

## Oral Poetry for Environmental Conservation: A Study of Selected Gusii Song Texts

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### Abstract

Environmental issues, issues such as the global warming have of late taken centre in world conferences. They are of late the convergence zone for brains right across board as nations look for ways to ameliorate this mind-boggling issue which is somehow threatening the peaceful existence of humanity on the globe. The tackling of this issue requires the concerted efforts of both scientists and artists such as those fronted by oral artists. The purpose of this study was to investigate how a selection of song texts from the Gusii community in Kenya has captured environmental issues and their contribution towards environmental conservation. The study first employed a deconstructive analysis of the selected song texts in order to arrive at the multiple meanings/ideas which are espoused by the selected songs and how they champion for the efforts of nature conservation. Keeping in mind that art is a form of ideological state apparatuses which “hails/interpellates” its subjects to think in a particular way; the deconstructive analysis of the song texts was thus augmented by Louis Althusser’s version of Marxism to demonstrate that the ideas generated and transmitted by the song texts hail their subjects towards rededicating their efforts towards the conserving of nature. At the conclusion, a strand of psychoanalysis is used to tie up the discussion. The study was limited to a deconstructive and Marxist analysis of five song texts purposively sampled from twenty five songs which were collected during the fieldwork session in the Kisii region of Western Kenya. Snowball research method was used during the collecting of the song texts from various artists. Equally, interviews were used alongside the deconstructive analysis so as to get an informed understanding of the song texts. The purpose of the study is to demonstrate that when tapped properly, performance of oral poetry is an effective vehicle in augmenting the already existing efforts of environmental conservation. The significance of this study is that its findings go a long way to contribute and augment the existing efforts of addressing environmental issues in the world. It is equally the intent of this study to reawaken and engineer a variety of discourses all of which will be aimed at stepping up the efforts of conserving our environment.

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**Keywords:** oral poetry, environment, conservation, deconstruction, signifier and signified

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### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Deconstructionists have argued that any discourse is bound to elucidate a multiplicity of meanings. For instance, Derrida (2005:649-666) has averred that discourses generated by texts of art are devoid of ultimate or fixed centres of meaning but instead, there is a play of meanings which result in the deferring of the intended absolute meaning. Another deconstructionist, Michael Foucault has argued that the meanings in texts result from discursive formations which are convoluted deep in the ideological arrangements of society. In plain terms, what the two deconstructionists are presenting to the scholarly world is that in a text is to be found a

multiplicity of meanings. Therefore, this study borrowed the deconstructionists approach to arrive at the multiple meanings and discourses which are brought forth by a set of five oral texts purposively sampled from the many collected during a field research in the Gusii region of western Kenya.

Althusser (1969:101) has postulated that “a person’s desires, choices, intentions, preferences, judgments and so forth (individual’s behaviour) are themselves products of social practices.” Social practices, on their own, do not generate and transmit a community’s worldview. The constructing and transmitting of a worldview rather, is achieved

through the composing and performing of various artistic products of a community's social practices such as song texts. In the Gusii context, just like many other parts of the world over, the issue of climate change is causing ripples. The concern then is whether oral poetry, particularly the sampled song texts are vibrantly addressing the changes in climate and constructing discourses aimed at ameliorating this worrying trend in environmental issues. It is on the basis of these realities that this study analyzed five song texts with a view to elucidating discourses whose intent is to demonstrate the enormous power of oral poetry in matters of environmental conservation.

## INTRODUCTION

Oral poetry (songs) is a part of the body of verbal arts that can be composed by members of a community. Others are chants, short forms (Proverbs, puns and riddles), narratives and other forms. Verbal art is not a preserve of any given particular society or community in the globe. Each community performs and listens to its verbal art thereby constructing their "world". At the same time, as members of any particular community gets engrossed in the performance and listening to their verbal art, they get "interpellated" into becoming acceptable members of their own society. Equally, when members of a given community get absorbed in the creating of their verbal art, their aims are varied. There are the obvious goals such as getting entertained, preserving their history, socialization, transmitting their social values as well as the instilling of the collective social norms among others. Oral poetry/songs are further divided into various classes. There exist nuptial songs, war poetry, religious poetry, ritual poetry and other classes. Despite these songs serving various functions and being performed in specified occasions, there is a possibility that when deconstructed, they can be generating and convey many more meanings than those intended for the gracing of the occasion for which they are performed.

In qualifying the pieces under investigation as art, this study rather borrows from Finnegan (1970) *Oral Literature in Africa*. Who carries an extensive study based on the collection and classification of various forms of oral literature. She analyses the literary features and social functions of various genres of oral literature. These include the analysis of various sub-genres of songs such as children's songs and rhymes, panegyrics, elegiacs, religious, special purpose, topical and political songs. She considers the specific attributes of each type.

While taking cognisance of her classification and identification of various sub-genres of African songs, this study considers the content and specific characteristics of various song texts of the Gusii and compares the outcome with Finnegan's study. Of

particular significance is Finnegan's assertion that oral literary texts carry the basic feature of literariness and can therefore be analyzed as literary texts. This study thus proceeded on to identify the aesthetic devices in selected song Gusii song texts, study their meanings and demonstrate the various ways in which they can "interpellate" members of any community into conserving nature.

Bukenya, Gachanja and Nandwa (1997) *Oral Literature, A Senior Course* follows a similar approach to that of Finnegan. It takes into account the literary features of various songs and then proceeding to identify their functions. Borrowing a leaf from the study by Bukenya Gachanja and Bukenya this study is able to analyze selected Gusii song texts from various perspectives. First, this study employs the New Critical Approaches to detect various artistic devices employed in the constructing of the ideas which are designed towards the conservation of nature.

Kichamu and Odaga (1982) in *Oral Literature: A School Certificate Course* makes an extensive and general survey of song texts from different ethnic communities in Kenya. Firstly, they note that many communities round Africa have work song texts, initiation or circumcision song texts, marriage, birth and child naming song texts, sacrificial, burial or funeral song texts, praise and love song texts. Such song texts, regardless of the community from which they are composed, form an important part in the lives and the thinking of the people who compose and perform them. They further note that oral poetry, just like narratives and proverbs, are about the people's conditions of life such as political, social, and economic hence they embody the history, philosophy, beliefs and wisdom of the people. From a similar perspective the current study considers that the texts it analyses for a part of philosophy of a people in which meanings meant to hail people into conservation of nature are espoused.

Nandwa and Bukenya's (1983:85) in *African Oral Literature for Schools* observe that song and dance pervade the entire spectrum of African traditional life; and that in most societies, there are songs for every stage and occasion of a person's life from the cradle to the grave. At birth, naming ceremonies are interlaced with songs. After birth, mothers, sisters and ayah nurses move in with lullabies. Immediately thereafter, as children learn to play on their own, they play as they learn the numerous play songs and recitations. After childhood, knocks the stage of initiation at which an individual is accepted into the society as an adult. At this stage, both initiation and praise (panegyric) songs are sung to reveal to the initiates the society's expectations on them. In marriage ceremonies, a great deal of the singing of nuptial songs is experienced. There is a likelihood

that songs which grace these occasions construct meanings which transcend the the intents of the occasion and proceed to espouse meanings which hail their composers and performers to be active in the conservation of nature.

Further, the postulation by Bukenya and Nandwa that songs encompass the entire gamut of African traditional life in itself speaks volumes. It is an indication that there are ideas and values which are generated and conveyed by songs which make them to permeate the social practices of African traditional life and even societies outside Africa. These are the ideas which determine the characteristics of an individual hence giving him/her an idea of the range of properties he/she can have and the limits which govern his/her thinking and action. In other words, both Bukenya and Nandwa allude to the fact that songs, such as the texts this study analyzes are a form of ideological state apparatuses which construct ideas and values whose function is to “interpellate” members of the community into being subjects of their society, chief of which can be the conservation of nature. This view is shared by Miruka (1999) *Studying Oral Literature* whose views involve both the classification and analysis of songs in terms of their characteristic features and functions.

Wellek and Warren (1949) in *Literary Theory* are of the view that in some ways, literary language is deficient and it is bound in ambiguities, and it is like every other historical language- full of homonyms, arbitrary or irrational categories such as grammatical gender and it is permeated with historical accidents, memories and associates (allusions) hence it is best understood when deconstructed. In a word, literary language is highly connotative. One feature of style, say a metaphor, can convey more than one meaning. Secondly, according to Wellek and Warren, the language of literature aims at influencing (interpellating) the character of the reader and persuades him and ultimately changes him. This is the object of this study when it espouses the idea that oral poetry can shape the minds of people into conserving nature.

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was limited to five song texts collected during a field research trip in the Kisii region of Western Kenya. It entailed collecting a number of Gusii song texts from which the five were sampled. Various *obokano* performers we recorded through the use of videotaping and oral interviews. Resource persons and oral artist performers were reached through snowball method of research and interviewed. Secondly, participant observation was the second source of data. This meant active involvement in the actual performance in order to be as close as possible to the performers. Observing and listening to the discourses of those engaged in the art

helped the study to infer some of the meanings conveyed by the song texts. Lastly, library research and information from the internet was handy. The research moved Libraries such as the ones at the University of Nairobi, Moi University and one at Kenyatta University.

#### IN PRAISE AND CONSERVATION OF FAUNA AND FLORA

Vansina (1985) has postulated that all literature is metaphor. This postulation is very important as far as the study of literature, especially oral poetry is concerned. It in essence prepares one to undertake a deconstructive analysis of any work of art in order to uncover the many meanings underlying the metaphor which is literature. The metaphors used in the conveying of various meanings in works of art spring out of the society in which the piece of art is composed and performed. These metaphors on one hand therefore mirror the social-political and cultural conditions of the society from which they spring out. On the other hand, when these metaphors are repeatedly sung and performed to members of a society who consume the art, they become an Ideological State Apparatuses which in turn “interpellates” the consumers into constructing and understanding their cosmos in a particular way.

Borrowing from Vansina’s postulation, this study therefore starts off its discussion from the point of view that all the song texts sampled and analyzed by this study are metaphors. Equally, that these song texts are a part of the wider genres of art which elucidate some aspects of human conditions. These are the conditions out of which these oral texts are constructed.

The focus of this study is anchored on the fact that all the song texts sampled in this study use animal imagery. To start with, various birds have been used as images in these songs. In song two, images of two birds are captured. There is *Enyamuchera* and *Rikorobo*. In songs four and five, there is *Egesingororo* and *Egentinkinye*. Let us thus look at the attributes of *Enyamuchera*. This is a bird of the same size as that of a weaverbird. Its back is black and its chest is white in colour. It has a relatively long tail and it is mainly a carnivorous bird which mainly feeds on insects. Its reputation rests on the fact that the bird has a strong and sharp eye sight which enables it to spot even a small insect from far. Its image in the song is captured in a rather interesting manner. *Enyamuchera bugia obokano* – this is basically interpreted as; *Enyamuchera*, play the harp. *Obokano* is a traditional eight stringed musical harp/instrument which is very popular among the Luo and Gusii communities of Western Kenya. The chirping of this bird is very much like the sounds produced by the harp whenever it is being played. Well, from the discussion above, it is then a reality

that the bird is used as a metaphor in this song text. Nevertheless, it is not the intent of this study at this stage to disambiguate the *Enyamuchera* metaphor so as to discuss its multiple meanings.

In the same song text, text number two in the appendix herein below, *Ekerandi ki'omong'ina*, the image of another bird, *Rikorobo*, has also been used. *Rikorobo* is a small darkish grey bird which among the Gusii community in Kenya is reputed for being very alert, of sharp intellect and swift in speed when it has sensed danger. It is reputed to be clever enough even to dodge clever traps. In this song text, the bird is painted as a smart dancer. *Rikorobo ita orobega* is simply translated to say, may the bird shake its shoulder- well, a style of dancing among the Gusii community especially when the eight stringed harp-*obokano* is being played. Well, this may have been taken from the way the birds of that very species shake their wings in joy anytime they meet on a given branch of a tree.

*Egetinkinye* could be the smallest in size of the birds known. It is tiny. Many; *ebitinkinye*, (*Ebitinkinye* is the plural of *ebetinkinye*) live in fairly large groups unlike other birds which in most cases live in pairs. A group of up to ten can be found inhabiting the same nest. Again, these nests of theirs are usually located in very thick canopies of trees. In the song text in which the attributes of this little bird are highlighted, the bird is praised for its intelligence. It searches for the safest place/canopy for the construction of its nest. This is a precaution so that should storms come, then the little bird will be safe right inside its nest. Being a metaphor, well, it can be construed to mean that the intent of the oral poem/song text and particularly the image of *ebetinkinye* is to hail members of the Gusii community to exercise intelligence when it comes to making weighty decisions in life.

Lastly, *Egesingororo* (Sparrow) is the bird whose image is captured in song text number five: *Egesingororo ekebarara*. *Ekebarabara* is a propeller especially that one which is used in the construction of helicopter planes. Just like the way the copter's propeller rotates/makes fast oscillations so as to lift up the chopper, so does the sparrow fly; so fast and for a long time without perching.

The images of the four birds as captured by the oral poems sampled in this study are not accidental. The aforementioned birds are chosen with certain considerations. A deconstruction of the meanings transmitted by the songs imply that other birds exist only that the mentioned ones are thought to possess peculiar attributes which can be borrowed by humans to enhance his conditions of living. To state that *ebetinkinye* is a clever bird is to imply that its actions are construed as a sign of ingenuity after having been

compared to those of others. The existence of this particular bird signifies the existence of many more other birds. The difference between them and *ebetinkinye* could be hinged in the fact that the others birds could be in possession of attributes not considered to be of great value in regard to human efforts of bettering the conditions of living around him, but all the same, they are important. Perhaps those other birds are not as artistic and careful when it comes to the construction of their nests. The existence of *ebetinkinye* is only but a signifier to the existence of many other species of birds of the air whose conservation is obligatory for a balanced environment. The aspect of *ebitinkinye* choosing on thick canopies for their nests signifies the many varieties of trees with large and thick canopies. Therefore, to think of this bird is to think of many more birds, different nests, different species of trees and their esoteric qualities hence, the oral poetry acting as vehicle for generating values whose intent is to augment the efforts of conserving nature.

Equally, the swiftness of the sparrow's flight catches the creative mind of the composers of the aforementioned song text with a reason. The song text composed with the *egesingororo* metaphor gets its way into the creative realms of the Abagusii community because of the bird's swiftness in speed when compared to that of the other birds of the air. The sparrow, in its state as a bird is just but a signifier. The signified are the many birds whose various speeds in flight are not as fast as that of the sparrow but all the same, they are very important in their distinctive ways. Their existence contributes immensely in the balancing of the natural ecosystems. If *egesingororo* was the only bird of the air, then its swift speed would not have caught the imaginative mind of the composers and consumers of the song text. Its existence is anchored on the existence of other birds of different abilities. Once more, their being alive means they draw their foods from the fruits of different trees and or various insects. The food chains are endless hence the meanings of this single metaphor of the *egesingororo* bird in the song text are deferred endlessly. Given that the meanings conjured up rotate around animals, plants and the earth on which the plants grow, it is the postulation of this study that the effectiveness of oral poetry should be tapped to aid the efforts which have been put in motion so as to conserve the global environment.

It has been discussed herein above that the Gusii people deeply value the music which is accompanied by the eight stringed harps. This is so partly because; the songs help in the defining of the identity of the community. Therefore, it is a sweet and rejuvenating experience when a member of the community hears the sound of their revered harp being projected by a bird of the air. The bird, *enyamuchera* then must be

to some extent be a revered bird among members of the community. The love for peculiar qualities in birds and animals is not limited only to the Gusii community in Kenya. This is a skill this study believes has been tapped by many a community round the world. Given that the intent of such song texts is to appreciate the beauty and richness of nature, it then is a reality that the power of oral poetry in various communities round the globe can be tapped and be exploited towards the direction of environmental conservation.

*Rikorobo*, though considered a clever bird, what catches the creative mind of the Omogusii is its dancing antics. Notice that the singing bird (*Enyamuchera*) and the dancing bird (*Rikorobo*) are images captured in the same song. Singing and dancing go hand in hand no wonder then that the two images are captured in the same song. Just as it is discussed in the cases of other birds herein above, the dancing antics of *Rikorobo* is a signifier. The signified lays in the fact that there are other birds of almost the same nature. They can dance only that the main difference between then and *rikorobo* is to be found in that their dancing antics. Their other abilities may not have been registered in the song text forming the basis of this study; but all the same, the other birds exist. The existence of the bird as a signifier points to an endless list of signifieds which can be birds, animals, plants, fish and other marine, land and air creatures of nature. Their different beauties and abilities are a signifier of their values in the stabilizing of the environment through their various ecosystems. Balanced ecosystems are a recipe for a well-balanced and conserved environment.

When birds of the air find their place into the oral art of a community, it is testimony enough that they occupy a place in the way the community defines its cosmos. In borrowing from the intelligence exhibited by different birds, the idea being constructed in the mindset of the many generations in the community and beyond is that conservation of nature is vital and all efforts towards conserving it should be invoked. Other than the birds of the air, a plethora of other wild animals are mentioned in the sampled song texts. There is *Onsusu* (the hare), *engabi* (antelope), *egwachi* (leopard) all in song text number one on the appendix and then *ekebwe* (fox) and *nyangweso* (swam of locusts) in song text number three. From the structure of the first song text – *Beng' chugucha*; the short and repetitive lines suggest that this is a play song text which is sang and performed by children in their playgrounds. The refrain is explicit about this being a song text performed by children. The vigour with which one has to dance, run and jump repetitively points to the postulation that this is a song text performed and consumed by children.

The antelope and hare are both wild herbivores of relatively small size. They signify existence of other herbivorous animals. The signified herbivores can be of the same size or are either small in size or bigger when compared to the antelope and hare. These could be animals such as the elephant, giraffe, buffalo, rhinoceros, zebra and other bigger ones on one hand. On the other hand the signified could be smaller herbivores such as rodents. Rodents could further be a signifier to the existence in the wild of other animals which feed on green vegetative matter and are in a symbiotic relationship with rodents. When animals such as rhinos are mentioned, in the background are birds which pluck ticks from the giant animals. There is a species of birds which are constantly to be found in the company of rhinos and elephants. They too have a symbiotic relationship with these giant animals in that they help the jumbos in plucking ticks and other parasites from their skins as well as warn them of imminent danger for they can see far off than the jumbos.

The two animals, the antelope and the hare are known to be fairly swift especially when confronted with danger. This signifier could suggest that there are other herbivorous animals in the wild which are either slower or swifter than the two. The signified can equally be swifter carnivores such as the cheetah which perhaps is one of the fastest animals in the wild. When performing oral pieces of art such as the song texts in which the images of these animals are used, it is possible to argue that they are a suitable avenue for imbedding in the psyche of children fundamental values about environmental conservation. The praise of animals in oral poetry is a clear indication that the composers of such song texts are subjects of a worldview which treasures the conservation of environment. This postulation augments in a classical manner the existing efforts of environmental conservation such as those fronted by United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). Should the performance of such song texts be encouraged through available and new methods, then it is presumed by this study that efforts of conserving nature will receive a tremendous boosted.

When an antelope or hare becomes a signifier, a cheater becomes the signified. The mentioning of a cheater conjures up in one's mind the images of wild cats of its class. It thus becomes a signifier to other wild cats such as lions, puma, tigers, jinx and others which become the signified. These big wild cats further conjures up images of their prey thus they become signifiers. Zebras, wild beasts, buffaloes and other large wild herbivores become the signified. The web of signifiers and the signified thus becomes endless as the meanings of one image keep on getting deferred indefinitely; but within the same cycle of environmental issues. Given that the original conveyor of these images are the beautifully crafted

pieces of oral art, then it is the persuasion of this brief study that oral poetry is a smart vehicle whose never tiring wheels of creating awareness can be stirred and directed towards the road of environmental conservation.

Of the sampled songs, song three which is christened **Obori Bwa'baba** has images of two other animals namely *ekebwe* and *nyangweso*. *Ekebwe*; which is the fox belongs to the family of dogs. It is in essence a wild dog. There is some curiosity arising from the way it has been used in the same piece of art with a swarm of locusts. From discussions held at the time of collecting data from the field, the fox is hailed as having acted as a harbinger of bad news. The folk song emanated from a sad historical incident in which swarms of locusts invaded the entire Gusii region of Western Kenya and destroyed a promising harvest of crops at that time. Though this is not the core concern of this study as it is, it is important to clarify why a carnivorous wild animal and locusts are used as images in the same piece of oral art. Just like the other animals discussed above, the fox and locusts can be signifiers to an endless train of signifieds, hence the fluidity of meanings. Their being used as images in pieces of oral art conjures up numerous images of the beautiful composition of nature. The ultimate result is a population whose psyche is 'hailed' towards the efforts of conserving environment.

The appearance of a fox in a work of art alludes to the existence of other of other animals in the wild with similar characteristics. These animals can be of the same size and or be of carnivorous family like the fox itself. When talking of carnivorous animals, it is almost obvious that there is the existence of animals of prey in the wild which make the survival of the carnivorous ones a reality. When talking of the animals of prey, images of animals such as antelopes, gazelles, hares, rodents of different sizes, impala and many others. When taking into account of such animals, it is a reality that they drink water. In water, there are thousands of species of marine creatures. In this order, the images and meanings will keep differing hence the postulation of this study that oral poetry is one such suitable vehicle for sensitizing masses about the beauty of our environment and heightening the scale of standards in conservation efforts.

#### **CONSERVATION OF FORESTS**

Animals do not exist in isolation. Not many animals live in deserts. Even those that live in deserts feed on desert plants. They have their own food webs and food chains. Starting with birds of the air, some of which are discussed in this paper, it is obvious that they live on trees and construct their abodes on the canopies of various trees. Other than the construction of their nests, the same trees are a provision for their

nutrition. It is therefore imperative that one cannot talk of birds in isolation. The talk about birds is a signifier of the innumerable benefits of trees. Talk of trees and they signify forests. Forests are indeed the back bone of the environment. Their benefits to humanity are invaluable. Other than moderation of climate, forests are sources of water – rivers, lakes and other water masses. Water remains the heart of life both on land and in marine bodies. Away from birds, animals of the land, the crawling ones and the non-crawling ones anchor their existence and survival on plants. Both herbivores and carnivores live because of forests. Other than forests being their habitats, their foods are direct products of these forests. Given that all these information is arrived at as a result of deconstructing a few song texts from a community in Kenya, it is worth noting that their power in enhancing the efforts of environmental conservation is tremendous. Various works of oral art can be invoked and be incorporated alongside other measures which have so far been put in motion in matters of conserving our environment.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Proponents of Psychoanalysis have averred that the personality of an individual is a construction of at least two components; that is, one's childhood experiences as well as one's hereditary genes. Given that song number one in the appendix below is mainly performed by children, it can be argued that such song texts as those that are sung and or performed by children in different communities are very crucial in construction of a mindset that can forever be dedicated towards the efforts of environmental conservation. If one is hailed early enough in his or her life to begin appreciating the need for conserving nature, then this will be part of that individual's personality. Habits form experiences. Children love music, more so when it accompanies their childhood games. If oral poetry for children can be composed in a sense that it foregrounds the boon and essence of conserving our environment, then such efforts are likely to go a long way in aiding this ailing world in rediscovering the quintessential facets of environmental conservation hence saving the world from blistering terms such as global warming. On these grounds, oral forms can be harnessed and be propagated as vehicles for conserving our environment and saving it from further destruction by human encroachment and other activities.

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**APPENDIX**  
**APPENDIX – SAMPLED SONGS**

**SONG ONE**

***BENG'I CHUGUCHA***

*Beng'i, beng' chugucha ero biroo!*

*Beng'i gwaya –*

*Ero biro-o*

*Beng'i gwaya amache kayiare?*

*Oite buna onsusu !*

*Minyoka buna onsusu!*

*Tuma buna onsusu*

*Minyoka buna engabi !*

*Tuma buna engabi*

*Minyoka buna egwachi!*

*Tuma buna egwachi!*

**HIT THE FOOT DOWN AND DANCE**

Dance, there they come

Hit your foot down

Behold there they come

Dance, where is the water?

Dance like the hare! ]

Run like the hare! ]

Jump like the hare! ]

Run like an antelope! ] **REFRAIN**

Jump like an antelope! ]

Run like the leopard! ]

ump like the leopard! ]

*Oite buna onsusu, beng'i chugucha ero biro*

*Beng'i gwaya*

*Ero biro-o!*

*Ben'gi gwaya amache kayiare?*

Like the hare, behold they come

Dance as you hit your foot down

There they come

Dance, where is the water

*Genda ng'ora mbeng' chugucha ero biro-o*

*Mbeng' gwaya*

*Ero biroo--*

*Beng, gwaya amache kayiare.*

Slow as you dance

Dance as you hit the ground

Behold, there they come

Dance, where is the water?

*Bagaka kimbaroche,*

*Bang'ina kimbaroche,*

*Tenga torore ero biro-o-o!*

*Beng' gwaya*

*Ero biro-o-o*

*Beng' gwaya amache kayiare?*

*Abana baito tenga torore ero biro-o*

*Beng' gwaya*

*Ero biroo-o-o*

*Beng' gwaya amache kayiare?*

Old men, I can see you

Elderly ladies, I can see you,

Dance well, behold there they come

Dance as you hit the ground

Behold there they come

Dance, where is the water?

Our children let's see you dance

As you hit your feet on the ground

Behold there they come

Dance, where is the water?

*Abana baito tuma torore,*

*Tuma torore, tuma torore, ero biro-o-o!*

*Beng' gwaya*

*Ero biro-o-o*

*Beng' gwaya amache kayiare?*

Our children, jump let's see you

Jump, let's see, there they come

Dance as you hit the ground

There they come

Dance, where is the water?

*SOLO: Abasae kimbaroche*

*Mogende ng'ora ng'ora*

*Buna amache ekaraya*

*Nyambane kayiare*

*Agende ng'ora ng'ora*

*Omomura omongwana*

*Akwanie abaibori*

*Ombeng'' chugucha erobiro-o-*

Young men, when I see you

Go slow, slow

Like water in a trough

Where is Nyambane?

He should go slow

A polite young man

May he greet his parents

Dance, dance, there they come

**SONG TWO**

***EKERANDI KIO OMONG'INA***

*Ekerandi kiomong'ina,*

*Egesera-a, egeseraa kio'mong'ina*

*Egesera aigwanane x2*

**MOTHER'S GUARD**

Mother's milk guard

Mother's grinding stone

Grinding stone brings peace

*Egesero kiomwana,  
Egeseraa, egeseraa, aigwanane x2  
Egeteni kiomogaka ---*

*Okirigiti osangara, ooo yaye! X2  
Onsinsi nakana enserera nse,  
Onsinsi akarera  
Nyankeni tonkeria ntanda  
Mogirango ndindindi!  
Eroo ondire tonkereria ondire x2*

*Chinsa isano nemo  
nari manga bokare gokia x2  
Nario manga bokare gokia,  
Nyamuchera bugia obakono x2  
Nari Manga bokare gokia,  
Rikorobo ita orobega x2*

*Okare engumbu eria  
Ere ondire Nyakeraboko  
Oretire Nyakeraboko,  
Nyakeraboko korwa amakere  
Aiyee Nyangwari yo 'bomame!  
Ase omong'ina akona kobura,  
Yaa suka gochia abwo*

*Aye otabwati Engobo!  
Aye nobwate omotwe omorongwe –  
Motwe omorongee otatiga Marube agende  
Ee Marube agende  
Agenda riyondi rinde – ee riyondi rinde-  
Aturere abamura Nyamior riyondi rinde  
Abamura Nyamioro bache!*

### **SONG THREE**

#### **OBORI BWA BABA**

*Obori bwa baba ekeande!  
Ee ekeande obori bwa baba, ekeande X3  
Baba omotengera nyangueso ndindindi!*

*Enyangweso yacha yaboria,  
Eee yaboria enyangweso yacha X3  
Baba omotengera nyangueso ndindindi!*

*Turi enyangweso teboria-a!  
Ee teboria turi nyangweso X3  
Baba omotengera nyangweso ndindindi.*

*Amaembe a baba amatogoro!  
Ee amatogoro amembe a baba X3  
Baba omotengera nyangueso ndindindi.*

*Enyangweso yacha yayaria!  
Ee yayaria, enyangweso yacha X3  
Baba omotengera nyangweso ndindindi!*

*Ekebwe giakura manga inse!  
Ee manga inse ekebwe giakura,x3  
Baba omotengera nyangweso ndindindi!*

*Nyanchoka moga Esironi eee-e!*

Young baby's sleeping skin  
Mother's grinding stone brings peace  
Father's three legged stool

Okirigiti, son of Onsangara X2  
Onsinsi, no deals with gossipers  
Onsinsi cried  
Nyankeni, do not disappoint me  
Mogirango will sing out!  
Please do not disappoint me.X2

At noon time  
Is the dawn of Manga escarpment  
It is the escarpment's dawn  
Enyamuchera, play the harp  
It is the dawn of Manga escarpment  
Rikorobo dances with its shoulders

One on the yonder ridge  
Has admired a malnourished girl  
Has married a worthless girl  
A weakling right from the shoulders  
Nyangw'ari from Uncle's place  
Where an elderly lady is'  
Baby boys should move near

If you do not have a feminine dress  
Then your head functions well  
Then let Marube go  
Let Marube leave  
Let him go to the ridge yonder  
Get fellow men of the other ridge  
Men with sharp pangas to come

#### **GRAND MOTHER'S FINGER MILLET**

Grand mum's finger millet is big and health!  
It is indeed big and healthy X3  
Grand mum dances for a swam of locusts

Locusts came and devoured the millet!  
Indeed the locusts devoured the millet X3  
Grand mum dances for the swam of locusts

Chase away the locusts from the farms!  
Behold, chase away the locusts X3  
Grand mum dances for the swam of locusts

Grand mun's sorghum is big and healthy!  
It is indeed big and healthy X3  
Grand mun dances for the swam of locusts

Locusts came and devoured the millet!  
Indeed the locusts devoured the millet X3  
Grand mum dances for the swam of locusts

A fox wailed down the Manga escarpment!  
Down Manga escarpment the fox wailed X3  
Grand mum dances for the swam of locusts!

Nyanchoka, Hezron's wife!

*Nyanchoka moga 'Esironi nkorera 're,  
Ere otachire omwana o bande e-e  
Ere otachire omwana obande okoeyana  
Okoeyana buna egesengi e-e,  
Okoeyana buna egesegi kiorosana-a  
Timanyeti gose ngokwa are-e-e  
Gose ngoku are gose nkobare-e-e*

Nyanchoka, Hezron's wife is crying  
She has weaned a young child  
She has weaned a breathless infant  
Breathing like a rodent  
Breathing like a wild rodent  
I am not sure whether the kid will die  
Or the kid will survive

*Obe e-e-e sabiri kumba!  
Kumbata mogondo are  
Obe e-e-e buna abakoro!  
Kumbata mogondo are  
Obe e-e-e Choisi bwari!  
Kumbata mogondo are  
Obe e-e-e Choisi Nyairo!  
Kumbata mogondo are  
Obe e-e-e mong'ina bwa'mayianda  
Kumbata mogondo are  
Aba-a-ang'ina kumba*

Sabiri is bending her back  
She is ploughing in the farm  
Just like those of old days  
She is ploughing in the farm  
What of Joyce Bwari  
She is ploughing in the farm  
What of Joyce Nyairo  
She is ploughing in the farm  
What of the great woman  
She is in the farm ploughing  
Women bend in your backs in farms

#### **SONG FOUR**

##### **EGETINGINYE EKENG'AINI**

*Egetinkinye eking'aiini kerigia obouundi kiagache  
nest  
Embura egotwa gesoe mwaye, gesoe mwayee! Ee baba!  
protection.  
Mbura egotwa gesoe mwaye eee- baba  
Ching'ende chikarangwe chiarugerwa  
Korwa Nyakongo omwana bw'omonda tagochiria,  
them  
Tagochiria ee baba ---- mwana bw'omonda tagochiria eee baba!  
child.*

##### **CLEVER BIRD**

Clever bird finds a safe canopy for its  
When it rains, it gets to its due  
When it rains, the bird gets into its nest.  
Fried beans are a good meal  
A rich heir from Nyakongo can't eat  
Cannot consume beans, a rich man's  
child.

#### **SONG FIVE**

##### **EGESINGORORO EKEBARABARA**

*Egesingororo ekebarabara, Aaeae!*

*Egesingororo ekebarabara, aeee!  
Baito egesingororo ekebarabara aee! ee! X2  
Nkere rogoro nkere mate,  
Aee! Ee! Nkere rogoro nkere mate, Aee ee!  
Omwana obaba temera abwo aeee!*

##### **THE ROVING SPARROW**

A fast moving sparrow

A roving sparrow  
My people, the roving sparrow  
Found in the North and South  
Ye-es, found in North and South!  
Mother's baby, try out like the sparrow