wa mama_

Omuyonga ubeleye muno
Omuyonga is very sad

Omuyonga ubeleye muno ko
Omuyonga is indeed sad

Baremakile omusala
They have cut down the shade
Chick in poem (2) is used here as a nickname. Abwanzo’s father is nicknamed Esiminywi ‘Chick’. His son, Abwanzo, then becomes Omwana wesiminywi ‘Child of a chick.’ Used in this poem, however, Omwana wesiminywi ‘Child of a chick’ creates the image of helplessness. Child of a chick must be so delicate, so helpless. This image makes the earth that swallows and squeezes such a helpless creature even more monstrous. Death then is a monster. This is the way members of this community view it.

In poems (2) and (11), the earth is shown as squeezing the dead, presumably when they are buried. This psychologically affects members of this community who must constantly live with the fear that one day the earth will squeeze/press them as it does now to the deceased.

The Abanyole say that the earth (liloba) is the humbler of every living creature including human beings (Mama Mauwa Likhutsa - Appendix 4, number 77). To somebody who is arrogant and insensitive to the feelings of other people in the community, they may say eliloba nalimmine ‘the earth will squeeze him/her’ or eliloba nalimmile ‘the earth will swallow him/her.’ To a rich person who uses his/her wealth to frustrate other members of the community, the people may say lekha butswa, eliloba nalimmile ‘wait, the earth will swallow him/her.’ In all these examples, the earth squeezing, swallowing etc are used as euphemisms of death. Used in this way, the Abanyole are saying that death is not a respecter of wealth, position etc. It humbles both the rich and the poor.

There is emphasis on the earth squeezing Abwanzo. The mourner may in fact be saying, if the earth squeezes Abwanzo, who am I? There is the suggestion in fact that Abwanzo is a man of status –but death is the most powerful and mystical force among the Abanyole and everybody in the community is helpless before it.

In normal day-to-day discourses among the Abanyole, it is not uncommon to hear men and women say, eliloba yili ‘this earth!’ Eliloba yili neliloba tu ‘This earth, it is real earth.’ These expressions are always used to refer to death. It is a puzzle, it is a mystery and causes untold suffering to members of this community (Mzee Ibrahim Otukho - Appendix 4, number 8).
Although death generally cuts and squeezes everybody, the image of earth as squeezing and cutting seems to apply to death of people with status among the Abanyole. Death therefore brings down the mighty. It humbles the most able people in society.

In poem (4), death is presented as a violent phenomenon. The image of cutting presents death as a cruel phenomenon that inflicts pain and torture not only on the dying person but also on the living. In this poem, death is equated to the cutting of a tree under which people take shelter, symbolically meaning a person on whom society can depend. This could be someone who supports people materially, emotionally, socially and intellectually. Cutting down such a useful tree therefore brings trouble, and anguish to the many people who found shelter under it. Other expressions of death as a cutting activity among the Abanyole include: lumukhalakile ‘it has cut him off,’ ukhalakilwe ‘he/she has been cut off.’ Gehman (1999:5) summarizes the experience of death very well when he notes: “But death is more than a transition. It is feared and resented.” Harjula (1978:54) reports a similar attitude among the Meru. People therefore feel helpless and hopeless in the face of death (Gehman 1999:5).

p’Bitek (1963:22) argues: “Death is not a gateway to some sort of desirable external existence, but a cruel monster which strikes down a member of a family and lineage.” This makes people fear death. One informant among the Meru confessed that the Meru people fear death and that may explain why they do not mention it by name. Rather, they use euphemisms of it (Harjula 1978:54).

The picture that is built of death is that it is a cutting, separating and disconnecting experience. It is a cruel and painful experience greatly feared by people not only among the Abanyole, but among many other ethnic groups in Africa.

8.2.1.2 Euphemisms of Death as Movement and Freeing

Given the dreadful image of death, it is important for the community to soften the blow by using mild adjectives. This psychologically reduces its impact, especially on the immediate
family members and close friends of the deceased, hence, the explanation given in this section.

It is a commonly held belief in Africa that death is not the final end of human beings - that there is a life after death (Roscoe 1923:25, Fortes and Dieterlen 1965:19, Goody 1962, Mbiti 1969:15, Adeyemo 1979:60, Uchendu 1965:11-12, Gehman 999:6). Mbiti (1969:157), for example, observes that death in Africa is conceived of as a departure and not a complete annihilation of a person. He notes: “Death is conceived of as a departure and not a complete annihilation of a person. He moves on to join the company of the departed, and the only major change is the decay of the physical body, but the spirit moves on to another state of existence.”

The views of the Ndebele of Zimbambwe concerning death agree with Mbiti’s observations above. These views are clearly articulated by Fortes and Dieterlen (1965: 19): “Death is the beginning of a permanent ontological departure of the individual from mankind to spirithood.”

Movement is thus a very important concept in studies on death in Africa. This movement can be interpreted at two levels - physical movement and spiritual movement, as will be exemplified in the discussion below.

Three poems portrayed death as a form of movement. These poems are: (21), (22) and (16). This is consistent with the Abanyole beliefs concerning this phenomenon, that at death, the dying person transforms into a spirit (same view is shared by the Meru. See Harjula 1978:56). Whereas the body of the deceased is buried, the spirit travels to join the other spirits in emakombe (the world of the departed ancestors). The mythology of this community does not make it clear where exactly emakombe is situated. But according to the beliefs of the people, this world does exist and the departed members of their community, both men and women, adults and children, congregate there as the living dead (Mzee Wellington Masatia Tambwa - Appendix 4, number 78).

Whereas the Abanyole believe that the spirits of their departed relatives reside in emakombe, other communities in Africa and outside of Africa believe they reside in other places. In some societies, the spirits live far away and must journey sometimes through dangerous
places to get there. For this reason, the dead are buried with foodstuff and weapons to use on their journey. Mbiti (1969:159) observes: “The Chagga hold that the journey takes nine days from this to the next world, and the soul must travel through dangerous desert region. On arrival at the other end, the soul has to be admitted by older spirits. To make the journey less demanding, the corpse is anointed with fat, “given” milk in the mouth and wrapped with hide, to provide it with food and protect it from the scorching desert sun.”

The spirits of the dead face an even more formidable challenge among the Lodagaa of West Africa as their spirit world is separated from this world by the river of death. According to Goody (1962), the Lodagaa believe that the land of the departed lies to the West. As soon as the funeral rites are performed, the soul begins its journey. At the river, it is ferried across for a fee of twenty cowries, which friends and relatives provide at the funeral. But crossing this river is an ordeal whose hazzards depend on the nature of the life that a person has led in this world. Therefore, “good” people get across easily but “bad” people fall through the bottom of the boat and must swim across the river, which can take up to three years to do. It is debtors, thieves, witches and those who denied something to others that face the greatest difficulties, in either being allowed to cross or in the act of crossing the river. Van Gennep (1960:149) observes a similar belief among the Todas. In this community, the dead go to Amnodre, a subterranean world. The route to this place is surrounded with obstacles. The “bad” fall from a thread which serves as a bridge, into a stream on whose shores they live for a while. The people of north Eurasia believe that the dead go by a long tortuous route towards the north where the dark and cold land of the dead is located (Siikala 2002:21). The Arctic peoples are known to have sometimes located their land of the dead in the West (Graceva 1989).

Irrespective of how one looks at it, there must be transition when one dies. First, the separation of the physical and spiritual entities of a human being at death entails an aspect of movement. Secondly, for the spirit to reach emakombe for the Abanyole, there must be passage, however short. Regardless of how far or near emakombe is, it is believed among the Abanyole that the spirits of the dead remain in close touch with the living (Mzee Wellington Masatia Tambwa - Appedix 4, number 78).

There may seem to be contradiction in the labelling of the spirits of the dead people as the living dead. They are dead because they do not function physically. They are, however,
living because from *emakombe* they continue to influence the activities of the living. For example, the living must name their children after the living dead. In this way, symbolically, the spirits of the dead continue to live in these people who bear their names. This makes for continuity, as each generation of the living continue to name their children after the dead relatives. It is possible to see from the preceding discussion, how death influences other facets of life.

There is a mythical connection between the circumcision rites and the living dead. The blood that trickles from wounds seeps into the ground, thereby spiritually binding the initiates and the living dead. It can therefore be argued that important rites of passage in this community gravitate around death. Young members of the community are initiated as a preparation for marriage. They marry to procreate. They procreate to fight death that threatens to annihilate society. The insistence of the *Abanyole* on having many children can also be understood in this context. The reason for the institution of polyginy in this community can also be understood and appreciated if viewed from this standpoint. Mbiti’s views concerning the gradual disappearance of an individual can also better be understood if we fully appreciate the value of children in African communities: “Death becomes, then, a gradual process, which is not completed until some years after the actual physical death. At the moment of physical death the person becomes a living-dead: he is neither alive physically, nor dead, relative to the corporate group. His own *Sasa* period is over, he enters fully into the *Zamani* period; but as far as the living, who knew him are concerned, he is kept ‘back’ in the *Sasa* period, from which he can disappear only gradually. Those who have nobody to keep them in the *Sasa* period in reality die immediately which is a great tragedy that must be avoided at all costs” (Mbiti 1969:159, Harjula 1978:62-63).

It can thus be appreciated why barren women in pre-colonial *Abanyole* community “married” young maidens whom they allowed to bear children with their husbands. Such children took the names of the barren women. This way, such barren women were sure to remain “alive” at death.

In pre-colonial *Bunyore*, if a man died leaving a wife or wives who were still at child bearing age, cousins or brothers of the deceased remarried the widow(s) and the children born took the name of the deceased to keep him firmly “alive” for a long time to come (*Mama* Roselani Hoka - Appendix 4, number 19). If a person - male or female of
marriageable age dies without having got children, he or she is buried like a child without the respect that is accorded those with children. Expressions at their funerals such as “Omurwe kukwe kukorre” (His or her head is lost) are common, and can be interpreted to mean that such a person “dies” immediately leaving nobody to remember them (Mama Maritsa Akute - Appendix 4, number 6). This, in fact, is seen as a curse, so that no children are named after them for fear that their spirits will influence them also to die without offspring. The Acoli of Uganda did not exercise full-scale funeral rites for unmarried people for the same reason that they were cursed. Giving them full honours would be encouraging the spirit of death to strike at that age. Gehman (1999:13) posits: “The size of the feast and the general attitude of the dancers among the Acoli of Uganda (Nilotic) is determined by the age, economic, social and political status of the dead person. No feast is held for someone under eighteen years of age. For only the married, older people, especially men, had power and prestige and were feared after death.”

The rejection of dead unmarried people is total among the Akamba people of Kenya. Gehman (1999:13) observes: “The grave sites of unmarried persons among the Akamba of Kenya were not important and could be anywhere the relatives chose. An unmarried man was despised and rejected. He could not be buried in the homestead. His bow was broken to show that no one remembered him.”

In pre-colonial Kenya, the young Abanyole men who died without children of their own had their buttocks stuffed with thorns from likunga plant as a way of locking up their spirits to prevent them from infecting other young men in the community (Mzee Sulumena Nyamanga - Appendix 4, number 71). For young women, the vagina was blocked as a way of stopping their spirit from returning to infect other young women in the community. For the barren
women, whether they had “married” and been given children to remember them after death, or had not “married” and so there was no body to keep them “alive” at death, their vagina were also blocked or a fruit from lirabe tree buried with them so that their bareness could not escape to infect other women (Mama Maritsa Akute - Appendix 4, number 6).

Lirabe tree. (Photo by Lauri Harvilahti).

Evidently, death is the driving force behind all the above procedures, so that the Abanyole adopt all manner of mystical activities in an effort to fight it. The moment one dies in Bunyore, this person assumes a different personality, becoming respected, and even feared. It appears that physical life tethers individuals thereby rendering them immobile. At death, however, it is believed an individual is untethered, let loose, hence, the idea or euphemism of death as freeing a person.

In poem (21), dead Onea is symbolically equated to a cow that has been untethered. This is found in line one, where the mourner cries Onea wanje uboloye ing’ombe ‘My Onea has untethered the cow.’ Free Onea is now highly mobile. It is believed in this community that spirits can appear at any time and can travel at the speed of lightning from emakombe to punish offending members of the community. This makes the Abanyole doubly afraid of these spirits.

I have said above that at death, an individual is transformed into a spirit. In poem (22), we see the image of death as a separator, when the mourner wails:

- Olumbe luno, This disaster
- Olumbe Olukhongo lwera khotsa, Big disaster killed uncle
- Walumbe namwekania, Disaster the separator
Separation here is used at two levels. Firstly, there is the separation (cutting) between the living and the dying person, which causes pain and anguish, because the living will not again physically see and interact with the dying person. Hence, death physically separates people. Separation is also used in this poem at a spiritual level when death separates the spirit from the body. Consequently, the body will be buried and rot while the spirit will continue to live in *emakombe*. In a special sense, the aforesaid separation can be seen as movement as there is distance formed between the living people and the spirits. There is also distance between the spirit and body.

Poem (16) attributed death to a motorcar. The mourner asks: *Mutoka sina okwakinga papa?* ‘Which motorcar carried dad away?’ (line 7). This is a very modern metaphor of death reflecting use of modern objects to describe death. This poem is chanted by men as they mourn the death of a fellow man. I have shown above that the spirit of the dead must travel to *emakombe*, the world of the spirits. Death is seen as the important vehicle that transports the spirits to this land. As a way of preparing such spirits for the journey, the mourners slaughter a heifer or she goat for a woman and a bull or he goat for a man on the day of burial.
Two men, Thomas Ateku-Likulukulu in a dark coat (also interviewed for this study) and Ailo skin the carcase of a goat slaughtered at the funeral of Janet Ayuma. *(Photo by Patricia Alembi).*

The blood from the slaughtered animal is allowed to flow freely and soak into the ground. This way the spirits of the departed ancestors are invited to partake in the ritual for it is believed that these spirits are responsible for escorting and welcoming the new spirits into *emakombe* (*Mzee Wellington Masatia Tambwa* - Appendix 4, number 78). Fresh blood on such occasions is reserved for the dead ancestors. The meat of the slain animal is then cooked and eaten by the mourners.

At another level, the dead animal joins the deceased who must journey with it to *emakombe*. The deceased must never be allowed to be poor in the next world as this would annoy them and cause them to return to take revenge on the living. Consequently, however poor a family may be, they will muster all their resources to buy an animal. The size of the animal in this case may not matter. I have never witnessed the burial of a married adult where a cow or goat was not slaughtered. For children and the unmarried, slaughtering of a cow or goat is not necessary because although such people receive decent burial, full scale funeral rites are denied them for they have not fulfilled the important function of procreation. When burying such people, meat is normally bought from butcheries to be eaten by the mourners.

Van Gennep (1960) reports that among the Ostyak of Salekhard, the dead person is taken to the burial place of his clan and deposited in the boat on the frozen grounds, with his feet facing north, surrounded with all the things he will need in the next world. And of the Kol of India, Van Gennep (1960:151) notes that rice and the tools of the deceased’s sex are placed there (down where the deceased lies) and in the mouth of the corpse there are rice cakes and silver coins for the journey since the soul retains a shadow of the body.
Slaughtering a cow is not only a ritual to feed the departed ancestors and provide wealth to the spirit of the deceased in *emakombe*, but this meat is also supposed to provide food for the living members of the community on this day when a great deal of food and drink are consumed. The amount of feasting can easily be equated to that on a wedding day. I have noted above that the spirit of the dead is freed from the physical body and “driven” to *emakombe*. In a symbolic sense, the spirit is born in the new world. The living members are aware of this fact and they must put up a big celebration to mark this new beginning for the deceased.

At another level, the celebrations on this day relieve the tension among the bereaved family and friends. Singing and dancing always accompany the feasting. The bereaved family’s attention is thus diverted and they are encouraged through the celebrations to see the bright side of things.

### 8.2.1.3 The Euphemism of Death as Resting

Two poems present death as a form of resting. The euphemism of resting in this poem is a euphemism of death. These poems are (3) and (8). They are reproduced below in this order.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Olumbe olukhongo</em></td>
<td>Big disaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>lwera Musungu</em></td>
<td>Big disaster killed <em>Musungu</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Musungu wakora</em></td>
<td><em>Musungu</em> is lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Olumbe olukhongo eee</em></td>
<td>Big disaster <em>eee</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Lekha Omwami wakora</em></td>
<td>My lord is lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Olumbe olukhongo</em></td>
<td>Big disaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Omwami wayela</em></td>
<td>My lord has landed/arrived {resting}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Olumbe olukhongo</em></td>
<td>Big disaster</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Poems</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Abasiele baliena mulolekho</em></td>
<td>Where are the mothers to see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Omwana ukonne</em></td>
<td>The child is asleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Abasiele baliena mulolekho</em></td>
<td>Where are the mothers to see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Omwana ukonne</em></td>
<td>The child is asleep</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In poem (8), death is compared to sleeping. The deeper meaning of this euphemism however, is that death does not annihilate but rather, is a form of sleep. Soon, the deceased will wake up into a new life in *emakombe*. It appears that life in that world is more relaxed as symbolized in the image of sleeping. This compares favourably with the christian idea of life in heaven. The Meru people have a similar view of death. The only difference is that they refer to death as sleeping when it is an old person who has died (Harjula 1978:55).

The above argument sharply contrasts with that presented in 8.2.1.1 above where death has been shown as a cruel monster that annihilates life. This suggests that death is such a mystery that, even in the same community, no consensus on its interpretation and subsequent meanings may be assigned to it. On the other hand, it may be argued that it all depends on which stage of mourning one is looking at and what meaning it assigns to death. Immediately after a death has occurred, emotions are often high and seeing and interpreting death in the light that has been discussed in 8.2.1.1 can thus be understood and appreciated.

The euphemism of death as sleeping is enhanced by the treatment of the deceased by members of this community. After one has been pronounced dead, the body is washed. The washing and dressing of the dead in this community is done by different people according to gender and age (*Mama* Mauwa Likhutsa - Appendix 4, number 77 and *Mzee* Johnston Okanga Abukutsa - Appendix 4, number 38). For example, if a child-boy or -girl dies, the washing and dressing of the body is done by women. If the deceased is a young man, the body is washed and dressed by fellow young men. If it is a young woman, however, the body is washed and dressed by her sisters-in-law and not by fellow young ladies. There are taboos forbidding young unmarried ladies from washing and dressing the dead. It is feared they may have problems finding men to marry them or if they do, they may not have successful family life (*Mama* Mauwa Likhutsa).

As for married women, their bodies are washed and dressed by their co-wives. For married men, their bodies are washed and dressed by their brothers or cousins. Sons cannot wash and dress bodies of their fathers. It is taboo in this community for a child to see the nakedness of the parents. It is believed that a child who sees the nakedness of the parents “*aubalanga*”
(difficult to translate into English, but may mean some kind of mental retardation) and may not find a wife or husband (Mzee Johnston Okanga Abukutsa).

There are special categories of people whose treatment I must discuss. These are: married women who divorce and return to their birth places and die there and murders. If a divorced woman dies in her parents’ home and the husband is not willing to take and bury her body, she is washed and dressed by her sisters-in-law (Mama Cathorina Teka - Appendix 4, number 73). Bodies of murderers on the other hand are washed and dressed by rebels in the clan who include men who have refused to marry (abasumba) or madmen. In the absence of such men in the clan, people from other clans will be hired to do it (Mzee Ibrahim Otukho - Appendix 4, number 8). Notice that there is total rejection of such bodies in this community.

After washing, the body is then laid on a nicely made bed in a tent specially made to accommodate the corpse until it is buried. The best family blankets and sheets are spread on the bed and the corpse is covered with them. Among the pre-colonial Abanyole, the same image was enhanced by the dead being laid on and covered with animal hides, the customary beddings of these people in those days. The dead would remain in this position until they were buried. Today, however, they are transferred into a lined coffin, also comfortably made, on the second or third day after death but are still treated as if they were asleep until they are buried.

Janet Ayuma’s body washed and dressed ready for burial. (Photo by Ezekiel Alembi).
There are varied burial details for the different members of the Abanyole community. Below are the details:

a) Men are accorded a more elaborate burial in this community (*Mzee* Elfas Okechi Okumbo - Appendix 4, number 58). One is able to understand this because *Abanyole* are a male dominated community. The most distinguishing feature of the differences in the funerals is *okhukoma*, the mock fight a few hours before the burial of a man with at least a son. There is also the beating of the two special small drums. This is not done for anybody else in the community. Bulls are slaughtered on the burial day of only married men.

b) Unmarried men who at the time of death are at or beyond the age to marry are buried by people specially chosen by the clan elders. Notice, that they have not done the most important thing in the community, procreate. They are therefore viewed as rebels and care must be exercised that their spirits do not return and enter young men in the clan thereby causing them not to marry and have a family. Often, such bodies are buried by fellow abasumba (those who are unmarried despite the fact that they are at marriageable age. The *Abanyole* consider this category of people as not being normal. Other members of the community look down upon them and their opinions are not respected). I have already noted that the buttocks of such bodies were traditionally stuffed with thorns or their right foot pierced by a special thorn called *likunga*. All these are efforts to fix the spirits of such bodies.

c) The bodies of murderers - men or women - are buried by strangers hired specifically for this task (*Mzee* Johnston Okanga Abukutsa - Appendix 4, number 38). During Pre-colonial times, such bodies were buried by *ebisutso* (this is how *Abasyubi*, a clan spread all over *Bunyore*, were referred to in olden days). This is a sign of total rejection of these bodies by the clan members for taking other peoples lives.

d) Bodies of people who had committed suicide - men or women, were treated as in (c) above for the same reasons. There were no detailed funeral arrangements for such bodies. For example, no bull or cow was killed at their funerals (*Mzee* Johnston Okanga Abukutsa).

e) Married women with children are accorded respect - but not equal to that of married men with children. Depending on how rich the family is, much food is eaten etc. A cow is slaughtered on the burial day. If the family is not rich, they slaughter a goat. It is completely unheard of that a married woman with children should be buried
without a cow or she-goat being slaughtered. I have explained in this chapter the significance of slaughtering a cow or a goat. This category of women are buried by respected brothers-in-law. The grave is dug by circumcised boys from the same clan.

f) Unmarried young ladies (who have not given birth) are buried by the side of their parents’ graves. No elaborate funeral details are entered into because she is considered a child. If the family are rich, they may slaughter a she-goat on the burial day of such a woman, if not, then meat is bought and eaten. Such bodies are buried by brothers or cousins (Mama Abigail Andisi Okechi - Appendix 4, number 57).

g) A woman who once was married and divorced or separated is buried in her parents’ home if her husband does not claim her body. In the event that she is buried in her parent’s home, her grave must be behind the house or in a corner near the fence (Mama Mauwa Likhutsa - Appendix 4, number 77). This means she does not belong here. Women in this community belong to their husbands. It is even considered bad luck that she is buried in her home. No elaborate funeral details are entered into incase such spirits were encouraged and entered into the girls in the homestead. In a special sense therefore, the Abanyole discourage their daughters from running away from their matrimonial homes however harsh the conditions there must be. This may explain why mothers and grandmothers spend huge amounts of time educating their daughters on how to take care of husbands and children.

I must point out here that this puts an unnecessarily big demand on women in this community. Many of them are forced to put up with really demanding tasks for fear that if they divorced, society will reject them.

h) As for children, there is very little in terms of funeral arrangements. No cow or goat is slaughtered. Generally, it is a very simple funeral. The idea is that elaborate funeral arrangements may encourage the spirit to stay on. This must be discouraged as it is seen as bad luck for one to die young. In this community one is expected to grow old and have sons and daughters. The spirit of dying young must therefore be discouraged (Mama Abigail Andisi Okechi – Appendix 4, number 57).

Furthermore, washing symbolizes purification by removing all physical contamination as the deceased is supposed to arrive in emakombe spotless and stainless. The symbol of washing, coupled with the special attention means the deceased is now prepared for rebirth in the world of the living dead for which death is merely an initiation. It is important to note
that as soon as a baby is born in this community it is washed. This symbolically moves the baby from the mystical world associated with the womb, into the world of human beings. Washing is therefore one of the accepted rituals of marking boundaries. When the dead are washed, it signifies to the Abanyole that the old nature is gone and the deceased must now assume the new, spiritual nature. It is important to note that all this happens in a continuum, implying that there is no break to life, which is like a circle, marked by many rituals/rites, among which death is but one.

Symbolic washing is also performed after the young men have been initiated/circumcised. Performed at this point, ritual washing “abolishes” childhood and ushers the young people into adulthood.

In poem (3), the mourner wails as she/he sings, Omwami wayela ‘The lord has landed/arrived/rested.’ Okhuyela is the act of arrival. In the context in which this poem is performed, we conclude that the deceased has arrived/landed in emakombe. Thus death is projected as a mild thing. It does not annihilate life. Rather, it is a rite of passage through which one ascends to a higher status as omukuka. Another poem where death has been portrayed as a mild thing is poem (16).

8.2.2 Repetition

This refers to the recurrence of a mood, idea, sound, word or line in a poem. In oral poetry, the most repeated features are the words, lines or sets of lines coming regularly after each stanza. Finnegan (1977:90) refers to repetition as the most marked feature of oral poetry. Forms and genres are recognized because they are repeated. In its widest sense, a refrain or chorus is part of all poetry. This technique is not intended to bore the audience. Rather, it is used to give a poem its musical element. Also, it serves to highlight certain issues in the poem (Zurmin 1981:101). Among the Abanyole, refrains in oral funeral poetry seems to be used at two levels: by individual mourners and by groups of people, especially the night performers.

As will be explained in the discussion below, repetition by individual mourners seems to involve deep emotions and often calls for more probing and investigation into the poems to
unearth the deeper (locked messages). I have called this kind of repetition signals. It tells the reader that there is more in this poem. Take the key and unlock the many doors to be able to appreciate the deeper meanings. The group performances on the other hand often assume a call and response structure. Repetition used here is often plain, not needing deeper probing and investigation to unearth the meaning. African poems call for a closer scrutiny to unearth hidden meaning. Broad and generalized discussions as found in Finnegan (1970), Finnegan (1977:88-133) and Akivaga and Odaga (1982), often mask or gloss over useful details that are always crucial to clear understanding of the meaning in the poems. This leads us to an examination of repetition in oral funeral poems beginning with poems performed by individual mourners.

8.2.2.1 Repetition in Poems by Individual Mourners

Repetition is a significant technique in poems performed by individuals among the members of the Abanyole community. Used in this way, repetition emphasizes the deep sense of loss experienced by the mourners. As I will explain in the discussion below, repetition here is also used to signal to the members of the community that there is much more to the text than what they first hear. Because they are aware of this, the members will quickly embark on assembling the necessary details to enable them to perceive the non-verbalized text. The combined texts will facilitate their interpretation of the message of the verbalized text.

The deep feelings on the part of the mourner may be explained by the fact that such a mourner is directly related to the deceased. She/he may be a wife, husband, son, daughter, niece or nephew to the deceased. Because of such close relationship and the fact that they are experiencing a deep sense of loss, these mourners challenge or even insult death. They also accuse the “killers” of the dead person though always mindful of the need to mourn within culturally accepted limits. Repetition of images and symbols therefore encourages the community to read wider meanings into the poems.

This may be appreciated more if we consider the feelings against the background of the Abanyole. Once a mourner repeats words, lines etc, the listeners are cued to the fact that they should not take these words and lines for what they mean in everyday discourse. They mean much more and the listeners must go out of their way to find out exactly what the
mourner is implying. In most of the poems analyzed in this study, this technique has been
liberally utilized for a variety of reasons. In poem (1), for example, the line *Baluhya basianje* ‘Fellow clans people’ has been repeated twice in stanza one and twice in stanza
two.

*Baluhya basianje*  
Fellow clans people

*Baluhya basianje*  
Fellow clans people

*Obukhala nisina*  
What is important

*Obukhala nomwana*  
A child is important

*Olamuruma omullo*  
You can send her to fetch fire

*Namatsi*  
Or water

*Norula esioba*  
When you return home

*Wikhalanga hamuliango*  
You sit by the door

*Esisungu nomanyila mmwoyo*  
With knowledge of English in your heart

*Beyayewe eeee*  
*Beyayewe eeee*

*Baluhya wee nikhole ndaboka*  
I have suffered for long

*Omwiwa we Inaya*  
One uncled at *Inaya*

*Ise mbula obukhala hango hano*  
I am useless in this home

*Mbole mbwe Baluhya*  
Fellow clans people, what do I say

*Baluhywa banje sindamanyanga ta*  
Fellow clans people, I did not know things
will come to this

*Papa sindamanyanga*  
Dad, I did not know

*Mama sindamanyanga*  
Mother, I did not know

*Baluhya wee*  
Fellow clans people wee

*Nikhale ndaboka*  
I have suffered for long

*Omwiwa we Inaya, ise mbula*  
One uncled at *Inaya*, I am now

*Obukhala*  
useless

*Hango hano*  
In this homestead

*Mbole mbwe Baluhya Baluhya*  
What do I say fellow clans people

*Baluhywa banje sindamanyanga*  
Fellow clans people, I did not know
The poem opens with the call *Baluhya basianje* ‘Fellow clans people.’ To begin with, this is a poem with intense emotions. It expresses the extreme sense of loss that the mourner experiences on losing a child. The high premium placed on children can only be understood when one realizes that without them, marriage is not recognized by the community. The above background justifies the kind of opening and the subsequent repetition of the line in stanzas one and two of the poem. By addressing the clans people and repeating this, the mourner is announcing that this death affects the entire community.

The *Abanyole* value children so much that it is a communal responsibility to ensure that they grow into worthy citizens. A disrespectful young person causes concern not only to the parents but to every member of this community. An adult who finds such a young person in mischief has the duty to rebuke him. Some elderly people even cane such errant young people (*Mzee* Elfas Okechi Okumbo - Appendix 4, number 58).

The above argument only goes to show how much *Abanyole* value children and the fact that the children are not only the property of their parents but also of the whole community. The call in the first stanza of this poem is therefore not just a call for solidarity, but rather, it is an announcement of a serious loss to society at large. On a different level, it can be argued that the feeling of loss is so intense that the mourner must seek psychological cushioning. An appeal to the clan psychologically boosts the mourner who is made to feel that his grief and loss are shared by the clan. Little wonder that the call on *Baluhya* “clans people” is not only repeated in the first stanza, but also in the second stanza. The word *Baluhya* alone is repeated six times in the second stanza, thus emphasizing the importance of the community support whether real or only psychological.

At the individual family level, children are very important. In fact, parents invest in their children as if in expensive and high profile companies. The belief is that these children will support them especially in their old age. In a country where there is no social security programme, children become the social security of their parents. Against this background, one can understand the intense feeling of loss when a child dies. This feeling is summarized very well in the following lines from stanza one of poem (1):

```
Baluhya basianje        Fellow clans people
Obukhala nisina        What is important/benefical
```
And the feeling of worthlessness when one loses a child is captured very well in line 3 of the second stanza: *Ise mbula Obukhala hango hano* ‘I am useless/worthless in this home.’ In poem (8), intense feeling is also expressed at the loss of a child. The mourner cries: *Abasiele baliena mulolekho* ‘Where are the mothers to see this.’ Again, it is not for nothing that the mourner appeals to the feelings of the public. Notice that this time, the appeal is restricted to the mothers. In day-to-day discourse, *abasiele* means old women. In this poem, it is used to mean mother. A mother knows the pains of giving birth. Losing a child is an equally painful experience to the mother. In this community, the pain is not only because the mother has lost a child, it is also because the mother has lost a helper, a source of income and a bank in old age.

The female mourner in this poem is appealing to fellow women for solidarity at this trying time. Twice in this short poem she repeats *Abasiele baliena mulolekho* ‘Where are the mothers to see this.’ The death of a child is not just a loss to the individual family but to society as a whole. The mothers therefore should come and witness this tragedy that has befallen society. The psychological element is that the mourner is assured that her loss is shared by all, thereby reducing her tension and pain.

There is also repetition of the line *Omwana ukonne* ‘The child is asleep.’ In normal usage, *ukonne* means he/she is asleep. In this context, *ukonne* becomes a euphemism and a metaphor for death. Apart from giving the *Abanyole* perception of rites related with death as a rite of passage and not the end of life, *ukonne* ‘is a sleep’ in this context psychologically lessens the gravity of losing a loved one. The deceased is not gone forever. He/she is a sleep. There is therefore the possibility of meeting again and this becomes a very important factor to the mourner. No wonder, this euphemism is repeated two times in lines two and four. Just like in poem (1), repetition is used to psychologically cushion the mourner besides revealing the perception of the *Abanyole* on death. Repetition also helps to create sadness and sustains it in the two poems.

If repetition has been used in poems (1) and (8), then it has been extensively used in poem (19). As in the two poems discussed above, the performer in poem (19) is mourning the death of his/her child. It is important to clarify that *omwana* ‘child’ is not used in the strict
sense of this word. Among the Abanyole, an individual remains a child to his/her preceding generations even up to the age of seventy. The reader should therefore not be misled into thinking that the people referred to are children in the conventional usage of the word.

In poem (19), *Omwana wa Anjichi* ‘Child of Anjichi’ is repeated three times, *Anjichi* alone six times, *Ukholle mbwena* ‘What have you done to me’ four times, *Inyumba esimbanga* ‘The jealous house’ eight times, *Murebe Emuseno* ‘Enquire from Maseno’ three times and *Murebe Emuhaya* ‘Find out from the chief’s centre at Emuhaya’ three times. From this, it can be seen that *Inyumba esimbanga* ‘The jealous house’ has been repeated more than any other line in the poem. It is followed by the name *Anjichi*, which is repeated six times.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Omwana wa Anjichi</em></th>
<th>Child of <em>Anjichi</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Ukholle mbwena?</em></td>
<td>What have you done to me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sese wa Anjichi</em></td>
<td><em>Sese of Anjichi</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ukholle mbwena?</em></td>
<td>What have you done to me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Nangwe mbwena?</em></td>
<td>What shall become of me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Nandelenenge khulusina bane?</em></td>
<td>On what shall I lean?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Omwana wa Anjichi</em></td>
<td>Child of <em>Anjichi</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ukholle mbwena?</em></td>
<td>What have you done to me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ye, ye, ye, ye</em></td>
<td><em>Ye, ye, ye, ye</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sindi nomulembe bana befwe</em></td>
<td>I have no peace My people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Otemba oboye mukoloba ye, ye</em></td>
<td>Otemba only said yesterday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Inyumba esimbanga</em></td>
<td>The jealous house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Khuliakana iyo</em></td>
<td>We shall meet there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Inyumba esimbanga ye</em></td>
<td>Oh jealous house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Inyumba esimbanga ye!</em></td>
<td>Oh jealous house!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Murebe Emuseno</em></td>
<td>Enquire from <em>Maseno</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Murebe Emuseno</em></td>
<td>Enquire from <em>Maseno</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Murebe Emuseno</em></td>
<td>Enquire from <em>Maseno</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tsia murebe Anjichi</em></td>
<td>Find out from <em>Anjichi</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Emuseno</em></td>
<td>At <em>Maseno</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Inyumba esimbanga ‘The jealous house’ could be said to be responsible for the death of the child of Anjichi. It is not clear from the poem how the “jealous house” killed the child of Anjichi but we can infer that it was through witchcraft, the most “common” cause of death in this community. The repetition of this line brings out the negative feelings the mourner has for this house. What may perhaps puzzle the reader or anybody hearing the poem sung, (and especially, if such a person is a stranger to Bunyore), is the veiled attack that the mourner makes on this house. First of all, it is not clear to whom the jealous house refers. It is also
not clear, how child of Anjichi was killed. Interestingly, the community will know whom the jealous house represents and the causes of the death of Omwana Wa Anjichi ‘Child of Anjichi.’ This elucidates the concept of two texts: the text which is verbalized and the one which must be constructed from the rumors, gossips etc of the people familiar with the homestead where a death has occurred. Heavy repetition here is therefore a signal for the other mourners to put two and two together to surmise the non-verbalized text.

There is no power in direct reference. The mourner in this poem is therefore being as discreet as is proper. The poem provides certain keys through words which stand out. Through repetition, it is up to the listeners to pick up the keys and open the “rooms” that are rich with the details required to understand a situation. In this way, the mourner stays within the culturally acceptable boundaries of oral funeral poetry. I have often heard mourners cautioned with the words *ekhule obulayi* which can be loosely translated as “mourn properly,” when it is considered that they are overstepping the boundaries of propriety referral. I have already pointed out in Chapter 6 how dangerous it is to accuse anybody of witchcraft. To say, therefore, that somebody has bewitched the child of Anjichi, may result in legal proceedings that may lead to imprisonment. The family may thus suffer a double tragedy.

Finally, in this poem, the lines *Murebe Emuseno* ‘Enquire from Maseno’ and *Murebe Emuhaya* ‘Enquire at Emuhaya’ are each repeated three times. The two towns are historically important to the Abanyole. Emuhaya is the principal location in Bunyore and therefore associated with the power of the Government. The first chief in Bunyore had his office there and the chief is the symbol of power and authority. The fact then that child of Anjichi was known in Emuhaya implies that he was a very important person in Bunyore. Note that the mourner does not tell us this. He/she wants us to deduce this meaning from the association between child of Anjichi and Emuhaya, the seat of power in Bunyore.

*Maseno*, on the other hand, was one of the first towns to be settled by Whites when they arrived in Western Kenya in the late 19th Century. White missionaries established a school, hospital and mission center, and for a long time anybody associated with *Maseno* was greatly respected, even feared because in the eyes of the rest of the Abanyole, they personified the mystery associated with White people. In fact, the *Abanyole* were
brainwashed to such a degree that to most of them, *Maseno* represented and still represents a higher and superior culture.

Consequently, the association of child of *Anjichi* with *Maseno* speaks volumes. The adept mourner does not need to spell it out. He/she has given us the key and it is our responsibility to understand the significance of association with *Maseno*. We know from the foregoing that child of *Anjichi* was a powerful and influential person because he was associated with both *Maseno* and *Emuhaya*, centers of Government power and Western civilization. This could be a clue to why the jealous house killed him. They envy his achievements and apparent fame.

It is apparent that one needs to know the culture of the *Abanyole* to be able to appreciate the beauty of oral funral poetry for the styles used in the poems are steeped in their culture. While discussing the relationship between symbolism and culture, Finnegan (1977:116) emphasizes this point when she observes: “In appreciating those songs, or the symbolism of any foreign poetry, some knowledge of the locally accepted symbolic associations of words and objects is essential. These may be some symbols, which have universal reference. But for the most part, local symbolism is culturally defined.”

Finnegan’s observation is significant and points to the fact that oral poetry is a product of a particular society and will thus reflect that society in one way or the other. Even the register used by the performer cannot be removed from the cultural set up of a particular society. Foley (1995:51) posits: “While the linguistic integers constitute the expressive code, in other words, they are merely the dedicated, agreed-upon, contextually appropriate signals for institutionalized meanings.” Therefore the infracultural registers (see Foley 1995: 50) can only be appreciated against a specific cultural background. It is this background that assigns meanings to them.

In poems (1), (8) and (19) above, I have shown that the death of a child devastates the parents. I have demonstrated that it is through the communality of the people that they can live with it. I have also shown that through the use of euphemism, the pains of the sting of death are assuaged. Repetition is put to good use in bringing out this loss. Among the *Abanyole*, it is not only the death of children that devastates people but also death of parents.
and through repetition of words and lines, the feelings and attitude of children and their society towards the death of parents is revealed.

In poem (9), for example, the words *Owera papa... ‘He who killed dad...’* and *Owera mama... ‘He who killed mother...’* are each repeated twice. They are used mainly for emphasis of the fact that the mourner is going through a painful time as a result of losing loved ones.

In the same poem, the words *Alakailanga khulubanda Munanguba ‘Wails in the valley at Munanguba’* are repeated four times. This is quite significant. The repetition of these words, therefore, serves as a signal. It is as if the mourner is saying there is a deeper meaning to be found in these words.

*Munanguba* is a river found in *Ebwiranyi*. For a long time the sides of this river have been quite bushy with grass, reeds and trees growing along it. There have been many stories, some of them very strange about things that have happened along this river. For example, it is said that the most dangerous night-runners are to be found along this river. Night runners in *Bunyore* are quite harmless in the sense that they do not beat up people. Those along this river, however, are said to be quite aggressive and there have been claims that they have even beaten up people who have walked along here and across the river at night.

Most recently there have been claims that there is a female genie with a family that beats up people who cross this river at night. When Harvilah and I did field work in *Bunyore* in July 2000, a young man who lives near this river, Kanini, narrated to us how he had wrestled with the genie. *Abanyole* have only recently started talking about genies. The strange creatures with super-natural powers have, however, for long existed in the Muslim culture. It appears that the *Abanyole* are therefore being influenced by this culture.

There is a belief among the *Abanyole* that people are manipulating the powers of these creatures to get wealth and power. The people that I talked to concerning this (*Mzee* Joseph Osuka - Appendix 4, number 1, *Mama* Mikali Ogaye, number 72 and *Mzee* Ibrahim Otukho, number 8) could not tell me exactly how this is done.
The Abanyole travel as far as Mombasa to purchase the genies. There have been stories from different villages on how the creatures have caused their keepers untold suffering when they demanded sacrifices in form of human beings and animals. As a result, many have lost their children and livestock.

Spirits are said to wail in darkness along river valleys. The person who “killed” the couple in this poem is therefore being likened to a spirit, an association which makes the “killer” more evil, hence, more hated than if he was directly referred to by name. Refering to him by name would only cause more trouble for the bereaved family as they could have one of their members locked up for character assassination. However, repeating that Owera papa alakailanga khulubanda Munanguba ‘He who killed dad wails in the valley at Munanguba,’ the mourner is telling the world: “here, take the key and open this door for yourself.” The listener must then quickly start constructing the non-verbalized text by listening to village whispers and gossips.

These, together with the leads given in the poem, will enable listeners to surmise what has been hinted at in the poem. In analyzing the style of these poems, it is essential that we do so within the context of their performance where the aforementioned signals will lead the analyst into the rich variety of meanings of the repeated words and lines. Foley (1995:49) summarizes this argument very well when he observes that: “Outside this forum of exchange, the signals will lack their implied content, and will necessarily be ‘read’ according to a code other than that employed by the performer in generating them. Outside the dedicated forum such an unaugmented discourse will flounder as well on unmanageable instances (and a collective surplus) of indeterminacy, as the audience seeks to fill logical lacunae without the special knowledge available only with admission to the performance arena.”

Other poems by individual mourners where repetition has been heavily used are (2), (3), (6), (7), (16), (20) and (22). Evidently, repetition is a very important feature of oral funeral poems. Finnegan (1977:90) is therefore right when she refers to repetition as the most marked feature of oral poetry, of which oral funeral poems are a part.

In poem (3) the words, Olumbe Olukhongo ‘Big disaster’ are repeated four times in this short poem of seven lines. Death is here equated to a disaster. The mourner is inviting the
listener to investigate why the death of Musungu is a disaster. Perhaps Musungu was a generous and understanding person. May be he helped many people. May be he initiated many useful projects. The information supplied in the poem is inadequate but there is a signal here and the listener must embark on a search for the missing links.

Note that Musungu ‘White person,’ may not be the real name of the deceased. It could easily be a nickname. When discussing repetition in poem (19), I mentioned that Maseno is associated with Western culture because of its history. When Europeans came into this region they settled in Maseno. Many White missionaries have been generous in providing to members of this community clothes, medicine, education and in some instances, food. The Abanyole therefore highly respect most European missionaries. For a long time, any Omunyole who is kind hearted and useful to the community has been referred to as Omusungu. The construction of the reasons why Musungu’s death is equated to a disaster must begin from here.

In poem (15) the dead person is likened to a lion. The mourner chants repeating:

\[\text{Esimba ya mama, khe njieyo} \quad \text{Mother’s lion, there it comes}\]
\[\text{Esimba ya papa, khe njieyo} \quad \text{Father’s lion, there it comes}\]

In the third and fourth stanzas, the same person is referred to as grandfather’s son and grandmother’s son respectively. Again, one needs background information to understand why the deceased is a lion. Was he fearless? Did he fearlessly and ruthlessly defend the community? What really makes him a lion? These are questions that can never be answered from this poem. We must, in Foley's (1995:49) words, get back into the performance arena, the context of the performance to investigate why the deceased is portrayed in this way. Only then can we be able to construct the meaning of the message presented in the verbalized part of the text.

**8.2.2.2 Repetition in Poems Performed by Groups of Mourners**

In poem (13), repetition is frequently used but this is a different kind of repetition from that I have so far discussed. This poem is structured along the call and response lines where the
soloist sings a line, which is picked up by the chorus. In this example, the chorus does not just repeat the soloist’s lines, it extends them by adding a few lines to complete the sense of the message. It is important to note that young men and women from the village of the deceased perform this poem at night.

It is interesting that repetition in poems that have a call and response structure do not call for interpretation and hidden meanings as in earlier examples in this section. Although such poems comment on death in interesting ways, the performers do not seem to get as profound as the individual mourners. This may be partly due to the fact that the night performers are not necessarily closely related to the deceased and although they share in the grief, are not directly affected. This may explain why their poems are lacking in depth in comparison with poems by individual performers. Also the intention of the night performers is primarily to entertain, and generally alleviate the mental anguish. The poems are therefore not as philosophical in nature as those of individual artists.

In poem (13) the loss of a mother is mourned. Repetition in this poem is used to stress the loss. In Chapter 6 (6.3), I emphasized the fact that mothers play a central role in the life of the Abanyole although this role is rarely recognized until they are dead. That is why Chemba is sad and that is also why he says:

Kalaba Omusiele aliyo
Khane khuhulilanga Obuyanzi

If mother was here
We would be happy

In a playful way, the night dancers raise a very important question, which is repeated many times in the poem. The soloist's first line runs:

Eh Chemba arebanga
Amarebo
Rasowa yatsia hena?

Eh Chemba is asking questions
Where did Rasowa go?

Khurebanga amarebo
Khurebanga amarebo

We are asking questions
We are asking questions

And in his last line, the soloist sings: Omusiele yatsia hena? ‘Where did mother go?’
From the discussion interviews with members of this community (Mzee Wellington Masatia Tambwa - Appendix 4, number 78, Mama Mauwa Likhutsa, number 77 and Mzee Johnston Okanga Abukutsa, number 38), it is not clear where *emakombe* is. Nobody seems to know for sure where it is but they all agreed that it exists and that nobody gets there except through death. Other poems with a similar repetition pattern are (10), (11), (12), (14), (26) and (27). In all these poems, the treatment of repetition as a style is superficial. This, again, is because the poems are not aimed at seriously probing issues related to death but rather, to amuse the mourners. Repetition in this context is used mainly to enhance the musical qualities of the poems and not to act as signals and keys to stores of knowledge on issues related to death.

### 8.2.3 Poetic Register

Language is the main medium of the oral artist in conveying her/his message to the audience. The skilled performer manipulates it in such away that she/he is able to physically and psychologically capture the audience.

A performer therefore does not use language of everyday discourse. She/he selects words and forms unique to the art in order to communicate the message effectively. A performer of oral poetry therefore uses language that is unique to his/her art and also unique to the targeted audience. This is what Foley (1995:49) refers to as register. Commenting on the language of performance, Foley (1995:49-50) notes: “Continuing with our receptionalist perspective on word-power, we can observe as a first principle that, however the system of signs is constituted, its primary burden is to stimulate the audience to an experience of a particular sort, based on the syntax of the event situated in a performance tradition. To invoke Gombrich’s theory of artistic perception, this brand or usage of language must be able to create the sought-after illusion unambiguously and coherently, though that responsibility does not in any way necessitate a ‘denotative’ idiom that describes by unremitting, even more detailed recourse to conventional types of signification. In fact, as discussed briefly in the opening chapter, the languages of traditional oral expression are special languages, made up of systems of elements that - under the prescribed transactional
What Foley means is that in oral poetry, language is used in a special way. Finnegans’s note (1977:110) can be compared with Foley’s observations above. She posits: “In varying forms and degrees, something of this ritual element - familiar yet special can be found in the language of many poetic genres. Perhaps it is the more important with oral poetry in that the separation from everyday activity must inevitably rely on means other than the interpretation of writing.”

The two scholars lay emphasis on the use of unique words in oral poetry and performance. Words being that important, a study of the poems then means a careful analysis of the words and how they have been used in the poems.

The performer of oral funeral poetry therefore heavily relies on language to communicate. She/he is aware of the expectations of the audience and the dictates of society. I have already stated that there is no power in direct mention. The singer must therefore use language that will call for interpretation. This language is weaved using symbolism, imagery and allusion. These are drawn from the people’s immediate environment. This supports Miruka’s (1994:90) assertion that oral poems heavily draw their reference from their immediate environment. That is why to echo Lewis (1942:20-21): these words are familiar, yet special. They are special precisely because they are creatively used.

The words and expressions that have been used in a special way in these poems can be said to:

- Be markers and onomatopoetic words that aid in putting together the structure of the poems
- Explain what the Abanyole think and believe about death
8.2.3.1 Words that Aid in Putting Together the Structure of the Poems as Well as Differentiate Gender in Oral Funeral Poetry

Some of the oral funeral poems employ semantically special words. A good example is poem (16) reproduced below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kapili kase kaliko</th>
<th>Kapili kase kaliko</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mamukuzu</td>
<td>Mamukuzu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kali mbwena?</td>
<td>What happened?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kali mbwena?</td>
<td>What happened?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siali sina?</td>
<td>What was it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siali sina?</td>
<td>What was it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutoka sina</td>
<td>Which motorcar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>okwakinga papa?</td>
<td>carried dad away?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this poem kapili kase kaliko and mamukuzu in lines 1 and 2 are examples of words used as markers belonging to a specific register of the genre. As words they do not seem to have a meaning. A closer examination of where and how those words are used, however, reveals that they make a lot of sense. They aid in holding the structure of the poem together and signaling the performance of this specific type of text. Without them, this poem may not only be the same, it may not exist at all.

Other examples of semantically special words used for holding together the structure of the poems are interjections: Eeehh in line 5 of poem (12) eh in lines 1 and 3 of poem (13) and eeyye in line 3 of poem (18). Like in poem (16), the poems will not be the same without these markers.

Other words are used to differentiate the gender of the mourners. A casual look at words like eeee in line 10 of poem (1), Huu huu huu in line 1 of poem (5), eh in line 5 of poem (8), eeeehh eeeehh in lines 3 and 7 and oooh in lines 4 and 8 of poem (9), Ye,ye,ye,ye in lines 9, 24 and 37, and ye,ye in lines 16, 30, 43, ye in lines 23, 34 and 36 of poem (19) and aye!In line 2, ayeha in line 4 and ye, ye, ye! In line 11 of poem (23) may lead one to conclude that these words do not serve any useful purpose in the poems. In a performance situation, these
interjections are very important, for they not only serve the useful purpose of holding together the structure and creating rhythmic effect in the poems, but they also help to distinguish between male and female mourners. There are interjections which are used by men only and others by women only. *Eee, eeeh, ye* and *eh* are basically used by women to alert the community of the demise of their clans person. They also use these interjections in the general mourning of the deceased. Words like *Yeho, Ooo*, and *huu huu* are basically used by men for the same purposes.

The use of interjections in oral funeral poetry is a detail that comes out more clearly in performance. It is mainly a detail in wailing and chanting although many times the mourners inject them into the structure of the poems. This means that a wholistic appreciation of style in oral poems cannot stop at an analysis of the poems, which have left out many useful sound words and other details that can be captured as the poem is performed live before an audience.

8.3 Conclusion

The analysis of the euphemisms and markers belonging to the register of the collected oral funeral poems reveals that this oral poetry represents features of a typical infracultural genre. However even without the knowledge of the societal background and style of performance, we can still find meaning in some of the poems. For instance, poem (25) below may be understood by people from different cultures:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Niwina owakata} & \quad \text{Who cheated} \\
\text{Nyankhusala Omenya} & \quad \text{Omenya’s mother-in-law} \\
\text{Ole omusala} & \quad \text{To take a drug} \\
\text{Nakila abandu babe} & \quad \text{That caused her people} \\
\text{Bahuela mmaloba} & \quad \text{To die} \\
\text{Ooo-nyakhusala omenya} & \quad \text{Ooo-Omenya’s mother -in-law}
\end{align*}
\]

As noted earlier, however, in their euphemism, symbolism and poetic register, the poems draw heavily from the local environment. Most of the euphemisms used in the poems therefore reveal a lot about the *Abanyole* people and their culture. Zurmin (1981: 205)
argues that traditional oral poetry must be seen within the context of folklore - as songs or recitations having measured rhythm and dealing with the verbal aspects of customs, observations etc of people. This observation is supported by my findings in the analysis of the poetic devices of the oral funeral poetry. The poetic register of the poems employs phrases and idioms that are deeply rooted in the traditions of the Abanyole people. This makes it difficult for non-Abanyole to get the deeper meaning from the poems.

In the analysis in this chapter, I have relied on the texts as far as their verbal style is concerned. However, I concur with Finnegan (1977:88) when she observes that: “With oral poetry, the distinction between the two (style and performance) is not a clear one, and it is impossible to appreciate either fully without some understanding of the other.”

Since oral funeral poetry is meant to be performed orally before an audience, a study of its performance in Chapter 7, I hope, has shed more light on the meaning of this genre for the Abanyole culture.
PART FOUR

EPILOGUE
CHAPTER 9

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

9.1 Introduction

Let me recapture the aim of the study. The primary purpose has been to filter and scan death through the lenses of poetry. A major finding is that oral funeral poetry is an important channel for expressing the Abanyole perceptions on death with respect to its causes and effects. It is an important folklore genre that transmits knowledge and wisdom from one generation to another. Of great relevance to the research theme, the analysis has revealed that oral funeral poetry has a rich blend of artistic elements of styles, performance and communicative economy which together portray salient features of the Abanyole perceptions on death. I can therefore conclude that oral funeral poetry is a powerful genre that partly unravels answers to the following questions:

a) What is the meaning of death?

b) What cause death?

c) What are the effects of death?

The analysis carried out has led to a comprehensive examination and response to these questions which formed the core of the research theme. I can therefore state with empirical certainty that the research questions raised have been adequately addressed.

I shall conclude the discussion in this dissertation by offering reflections on four fronts, which tie together the main theoretical and empirical strands of this study. These are:

- Research process and orientation
- Study approach
- Official response and perception of oral funeral poetry
- Perceptions on gender emanating from oral funeral poetry
9.2 Research Process and Orientation

I am concerned that whereas parochial Eurocentric scholars looked at African art forms such as oral funeral poetry as primitive and barbaric (see p’Bitek 1971:vii-ix. See also pages 6-7 of the same book), my analysis reveals that these forms of cultural heritage indeed have important social and spiritual roles. My conclusion therefore is that the parochial Eurocentric view has arisen from quick, artificial and detached studies that involve mere recordings, photographing and quickly arranged interviews that contribute very little to the understanding of the deep social and spiritual dimensions of African oral poetry. While I am aware of the fact that not all European scholars are biased in their presentation of African reality, I am concerned that there has been a large component of uncritical and biased presentation particular of forms of cultural heritage by a number of European scholars (see p’Bitek 1971:6-7). It has been demonstrated that the Africanists in centres of learning in Europe and North America contributed significantly to this distortion and misrepresentation (Zeleza 1997). Further, it was reinforced by some Africans who tried to interpret African cultural heritage through European lenses and overlook the African reality. p’Bitek (1971, 1973) presents a critical opinion of such scholars. Some of the African scholars who have been criticized include Kenyatta and Mbiti (Mwanzi 1972). Other current examples include Gates (1988), Mbembe (1992:1-30) and Mudimbe (1989) who have received negative reviews from Prah (1997:14-22) and Taiwo (1995).

My conclusion as far as research on African oral heritage is concerned is that we need a new approach on the manner in which we conduct these studies. This applies not only to oral funeral poetry but also to other African forms of intangible heritage. My opinion is that scholars who are interested in these forms should seek to develop an empathetic approach that allows the phenomenon of study to reveal and speak for itself. Such scholars must therefore become “the students of the people,” and should strive to apply Afrocentric studies and not European studies of Africa (Asante 1995:11).

It is within this context that I call for a reversal of training in methodology of scholars involved in the study of African folklore. I predict that deeper insights and balanced presentation will be realized if the scholars have meaningful engagement and involvement with the Africa reality. This calls for continuous dialogue and interaction between the...
scholars and phenomenon under investigation. Episodic contacts with Africa in newspapers, television, internet, telephone or through fax will not do (see discussion under study approach below).

One of the problems that has been noted in studying African reality is the existence of academic tourists (Zeleza 1997) or what Chambers (1983) has called rural development tourists. These people claim to be specialists on African issues when in reality, they have half-baked and distorted knowledge of the continent. Their research is based on short-lived encounters and some have been found not to have been to Africa to carry out any fieldwork as was the case with British African historians who had not visited Africa since 1983 yet continued to authoritatively publish (from discussion with Murunga in June 1999. He is a Kenyan historian currently on Ph.D. programme at North Westren University in the United States of America). Others have been known to analyze selected phenomena pertaining to a small number of communities and have used these to make sweeping generalizations (see Mbiti 1969, Finnegan 1970). Zeleza (1997) shows that some of these scholars have even practised professional dishonesty by plagiarizing on the work of the young scholars who have studied under them. In early 1990 during a conference in one of the hotels in Nairobi, a scholar from Germany, obviously ignorant of the Tachoni of Bungoma District, claimed that this ethnic group was extinct! (This information was collected from Godwin Murunga).

Thus, I suggest that a genuine interest in African reality should be a prerequisite of researches into African issues. The point I am stressing is the need for Western and African scholars to disengage from illusory and superficial analysis of African reality and endeavour to seek the richness that can be gained from a dialogical and ethnopoetic approach.

I am arguing a case for a number of micro-level studies covering geographical location, communities and themes. Unfortunately, there has been a tendency to apply broad themes to groups of communities. This is the case with Ruth Finnegan (1970), Nandwa and Bukenya (1983) and Akivaga and Odaga (1982). Hence, I believe that micro-level studies will help to avoid such generalizations.
9.3 Study Approach

An important theoretical and empirical concern in this study has been to utilize an appropriate approach to gather and interpret information from the study community. While it is important to articulate the research theme, it is necessary to pay attention to the approach to contribute towards answering the research questions. I have realized that there can be disjuncture between research purpose and approach. The point to emphasize is the need for synchronization between the articulation of the problem (however plausible and convincing it may be) and the research approach (theoretical and methodological). In my case, I situated my study in the interactive and interrogative framework to probe and tease out information relevant to the research theme. Below I give examples of how this framework has been used in this study.

The first was the candidate-supervisor interaction. An effort was made to go beyond the formal process of supervision which is often characterized by detachment and officialdom; to a deep, incisive and involved engagement not just at the theoretical debate but also at a joint and sincere effort to wrestle with the dynamics of data collection. Harvilahti and I engaged with informants on oral funeral poetry for a period of one week in July 2000 and one more week in December 2001. This involved recording information till night, visiting informants in their homes, video recording, cross checking information collected and co-operatively making genuine efforts to decipher the meaning behind expressions and other audio visual material.

The second is rich and broadened framework that enabled the study to benefit from critical feedback from a wide range of persons. The approach used was one of simultaneous information gathering, analysis, write up and discussion of results. Through this process I was able to respond to emerging gaps in the information gathered as well as taking up further analysis on issues raised by feedback givers. The persons who read the work (my supervisor and other scholars including Khayesi, Aseka, Nilsson, Bendix, Harjula and Heikkinen) gave comments on virtually every aspect starting with the focus of the study up to the conclusion and appendices. It came out clearly that these persons had comments on specific areas which were of interest to them. This kind of differentiated stakeholding in
reading and giving comments opened me to new ideas and approaches which have overall strengthened the content, approach and structure of this study.

The third is deep immersion in the rhythm of life of study community in information gathering and collective reflection on the product of the investigation. In brief, I had beneficial interaction with the study community. This took two forms: The first was during information gathering and follow up for clarity on problematic issues that emerged during analysis and write up. The second was an organized community comment and reflection on the interpretation and presentation of the information gathered. The chapters on results in the draft of the thesis were given to members of the Abanyole community who translated them into Olunyole. A forum was then organized to which over a hundred members of the community and scholars were invited (see Appendix 5). One of my supervisors, Harvilahiti, took part in this forum.

It is within such a dialogue that the research findings can find meaningful application in the community. The material presented in this dissertation cannot just be reduced to filling a gap in knowledge for the sake of writing a thesis. Rather, they have great potential to be used as education resource material as well as a source of information on African folklore. Death is a theme covered in a wide range of disciplines including health science, sociology, religion and anthropology. Students, researchers and readers within and without the formal educational sector can use the information on death presented in this study. Other writers should consider using the information to enrich discussion and writing on death.

9.4 Official Response and Perception of Oral Funeral Poetry

In the course of my fieldwork, I realized that oral funeral poetry performance is faced with the problem of official censure. This state of affairs has arisen from the misuse of this medium. With particular reference are the excesses and indulgences of the young people whose drug taking and alcohol abuse often degenerate into violence during the secular night performances.

While a ban on “secular” night performances may be a necessary immediate measure, it is not a long-lasting solution. My view is that a long-lasting solution lies in finding out and
addressing the underlying causes of alcohol and drug abuse in the community. All key stakeholders should be involved in getting to the root of the problem and formulating a workable solution.

9.5 Perceptions on Gender Emanating from Oral Funeral Poetry

While analyzing the okhukoma category of the Abanyole oral funeral poetry, I have realized that there are gender issues that need to be elucidated. Specifically, there are two main perceptions on gender that have drawn my attention. Each of these is discussed below.

The first issue is the perception and presentation of a woman when she is alive and when she is dead. It has struck me that there is contradiction where by she is portrayed as a villain in life but a heroine in death. In this sense, the true identity of an Omunyole woman comes out at death and is communicated through oral funeral poetry.

The second issue pertains to the question of who qualifies for okhukoma. The main criterion is: “a man with a son.” This excludes:

- A man with only a daughter
- A woman with a son
- A woman with a daughter

irrespective of the high moral standards that these people might have maintained.

There is need to re-think this gender bias. This comment is not a typical and hallowed chorus on women’s rights, but a genuine reflection on the need to open the criterion for selecting the people deserving okhukoma performances. Why should high moral standards refer only to men and not women?
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APPENDIX 1: ALL ORAL FUNERAL POEMS ANALYZED

(1) (Lament)

_Baluhy basianje_ Fellow clans people
_Baluhy basianje_ Fellow clans people
_Obukhala nisina_ What is important
_Obukhala nomwana_ A child is important
_Olamuruma omullo_ You can send her to fetch fire
_Namatsi_ Or water
_Norula esioba_ When you return home
_Wikhalanga hamuliano_ Or sit by the door
_Esisungu nomanyila mmwoyo_ With knowledge of English in you heart
_Beyayewe eeee_ _Beyayewe eeee_

_Baluhy weee nikhale ndaboka_ I have suffered for long
_Omwiwa we Inaya_ One unced at _Inaya_
_Ise mbula obukhala hango hano_ I am useless in this home
_Mbole mbwe Baluhy_ Fellow clans people, what do I say
_Baluhy banje sindamanyanga ta_ Fellow clans people, I did not know things
_will come to this

_Papa sindamanyanga_ Dad, I did not know
_Mama sindamanyanga_ Mother, I did not know
_Baluhy we_ Fellow clans people wee
_Nikhale ndaboka_ I have suffered for long
_Omwiwa we Inaya ise mbula_ One unced at _Inaya_, I am now
_obukhala_ useless
_Hango hano_ In this homestead
_Mbole mbwe Baluhy Baluhy_ What do I say fellow clans people
_Baluhy banje sindamanyanga_ Fellow clans people, I did not know


(2) (Chant)

Liloba yili This earth
Neliloba kooo It is real earth
Liamina Abwanzo It squeezed Abwanzo
Omwana wesiminywi Child of a chick
Namaraba kooo It is really dangerous

Liamina Abwanzo It squeezed Abwanzo
Liloba yili This earth
Neliloba kooo It is really earth
Liamina Abwanzo For it squeezed Abwanzo

(3) (Lament)

Olumbe olukhongo Big disaster
lwera Musungu Killed Musungu
Musungu wakora Musungu is lost
Olumbe olukhongo eee Big disaster eee
Lekha Omwami wakora My Lord is lost
Olumbe olukhongo Big disaster
Omwami wayela My Lord has landed/arrived [resting]
Olumbe olukhongo Big disaster

(4) (Okhukoma lyric)

Omwana wa Angose omwoyo Child of Angose this wailing is
nokukwo for you
Muyonga ubeleye muno Muyonga is very sad
Mwana ninzikhaye hamuliango When I’m seated by the doorside
Nesibabi with a dagger
Sianje mmakhono In my hands
Nakholenge mbwe etalanyi What shall I do the strong one
Muyonga ubeleye muno wee Muyonga is very sad
Baremakile omusala kwo They have cut down the tree
Ommonyo Yekamanga mwo That provides shade for Ommonyo
Ekampala In Kampala

(5) (Chant)

Huu huu huu Lukhoba Huu huu huu Lukhoba
Wamalanda Son of Malanda
Ndikhola mbwe huu What shall I do huu
Lukhoba Wamalanda Lukhoba son of Malanda
Abali nabakhasi Those with wives
Bahulila obulayi Are happy
Lukhoba Wamalanda Lukhoba son of Malanda
Omullo kulisamba Fire will burn me

(6) (Chant)

Omusungu yapimile Ambiyo A white doctor examined Ambiyo
Siabira muluno She will not survive this one
Olietuti Mayai Olietuti Eggs
Siabira muluno She will not survive this one
Ambiyo natsiye musiro When Ambiyo goes to the market
Manyanza butswa I feel happy

(7) (Chant)

Asande omukhaye Wowino Asande wife of Owino
Asande ndimile Asande I am lonely
Rebelenge I asked
Asande alihe Asande Where is Asande
Asande omukhaye welpali Asande the woman from Ipali
Mbarrenge Asande I’ve been thinking of Asande
Ndime I’m lonely
Asande omukhaye Wowino Ipali  
Asande mbokele  
Ngallenge Asande aliho  
Asande mbukile

Asande mbokele  
Asande I’m lonely

Asande omukhaye Wowino Ipali  
Asande ndimile  
Mbarrenge Asande Maidear  
Asande mbokele

Asande I’m lonely

Mbarrenge Asande Maidear  
I’ve been thinking of Asande my dear

Asande I’ve suffered

(8) (Lament)

Abasiele bali ena mulolekho  
Omwana ukonne

Where are the mothers to see  
The child is asleep

Abasiele bali ena mulolekho  
Omwana ukonne

Where are the mothers to see  
The child is asleep

Ifwe nakhukhole mbwe eh  
Omwana umalle okhutsia

What shall we do eh  
The child is gone

(9) (Lament)

Owera papa  
Owera papa alakailanga

He who killed dad  
He who killed dad wails in the

khulubanda Munanguba  
Eeehh eeehh

valley at Munanguba  
Eeehh eeehh

Oooh alakailanga khulubanda  
Oooh alakailanga khulubanda

Oooh he wails in the valley at  
Oooh he wails

Munanguba  
Munanguba

Owera mama  
Owera mama alakailanga

He who killed mother  
He who killed mother wails in the

Khulubanda Munanguba  
Eeehh eeehh

valley at Munanguba  
Eeehh eeehh

Oooh alakailanga  
Oooh alakailanga

Oooh he wails  
Oooh he wails

khulubanda Munanguba  
khulubanda Munanguba

in the valley at Munanguba

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### (10) (Lyric by “secular” night performers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solo: Lwenyanga si</th>
<th>Solo: What does it want</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lwenyanga si olumbe lwenyanga si</td>
<td>What does disaster want, what does it want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lwenyanga si</td>
<td>What does it want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lwenyanga si olumbe lwenyanga si</td>
<td>What does disaster want, what does it want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All: Lwenyanga si</td>
<td>All: What does it want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lwenyanga si olumbe lwenyanga si</td>
<td>What does death want, what does it want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lwenyanga si</td>
<td>What does it want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lwenyanga si olumbe lwenyanga si</td>
<td>What does disaster want, what does it want</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solo: Lienyanga si</th>
<th>Solo: What does it want</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lienyanga si elifwa lienyanga si</td>
<td>What does dying want, what does it want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lienyanga si</td>
<td>What does it want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lienyanga si elifwa lienyanga si</td>
<td>What does dying want, what does it want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All: Lienyanga si</td>
<td>All: What does it want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lienyanga si elifwa lienyanga si</td>
<td>What does dying want, what does it want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lienyanga si</td>
<td>What does it want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lienyanga si elifwa lienyanga si</td>
<td>What does dying want, what does it want</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solo: Murabelela</th>
<th>Solo: Do not be sad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Murabelela absiefwe murabelela</td>
<td>Colleagues do not be sad, do not be sad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murabelela</td>
<td>Do not be sad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murabelela abasiefwe murabelela</td>
<td>Colleagues do not be sad, do not be sad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### (11) (Lyric by “secular” night performers. Also performed at burial)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solo: Luwweye okhulanga papa</th>
<th>Solo: This is the end of calling papa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Luwweye bane</td>
<td>O yes it is the end</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All: Luwweye okhulanga papa</th>
<th>All: This is the end of calling papa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Luwweye bane</td>
<td>Oh yes it is the end</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solo: Luwweye khubana babe</th>
<th>Solo: This is the end for his children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Luwweye bane</td>
<td>Oh yes it is the end</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All:  Luwweye khubana babe
     Luwweye bane
Solo:  Luwweye mulitala
     Luwweye bane
All:  Luwweye mulitala
     Luwweye bane
Solo:  Eh papa wefwe
     Eh papa bane
All:  Eeeh eeh eeh
Solo:  Eh papa wefwe
     Eh papa bane
All:  Liloba litsia okhumina
      omwana wa mama
Solo:  Eh papa bane
     Eh papa bane
All:  Eeeh eeh eeh
Solo:  Eh papa bane
     Eh papa bane
All:  Liloba litsia okhumina
      omwana wa mama
(12) (Lyric by “secular” night performers)
Solo:  Olwa papa yali okhufwa
     Abalonga khwabelela
All:  Olwa papa yali okhufwa
     Abalonga khwabelela
Solo:  Eeehh
All:  Abalonga khwabelela

All: This is the end for his children
     Oh yes it is the end
Solo: This is the end in this homestead
     Oh yes it is the end
Solo: Eh our father
Solo: Eh our father
All: The earth will squeeze
      Our mother’s son
Solo: Eh our father
All: When dad died
     We of Ebulonga were very sad
All: When dad died
     We of Ebulonga were very sad
Solo: Eeehh
Solo: Eeehh
All: We of Ebulonga were very sad

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(13) (Lyric by “secular” night performers)

Solo: Eh Chemba arebanga amarebo
   Rasowa yatsia hena?
Solo: Eh Chemba is asking questions
   Where did Rasowa go?

All: Eh Chemba arebanga amarebo
   Rasowa yatsia hena?
All: Eh Chemba is asking questions
   Where did Rasowa go

Solo: Khurebanga amarebo
   Khurebanga amarebo
   Omusiele yatsia hena
Solo: We are asking questions
   We are asking questions
   Where did mother go

All: Khurebanga amarebo
   Khurebanga amarebo
   Omusiele yatsia hena
   Kalaba omusiele aliyo
   Khane khuhulilanga obuyanzi
   Kalaba omusiele aliyo
   Khane khuhulilanga obuyanzi
All: We are asking questions
   We are asking questions
   Where did mother go
   If mother was here
   We would be happy
   If mother was here
   We would be happy

(14) (Lyric by “secular” night performers)

Solo: Enimba omukhana
Solo: If I was a girl

All: Enimba omukhana
All: If I was a girl

   Sindakhatekha Ebwiranyi
   Aberanyi nabalosi
   Aberanyi nabalosi
   Balokananga nabarende
Solo: Enimba omusiani
Solo: If I was a man

All: Enimba omusiani
All: If I was a man

   Sindakhatesya Ebwiranyi
   Aberanyi nabalosi
   Aberanyi nabalosi
   Aberanyi nabalosi
   Aberanyi are witches
   Aberanyi are witches
   Aberanyi are witches
   They bewitch their neighbours
   I would not be married in Ebwiranyi
(15) (Chant)

*Esimba ya mama khe njieyo*  
Mother’s lion, there it comes

*Esimba ya papa khe njieyo*  
Father’s lion, there it comes

*Omwana wa kuka yetsanga*  
Grandfather’s child is coming

*Omwana wa kukhu yetsanga*  
Grandmother’s child is coming

(16) (Chant)

*Kapili kase kaliko*  
Kapili kase kaliko

*Mamukuzu*  
Mamukuzu

*Kali mbwena?*  
What happened?

*Kali mbwena?*  
What happened?

*Siali sina?*  
What was it?

*Siali sina?*  
What was it?

*Mutoka sina*  
Which motor car

*okwakinga papa?*  
carried dad away?

(17) (Lament)

*Mama wee! Mama wee!*  
Mother wee! Mother wee!

*Mama ukholle mbwena?*  
Mother, what have you done to me?

*Oufukilanga obusuma*  
You who cooks for me

*Ndelo nandie hena?*  
Where will I eat now?

*Ounjikullanga omuliango*  
You who opens the door for me

*Ndelo wina owanaunjikulle?*  
Who will open for me now?

*Mama ufunuye esikenyi*  
Mother, you have exposed me

*Ndelo kho nabanzekhe*  
People will now laugh at me

*Mama we! Mama wee*  
Mother wee! Mother wee
(18) (Lyric by “secular” night performers)

Abasyubi bakhola emisangoo  Abasyubi performed rituals
Batsila Akunda nafwa  That caused Akunda’s death
Ee-eye  Ee-eye
Akunda wakwa amaloba  Akunda has now turned into earth

(19) (Lament)

Omwana wa Anjichi  Child of Anjichi
Ukholle mbwena?  What have you done to me?
Sese wa Anjichi  Sese of Anjichi
Ukholle mbwena?  What have you done to me?
Nangwe mbwena?  What shall become of me?
Nandeletenge khulusina bane?  On what shall I lean?
Omwana wa Anjichi  Child of Anjichi
Ukholle mbwena?  What have you done to me?
Ye, ye, ye, ye  Ye, ye, ye, ye

Sindi nomulembe bana befwe  I have no peace My people
Otemba oboye mukoloba ye, ye  Otemba only said yesterday
Inyumba esimbanga  The jealous house
Khuliakana iyo  We shall meet there
Inyumba esimbanga ye  Oh jealous house
Inyumba esimbanga ye!  Oh jealous house!

Murebe Emuseno  Enquire from Maseno
Murebe Emuseno  Enquire from Maseno
Murebe Emuseno  Enquire from Maseno
Tsia murebe Anjichi  Find out from Anjichi
Emuseno  At Maseno
Omwana wanje wandatola bululu bane  My child who I got
Rebanga butswa Anjichi  I am asking you Anjichi
Waikholle mbwena eh? What have you done to me?
Ye, ye, ye, ye
Sindi nomulembe bana befwe I have no peace
Otemba oboye mukoloba ye, ye Otembo only said yesterday ye, ye
Inyumba esimbanga The jealous house
Khuliakana iyo We shall meet there
Inyumba esimbanga ye Oh jealous house
Inyumba esimbanga ye! Oh jealous house, ye!

Murebe Emuhaya Enquire from Emuhaya
Murebe Emuhaya Enquire from Emuhaya
Tsia Murebe Oluhano Find out from Chief Oluhano
Emuhaya eh At Emuhaya
Omwana wanje wandatola bululu The child I got through pain
Bane My people
Rebanga Anjichi waikholle mbwena? I’m asking Anjichi what did you do to me?
Ye, ye, ye, ye! Ye, ye, ye, ye!
Sindi nomulembe bana befwe I have no peace My people!
Otemba oboye mukoloba ye, ye Otembo only said yesterday ye, ye
Inyumba esimbanga The jealous house
Khuliakana iyo We shall meet there
Inyumba esimbanga ye, ye The jealous house
Inyumba esimbanga ye! Oh the jealous house!

20 (Lament)

Abandu hano batsia bosim Where have all these people gone?
Olwalelo nzikaye omuliango ye Today I have closed the door
Olwalelo nzikaye omuliango Today I have closed it
Mwitala liabakhongo ma In the home of great ones
Lelo nzikaye omuliango  The door is closed forever
Mama hano yatsia hena  Where has mother gone?
Olwalelo nzikaye omulaingo ye  Today I have closed the door
Olwalelo nzikaye omuliango  Today I have closed the door
Mwitala liabakhongo ma  In the homestead of great ones
Lelo nzikaye omuliango  Today I have closed the door
Senje hano yatsia hena?  Where has aunt gone?
Olwalelo nzikaye omuliango eh  Today I have closed the door
Kukhu hano yatsia hena?  Where has grandmother gone?
Olwalelo nzikaye omuliango eh  Today I have closed the door
Mwitala liabakhongo  In the homestead of great ones
Lelo nzikaye omuliango kabisa  Today I have closed the door forever

(21) (Chant)

Onea wanje uboloye ing’ombe  My dear Onea has untethered the cow
Abandahanga  Those who praise me
Ikalukhile emukulu  It has gone back to the hills

(22) (Chant)

Olumbe luno  Big disaster
Olumbe lwera khotsa  Big disaster killed uncle
Walumbe namwekania  Disaster the separator
Olumbe luno  Big disaster
Olumbe lwera mama  Big disaster killed mother
Walumbe namwekania  Disaster the separator
Olumbe lwera papa  Big disaster killed dad
Walumbe namwekania  Disaster the separator

(23) (Lament)

Bana befwe, siali si?  Brethren, what was it?
Aye!  Aye!
Ise ndakwa omulia abandu  I have become a man eater
Aye! Aye!
Ayeha reba wiko  Ah who shall I ask?
Njenyanga butswa  I am shocked
Narebe wiko  Whom shall I ask
Njenyanga liloba yili  This earth swallows people

limilanga abandu  It swallows people
Njenyanga butswa  I am shocked
Ise lelo inzokha  These days I am a snake
Baluyia ye, ye, ye  Clans people ye, ye, ye
Baluyia ye, ye, ye  Clans people ye, ye, ye
Baluyia ye, ye, ye  Clans people ye, ye, ye
Omwana wanje utsiye  My child has gone
Baluhya ise lelo  Clans people today
Sikaye butswa  I have remained with nothing
Sikaye butswa  I have remained with nothing
Ise ndilibwa namachungu  I will be eaten by rats
Njenyanga butswa  I am shocked

(24) (Okhukoma lyric)

Omuyonga ubeleye muno  Omuyonga is very sad
Omuyonga ubeleye muno ko  Omuyonga is indeed sad
Baremakile omusala  They have cut down the shade tree
Okwa Baluhya bekamanga mwo  That the clans people shelter under
Ekampala  In Kampala

(25) (Chant)

Niwina owakata  Who cheated
nyakhusa Omenya  Omenya’s mother-in-law
Ole omusala  To take a drug
Nakila abandu babe  That caused her people
Bahuela mmaloba  To die
Ooo - nyakhusala Omenya  Ooo - Omenya’s mother-in-law

(26)  (Lyric by “secular” night performers)

Solo: Olwa papa yali okhufwa  Solo: When father died
All: Aberanyi babelela  All: Aberanyi were sad
    Olwayarebwa mwisandaku  When he was put in the coffin
    Aberanyi esibela siali sire  Aberanyi nearly died of grief

Solo: Olwa mama yali okhufwa  Solo: When mother died
All: Abana babelela  All: The children were sad
    Olwayarebwa mwisanduku  When her body was put in the coffin
    Abana esibela siali sire  The children nearly died of grief

(27)  (Lyric by “secular” night performers)

Solo: Emikunda tsia  Solo: Father’s farms on
    papa munjelekha  the ridge yonder
All: Emikunda tsia  All: Father’s farms on
    papa munjelekha  the ridge yonder
    Yakhakulle lijoku khulalima  He would have bought an oxen plough
    Khulalima  For us to dig
    Khulalima  For us to dig
    Emikunda tsiefwe munjelekha  Our farms on the ridge yonder
APPENDIX 2: OTHER ORAL FUNERAL POEMS COLLECTED

(1) (Chant)

Niwina owakonyelekho Miya  Who visited Miya
Kho nimumanya  To know that
Miya natsie mmaloba?  Miya will die?

(2) (Lyric by “secular” night performers)

Khabile njonyele  I have searched until I’m tired
Omwana wa mama  Mother’s child
Khabile njonyele  I have searched until I’m tired

Khabile njonyele  I have searched until I’m tired
Omwana wefwe uno  Our brother
Khabile njonyele  I have searched until I’m tired

Khabile njonyele  I have searched until I’m tired
Omulai wa mama  The beautiful one of mother
Khabile njonyele  I have searched until I’m tired

(3) (Lyric by “secular” night performers)

Luwweye hango hano  It is finished, in this homestead it is
luwweye bane  completely finished
Luwweye hango hano  It is finished, in this homestead it is
luwweye bane  completely finished
Omulai wam ‘ma  The beautiful one of mother
Eee eeeeee  Eee eeeeee
Omulai wam ‘ma  The beautiful one of mother
Liloba litsia okhumila  The earth will swallow
Omwana wa mama  Mother’s child
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song Title</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Luwweye mulitala</td>
<td>It is finished, in this homestead it is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>luwweye bane</td>
<td>completely finished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luwweye mulitala</td>
<td>It is finished, in this homestead it is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>luwweye bane</td>
<td>completely finished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luwweye khubanabo</td>
<td>It is finished, for your children it is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>luwweye bane</td>
<td>completely finished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luwweye mulitala</td>
<td>It is finished, for your children it is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>luwweye bane</td>
<td>completely finished</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**(4) (Lament)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song Title</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Omukhwe wo Mumbeni</td>
<td>The son-in-law of the rainmakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahila Olume wam’ma</td>
<td>They have taken Olume son of my mother away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olume wam’ma</td>
<td>Olume son of my mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omwiwa we Inaya</td>
<td>The one unced at Inaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olume ndalila eee</td>
<td>Olume I cry eee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ndacheleba ndalila</td>
<td>I was late, I cried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olume wam’ma</td>
<td>Olume son of my mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olume wam’ma</td>
<td>Olume son of my mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nali omwiwa we Inaya</td>
<td><em>The one unced at Inaya</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omambia ndalilala</td>
<td>Omambia I cry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eeee</td>
<td>Eeee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**(5) (Lament)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song Title</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ndanula Nyapela</td>
<td>I snatched away from Nyapela</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omundu wanje</td>
<td>My person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bane Omwiwa we Ikobelo</td>
<td>Oh, the one unced at Ikobelo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omundu wanje bane</td>
<td>My person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mako Omundu wo Mundika Oh, the person from Mundika
Omundu wanje ndalila My person I cry
Ayilo Omosoti wanje Ayilo my lover
Ndasinjila khu Njiti I stood at Khu Njiti
Ndakhonela obulimo And made a knot on the grass

Omundu wanje ndalila Oh my person I cry
Ayilo wanje My Ayilo
Ndasinjila khu Njiti I stood at khuNjiti
Manikhonela obulimo And made a knot on the grass

(6) (Lament)

Olume yatsia oluchendo Olume went on a journey
Akhachelela yenyene And came back alone
Mukhwana yatsia oluchendo Mukhwana went on a journey
Akhachelela yenyene And came back alone
Namukhole mbwee? What will you do?
Mukhwana yatsia oluchendo Mukhwana went on a journey
Akhachelela yenyene And came back alone
Membe weindebe musiro Membe, the market chairman
Namukhole mbwee What will you do?
Mukhwana yatsia oluchendo Mukhwana went on a journey
Akhachelela yenyene And came back alone
Membe weindebe musiro Membe, the market chairman
Namukhole mbwee What will you do?
Lelo namunzabile m’maloba Today you will bury me in the earth
Khabukule omusomi omukhongo Call in a respected minister
Mamurekho ingubo Then cover my body in a piece of cloth
Mamunjabile And bury me
Siling’ane Then stop wailing/mourning
Mama eh  Mother eh
Mama ndalila  Mother, I am mourning
Papa aliena?  Where is father?

Kukhu eh  Grandmother, I am mourning
Kukhu ndalila  Grandmother, I am mourning
Papa aliena?  Where is father?

Papa ukhulekhele  Father has left us
Chenda bulai papa  Travel well father
Chenda bulai  Travel well
Khuliakana  We will meet

(8)  (Chant)

Niwina owakonyelekho Miya  Who visited Miya
Kho nimumanya  That s/he came to know
Miya natsie mmaloba?  That Miya Will die?

(9)  (Lament)

Eee Esipila wa Akeng’o  Eee Esipila son of Akeng’o
Ndachendanga ndaetuya  I have travelled and Seen much
Omukhasi omukabusia  A woman who has been remarried
nokusinyo  Is a bore
Esipila alamilanga  Esipila is crying
Indangu  In the backyard
Khaulile esibela  Feel sorrowful
Amaraba  Danger
Siling 'ane  And stop mourning
(10) (Lyric by “secular” night performers)

Solo: Atingo hanjelekha yaho  
     Saralanga Omundu  
All: Atingo hanjelekha yaho  
     Saralanga Omundu

Solo: Kata wamukhola mbwena  
     Saralanga tawe  
All: Kata wamukhola mbwena  
     Saralanga tawe

Solo: Kata wamunyeka ko  
     Saralanga tawe  
All: Kata wamunyeka ko  
     Saralanga tawe

Solo: Atingo hanjelekha yaho  
     Saralanga omundu  
All: Atingo hanjelekha yaho  
     Saralanga omundu

(11) (Lyric by “secular” night performers)

Solo: Olumbe lwamalle abandu  
All: Eeh!

Solo: Olumbe lwamalle abandu  
All: Eeh!

Olumbe lwamalle abandu  
Lubundaa mabinda

Solo: Inzofu yamalle abandu  
All: Eeh!

Solo: The elephant has killed many people
All: Eeh!
Solo: *Inzofu yamalle abandu* Solo: The elephant has killed many people

*Inzofu yamalle abandu* The elephant has killed many people

*Nebindaa mabinda* It roars and roars

(12) (Lyric by “secular” night performers)

Solo: *Khwembenge omwana eee* Solo: Let’s sing about this lady eee

*Khwembenge omwana eee* All: Let’s sing about this lady eee

*Yatsia nabana munda* Solo: She died before bearing children

*Yatsia nabana munda* All: She died before bearing children

*Solo: Ndelo nakhole mbwe eee?* Solo: What shall I do eee?

*Ndelo nakhole mbwe eee?* All: What shall I do eee?

*Yatsia nabana munda* Solo: She died before bearing children

*Yatsia nabana munda* All: She died before bearing children

(13) (Lyric by “secular” night performers)

Solo: *Omundu ochayanga* Solo: Whoever despises

*Mama wefwe* Our mother

*Alisambwa nesitima* All: Will be electrocuted

*Omundu ochayanga* Whoever despises

*Mama wefwe* Our mother

*Alisambwa nesitima* Will be electrocuted

*Solo: Eh mama ibe* Solo: You mother

*Tsia imbeli* All: Move forward

*Solo: Eh mama ibe* Solo: You mother

*Tsia imbeli* All: Move forward
Abandu bakhulole  Let everybody see you
Tsia imbeli    Move forward

(14) (Lyric by “secular” night performers)

Solo: Ee papa yali okhufwa  Solo: Ee father died
All: Mama nalondakho        All: Mother died soon afterwards

Solo: Ooye ooye!            Solo: Ooye ooye!
All: Ooye ooye!             All: Ooye ooye!

Solo: Ooye ooye!            Solo: Ooye ooye!
All: Ooye khwauka           All: Ooye! We were shocked

Solo: Olwa abebuli bafwa    Solo: When our parents died
All: Abatongoi khwabelela  All: We from Ebutongoi were sad
Solo: Ooye ooye!            Solo: Ooye ooye!
All: Ooye khwauka           All: Ooye We were shocked

(15) (Lyric by “secular” night performers)

Solo: Eyako kanala – kooo   Solo: That is normal
   Eyako kanala             That is normal
All: Eyako kanala – koo    All: That is normal
   Eyako kanala            That is normal
   Omundu wayanzwa         The person who was loved
   nasili mwoyo            When she/he was still alive

Solo: Olufu lwanala – kooo  Solo: Death is normal
   Olufu lwanala           Death is normal
All: Olufu lwanala – kooo  All: Death is normal
   Olufu lwanala          Death is normal
Solo: Ee papa wefwe  
Solo: Ee our father

All: Omundu wayanzwa  
All: The person who was loved

nasili mwoyo  
When she/he was still alive

Solo: Omwana wefwe  
Solo: Our brother/sister

All: Omundu wayanzwa  
All: The person who was loved

nasili mwoyo  
When she/he was still alive

(16) (Lyric by “secular” night performers)

Solo: Situa orakhafwa omwoyo  
Solo: Do not give up hope, Situa

All: Situa orakhafwa omwoyo  
All: Do not give up hope, Situa

Niwe ingasi ya abana  
You are the ladies’ ladder

Niwe olusimbi lwa abana  
Your are the ladies’ medal

Solo: Uno ni omwana wefwe eee  
Solo: This is our brother/sister

Eee owakhwayanza eee  
The one we love

All: Ni omwana wefwe eee  
All: She/he is our brother/sister

Eee owakhwayanza eee  
The one we love

Eee nambole nawina?  
To whom will I talk?

Eee nambole nawina?  
To whom will I talk?

(17) (Lyric by “secular” night performers)

Solo: Omwana  
Solo: The young lady

Omwana wamanyikha  
The famous young lady

All: Omwana wamanyikha  
All: The famous young lady

Singa omutoka kwamalako  
Like the constitutional car

Solo: Woye  
Solo: Woye

All: Woyi woyee woiy ndauka  
All: Woyi woyee woyi Woyi I am surprised

Solo: Omusiele  
Solo: The old woman

Omusiele owamanyikha  
The famous old woman
All: *Omusiele owamanyikha*  
*Singa omutoka kwamalako*  
Solo: *Omusiani*  
*Omusiani wamanyikha*  
All: *Omusian wamanyikha*  
*Singa omutoka kwamalako*  
Solo: *Woye*  
Solo: *Abasiani*  
*Abasiani bamanyikha*  
Solo: *Woye*  
All: *Woyi woyee woyi ndauka*  
Solo: *Woye*  
Solo: *Abasiani*  
*Abasiani bamanyikha*  
Solo: *Woye*  
All: *Woyi woyee woyi woyi woyee ndauka*  
(18) (Lyric by “secular” night performers)

Solo: *Omusiele oraenda omwoyo*  
*Omusiele orakhabelela*  
All: *Niwe ingasi yabana*  
*Niwe olusimbi lwabana*  
Solo: *Baane*  
*Niwe ingasi yabana*  
*Niwe olusimbi lwabana*  
Solo: *Maisha oraenda omwoyo*  
*Maisha orakhabelela*  
Solo: Don’t worry, old woman  
Don’t be sad, old woman  
You are the young people’s support  
You are the young people’s medal  
Solo: My kins people  
You are the young people’s support  
You are the young people’s medal  
Solo: Don’t worry, Maisha  
Don’t be sad, Maisha
All: Niwe ingasi yabana
Niwe olusimbi lwabana

Solo: Baane

All: Niwe ingasi yabana
Niwe olusimbi

(19) (Lyric by “secular” night performers)

Solo: Beyaya andatsie
All: Beyaya andatsie

Solo: Omukongo
Omukongo kwalula

All: Omukongo
Omukongo kwalula

Solo: Ebilenje
Ebilenje bialula

All: Ebilenje
Ebilenje bialula

Solo: Amakhono
Amakhone kalula

All: Amakhono
Amakhone kalula

Solo: Ngamila okusiolo ndetile
Ngamila okusiolo ndetile

All: Ngamila okusiolo ndetile
Ngamila okusiolo ndetile

All: You are the young people’s support
You are the young people’s medal

Solo: My kins people

All: You are the young people’s support
You are the medal

Solo: Oh the place I went to
All: Oh the place I went to

Solo: My back
My back is tired

All: My back
My back is tired

Solo: My legs
My legs are tired

All: My legs
My legs are tired

Solo: My hands
My hands are tired

All: My hands
My hands are tired

Solo: Give me a stick for support
Give me a stick for support

All: Give me a stick for support
Give me a stick for support
Solo: *Inywe abasiani*  
*Solo:* You young men  
*Muyanze mulekhe liyoka*  
Please stop making noise  

*All:* Babolanga  
*All:* They say  
*Omwana omulayi wakora*  
We have lost a good child

Solo: *Eee*  
*Solo:* Eee  
*All:* Babolanga  
*All:* They say  
*Omwana omulayi wakora*  
We have lost a good child

Solo: *Inywe abaluhya*  
*Solo:* You kins people  
*Muyanze mulekhe liyoka*  
Please stop making noise  

*All:* Babolanga  
*All:* They say  
*Omwana omulayi wakora*  
We have lost a good child

Solo: *Enga abasiele*  
*Solo:* Old ladies  
*Muyanze mulekhe amarebo*  
Please stop asking questions  

*All:* Babolanga  
*All:* They say  
*Omwana omulayi wakora*  
We have lost a good child

Solo: *Eee*  
*Solo:* Eee  
*All:* Babolanga  
*All:* They say  
*Omwana omulayi wakora*  
We have lost a good child

Solo: *Bane*  
*Solo:* My goodness  
*All:* Babolanga *o*  
*All:* They say  
*Omwana omulayi wakora*  
We have lost a good child

(21)  
(Lyric by “secular” night performers)

Solo: *Walekha abana babe*  
*Solo:* She/he has died  
Leaving the children
All: Uyo khewatsia okhusosa
   All: She/he has gone to rest

Solo: Walekha abana
   Solo: She/he has died

   Leaving the children

All: Uyo khewatsia okhusosa
   All: She/he has gone to rest

Solo: Walekha mama uwe
   Solo: She/he has died

   Leaving the mother

All: Uyo khewatsia okhusosa
   All: She/he has gone to rest

(22) (Lyric by “secular” night performers)

Solo: Uyo omusiani Bingwa
       Baane
   Solo: Young man Bingwa

   Kins people

All: Alakayanga omukhana Kobole
   All: He’s mourning young lady Kobole

Solo: Luwweye okhulanga Kobole
       Luwweye bane
   Solo: It is the end of calling Kobole

   It is indeed the end kins people

All: Luwweye okhulanga Kobole
       Luwweye bane
   All: It is the end of calling Kobole

   It is indeed the end kins people

Solo: Baane
   Solo: Kins people

All: Bane
   All: Kins people

Solo: Omulayi wa Mama
   Solo: The beautiful one of my Mother

All: E! E! E! E!
   All: E! E! E! E!

Liloba litsia okhumila
   The earth will swallow

Omwana wa mama
   Mother’s child

Solo: Owakhwayanza
   Solo: The one we love

All: Liloba litsia okhumila
   All: The earth will swallow

Omwana wa mama
   Mother’s child
APPENDIX 3: FUNERALS ATTENDED

I continued to attend and participate in funerals in Bunyore after 1998. In a sense, therefore, my fieldwork has been a continuous process spreading over a period of five years (between 1997 and 2002). For example, other funerals attended include those of Janet Ayuma (1999), William Nabutsili (1999), Jane Ongachi (1999), Monica Osieko (2000), Hon. Erick Edward Khasakhala (2000), Tom Masatia (2001), Mauwa Likhutsa - also interviewed for this study - (2002).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>VILLAGE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Omuchele Amboye</td>
<td>Emusoli</td>
<td>18/10/1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turukasi Mukhwana Esitoko</td>
<td>Ebuyalu</td>
<td>28/10/1997</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph Kweya Muhando</td>
<td>Emakunda</td>
<td>29/10/1997</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nehamiah Ochwacho Otenyo</td>
<td>Emusoli</td>
<td>17/11/1997</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lydia Wangale Maina</td>
<td>Ebuyalu</td>
<td>22/11/1997</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alfred Ogendo Okeyo</td>
<td>Ebuyalu</td>
<td>24/11/1997</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apolo Ochieng</td>
<td>Emakunda</td>
<td>13/12/1997</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mary Arit Petia</td>
<td>Khmuseno</td>
<td>16/12/1997</td>
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<td>Melisa Ndanyi Mukoko</td>
<td>Esitsimi</td>
<td>30/12/1997</td>
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<td>John Litieka Oginga</td>
<td>Ebwiranyi Mwilala</td>
<td>1/1/1998</td>
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<td>Gladys Abisagi Onyango</td>
<td>Ebwiranyi Mwilala</td>
<td>10/1/1998</td>
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<td>Omwanda Moi</td>
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<td>Paulina Okaya</td>
<td>Ebwiranyi Esabalu</td>
<td>22/2/1998</td>
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<td>Zablon Inyambukho John</td>
<td>Mwilala</td>
<td>2/5/1998</td>
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<td>Ezekiel Obwera Injelwa</td>
<td>Esitsimi</td>
<td>16/6/1998</td>
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<td>Rephen Doricus Owendi</td>
<td>Emakunda</td>
<td>27/6/1998</td>
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<tr>
<td>Everlyn Okisa Osodo</td>
<td>Emusoli</td>
<td>10/7/1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Opanda</td>
<td>Emakunda</td>
<td>11/7/1998</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 4: INFORMATION ON THE ABANYOLE WITH WHOM I DISCUSSED THE RESEARCH THEME

Some of the people on this list were not interviewed between 1997 and 1998 but I had discussions with them on this subject on several occasions between September 1998 and December 2001. I have therefore included their names in the list. They are Elfas Okumbo Okechi, Abigail Andisi Okechi, Gerald Apwacho, Aggrey Indiatsi and Dan Atulo Okwanyo.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Age:</th>
<th>Village:</th>
<th>Level of Education:</th>
<th>Other Details:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Joseph Osuka</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>Ebwiranyi Mukhalakhala</td>
<td>Never went to school</td>
<td>He is married and had six children. Two died and four are still living. Between 1955 and 1957 he worked as a casual labourer at the Rosterman Gold mines in Kakamega. He then moved to Nakuru (provincial headquarters of Rift Valley Province) where he got a job and worked with the Municipal Council until his retirement in 1985. Now he lives in his rural home and is supported by two of his children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fronika Ayoti</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Ebwiranyi Mukhalakhala</td>
<td>Std. Three</td>
<td>Wife to Joseph Osuka. She lost eyesight three years ago due to an illness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Felister Andeyo Omulama</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Ebwiranyi Mukhalakhala</td>
<td>Never went to school</td>
<td>First wife of the late Omulama Otwelo. Together with the husband they had twelve children. Ten of them are now dead. She is a small-scale farmer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Roselida Omulama</td>
<td>Does not know the year she was born but says it was during inzala yesikombe (Hunger of the cup). This is estimated to have been around 1943</td>
<td>Ebwiranyi Mukhalakhala</td>
<td>Never went to school</td>
<td>Third wife of the late Omulama Otwelo. They had seven children. Two are now dead. Roselida is a small-scale farmer and trader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Thomas Ateku Omulama (Turkey)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Ebwiranyi Mukhalakhala</td>
<td>Std. 2</td>
<td>First son of the late Omulama Otwelo. A talented dancer and entertains crowds at the night performances. In 1965, he married Sella and together they had eight children. Two of the children are dead. His nickname is Likulukulu “Turkey” because he becomes proud after drinking “Jeremiah’s water.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Maritsa Akute</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>Ebwiranyi Mukhalakhala</td>
<td>Std. 2</td>
<td>Wife of the late Manasi Akute, the man who married her in 1955. She had seven children. One is now dead. When I had a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7 Apollo Oyondi Keria 74 Ebusakami Esabalu
He learned in a day school (Nursery)
A polygamous man of two wives. All together he has eleven children. In his youthful days, he was a talented guitarist and singer and thrilled many in night performances. When I interviewed him, he joked a lot saying many times “I was also popular with girls. They would not go to those night performances if Oyondi was not singing.” For a living, he worked as a carpenter until he was taken ill about ten years ago. He is now supported by his children.

8 Ibrahimu Otukho 75 Ebwiranyi Emusoli
Std. 4
Quite an eloquent speaker, an orator in his own right. He is a Lay Reader with the Anglican Church of Kenya. He married in 1951 and has eight children. He earns a living from small-scale farming and is also supported by his children.

9 Alice Otundo 43 Ebulonga Etwenya
Form four (High School graduate)
Married Joel Otundo (see 59 below) in 1982. They have six children. She is a small-scale farmer and a business lady. With the husband, they own a grinding mill where she works most of the time.

10 Hezekia Amutsama. His nickname is Masimbo 39 Ebwiranyi Ebuyalu
Std. 4
He is one of the talented abakomi. In the night performances, he plays drums. When I had a discussion interview with him, he had just separated with his wife. He has three children and works for the other villagers to provide for his family.

11 Shadrack Iriri Amutsama 36 Ebwiranyi Ebuyalu
Form 6 (advanced level) Diploma in Science Education
A very talented omukomi. He is a good dancer in night performances and plays a number of instruments including esilili (one stringed instrument) and drums. He married in 1990 and has seven children. Currently, he is a secondary school teacher and teaches physics and chemistry. He was my assistant in the first phase of the research.

12 Kuta Sikote 78 Ebwiranyi Mukhalakhala
Learned in a day school (Nursery)
He is an elder in a denomination called Church of God in East Africa. Married in 1951 and has six children. He is the oldest tailor in Ebwiranyi village. He is also a small-scale farmer.

13 Achuya Okiya 79 Ebwiranyi Ebukuya
Never went to school
Married to Mzee Okiya in 1944.

14 Mary Were 82 Ebutongoi Ebunaabo
Learned in a day school (Nursery)
She is a widow and has lost her eye sight. She had eight children. Two are now dead. Mary depends on her children for a living.

15 Joyce Omuhandiki 66 Ebutongoi Ebunaabo
Never went to school
She is a widow. Together with the husband, a man who married her in 1947, they had eight children. Six of these are already dead. She depends on her two surviving children for a living.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Daniel Gwoma</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>Ebutongoi</td>
<td>Std 8</td>
<td>Watchman</td>
<td>Married his wife Luciana in 1942. He worked in Nairobi as a watchman for thirty years, retiring in 1990, with Luciana, they had eight children. Two are now dead. He and his wife earn a living from the financial support they get from their children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Luciana Gwoma</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Ebutongoi</td>
<td>Std 8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Daniel Gwoma’s wife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Aluko Achongo</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>Ebutongoi</td>
<td>Std 8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Now a widow, Aluko and her late husband had fourteen children. Twelve are now dead. She has health problems and earns a living from the support she gets from the children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Roselani Hoka</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>Ebutongoi</td>
<td>Std 8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Had seven children. Two are dead. For a living, she depends on support from the children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Daniel Khabeleli</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Ebutongoi</td>
<td>Std 8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sadly, he died in 2001.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Jason Apwoka</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>Ebutongoi</td>
<td>Std 8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unfortunately, he died in 2002.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Stanley Obukwa</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>Ebutongoi</td>
<td>Std 8</td>
<td></td>
<td>He is a retired school teacher who now pastors at a local church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Delecina Omuka</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Ebutongoi</td>
<td>Std 8</td>
<td></td>
<td>For many years she was a small-scale farmer. She is now old and earns a living from the support she gets from her children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Paulo Onena</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Ebutongoi</td>
<td>Std 8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unfortunately, he died in 2002.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Mariko Oyoko</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Ebutongoi</td>
<td>Std 8</td>
<td></td>
<td>He is a carpenter. From this he raises money to provide for his family. He is also a small-scale farmer. He is married and had sixteen children. Ten of them are now dead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Onjiko Musungu</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>Ebutongoi</td>
<td>Std 8</td>
<td></td>
<td>A widow and depends on her seven children for a living.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Zakayo Mukunyi</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Ebutongoi</td>
<td>Std 6</td>
<td></td>
<td>He is a small scale-farmer. He also works for people in the village to supplement earnings from farming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Grace Abnery</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Ebutongoi</td>
<td>Std 6</td>
<td></td>
<td>An old but physically and mentally strong mother of eight children. She is a small-scale businesswoman. Depends on this for a living.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Joseph Pila</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>Ebutongoi</td>
<td>Std 6</td>
<td></td>
<td>He is a retired accountant. A father of four, Pila is now a businessman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Habil Nyakhile</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Ebutongoi</td>
<td>Std 8</td>
<td></td>
<td>A widower. He is a father of eight. For many years he was a small-scale farmer. From last year (2001), he got mentally ill. His children provide the support he needs for a living.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Luka Were</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Ebutongoi</td>
<td>Form 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>A father of two, Luka does petty business to support his family. He is also a small-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>School graduate (Year)</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Additional Information</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>William Stuma</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Ebunabao Std 6</td>
<td>A good omukomi. He is specifically involved in “secular” night performances. Stuma is married and has seven children.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Kanini Maywaka Mandu</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Esitsimi Std 8</td>
<td>Kanini is not his real name. It is a nickname he got due to his body size (It means small in Kikamba, one of the Bantu languages spoken by an ethnic group called Kamba). But now Kanini is like his real name. Villagers know him by this and call him by it. He is a very dedicated omukomi. Like his father Russia, he is famous in secular night performances. A father of three, Kanini is a small-scale farmer.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Fronica Iriri</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Ebuyalu Std 6</td>
<td>A committed singer in the church choir. She is also involved in several church committees. A mother of eight (her own) and two (adopted) children, she is a small-scale farmer. Most of her support comes from her husband and children.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Alifreda Nyanguka</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Elukala Never went to school</td>
<td>A mother of seven, she is a small-scale farmer and trader. She also gets support from her children.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Gwoma Nyambura</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Ebuyalu Std 3</td>
<td>An effective omukomi. He has his own band that performs in funerals. In this band, he sings and plays the one stringed instrument, esilili. He is a father of three and mostly provides for his family through small scale farming. He also works for other villagers to supplement his earnings.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Dinah Amimo Otwelo</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Mukhalakhala Std 7</td>
<td>A nursery school teacher at the Maseno school for the Deaf. She sings in the church choir and has one child. She was one of the Key informants of this study. I held several discussions with her between 1997 and 2001. She has deep knowledge on funeral rites.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Johnston Okanga Abukutsa</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Ebulonga Class B</td>
<td>He is married and has nine children. Okang’a is the leader of abakomi in Bunyore. In okhukoma, he is a dancer and singer. He earns some money from performing but largely depends on petty farming for a living. He has very good oral accounts on history of okhukoma and the Abanyole in general. I had many discussions with him in 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001. Very resourceful man.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Sibitali Osome</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>Emukangu Never went to school</td>
<td>A father of eight, Sibitali Osome is a very talented omukomi. He has been involved in okhukoma for many years. He earns some income from performing but largely depends on petty farming for a living. Supported also by his children.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Nyonje Atieli</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Ebunabao Never went to school</td>
<td>He also performs in okhukoma. Nyonje is married and has six children. He relies on petty farming to provide for his family. Gets some money from performing to supplement income from petty farming.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Never went to school</td>
<td>Occupation and Other Details</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Amwai O. Omboko</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
<td>Never went to school</td>
<td>A veteran omukomi. He is a very good dancer at funerals. A father of eight, Amwai mainly earns a living from petty farming. Also supported by his children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Thomas Okila</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
<td>Class 3</td>
<td>An omukomi of many years. A father of five, Okila earns his living from petty farming and dancing at funerals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Johana Oteche</td>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
<td>Never went to school</td>
<td>An effective omukomi. Oteche is married and has two children. He earns a living from petty farming and dancing at funerals. He is also supported by his children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Nyonje Atsetse</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
<td>Never went to school</td>
<td>He is an accomplished omukomi specializing in dancing. A father of six, Nyonje lives on petty farming.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Arthur Okwemba</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
<td>Never went to school</td>
<td>He is an omukomi. Arthur is omusumba and has no children. He lives on petty farming, dancing at funerals and working for people in the village.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Zakayo Mutambo</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
<td>Never went to school</td>
<td>Zakayo died in 1999. He was an omukomi who lived on petty farming and dancing at funerals. He was also supported by his five children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Atelo Opila</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
<td>Never went to school</td>
<td>An omukomi for many years. He is married to two wives and has thirteen children. Opila is a petty farmer and is also supported by his children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Omuka Omuyinda</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
<td>Class 4</td>
<td>Omuka is an omukomi. He is omusumba and has no children. He lives on dancing at funerals and working for people in the village.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Okola Oluchina</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
<td>Never went to school</td>
<td>He is omusumba and has no children. Okola is a dancer in okhukoma. He lives on dancing at funerals and working for people in the village.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Cleopa Olukune</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
<td>Never went to school</td>
<td>He is a polygamous man of three wives. Cleopa has thirteen children. He is an omukomi and earns his living from petty farming and support from his children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Amwai Obumbelwa</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td>Class 4</td>
<td>A father of eight, Amwai is a petty farmer. He is an omukomi and dances at funerals and at other occasions where his team has been invited.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Onyino Mukokha</td>
<td>77</td>
<td></td>
<td>Never went to school</td>
<td>He died in April 2002. He was an accomplished omukomi and danced at funerals and other occasions where his team was invited. He had one wife and six children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Alice Achungo Yosi</td>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
<td>Never went to school</td>
<td>A widow and mother of ten (nine living and one dead). She is a petty trader in Luanda market. Achungo is also a petty farmer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Rubai Ainea</td>
<td>97</td>
<td></td>
<td>Class B</td>
<td>Unfortunately, she died in November 2000. She had seven children (4 living and 3 dead). Rubai was a small-scale trader at Luanda market and a peasant farmer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Gerald Apwacho</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
<td>Form 2</td>
<td>A widower (wife died in June 2002) and father of eight. He is a school teacher.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Currently teaching at a home school. He gave very constructive comments when the translated chapters of the dissertation were read to Abanyole on 8/2/2001. He has rich knowledge of okhukoma and Abanyole lore in general.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Aggrey Indiatsi</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Ehuskhale Mumboha</td>
<td>He is married and has five children. Indiatsi is a trained school teacher but now retired. He is now part-time businessman and pensioner. He was one of the two people who translated the chapters of this dissertation that were read to Abanyole at the “oral defence” in the village on 8/12/2001. He has excellent understanding of images and symbols of death in funeral poems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Abigail Andisi Okechi</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Ehuskhale Epanga</td>
<td>Married with two children. She is a trained schoolteacher. Now retired and serving the church (Church of God in East Africa) as a volunteer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Elfas Okumbo Okechi</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Ehuskhale Epanga</td>
<td>Andisi’s husband. He trained at the State University of New York, Oswego majoring in history. He later got a post graduate Diploma in Education at the same university. He has another Diploma in Administration from Australia. For many years he was a high school and college principal. He’s now retired and is a businessman at the Luanda market. Together with Aggrey Indiatsi they translated chapters on results into Lunyore. These were the chapters that were read to Abanyole who attended an oral discussion of the findings in this dissertation on 18/12/2001/. His understanding of Lunyore and funeral rites is deep and we have discussed many things concerning this topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Joel Otundo Olasya</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Ebulonga Etwenya</td>
<td>Married with six children, Joel is a trained teacher currently teaching at a school near his home. He is also a businessman and small-scale farmer. Joel and his wife Alice helped in the organization of the public forum where the chapters of this dissertation in Lunyore were read to Abanyole on 18/12/2001.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Joshua Amukonyi</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>Ebulonga Etwenya</td>
<td>Married and has two children. A trained school teacher but now retired and working for the Anglican Church of Kenya as a volunteer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Violet Ogabe</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Emmul Emlahaba</td>
<td>A widow with five children. She is a peasant farmer and receives support from her children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>Joyce Odundo</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Ebulonga Etwenya</td>
<td>Married and a mother of seven, Joyce is a peasant farmer. She also lives on the financial support she gets from her children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Irene Indimuli</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Emmul Ebutuku</td>
<td>She is a widow and mother of two. Irene is a petty trader and farmer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Ebulonga</td>
<td>He is a church minister with a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Occupation/Additional Information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>-----------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omusionza Etwenya</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Std 4</td>
<td>A married man and father of one, Omusionza is also a petty farmer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eunice Omusionza</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Ebusyubi</td>
<td>She is married with nine children. Eunice is a small-scale trader and farmer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eunice Nandi</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Esiantumba</td>
<td>She is a widow with six children. Eunice is a trained school teacher but now retired on pension. She does small-scale business and farming.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleopa Amanya</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>Ebulonga</td>
<td>A retired railway worker who is now a small scale farmer. Cleopa is an elder in the local Anglican church of Kenya.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex Okuku</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Ebulonga</td>
<td>A polygamous man with two wives. He has eight children. Alex is a trained teacher currently teaching at Ekwanda Primary school. He is an omukoni and occasionally dances in the christian night performances as well as night performances with “secular” tunes. He has vast knowledge on death and funeral rituals as well as general knowledge on Abanyole. Alex has a sharp sense of humor and I remember him making everybody laugh on a number of occasions when I discussed with him. Our discussions often went into the night – sometimes after 9.00 – and he and Joel Otundo would escort me back to my Ebwiranyi home.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan Atulo Okwanyo</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Ebwiranyi</td>
<td>Married and has seven children. Dan is a trained teacher currently teaching at a high school in the Kombewa area. He does part-time photography and petty farming. He is an omukoni who is talented in playing the entire repertoire of oral funeral poetry musical instruments in the night dances-all-categories. For example, he plays the guitar, drum, bell, esilili (one stringed instrument) etc. He is quite knowledgeable about the Abanyole lore. Like Alex Okuku, Dan has a way of making serious situations appear light. I thoroughly enjoyed every minute of our discussions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadrack Odongo</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>Emmuli</td>
<td>Unfortunately, Odongo died in December 2001. He was married and had seven children. He was a church minister and practiced small scale farming.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulumena Nyamanga</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>Emmuli</td>
<td>Sadly, Sulumena died in 2001. He left behind a widow and five children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikali Ogaye</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>Emmuli</td>
<td>A widow with eight children. She does small-scale farming. She also gets financial support from her children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathorina Teka</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>Emmuli</td>
<td>A mother of four. She is a retired nurse. Does petty farming. For a living, Cathorina gets financial support from her children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica Osuka</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Emmuli</td>
<td>Married and a mother of four, Monica is a trained secretary. Currently she runs her own business in secretarial services. She also does small scale farming.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Naftali Omusionza</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Form 4</td>
<td>A father of eight, Naftali is a retired teacher on pension. He is now a church minister and small-scale farmer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>Oili Safari Likhutsa</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td>Safari is not his real name. It is a nickname that he uses in night performances. He basically works for other villagers to earn a living.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>Mauwa Likhutsa</td>
<td>Could not remember when she was born. She could be estimated to be one hundred and ten years.</td>
<td></td>
<td>She was until her death in June this year (2002) the oldest woman in the village. When I interviewed her first in 1997 she was cheerful. She joked and sung very many funeral songs for me. She was in a similar mood in 2000 when I interviewed her for the second time. I returned to her village to talk to her in 2001, but now she looked tired. I didn’t get into a discussion on death but instead decided to have a general talk. Mauwa was quite knowledgeable about Abanyole lore in general and funeral songs and rites in particular.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>Wellington Masatia Tambwa</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Std 2</td>
<td>He worked first as an overseer in a sisal estate in Taita Taveta, then as a clerk at Kenyatta National Hospital. He has now retired and staying at his rural home in Bunyore. Masatia has two wives and had nineteen children. Six of the children are dead. He is a medicine man and wears omukasa (a family hand chain) that was passed to him by his father Tambwa. This chain signifies that he is the official ommbiti of his clan (clan head). He is quite knowledgeable about the history and lore of this community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 5: READING OF DISSERTATION TO THE VILLAGERS

Translation of the dissertation into Lunyore was based on the version of Chapters 5, 6 and 7 (227-277) as at September 2001. These are the chapters that were read on 18/12/2001. I have arranged to have another meeting with members of this community on 7/12/2002. The purpose of this meeting is to offer the Abanyole an opportunity to further reflect and dialogue on oral funeral poetry and death. Specifically, we will discuss two issues emerging from the discussion in the dissertation and together decide the way they can be corrected. These are:

a) The abuse of drugs and alcohol by the young people on the event of death.

b) For whom should okhukoma really be performed and why?

It is hoped that a Culture Day will be launched on this day. The idea here is to give the Abanyole an opportunity to meet a number of times (to be decided at the meeting) each year to sing, dance and together reflect on death.

At the 7/12/2002 meeting, copies of this dissertation will be given to the participants.

The methodology that I have used has been basically interactive and participatory, including among others, collective reflection by members of this community and I. The interaction was not limited to data collection but also to interpretation of the findings. I organized a forum with selected members of the Abanyole community on 18/12/2001. The forum was used to provide an opportunity to the community members to reflect upon and comment on the findings of the study.

One hundred and twenty members of the community attended. These were forty children and eighty adults. Of the adults who attended, there was a group of four retired teachers, twelve teachers who are still in active service, one quantity surveyor, one agricultural officer, one technician, one church minister, one traditional healer, two scholars, five M.A. students and thirty abakomi (performers). The rest were men and women who have little or no formal education and live mainly on subsistence farming and petty business.
Personal enquiry and self selecting methods were used to get these people. subsequently, letters were written and sent to invite them to the forum. Copies of these letters are attached in this section.

The day started with performances. Rovina and his team of ten performers arrived at my Ebwiranyi home performing at 8.30 a.m. Having performed a few numbers in the compound, they settled down for breakfast.

This over, they picked up their instruments and once again started performing. The entire length of three kilometres to Ekwanda Primary School, the venue of the forum, was marked by heavy singing, dancing and generally a celebration mood.

At Ekwanda Primary School, we found a team of okhukoma performers led by Nyangweso Okang’a already entertaining the crowd until about 11.00 a.m. when the official part of the programme started. The crowd sat to listen to the translated chapters on empirical evidence read by Dan Atulo, a school teacher and accomplished omukomi. Members of this community followed the reading with keen interest. They nodded their heads and gave the yee chorus answers as the reading went on. This was to signify that they approved what Atulo was reading to them.

The reading was followed by a serious but honest debate on the dissertation. For example, Gerald Apwacho, a school teacher, pointed out that I had left out important musical instruments while discussing the performance of oral funeral poetry. These included different types of horns and drums. Dan Atulo answered saying that due to time constraints, he had not read a section of the chapter on performance but the information provided was already included in the chapter.

Rakem Oluchiri, a retired school teacher, argued that elilannde (a creeper) (see page 60 for picture) was used in okhukoma to disguise the identity of the performers. Okang’a, an accomplished omukomi, challenged this view arguing that the creeper is used for decoration. Later as we ate lunch, Wellington Masatia, a healer, verified that the creeper was used to repel evil spirits. It is the same spirits, he continued to argue, that were responsible for the
death of the deceased. Concerning the causes of death, it was pointed out that there was nothing like natural death in the belief system of the Abanyole.

Listening to the discussion, I came to the conclusion that I had to do follow up fieldwork to harmonise the views. This was done on 19/12/2001 and 20/12/2001. Interviews and discussions with Dinah Otwelo, Joseph Osuka, Wellington Masatia and Johnstone Okan’ga resulted not only in the harmonizing of arguments but a fruitful engagement in discussion on Abanyole mythology (see page 59-63 of Chapter 3 for a discussion on olusambwa and page 88-89 of Chapter 5 for details on other causes of death among the Abanyole).

Clearly, I would have missed out on very useful content on “The Construction of The Abanyole Perceptions On Death Through Oral funeral poetry” had I submitted the dissertation without having such an interactive forum for joint and collective reflection.

I must admit that this is a very demanding methodology. One must all the time remember that it is not only the researchers views nor those of the community that are presented. Rather it is the inter subjective collective view developed from interpretation by the researcher and the study community that is presented. This in essence means that the researcher cannot afford to be a visitor in the community, as has been the case with some Africans and armchair critics. He/she must become part of the community. Hence my choice of an interactive fieldwork methodology and ethnopoetics model of analysis.

Comprehensive preparation went into organizing the forum. First we had to decide on the venue. A lot of discussion went into this. Some people argued that it should be staged in our village. “We cannot take the pride of our clan to another village,” they argued. We finally settled on Ekwanda Primary School for a number of reasons. First, it has ample space where the discussions and performances could take place. Secondly, since it was not possible for me to be at home and co-ordinate the event, which turned out to be larger and more involving than we had initially thought, I had to get someone to co-ordinate the activities. Joel Otundo and his wife Alice Otundo were my choice. I could rely on them to do a good job and indeed they did as was evidenced in the turn out and the quality of the discussion. The couple were greatly assisted by Alex Okuku. These co-ordinators of the forum had to be living close to the venue as was the case with the three above. Thirdly, the headmaster of
Ekwanda Primary School, Timothy Onyino, was very co-operative and supportive right from the start of the arrangements.

Translation of technical work such as we have in the dissertation calls for someone who has deep knowledge of the languages, in this case, English and Lunyore as well as the history, values, sociology and geography of the community. Mzee Elfas Okechi Okumbo from Ebusikhale Epang’a village and Mzee Aggrey Indiatsi from Ebusikhale Mumboha village were my choice for this task. I sincerely thank them for the good job they did. Their translation was greatly admired and respected in the “defence” in Bunyore.

Below is a report on the “defence” by M.A. students and a technician from Kenyatta University and letters written to invite different categories of people who attended the forum.
VILLAGERS ENDORSE SCHOLARLY FINDINGS

A Dr. Phil. “DEFENCE” IN THE VILLAGE

REPORT

BY

JOSEPH MUSUNGU – M.A STUDENT, LITERATURE DEPT, K.U
JOHN MULWA – TECHNICIAN FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPT, K.U
DOUGLAS KIVOI - M.A STUDENT, PHILOSOPHY DEPT, K.U
ELIZABETH OKONGO - M.A STUDENT, SOCIOLOGY DEPT, K.U

Th 18th December, 2001 was the D-Day in South Bunyore of Luanda division. Ezekiel Alembi, a scholar from Kenyatta University, was the celebrity. The question that hung loose in the air was about the anticipated reading of the Dr. Phil. dissertation to the villagers. The events of the day kicked off as early as 6. The early morning hours seemed to stagnate as people anxiously waited for the climax of the day. The traditional performers chanted their way towards Ekwanda Primary School which was the centre of the day’s proceedings. The Luanda - Ekwanda road as well as the Maseno-Ekwanda one were full of “hungry” villagers in need of new knowledge.

Perhaps it is the natural curiosity of human beings to dig deeper into the obscurity in order to discover new knowledge or the aesthetics of music by the traditional oral funeral poetry performers that drew the crowd.

A majority of the people wondered at the prospect of having such a function in the village since prior to that scholars have more often than not had to interview people only to come up with complicated jargon that the resource persons could not grasp its content. To many therefore, this was a golden opportunity not only to listen to the findings of this scholar but also to participate in the discussion. The Dr. Phil. dissertation about “The construction of the Abanyole worldview on death through okhukoma poetry” was to be read by Mr. Dan Atulo in Lunyore. This gave a lot of encouragement especially to the elderly people some of whom are not familiar with either English or Kiswahili. By 11, the events of the day kicked off with an audience of 120 people.
The oral funeral performance teams punctuated the activities of the meeting with their thrilling performances to the audience. Mr. Alembi’s interactive and dialogical methodology demanded that he conducts a series of interviews as well as participate in activities related to funerals. This was the forum that gave a chance for the resource persons to come together and approve, disapprove and or make necessary alterations on the research findings. The occasion was attended mainly by elders, teacher’s, office executives, students, village performers among others. Also present was Mr. Alembi’s supervisor, Prof. Lauri Harvilahti from Helsinki University, Finland.

According to Prof. Lauri Harvilahti, this was a milestone in the scholarly world given the fact that African folklore has for a long period of time not been very well known in the West, and, sadly, even to African scholars.

The forum was also used as a venue to pass across knowledge to both the young and the adults present. Children for instance were informed of societal expectations especially as it pertains to hard work and self discipline. One of the leading educationists in the region, Mr. Elfas Okechi had the opportunity to talk to the school going age children on the need to embrace education. He asserted that learning is an indispensable activity that can realize its fruits through discipline. The village elders equally sighed with joy that the forum had taken the community back to its right track paving way for elders to educate the youth about their cultural values that risk becoming obsolete due to the effects of modernization.

By the end of the day, it was unanimously resolved that such forum be held annually as a way of ensuring cultural continuity among the Abanyole. This will serve as a signal to the rest of the African communities on the need to embrace our cultural values.

Mr. Alembi’s “defence” was a provocative, interesting as well as crucial activity in the scholarly world. It nullified the stereotypical mentality that only intellectuals have the right and ability to listen to and respond to an academic defence. Indeed most people learnt with glee that day when the dissertation was read to them. The son of the Abanyole community had actually given back to his people what belongs to them. The Abanyole as well as other participants at the forum agreed that it was a Dr. Phil. dissertation, the first of its own kind for the researcher had not just relied on interviews and library work but also on the views of
the people to the extent of arranging a forum where the contents of the dissertation could be endorsed by the people who had supplied the information.

Indeed, this was a challenge to the upcoming scholars/researchers to critically re-examine their methodology and to consider the possibility of conducting such similar fora. Indeed, this is the only way research findings on communities can be validated. This defence has left memories in the heads of people who still yearn for more. To some extent it was a revolutionary academic activity that should challenge other scholars who study the cultures of African people.

**Bravo Alembi and Long-Live our African Culture.**

John Mulwa (left) and Joseph Musungu - two of the four people who wrote this report. *(Photos by Lauri Harvilähti).*
PROGRAMME FOR THE READING OF THE Dr. Phil. DISSERTATION TO MEMBERS OF THE ABANYOLE COMMUNITY

Date: 18th December 2001

Venue: Ekwanda Primary School

9.00 – 9.30 Arrival

9.30-10.00 Opening Remarks by:
The Chairman of the “defence”, Mr. Newton Maungu
Mr. Elfas Okechi Okumbo
Headmaster, Ekwanda Primary School
Chief, South Bunyore Location
Mr. Daniel K. Alembi
Prof. Lauri Harvilahti

10.00-10.30 Performances

10.30-1.00 Reading and discussion of dissertation

1.00-2.00 Lunch

2.00-4.40 Performances by:
Gwoma Nyambura and team
Johnstone Okang’a and team
Rovina and team

4.40-5.00 Vote of thanks
Chairman, Mr. Newton Maungu
Mr. Elfas Okechi
Mr. Daniel K. Alembi
Prof. Lauri Harvilahiti

5.0 Tea and Departure
Kenyatta University
Literature Department
P.O. Box 43844
Nairobi
17th November 2001

Khu

Nyoola amasiesi mulira lioMwami. Inyuma wamasiesi, ndi nende obusangali okkhulanga mmukhung’ano okwanakhube nnakwo Ekwanda Primary School omwesi nikuli 18th December 2001 okhutsiaka etsisa tsitaru (9.00 a.m) habwene. Lichomo liomukhung’ano kuno nokhusoma nende okhutwakana khukobuhandiki bwesitapu esiamandikanga okhulondokhana nende lifwa Mmbanyole.

Nambe nende obusangali obukhongo nikaba wakhakasia obweyango okhwitsa okhusangilana nnefwe halala. Yanza olinde esa.

Nise owenywe,

Esekia Alembi
Letter written to invite colleagues and researchers

FROM: Ezekiel Alembi

TO: Colleagues and Researchers in Folklore and Related Areas

Date: 17th November 2001

SUBJECT: Reflection with the Study Community on a Thesis Draft

I am working towards finalising the analysis and confirmation of empirical evidence on my Dr. Phil. thesis whose working title is The Construction of the Abanyole Worldview on Death Through Okhukoma Poetry. A key element in my research strategy and study process is meaningful interaction and engaged dialogue towards the interpretation of oral “texts” collected. I am situating my study in the expanding theoretical thrust, commonly referred to as ethnopoetics.

I have organized for an inter-subjective dialogical reading and writing of my thesis draft with members of the Abanyole community in Vihiga district on 18th December 2001 at Ekwanda Primary School, near Maseno University. The session will start at 9.00 a.m. and is expected to go on for the whole day. I am kindly requesting you to join us in this enriching and fulfilling academic experience in which we are exploring an understanding of the mystery of death as a phenomenon that can be investigated within folklore and ethno studies. One of my thesis supervisors, Prof. Lauri Harvilahiti, from Finland, will attend this session. Your participation will therefore be important in helping to dialogue and interpret death from an ethno-cultural point of view. The dialogue will also include performances of Oral funeral poems, which we shall record as an initial evidence gathering for developing an ethnographic film on African art forms. I am inviting you to feel free to participate in the said performances and kindly let me know your interest in taking part so that I can avail the required cultural costume for you.

We shall provide accommodation and meals. We request you to meet your transport costs. Kindly confirm your attendance to enable us plan effectively.

Warm regards and best wishes.
KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE

P.O. BOX 43844, NAIROBI, KENYA
TEL: 810901/811622/810901

17th October 2001

The Chief,
South Bunyore Location,
Luanda
Dear Sir,

REF: READING OF Dr. Phil. DISSERTATION TO MEMBERS OF THE
ABANYOLE COMMUNITY

I am writing to inform you that I have arranged a reading session of my Dr. Phil. dissertation entitled “The Construction of The Abanyole Worldview on Death Through okhukoma Poetry” to members of the Abanyole community. The event will be on 18/12/2001 and will take a whole day. Over one hundred people have been invited from the eight locations of Bunyore. In addition, my supervisor, Prof. Lauri Harvilahti from the University of Helsinki, will attend. There will also be a number of my colleagues from Kenyatta University in attendance.
Sir, the purpose of this event is to give the *Abanyole* an opportunity to listen to and respond to the draft dissertation before I deposit it at the Faculty of Arts of Helsinki University for publication and defence.

I kindly request you to make time and attend this important event.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Ezekiel Alembi
Letter to the District Commissioner, Vihiga District, requesting for permission to hold the forum.

THE DISTRICT COMMISSIONER,
VIHIGA DISTRICT,
P.O. BOX 75,
MARAGOLI.

Dear Sir,

REF: PERMISSION TO HOLD A Dr. Phil. READING SESSION IN BUNYORE ON 18/12/2001

I am Ezekiel Alembi from Literature Department of Kenyatta University writing to request that you give permission for me to read my Dr. Phil. dissertation to members of the Abanyole community. The event is supposed to take place at Ekwanda Primary School in South Bunyore on 18/12/2001.

I have been writing my dissertation titled “The construction of the Abanyole Worldview on Death Through Okhukoma Poetry.” This dissertation is to be submitted for defence in the Faculty of Arts at Helsinki University. The purpose of the one day meeting is to give the Abanyole an opportunity to listen to the content of the dissertation and authenticate it as true and representative of the views of the Abanyole on death.
This will be a purely academic event. There will be no politicians and politics.

I look forward to a favourable response.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Ezekiel Alembi.

cc  P.C. Western Province
    D.O. Luanda Division
PICTURES

(All photographs in this section taken by Lauri Harvilahiti)

A crowd of young people dance their way to Ekwanda Primary School, venue of the defence.

A moment to relax. Mzee Elfas Okechi Okumbo (also interviewed for this study) at the venue shortly before the defence. He was one of the two old men who translated the dissertation into Lunyore.
Newton Maungu, chairman of the defence giving introductory remarks.

Dan Atulo Okwanyo, a respected singer of funeral songs (also interviewed for this study), reads the dissertation.

Mzee Wellington Masatia Tambwa in a hat (also interviewed for this study), Mzee Elfas Okechi Okumbo (centre) and Newton Maungu Keenly follow the reading.

A group of young people follow the reading.

The old people also had an ear for the words that were read.
Dinah Amimo Otwelo (also interviewed for this study) at the defence.

The children, too, listen to the reading.

It is time to respond to issues raised in the dissertation. Gerald Apwacho (also interviewed for this study) makes a contribution to the discussion.

Mzee Rakem Oluchiri (retired teacher) stresses a point.

Mzee Johnston Okang’a Abukutsa (also interviewed for this study) makes his contribution.
It was not all academia. The participants were also entertained by three groups that perform at funerals led by Johnston Okanga Abukutsa, Rovina and Gwoma Nyambura. These participants seem to follow the performances with interest.

Dan Atulo Okwanyo the versatile artist. Here (at the defence) he plays esilili (one stringed instrument) that is used in “secular” night performances.

Finally - Mama Abigail Andisi Okechi (also interviewed for this study) makes concluding remarks.
CHAPTER 5

OKHUMAN YILISIA EMILUKHA ECHILERANGA LIFWA MUNJILA YE TSINYEMBO TSIO OKHUKOMA

5.1 Obuchachilo


Mubukhabilisi mukakhale ka Abanyole, biliho ebifune bibili ebicemelanga lifwa:

a) lifwa lilerwaa nobunyali bwokhuchenya
b) lifwa lio okhumikwa

khukabili kano, lifwa lirulila mubunyali bwokhuchenya, nokhung’ayile shinga keno sibwanga mu chapter yino.

Obuchesi burumikhiyywe okhubunjelesia kano mu chapter yino burulule mubuchesi bunyolekhele mumarebo, obuhandiche nende mukanullamwo mubusomi bwokhuranga bwobuloosi bwa abandu bakamanya nende mutsinyembo.

5.2 Lifwa Lio Khulokwa Mu Bunyole

Lifwa elinji mu Banyole litulwanga khu bandu barumikhilanga obulosi. Obusibili bufwana mbu khandi buli mu bandu balangwa Azande aba Sudan (Evans–Pritchard 1976:5).

Mulwembo (19) lifwa lio omwana wa Anjichi litulwanga khu nyumba esimbanga.

Olwembo No. 19

Omwana wa Anjichi
Ukholle mbwena?
Sese wa Anjichi
Ukholle mbwena?
Nandeletenge khulusina bane?
Omwana wa Anjichi
Ukholle mbwena?
Ye, ye, ye, ye
Sindi nomulembe bana befwe
Otemba abo ye mukoloba ye ye
Inyumba esimbanga
Khuliakana iyo
Inyumba esimbanga ye
Inyumba esimbanga ye!

Murebe e Museno
Murebe e Museno
Murebe e Museno
Tsia murebe Anjichi e Museno
Omwana wanje wandatola bululu bane
Rebanga butswa Anjichi
Waikholle mbwena eh?
Ye, ye, ye, ye,
Sindi nomulembe bana befwe
Otemba aboye mukoloba ye ye
Inyumba esimbanga
Khuliakana yio
Inyumba esimbanga ye
Inyumba esimbanga ye!

Murebe Emuhaya
Murebe Emuhaya
Murebe Emuhaya
Tsia Murebe Oluhano Emuhaya eh
Omwana wanje wandatola bululu bane
Rebenga Anjichi waikholle mbwena?
Ye, ye, ye, ye!
Sindi nomulembe bana befwe
Otemba aboye mukoloba ye ye
Inyumba esimbanga
Khuliakana iyo
Inyumba esimbanga ye ye
Inyumba esimbanga ye!

Mutsinyali tsitaru tsiokhumallikha tsiolwembo, omukomi akalukhilanga mukhutula
nokhurisia mubuli lunyali Iwakhataru olwokhumallikha mu lwembo “khuliakanna iyo.”
Olwembo silumanyianga obwe inyumba yeimbilikha yeera omwana wa Anjichi, nebutswa
khunyala okhulola mbu yeerwa nobufila, injila emanyikhile eyokhurumikhila obunyali bwa
makanu mu Bunyole.

Inyumba eye imbalikha mulwembo niyo inyumba eyobusuku etulwanga khulwa okhwira
omwana wa Anjichi. Yali omuhinda, shinga omwembi abolanga “Nandeletenge khulusina
bane?” (Olunyali lwa musafu olwesiasia siokhuranga). Kano kamanyianga omufu
yakhoonyanga omukomi nebindu. Omufu khandi yali niyamanyakha. Yali niyamanyakha
ku Chief Oluhano (Olunyali lwa khane lwe siasia sia khataru). Yali omundu omukhongo
khandi owobukhonyi mwitala. Khandi yali niyamanyakha Emuseno (tsinyali tsokhuranga
tsitaru musiasia sia khuhili). Emuseno ne emission ya khale khandi esenda ya ameko
(amebaalo) mu Bunyole. Sichila omufu yali niyamanyakha Emuseno, kamanyianga mbu yali
niyasoma obulayi (okhurula mu sikuli sie ikulu khandi lisomelo lia abebaali mana khandi University), nohomba omundu omanyikhile owe dini (injili). Abeinzu yeera omwana wa Anjichi bali neimbaliikha khu mufu khulwa akayali niyanyoola shinga kalolekhele mbu yali niyamanyikha khandi yafwananga omuyinda.


Sichila yasubila mbu abebulîbe beerwa nabaana babwe, omwana wabali nibafwiye bano yekhuula niyemba olwembo (9). Mulwembo luno, kata omusiani uno niyekhulanga nyina, nelifwa lia samwana elia mmala po kata assili nende okhurimukhwa ikholo khulwa okhufwa yikhwo. Mulwembo luno, yenosianga nasubíye mbu samwana yeerwe nabandu ababîi. Yembabya “owera papa alakayilanga khulubanda munanguba.”


Omusiani uno siabolanga mbu omundu ousubilwanga yeera abebuli be toto alakailanga mumabanda tawe. Khandi siabolanga abebuli be beerwa nebisieno tawe. Esiabolanga sili mbu omundu oubolungwa yeera abebuli be afwana ebisieno ebichilanga abandu nibanyakhana. Omusiani uno arumikhilanga tsingano khandi etsiang’aya okhurumikhilwa mumasika e Bunyole. Okhwekhula khufwana obusitsa. Akandemanga okhuboolaa kali mbu tsinyembo tsio khwekhula tsili mu miima chia abandu. Kachilanga okhwola omundu abe
nende okhunyilisia tsinjero kho amanye khandi ahuchille ako musiani uno abolanga. Siali ounyala okhwinjilla ourallwe singa omwiri sichila nounyala okhuhila amakhuwa kano mu koti kachile abe inzu yomusiani uno banyakhane khandi omwana wabwe nabohelwe.


Olwembo lundi lwandanyoola, lutulanga Aberanyi, oluhyu mu south west Bunyore, shinga abarumikhilaa obulosi okhwira omundu.

Enimba omukhana–Omurellesi
Enimba omukhana–Boosi
Sindakhatekha Ebwiranyi
Aberanyi nabalosi
Aberanyi nabalosi
Balokananga nabarende

Enimba omusiani–Omurelesi
Enimba omusiani–Boosi
Sindakhatesya Ebwiranyi
Aberanyi nabalosi
Aberanyi nabalosi
Balokananga nabarende


Olwa kuka yafwa kasubilwanga yali nemihika ahembi 120 nebutswa mulwembo luno kabolekhanga mbu, “Abasyubi bakhola emisanga nibachila Akunda nafwa.”


Mulwembo (25) Nyakhusala nyene Omenya atulwanga kuhlwo okhufwa khwa abeinzu ye. Kafwananga yakatwa nende omufila okhurumikhila omusala okwachila abeinzu ye nibafwa. Omwembi yembanga:

Niwina owakata nyakhusala Omenya
Ole omusala
Nakila abandu babe
Bahwela mmaloba
Oo-nyakhusala Omenya

nobwabatsa okhuruka abakhasi mana banyala okhutesia abakhasi abenji obwabenyele kata olwa baranyala okhubalisia. Oburumikhi bwe emisala bunyala okhuchila omusatsa ayanze omukhasi mulala mana abetsenge ahambi ninaye khasotso. Omukhasi singa uno anyala okhuchaka okhuruka omusatsa mana yononie obunyali bwabasatsa burallwe.

Okruralwa khwa nyakhusala Omenya shinga owali nomusala okwalera okhusandikha khwa abeinzu ye kenyekhha kuhengwe obulahi. Kanyala okhuba amakhuwa kachakwa nabasatsa khulwa okhusiluhasia abakhasi. Ne nikali mbu yatilakhwo khumusala okwamala abeinzu ye, kho lino lienyekha liaba eliechesio mulwembo luno mbu abandu balekhe emisala echibula nobwatoto bwobulesi khase tsinyala okhulera omunyakhano khu mundu kata abeinzu boosi.

5.3 Okhufwa Khulwo Okhumikwa


Esikhole sino sikholungwa khuluo okhu tsienula oluhya sichila okhulia nabandu shinga bano nokhwononia oluhya. Malle okhumanyia mubuchachilo obwa Abanyole bahendellanga obulamu bwo mundu khandi singa barakahuchilla okhubaala nobulamu bwomundu noho okhunyasia obulamu bwo owasie owabamenyele ninaye.

Okhumikwa shinga okhuchemelaa okhufwa mu Africa khwa ebisila abasomi Abasungu nende Abamali abanji abakhabilisia khuko bulamu nobusubili bwabandu. Bilio ebifune bibili ebinyala okhwinosia obukara buno. Esifune siokhuranga, singa malle okhuboola, shili mbu okhumika sikhwali okhung’ayu mu Africa tawe kho nisio esichila abasomi abanji abakhabilisianga esifune sie lifwa niba rakhaengelesia akene kano tawe. Okhumika, kata
mbwo, sikhuuma mu Africa tawe. Kano kambilaa khu sifune siakhabili. Kandolekhelanga okhurula khu busomi obwa ndakholle mbu abakhabilisi bakopananga abene khu bene mana bakalukhilanga ako oundi anyooye sila okhuwenelesia mukari mwako.

Netsinyembo tsindititi etsiliho etsiralanga okhumika singa na esifune silala khubindu bileraa lifwa mu Abanyole. Mutsinyembo tsiosi etsia ndabunjelesia khu lifwa ni tsibili tsionyene etsimanyianga okhumika shinga esifune. Tsinyembo tsibili tsino sitsili tsionyene khusifune sio okhumika tawe. Tsirumikhilwanga khandi mamasika hakasubiyywe mbu omunde afwiye kholwo obulosi noho offila. Tsinyembo tsibili tsino (4) nende (24) tsimanyibbwe shinga mbu khandi:

Omwana wa Angose omuoyo nokukwo
Muyonga ubeleye muno
Mwana ninzikhaye hamuliango nesibabi
Sianje mmukhono
Nakholenge mbwe etalanyi
Muyonga ubeleye muno wee
Baremakile omusala kwo Ommonyo
Yekamanga mwo
Ekampala

Omuyonga ubeleye muno
Omuyonga ubeleye muno koo
Baremakile omusala
Okwa Baluhya bekamangamwo
Ekampala


5.4 Obwiluli

Mu chapter yino, ndemele okhwinosia ebifune bileranga okhufwa singa kamanyibbwe mutsinyembo tsio okhukoma. Akokhumalilla kakhunyooye kali mbu oburumikhi bwo obunyali bwo offila bwang’aya muno mu Banyole.

Esindi esileranga lifwa mu Abanyole esia malle okhumanyia, khandi esiarama abasomi bobukhabilisi ni okhumikwa.

Ebifune bibili bihanwanga khuluo obutofu buno:

a) Okhumikwa sikhwali nikhwang’ayanga mu Africa tawe nebutsa bulano nokhuunji po

b) Kalolekhanga mbu abasomi bakabukhiyenge mukamanyikha sila okkhabilisia amacheni tawe

Mubwimbikiti, okhurulana nende akakhenosibwa, nakatoto mbu omundu siafwitsanga khwuo butswa khulwo obukhulundu nohomba obulwaye tawe mu Bunyole. Kata yerwe nelikulu, kasubikha mbu likulu lilerrwe no mundu. Okhunyalala nohomba omurengo sibihuchillwanga singa ebiakhachila omundu wafwa tawe. Okhwola abeho oulerre obulwaye buno.
CHAPTER 6

AKE LIFWA LILERA

6.1 Obuchachilo


Malle okhukabula obwinoosi bwanje mubitonye bine shinga:

- Okhufwa khunulanga oluhya ahabatollanga, abaana
- Nyina: omuyingwa nassili mwoyo omukhaye weifuma niyakhafwa
- Omuyingwa nali omulamu, owe ifuma niyakhafwa: Okhufwa khwo omukhaye nende haka lileera khu musatsa
- Okhufwa khwa samwana nende aka lileera khu baana

Ndemanga okhumanyia kano mubitonye shinga kalondokhananga:

6.2 Okhufwa Khunulanga Oluhya Ahabatollanga, Abaana

Manyissie mubuchachilo (Chapter 1) mbu abaana mu Bunyole nesiekhoyelo esikali muno. Okhulerana mana mubule abaana, nokhulerana okhubula obusangali. Abaana nilwo oluhya lwabandu.
Omusatsa ahuchillungwa okhwalikha nikali omukhasi we owokhuranga siyebulanga tawe. Kata omusatsa niyakwa esitsili, omukhasi ahuchillwanga okhunyoola abaana nabasatsa bandi okhurula mu Luhy wa lwanga omusata. Mubuchachilo bwobwinosi bwanje manyianga mbu okhubirra mubaana kata inyumba noho oluhya nilwakhakorre sichila okhufwa, khwikallungwa. Nisio esichilaa khuboola abaana ne siilo mu Bunyole.

Mulwembo (I), amakhuwa kakhuboye hekulu yaho katinyilisibwanga. Mulwembo luno, omwembi yembanga naboola:

Baluhya basianje
Baluhya basianje
Obukhala ni sina?
Obukhala nomwana
Olamuruma omullo
Na matsi


Olwa bebuli bakosianga owamana belolanga singa abali butswa khandi sila obukusi. Kano kamanyibwa khandi mulwembo:
Omwana we Inaya
Ise mbula obukhala hango

Olwembo luno lumanyianga obukhala bwo omukhsa. Ali nobukhala nanyala okhwibula abaana. Sila omwana, yelolanga singa owubula obukhala. Mulwembo (23) akambolanga kahuchillwanga. Olwembo lwene nduoluno:

Omwana wanje utsiye
Baluhya ise lelo
Sikaye butswa
Ise ndililibwa na machungu


Abanyole basubila mbu abebuli bamenyu mu baana. Nisio esichilaa Abanyole baba nende obusubili mbu omundu wafwa asiminya olwa abaana be bassili mwoyo. Kasubilwa mbu olwa abaana bayabilanga abebuli obulayi, abebuli bafwiye belolanga mbu balekhele inyuma abaana abakufu, abesilosia khandi aboluyali abakhatsilile okhubasinjilla musibala. Esifwanani sio mundu okhulibwa na machungu olwa afiye ketsanga bulayi olwa omundu amanyilisiaab obusubili bwa abandu bano okhwelela kha lifwa nende abaana.


Omunyakhano kwe lifwa lileraa kha mundu nakosiye omwana kumanyibbwe mu lwembo (19). Mulwembo luno, omwekhuli abolanga:

Nandeletenge khulusina
Omwana wa Anjichi
Ukholle mbwene?


Singa kalolekhanga mukakhenosibwa, abaana bali abobukusi muno mu Banyole. Nibo imbekuyo luhya. Nibabula tawe, oluhya lubetsanga niluhengelee mukhutiba. Abaana khandi nibo abahaananga, kho okhufwa khwabwe nelikhupako likhongo khube inzu, oluhya nende

6.3 Nyina Omuyingwa Nali Mwoyo, Omukhaye We Ifuma Mu Khufwa

Akelifwa lia nyina lileranga khubaana kalolekha obulayi mutsinyembo tsia ndanyoola. Malle okhumanyia mbu aba mama batiyanga obutinyu mu luhya luno okhu lisia abetsinzu tsiabwe. Sichila nibo abahengelesianga ebhindu bikhonyaa obulamu singa ebiokhulia nende tsingubo, aba mama babetsanga secheli khu baana.

Mulwembo (17) omwekhuli alakayangwa:

Oufukilanga obusuma
Ndelo nandie hena?
Ounjikullanga omuliango
Ndelo wina owanawikule?
Mama ufunuye esiekenye
Ndelo kho nabanzekhe

Omwekhuli uno nako amanji olwa nyina afwiye. Singa kali, nyina afwananga niye owamulisianga khandi namwikulla omuliango. Kabili kano kamanyiaa obukhoonyi obwo omwekhuli yanyoyenge okhurula khu mufu.


ouranyala okhumanyilisia nende okkholla akaboleyywe khandi ourali no obuchesi. Omukhasi nounyala okhukatwa namanani kho khandi ake ouhabinwa no musatsa noho nabaana besisiani abatiti.


Injila yindi eya abakhasi batutuhibbwamwo ni mbu barumikhilwanga obbibibi nende abasatsa babakalusiye omusatsa we niyakhafwa. Mumilukha kenyekhanga abe omusiani wanga omusatsawe oufwiye. Singa kalolekhele, khale kano kenyekhanga kamanyie oufwiye singa oussili mwoyo nende okhunyoola abaana bakulikhwa elirali. Kano kakholanga oluhyo okhwehulla mbu baleka olufu.

Ndemanga okhuboola mbu omukhasi arumikhilwanga obbibibi khandi anyekwa mukhukalusiibwa sichila akaboolanga sika hullwanga tawe. Kata narenya okhukabusibwa, okhwola ahuchille okkhola akenyekhanga yako. Omulimo kwo omusatsa nokhuhenga omukhasi we omukhulu nde abana babe mbeli. Khu mukhasi omukalusia, emilimo chie nokhwibulayo abaana. Kano katutuhiingia omukhasi uno mana ahuchille akomusatsa
omukalusiye yenyele nende aka baluhya baboye. Khandi lusi abasatsa bandi babetsanga bayononia emiandu chiali echio omusatsawe mana kalekha abeinzu yo muchendi nomunyakhano.


Ebilolesio bindi khuyako bilolekhaa mulwembo (26). Abaana mulwembo luno, olwembwa nababukha mumisino chiabwe chia butukhu, bibelelaa khu lifwa lia nyina. Abaana yaba benyaa okhukwa hasi olwabalolanga nyina nayabilwanga. Mulwembo (13) olwembwa khandi nababukha mumisino chia butukhu, abaana bekholanga okhufwa khwa nyina nibabeleye:

Kalaba omusiele aliho
Khane kuhulilanga obuyanzi

Kata nikaralolekhangha obulayi, likhupako lino linosibwanga nende emilimo echio omusiele yakholanga hango.

Okhurula khukakhabolwa, kalolekhele mbu toto abamama bakholanga emilimo eminji okhukhusia amatala mu Bunyole. Obulolekhi bwa toto nende okuhela khwabwe khulolekhaa obulahi mu lwembo lwo okhukoma.
6.4 Omuyingwa Mubulamu, Owe Ifuma Mu Khufwa: Ake Lifwa Lia Abakhasi Lileera Khu Abasatsa


Okhurula olwa abaana babetsanga mbasili abatititi, abasatsa abakhulundu abali namaparo ka khale, bechesianga abaana abasiani okhubula okkhonyana nabakhasi emilimo echio munzu chio okhulinda hango nende okhulela abaana.

Omunyakhano okwo omusatsa alolanga olwo omukhasiwe afwiye kumanyibbwe mulwembo (6) olwembanga mbu:

Omusungu yapimile Ambiyo
Siabira muluno
Olietuti mayai
Siabira muluno
Ambiyo natsiye musiro
Manyanza butswa


6.5 Lifwa Lia Samwana Nende Aka Lileera Khu Baana

Abanyole sibafwananga abali netsi nyembo tsinyinji etsimanyinjia esio okhufwa khuleera khubaana olwa samwana afwitsanga tawe. Okhurula mu tsinyembo tsiosi etsiandatola khu lifwa, nitsibili tsionyene etsili nesifune sino.


Olwembo (12) lumanyianga obwa abaana khandi litaala liosi liekhulanga olwo omukhulundu afwitsanga. Kano kamanyiaa singa behuliye khu lifwa lia samwana.
6.6 Okhwilula


Khulweyako, tsinyembo tsio okhukoma sitsili butswa khusi ke lifwa lionyene tawe nebutswa khandi limenya. Toto abaana nibakhahulla khusi tsinyembo tsino bamanyanga ake litaala liekolombanga okhurula khubo khandi ahebuli bahullanga tsinyembo beta okhumunyilibisa esisa abaana babwe benyangwa okhurula khubo. Kho tsinyembo tsino tsihananga esilan’gi esilahi esisa khwelolla mwo esisa omundu anyala okhulola esibala esiso Munyole.
CHAPTER 7

OKHUSINA OLWEMBO LWO OKHUKOMA

7.1 Obuchachilo

Lichomo lianje mu chapter yino eyo okhusina olwembo lwo okhukoma nokhumanyia akalimwo, amayosi, ifwo, tsingubo nende okhwesiaha khulomba okhumanyilisia okhwa Abanyole balolaa mukhufwa. Khandi akandi kalimwo ni singa omukomi woluhyu luno yekaa tsinyembo etsio okhukoma. Ameebaalo kano kali khubwinosi oburulle mu khuhambanibwa okhwa amahandiko, amarebo nende okhuhengelesia olwandali nikhung’asianga amang’ana khulwe lisomo lino.

7.2 Olwembo lwo Okhukoma Lwekwaa mbwena?

Amasika kabetsanga nende amaparo amehinikhu akahullikhanga nikali mutsinyembo. Tsinyembo tsino nitsisinwa tsihananga obweyangu obulahi okhuhinia amaparo amabi nende ebikhole ebiakhiralsisissie obulamu obwo oufwiliyywe. Obwekhuli nende obwembi mu Bunyole sibuli butswa obwekhuli bwe sikhasi nebutswa aba luhya bosí olwa Abanyole-abakhana na abasiani, abasatsa na abakhasi boosi bekhulanga ne nibemba mumasika.

7.3 Akali Mukhusina Khwo Okhukoma


Olwo omundu abolungwa mbu wakhafwa, okhwekhula nende obwembi buchakanga.

7.4 Olwa Olwembo Nende Obusino Bwokhukoma Businwaa


Omukanda kwa abeingo nikwo okwanjitsa okhulloma khwo muburambi. Omukanda yiku kukhung’asiao abakhana na abasiani. Ebikhupilla singa na etsigita, etsikengele ne tsing’oma birumikhilwanga nende yabo abasinanga.

7.4.1 Olwembo lwo Okhukoma Litukhu lio Omundu Afwitsanga Nende Tsinyanga
Tsilondakhwo Nibassili Okhuyabila


Obwabukhani hakari wa abasatsa nende abakhasi mukhwekhula buli mbu abakhasi bembanga nabasatsa nibahumana. Obwabukhani bundi buli munjila yokhwekhula. Abasatsa bakinganga tsindabusi nende ebikulume ne nibahumana olwa abakhasi bembanga namakhone khumirwe, khumukongo noho mutsinda.


7.4.2 Akekholekhaa Butukhu

Kano kakholwanga obutukhu bwokhumallikha kho bayabile noho omundu we ifuma singa chifu noho omundu omanyikhile muno, obukholi buno bunyala okhutsililla oluhono lwo omufu assili khusitanda. Amarebo kanyala okhurullamwo kali: Busina kano koosi kekholekhanga butukhu? Nakalombwa khale noho ketsukhannwanga butswa nikekholekhele mbu kabe butukhu?


Abandu balala bali namakani kabukhanne. Emibayo chiabutukhu chiakhatsililla khulwa emiyika eminji. Malle okhumanyia mbu olufu luleranga esibeela kho abakomi bano benyekhanga baleera emioyo ahambi nobusangali khubafwiliyywe nibahinia amaloro amabi akabeetselanga tsinyanga tsiabali bonyene butukhu.

Omukanda kuno kwalola mbu akabolwanga singa amabibibi mubuhambani bwebikhole, kahuchillwanga mumasika mana khandi kali mufwo noho mubima bia Abanyole mukari.
Amalwa nende ebiokhulia nemilukha chioikhukoba oufwiye musibala esiabafu bamenyanga, emakombe.


7.4.2.1 Obufwani Nende Obusiro Obwo Okhukoma Butukhu


Lusi amakhuwa kali mutsinyembo kakholanga abafwiliyywe okhuchaka okhulakaya. Lusi khandi abafwiliyywe nende abalina behullanga mana bachaka okhuhana ebiokhulia, amapesa nende amalwa khe bakomi olwa basinanga.

Okhusina khuno khusinjisibwaa khase na khase nende yabo abasinanga, nende abaloli, olwa benyaa okhumaniya obusitsa bwabwe obwo okhusina. Singa omundu anyala okhusinjisia obusino mana achake okhwepaka mbu:

   Nise Ja Uganda
   Mbullanga orundu
   Rundi ruli hano
   Orwelangaa elira yilio
   Nyenyanga rulole hano
   Esaa yino

Abandu boosi betsa okhusiling’ana. Omundu narehinia, omwepaki osinjiye yetsa okhuchaka khandi:

   Ilio silli elira litoro tawe
   Ndanyakhana okhulinyoola
   Rakahulla imbwa yooyosi
   Niylanganga elira yilio tawe
   Runanga munyembele olwembo ollayi
   Ne lutsie khu:
   Eyasulwe nali Emakunda
   Gagi nali Ebuyalu
   Jebino nali Esitsimi
   Olukanga nali Mukhalakhala
   Russia nali Esitsimi

Bulano arungaa etsisilingi 5/- noho 10/- mwisanduku lie gita. Abasini bandi bahenganga nibenya okhumanya arungile tsianga kho okhwola atangase etsiarungile boosi bahulle. Olwa amalaa okhutangasa, omukhupi we e gita ouli khandi singa omwembali, achakaa okhwemba
olwembo lwenyelwe. Sibetsa okhwemba oluhono tawe, oundi mulala khu basini noho omwembi yetsa okhuchaka okhwepaka:

Kabala, Adijangao, Mswahili, khonje
Bebeto
Njuki, stua nende Bidii
Nyenyanga abandu yaba boosi
Hano bwangu

Nyakhanne mumakani mbu
Obukhana bunyala okhusinjisibwa
Nende ebiingwa singa Ja Uganda
Khulwa etsilingi likhumi tsionyene
Khu inywe boosi abali hano
Ni wina ouramanyile?
Umeme nilio elira liakhollanga
Uyyie obulahi amera kano
Njuki stua na Bidii

Abandu baroboywe yabo besundaa hakari aho obweyangu bulombelwe khubo. Omwepaki atsilillanga:

Omwami Ommpeni
Mbananga etsisilingi
Likhumu nende tsirano
Nyembele obuusi
Abandu bali hano
Bonyene nibo abetsa
Okhusina obukhana yibu

Ahaana 15/- mwisanduku lie gita. Omurellesi achakaa okhwemba olwembo lwenyelwe nabandu nibemba khandi obusino nibutsililla ntsingufu.
Nikwakhasinwa okhulondokhana nende tsifwo tsiyekhanga, omusino kuno kunyala okhututuhlya esibela, mana kulombe obutukhu obusangalu. Khandi kunyala okhupoyya abafwiliyywe nende abekho esibela sia amasika. Kho abasini ba butukhu bano bakholanga emilimo emilayi echiokhulera amakani ahambi nende okhusangasia abamasika.

7.4.3 Okhukoma


7.4.3.1 Obwokhusina Nende Esifune Siakhwo

Obusino obwo okhukoma nobusino obwakabulwa mubitonye bine. Ebitonye bino ni Okhuchesia, Esilemba, Okhuhuliana nende Likopo

Kano namera akahanwa khu bikhole biahukhanne ebio okhukoma na Abanyole. Ebitonye bino binosibwanga singa mbu nikhuchaka nende okuchesia:

Okhuchesia

Esilemba

Abasini nibakhamala okhukonya hosi aha omufu yali niyayanza, nebachaka okhuchenda nibasesema olunyuma okhwilukha obutinyu singa abali mwihe, ne mbasiomia hango ho omufu. Sino silangwaa mbu esilemba. Olwa belukhaa, bakhupanga tsinzika, nibemba, nibakhupa tsing’oma obutinyu ne nibemba tsinyembo singa tsie lihe. Olwa benjilaa hango, omukhasi wo omufu arulanga nabenjisia niyali omusubilwa nebutswa niyali niyachendakhwo lukano, siabenjisiaa tawe sichila kasubikha mbu nounyala okhufwila habwene yaho.

Okhuhuliana


Likopo

Esitonye siokhumallikha sio okhukoma silangwaa mbu likopo. Buno nobusino obwa kalaha sichila abasini babetsanga bachonyele olunyuma lwo Okhuhuliana okhumalanga tsingufu. Musitonye sino, abasini bachendanga khumuhanda nende khuruchila oruli ahambi hango ho omufu, nibemba nibahana oluyali olwokhumalllikha nassili okhuyabilwa.

7.4.3.2 Abasini


7.4.3.2 Ebikhupillwa


7.4.3.4 Tsingubo, Ebiebikho Bindi Nende Emilukha


7.4.3.5 Obukhongo Bwo Okhukoma Mumukanda

Kaliho amalako, emilukha nende emisilo, etsie nyekhangha tsilondwe nende abemeli babasini bo okhukoma nende abakhulundu abo mu luhya abakhekomba mbu balakomwe


7.5 Matu Nende Okhumalilisia

Mu chapter muno, malle okhumanyi mbu Abanyole mubusino bwo okhukoma nabeinikhu khandi buleramwo abakhasi na basatsa. Khandi manyissie mbu obsino buno buli noburumikhi obunji mubandu bano mana malle okhulomba ebifune bino khu lifwa:

a) Okhufwa khuleranga esibeela esinji khubafwiliyywe nende abalina. Emisino chino chihotselesianga abali musibeela.

b) Olufu lusubilwanga mbu lulerungwa nende ebisieno. Okhukoma khurumikhilwanga khulwo okhuhinia ebisieno bino bio olufu khandi okhulomba abafiliyywe okhumenya nomulembe nende sila okhu koswa noho obusolo.