

PERFORMANCE AND PERFORMANCE SPACES IN BUKUSU WORK AND CELEBRATORY SONGS

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Abstract

This paper is an examination of the dramatic aspects and the spaces utilized in the delivery of Bukusu work and celebratory songs. By work songs we refer to songs for tapping of white ants while celebratory songs refer to those for twin dances and initiation. The paper opines that apart from the oral delivery of the songs, the drama witnessed and other theatrical aspects are the means through which the songs receive full realization; there are dramatic aspects that make the oral performances complete. The paper therefore investigates the drama that accompanies the oral performances and how it gives life to the songs. Abstinence from conjugal responsibilities during initiation, centrality of the (Bakoki) age grade fold, the ululation performed by the mother(s), the 'Namachengeche' concept, the sitting arrangement by the female folk on the day of initiation, sharing of white ants after tapping, the nature and context of the twin dance and other performative spaces constitute the essential components that give life to the oral texts.

1. Introduction

The Bukusu community has many sessions when it sings and dances. There are however sessions when the singing is accompanied with theatrical activities that are complementary to the choral sessions. Tapping of white ants and twin dances are feminine activities though men are allowed to join, while initiation though a domain of males, women have room to participate. This paper benefits from an ethnographic study carried out among the Bukusu. The Bukusu are one of the seventeen tribes of

the luhya, Bantu people of East Africa. They speak Lubukusu (Makila 30).

Bukenya and Nandwa regard performance as the interaction between a performer and an audience; to them then, performance involves the narrator's use of language, body movement, facial expressions, song and dance (19). The paper looks at the dramatic aspects that inform the oral performances. As forms of oral poetry, singing is prevalent but a lot of drama is witnessed. Okpewho states that music is an integral part of a performance especially in

oral poetry when done in front of an audience for this gives a performance structure and context and aid in discovering of meaning from the community's perspective during performance (83).

The performances in Bukusu work and celebratory songs are subjected to their cultural contexts of performance to demonstrate how essential they are in the overall realization of the oral texts. This is echoed by Kabira and Mutahi who identify the cultural context as the point of departure in understanding performance. They posit that: 'Oral literature can only be fully appreciated within its cultural context and performance; it is the cultural context that gives audience the total picture of the implications of the literature itself. In performance the extra linguistic features enhance the message contained in the language used (6).

2. Abstinance from conjugal responsibilities

On the night preceding the day of circumcision among the Bukusu, whereas the rest of the revelers are free to sing, dance and engage in other theatrical activities, there are three groups of people

who are required to abstain from sex on that night. The three are: parents to the candidate(s) for initiation, those to mud the candidate(s) on the morning of initiation and members of the age grade (Bakoki) fold to the parents. They are literally instructed and conditioned to sleep with 'clothes on'.

As Kabaji notes, its common belief among the luhya that one preparing for any form of competition or contest should abstain from sex. Kabaji further argues that any contact with the Vagina is believed to weaken a man (39). Initiation among the Bukusu is actually a battle, hence the need to abstain. Indirectly, the three groups above will be battling it out, any sexual activity may 'weaken' their candidate who may wince at the knife and therefore show cowardice, something the Bukusu associate with nilotic groups. This is evident in the 'sioyaye' chant:

LS: Omusinde oteremaka achia
ebunyolo!

CH: Haho! Haho! Hahoo oooo!

Trans:

LS: A Cowardly uncircumcised
boy should take refuge in the Luo
country!

CH: Haho! Haho! Haho oooo!
(Makila 175).

Initiation is not only a rite of passage in the community but also a test of one's bravery and ability to withstand the pain of the knife, hence the need to be psychologically strong by avoiding any sexual activity.

The Bukusu still believe that any sexual activity will lead to excessive bleeding by the initiate after the operation. In BCS 1, the performers remind one another about the mode of sleeping which they had gone through in the night. The song thus goes:

LS:Ngonile mufware!

CH:haaa!

LS:Ngonile mufware!

CH:haaa!

LS:Pius okonile orie?

CH:Haaa!

LS:Ese ngonile mema!

CH:haaa

LS:ngonile omumufu!

CH:haaa!

Trans:

LS:I slept with clothes on!

CH:haaa!

LS:I slept with clothes on!

CH:haaa!

LS:Pius,how did you sleep?

CH:haaa!

LS:For me i slept while standing!

CH:haaa!

LS:I slept as am!

CH:haaa!

Whereas there is no mention of sexual intercourse in the singing, one can observe that the song is not only a reminder but also a confirmation that they have abstained from any sexual activity as advised hence ready to have the candidate initiated. In fact in the morning when returning from the river after mudding the candidate, express instructions and warnings are given to anybody who might have engaged in any sexual activity to keep off the path to be used by the candidates. Maelo referring to the performer of funeral oral poetry among the Bukusu indicates that on the eve of the performance of the ritual, 'oswala kumuse' abstains from having sex with his wife to keep the purity and sanctity of the ritual. In case the performer fails to observe this, then it is believed that misfortune would befall him (32). Mellitus Wanyama notes that the mother to the initiate is not supposed to have sexual intercourse during

the month of the ceremony as doing this, it is believed would cause some misfortunes to the initiate in the process of being circumcised(4-15).

Failure to abstain from sex by either the parents, those to mud the candidates or a member of the age grade fold may lead to excessive bleeding by the initiate on the morning of the cut. Ben lusweti and Anastancia Nafula referred to an incidence in 1978 when one initiate bled profusely and the clan was compelled to administer an oath to the women folk present so that it could establish if one of them was the cause. As it were, they confirmed, one of the women present was responsible for rumour had it that she was a lover to the initiate and had had sex secretly with the young man for it would be long before they meet again for the young man had to heal before he could engage in any sexual activity.

Kabaji referring to bull fighting, states that a bull whose owner indulges in sex on the night preceding the fight may be defeated or turn against the owner (41). Circumcision, we would like to suggest here is in fact preparation of the 'bull' to perform its duties i.e. to make a man virile, dangerous and lethal (Kabaji 39). This preparation is echoed on the morning of initiation at the time of mudding. Those

charged with this responsibility take time to verbally bully them to use their manhood without sparing any member of the female sex; this is in agreement with making the Bull lethal.



At the river for mudding during the circumcision of Abraham Kasili

Ifi Amadiume corroborates the idea of virility when she posits about the Nnobi that the boy's socialization stressed masculinity, equated with virility, violence, valor and authority (94). It is also echoed in BCS 2:

LS: Omusinde layo!

Ch: Haho!

LS: Hee!

CH: Orao bachonga!

LS: Masewa!

CH: Haho!

LS: Hee!

CH: Orao babala!

This translates to:

LS: The uncircumcised layo!

CH: Haho!

LS: Hee!

CH: Allow it to be sharpened!

LS: Masewa!

CH: Haho!

LS: Hee!

CH: Allow it to cut fully around!

The performers instruct the candidate to patiently allow the traditional surgeon 'sharpen' him in readiness for a responsibility a head of him. Normally the initiates in the community were expected to take up mature responsibilities among them marriage.

Defeat in the bull fight cited above (Kabaji 41) then can be interpreted as the show of cowardice or wincing at the knife or outright defiance by the candidate to go through the operation, there are cases of candidates who've become defiant on the morning of initiation. Such defiance has never failed to receive explanations, however, we may suggest here that it could be linked to either parents or a member of the age set involvement in sexual activities. Kabaji states that men create taboos because they are afraid of

being weakened by a woman and thereby tainted with femininity (41). This could explain why the community insists on abstinence on that night. Parents are therefore put in a complementary position to enable the ceremony be successful as both father and mother have to abstain.

BCS 3 below is an appeal to the mother(s) both fictive and biological present on the occasion to remain steadfast and alert the whole night. The song thus goes:

LS: Ngeba mawe akona!

CH: haho, ngeba mawe akona!

LS: Ngeba mawe alila!

CH: haho, ngeba mawe alila!

LS: Ngeba mawe niye?

CH: haho, ngeba mawe niye!

Trans:

LS: Unless the mother is asleep!

CH: haho, unless the mother is asleep!

LS: unless the mother is crying!

CH: haho, unless the mother is crying!

LS: Unless it is the mother!

CH: haho, unless it is the mother!

Whereas in the song where the performers refer to their sleeping styles on the night of initiation as having slept with clothes on, in the above song, the mothers are reminded about being alert and avoiding anything that may interfere with the success of the initiation, this includes abstaining from any conjugal responsibilities.

What actually stands out is that male and female members of the community are complements of each other. It therefore follows that whether the drama is outside the house or inside the house on the night before initiation, it complements the choral performance to make the whole function a success.

3. The Centrality/role of the Age-grade (Bakoki) fold in the Initiation Performances

The Bukusu have different age- grades (Sets). Makila identifies the following as the known sets: Kolongolo, Kikwameti, Kananachi, Kinyikeu, Nyange, Maina, Chuma and Sawa (177). During the circumcision period, those to be initiated are tasked by their parents to invite those who are their cohorts in the age grade. On the night preceding the circumcision rite, the members of the cohort will conglomerate at the venue where the ceremony is to be held. Whereas practical circumcision involved the male members only, the Bakoki fold allows the cohorts to come in the assembly with their spouses, the woman therefore in this occasion becomes masculine by association.

In BCS 4, the Bakoki fold sings and reminds each other about their responsibilities in affirming the candidates' readiness to go through the cut without any show of cowardice. This song

confirms that those present in the fold are both accountable for the success of the ceremony hence complements of each other. The song thus goes:

LS: Bakoki semwali mwareba omwana!

CH: haa ha!

LS: Bakoki semwali mwareba omwana!

CH: haa aa haa! andi mwarebakho!

LS: Chuma semwali mwareba omwana!

CH: haa haa!

LS: Chuma semwali mwareba omwana!

CH: haa aa haa! Semwali mwareba!

Trans:

LS: Age grade members you should have asked the child!

CH: haa ha!

LS: Age grade members you should have asked the child!

CH: haa aa haa! You should have asked!

LS: Chuma you should have asked the child!

CH: haa haa!

LS: Chuma you should have asked the child!

CH: haa, aa haa! You should have asked!

As fictive fathers and mothers therefore, they are directly responsible for the kind of face the candidate puts up on the material day. Should the initiate demonstrate any cowardice, the shame goes to them.

Kabajji referring to the role played by the wife of the owner of a bull on the morning

before the fight, states that except for the bull owner's wife, no other woman should cross its path (39). Further he states, having avoided sex that night, she is considered a step above females and hence could contribute to the preparation of the bull, and assume some degree of masculinity by association. The Bukusu Bakoki (Age-grade) fold regards the woman present in that assembly in the same vein; she assumes some sense of masculinity through association. On some occasions, the man can send his wife to practically represent him in the fold in case of his absence. As opposed to other traditional fora where women are required to sit on the floor, (during beer parties, solving of domestic disputes) in the Bakoki fold, they are offered places to sit just like their male counterparts, hence elevated to an equal status like the males. In addition, long after the death of the husband, the wife still has the latitude to attend the assemblies and receive the award (Lubaka-cluster meat) meant for the husband.

As the fold drinks and eats (roast beef) all night, the women present, now on equal status with the men, will place orders for anything they want just like their male counterparts.

In BCS 5 those present in the fold reprimand the mother and father to the

candidate for being selfish on the occasion.

The song thus goes:

LS: Maayi wo omwana!

CH: Sakhuwa walia ta! Bumesi nibwo amanyile!

LS: Kebaa!

CH: Kebaa!

LS: Oli kebaa!

CH: Kebaa kamaindi nacha nakusia nanywela enjaka!

Trans:

LS: Mother to the child!

CH: She can't feed you! All she cares is drunkenness!

LS: She steals!

CH: She steals!

LS: You insist she steals!

CH: She steals maize and barter it for bhang!

Whereas the women present do not place orders straight, from the song it is evident that they remind the mother to play her role in ensuring those present aren't hungry for the occasion affords a lot of feasting by those present. In constructing the mother as a mean person through the song, the mothers present ironically call for her proactiveness on the occasion since meanness is least expected of her on the occasion. Mellitus, while assessing the roles of different people on the occasion reports that the mother is supposed to make sure that there is enough food for the visitors, ensures that the visitors are happy,

eat well and have enough of the traditional brew (busaa) (4-14).

This fold therefore is an occasion that empowers the female folk putting them on an equal footing with their male folk. The Bakoki (both male and female) are actually fictive fathers and mothers to the candidate(s) respectively, through this assembly, the Bukusu initiation occasion reinforces the image of motherhood as a complement of fatherhood. The fold imposes sanctions on its members; they cannot engage in any sexual activity on that night, cannot go to their homes in the night and be back at the function among others. These sanctions create order in the fold and a member can be punished for failing to keep the set rules. One such rule in the Bakoki fold is prohibition of members to go with each other's wife or husband. To demonstrate the closeness of the age grade members, Wasambo asserts that members of the age set enjoyed comradeship relations which were accompanied by behavioral rules, rites and reciprocal privileges. He further posits that the relationship was so emotionally elevated that marriage to an age mate's daughter was forbidden. In fact, he insists people who belonged to one cluster enjoyed greater degree of intimacy between them and they favored each in the customary distribution of 'Lubaka' (cluster

meat) and these clusters served as a means of reckoning and maintaining security in social, legal and ritual matters (14). Mellitus reckons that the age mates of the initiate's father (Bakoki) advise and encourage the initiate. They are given special treatment because they are believed to cause harm through their utterances of bad wishes should they get annoyed with the initiate(s) father. He adds that the annoyance normally results from the failure of the initiate's father to meet their expectations. Examples of harm to the initiate are: prolonged healing period, bleeding and any other kinds of bad luck (4-15). The age grade fold therefore though a masculine model incorporates the female folk to ensure that the initiation ceremony is a complete success.

4. The ululation performed by the mother in the performance of initiation songs

During the initiation period, duties are assigned to both parents to ensure a successful initiation ceremony however, there are some tasks that are duly feminine and need not be formally spelt out. In music and dance, especially, among the Bukusu community, ululation is entirely a feminine task and is a mark majorly for a climax or an indication of change of dance steps. The mother to any candidate for initiation is culturally expected to set off the candidate in his task of going around to

inform relatives, friends and neighbors about his intent of being initiated every morning. While the candidate begins off by playing the metallophones (chinyimba), the mother, whether accompanied by other performers or not, will not allow the candidate to leave her compound until she ululates. Once she performs the ululation after brief verbal instructions to the candidate about the seriousness of what he is about to engage in, the candidate is then set off to begin his rounds. This is usually performed every time the candidate leaves the home; it therefore announces the start of events of the day. Later in the day, when he comes back, the mother will still be on the ready, to receive him, the climax of the reception being another ululation performed by the mother.

During the crowning ceremony on the day of initiation after a successful event, the mother and other women will ululate to announce its success; this will be followed by a dance to celebrate the occasion's success. There are duties however which are entirely masculine, these include: mudding the candidate, actual circumcision, and soloing the 'Sioyaye' chant. Whereas there are men who have mastered the art of ululation (Boniface Mukhongo and the late Peter Kundu), it remains the sole responsibility of the mother to perform it during the initiation

period. In fact, whenever the operation is over successfully, the men will immediately call for the ululation from the mothers as it's a reminder to them that they have a role to play to make the whole event complete. Mellitus concurs with this paper when he says that the mother will remain sitting with her legs in horizontal position to the floor until she hears the circumciser's whistle. This is when she stands up and ululates as a sign of victory and joy (4-15).

5. The 'Namachengeche' Concept

'Namachengeche' is a Lubukusu vocabulary for a girl or woman assigned the task of carrying clothes of the candidate on the morning of initiation, acts as their time keeper after initiation and prepares their food among other responsibilities. On the morning of initiation, those to undergo the operation are taken to the river to wet their bodies in readiness for mudding before being driven home. On stripping naked, the candidate's attire (pair of shorts) is handed over to the girl or woman. she is thereafter expected to remove the mud from the initiate's body, she is commissioned to be in-charge of the house where the initiates stay (Likombe) during seclusion, manage time of reporting back to the house by the initiates, prepare the meals for them, check the progress of healing and ensure the initiates receive the required medication.

This responsibility on many occasions fell in the hands of the grandmother. However in her absence, another female was nominated. She ideally ensures unnecessary interference with the healing process. She has the Latitude to mete out punishment on an errant initiate for example in the event of delaying to come home at the required time or sheltering out of home when it rains. Such punishment can be a fine in the form of an egg or hit the ankles of the initiates. Mellitus corroborates our argument above when he asserts that one of the initiate's sisters is given duty of carrying his costumes, instruments and clothes after he removes them on the day of circumcision while going to the river. The same sister also receives gifts/presents given to the initiate after circumcision, cleans up the initiate's body by removing the mud on his head. Lastly, she takes care of the initiate by serving him with food and drinks. Often, he adds, apart from the sister, his grandmother may remove the heap of mud after circumcision (4-17). The sister nominated above or the grandmother are what this paper refers to as 'Namchengeche'.

As Stanlie posits, mothering is an entire way of a community organizing to nurture itself and future generations (45). The girl

or woman (Namachengeche) essentially mothers or other mothers the candidates into a new life; after shedding off the skin of being uncircumcised, the girl or woman is tasked to welcome them to the new stage of life as she nurses them through the seclusion period till healing and coming out of seclusion. Apart from carrying the candidates' clothes, which they never put on again a symbol of graduation to another level in the society, her task of removing the mud after the operation and the eventual responsibility of managing their house (Likombe) and nursing them overly constructs the female individual as a caretaker/nurturer for she has to perform all these tasks till the initiate's graduation at the end of the year.

Photo Two: 'Namachengeche' does her work after circumcision of Sammy wafula (his Aunt Mary khisa).



Photo by Masinde Simon

The Bukusu therefore had understood the concept of other mothering. This is reinforced in BCS 6 that implores the mother to take care of the candidate as a session of sickness is at the corner:

LS: Mayi wo omwana!

CH: Tila omwana, bulwale bwamwolele!

LS: Mayi wa Siando!

CH: Tila siando, bulwale bwamwolele!

Trans:

LS: mother of the child

CH: lull the child, sickness is at the corner!

LS: Mother of siando!

CH: Lull siando, sickness is at the corner!

In BCS 7 the mother is called upon to come and check the uncircumcised penis of the candidate. This call upon the mother is a reminder to her as a nurturer/caretaker that the candidate is about to shed his childhood state where she can freely look at his penis but which she may not see again. Though the mother doesn't practically have a look at the penis, she utilizes this space given to her to give verbal advice to the candidate on the seriousness of the impending ceremony. She does this by making reference to the degree of the pain involved in the cut. She

exaggerates the length of time involved in the operation by informing the candidate that it will take the whole day; from dawn to dusk. This is meant to psychologically prepare the candidate for the immense pain involved in the cut. Therefore as a nurturer, she is tasked to perform a maternal responsibility to facilitate the success of the ceremony. The song goes thus:

LS: mayi wo omwana bira olole!

CH: Aah! LS: mayi wo omwana bira olole!

CH: Aah! Mayi wo omwana bira olole esonga!

LS: Senge wo omwana bira olole!

CH: Aah!

LS: Senge wo omwana bira olole!

CH: Aah! Senge wo omwana bira olole
esonga!

Trans:

LS: Mother to the child come and have a
look!

CH: Aaah!

LS: Mother to the child come and have a
look!

CH: Aaah! Mother to the child come and
have a look at the penis!

LS: Aunt to the child come and have a
look!

CH: Aaah!

LS: Aunt to the child come and have a
look!

CH: Aaah! Aunt to the child come and
have a look at the penis!

Although, BCS 6 and BCS 7 refer to the
biological mother, it is not surprising that a
fictive mother is assigned to the initiate for
nursing. The idea conceived in the above

songs for the biological mother is to
prepare the candidate psychologically for
the knife then hand over to a foster mother
(Namachengeche) to take care of the
initiate. Stanlie argues that the concept of
other mothering developed in response to
the overgrowing need to share the
responsibility for child nurturance (45).
The overall impression is that this session
empowers the female individual assigning
her tasks to ensure that the initiate is taken
care of up to time he heals hence making
the initiation ceremony complete.

6. The Sitting Arrangement by the Female Folk on the Day of Initiation Performances

The female folk in this regard include
biological mother(s) to the candidate(s),
the candidates' paternal and maternal aunts
and cousins. Moments before the
candidates arrive at the spot meant for the
cut (etyang'i), the female folk are tasked to
sit in one of the houses nearest the spot
(mostly the kitchen) with the biological
mother(s) at the centre in the pattern of the
sitting. The women are required to remain
in the sitting position with their legs
stretched out straight till the operation is
over. Once the men check and confirm that
the operation is done, the women will be
allowed to come out of the house and
ululate announcing successful
circumcision and crowning of the initiate
with presents for their demonstration of

bravery. Mellitus agrees with this posit when he states that when actual circumcision is going on, the mother to the initiate sits in her house with her legs horizontal to the floor until she hears the circumciser's whistle, this is when she stands up and ululates as a sign of victory and joy(4-15). While the mothers will be seated, the fathers will be busy checking out the possible route that the candidates have to enter the compound through, normally its believed the normal entrance could be bewitched hence the need to open a new entrance.

With their walking sticks raised, they insist on the candidate to remain steadfast and withstand the pain. Any member of the sitting women folk who may by chance fold her leg will cause the candidate(s) to show cowardice. Discussing the sitting arrangement, one informant (Khisa Marauni) strongly felt that it's a kind of second birth or delivery being re-enacted by the mother; to deliver the candidate into a new status hence she has to remain steadfast too and deliver a 'healthy baby' or risk 'delivering a still born' (a cowardly initiate). While receiving the candidates, those accompanying them sing the 'Sioyaye' chant. Simiyu notes that 'sioyaye' is mainly for men who carry sticks and clubs lifted high up as a warning to the initiate for dire consequences in case

he flitters about circumcision (35). The 'sioyaye' is meant to embolden the candidate as he is reminded about the pain involved in the cut hence the men/fathers play their last important role in psychological preparation of the candidate. Therefore, whether on the outside receiving the candidates (by men) or in the house (seated by women), each has a role to play to enable have a successful initiation event. Whereas the ceremony is a masculine endeavor, one cannot fail to note the space allocated to women in the role assigned to them; they are an indispensable lot in facilitating a successful initiation ceremony. In the absence of a biological mother, then other 'mothers' must be called upon and tasked to sit and enable the event go on.

In the same vein, the Bukusu women have taken it in their stride, and confidently assert that it's their responsibility. In fact on some occasions, they (Women) have insisted that they have not sat down hence the candidate(s) cannot come and face the knife. Wabende argues that in effect all initiation ceremonies are social dramas where those who attend are not audiences but rather part of the performers in the enactment of the ritual (24). Whereas the sitting women do not engage in any singing at this point, the mute silence that prevails in their sitting awaiting

announcement from those outside of a successful event reveals that they are part of the performers and not audiences as they immediately jump to their feet with ululations marking completion of the scene in the social drama. The fact that they sit in mute silence with their legs horizontal to the floor gives a picture of a freeze position in a theatre as one waits other character(s) to complete their part(s) in a dramatic scene, the characters whether in the mute position (mothers) or active on stage (men/fathers) outside make the whole ceremony a success hence complements of each other. This drama is a mark of the second last aspect before actual circumcision.

7. The Nature and Context of Twin Dance

Simiyu researching on the social cultural significance of Bukusu circumcision songs notes that when twins are born in the community, a special dance (bukhwana) is performed taking the name from the kind of children born (23). Nangendo further adds that twins symbolized fertility, prosperity, well being as well as strength of Babukusu and their society which would only be realized with a good harvest. He adds that people engage in what is called 'khukhina bukhwana' (dancing twinship) in which people take part in a very peculiar sort of dance where sexual songs are sung (36). Mellitus adds

that during the circumcision of twins they are normally taken to the river as early as 3:00 am and are circumcised at 5:00 am; they are not supposed to be exposed anyhow to the public during anytime. This therefore enhances the fact that twins are a rare phenomenon and they are feared and respected hence must treated and acknowledged specially in all respects. They are circumcised the same day. The same knife must be used to show that they came from the same womb (Mellitus 4-23). The Bukusu community has a metaphorical reference to twins; 'Bukhwana kamakele'-which translates to: twinning is leprosy. This is a metaphorical reference to the seclusion period where the couple just like one suffering from leprosy cannot freely intermingle with the rest of the society until the dance is performed.

Once a couple delivers twins, their freedom of movement is curtailed. The dance can be performed twice or ones depending on how well off the family involved is. Each of the parents has to have a session for the dance. Both parents are responsible as the history of twins in a given family can be traced from either the father's lineage or the mother's. Family members of the father and those of the mother respectively have to perform the dance and allow members of their family come out of seclusion. However,

depending on the prevailing economic situation, a single dance can be performed for the couple. Before dancing, a sheep is slaughtered. This is prerogative. Once the sheep is flayed, the couple is made to bite a raw part of a specially cut piece of meat. As they bite the raw piece, they are daunted with the phrase: 'wamwene ne kukhwana kwenye' which translates to "it is upon you and your twins". Despite this comment sounding negative, Ben Lusweti insisted that it is meant to encourage the couple to find pleasure in delivering twins. Another special herb (libombwe) is tied round their neck, this is supposed to prevent and or protect the twins from being unnecessarily weak then and in future especially during cultural functions such as initiation. Each of the parents to the twins is paired up with an assistant equivalent to a best man and maid in a wedding. Once all these have been done, the dance can then commence.

The dance doesn't have a definite period after delivery but it has to be spaced enough to allow the mother regain strength to enable her partake of the dance as expected. On the day of the dance, the couple will be locked inside their house with brothers and cousins to the husband or rather brothers - in -law to the lady. The door will not be bolted as such but will be held in place by those inside. The other

team coming in to 'open' the twinning and break the period of seclusion, will start singing on nearing the compound, but before then, a drum will be sounded to announce their arrival and readiness for the Dance. The moment the drumming starts, the performers who are out allow themselves into the arena and take the floor. However, there is one individual who will be nominated to oversee the tug of war. The dance pattern evident in the whole session of dancing is the waist wiggle. The dancers are adorned in sisal skirts and have their bodies tattooed. The performers will advance towards the locked door; there will be a tug -of - war between those inside and those out, as this happens, those not involved in the tug-of-war will be gyrating the waist. The individual nominated to oversee the tug-of-war will referee it and determine when it should end. While the tug - of - war is on, the dance proceeds, it climaxes the moment the door is flung open, then the couple comes out and joins in the dance, this is where the waist wiggle climaxes. The couple dances without any fear and they take steps imitative of the sexual acts as those present sing to them rhetorically asking them whether they were having intercourse explicitly so or they were hiding some aspects of it. BCS 8 demonstrates the same, it thus goes:
LS: Omukhasi Okhabeula!

CH: Sanywa mungoyelo!

LS: Ne abone omutiya wewe!

CH: Aboa bunikula!

LS: Namung'ong'oli ng'o!

CH: Namung'ong'oli ng'o!

LS: George ne abone kata!

CH: Saboa kwatinya!

LS: Wakisangakho namwe wakholanga busa ori!

CH: Wakisangakho namwe wakholanga busa ori!

LS: Khinakho ndolee!

CH: Khinakho ndolee!

Trans:

LS: A Wife who can't shave her private parts!

CH: She can't drink in assembly of men!

LS: When she sees her man friend!

CH: She loosens her pants!

LS: An exposed private part of a man!

CH: An exposed private part of a man!

LS: When George sees Katherine!

CH: He loosens his loin cloth!

LS: Were you doing this in privacy or openly?

CH: Were you doing this in privacy or openly?

LS: Dance so that we can see!

CH: Dance so that we can see!

The Rhetoric questions in the second last stanza show how those present daunt the couple whether they had sex explicitly or hid aspects of the same. The questions are in reference to the waist wiggle dance steps. The performers terminally request the couple to act out the sexually connotative steps through dancing.

Before the door is flung open the babies are held by the nominees who are equal to the best man and maids during a wedding ceremony. The nominee to oversee the tug of war will carry the children once the door is open and the best man and maid hold the hands of the couple and dance around the house. The soloist will keep shifting from one song to the other depending on the flexibility of those involved and sometimes would yield to pressure from those present to lead a given song because it is their favorite. The songs on this occasion have a lot of vulgar vocabulary touching on the private parts of both men and women and the dance steps are imitative of sexual acts. Because of the

kind of diction involved in the singing and the sexual dance steps, parents to the couple cannot participate in this dance. In the same vein, the children to the couple (if any) are not allowed to participate in the dance due to the dance steps and the diction.

Thereafter, there shall be a celebration which may involve slaughtering of a cow or sheep in honor of the birth of the twins. Though the dance is performed by women (majorly), men are offered space. The fact that the dance is meant to be performed for each spouse differently is a way of underscoring the fact that each of the spouses has a responsibility to play in the biological process of getting children, the dance then is in line with Deidre's argument on the complementarity of man and woman in the dispensation of life responsibilities (93).

The whole concept of twinning in the Bukusu has lots of superstitions. Among them, twins at a tender age don't die; they simply fly away. In addition, a couple that has not held the dance should not cross through a field of groundnuts for they will (groundnuts) be scorched. Anastancia Nafula insisted that there are those who ignored the dance and who have since been affected by the twin effect; they have had their skins scalded (bukhwana

khukhwosia- being scalded by twins). Other superstitions that surround twins include: twins can't dig a grave for a fellow twin; they can't view the body of the dead, and cannot be allowed to sit by the door in a social gathering like a beer party session. Without the drama that accompanies the performance, the singing alone would present a very dull performance hence the dance complements the singing making the dance a spectacle to watch.

8. The Sharing of White Ants after the Tapping

After a successful harvest of white ants, the women (performers) are solely in-charge of the sharing, this is as opposed to other occasions among the Bukusu when men are at the centre of distribution of anything. White ants can never be denied anybody; those present and who may not have participated in the tapping will always be spared for a share. They can as well place request through a single word 'khinekho' Which may not have an English equivalent but which can be explained to mean (of course in the register of white ants tapping) offer me a share of the harvest. As witnessed in the performance, 'khukhina' is actually an award/a reward for finding one on the scene of tapping the white ants. Because white ants can never be denied anybody,

this constructs the mother as generous, caretaker and a nurturer in the society. Khaoya posits that in the Bukusu community, the person who has harvested 'chiswa' must give out some to people at the end of the harvest for blessings. It is a taboo for one to carry the whole harvest home without sharing it with others as this enhances communalism and discourages individualism (99). Khaoya concludes that group chemistry in chiswa harvesting songs encourages sharing and condemns selfishness (95).

Khaoya's conclusion above is echoed in BWS 9 where the performers ridicule women who are egocentric and have tendencies of hiding what has been harvested (white ants). The song, in the conclusive stanza brings out the stingy nature of such women. The stanza thus goes:

LS: Omukhasi we lusooba kaboa sindu mulukhola!

CH: Omukhasi we lusooba kaboa sindu mulukhola!

Trans:

LS: A Woman with selfish tendencies has hidden something (white ants) in dry banana leaves!

CH: A woman with selfish tendencies has hidden something (white ants) in dry banana leaves!

Group chemistry is also echoed in BWS

10, where the performers of white ants tapping songs condemn one of them whom they had suspected of fouling the air during the tapping process, something the fold doesn't take lightly. The song thus goes:

LS: winyambile winyambile!

CH: winyambile winyambile, kumusi kurombe haa!

LS: Kumusi kurombe!

CH: kumusi kurombe! Haa!

Trans:

LS: Whoever has farted! Whoever has farted!

CH: Whoever has farted, whoever has farted! May his/her anus develop a growth! haa!

LS: May the anus develop a growth! May the anus develop a growth!

CH: May the anus develop a growth haa!

The performers warn the suspect of dire consequences for fouling the air. It is believed that fouling the air may stop the white ants from coming out leading therefore to a failed attempt at harvesting of the ants. The white ants harvesters therefore insist on similar group chemistry for the success of their endeavour. The Bukusu mothers then are proactive individuals in the way they forestall deterrent measures in ensuring a successful harvest. They are able to order their own space and control all those present not only

during the harvesting but also during the sharing. In their generosity, they portray the communal nature of the Bukusu society. To reinforce the idea of a communal spirit, Ohrle and Emeka say: ‘.....thought processes from the so-called developed world descend from Descartes’ powerful idea on which western individualism is based: ‘I think therefore I am’. Thought processes out of Africa, stem from the basic idea of *ubuntu*:’

A person is a person by virtue of other people. These two ideas are the opposite sides of the same coin. Descartes’ idea fosters strong individualism while the concept of Ubuntu fosters development of communal spirit’ (8). In BWS 9 for example, wizardry is condemned by the performers coaxing the white ants to come out or else those dilly dallying are likened to the behavior of wizards.

LS: Ne wirekeresha aba olinga kundu kulosi!

CH: Ne wirekesha aba olinga kundu kulosi!

Trans:

LS: If you dilly dally, you are like a wizard!

CH: If you dilly dally, you are like a wizard!

Wizardry therefore is a vice that the community detests, that is why performers use it as bait in coaxing the ants to come

out by talking to them (white ants) through singing. Those present therefore indirectly learn about wizardry and are implored to avoid it.

9. Performance Spaces

Schechner Richard says that a particular place is where a ceremony takes place, where a mythic event has happened in the past, where beings manifest themselves through songs and dances and where special actions converge creating a theatrical place by poetic means (166). Okpweho on his part posits that performers differ from one another depending on factors such as age and energy by the performer, the nature of the occasion, the type of setting whether or not any musical accompaniments are used especially by the performer, and whether it is solo or group performance (46). The performers of Bukusu work and celebratory songs are quite different whether at individual or group level; however all of them performed from memory. Most of the performances were outside the houses due to the dancing and drama involved. Evan Mwangi recognizes the presence of dramatic spaces which he argues includes the physical space on which a drama text is performed (46). In the songs, there is physical space which is clearly defined. Whereas initiation songs are performed in anti-clockwise direction; twin dance songs involve a lot of dancing

within and around the house of the couple. White ants tapping songs are performed in a kneeling or sitting position.



Photo nine; revelers doing the anti-clockwise movement during initiation.

10. CONCLUSION.

We have analyzed the drama that informs the oral performances of Bukusu work and celebratory songs. The Bukusu men and women use drama to make the oral performances complete. The sitting arrangement by the women folk on the day of initiation, the 'Namangeche' concept, the sharing of white ants, the ululation by the mother, abstinence from conjugal responsibilities, the twin dance and the 'Bakoki' fold (age grade fold) are theatrical aspects that are replete in the choral performances.

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