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# Narrative as a process of re-negotiating ethnic identities among Abanyole of Western Kenya

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# Narrative as a Process of Re-negotiating Ethnic Identities among Abanyole of Western Kenya

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A Thesis Submitted to the School of Literature and Language Studies, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Johannesburg, 2011

**Declaration**

I declare that this is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university

DISHON G. KNOETZE

(Name of Candidate)

21st day of JANUARY 2011

## Abstract

Whereas there is an accumulation of a large body of research in oral literature, it is mostly confined to what is considered as the "fabula" and "folk wisdom" (*tsingano*) genres. Such understanding of genre eschews oral history because it is designated as a "factual" genre and ceded to historians. Using material collected ethnographically among the Abanyole of Western Kenya, this study combines historical and literary methods to investigate the Nyole expression of ethnic identity through the oral historical narrative. The study shifts attention from the perceived mutual exclusiveness of factual and fictional genres by focusing on the processes of the constitution and narration, and the purpose of narration of *akakhale* (the past) by the Nyole to cast light on the methods of fashioning the Nyole historical and social imagination. Thus, the study suggests alternative methods of reading the oral historical narrative by highlighting the discursive processes and the predominance of language use in the production the texts of the Nyole past.

Taking the notion of the past as the storehouse of a people's idea of origin and ethnic identity as the point of departure, the study investigates how Abanyole talk about their ethnic identity. In the process the study shifts attention from the external dimensions, which have predominated discourses on ethnicity, to the internal processes or the intra-community dimensions of ethnicity. The thesis demonstrates that narration of the Nyole past is not meant to reproduce kernels of truth-as-it-was; the purpose which the narration process is deployed to serve, and the meaning of the narrative is unveiled by interrogating the Nyole social and historical contexts, and the dynamics of the immediate context of narration which include the narrator's conscious selection in the process of integration of what should constitute the ideal community history. Hence, the thesis underscores the implications of the exclusive Nyole social structure, the uncertainty produced by population explosion and scarcity of land, the interpretation of the objective of ethnographer, the need to represent the past in an acceptable and non-threatening manner; and oral history as narrative to highlight how textuality and performativity are deployed to deal with issues of legitimacy and the desire to have a more inclusive definition of being Nyole. The thesis appropriates narrative as a socially symbolic act as a model to explicate the multiplicity and contradiction in the Nyole narrative of origin, and the uncertainty in the conception of belonging to the Nyole sub-group of the Luhya ethnic nation.

## Dedication

To my son Luke Kweya Okoba, who remained the ideal son, colleague, and reader;

In memory of my mother Florence Odero Kweya who nurtured this idea but gave up too soon,

and

My father George Kweya Okoba who, having waited patiently, considered his mission accomplished after granting me an interview in 2006 and retreated in 2007

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## Acknowledgement

I am greatly indebted to my supervisor Prof. Isabel Hofmeyr for her commitment, encouragement and patience since we first discussed my work in Kenya in 2005, and throughout my stay at the University of the Witwatersrand. I will always treasure her mentorship which greatly shaped my ideas, and the trouble she took to ensure that my study was funded. I also wish to thank members of staff of the Department of African Literature Prof. James Ogude, Dr. Dan Ojwang, Prof. Bheki Peterson, and Mrs Merle Govind; the Head of School Prof. Leon De Cock; and Prof. Hillary Janks, Prof. Anette Horn; and Deliah Rossouw. I would also like to thank my colleagues at the School of Literature and Language Studies for those stimulating discussions we had especially during the seminars and conferences. I am grateful to Prof. Emilia Ilieva, Prof. C. J. Odhiambo, Dr. Tom Odhiambo, Dr. Joseph Walunywa, Dr. Onyango Ogola, Dr. Felicia Yieke, Dr. Okello Ogwang, and Dr Maina Mutonya for setting aside time to read my work and make comments; and to Prof. Sue Van Zyl for the opportunities she granted me to attend writing workshops at Wits Rural and Parayse. I will always treasure the discussions with Prof. Maurice N. Amutabi (during his visit to South Africa and in numerous email exchanges) for his valuable suggestions on the issues of Ebunyole, and for the generous load of books he sent from USA. I was also the beneficiary of the generosity of the late Prof. Atieno Odhiambo who gathered materials and sent to a person he hardly knew when he read about my project on the internet. I am grateful to CODESRIA for the sponsorship to the methodologies workshop in Gaborone, Botswana in 2008 and specifically to Dr. Omobolaji Olarinmoye for his constructive comments on my study during this event. My special gratitude to Prof Aggrey Sindabi, Dr. Fugich Wako, Dr. J.

Nyairo, Prof E. Ilieva, Prof. J. Bosire, Mr. Austin Bukenya, and Bunyole Kenya Development Forum: they consistently encouraged me to embark on this project.

I am greatly indebted to the Andrew Mellon Mentorship Program for the generous scholarship they made available to me which made my stay in South Africa a lot easier, and my supervisor Prof. Hofmeyr for recommending me for the scholarship. I am also very grateful for the Harold and Doris Tothill Prestige Scholarship, and the E. P. Bradlow Scholarship through the University of the Witwatersrand. I most sincerely thank the University of the Witwatersrand for the Postgraduate Merit Award and the University Council Postgraduate Scholarship, and for the various awards of overseas travel grants to attend conferences. I also benefited from additional funds extended to me by the department, by the school through Prof. Kathleen Thorpe, and by Prof. Hofmeyr personally to enable me attend these conferences both inside and outside South Africa. I am grateful to the British Institute in Eastern Africa (BIEA), especially to the former director, Dr. Justin Willis, for the research grant; and to Egerton University for granting me study leave, the offer of part of the initial fees, and some research funds. All these generous awards made this study possible.

I appreciate my colleagues, Dr Grace Musila, Dr Colomba Muriungi, Dr Timothy Onduru, Dr Austin Tam-George, Dr. Dina Ligaga, Dr. Jacinta Ndambuki, and many others for showing me around when I arrived at Wits, and for the very valuable scholarly discussions. I am grateful to Luke Okoba, Moses Esilaba, Kefa Lidundu, Chris Ouma, Joyce Omwoha, Beverly Achieng, Dr Phyllis Bartoo, Westen Shilaho, Vedaste Nzayabino, Edwin Nyirenda, Dr. Senayon Olaolua, John Kipsang, Nkeke Lesolang and the University of Limpopo group, K. Matongo, Nomusa Moyo, Emily Aradi, Edwin Musoti, Jennifer Musangi, Naomi Nkealah, Florence Sipala, and many others for being wonderful colleagues at Wits. Mr Davis Abwavo and Mr. Onesmus Ayaya and their families deserve thanks for giving me a very soft landing in South Africa and for remaining true friends throughout my stay. I owe the largest debt to

all my resource persons who put aside their impotant business to create time for the interviews, often on more than one occasion. I learned a great deal at their feet. In that respect, my father George Kweya, Mbalukha Makaali, my field assistant Adam Kutai, Rev. Aggrey Anduuru, William Ot'tiali, Mzee Bilikile of Bunyole Uganda, Dr. Lew Goodrick, Hezekiah Ong'ondo, Martha Koki and her group, Mrs. Ndege, Nelson Muyela, the Abalukhoba elders, Raphael Anjimbi and Nyong'a Amatinye and their group, Brown Eyahuma, Ayub Muchel'le, Gilbert Oluko, and all the others whom I have not named here deserve mention for their dedication. Some of them never lived long enough to see what I have produced out of their labor, but I hope this work is the best way to keep their spirit alive. Charles Hadambire always took the trouble to invite me to Bunyole, Uganda and accommodate me whenever there was an event there; Joseph Weddi and his family, Isaac Mbubi and the members of Bunyole Development Forum (Uganda); the members of Bunyole International Association (BIA) in Sweden who invited me to Stockholm; and Dr Wotsuna Khamalwa who drew my attention to the reality of another Banyole/Anyole in Uganda, which inspired this work: all deserve thanks for their encouragement.

I am most grateful to my teacher Prof. H. Indangasi for his willingness to provide information required at Wits at the shortest notice; and to Josphat Ndirangu for the videography, and John Omollo for the cartographic work. My family Inyambula Kweya, Gaulkey, Enos, Saul, Okoba Kweya; Dorcas, Martha, Sophia, Agnes, Esther; Agnetta, Angela, and others deserve thanks for encouraging me and making sure that all was well behind me. I acknowledge the generous assistance of Prof. Ezra Martim, Mary Khayesi, Lydia Mareri; and all colleagues in the Department of Literature Languages and Linguistics in Laikipia University College, and in Egerton University, especially the chairman Dr. James Mutiti.

A version of Chapter Six was presented at the Moi University Annual Conference in Eldoret, Kenya on 4-8 August 2009. Another version of Chapter Six appears in *Egerton Journal* (Vol.

8, 2009) under the title: “Imagining a Local Transnation: Maseno Border and the Production of Cultural Uncertainty”.

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# Chapter One

# Introduction: Understanding ambiguity in the manifestations of ethnicity

## 1.0 Overview

On 15 December 2006, an event occurred which highlights the concerns of this study. It took place at Ebukanga Primary School in Ebukanga village of Central Bunyore Location which is located at the border between the Nyole and the Kisa 'sub-nations' of the wider Luhya ethnic 'nation' of Western Kenya. The event had been publicized locally as Ebukanga Cultural Festival (ECF), while in the rest of Ebunyole it was flaunted as Bunyore Cultural Festival (BCF) to which all Abanyole were invited. Thus, through the manner in which the event was named, it appeared to appeal to the diverse sentiments of both clan (Abakanga) and 'sub-nation' (Abanyole). The event therefore highlighted a double-voicedness in the self perception of Abakanga as a Nyole clan by simultaneously dislocating them from the Nyole 'sub-nation' (as ECF), and re-locating them within the 'sub-nation' (as BCF).

Three things appeared curious about the Ebukanga event. First, there already existed a well known event called Bunyore Cultural Festival which assembled people from all corners of Ebunyole. This event was held on 9 December annually at Ekwanda Secondary School in the South Bunyore Location at the border between Bunyore (Western Province) and Seme (Nyanza Province). This means that by December 15, the 2006 festival had already been held. How was this apparent attempt to echo, duplicate and displace the established event to be explained? Secondly, on the one hand, there was the striking ambiguity in equating Ebunyole ('sub-nation') and Ebukanga (clan) as implied in the proposition that the two event names carried equal weight and could unproblematically substitute each other without any implications on how the event was to be understood. On the other, could the ambiguous

naming signify the desire to fashion an identity distinct from the familiar overarching Nyole identity; or what kind of clan identity was envisioned relative to Nyoleness? Thirdly, whereas it was possible to have such an event in that corner of Ebunyole, this was not a common practice which could pass as a matter of course. Usually the site of a Nyole cultural event, as this one variously claimed to be would be Emuhaya, which is the center of both the Emuhaya parliamentary constituency and the new Emuhaya District, and the popularly recognized center for the Nyole 'sub-nation'. Already there was on-going debate as to the objective of the organizers of the original annual Bunyore Cultural Festival in locating the event in such a fringe corner of Ebunyole as Ekwanda instead of Emuhaya, the official center of Ebunyole. Besides, dedicating the Ebukanga event however ambiguously to the culture of a clan was unusual; it insinuated inconsistencies and other possibilities in the Nyole self-imagination that were both not usually explicitly stated and contradicted the public self-representation of Nyoleness as overarching. It is possible to suggest that the ambivalence displayed in the performance of belonging to clan and 'sub-nation' signified rupture in the conception of the two? Then how should such rupture be explained?

The Ebukanga event had been planned by Juma, an aspirant for the Emuhaya Constituency parliamentary seat. The December 2007 Kenya Presidential and Parliamentary Elections were a year away and most aspirants typically chose this season, when most Abanyole who work in urban centers outside Ebunyole return for the Christmas vacation, to declare their candidature and launch campaigns. But as the event unfolded two phenomena which are significant for this study became apparent. First, the fact that Juma lived and worked in Mombasa at the Coast of Kenya which is more than 900 km away from the site of the festival was highlighted incessantly. This fact was underscored by persistent apologies for the deferment of the formal launch of the event at 10 am as had been broadcast initially, and also

by appeals by Juma himself and his agents for the audience's patience. But of interest is the source of the delay: Juma had specifically invited some friends of Arabic descent from Mombasa (a point that was repeatedly emphasized) to grace the occasion as distinguished guests but because of some unspecified obstacles, they could not keep the appointed time.

Under similar circumstances in the Kenyan political culture, no façade such as a festival would be allowed to mask the identity of the aspirant as the focal point of such a campaign meeting. Thus, the prominence given to Mombasa both as the location of Juma's residence and the origin of his guests, and (particularly) the Arabic/non-Nyole identity of the guests beg explanation a propos the nature of the Nyole society. This incident epitomized an intricate notion of leadership and ways of being Nyole which Juma performed flawlessly. The popular figure of the leader in the Nyole perception is one who appears to occupy simultaneously the liminal "outsider"/"insider" space; a Nyole who returned in the guise of a stranger (*orul'le elwanyi/owikhile* – one from "out there"/one who has just disembarked, therefore a traveler); Juma personified this figure. In this sense, Juma read the script perfectly and stretched the outsider motif for maximum effect – he complicated his stranger figure by frequently reminding his audience to expect his Arab friends from Mombasa who supported his bid. Hence, the progress of the guests was monitored closely by cell phone and dutifully broadcast to the audience; and when they finally showed up at 3.30 pm, their arrival was appropriately dramatized.

Secondly and notably, between *esikuti* (Luhya drum/dance) entertainment sessions, Juma himself and his assistants took turns to address the audience about the marginalization of the clan by dominant clans and to assert that the time had come for Abakanga to stake their claim on the leadership of Ebunyole and wrest it from the clans that had monopolized that position.

This view of the marginal locus of the Abakanga in Ebunyole echoes earlier well documented attempts (as is evident in Kenya National Archives records) by Abakanga and other smaller contiguous clans (such as the Abakhaya and the Abamukunzi) to gang up together shortly before Kenya's independence and soon after with a view to carving out an administrative location of their own. This crusade underscores the fact that in Ebunyole, the location and sub-location administrative boundaries coincide with clan boundaries. However, their argument then was that they were being oppressed and dominated by the Abasilatsi, one of the larger Nyole clans. This is despite the fact that under other circumstances, some narratives affirm close Abakhaya-Abasilatsi inter-clan bonds.[1] Thus, on the one hand, consciousness of the history of a clan longing for distinct identity appeared to obscure the contradiction in Juma's desire to lead all the Abanyole, validated and staked on clan sentiments and endorsed by aliens/travelers unacquainted with local issues. On the other**,** the paradox produced by the ambiguity in event names signaled fluctuating perspectives on and resistance to taken-for-granted totalizing narratives of Nyole identity and subtly acknowledged the multiple meanings produced by attempts to address divergent clan and 'sub-nation' interests.

The decision to ostensibly launch Abakanga Cultural Festival manifests the clan nature of the politics of Ebunyole which reached a crescendo in 2007 with as many as 72 people initially declaring candidature. Thus Emuhaya (the Nyole constituency) remained true to its reputation as one of the constituencies which always boast the highest number of contestants in Kenya. A pattern was evident whereby each of the 72 candidates could be traced back to a particular

[1] According to some Abasilatsi narratives Mwechenye, the second wife of Amukhoye the ancestor of Abasilatsi, came from Ebukhayo (present Busia District). Mwechenye invited her brother to live with her. Then Amukhoye asked him to take up land in the neighbourhood where he started the Abakhaya clan. Abasilatsi refer to Abakhaya as their uncles. The clan name Ebukhaya supposedly echoes the Ebukhayo origin of their ancestor. According to some Abamukunzi narratives, they came from Luoland. They originally came as medicinemen and to help Abasilatsi in their expansionist wars. Eventually, Abamukunzi were asked to settle next to Abasilatsi. Inter-clan marriage was delegimated to signify the special symbolic inter-clan bonds (*obukulo*) between them.

clan or set of clans. Thus, the 72 candidates who initially expressed interest in the seat (before they were whittled down to 28 through inter-clan pacts) corresponded to the 78 Nyole clans.

This fracture along clan boundaries belies the fact that first, under different circumstances, many narratives of the Nyole past underscore homologous descent from Anyole, the eponymous Nyole ancestor. Secondly, the Abanyole claim this collective identity through affirmation of such appellations as Anyole, *Anyole lichina, omwibule* (solid rock/authentic Nyole by birth). Thus, they assert a derivative identity which affirms association between self-imagination and the physical environment of Ebunyole particularly the Bunyore Hills. Often acclaimed as the cradle of all the Abanyole, the hills on the southern edge of Nyoleland are characterized by huge granite boulders – *amachina*). Other appelations are *Abaana ba Anyole* (children/descendants of Anyole), *omwana wanga oundi* (literally brother of the other – my brother), *abeingo (*singular *oweingo)/bemusikhoni* (people of a shared cradle/home – symbolized by euphorbia [*esikhoni*] hedge which demarcates *litaala/hango* [family home/land]), *abasanga ol'lela/olubelekha* (those who shared the umbilical cord/womb). Thus, the Abanyole often imagine a continuous Nyoleness by emphasizing the notion of passive ethnogenesis (Anderson 1999; Hill 1996) which is discerned by accruing markers of collective identity derived from interaction with the physical environment.

Accordingly, as Olumwullah (2002) observes, the interface between homology and the physical features of the cradle create the façade of a sense of clan interconnectedness; oneness which *abasanga ol'lela*/*abeingo* (the figure of the nucleus family) as the all encompassing family unit infers. But election time often exposes schisms between the mainstream clans (*Abene Liloba* – owners of the soil) and the others (*Abamenyibwa* – tenant clans [explained below]), which are usually silenced by the figure of clan genealogy. And

often the façade of a single Abanyole descent dissolves when passionate issues such as parliamentary representation are at stake as in the Juma event, which destabilizes the homologous descent narratives. Thus, the contests entailed by election politics proffer the prospect for ventilation of feebly suppressed narratives of Nyole disparity and opportunity for self-reflexivity and appraisal of conditions of being Nyole.

What appears as a one-off event, therefore, yields several fundamental inferences on the nature of the Nyole identity. The first is the opposition between the local and the outside and how this might reflect the reality of the social set-up which undermines the veneer of Nyole homology narratives. The immediate explanation might be found in the fact that the majority of modern day Abanyole always look outside for survival mainly through undertaking paid unskilled labor in Kenyan urban centers and beyond as well as through acquisition of land in government resettlement schemes and elsewhere owing to pressure on land in Ebunyole brought about by population explosion. The colonial District Commissioner raised the alarm over the population crisis in Ebunyole as early as the 1930s when decongestation plans were first envisioned. Thus, Juma's campaign strategy of playing the double outsider reflects first the association of non-viability of both community land resource (responsible for the outward flow of the population), and by extension the understanding of the local in modern Nyole consciousness. Secondly and accordingly, it highlights the significance of the outside to survival in Ebunyole through remissions from *abatsia elwanyi* or *emukulu/abanina* (migrant laborers) and the fundamental regard of returned travelers in the Nyole consciousness. Hence such expressions as: *ibe khwamenya tsa n'nawe Ebunyole ino oli na si/umbol'la si*? (We live with you here in Ebunyole, what could you possibly have/tell me?) are often invoked to contain local upstarts and underscore the authority of the outside in the Nyole imagination.

The circumstances imply that liminality is fundamental to the Nyole self-imagination and makes possible the notion of belonging performed through the contradictory alien-insider figure. It has been observed that the apparent Nyole preference of liminality also characterizes the other Luhya 'sub-nations' and has often been cited to explain why Luhyaland habitually produces an inordinate number of presidential hopefuls who often launch vicious wars of attrition to the advantage of candidates from elsewhere in Kenya. Thus, ambivalence characterizes daily expression of the Nyole/Luhya identities through simultaneously highlighting and repudiating interconnectedness. How then should, first, the Nyole/Luhya preference for ambiguity as a strategy of interaction with community (as instantiated by Juma) be explained? Secondly, how should the double-voicedness that underscored Juma's imagination of the Nyole leader as one who can only find acceptability through subterfuge be read? These questions provide the core focus of this thesis but before proceeding to discuss them, below I give some background on the Abanyole and their way of knowing both community and belonging.

### 1.1. The Abanyole

The Abanyole are one of the 17 Bantu sub-ethnic groups (Osogo 1966: 7)[2] of the larger Luhya ethnic 'nation' which occupies the Western and parts of the Rift Valley (especially Trans Nzoia and parts of Nandi districts) provinces of Kenya. Each sub-group in this region speaks one of the multiple Luhya dialects (or languages depending on how one chooses to classify them [see fig 1 below]). However, owing to the complex history of migration and settlement of the interlacustrine region of East Africa, as well as the politics of colonization

[2] According to Kenya Today Vol.5 No.3 (1959) there are 16 Luhya ethnic sub-nationalities. Osogo (1967) counted 17. However my own count realizes 19: Abanyole, Abalogooli, Abatirichi, Abanyang'ori, Abedakho, Abesukha, Abakisa, Abamarama, Abakabras, Abatachoni, Ababukusu, Abatsotso, Abanyala (Abakachilelwa), Abawanga, Abanyala (Port Victoria), Abasamia, Abakhayo, Abamarachi, and Abatura. This leaves the question of the number of Luhya sub-nations open to debate.

of Kenya, remnants of Luhya-speaking peoples are also found in some sections of the northern part of Nyanza Province of Kenya which is predominantly Luo,[3] a Nilotic group (see fig. 2 and 3 below). However, as Cohen and Odhiambo (1987) suggest, the Luos and the Luhyas in that area tend to speak both languages.

The Abanyole live in Emuhaya District whose headquarters are at Emuhaya in East Bunyore. Emuhaya District was recently (January 2007) hived off from Vihiga District (see fig. 2 below) whose headquarters are at Mbale in Maragooliland. Till then, Abanyole shared Vihiga District with the Maragooli (Abalogooli) and the Tiriki (Abatirichi) Luhya 'sub-nations' both of which seem to share some distant relations with the Abanyole (according to some oral traditions of the three communities).[4]

Emuhaya, an all Nyole District, whose boundaries coincide with the Nyole 'sub-nation' boundaries, has an area of about 174 square kilometers supporting a population of about 315,000 people (2009 census figures). The population density in some areas is over 1300 people per square kilometer, an issue that caught the attention of authorities as far back as the 1920s as colonial records show (Olumwullah 2002). Hence, Bunyore was one of the first places to be considered for decongestation during the colonial era. Some people were relocated to Kigumba in Uganda in the 1940s and 1950s while others were relocated to farms in the Government Resettlement Schemes, such as Lugari, that were being vacated by the white settler farmers just before independence. So, issues related to insufficiency of land (the sole means of production) such as migrant labor, or *okhwatikha/okhutsia olukala* (to migrate/start a new home outside Ebunyole), and the rise of the Nyole diasporas have

[3] The Luo are Nilotic peoples to the west and south of the (Luhya) Bantu speaking peoples in the western region of Kenya.

[4] Were (1967) found that some clans such as Abamang'ali are represented in the three areas. My source *mzee* Anduuru (interviewed 4 February 2007) has also elaborated this in his manuscripts on Abanyole past, lineages and culture.

underpinned the Nyole consciousness. Originally *okhutsia olukala* meant to move and set up a homestead, usually in virgin land away from the parents' homestead. The act also signified *okhuhela* (courage/masculinity/coming of age) because it meant setting up a home in the wild away from human settlement and confronting wild animals. But the term has been inflected to metaphorically connote the emerging Nyole tendency to migrate and set up homes "in the wild" away from Ebunyole as a way of dealing with the problem of land scarcity in Ebunyole. In the Nyole imagination, spaces outside the familiar Nyole boundaries, even if inhabited by other people, are the wild (*esitsimi*). Therefore, those who live outside Ebunyole figure the Nyole notion of masculinity because they have domesticated "the wild".

Abanyole (singular Omunyole) refers to the people; Ebunyole is their ancestral home. The alternative – Bunyore – instantiates colonial/missionary imagination of Nyole orthography, influenced by Zulu orthography through Bila (a Zulu man who accompanied the first missionaries to enter Ebunyole, who came from South Africa) and Miss Mabel Baker, a South African missionary whose father established the first ever mission station in Ebunyole in 1904. Both were brought from South Africa by the South African Compounds and Interior Missions (SACIM) the predecessor of Church of God (Makokha 1996: 211). Bunyore is mainly used in formal reference to the Nyole country. In this study, I have retained Ebunyole to capture the way the people refer to themselves in daily life. In Olunyole (as in many Luhya language clusters) the prefix E/Ebu (before the root "Nyole" for instance) signifies place. That explains why some scholars such as Olumwullah (2002) prefer to render the name as EbuNyole. Omu/Aba (singular and plural respectively) designates the people, while Olu refers to the language. Anyole is a term of ethnic identification and affirmation. It refers to the notion of Nyole common ancestry as descendants of Anyole, the eponymous Nyole ancestor.

**Fig. 1: MAP OF KENYA SHOWING STUDY AREA**



Fig. 2: TOPOGRAPHIC MAP OF EMUHAYA DISTRICT

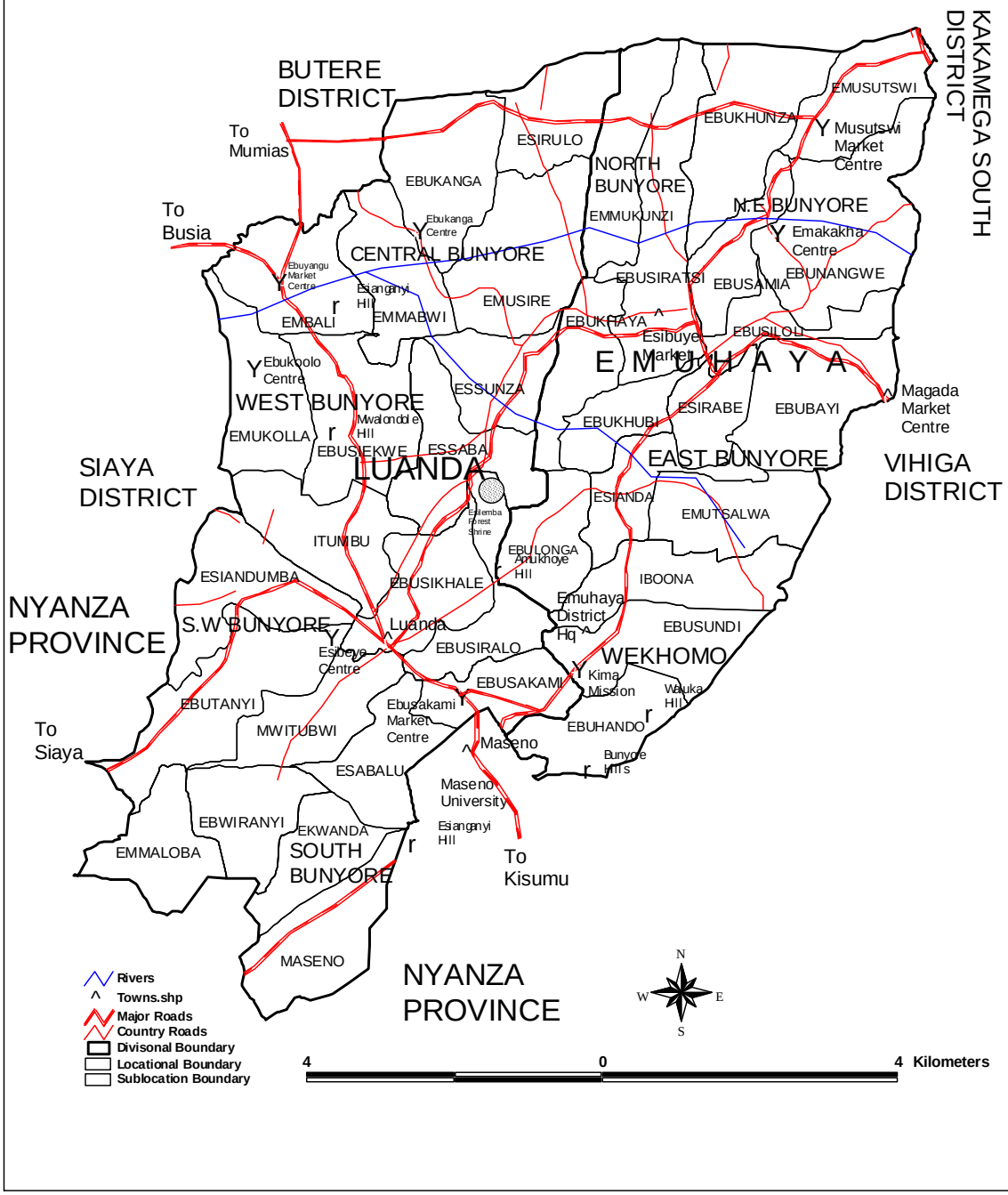
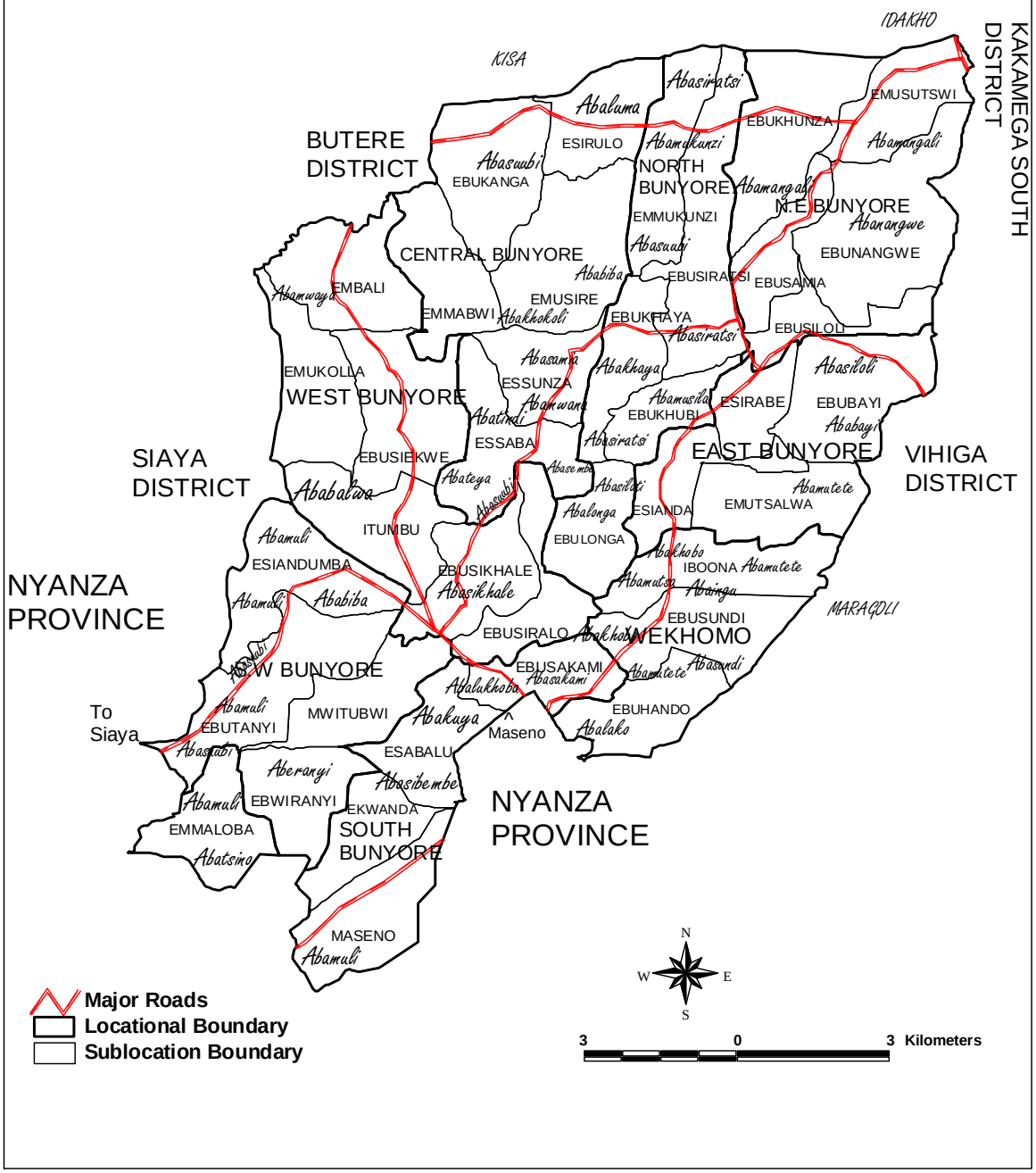


**Fig.3. MAP OF EMUHAYA DISTRICT: Showing Major Abanyole Clans**



As the last district of Western Province to the south, Emuhaya borders both Kisumu and Siaya districts of the predominantly Luo speaking Nyanza[5] Province (fig. 2 and 3). The fact that Emuhaya shares the western and southern borders with the Luo means that the relationship with the Luo is significant in the history and culture of both the Abaluhya generally and the Abanyole particularly, since the pre-colonial times[6] (Olumwullah 2002; Ochieng' 2002; Were 1967; Ogot 1967, 2002, 2009; Osogo 1966).

Like many African ethnic communities, the Abanyole mostly claim a monolithic descent from a common ancestor, Anyole, to whom they assert connection via a complex pattern of lineage strands. However, the simultaneous existence of equally convincing narratives which undermine the genealogical interconnectedness of the Abanyole and strikingly contradict the popular Abanyole-descent-from-Anyole narratives calls attention to the problematic question of ethnic identity in Africa.

Of the narratives that contradict the origin of Nyoleness through Anyole lineage, two categories stand out. First is the category that constructs the Abanyole clans as cleavages from disparate ethnicities of Eastern Uganda which coalesced into the present the Nyole 'sub-nation' of the Luhya to respond better to the challenges of migration and settlement in the interlacustrine region of East Africa (Olumwullah 2002; Were 1967; Ogot 1967, 2009; Ochieng' 2002; Osogo 1966). It would hence appear that the Abanyole coalesced around a core group which might have broken from the Abanyole of Eastern Uganda to better deal

[5] Nyanza is mainly occupied by three unrelated ethnic 'nations': the Luo who are predominant, the Kisii, and the Kuria. The last two are Bantu communities occupying the Southern part of Nyanza Province but are seemingly related to the Luhya. The Suba were once Bantu but now they are almost completely assimilated by the Luo

[6] Were (1967) for instance says that the Luo of Gem never attacked Abanyole. Abanyole have been known for rain making since pre-colonial times. Hence, it was safer to avoid provocation lest Abanyole withhold the rain and cause drought and famine. During harvest, Abanyole rainmakers were entitled to part of the harvest in the whole region as a token of appreciation for bringing rain. In recent times, Kenyatta, who was the first president of Kenya, is known to have consulted the rainmakers during the 1967 drought. It is not uncommon for Omunyole to be summoned to halt the rain for some hours so that certain crucial functions can proceed.

with threats from the Nilotic Luo (Olumwullah 2002). The second category undermines claims of separate the Nyole identity by subsuming them into the broader Luhya ethnic nation. The assertions of such narratives inform the claims of early Luhya academic historiography (Were 1967; Osogo 1966) which emphasized explicit inter-connectedness. Such studies echo academic historiography of other Kenyan ethnicities which propped up the objectives of a monolithic myth for the nascent postcolonial nation-state such as Muriuki (1974) and Ogot (1967).

The discontinuities and contradictions inherent in all these narratives raise a number of issues. First is the nature of ethnic identities in Africa and how this phenomenon should be studied. The existence of multiple discordant identity narratives within umbrella ethnicities in Africa (the Shona, the Nguni, the Luo, the Luhya, the Kikuyu, the Asante, the Zulu, and many others) calls for explanation. Second is the role of colonial/postcolonial discourses in the re-imagination of Nyole/Luhya identities as well as those of other African ethnicities with similar configuration (Lentz and Nugent 2000; Lentz 2006; Meyer 1999; Appiah 1992; Vail 1989).

### 1.2. Some elements of the Nyole social configuration

Vansina (1992) suggests that migration and origin stories are best understood as cosmologies. They are “logical constructs” “put in a genealogical form” (22). Therefore, it is my argument that understanding Nyole cosmology might help illuminate the underlying dynamics that inform both the way the Nyole explain their origin, and their epistemology. The Abanyole consist of several clans which are divided into two subtly contesting groups. These are subtle because first, the contests may not be apparent to outsiders. Second, even though the

contestants may be aware of the disputes, they may not state the cause of the mutual suspicion because the passage of time and postcolonial social transformation have blurred their sharp edges and their origins in the era of migration and settlement of Ebunyole. One set of clans, *Abene Liloba* (owners of the land), claims the status of authentic Abanyole as direct descendants of Anyole, the eponymous ancestor who settled at Wekhomo at the foot of Bunyore (Ebuhando) Hills. The location is venerated and envisioned within the trope of origin as the cradle and the center of Ebunyole. Generally, the clans which have settled within the vicinity of Wekhomo and Bunyore Hills belong to the *Abene liloba* cohort. The other set of clans: *Abamenyibwa* (tenants-clans which includes *Abarende*[7] [neighbors] and *Abasumba* [dependants/slaves]) are late arrivals accessed the land at the pleasure of *Abene Liloba* (Olumullah 2002; Owen 1932). The subtext in these appellations underscores rights over land as the bottom line in the clan dichotomy and reiterates the consequence of the scarcity of land and the desire to control the vital resource for Nyole social relationships and self-conception.

Mutual suspicion, open jealousies and hostilities characterized the relationship between the late arrivals and the claimants to legitimate ownership of the soil (Owen 1932; Olumwullah 2002) since the era of migration and settlement of the lacustrine region. On the one hand, the *Abene Liloba* viewed Wekhomo and Bunyore Hills cradle as the center of Ebunyole and as the overarching concept of Nyoleness but one which exluded the "outsider" (*Abamenyibwa*) set of clans. *Abene Liloba* used descent-from-Anyole to legitimate their claims. But the suggestion (Owen 1932) that *Abamenyibwa* could be absorbed and become mainstream

[7] The concept *abarende* (singular *omurende*) has two meanings. First it means neighbor, in the sense of one who lives next to you. But it also means outsider and therefore the subject of suspicion when things go wrong. It is not uncommon for *omurende* to be blamed for the death of a member of the family. Hence *omurende* is a potential enemy and always has reason to harbour ill motive. In this case, the notion of outsiderness and lack of direct access to the land may be seen to constitute the source of suspicion. Hence, Olumwullah (2002) suggests that outsider clans were the first suspects in the event of death or catastrophe within the trope of *inyumba esimbanga* (the jealous house).

Abanyole through the concept of *Abamirikha* (those who are swallowed) muddies the waters and undermines the claim that *Abene Liloba* signifies genealogical purity. On the other hand, the steady rise of Esibila (Malondole) Hills in the west as the center of life (as the site of the rainmaking shrines of *Malondole* the God of fertility, and as the source of fire [from the nearby Esilemba forest in Ekamanji]) to replenish a burned out hearth as suggested by Anduuru (interviewed 2 and 4 February 2007) and Olumwullah (2002) connotes the desire to establish an alternative center in the West of Ebunyole to interrogate the teleogy of the East and to resist dominant claims by *Abene Liloba.* This binary implies "interpretive notions of the insider/outsider opposition" (Olumwullah 2002) informed by the intra-'sub-nation' fracture because of shortage of land.

At the same time, Ebukwe (east – the location of Bunyore Hills and the site of *Abene Liloba* set of clans) and Mumbo (west – the location of *Abamenyibwa*) opposition informs the Nyole ways of knowing. Both the importance of the sun in Nyole epistemology and the fact that Ebukwe is where the sun rises on its daily journey to Mumbo (the site of otherness) where it takes all *esibi* (misfortunes – hence the call *esibi tsiokwe mumbo*[8] [misfortunes go and land in the west]) legitimates the supremacy of the east and its inhabitants over the west and its inhabitants. Hence, as Olumwullah claims, the association of *Abamenyibwa* with the west only intensifies their otherness. On the one hand, Ebukwe is represented in metaphors of life, health and wealth (Olumwullah 2002: 88). This highlights the imperative of the metonymic proximity of the sun and daylight and Ebukwe as a central trope in Nyole epistemology; hence, as Olumwullah notes, "not only does the sun rise in the east bringing milk and health

[8] Around February after a long dry spell and just before the planting season, an apparently spontaneous drumming/percussion and shouting ritual starts in the east at about 7.30 pm till about 10.00 pm in the evening just after the first drizzle. But soon it covers the entire Ebunyole. All people come out beating all sorts of containers as they command: *esibi tsia imbo/Mumbo/tsiokwe munyanza* (misfortune go to Luoland/the west/go and plunge in the lake). No one could tell me where it all begins or who starts it in the east. Ironically when the Abanyole in the west and the Luo pick up the ritual, even they command *esibi* to go further west into the Luo country/the lake. Hence, the West is generally the direction of uncertainty, the unknown, and the threatening.

with it, but the rain comes from that direction, and all major streams flow from the east to the north or north east" (2002: 88). On the other hand, Mumbo is a trope of evil, magic, misfortune, death. The significance of Malondole Hills as the source of life therefore contradicts the location of the hills in the interstitial space of Mumbo (Olumwullah, ibid) and the identity of Malondole/Esibila as the source of life which makes the hills the symbolic center of contest to the hegemony of *Abene Liloba.*

The issue of how this spatial configurations, binary oppositions and the issue of how land scarcity might first, influence conceptions of Nyole ethnicity and notion of peoplehood and second, interrogate how they might be read for explanation of Juma's actions, the expressions of Nyole identities, and notions of the past are central to this study. How do all these issues influence the perceptions of the self and how do these manifest themselves in narratives of Nyole past and belonging?

### 1.3. Ethnicity and ethnic identity

This study emphasizes three things. First, is the psychic nature of the expression of ethnicity. Secondly, the study takes cognizance of the assertion that ethnicity is "constructed within history" (Hall 1989: 25) and is actualized through narrative so that the changes in history and the way it is narrated gesture to changes in self-conception. Ethnic identity constitutes a people's relation to their own past, their mode of understanding their roots (Hall 1989: 24). Third is the notion that identity, "the story we tell about ourselves to know who we are," (ibid 23) as a way of narrating ourselves (Freeman 1993) is located within discourse or representation. Therefore the study emphasizes the instability of the notion of identity because of the way it is realized through play on history and difference (ibid) and the process of its realization as narrative and discourse and therefore as language. Therefore, intertextual

relationship between the present utterances and prior utterances which they quote, affirm or displace (ibid; Stam et al 1992) is emphasized as fundamental to the nature of ethnicity as unstable and an invention of language and the mode of conception of the past.

### 1.4. Issues of ethnicity in Africa

The foregoing issues point to the more fundamental question of how ethnicity takes shape, how to understand the manifestations of ethnic identity in Africa and how that might elucidate the dynamics of the formation of the Nyole 'sub-nation'. But first, how has ethnicity in Africa been understood?

The contrast between ethnicity and tribalism is important for this study. Hence, Berman's (1998) suggestion that ethnicity manifests itself in Africa as moral ethnicity and political tribalism is pertinent. Berman defines moral ethnicity as "internal struggles over moral economy and political economy and political legitimacy tied to the definition of ethnic communities" (1998: 305). In contrast, political tribalism is, "external conflicts over differential access to resources of modernity and economic accumulation" (ibid). Thus, the objective of (political) tribalism is materialistic and opportunistic control of state patronage (ibid 339) and deploys ethnic difference to underwrite corruption and patronage networks (Berman 306). Political tribalism which has its roots in the colonial formation of the nation-state is what the concept ethnicity and studies on ethnicity have usually emphasized (ibid) to highlight the dynamics of the post-colonial inter-ethnic contests over access to and control of state resources and patronage to which political instability in Africa has been attributed.

Political tribalism emphasizes what advantage ethnic difference is put to in the modern nation-state thus underscoring the conception of tribalism as a colonial phenomenon. Hence, the suggestion that ethnicity could be seen as "a cultural ghost… an atavistic residue deriving from the distant past of rural Africa that should have evaporated with the passage of time…" (Leroy Vail quoted in Berman 1998: 306) is problematic. It seems to confuse the selfish political advantage ethnic identity is deployed to serve in the modern nation-state and the dynamics of the desire to locate oneself within an imagined community or to define conditions of belonging to an overarching ethnic group.

The suggestion by Hall (1989) that the ideal conditions for the expression of ethnic identity demand the existence of an ethnic other is crucial. In which case claiming a particular ethnicity is showing consciousness of the existence of a diverse ethnic other from whom one needs to distinguish oneself. However, the mode of deployment of such diversity in the post-colonial nation state is what "stigmatizes all social and political manifestations of ethnicity" (Berman 1998: 306). This study emphasizes moral ethnicity which underscores internal dynamics within the ethnic group which have received less attention much as it is the ethoses of moral ethnicity that are appropriated reloaded and deployed to serve the selfish motives of political tribalism which has burdened the nation-state. Of significance is the issue of how to locate the boundaries and belonging to the ethnic community. In the pre-colonial times, "only those with recognized kinship and ethnicity could legitimately negotiate the property rights and relations of obligation and reciprocity of the moral economy" (1998: 325). How has the colonial experience obligated the re-imagination of the moral economy?

Scholarship on African ethnicity has observed trends similar to the Nyole identity manifestations thus making the matter worth attention. Focusing on the issue of the "linkages

of ethnic and other collective identities, and the relationship of tension between territorial and linguistic-cultural definitions of ethnic boundaries," Lentz (2000: 137) introduces the term 'Dagabafication' to capture the process by which contiguous ethnicities in Ghana took up Dagaba identity (2000: 142). One of the reasons for this convenient identity switch was "to distance themselves from the stigma of primitiveness which stuck to the Lobi" (Lentz 2000: 142). Lobi was the dominant power around which others agglutinated till the charge of primitiveness undermined her authority. However, Vail (1989: 152) notes a pattern of settlement in the Northern Province of Malawi where contiguous "culturally related peoples… Ngonde, Sukwa, Ndali, Lumbya and Nyiha" lived in "great…fragmentation owing to the disparateness of the ethnicities." One inference that can be drawn from the two observations is that cultural, spatial or genealogical contiguity alone may not explain how ethnic nations are formed or sustained.

However, certain scholars (Lonsdale 1977; Iliffe 1979; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Cohen and Odhiambo 1987; Berman 1998) see contemporary manifestations of ethnicity as "a colonial construct which was not rooted in a timeless past" (Lentz and Nugent 2000). This contrasts with the primordial concept of ethnicity which is often idealized in public Nyole corporate self-representation. Vaughan (1987) and Vail and White (1989) assert that 'tribes' in Africa are a product of colonial socio-political engineering whose objective was to ease administration through manipulation. In that connection, Lentz observes that the colonial annexation of the Lawra, the Nadom, and the Jirapa contributed to an expanded Ghanian Lobi ethnic 'nation' in the 1920s. Also, Meyer (1999: 1-23) discusses a pact whereby some Ghanian communities took up the identity of their powerful Peki neighbor as a security strategy; an arrangement that was formalized by the colonial administration on the presumption that all were Peki. All these call attention to the significance of the distinction

between ethnicity and tribalism and necessitate further inquiry into colonial contribution to the process of 'tribe' formation in Africa as Lentz (2000: 152, 2006); Vail and White (1989: 157); Berman (1998: 310); and Meyer (1999) illustrate. Thus, if the colonial imagination of ethnic boundaries is problematic and permissive, how should the inter-clan/'sub-nation'/ethnic 'nation' and inter-nation state boundaries be defined, and how might the phenomenon inform the manifestations of Nyole identity?

Some scholars see contemporary ethnic manifestations in Africa not as a function of genealogy but as an attribute of expediency and realpolitik. Hence, Vail and White (1989) talk of the Ngoni, the Tonga, the Tumbuka and several other communities in the lake Malawi region suppressing their identity to take on the more powerful Ngoni name (1989: 152-3). Besides, Ochieng' (1974, 1975) undermines the possibility of Luo ethnic continuity by asserting that his Yimbo clan, partly Luo-Nilotic and partly Luhya-Bantu, conveniently asserted Luo identity, a view affirmed by Cohen and Odhiambo (1987: 276) and Ogot (2002, 2009). This is despite the fact that first, ordinarily the Yimbo assert Luo identity and secondly, no continuity is imagined in the daily representation of the contiguous Nilotic and Bantu groups of the interlacustrine region of East Africa. Thus, the ease with which ethnic identities are picked and dropped as these studies illustrate underscores the flexibility and instability of ethnic identity, which makes homology as explanation of ethnic etiology both unsatisfactory and untenable. How might this fluidity inform the Nyole phenomenon? These and similar studies connote that the double-voicedness and the illusions created by notions of totalized descent is not unique to the Nyole case. Thus, they underscore the need to discover the motivation behind the multiple and contradictory meanings in expression of Nyole identity which is often characterized by simultaneous affirmation and negation of Nyoleness.

In view of the fact that ethnic communities claim monolithic and homologous identities regardless of the foregoing contradictions, there is need to explain how ethnic nations are formed outside the suppositions of the scientific historiography model which often eschews contradictions (White 1978). In the case of the Nyole, how do they weave through the contesting claims on their identity on a daily basis? The other question that begs answers is how the notions of ethnic identity are derived. Given that ethnic identity claims are often validated by reference to narratives of origin and a shared past (Lentz 2000, 2006; Olumwullah 2002; Hosbawm 1983; Anderson 1983), this study scrutinizes the Nyole oral historical narrative (which subsumes the origin narrative) to establish whether the past serves a purpose other than mere recalling of the-past-as-fact – origins, lineage and general historical experience over time. In other words, do the narratives serve purposes other than fulfill the desire to recount the-past-as-fact? The study notes the assertion that some traditions of origin are borrowed while others come "straight out of tales" (Vansina 1992: 22) placing tales (fictions), logic, and the imagination of the narrators at the core of community history.

At the same time, it is apparent that the Juma campaign strategy already discussed is best explicated against the background of the Nyole inter-clan relations through history. That means that the sense of exclusion and historical injustice that Juma infers to validate his objective is better understood in intertextual correlation to the inter-/intra-clan relationship through history which Juma proposed to address via his election. Given, as observed above, that under different circumstances some Nyole narratives stress homologous descent to underscore the undivided unity of Abanyole, there is compelling need to investigate whether other Nyole historical narratives that validate Juma's stated position have a counter-hegemonic objective so that performance of such narratives is a strategy to attain equilibrium in a context of myriads of contesting narratives of Nyole past. In other words, there is need to

investigate whether the objective of each version of origin narratives is to destabilize the claims other narratives make on the identity of the Nyole 'sub-nation', on the one hand, and on that of each of the Nyole clans, on the other. In that case, contesting the hegemonies and hierarchies (Fairclough 2003) in the claims of each narrative category rather than the factuality of the events narrated would be significant motivation for the performance of narratives of the past.

In view of these observations, this study is interested in the relationship between ethnicity, history/the past, and narrative in so far as narrative is the vehicle for projection of ethnic sentiment, sense of belonging, what/who people say they are, and claims of ethnic identity (Bhabha 1990). My endeavor is bolstered by the assertion that "ethnicity is constructed in history… [and] narrative" (Hall 1989: 25). Hall (1989: 24) also underscores the importance of the understanding the past as a position from which to corroborate one's ethnic claims. These assertions underscore the fundamental role of history/the past in the construction and validation of ethnicity. The focus is on why ethnic identity is retrieved, projected and contested. The aim of this study therefore is to understand the nature of Nyole ethnicity through the lens of historical narratives which "store" ideologies and meanings of the concept of "Nyoleness"; and also to provide insight into how these meanings have shifted over the last century. Of interest is the contradiction displayed in the adoption of such modern institutions as the Church of God (popularly recognized as the Nyole Church) to reinforce the notion of Nyole indigeneity and timelessness, and as the basis of designation of authentic Nyole identity. The study locates tensions, contests, repressions, and contradictions implicated in the production of multiple narratives of the Nyole origin and how the narratives navigate through the labyrinth to retain the notion of the Nyole ethnic integrity. The research focuses on the historical narrative genres. However, legends, praise poetry, myths et cetera,

which also carry historical substance are summoned where they help elaborate the Nyole sense of the past and how they influence contemporary conception of Nyoleness. Hence, central to the project is the concept of genre (Derrida 1980; Kaplan 1992; Jacobus 1984); and particularly the intention is to interrogate the assertions by Were (1967) regarding the limitations of fabula genres as a source of 'truth' and a storehouse of a peoples sense of the past.

This study takes shape in a context where Nyole identity space has been overshadowed by claims on it by the bigger categories, namely the Luhya ethnic 'nation' and the post-colonial nation-state. Simultaneously, the Nyole grapple with discontinuities and contradictions inherent in their own narratives of origin and sojourn in their present location. Memory lapse and western cultural intervention in the form of religion, education and administrative structural realignment only redoubles the maze of discontinuities and tensions. Against this background, the study engages other studies (Were 1967; Osogo 1966) which frame narratives of continuity in the Luhya 'sub-nations' thus silencing the finer details evident in the day to day cultural performance which highlights complex continually-emerging unique inter/intra 'sub-nation' identities. The state of affairs calls for investigation into how the Nyole explain their ancestry, their cultural philosophy, their religion, and other practices that are not circumscribed by the meaning of the post-colonial invention of a single Luhya ethnic 'nation'. The study also addresses the issue of stability of the ethnic category by seeking to establish whether there can be a single philosophical, religious, and historical foundation for such a claim.

The research draws on the discussion of Lentz (2000: 137), regarding whether ethnic groups are defined by territory, language/culture or homology. Lentz arguments echo Anderson's

(1983) study on ethnicity which underscores the social constructionist arguments when he designates ethnic nations as imagined communities, and Said's (1978) concept of imagined geographies which explicates "perceptions of spaces created through certain images and discourses." These studies underscore the key arguments in the explanation of the incidence of diversity in the Nyole story of origin thus, raising the issue of the extent to which ethnic categories can claim stability and teleology. The presence of more than one story of origin implies inherent tensions within the ethnic category thereby creating the need to explain whether the tensions result from consciousness/repression of disparity of Nyole clans, and whether such tensions are inherent in other Luhya 'sub-nations'. The possibility that in everyday performance of identity, such tensions are suppressed/repressed (Jameson 1981: 79) to retain the integrity of Nyole homology claims calls for investigation. Similarly, the possibilities of mythic performance as a resistance strategy to loss of unique identity of each Nyole clan as well as extra-textual negotiation with other narratives as key to the Nyole identity manifestations are investigated.

The study also notes the recent postcolonial influences on ethnic formations. In this regard, the notion that "ethnic community identities have rested on the invented histories and 'noble' lies responding to the exigencies of current political struggles" (Berman 1998: 326) is crucial. It calls for the examination of the influence of imperialism on the construction of ethnicities. Of particular interest is the role the intelligentsia and indigenous administrators of the time in fashioning out ethnic boundaries as they are now. The assertion that the writings of early Christian converts of the colonial era, who constituted the elite of the time, influenced the ethnic imaginings is informative. But the observation that "their accounts interacted with and were influenced by missionary and anthropological accounts of their cultures which … helped reify and objectify their conceptions of their culture and community" (Berman, 327)

gestures to the need to explore the process of the configuration of the views of this very influential group.

The key questions are: how are ethnic identities attained? What purposes does narrating the past serve? When is a monolithic Nyoleness reified in narrative? If from linguistic, historical and anthropological viewpoints the Abanyole constitute a polity, how should internally contesting narratives of origin be explained; and how do historical narratives inform invention and retrieval of personal/communal histories and identities? In other words, how do these histories select micronarratives of origin myths that inform them and underwrite identity claims?

Simultaneously, the study revisits the issue of how the Nyole understand and categorize their past in order to engage Were's (1967) claim of distinction between what he calls fables/myths (fictions), on the one hand, and oral tradition (factual), on the other. Were claims to rely on (factual) oral traditions while disregarding the fictional categories yet he admits that the context of performance/the performers of the two categories are the same (1967: 14). The possibility of cross-fertilization between the two categories undermines the notion of purity. This study emphasizes the crisscrossing of the boundaries of these historical genres in resonance with the implication of the assertion that the "framework of history and genre… is important in the construction of national identity" (Brownlee 2006: 65).

The question then is whether Were's concept of genre resonates with indigenous classification. My argument is informed by Cohen's (1991: 89) assertions that genres are cultural formations and that "a genre theory… must confront at the very least, the question of whether genre is discipline-controlled or nation-controlled or both." In other words, should

genres be identified by scholarly criteria or dynamic indigenous owner's rationale? Cohen's assertion that "generic history stresses both the need for classification and the need to realize the limits of any monolithic classification" (90) is crucial for this study. The purpose at this point is to moderate the assertion of Were's seminal work of Nyole historiography regarding whether Nyole myth and fables, which he dismisses as historically irrelevant can in fact be a storehouse of a people's sense of the past. Therefore, there is need to find out how the owners classify their past.

The study is informed by Hofmeyr's assertion (1994: 1) that "the study of oral performance has been crippled by a situation in which literary and historical concerns have been separated from each other". Barber and Farias (1989: 2) further state that that:

> What texts say…is inseparable from history in the sense of the past in at least three ways. Texts are produced in specific historical circumstances the imprint of which they bear with them; secondly, texts are transmitted through time bringing with them elements of the past but also undergoing a process of erasure and layering as they are refashioned in accordance with the new concerns; and thirdly, some … texts are about the past in relation to the present.

These assertions make an important statement on the collaboration of the factual and the fictional in the production of the historical text, thus calling for a different approach to oral tradition other than as source of hard historical facts. Hence, the study highlights discourse in the historical narrative. In this regard, the study benefits from White (1978, 1987, 1989, 1998), La Capra (1998), Louch (1969), and other scholars who have explored the issue of rhetoric in history. The views of Hofmeyr (1994) and Barber and Farias (1989) find support

in Walter Benjamin's notion of narrative translation of the past (Novak 2004: 3-4) through textual and contextual interaction in the production of meaning. The issue of erasure and layering (Hofmeyr, 1994; Barber and Farias, 1989; White, 1978) is vital to my interest in the changes that have occurred in the conception of Nyoleness in the last century and how such changes are captured in Nyole textual representation of origin. The focus therefore is on interaction of the past and the present in textualization of Nyole concepts of origin and the past in line with Deleuze's assertion (1990) that "event's temporality … resists teleologies of the past and preset future. It exists in a time which has always just past". I approach the task with the notion that Nyole identity is found not just in what they say, but how they say it. Thus, to understand Nyole consciousness of past experience the texts have to be looked at in relation to other texts they imply, adopt, recast and interrogate because "utterances or texts are never moments of origin since they depend on the prior existence of codes and conventions, and it is in the nature of the codes to be always in existence, to have lost origins" (Culler 1998: 22). Hence, I draw on White's assertion that in view of the fact that canonical historiography is metaphoric in nature, "historical discourse [is] primarily interpretive [rather than] explanatory or descriptive" (1989: 25).

Given that ethnicity is such a volatile and ambiguous category, the use of the term is complicated. The list of terms to refer to ethnic units can be long: tribe, ethnicity, polity, clan, lineage, nation, and many others. In this thesis, I have opted to use terms 'nation' to refer to the Luhya 'nation'. 'Sub-nation' refers to a sub-group within this broader unit. Clan refers to a group within the 'sub-nation' which claims the same lineage. These are the best approximations I could find. The use here is guided by the Nyole terms themselves as well as the manner in which the terms are implicated in contemporary popular usage in intra-ethnic

interactions in Kenya. The usage also echoes the manner in which Olumwullah (2002) in his study of the Abanyole has used the same terms.

### 1.5. Significance and Justification of the study

Were (1967) is the only authoritative attempt at weaving together a narrative on the historiography of the imagined Luhya 'ethnic nation'. Were appears to have been informed by the nationalist anxiety at the time to create a myth for the nascent postcolonial nation-state which created homogeneous nations out of previously loosely related ethnic categories as the Miji Kenda at the Kenyan coast, the Luhya, the Luo, the Kikuyu, and many others. The trend was set by Kenyatta (1965) whose pioneer anthropological study of the Kikuyu in the 1930s asserted claims of Kikuyu homogeneity thus silencing narratives which affirm their multiplicity. Paradoxically, where Kenyatta's claims were authorized by myths of Kikuyu descent from nine sisters, Were unilaterally dismissed some genres that were inconsistent with his methodology on account that they were mythic (Were 1967: 83). However, recent scholarship has recognized the historical value of such previously marginal genres as myth (Thompson 2009; Olumwullah 2002; Atieno Odhiambo 2002), music and poems which Were dismissed as fabula genres (Amutabi 2002: 79). Even then, Were does admit that the Luhya show signs of diversity. Therefore what he regards as Luhya clans might well be understood as separate 'sub-nations'. My endeavor is validated by White's observation that scientific historians proceed on the assumption that texts could yield scientific truth (1989: 23), and La Capra's view that historians "continue to confide in a 'documentary' or 'objectivist' model of knowledge that is typically blind to its own rhetoric" (1998: 70). Thus, Were's study ignores what White (ibid) calls the "performative component which yields the figurative, tropological

and generic aspects of discourse in the texts" and Louch's (1969) notion of history as narrative.

Two views of Hayden White resonate with themes in the historiography of the Luhya of Western Kenya. The first is that "history… is accessible only by way of language, and that our experience of history is indissociable from the discourse about it". Second is the fact that "historical discourse is actualized in its culturally significant form as a specific kind of writing that licenses us to consider the relevance of literary theory to both the theory and practice of historiography" (1989: 19). Consequently, as the major work on Luhya historiography to date, Were's work (1967) invites moderation of the explanation and description paradigm (White 1987: ix) that informs its methodology because on that basis, he dismisses mythical discourses (1967: 14, 83) as authentic source of history. However, this claim which presumes fixity of genres of oral history is untenable in view of the assertions by Cohen (1991), Barber (1989) and Hofmeyr (1994) about the coexistence and complementary relationship of the fictional and the factual genres. This study proposes the use of the interpretive paradigm (White 1989, 1978) to engage Kenyan historiography through focusing on how the Luhya talk about their past to give vent to the indigenous interpretive relationship with their own historical genres. Thus, the study underscores the notion of history as narrative (White 1978; Louch 1969) by using literary methodology to investigate historical genres. The study shows how identity discourses are deployed in the postcolonial space, and demonstrates that oral traditions are more than mere inert containers of kernels of historical fact.

In that regard, there is the need first, to revisit the entire Nyole notion of the past while simultaneously focusing on and recognizing the "poetic inventiveness presumed to be characteristic of the writer of fictional narratives" which nevertheless is recognizable as a

central characteristic in the discourse of the historical narratives (White 1987: x). Second, as White (1978, 1987, 1989, and 1998) observes, the historical narrative is realized using the literary device of emplotting to weave the events together. While on the nature of events, Deleuze (1990) asserts that "events resist origins, and particularly the indeterminacy of events prevents fixity of meaning… and teleologies" because "meaning resists linear disclosure" and "it is never a principle or origin, it is produced."

Third, memory is crucial in the reconstruction of events, on the one hand, and identity, on the other. Hence, the assertion that memory provides the basis for construction/reconstruction and legitimation of identity (Koureas 2007: 1) underscores the fundamental role of memory for retrieval of the past and for identity claims. Yet on the nature of memory Thompson (2009: 11) avers that distorting and forgetting are part of the operations of memory and they "influence our present action"; a position affirmed by the assertion that memory is a construct (Weissberg 1999: 21; Thelen 1989: 1118). Besides, past collective myths influence memory because "people use myths in their individual memories, accepting, rejecting, or selecting to make sense of their own lives" (Weissberg 1999: 21; Thelen 1989: 1117). Hence, the nature of history as narrative, the central role of memory in the reconstruction of the events, and the complementary and augumentary relationship between memory and myth (Freeman 2003) subvert any attempt to separate the fictional and historical genres. Consequently, by approaching the issue from an interpretive position, the study applies the idea of White (1998: 151) on the necessity of "interpretive strategies …for the representation of a given segment of the historical process" by paying attention to the rhetorical dynamics in the historical texts.

In view of the scarcity of research on the Nyole, first, the study aims both to fill a small amount of this gap whilst making a contribution to the broader scholarship on ethnicity in Africa by scholars like Lentz (2000, 2006), Meyer (1999), Vaughan (1987) and Vail (1989). With regard to studies of the Nyole, apart from Olumwullah (2002) who focuses on the Nyole conception of disease, and the work of Maurice Amutabi, other work on Nyole historiography (Were 1967; Osogo 1966) used the great man syndrome of history by relying on dominant characters in society (Amutabi 2002: 79). This method echoes what Cohen and Odhiambo (1987: 282) call "the tribunal process" and its limitations. This study adopts the concept of history from below by giving vent to how common people typically talk about the past and how they deploy that past in their daily lives.

Secondly, the study explicates the basis of the double-voicedness, double-vision, ambiguity, and contradiction in the expression of Nyole identities and why the margins are thought to be a safe location with regard to Nyole identity. Despite the manifestation of such duality in the typical behavior of the Nyole as seen in the behavior of Juma, no attempt has been made to explain the manifestation of incidences of approach-avoidance in the Nyole disposition. In this regard, the study takes cognizance of the assertion that personal and communal identity are claimed and reclaimed and need to be affirmed in times of uncertainty, turmoil and change (Koureas 2007: 1). The implications of this assertion are important for the instability in the expression of Nyoleness. The work therefore responds to the need to explain the motivation behind this uncertainty and to explicate the turmoil and change that might underwrite the behavior and how that might be implicated in the collective behavior of other Luhya groups, on the one hand, and that of other similar communities, on the other.

Given the passion that underpins the debates on ethnicity which culminated in the 2008 post-election ethnic violence in Kenya, this study is envisaged as a call to retrieve the discourses on ethnicity from the margins where they have been consigned because they are viewed as contradictory to the objectives of a homogeneous nation-state. The experience of the 2008 ethnic violence in Kenya, the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, and ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia suggest that legislating against ethnic discourses only serves the inadvertent purpose of withdrawing them from the public space rather than eliminating them altogether. Hence, this study engages with non-literary, mainly historical material, to interrogate the conception of ethnic sentiments and sense of belonging, and the nation to highlight how the sentiments attain their materiality.

This study also intersects with oral literature research in East Africa which has traditionally focused on what is regarded as the fictional categories (*tsingano*) of the oral genres in their attempt to underscore the primacy of performance while eschewing the historical narrative (*akakhale).* Often, oral tradition is given attention only as background to fictional narratives but it is hardly considered a legitimate target of research to explain how the narrator constructs the events, why the representation of events differs from one occasion to another and from one narrator to the next. If the oral historical category reproduces the events-as-happened, then how should the incidence of different versions of supposedly the same event be explained? Little attention is paid to the implications of the fact that the context of performance (the space in which narration takes place – *Dikgoro* among the Sotho [Hofmeyr 1994: 78] or *esitioli* [evening bonfire] among Abanyole/Luhya) as well as the narrators of the historical and the fictional categories (at least in the Abanyole case) are quite often the same. This is not what I argue – I say that gender and place defines how these genres are seen.

Therefore, on the one hand, the historiographers who focus on historicity usually regard what they collect as a virtual reproduction of the order of events in some remote time past using the narrative as evidence. On the other, oral literature research eschews the historical narrative on account of the supposed factuality which renders the historical narrative illegitimate as a target for those interested in the manner of its realization and the weaving together of events to form the narrative. The study is imagined as a contribution to Barber's (1989: 2) call for an "integrated approach… to relate text to history", and Hofmeyr's exhortation of oral literature and oral history scholarship to collapse disciplinary boundaries between "historical and literary concerns" (1994: 1-2). Going by the way oral literature research and teaching is conducted in Kenyan universities it is my contention that the advice has not been heeded. This study therefore advocates bringing of the historical narrative into the literature classroom by emphasizing its rhetoric and its nature as narrative which it shares with the fictional genres.

At the same time, whereas biographies have been studied in oral history, the trends in such studies suggest that biographies, life histories and related genres are looked at only in so far as they are genres of history. The explanations by Thompson (1988: 33 – 34, 83 – 84 and 236 – 237) exemplify these trends. This study takes a different approach whereby I focus on biographies and life histories not for their historical content but to illuminate the manner in which the opportunity to narrate the past is appropriated and turned into the opportunity expose ones life story. Therefore the study explores the juncture between the personal and the public histories to underline the fact that the chance to narrate community past also offers the narrator the prospect of stabilizing "the logic of the self" or "where I come from" (Hall 1989: 20).

## 1.6. Theoretical Perspectives

### 1.6.1. Narrating History as a Fiction Making Process

This study is concerned with explication of the process of encoding and re-encoding of events in the course of fashioning the oral historical narrative, while taking into account factors that might motivate the choice of various procedures of emplotting (White 1978) the story of the past. The study takes into account Walter Benjamin's assertion that every storytelling session is a moment of translation (quoted in Novak (2004: 3-4). By story telling as translation, Benjamin means that narrating is not a faithful reproduction of events as they happened but it is an interpretive process where the narrator refashions or reconfigures the events to speak to her/his experience. By reconfiguring the events, the narrator gives them new meanings which speak to where s/he comes from. The study also benefits from Foucault's view that such reconfiguration or interpretation is a "reduction in which some crucial content is lost or repressed" (White 1978: 234). This implicates both conscious and unconscious choices on the part of the storyteller to fashion a story in a particular way because story telling is not a value free endeavor, neither is it merely an opportunity to bring out inert events-as-they-happened. Story telling is also a way of fashioning the narrator's identity, and therefore it is a way of lending authenticity to the narrator's experience (Hall 1989). Thelen (1989: 1117) calls this the "psychological issues of individual motivation" in determining the shape of the final product. This position resonates with Jameson's (1981: 44, 79) assertion that narration is a process of seeking imaginative resolution to social problems and to unresolved contradictions. Therefore, the process of re-encoding or re-emploting the events either makes them familiar/unfamiliar and less threatening (White 1978: 86, 258). Thus, emplotment is a

fictionalization process which uses rhetoric and troping to "generate figures of speech" (1978: 2). This position underscores the predominance of language use in fashioning history.

The concern of the study is therefore the interpretation of a storyteller's interpretive process which is discernible in the choice of tropes in the encoding procedure, as well as the contextual and personal considerations that might influence narrative choices. The intention is to account for disparity in different versions on separate occasions by one narrator, on the one hand, and the multiplicity of of versions among different narrators, on the other. The study is informed first, by Foucault's and Wittgenstein's observation about the possibility of any utterance but the impossibility of reproduction of "the order of things" in discourse; and secondly, by Foucault's assertion about the absence of continuity between the past and the present (White 1978: 236). Hence, Foucault's assertion that "... any effort to recapture the order of things in language… condemn[s] certain aspects of that order to obscurity" [because] "speaking is a repressive act identifiable as a specific form of repression by the area of experience it consigns to silence" (Quoted in White 1978: 239), which concurs with Culler (1998), Deleuze (1990) and Bakhtin (1981), is crucial for this study. The study therefore focuses on how fashioning of events into narrative produces discontinuities in ethnic identity narratives.

At the same time, the assertion that "understanding is the process of rendering the unfamiliar or the 'uncanny'… familiar" (White 1978: 5) is important for the purpose of this study in so far as it points to a major motivation for telling stories. The unfamiliar is threatening, therefore story telling serves the purpose of rendering events in such a way that "they are felt to be humanly useful, non-threatening, or simply known by association" (White ibid). But for the same reasons, the storyteller might choose to defamiliarize the familiar through troping

(White 1978: 258). From Lentz and Nugent (2000), we get some insights into situations that might be threatening such as representation of genealogy in a manner that excludes membership rights of sections of the community. Similarly, the encoding process that undermines the assertion of separate ethnicity might be a source of "unfamiliarity" and discomfiture. In both scenarios, "the winners and the losers [seek] means of cementing or altering their respective positions… [often] through recourse to history" (2000: 18). This assertion about the deployment of history to validate ethnicity and belonging, affirms White's claim about the impossibility of linear factuality in history and finds anchor in Foucault's (in White 1978: 236) and Deleuze's (1990) claim of discontinuity between the past and the present. That draws attention to the constituting process of the historical text.

White again offers a vital clue in the suggestion that the process of understanding proceeds by "exploitation of the modalities of figuration" (1978: 3). Thus, figuration, hybridization, and bricolaging might explain the mode of composition in history especially given the nature of bricolage as a technique of composition which is less interested in coherency and consistency. Instead emphasizes improvisation and the functioning of phenomena in a spatio-temporal locale. All these make bricolaging a technique amenable to appropriation in discursive procedures.

### 1.6.2. Discourse as a device of interpretation

White implicates cognition as a process of knowledge acquisition in what he calls "problematical topics" which include "human nature, culture and history" (1978: 1). The problematical characteristics of these topics are located in the "the differences of opinion as to *what* they are, *how* they should be spoken about and the *kinds* of knowledge we can have

about them" (1978: 1). Their problem is in their nature as products of perception, reasoning, and intuition in their modes of encoding experience.

Bakhtin's (1981: 263, 428) term heteroglossia as a set of contextual conditions (social, historical, meteorological, and physiological) in which "all utterances interact within the framework of a matrix of forces" gives insight into the "centripetal and centrifugal tensions" that characterize the context of utterance (Bakhtin 1981: 272). The perceiver whose intuitions demarcate the codes operating in heteroglossia during storytelling is part of the context. According to Bakhtin, perception is conditioned by ideology and "incarnated [in] action and discourse." In other words, discourse encapsulates the perceptions or cognitions resulting from the tensions of interaction.

Bakhtin's emphasis on the tension filled heteroglossia context in which discourse operates is amplified by White's (1978: 1) claim that appreciation of operations of discourse opens a window to understanding the "problematical topics." The features of discourse make it self-consciously index its uncertainty about its own "authority which it systematically displays on its very surface." This feature is inherent in the nature of discourse as a "genre in which the effort to earn [the] right of expression with full credit to the possibility that things might be expressed otherwise, is pre-eminent" (White, 1978: 2). Hence, the uncertainty of meaning produced by the complementary interactions of the two concepts and the assertion that "heteroglossia is that which a systematic linguistics must suppress" (Bakhtin 1981: 263, 428) implies that the two concepts undermine the structural basis of scientific historiography**.** The consciousness of the inconclusiveness of meaning makes troping central to the functioning of discourse. Hence, the assertion that as the "soul of discourse", troping is "the mechanism

without which discourse cannot do its work or achieve its end" because discourse is tropological rather than logical" in nature (White 1978).

These assertions imply that identifying tropes of discourse gives one the infinite capacity to explore possible meanings of contextual interactions. Therefore, discourse becomes a suitable tool to "… *define* contours, *identify* the elements, and *discern* the kind of relationships of human experience" (1978: 1) implicated in "problematical topics." Hence, as the "soul of discourse" troping is the device for engaging with "problematical topics" because of its capacity to "generate figures of speech or thought by its variation from what is 'normally' expected, and by the association it establishes between concepts normally felt not to be related or to be related in a way different from that suggested in the trope used" (White, 2). This implicates deviation as a major characteristic of troping.

Significantly, White (1978: 2) adopts Bloom's designation of tropes when he says that a trope is the "linguistic equivalent of a psychological mechanism of defense against literal meaning in discourse in the way that repression, regression, projection… are defense against the apprehension of death in the psyche". Thus, on the basis of this analogy troping grants discourse an infinite capacity of connotation through engineering of encoding procedures as a means of getting over contradictions.

White further asserts that discourse oscillates between "alternative ways of encoding reality" thus making discourse a "mediative enterprise" (2). The mediative function of discourse is of great interest in the suggestion that discourse facilitates dialogue between "encodations of experience and a clutter of other phenomena which refuse incorporation into conventionalized notions of 'reality', 'truth' and 'possibility'" (White 1978: 4); and again

between “traditions of discourse in a particular field and others of which may be idiolects of the author” (ibid). This means that discourse relativizes convention, be it institutional, disciplinary, or personal/individual (ibid), thereby making it a vital reading device. In the words of Bakhtin (1981: 427): “a word, discourse, or culture undergoes dialogization when it is relativized, de-privileged, aware of competing definitions for the same things.”

### 1.6.3. Intertextuality as a Tool of Discourse

It is questioned how discourse relativizes convention, language or culture (Bakhtin 1981: 427). One method is by generating discursive meaning. Bakhtin’s concept dialogism/dialogization explains how discourse negotiates and mediates conditions of heteroglossia. Heteroglossia is itself bound by the spatial and temporal conditions which relativize meaning. In Bakhtin’s words, it is the space in which “the centripetal and centrifugal forces of dialogized language on the one hand, and undialogized (absolute and authoritative language) collide” (1981: 263, 411, 426) in a tension-filled interaction.

The functioning of dialogism in heteroglossia is best understood through definition of the concept dialogism as “the characteristic epistemological mode of a world dominated by heteroglossia” (Bakhtin 1981: 426). Hence, dialogism is a “condition of constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential to influence others” (ibid). Significantly, the view that dialogism operates in conditions of instability and relativity of meaning, which characterizes White’s “problematical topics”, is implied here; it stresses the inclination of dialogism to signal “the impossibility of monologues [or teleology] and the domination of verbal ideological world by heteroglossia” (270).

However, the issue of hierarchy is resolved by the concept intertextuality (which also implies dialogism) elaborated by scholars such as Culler (1998), Bloom (1975), Barthes (1993), Stam et al (1992), and others. Intertextuality offers a better understanding of dialogism for the purpose of this study in the way it explicitly focuses on the text. Culler asserts that a text always exists in relationship "to a body of discourse enterprise which is already in place." In addition the pre-existing text not only "creates the possibility of the new" or subsequent text; it always anticipates it (ibid). Consequently, a text always proposes modification or elaboration of a preexisting one (Culler 1998: 20). This makes the "act of reading and writing an intersubjective one producing an intersubjective, relative body of knowledge" (Culler 1998: 21; Klopper 2006) which Bakhtin would say is dialogized. Thus, Culler implies that a narrative can only be understood in relationship to prior discourses and "other projects and thoughts which it implicitly takes up, prolongs, cites, refutes, transforms" (21).

Culler further reifies the codes by suggesting that the intelligibility of a discursive system is the function of the intertextual codes (ibid) making it possible to suggest that intertextuality might offer a way of understanding the functioning of discourse in narratives. Intertexuality has two sides to it. First it is "a work's relation to particular prior texts." But most importantly, it is "an assertion of a work's participation in a discursive space and its relation to the codes which are the potential formalization of that space (Culler 1998: 22). The process of reading, writing, and storytelling is intertextual. It is a process of "placing a work in a discursive space and relating it to other texts, and to other codes of that space, [thus it is] taking up of a position in a discursive space" (Culler 1998: 22). Intertextuality therefore encompasses for this study the dialogic nature of texts which produces relative meaning through appropriation of the discourse features of tropes and figuration. Hence, the

relativization of meaning is achieved through the mediative function of discourse (White 1978: 4) whilst troping is the quality of discourse that makes that function possible (ibid).

At the same time, Culler's concept 'presupposition' which is associated with Bloom (1973) underlies this relativity. Presupposition is the assumption a text makes in order "to take its significance" (21). The assertion that presupposition may be "deeply sedimented in [the storyteller's] past or that of his discipline [and] ones presuppositions is best revealed by another presupposition" (Culler 1998: 21) also implies the possibility of a storyteller's unconsciousness of some of the fundamental presuppositions to his own narrative. The implication is that the narrator may not necessarily be a competent interpreter of the conditions that underlie the fashioning of his/her own narrative. This leaves room for projects such as this study which attempts to understand how the narrator negotiates shared communal knowledge to construct alternative ways of knowing through his/her narrative version. The suggestion that the prior body of discourse which dominates narrative presupposition is merely implied in the narrative rather than stated explicitly strengthens my assertion that whatever the rhetoric the narrator uses to make an imprint on the community ways of knowing, the interconnectedness of texts is palpable. Two situations then are possible. One, the apparent fragmentation and textual gaps that Barber (1989: 21) talks about may be attributable to presuppositions. But secondly, it also suggests that detecting the presuppositions is up to the reader/listener rather than the narrator. Therefore the storyteller may not fully account for the significance of the narrative because s/he may not be aware of all the contextual layering and successions of significance in the foundational presuppositions of his/her story.

Relativization of meaning is similarly achieved by hybridization which is the concept at the base of Barber's (1889: 20-21) notion of fragmentary composition of the historical narrative. Barber's assertion about an Oriki text being woven out of fragments (same as White's events) from a diversity of times and voices implies that they are pieced together by a sort of hybridization process. Two conceptions of hybridization are crucial here. First, according to Bakhtin, hybridization is the "mixing within a single and concrete utterance, of two or more different linguistic consciounesses often separated in time and space" (1981: 429). Thus hybridization is a device of bringing the past into the understanding of the present of the narrative. Secondly, hybridization according to Fairclough (2003: 7) implies shift in time and space and "shift away from overt hierarchies" making hybridization an intertextual device in so far as it brings the separate times and spaces into dialogue towards imaginary solution by its double-voicedness (Fairclough Ibid). This is because hybridization interrogates and resists the existing hierarchies of power (Fairclough 2003: 7) which are created by the bid by master or "true" narratives to suppress other narratives and create temporal linearity or teleology. Of importance also is Bhabha's (1990: 4) assertion that hybridity is a device for "cultural ambivalence of the modern society." Applying it to the concept of the nation, he claims that "hybridity captures the cultural ambivalence or conceptual indeterminacy in the transitional history of the nation" (ibid). All definitions capture the double-voicedness of hybridity as a feature of discourse, thus making it a tool for the examination of the fragmentary composition of the oral historical narrative.

### 1.6.4. Theoretical orientation of the study

The point of departure for this study is Barber's (1989) reminder to pay attention to historicity and literariness or textuality of the text to surface clues as to how meaning is

constructed (1989: 1, 2), and again to put textuality back into "history and history back into textuality" (1989: 2). Klopper (2006) reiterates the foregoing assertions when he says that history, fiction, and textuality are characterized by mutual adaptability, heterogeneity and change through time, thus highlighting their malleability and the possibility of a reciprocal/symbiotic relationship. Thus, the framing of this study is informed by the need to heed La Capra (1998), White (1978, 1987, 1989, 1998), Readings (1998) to the extent that they call for recognition of the fact that the "historical text is a product of the discursive space" (Culler 1998:2, 4). The space is distinguished by rhetoric (White 1998, Readings 1998; Culler 1998; La Capra 1998) and dialogism. I therefore underscore the notion of intertextuality of Culler (1998), Beverly (1992, 2000), Kaplan (1992), Smarr (1993), and Schwandt 2000) in an interpretive reading of the Nyole texts. I rely on the notions of translation of Still and Worton (1993), Benjamin (1968), Novak (2004) and Dana (2003) as a theory of intertextuality.

The framing of this study is guided by the question why and how ethnic communities narrativize their past and how they navigate silences, discontinuities, and contradictions in narratives of the past. Of particular interest is ways of knowing the truth vis-à-vis discontinuities in the historical narrative. Hence, the notion of narrative as a socially symbolic act linked to the political unconscious (Jameson 1981) forms the core of the main thrust of the study – to seek the motivation for the production of the historical text.

According to Jameson, three dimensions (social reification, stylistic invention, and diegesis) of a text and its social sub-texts are bound by a mutual relationship of "production, projection, compensation, repression and displacement" (1981: 44); White (1985: 2) talks of similar attributes of a text but associates them with the functioning of tropes. The implication

here is that the first two dimensions are woven together by the third – diegesis. But Jameson's assertion that "stylistic mannerisms have the function of symbolically resolving the contradictions in the subtext" (1981: 44) offers crucial insight into how and why the past is textualized, and the conscious process of selecting and weaving of events. Hence, in this model, textualization is a process of rendering social codes acceptable and non-menacing.

By the concept narrative as a symbolic resolution which he borrows from Claude Levi Strauss (Jameson 1981: 79-80), Jameson means that "real social contradictions, insurmountable in their own terms find a purely formal resolution in the aesthetic realm" (1981: 79). The sources of the contradiction are narratives which are 'asymmetrical' (1981: 78), and in my case I would add perceptions of the relationship of power between dominant and subordinate ethnicities whereby the minor ethnicities are obliterated in the imagination of the dominant ones (Lentz and Nugent 2000). Thus, the craft of narrative confronts the narrator with contradictions which s/he tries to resolve through storying and narrative coding. However, whereas narrative offers an imaginary resolution of some contradictions and not all problems can be resolved, some are repressed, displaced, projected, and so on, to render an acceptable outcome (Jameson 1981: 79 and 80, White 1978: 2)

The study also notes Jameson's assertion that whereas the contradictions are found in the ideology, cultural texts and artifacts, the symbolic act or resolution is an aesthetic act which "invents imaginary or formal resolutions to unresolvable contradictions" (1981: 79). Hence, the solution is discursive and relies on formal or discourse features. The study therefore frames the resolutions as framed by a dialogic or intertextual process (Culler 1998; Bakhtin 1981) within the text, between the text and its contexts, and between the text and other texts. The "imaginary or formal solutions to unresolvable contradictions" (Jameson 1981: 79)

which characterize interactions in a heteroglossic situation are therefore realized through dialogue among the tropes which are central to the coding of story events. The dialogic interaction of the tropes in discourse constitutes the narrators translation (reading) and apprehension of the events. Thus, multiplicity of narrative versions can be seen as attempts to cure pre-narrative contradictions caused by the unresolvables. The discontinuities caused by the multiplicity are assumed and ignored and 'cease to be' (Jameson 1981).

### 1.7.1. Methodology

This study takes cognizance of the assertion that the study of culture is located within the field of semiotics and as a venture that calls for interpretation of "patterns of signification" indexed by the networks of culture (Geertz 1975: 5). Therefore, the study enters the methodological debate at the point of the controversy between the empirical and interpretivist traditions, on the one hand, and the philosophical hermeneutic and social constructionist paradigms, on the other. I group the first two together because they share the general epistemological view that factuality and objectivity are attributes of texts, and that texts can represent reality (Schwandt 2000; Seale 2004; White 1978). The second pair is generally united by the view that "…texts can never be perfect windows into the past [so they can't imitate, reflect or represent reality because] they are socially produced" (Seale 2004: 254; Deleuze 1990; Calhoun 2003; Somers and Gibson 2003). Textuality is core to my argument because as Somers and Gibson (2003) assert, "social life is…storied and narrative is an ontological condition of social life" and "people construct identities… by locating themselves or being located within a repertoire of emplotted sories…."

Because I argue that ethnic identity is socially produced and shifts due to social factors (Anderson 1983; Lentz and Nugent 2000; Lentz 2000, 2006; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) and is accessed as texts, I favor the social constructionist perspective of ethnic 'nations' as imagined communities (Anderson 1983) as explicated by Lentz (2000), Bhabha (1990, 1994), Khagram and Levitt (2008), Said (1978), Deleuze and Guattari (1988) among others. Therefore the socialist constructionist challenge first, to the notion of identity as a naturally produced constant is central to my approach which is informed by the argument that "ethnicity is not a fixed condition or essence but a historical process that can only be studied in specific contexts" (Berman 1998: 311). Secondly, the social constructionist contest of the viability of identities that are often represented as "singular, integral … harmonious and unproblematic" such as race and ethnicity (Calhoun 2003: 13; Somers 1994, 2003) underpins my arguments. Instead narrative identity (Somers 1994) is emphasized in order to underscore the significance of the functioning of discourse.

Since ethnic identity claims are rendered through narrative, the nature of narrative and texts, and their mode of production (Still and Worton 1993; Freeman 1993; Josselson 1993, 1996; Fairclough 2003; Calhoun 2003) is underscored in this study, hence the importance of the designation of "texts as topics rather than a resource" (Seale 2004: 254). I therefore explore textual explanation for the multiplicity of identity narratives in "how different discourses and different identities in them are produced" (ibid). However, I argue the case for enriching the social constructionist position with specific aspects of philosophical hermeneutism which eschew suggestions that interpretation of texts could be a source of truth (Schwandt 2000). I emphasize the rhetorical procedures and aporias that characterize the process of production of narratives and texts, the implications of oral production of the texts of the past, the constructionist/creative aspects, and the vagaries of memory (Thompson 2009; Freeman

1993) especially with regard to memory lapse. The study favors the arguments in the concept cosmopolitanism (Menon 2009; Anderson 1983; Appiah 2006) as a method of understanding the constitution of ethnic nations which recognizes diversity in ethnic composition against the popular homology arguments.

### 1.7.2. Methods of data collection

The fieldwork on which this study is based was conducted in Ebunyole between December 2006 and March 2007. (One interview and archival research were conducted in Nairobi; one other interview was conducted at the headquarters of the Church Missionary Society [CMS] Maseno North Diocese at Kakamega, the hearquarters of the Western Province of Kenya). However, the real process began in December 2005 – January 2006 when I went to do the "general gathering interviews" or the pilot study (Thompson 1988: 196) as a way of "mapping out the field and picking out ideas and information" (ibid).

I initially set out to conduct about 12 interviews but I ended up carrying out more than 30 interviews. At the end of an interview session, some participants would often press on me to interview some other person they considered a better expert in what they understood to be my area of interest. Such incidence suited my purposes well because it confirmed the notion of history as a "continuous dialogue" (Hall 1989: 20) which is core to this study. At other times some people who knew my mission would attract my attention to an event occurring somewhere in Ebunyole which they thought would be relevant to my study (such as the interview on which Chapter 3 and [partly] Chapter 4 are based). Such developments account for the increase in the number of interviews.

For each interview, I typically started by asking for the biographical details of each interviewee. Cohen and Adhiambo (1987: 275) make a crucial observation when they assert that "diverse and incongruent elements are condensed into, or suspended from the [historical] text…. [hence] sessions of history telling… are moments of 'workshop history.'" Thus, whereas asking for the biodata is a basic requirement for any ethnographic research, in my case obtaining biographical details and sketches of the interviewee's life history was significant because of my interest in establishing how personal experiences influence perceptions of the past especially as underscored by Freeman (1993), Ochberg (1996) and Josselson (1996). My position here coincides with the assertion that telling the past is not a value free endeavor but it is a struggle to stabilize and domesticate "the logic of the true self" (Hall 1989: 20). Hence, one of the notions that informed my approach is summarized by Cohen and Odhiambo (1989: 275) when they assert that history is "addressed, received and presented as material for power… [resulting in] discoordination and contention in the holding of knowledge"; and by Ibrahim (2001) about History telling as a site for resumption of "unfinished business". So telling history is inseperable from daily social processes.

Two main questions guided the process at each interview session. After the preliminaries, the first question for each interviewee would be: Are you Omunyole? This would be followed by: Who are Abanyole and where did they come from? The answers to these questions often generated heated exchanges and disputes which made up the texts I collected. In situations where there was only one narrator as in the case of Muchel'le and Okweingoti (Chapter Two) he would often take the opportunity to engage discourses that undermined his authenticity by emphasizing more inclusive versions of the Nyole origin narratives, which suited my purpose. However, some supplementary questions would be asked depending on the responses and the need, which would always be unique to each interview session. This means

that the interview process was less formal and was directed by the context. The result was that most of the interview sessions would last more than one-and-a-half hours. However, it was not unusual to have interviews which stretched well over three hours especially where "facts" were contested or alternative pasts needed disclosure, or the narrator simply wanted to use the opportunity to clarify issues. My approach is informed by the advise of Thompson (1988: 196) who lists "an interest and respect for people as individuals, and flexibility in response to them; an ability to show understanding and sympathy for their point of view; and … a willingness to sit quietly and listen" as essential qualities of a good oral history interview.

Four methods of data collection were used. First, participant observation was used during all narration of the experience of the past. The ethnographer's positionality (Schwandt 2000) was emphasized during the performance because personal idiosyncrasies and experiences, and the relationship between the researcher and the community is interrogated in this study since these are inevitably implicated in the data collected because a research project can never be free of the researcher's influence (Keesing 1985).

Secondly, interviews were used to raise the biographical profiles of both the narrator and the members of the audience who participated in the performance by asking questions or expressing their views on the rendering of the past, or by offering alternative versions of the past. Hence, the method was used to surface opinions of the audience towards versions of narratives of the past they had the opportunity to hear, thus surfacing the dynamism in the conception of the past as truth. This method is informed by the experience of Lonsdale (discussed in Peterson 2004: 72) whereby during the presentation of their land grievances before the colonial authorities in Nyeri in the 1930s, Kikuyu leaders purported to represent

the overarching story of injustice against the community but this representation masked the disparity of opinion and the existence of contradictory narratives on the issue of land. This way the assertion by Hall (1989) that "history has to be understood as a continuous dialogic relationship between that which is already made and that which is making the future" and the present was underscored. Equally such interviews exposed how each narrator acquired her/his version and and often gestured towards the anxieties involved (Freeman 1993; Lentz 2000) in the desire to have certain versions prevail while suppressing other versions.

The foregoing method contrasts with what Cohen and Odhiambo (1987: 282) call the tribunal process of history whereby earlier historiographers of Western Kenya used the chiefs to summon potential sources to the chief's office. Such sources would be required to narrate community history in the presence of the intimidating figure of the chief as a government agent at a time when arrests by chiefs over tax evasion were common in Ebunyole. It is my argument that such a context is constrictive; it interferes with creative freedom and scuttles debate among the community historians. Cohen and Odhiambo (ibid) suggest that the potentially alienating tribunal method was used by Ogot (1967). Some Nyole elders implied that Were (1967) also used a similar approach. The consequence is that the Nyole elders have failed to identify with their history as produced by Were in a manner similar to what Cohen and Odhiambo (ibid) observe about the reception of Ogot (1967).

Thirdly**,** photography and audio/video recording were used to record the interviews and performances for transcription and analysis. Video recording was crucial for capturing the gestures and other nuances in the performance for clues on how the performer enhances his narrative to persuade his audience, and also for capturing the dynamics of power play (Kiesling 2006; Foucault 1984; Odhiambo and Cohen 1987) in situations of competing

narrators. The actions of the ethnographer were also captured on camera for scrutiny of how my influence contributed to the narratives I received. This is because this study emphasizes the importance of contextual interactions in production of meaning during performance.

Fourth, archival studies were used to peruse archival records at the Kenya National Archives (KNA). While viewing the archival data as other texts, they were scrutinized for how they echo/deviate from the narratives without privileging any of the two sets of data. Digression might index the changes that Nyole self perception has undergone, but it may also implicate contextual factors during narration. For sampling, I used knowledgeable persons to locate resource persons from various Nyole clans. Others were found where necessary through snowballing because history/traditions are a specialised area typically associated with certain (usually elderly) men. However, the decision to approach this matter with an open mind yielded the participation of some youth and women as very important resource persons as seen in Chapter 4, which interrogates the perceptions about the relations between historical knowledge and age, and gender. In each case I asked participants to tell stories about the origin and past of the community while I collected texts-in-performance. The study was receptive to the possibility of the ethnographer's influence on the performance to facilitate the scrutiny of the notion of the ethnographer as the texts that s/he collects. This understanding informed the methods of data collection wherein first, I paid close attention to all the pre-interview discourses about my research project and how I was understood and second, I during each interview stayed within the focus of the field camera with the object of recording every fragment of my actions in relation to the performance for scrutiny afterwards.

## 1.8. Data Analysis

The study analyses two sets of data. First is the transcribed texts of Nyole oral historical texts, while the second is the contextual information which illustrates the background against which the texts are realized. But more crucially, the contextual information encompasses the pretext which the text "transforms, modifies, elaborates, or extends" Culler (1998). In this sense, the study takes cognizance of Hofmeyr's observation (1994: 181) about the "complex links that unite the producer [storyteller], text, audience and the world in which they exist".

As the background against which textual meaning is actualized, the contextual features are grouped as follows. First, there is the social history of the text which highlights both the pretext and the events that they foreground against those they silence. For instance, some Nyole historical narratives deemphasize the Ugandan cradle even though some of the Nyole of Eastern Uganda see their home as the cradle of all Abanyole and subconsciously perpetuate this in their stories[9]. Secondly, the archival records offer some insights into the Nyole past from the onset of colonization. Hence, they offer some crucial information on the Nyole character against which the Nyole texts are read, not necessarily for accuracy but for the way the texts accentuate or contradict such pretexts. When such records are read with the texts, they can give clues as to the transformation the story of origin and Nyole identity has undergone.

[9] One Ugandan Munyole (mzee Bilikile, since deceased) thinks the obliteration of the sense of the cradle from Kenyan Nyole memory is typical of all Abanyole. He says Abanyole are reluctant to identify themselves as such. And he cites the case of the former Ugandan President, Godfrey Binaisa, whom he says is a Munyole but identified himself as a Muganda (of the Baganda ethnic group of Uganda). This calls for inquiry into repression as a factor in Nyole performance of identity.

Thirdly, there is the performer himself who engages meaning implied in one and two above by recasting and reframing the meaning with a uniquely personal idiolect/style (White 1978) which gives the narratives a personal texture. Hence, the argument about the uncertainty of the boundaries between history, fiction, and autobiography (Easton 2006), the assertion that the opportunity to narrate history is also the moment of self-representation (Clopper 2006), and the assertion that the moment of narration is the instance to give vent to "intricately woven narcissistic tapestries" (Josselson (1996: 70) inform the understanding of why the past is narrated. The study therefore establishes how the narrator, while operating within tradition extends meaning by inflection/deflection while taking generic boundaries for granted to familiarize/defamiliarize meaning and prescribe imaginary resolutions for discontinuities and contradictions. I have in mind one performer who is a well respected Christian and a preacher. In performing Nyole genealogies, he bridges discontinuities and contradictions by giving Nyole ancestors Christian names. Even then, it is clear that the ancestors he talks about could only have lived before the coming of Christianity.

Analysis is informed by Hofmeyr's (1994: 106) assertion that narratives can provide historical understanding and social and cultural interpretation, and that historical meaning is only discernible when "close attention is paid to the narrative form." This assertion echoes White (1978) who recommends approaching history via the literary devices of tropes. The analysis therefore proceeds by locating contradictions and instances of hybridization, bricolaging, intertextuality, troping et cetera. Hence, attention is paid to how a "text quotes, plagiarizes or alludes to other texts" (Stam et al. 1992: 206). However where Stam et al. talk about plagiarism, I would rather use the term reproduction to avoid the implied illegality because it has no sense in both textuality and the oral context. At the same time, I also look out for dialogism in focusing on the interactions and tensions between events in the same

narrative, and between narratives. The naming of ancestors referred to above is a good example which calls attention to itself when it inflects the story and inserts incongruent features. I also look for instances of hypertextuality manifested in implied relationship between anterior and posterior texts in which the posterior or the latter text's dialogic relation with the earlier one is seen in the terms of modifying, extending, elaborating, and transforming the earlier text (Stam et al 1992: 209).

In all the cases I look for how Kenneth Burke's master tropes – namely metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony (White 1978: 5) – operate. White (1978: 5) underscores the significance of these features when he suggests that the tropes are the core features in the construction of meaning in the relationship implied in all forms of intertextuality on which the interaction between text and context rests.

### 1.9. Thesis organization

The study has focused on the narratives of Abanyole origin and how the dynamics of past clan interaction reflect in and might explain the practice of daily life in Ebunyole. Whereas to a casual observer, the Nyole social structure (highlighted above) which creates a hierarchy between the two sets of Nyole clans may no longer be palpable in the contemporary daily life, the study underscores the significance of the vestiges of the social organization in the daily inter- and intra-clan interactions and the corollary for Nyole identities and sense of belonging. The study proceeds from the premise that contemporary life may have diminished the consequences of the social structure but the ramifications continue, albeit subliminally, to manifest themselves in the intra-Nyole social interactions. For instance, the politics of access to commercial property at Luanda Market wherein it is claimed that Abasikhale clan in whose

land the market is sited have conspired not to sell plots to outsiders makes sense within the framework of the latent dynamics of the old binary. In turn, the trend mirrors how land scarcity has been brought to bear on Nyole conception of the self and the other. Hence, the study attempts to understand narrating the past as trying to come to terms with the implications of the social hierarchy by both those it marginalizes and those it legitimates.

The work is therefore divided into seven chapters, each of which tries to expound on the implications of some aspects of the Nyole social dichotomy. As the introductory chapter, Chapter One highlights the background of Abanyole in order to underscore the issues that the study focuses on. The chapter then gives an overview of the literature on ethnicity and the theoretical and methodological issues that are implicated in the study of ethnicity. Thus, the chapter underscores figures of discourse, the way people talk about their past and how they perceive themselves, and the way they signify with the rhetoric of the discourses as the location of the meaning and significance of narrating the past. Chapter Two explores the background of the Nyole clan dichotomy that underwrites the Nyole social divide and its proposition for the Nyole sense of belonging. Using patterns in the narratives collected as the foundation, the chapter traces the notion of locale of origin that each cohort of clans seems to prefer between Uganda and outside Uganda as an upshot of the divide. The chapter asserts that the point of origin preferred by either side of the dichotomy speaks directly to the clan binary. Hence, either site is concretized or undermined depending on how it legitimates or demoralizes the holder's sense of inclusion. The chapter tries to understand the constrictions that notions of ethnic nationalism impose on those they exclude and thus lays the background for Chapter Six which comes later and whose focus is beyond nationness.

Chapter Three looks at the mediative function of the context in the narration of the past. Underscoring narration as contextual power play, the chapter highlights how three aspects of the context: gerontocracy, gender, and the ethnographer are implicated in the events narrated and the general interaction within the narrative space. The chapter underscores the significance of the narrative occasion as an opportunity to circumvent or affirm the order invested by social institutions with the objective of dominating the narrative space and expressing individuality, as well as a chance to deal with what Ibrahim (2001) calls unfinished business. It is apparent that the notions of outsiderness/insiderness which the clan dichotomy emphasizes acquire new meaning in situations where the dividing lines of the dichotomy are ambiguous such as in circumstances of intra-clan contest. But the chapter also negates the notion of the neutrality of the ethnographer by highlighting the ethnographer's influence on the conception of the narrative event and ways in which s/he is responsible for the kind of narratives s/he collects. Hence, the narrative event makes sense as the mirror of, and the site for espousing the dynamics of social life and ways of knowing.

Chapter Four focuses on ways in which the individual narrator perceives his role as a community historian through narrative conception and the location of the narrating self in relation to the events narrated. The chapter asserts that the opportunity to narrate the past offers a chance for revisioning and modification of the conception of both that past and the life story of the narrating self and her/his relationship with society. Consequently, the chapter explores how to understand the resultant notions of kinds of the past underpinned by circumstances whereby the past is restructured in narrative to accommodate the life experience of the narrating self, Hence, Chapter Three and Four are related in so far as they underscore the purpose of narrating the past not for the sake of reliving the past, but for the

ways in which it speaks to the individual and collective conditions of life in the present including the immediate present of narration.

Chapter Five and Six focus on discursive attempts to overthrow or diminish the implications of the clan dichotomy. Chapter Five highlights how modernity and modern technology such as writing, documentation and archiving have been appropriated, made Nyole and deployed for the purpose of discursively subverting the restrictive Nyole social structure and its implications as well as validating opinion. One of the ways in which it is deployed is through appropriation of its signification to read and reconstitute the archive of community memory and conceptions of the past by diminishing the implications of the clan dichotomy through recontextualization to foreground other events and ways of knowing the past. Thus, it yields custody of the past to those whom the past negates. Chapter Six focuses on conceptions of boundaries of the ethnic nation and the notions of outsiderness and insiderness. It explores the notion of narrating the past as destabilizing Nyole teleology through gesturing to the discontinuities and incommensurables and inexplicables within the nation space and thus emphasizing the notion of the space as striated rather than homogeneous. The chapter also underscores how the presence of the Luoness across the border offers the alternative to Nyoleness and dampens the effect of marginalization by the Nyole center. The chapter underscores the conception of an inclusive Nyole identity that is underpinned by the concept of the transnation which allows cultural flows across the boundaries of contiguous national spaces and limits the impact of exclusion from the nation. Chapter Seven concludes the thesis. It sums up the main arguments of the study and highlights the contributions and implications of the study for the area of discourses of ethnicity and and oral history.

# Chapter Two

# Figuring the nation: conceptions of Nyole nationality, nationness and belonging

## 2.0. Overview

This chapter explores the strategies employed in the imagination and the scale of representation of the past – origin, passage and final settlement of the Abanyole people in Ebunyole in Western Kenya – and the social conditions underlying the imaginations of Nyole identities. The focus of the chapter is on the social dynamics informing the processes of production of discourses of Nyole etiology and how the dynamics are reproduced in the categories of community origin narratives. Hence, I explore ways in which the narrative event converts into an occasion to revision or invent the past (White 1978; Hobsbawm 1983; Anderson 1991; Bhabha 1990; Freeman 1993; Barber 2006). This investigation is underpinned by a context where on the one hand, in the day-to-day-life Abanyole usually affirm a bona fide Nyole identity through figures such as: "*ndi Omunyole/Anyole lichina*" (I am solid rock Nyole), *abolubambwa lwa Anyole*" (descendants of Anyole ), *aboluyia lwa Anyole* (of Anyole nation), *Abaana ba Anyole* (children/descendants of Anyole) as shown in Chapter One. Others simply respond affirmatively to the appellation "Anyole" or *omwibule* (legitimate descendant) to assert legitimate descent from the legendary first Nyole ancestor.

On the other hand, when the historians of the various clans narrate their past/origin, what emerges is a multiplicity of often contradictory narratives which subvert the neat discourses of a monolithic Nyole descent projected in the public sphere. The consequence is first, of the more than 78 Nyole sub-clans, the number of those who claim Anyole ancestry remains fluid,

vacillating between 3 and in excess of 78 depending on how they are enumerated. Secondly, Nyoleness seems to be marked by contradiction and double-voicedness (Irvine 2006) wherein Nyole identities are asserted and repudiated. Expression of Nyoleness is also characterized by double-consciousness, defined by Dubois (1994: 5) as a two-ness of being "an American, a Negro; ... two warring ideals in one… body….", and the Negro "wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American" (1994: 6). Whereas Dubois is referring to the African American context the description fits certain characteristics of expression of Nyoleness by the *Abamenyibwa* cohort where they want to assert both their inimitable clan, and Nyole identities all at once. These make affirmation of Nyoleness uncertain and circumstantial. The upshot of the state of affairs is a fragmentary situation which generates multiple notions of Nyole identities and etiologies as the following two scenarios illustrate.

First, a common pattern that I encountered in interviews was that the sources would start by asserting their *Anyole lichina/omwibule* (authentic Nyole) ancestry and then proceed to steadily undermine that assertion, often by deconstructing the basis of Nyoleness. For example, during interviews with Abalukhoba, one of the Nyole clans, a community historian repudiated Nyole ancestry thus: "*Ifwe sikhuli Abanyole tawe, khwarula Bukoba, khwachenda khumatsi*" (We are not Abanyole; we came from Bukoba [Tanzania],). He then added; "We walked on the water surface [of Lake Victoria] when we were coming here." The water he refers to is Lake Victoria which surrounds the Bukoba Island which they claim as their origin. The assertion underscores the diversity and superiority of his clan as opposed to other clans which claim to have walked along the banks of the River Nile to reach Ebunyole (for instance, as narrated by one source Afubwa, interviewed 3 January 2007).

It is thus apparent that the desire to project clan distinction can be so acute that details such as the manner of movement and entry into Ebunyole are underscored as the all important distinction marker. But here, the deliberate projection of the extra-ordinary fete of conquest of Inyanza (the lake) by walking on its waters while other Abanyole could only walk along the banks of the river connotes superior self-perception of the clan. Such a sense of superiority and difference seems to inform the deliberate discursive location of the narrator's clan on the margins of the mainstream narratives which assert Uganda as the origin of Abanyole. Remarkably, a fellow clansman affirmed this outsiderness thus: **"**The first people, our ancestors, preceded these Abanyole." Yet at the start of the interview and subsequently, the two together with the other interviewees answered affirmatively to my question whether they were Abanyole.

Secondly, the narratives of two sources from Abasiekwe clan about the clan's connection with Nyole ancestry are marked by contradiction. Abnery Osango, the leader of Abasiekwe lineage of rain-makers (interviewed 10 January 2007), asserted that Abasiekwe descended directly from Anyole. Surprisingly though, Rev Aggrey Anduuru of the same clan (interviewed 2 and 4 February 2007) who has extensively researched Nyole pasts (I have discussed his research in detail in Chapter Five) started his narrative by negating Nyoleness: "*ifwe sikhuli Abanyole tawe khwarula Eburebe…Ebunyala*" (we are not Abanyole, we came from Bunyala." Bunyala is a diverse Luhya 'sub-nation' located about 45 and 15 kilometers respectively to the North of Ebunyole and Kakamega, the Western provincial headquarters). Thus, even at the intra-clan level, divergence underpins conceptions of Nyole etiology and identity. Similar contradictions are discernible in several other narratives: Samson Ansachi of the Abamukunzi clan (interviewed 18 January 2007), Elijah Amookola of the Abasikhale clan (8 February 2007), John Andebe of the Abasiralo clan (09 February 2007), Lazaro

Okumbe of the Aberanyi clan (3 February 2009), and many others. The issue that arises then is what purpose narrating the past might serve beyond reliving the past. Might narrating the past offer the opportunity to interrogate other narratives which superimpose on the identity space of the narrator as implied in Chapter One?

One remarkable upshot of the foregoing which further complicates the already convoluted scenario, and which informs this investigation is the emergence of a pattern in the narratives whereby inclusion/exclusion into Nyoleness seems to be subtly staked on the issue of the exact locale of origin of Abanyole between (a) contemporary Uganda, and (b) beyond Uganda, and the nature of the social formations which various Nyole clans cleaved from to form a distinct Nyole polity. It is apparent that Nyole identities are multiple, fragmentary and circumstantial, a condition that was profoundly manifested during the campaigns for the 2007 parliamentary elections when sub-texts of authenticity/outsiderness were subtly inserted in several campaign discourses which broached the issues of lineage and clan origin to justify claims of who can legitimately represent the Abanyole in parliament, as demonstrated in Chapter One. Thus, the past of Abanyole is an unsettled and unstable site of contradictions and of constant struggle and negotiation of the obscure issue of conditions of acceptability of Nyoleness. Hence, the sub-texts of the dichotomy of the Nyole clans though not apparent in daily discourses seem to be ingrained in the subconscious and inform the daily struggles with the contradictions of multiple expressions of Nyole identity. Thus, conditional affirmation of the identity or affirmation-by-negation is the effect. (For instance, some narrators assert firmly: “we are not Abanyole” even as they claim to elicit the Nyole past).

Consequently, one of the tasks of this chapter is to highlight the significance of the Nyole social structure and how this is brought to bear on the way Nyole origin, past and identity are

perceived and talked about. The binary opposition between two sets of clans: *Abene liloba* (owners of the land – clans which claim absolute rights to the land by virtue of genealogical connection with Anyole, the eponymous founder of the Nyole polity) and *Abamenyibwa* (tenant clans – those whose ancestors apparently arrived later and initially accessed the land at the discretion of the "owners" [Owen 1932; Olumwullah 2002]) which subtly underpins the way Nyole reality is perceived, is fundamental to the concerns of this chapter. The ambiguity of the Nyole concept, *omurende*, is also emphasized. *Omurende* means both neighbor and outsider/foreigner and is often used to describe the "non-mainstream" clans especially those settled in the midst of the "mainstream clans". Thus, its use can create tensions depending on the context because of its connotations. I have discussed this Nyole dichotomy in Chapter One. However, as I demonstrate below, my interest here is in the pattern that seems to emerge wherein the preference for either Uganda or beyond Uganda origin narratives seems to reproduce this dichotomous *Abene Liuloba/Abamenyibwa* social structure. Therefore the issue is the extent to which performance of origin and the past as well as inclination towards a particular site of origin may be said to be an intertextual discursive process which either affirms or contests the exclusive social structure.

The ambivalence in the manifestation of Nyole identity raises the question of how to explicate Nyole identity. Should community bonds be understood in cultural-linguistic terms or in in terms of descent (Lentz 2000: 137; Olumwullah 2002: 37; Were 1967: 131)? To what extent might the beyond-Uganda category of locale of origin be said to be a dialogic strategy to dilute, undermine or contest the Nyole social structure, or to resist total homogenization into Nyole identity? In this chapter, I highlight the two sets of Nyole origin narratives in so far as they seem to unconsciously resonate with the Nyole social structure and underpin the divergences in the existing scholarship on the pasts of the wider Luhya polity which

encompasses the Nyole 'sub-nation' as I show below. However, I focus on the beyond-Uganda category, first in order to explicate the sheer scope of how they imagine the spatial and temporal expansiveness of Nyole etiology through extending the notion of origin beyond Uganda. Secondly, I seek to understand the rationale for the preference of such a wide scope within which to define Nyole identity.

The issues that guide the investigation are how to explain the multiple and contradictory notions of Nyole 'nation' and peoplehood which Abanyole seem to navigate remarkably unobtrusively on a day-to-day basis in order to still imagine themselves as a socially cohesive entity. Therefore, in what ways can the historical narrative authenticate identity claims? What kind of cultural space is produced by ambivalent discourses of the ethnic nation? How is the Nyole polity and its past imagined and narrated and how might the narrative process and choices be said to both replicate and interrogate the Nyole social structure? How can the liminality, the state of flux of Nyole identity, be explained especially in view of disparate notions of origin? Below, I first frame this investigation within the nation-narrative debates, followed by a brief historical background to contextualize the arguments that underpin the discourses of Abanyole-Luhya identity. I then illustrate the two categories of Nyole origin narratives and the implications for Nyole identity in the subsequent section.

### 2.1. Narrating the nation

The importance of history to the identity of the nation is known and has been highlighted in various studies (for instance Olumwullah 2002; Anderson 1991; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Bhabha 1990, 1994; Brennan 1990; Khagram and Levitt 2008). But the volatility implied in the ease with which Nyole identity is picked up and dropped surfaces the issue of

the nature of the ethnic nation; a geographical space or a cognitive concept which attains materiality through narration? Two notions underpin my conception of the ethnic nation and its validation by its past: first is the nation as a community whose inscapes are illustrated by tensions, contradiction, ambivalence (Bhabha (1990: 1); a space typified by a sense of incompleteness where "meanings are partial… and history is in the process of being made" (Bhabha 1990: 3). Therefore the nation is "distinguished …by the style in which they are imagined" (Anderson 1991: 7). Second is the figuring of the nation as a narrative which loses its "origins in the myths of time and only fully realizes its horizons in the mind's eye" (Bhabha 1990: 1, 4). The two propositions emphasize two significant features of the nation which legitimate the claims and counterclaims of nationess: first, the nation as a blurred notion of the past which blunts the edges of time to produce a malleable conception of what I call national time distinguished by a sense of timelessness, or time immemorial (Brennan 1990: 45). Second is the significance of the narration process to the revitalization of the memories of the founding events. Such memories are usually blurred by the passage of time and only remembered and relived as, and through narrative. These highlight the significance of the assertion that the past is "most manifestly …a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse" (White 1973: ix, 125) to highlight the process of its enactment.

Therefore, I underscore the view that first narrating the pasts of the nation is a rhetorical process (Bhabha 1990: 3) whose meaning is textually produced through "textual strategies, metaphoric displacements, sub-texts and figurative stratagems" (Bhabha 1990: 2). Secondly, narration is a performative process (Bhabha 1990: 3) in which the discursive formations that legitimate public statements or public spheres (Gunew (1990: 100) which endorse social hierarchy are interrogated by counter-public sphere narratives (ibid). The counter-public sphere narratives are those which are marginalized by mainstream narratives (ibid). Thirdly,

narrating the past is a productive process of invention of tradition which attempts to "establish continuity with a suitable… [notion of the] past" Hobsbawm 1983: 1). Crucially, Hobsbawm adds that invention of tradition occurs when "rapid transformation of society weakens social patterns for which old traditions had been designed… or when old institutions no longer prove sufficiently adaptable or flexible or are otherwise eliminated" (1983: 4-5). This assertion resonates with the context under study where the old social structures have been undermined by modernity and social strife caused by scarcity of land thereby making possible for those marginalized by the old social set up to interrogate those structures through deleting, inflecting, refashioning or accentuating certain aspects of the narratives of origin.

### 2.2. Background: debates on the origin of the Abaluhya

In this section I explore the conditions that underpin the ambivalence in Nyole identities. However, I proceed by highlighting convergences in the performance of identity between the Abanyole and the other Luhya 'sub-nations' because the uncertainty that characterizes the manifestation of Nyole identity is reproduced both within the other Luhya 'sub-nations', and also in response to the idea of an overarching Luhya ethnic nation which circumscribes all the lacustrine Bantu communities of Kenya (Olumwullah 2002; Were 1967; Osogo 1966; Lonsdale 1977; Wagner 1949). Hence, I underscore the significance of the process of migration settlement and formation of the wider Luhya ethnic nation for the explication of the ambivalence that epitomizes perceptions of community and belonging among Abanyole, which is reproduced in the various Luhya 'sub-nations'. Therefore, the issue I highlight is the extent to which the double-voiced recognition of Luhyaness is duplicated in the perception of Nyole identity and how performance of the past might be said to engender counter-hegemonic discourses which produce conditions of acceptability of Nyole identity.

The idea of the Luhya ethnic nation took root in earnest in the 1940s (Oluwullah 2002: 40; Makila 1976: 29) in a context where independence was envisaged. At the time, the idea of larger ethnic formations both as a bargaining front and to assuage the uncertainties generated by the novel socio-political formations of the postcolonial multiethnic nation-state was in vogue in Africa (Vail 1989; Lentz and Nugent 2000; Lentz 2000). Hence the observation (Makila 1976: 29) that the idea of a Luhya polity was conceived as strategic response to the anxieties produced by the colonial creation of new tribes through reorganizing and banding together assemblages of disparate peoples and spaces of the geographically/culturally contiguous but largely autonomous Bantu communities in the Western Kenya region. This position is affirmed by studies elsewhere in Africa (Meyer 1999: 1-23; Lentz and Nugent 2000; Lentz 2006; Vail 1989; Berman 1998).[10]

The holding name Abaluhya was selected by leaders from the various Luhya groups (Makila 1976; Olumwullah 2002; Osogo 1966; Anduuru – interviewed 2 and 4 February 2007) apparently in a meeting called by the colonial administration in 1943.[11] Etymologically, the name comes from the term *oluyia*, which cuts across all Luhya dialects; it connotes a shared lineage or family courtyard. Both meanings underscore family/genealogical bonds among the Luhya communities. However, the paradox of the leaders signifying formal recognition of colonial imagination of interconnectedness of Kenyan lacustrine Bantu by envisioning them

[10] Such reorganization created the knotted issue of the lost counties in Uganda whereby the British colonial administration strategically annexed some counties from Bunyoro Kingdom to the collaborationist Buganda Kingdom to weaken Bunyoro resistance to colonial rule. The counties have remained a part of Buganda and have been the cause of tensions between the two ethnic communities (Doyle 2009; Twaddle 1993; Steinhart 1977; Beattie 1960).

[11] Opinion varies. Some say the term was used for the first time to refer to the lacustirne Bantu in the 1920s (Were 1967). In his manuscript on the history and culture of Abanyole, Rev Aggrey Anduuru says that at a meeting initiated by the colonial administration in 1944 to find a name acceptable to all the peoples of the then North Kavirondo District (the present Western Province) the name Luhya was adopted. Politicians led by Masinde Muliro then popularized the name in the late 1940s and 1950s at the time of agitation for independence, which was also the period for strategic ethnic alignment for a stake in the economy of Kenya.

in terms of genealogical links is apparent; the Luhya had all along tried to suppress this trajectory so as to safeguard separate group autonomies (Olumwullah 2002: 45; Were 1967).

On the one hand, contemporary expression of the overarching Luhya identity is a post-colonial phenomenon. On the other hand, a number of studies have observed the contradiction wherein diverse Luhya communities also tried to cling onto their distinctive identities (Olumwullah 2002: 45; Were 1967; Osogo 1966; Makila 1976; Wagner 1949) in a context where "mobility of the groups before or even after settlement facilitated… mingling" (Olumwullah 2002:39; Were 1967; Osogo 1966; Wagner 1949). Hence, it is possible to say that by the time of its legitimation in the 1940s, the basis of the overarching Luhya ethnic nation was both already laid and in progress through trans-community mobility for various reasons ranging from famine, taboo banishment, adventure, the need by medicine men to locate themselves in proximity with their clientele (Olumwhullah 2002; Berman 1998), and many others. Hence for instance, Erasto Nyong'a (interviewed 3 January 2007), said that the the Ababakhi clan, came from Ebulogooli but initially settled among their Abasilatsi hosts as *abafumu/abalesi* (medicine-men/healers). Similarly, Alwala Makaali (interviewed 26 December 2006) asserted that the Abamusila clan originally came from Luoland as a*juoga* (Luo for medicine-man) on the invitation of the legendary founder of the Abasilatsi clan – Amukhoye. Such trans-community migrations created the continuities that validated the imagination of a Luhya ethnic nation. In this sense, wider Luhya identity configurations (to reverse Olumwullah's words) was already being "erected at the back-stage level even as it was [contested] by commentaries made at the front stage" (2002: 40), thus underscoring the ambivalence that has typified Luhya and by extension Nyole identities.

However, the notion of the overarching Luhya ethnic nation incorporating diverse 'sub-nations' has generated a number of arguments that variously interrogate or validate the idea. The arguments boil down to whether the 'sub-nation'/clan can claim a linear ancestry. There are two main arguments on the issue of the origin and background of the polities encompassed within (and thus on the conditions of possibility of) the Luhya ethnic nation. The first argument emphasizes the idea that the Luhya are disparate groups that share very little in common. The second argument asserts that although the Luhya communities have usually charted separate destinies, from a broader perspective they are bonded by a range of common factors; among them the fact that quite a number of them detached from the same, or a contiguous set of communities in Eastern Uganda to migrate to Ebunyole (Were 1967).

### 2.3. The Luhya: disparate or related groups?

The notion of a Luhya ethnic nation has been validated by the assertion that although Luhya languages and cultures vary from each other, the variations merely highlight superficial distinctions among the various Luhya communities but they are not so significant as to encumber intergroup cultural continuities. Hence, the different language groups are deemed as a part of the continuum of dialects of the same linguistic-cultural group (Lentz 2000: 137; Olumwullah 2002; Were 1967). However, the notion of the Luhya 'sub-nations' as a disruptive diversity has been validated by highlighting two extremes of the Luhya cultural-linguistic continuum – the Maragoli and the Bukusu – whose dialects are cited as the embodiment of Luhya linguistic-cultural discontinuity. These divergences have been represented as figuring the disparities of the origin of the Luhya 'sub-nations' and clans. Hence, two contradictory assertions have typified the discourses on Abaluhya: first, there is little in the form of a cultural commonwealth among the Luhya groups (Aswani, and Malusu

[quoted in Olumwullah 2002: 37], and Makila 1978). Second, any bonds among the Luhya 'sub-nations' are best understood in terms of the origin of the clans and sub-clans from the greater Eastern Uganda Bantu groups (Olumwullah 2002).

As a result, on the one hand, some narratives assert that Abalogooli, the Luhya 'sub-nation' located to the east of Ebunyole, share some remote ancestry with Abanyole (Brown Eyahuma, interviewed 19 December 2006; Rev. Aggrey Anduuru, interviewed 2 and 4 January 2007; Ayub Muchel'le, interviewed 23 December 2006; Olumwullah 2002; Were 1967; Osogo 1966 for instance) and they came from Uganda. According to this argument, Muhindila/Amuhinda was the father of the founders of the Nyole, Logooli, and Wanga 'sub-nations' of the Luhya ethnic nation, as well as the Kisii who formed a distinct ethnic nation to the South of the predominantly Luo Nyanza Province. Alternatively, he is the father of all Abaluhya. Hence, Muhindila/Amuhinda is supposed to have sired Mwenje[12] the ancestor of Abanyole, Andimi/Andokooli the father of Abalogooli, as well as all the founders of the other Luhya 'sub-nations' and other lacustrine Bantu communities such as the Kisii, Kuria, Suba and Suna. The last two have since been or are in the last stages of being Luoized. This seems to be the argument that informs Were's (1967: 63) assertion that Abalogooli, Abatirichi and Abanyole "seem to have originally come from the Bantu part of Eastern Uganda."

On the other hand, some Maragoli narratives have often repudiated the possibility of remote kinship with Abanyole by asserting that Abalogooli migrated from Tanzania and not Uganda as the others claim. Besides, the Abalogooli add that they entered from the South, from the Shirati region of Tanzania, having crossed by boat up to the Suba Island of Lake Victoria in South Nyanza where they abandoned their cousins the Avasuva (Abasuba) and proceeded to

[12] Mwenje is also called Anyole in some accounts. Some say it is Mwenje who came directly from Uganda while others (like Anduuru) say Mwenje was son of Muhindila who sired Anyole then Anyole sired another Anyole, who sired the rest of Abanyole.

the Kavirondo, now Winam Gulf (Wagner 1949: 25), which is the site of the modern day Kisumu city. They then moved to Maseno from where most of the Abaluhya appear to have dispersed to colonize Luhya land. Brown Eyahuma (interviewed 19 December 2006) avows that the Maragoli try to assert their difference by derogatively referring to Abanyole as Abakamwenje (descendants of Mwenje). But some Nyole narratives affirm Abanyole descent from Mwenje so it is not clear how the name is derogatory. However, the matter is further complicated by the claim that the Suba separated from the Abasubi, a Nyole clan; and that the Suba neighbors the Abakuria (Abatende) who straddle the Kenya-Tanzania border, the Kisii and the Suna are the cousins of the Abanyole who proceeded southwestwards to the present sites in South Nyanza (Rev Anduuru interviewed 2 and 4 January, 2007).

Paradoxically, neither Abanyole nor Abalogooli seem eager to pursue the possibility of how their separate claims of connection to the Suba, the Kisii, the Kuria, and the Suna could figure remote Nyole-Logooli convergences and be read as the metaphor of the complex bonds of lacustrine Bantu. Even if the Maragooli entered from Tanzania, the possibility of interconnectedness may not be ruled out if the trajectory that asserts Bunyoro as the pre-Eastern Uganda cradle of the lacustrine Bantu is taken into account. Thus, Beattie (1960) asserts that during upheavals in Bunyoro, some groups crossed the Kagera River into the Karagwe area of Tanzania while others moved through Jinja to Eastern Uganda. The possibility of the Tanzanian group looping through Shirati to finally reconnect at Maseno with their kin who entered from Eastern Uganda is not too remote. Whatever the case, up to the 1960s and 1970s, there was regular traffic between Maragoli and Tarime in Tanzania which was intense enough to support a bus company called Tarime Bus; this might bolster the Tanzania-as-cradle-of-Maragoli and therefore their diversity argument. But Tarime is also the name of one of the nine brothers of Muhindila who accompanied him during the

migration up to Bunyore Hills (Olumwullah 2002; Anduuru, interviewed 2 and 4 February 2007), which further complicates the matter. However, some Maragooli avow that they have cousins in Tanzania with whom they share cultural-linguistic traits. This is one of the reasons why a prominent Maragoli politician (Moses Mudavadi) at one time envisaged an overarching socio-cultural organization, Maragoli East Africa, to bring together peoples who are imagined to share a remote Maragoli ancestry.[13]

On the other extreme of the Luhya linguistic continuum, the Babukusu of the Bukusu 'sub-nation' located near Mt Elgon to the North of Luhya land have often repudiated Luhya identity on account of cultural-linguistic disparities. Their sense of outsiderness is no better stressed than when they cynically refer to all other sub-groups as "Baluyia" to signify their outsiderness in that category. That context underpins the work of Makila (1976) who researched the Bukusu extensively to disprove Were's assertion that the Bukusu could be a part of the Luhya ethnic nation. Instead, Makila strives to assert Bukusu distinctiveness by avowing that some of the Bukusu clans entered Bukusu land from the southwest. Ironically, Were (1967), Olumwullah (2002) and Osogo (1966) affirm this aspect of the Bukusu movement even as they incorporate them in the Luhya ethnic nation. Even then, Makila agrees with Osogo (1966) that some Bukusu clans like Bakhone detached from other Bantu groups he seeks to distance the Bukusu from. The rest of the Bantu say they entered their respective locations from the southeast, underscoring the possibility of entry by boat or by

[13] Telephone interview with Kefa Simwa on 17 November 2009. Kefa says that a scholar from Maragoli confirmed the existence of Maragoli speakers in Tanzania. He added that some of the Maragoli who have now settled at Kanyamkago in South Nyanza and Kegati in Kisii are remnants of the Maragoli migration from Tanzania. That is probable but there was also a colonial demographic redistribution program to decongest Maragoli land which relocated part of the excess population to South Nyanza and Kisii. A possible argument is that the new arrivals added to the original population of Maragoli stragglers of the Bantu migration era. However, Were (1967) has argued that the Maragoli did not enter from Tanzania, but they simply followed their Gusii cousins to Kisii but turned back later to eventually settle in Ebulogooli. Those who say they came from Tanzania misread this Maragoli re-entry into Kisumu from South Nyanza.

walking along the edge of River Nile and Lake Victoria till the sudden dead end at Kisumu (Wagner 1949: 24).

The major point of contention between Were and Makila might be Were's dismissive assertion that "…some of the Abaluhya consider Misiri as their original homeland…" (1967: 64). But "Egypt and all it stands for… [belongs] to the realm of myth…It is quite likely that some of this myth probably originated from the Jewish History as contained in the Old Testament" (83). On the one hand, the argument by Were restricts the notion of origin to Uganda which undermines some texts of Luhya popular tradition as shown below. Thus, Makila seems to foreground the beyond-Uganda origin sub-text that is silenced and asserts Esibakala – somewhere at the Sudan Egypt border as the "known" site of Babukusu origin (1976: 28). Hence, he interrogates Were's inflection of the Uganda origin narrative that undermines Misiri-as-cradle which the Bukusu emphasize during the circumcision related rituals. On the other hand, by denting the significance of Uganda, Makila seems oblivious of the Bukusu connection with Uganda in a context where the home of Bagishu whom Babukusu assertively acknowledge as their cousins is located in Eastern Uganda.

A number of observations can be made from the foregoing arguments about Luhya identities which impinge on expression of the Nyole identities. First, the dynamism in Luhya identities is replicated in other African communities. Examples include Lentz's (2000: 142) analysis of Dagabafication and Vail and White's (1989: 152-3) assertion that several communities around Lake Malawi such as the Tonga and the Tumbuka suppressed their identities for the security of the powerful Ngoni identity. These experiences highlight the dynamic, seasonal and functional nature of ethnic identities which are constantly renegotiated and always in the process of becoming and therefore cannot entirely be explained by genealogy.

Secondly, a lot of Nyole identity debates typified my experience of accounts of the ancestry of some Abanyole clans. For instance, the the Abasikhale, the Abasiralo, the Abamulele and the Abaas'sama clans are said to have migrated from Ebulogooli, However, whereas Mr. Amookola of Ebusikhale (interviewed 8 February 2007) acknowledged that the Abasikhale and the Abasiralo clans are cousins, he asserted that the Abalogooli are merely their uncles while affirming their descent from Anyole. Similarly, the connection between the Ababayi (Nyole) and the Babayi (Bukusu) has been cited even as the Ababayi claim that Ambayi, their founding ancestor, and Asubwe, the founding ancestor of the Abasiekwe (who assert links with the Abarebe (Banyala), not the Bukusu) were twin brothers. Stories that echo such conditions are common in the rhetoric of the Nyole and the larger Luhya ethnic formations. Thus, the experience of Gunter Wagner in Maragooli might throw some light on the social formation of the Abanyole and the other Luhya 'sub-nations'. Wagner (1949) noted a lot of elasticity in identity expression among the Luhya 'sub-nations' as far back as 1934 when he started his study. He avers that all the Abalogooli "consider themselves *avana va* [children of] Mulogoli". However, the smaller clans which might have migrated from such neighboring 'sub-nations' as **the** Nyole, the Kisa or the Tiriki "try to cover up the fact so as to be considered full-fledged members of the Logoli tribe" (Wagner 1949: 60). Alternatively, they might say the "founder of the clan was related to the founder of [this or the other] sub-clans, but the exact nature of the relationship had been forgotten" (1949: 60). Hence, there is some element of connectedness among the Luhya (and by extension the Nyole) groups but the kinship bonds they often assert are better understood in cultural and metaphoric terms partly because the Luhya notions of kinship are pervasive. The issue is how to explain the modern day double-voiced response to Nyole/Luhya identity wherein the clans and 'sub-nations' respectively both desire an overarching identity and some sense of autonomy.

## 2.4. Narratives of Abanyole origin

In this section, I explore the two strands of the Abanyole origin narratives. The first category which contains the majority of the narratives I collected emphasizes Uganda as the beginning of the story of Abanyole. This category is more associated with *Abene Liloba* group of clans. The second category which was mostly associated with *Abamenyibwa* set of clans has fewer narratives but the narratives are distinguished both by their scope and by the webs of interconnectedness they weave between the events of Abanyole past and other events/communities beyond Uganda. My emphasis in each case is on the way each narrative category might be said to figure and speak to the structure of Nyole society.

### 2.4.1. Uganda origin narratives

The Uganda origin narratives assert Uganda as the source of Abanyole. The narratives may gloss over the interconnectedness between Abanyole and other Bantu groups around Africa, but they are distinguished by a pattern wherein they underscore the importance of Uganda specifically as the origin of Anyole and the Nyole genealogy and generally, of the lacustrine Bantu groups. Hence, one of the distinguishing features of this category is that it does not envision the notion of Nyoleness outside the boundaries of modern day Uganda. Below I focus on one narrator, Brown Eyahuma Ochango, who exemplifies this category.

Brown Eyahuma (born 1935) is from the Abasilatsi clan of Abanyole but he bought land and migrated to Luoland in the part of Nyanza Province which shares the border with the Abanyole/Western Province. Eyahuma (interviewed 19 December 2006) is the son of

Ochango Eyahuma who was a headman and much respected community leader and community historian of the Abasilatsi. However, Eyahuma says he learned his repertoire mainly from his grandmother. Eyahuma's experience therefore calls attention to the changing gender roles in the transmission of history in Ebunyole in a context where even Eyahuma himself asserted that knowledge of the past of the community was a men's affair discussed at the exclusive site of *esitioli* [the evening bon fire], a setting which excluded women and girls. However, the rest of his knowledge was acquired at *esitioli* in his home which brought together renowned Abasilatsi community historians such as Caleb Ot'tichilo, Raphael Nyawanga and his own father, Ochango Eyahuma. He went to school up to class 4 and then spent his entire working life as a painter in Nairobi. Now, apart from subsistence farming, he is occasionally invited to speak on the Abanyole culture and past.

Eyahuma's narrative highlights three important trajectories on the matter of the origin of the Abanyole. First he asserts that Abanyole came from Uganda and they are related to two groups there: the Banyole and the Banyoro. Apparently the Abanyole came from Bunyoro and went up to Busolwe then to Butalej'ja in Bunyole of Eastern Uganda. They then crossed the site of present Kenya-Uganda border and entered Butalanyi among the Abamarachi (a Luhya 'sub-nation') and then turned back and entered Samia (a Luhya 'sub-nation'). Some Abanyole remained in Samia and called themselves Abalunya, but they named their new settlement Ebunyole. From Samia, the main group passed through the current Siaya District of Luoland where they found Abamuhana (a related Bantu community which arrived earlier); some Abamuhana tagged along to form the Abamuhana clan in Ebunyole. They then moved to Ebusenge (Usenge?) then to Wangarodi (presumably what Ogot 2009 calls Wang'rodi) where they left a section of the Abasiloli clan (now Luoised and called Kasimoli). From here they moved to Ebusaali, then Obunga (present day industrial area of Kisumu) and onwards to

Kibuye, Ekibaswa, Enyahela, Ebutabwongo, and finally to Bunyore/Wekhomo Hills, the symbolic cradle of Abanyole.

Eyahuma's account resonates with that of Mbalukha Makaali (interviewed 18 and 26 December 2006) and a few others. However, Mbalukha avows that an additional column from a Nyole settlement in Kigumba Uganda joined the main Nyole group. Even then, other accounts (Makokha 1996 for instance) suggest that the Nyole presence in Kigumba Uganda is a postcolonial phenomenon. They were settled there as a part of the colonial 'decongesttion' strategy to ease pressure on land in Ebunyole, Kenya in the 1950s. Nevertheless, of the Uganda origin narratives, Eyahuma's and Mbalukha's are unique in so far as they locate the beginning of the migration of the Abanyole to Bunyoro at the foothills of the Ruwenzori Mountains near the Rwanda-Uganda border. The most common origin narratives which also seem to inform Luhya historiography (Osogo 1966, Were 1967, Olumwullah 2002) commence from Eastern Uganda.

However, the story of continuous Banyole (Uganda)-Abanyole (Kenya) identity at one time in the past, and the cleavage of the Abanyole of Kenya seemed to have slipped from the memory of most Banyole (Uganda) except one elder, Bilikile. Bilikile, a retired teacher who was involved in research on Lunyole language, culture, and the past has written a Lunyole-English dictionary with Prof. Susan and Prof. Michael Whyte, anthropologists from the University of Copenhagen.

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Bilikile's account is important for the reasons it cites for separation of the two Nyoles. He asserts that the Abanyole of Kenya and Uganda are descendants of two brothers. Together, the two brothers used to perform sentry duties to drive elephants off the farms. As they went

on duty one day, the elder brother borrowed the extra spear of his younger brother. Unfortunately, the elder brother impaled an elephant and it escaped across the Nile with the spear stuck in its side. Meanwhile, back at home the younger brother's daughter inadvertently swallowed a very beautiful *inyuma* [diamond]; property of the daughter of the elder brother.

Later that evening, each demanded their property. The elder brother got so persistent that the younger brother was left with no alternative but to slit his daughter's stomach to retrieve the *inyuma*. On his part, the elder brother followed the elephant across the Nile but failed to trace it. They eventually agreed to go separate ways because of imminent hostility following *esiluchi* (taboo murder in the family). The elder brother swore never to re-cross the Nile back home till he got the spear. Nevertheless, he partially retraced his steps and established a new home not too far from the collective home close to the western slopes of Mt Elgon. To this day he still trails the elephant to get the spear. Crucially, Bilikile asserts that as the younger brother went eastwards (never to be seen again), a number of groups joined his band especially from Samia, and with them he went to lay the foundation of the Kenya Abanyole.

This story augments Eyahuma's in so far as it accounts for the Banyole-Abanyole affinity and why they separated and how the group swelled its ranks as they went to Ebunyole. A few narratives (including Bilikile's) suggest that those who came from such clans as the Abatongoi and the Abamang'ali joined the Nyole group in Samia. In that case, such narratives place them outside the Nyole mainstream and gesture to one way of understanding the origins of the *Abamenyibwa* concept. However, other accounts (Okweingoti below for instance) assert that Mwenje (ancestor of the Abanyole), Anyumba (ancestor of the Basoga (Uganda), and Anyuli (ancestor of the Banyole) separated at Jinja Uganda (not Bunyole), where the Nile exits Lake Victoria because one group (the Abanyole) wanted to follow the

Lake while for the others, the river's end signified the end of adventure and possibilities. Hence, they decided to look for a suitable place nearby to settle.

Implicitly, the harmony and continuity of the flow of the Nile is a metaphor of the unity of the pre-dispersal Nyole collective. Thus, the reality of the river seems to have figured a call to continued Nyole collectivity. But the sudden change in the riverine flow seemed to presage the unsustainability of the Nyole collective hence the disarray in the symbolic association of the end of the river with the dearth of unity. This reading underscores and intensifies the significance of the Nile in the consciousness of the Nyole collective. First, the river is partly responsible for the separation because it seemed to slow down the progress of the elder brother in his bid to rescue family unity by retrieving the spear from the elephant. Now the sudden end of the river figures the end of Nyole unity. The river therefore seems to have a metaphorical value in Nyole past, which legitimates the claim by Afubwa (Interviewed 3 January 2007) and a few others that the Abanyole are the people of the Nile. Might the eminence of River Nile in Nyole narratives figure unconscious memory of the reality of the Egyptian origin of Abanyole given its fundamental location in Egyptian life from antiquity?

Remarkably, versions of Bilikile's Nyole etiology are widespread in the lacustrine region. The Nilotic Luos, neighbors of Abanyole tell a similar story to explain the rupture with their cousins the Jopadhola neighbors of Eastern Uganda Banyole. In Ebunyole Kenya, a similar story is told to explain why one clan Abamuli migrated to establish a home closer to the Luo border. On the one hand, the story appears to serve more as a pervasive stock validation of apparently inexplicable chasms among the East African lacustrine communities. On the other hand, the spread of the story seems to confirm strands of both inter-/intra-community continuities/discontinuities among the lacustrine communities, thus negating the

cultural/genealogical purity which these communities often claim. Again, the fact that the entry of the Luo in Bunyoro area might be responsible for at least part of the migration (Beattie 1960; Steinhart 1977) connotes Bunyoro as start of the Bantu-Nilotic cultural blend.

The second trajectory is the assertion that the Abanyole moved as a group to Ebunyole and therefore contradicts claims in some narratives that only one person, Anyole, came and established *oluyia lwa Anyole* [the Nyole nation] and therefore the Nyole nation is linked by genealogical bonds as some narratives suggest. Eyahuma says:

> Some people say the [authentic] Abanyole… are 12 sub-clans…. *Pa* the first born of Anyole is Omusiloli, *pa* Omusuubi, *pa* whoever…! *But I don't think so. When I look closely I find that the Abanyole came as a group*… One man cannot move alone. There were wild animals: elephants, lions, leopards… they were in the forests. It was wild. There were no human settlements. Can one man move?" (Interviewed 19 December 2006).

Eyahuma makes clear he is expressing an opinion, implying that he does not take indiscriminately what he was told; he interrogates and revises it to make sense. Hence, he goes on to endorse his movement-as-a-group position by saying that if there were some Abasiloli and Abasuubi (said to be twin brothers) who remained at Wangarodi and yet others proceeded to establish the Abasiloli and the Abasuubi clans in Ebunyole, then that means that first, the two clans did not start in Ebunyole. Secondly, there must have been more than one Omusiloli and Omusuubi for some to remain at Wangarodi and become the present Kasimoli clan in Luoland while another group went to establish the Abasiloli and the Abasuubi clans in Ebunyole. So, both cannot be said to descend from a single man. Thus, Eyahuma affirms Bilikile's claim that even if his focus is on the second Nyole brother, other people joined his

party on the way so they arrived in Ebunyole as chippings from other groups, but united by common purpose and sustained by evolving a culture, rather than blood bonds.

On the one hand, Eyahuma's claim here seems to signify the primacy of the core Nyole group around which the chippings from other groups agglutinated; the core Nyole went on to form *Abene Liloba* set of clans while the others formed the *Abamenyibwa* set. On the other hand, the claim reinforces his view that Abanyole are united by language precisely because of this disparity, as he says: "This tongue we speak is Olunyole…. So we are Abanyole. Where tongues separate is where different group names begin." Thus, his position echoes Lentz (2000: 137) and Olumwullah (2002) about linguistic-cultural definition of ethnicity. But Eyahuma connotes two echelons of Nyole identity: the first is the inner core defined by lineage bonds; the second is at the metaphoric level defined by the common mother tongue (Hobsbawm 1983: 14), thus reproducing the existing Nyole clan hierarchy.

The third trajectory is the claim of interconnectedness of all the Abaluhya. Eyahuma claims that all the Luhya clans and 'sub-nations', except the Bukusu, can trace their ancestry back to Muhindila and his wife Liayela. However, unlike many narratives which claim that Muhindila moved out of Uganda, Eyahuma asserts that Muhindila lived and brought up his children in Uganda. The offspring, and not Muhindila, migrated to form the settlements that have coalesced into the present-day Luhya ethnic nation. At the same time, many narratives talk about Muhindila as the father of Mwenje who in turn was the father of Anyole. In that way, they localize Muhindila to the founding of the Nyole 'sub-nation'. However, Eyahuma's account negates that position by representing him as the overarching figure that legitimates the Luhya ethnic nation. This position seems to contradict the earlier assertion that diverse groups coaleasced around a Nyole core.

It is apparent that Eyahuma ambivalently both foregrounds and undermines the genealogy trajectory. These uncertain shifts can be explained by Bhabha's assertion that history is half made because it is "in the process of being made" and the ambivalence is because history is "caught uncertainly in the act of composing its powerful image" (1990: 3). It is apparent that the actual bonds and events of the cleavage are blurred leaving a nebulous idea on which the rest is discursively reconstructed (Richardson 1997). Hence, Bunyoro-Bunyole-Kigumba as narrated seem more about legitimating the status quo, both of the Nyole 'sub-nation' and the *Abene Liloba/Abamenyibwa* hierarchy of Nyole clans, than about reproducing the events-as-happened. Crucially, Eyahuma's strategy of interrogating, disputing and altering other narratives affirms the notion of narration as a dynamic cultural editing process (Barber 2006: 19).

### 2.4.2. Beyond Uganda origin narratives

The second category of the Abanyole origin narratives is distinguished, first by the sheer scale of temporal and spatial framework within which Nyole identity is imagined, second, by the infrequency of their occurrence, and third by the location of the narrators' clans in relation to the Nyole hierarchy of clans. During my fieldwork, I collected only two such narratives even though some of the spaces traversed by the Nyole which these narratives circumscribe were mentioned intermittently and incidentally in others accounts. Unlike the Uganda origin category, this category situates the locale of Abanyole origin and the commencement of the southward journey either to the north beyond Uganda, or further away outside the African continent to ancient Mesopotamia, Israel and the Middle East. But the issue is whether there is any sense of security that the expanded conception which weaves

strings of interconnectedness between notions of origin of Nyoleness and ancient civilizations and what such fashioning of Nyole identity might afford for the performer. Below I give two such narratives, one by Ayub Muchel'le and the other by Christopher Okweingoti.

#### 2.4.2.1. Muchel'le and the Abyssinia-Israel perspective of the Nyole origin

Ayub Muchel'le (born 1932) comes from the Abatongoi clan. Muchel'le (interviewed 23 December, 2006) dropped out of school after Kenya African Preliminary Exam (KAPE) because he could not raise school fees for secondary education. He joined the then East African Railways and Harbors (EARH, later Kenya Railways) in the late 1950s where he worked till his retirement in the early 1980s to concentrate on business, politics and church work – he often preaches to the local Church of God congregation. Muchel'le acquired part of the knowledge on Nyole past through apprenticeship to Okubo, his maternal grandfather for whom he performed miscellaneous chores. Remarkably though, in addition to the heritage from his grandfather, Muchel'le also deliberately collected a range of narratives of all Nyole lineages as a part of his political strategy to win a local authority seat as well as assist his party candidate win the Emuhaya Constituency parliamentary seat. Hence, Muchel'le has meticulously kept detailed annual diaries over a stretch of time. The diaries contain records of the past and lineage bonds of all Nyole clans. He referred to these diaries occasionally to nudge his memory during the performance.

Muchel'le asserts that King Solomon from a land called Ebukurene "married a woman from… Absinia – that is Abyssinia… Ethiopia…." The woman, the Queen of Sheba, met King Solomon when she took materials from her kingdom for the construction of "the Temple of God." She "united with Solomon and bore a son called Simoni Omukurene whose

name appears in the Bible." They crossed from Ebukurene (presumably somewhere in Israel) and came to Emisiri (Egypt). In Egypt, the father of Amuhinda (the ancestor of Abanyole – Muhindila?) was born to Simoni Omukurene. So Abakurene "is the family of Solomon and Anyole." From Emisiri, the father of Amuhinda crossed to Sudan, Ethiopia, and then to Uganda and settled among a people called Abanyoro, whom Muchel'le says are Abajaluo [Luos] "called Jopadhola". The Jopadhola and Banyoro of Uganda are very distinct groups located in Eastern and Western Uganda respectively. Whereas the notion of lacustrine Bantu and Nilotic purity is untenable, it is not clear how in this narrative the Banyoro, a Bantu group, transmutes unproblematically into the Jopadhola, a Nilotic group.

Apparently, a Jopadhola leader had open sores which one of the Abanyole pricked inadvertently: "Then it turned out, '*Uhu*! You have come here and you know the problem of our man, yet you go ahead and trample on his wounds? You must leave!'" Presumably, Amuhinda was unsettled by this hostility and left Bunyoro all the way to the site of the present lakeside city of Kisumu where he stayed with his children: Andimi, Mwenje, Akusii, and Kawango.[14] Later on, the sons separated to occupy their present locations. Mwenje, the ancestor of the Abanyole went and established his home among the rocks at Wekhomo at the foot of the Ebuhando Hills.

The Abaluhya generally have referred to Ethiopia/Sudan (Nubia)/Egypt (Misiri) as their origin.[15] However, Muchel'le's narrative innovatively draws networks of connections

[14] Muchel'le calls Abawanga Kawango, a Luo translation of the name.

[15] The Bukusu, the Kabras and the Tachoni talk of this connection with the Ethiopian Dynasty. Muchel'le extended it to Israel. Mr Okweingoti and Mbalukha mentioned it without talking about the dynastic connections. But Mr Okweingoti extends beyond Egypt to Mesopotamia/Iraq.
During the Bukusu, Tachoni and Kabras circumcision, the Ethiopia-Sudan-Egypt continuum is mentioned but the three are perceived as one continuous territory/space, so they are mentioned almost interchangeably suggesting a blurred perception of origin in the Nile Valley/Basin. Tracy Marks (http://www.windweaver.com/sheba/Sheba8.htm) also suggests such a blurred notion where Egypt, Ethiopia, Yemen and parts of the Arabian mountains fall within the same territory with no clear distinction.

between Abanyole, and Ethiopian, and Middle Eastern civilizations; and through that to other civilizations of the world. Consequently, the story of Abanyole past is catapulted in one sweep to the arena where it interacts and dialogues with other texts of world civilizations through the Ethiopian connection.

Tracy Marks,[16] Hall (1995), Spleth (2002), and Bevan (2006) assert that the founding king of the Ethiopian dynasty is Menelek. According to legend, Menelek 1, supposedly the son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, was born about 6th or 7th centuries BCE (Bevan 2006). The real name of the Queen of Sheba is variously Makeda/Maqda/Makera/Nikaulis/ Nikaule/Belquees/Bilquis/Bilqis/Balkis/The Queen of the South, depending on the tradition[17] (Spleth 2002; Bellis 1995). Some traditions assert that she reigned over Sheba/Saba[18] in the 10th Century BCE, while others put it at 6th or 7th centuries BCE. The name given to the son of Solomon and Queen Makeda, probably whom Muchel'le calls Simoni Omukurene, was Menelek or David II[19] (Bevan 2006). The legend, of Menelek 1, first "written down in the 14th century, relates how God's "favour swung from Israel to Ethiopia who became the new elect of God. [Hence], Orthodox Christianity came to the Axumite" (Bevan 2006). The legend therefore seems to highlight the rising significance and the desire of Ethiopia to become the new/alternative center of the Christian tradition.

Other accounts (Tracy Marks for instance) connect the ancestry of Menelek to Macedonia while others suggest that in fact the offspring of the union between Solomon and Makeda was

[16] Tracy Marks: "Makeda, Queen of Sheba: The Aftermath": http://www.windweaver.com/sheba/Sheba8.htm
[17] Marks suggests that "the legend of the Queen of Sheba is common throughout Arabia, Persia, Ethiopia, and Israel" http://www.windweaver.com/sheba/Sheba8.htm
[18] The exploits of the Queen of Sheba are documented in the Ethiopian epic – the Kebra Negast, the Quran, and in 1 Kings10:1-13 and 2 Chronicles 9:1-12 in the Bible in addition to the traditions named in note 16 above.
[19] According to Tracy Marks, this name was given by King Solomon who named him after his father, King David. But also Arabic traditions refer to him as Ibn al Hakim (son of the wise man). Tracy Marks adds: "Islamic and Persian sources state that this child was Nebuchadnezzar," (http://www.windweaver.com/sheba/Sheba8.htm) turning the issue of his naming into the melding point of sorts of the disparate cultures of the world.

Nebuchadnezzar who conquered Jerusalem in 587 BCE and destroyed the temple (Bellis 1995: 19). How Nebuchadnezzar sublimes into Menelek is not clear. However, the implied interconnectedness creates a complex of cultural and genealogical continuity not captured by global cultural taxonomies and histories. It is into this controversy that Muchel'le's account maneuvers the already convoluted issue of Abanyole origin. But the issue is how to explain the connections that Muchel'le's narrative creates through connoting interconnectedness silenced by such texts as the Bible by first, foregrounding the Ethiopian/Middle Eastern/Christian connections and second, by constructing a Nyole identity that destabilizes the exclusive claims of major canonical texts which highlight the otherness of Africa (Spleth (2002). In addition, what notion of Nyole identity may be inferred from his conception?

It is possible to say that given Muchel'le's Christian leaning, he might have picked the story from the Bible because the Queen of Sheba is best known from I Kings (Hall 1995: 181). This claim would however validate the connotation in Were (1967) that any beyond-Uganda Luhya origin claims have much to do with attempts to inflect the exclusionary Biblical narratives to accommodate the Luhya experience and also to make the Bible local in a manner that resonates with the transformations of *The Pilgrim's Progress* through its world journeys as explicated by Hofmeyr (2004).

But need the Ethiopian/Egyptian/Sudanese/Middle Eastern perspectives of Luhya origin claims be invalidated by the dearth of hard evidence or by the fact that they resonate with the Bible? If the claim of Luhya origins in the North is generally accepted, then challenging the Ethiopian/Christian connection would be tricky because Ethiopia is in the general pathway of the possible southward migration. Validating Muchel'le's assertions firstly, Diop (1974: 49) and Obenga (2004) aver that the Bantu/Africans were both at one time residents of the Egypt-

Nubia-Abyssinia belt and produced the early Egyptian civilization as an African civilization (Obenga 2004) which originated in Nubia/Abyssinia to the south (Diop 1974: 49) before they were pushed out by the Arab influx (Diop 1974). Secondly, the apparent the Nyole/Luhya fascination with the course of the River Nile (as was apparent during the research) which seemed to guide their southward movement seems to affirm the same. A detour to the Ethiopian Higlands along the course of the Blue Nile may not be far fetched. Hence, the centrality of the Nile in Nyole identity, and the representation of Makeda as coming from the source of the Nile (Spleth 2002: 66) would validate claims of the Nyole-Makeda connections.

The issue however still remains why Muchel'le deemed the Ethiopian dynasty connection (and specifically the Queen of Sheba texts) silenced by the Uganda origin narratives, as an important aspect of the Nyole past. This is especially significant in a context where the illustrious Queen of Sheba texts are dialogized by the sub-texts of the reading of the Queen of Sheba phenomenon in other parts of the world as shown below.

Whereas Muchel'le neither explains the outward movement of Abanyole from Ebukurene nor seems to anticipate such obligation, his ingenuity lies in the Abanyole-Abyssinia-Israel continuity that his brief narrative constructs. Similarly, Muchel'le inserts the Nyole in the Biblical narrative through their ancestor Simoni Omukurene. The implied interconnectedness between peoples, races and cultures of Africa and the world in Muchel'le's perception displaces Abanyole past from the usual recent day-to-day memory to a site where it dialogues with, interrogates and displaces other world texts which would negate such interaction. When appraised against the current conditions of destitution in Ebunyole, Muchel'le's story seems configured to insinuate a better past for the community and the possibility of its replication.

Muchel'le makes two other assertions that complicate appreciation of Nyole identity. First, he avers that the real name of Anyole son of Amuhinda is Mwenje. He was nicknamed Anyole because of his battle prowess: "*yanyolanga abandu bunyola* [he would mow down the enemy like vegetable]. He would slash people at lightning speed…. If he thrust his spear into one man, it would penetrate through as many as three men at once. But his name was Mwenje." The *Abene Liloba* status is validated by claims of continuity between the mainstream set of clans as the descendants of Anyole and the Nyole groups of Uganda which Anyole came from as Eyahuma implies above. But suggesting that Anyole is a nickname signifies the absence of rootedness for the name because he silences connectedness with Ugandan Nyole groups which would authenticate the *Abene Liloba/Abamenyibwa* dichotomy of the Nyole social structure. In addition, he waters down the popular representation of the past to which "Anyole" is central (Olumwullah 2002: 49). In effect, this representation insinuates the Nyole clan dichotomy as a façade and subverts the exclusionist social position of *Abene Liloba* on account of historical and genealogical links with the Uganda Nyole. Unlike the name Anyole, the "real" name Mwenje is less known, less exclusionist and less disruptive. Apart from the (unspecified) negative connotations of the name Mwenje through Maragooli reference to the Nyole as Abakamwenje as Eyahuma suggests above, it is hardly memorable and recognizable to many Abanyole. Thus, it would appear Muchel'le's narrative subtly sabotages the possibility of bonds between Abanyole, Banyoro and Banyole which would authenticate the Uganda origin narratives and legitimate the claims of *Abene Liloba* set of clans to strip *Abene Liloba* of the singlemost justification of the exclusive social position they claim.

At the same time, the Abaluhya generally derogatively refer to the Luo as Abanyolo for reasons that are not clear. Besides, in the Luhya dialects, Bunyoro is pronounced Ebunyolo/Bunyolo which echoes the Luhya name for Luoland (Ebunyolo). Thus, Muchel'le's

categorization is partly authorized by the ambiguity in nomenclature which signifies continuity between Banyoro and Abanyolo. Abanyolo, their land, and their location (the west) cummulatively figure the notion of otherness in Nyole cosmology (Olumwullah 2002). Hence, Muhel'le's account underscores the view that apart from a brief period when Banyoro accommodated Abanyole before the fallout on account of trampling on the raw wound of a Nyoro leader,[20] the two have no other association. But, categorizing Abanyolo (Luo) and Abanyolo (Banyoro) as Nilotes both authenticates their affinity and negates the possibility of Banyoro-Abanyole bonds; Abaluhya usually define their identity in terms of what they are not – Abanyolo.[21] Thus, Muchel'le insinuates that any parallels between the "Banyolo" of Uganda and Abanyole are merely coincidental and homonymic: the signifiers may be almost similar but the signified are diverse. Ironically, Eyahuma who underscores Uganda origin seems to agree with Muchel'le when he asserts rather speculatively that Abanyole came from Uganda "*because* we have a group in Uganda called the Banyoro. We also have the Abanyole… they meet on the tongue." Thus, nomenclature is perceived as a fundamental and productive criterion of identification and categorization in the rhetoric of Luhya/Nyole identity. Hence, Olumwullah (2002: 50) has stressed the significance and implications of ethnonyms in the discourses of Nyole identity. Consequently, for Muchel'le onomastic etymology is a strategy for contestation to dislocate and replace meanings and subtly destabilize the foundation of the exclusionist and overbearing Nyole hierarchy which is partly validated by the hegemonic potential that names can produce. This play on names in defining Nyoleness resonates with Bhabha's assertion that, "in the process of narration of the nation, language is caught up in performativity" (1990: 3).

[20] Like Bilikile's story of the diamond that caused the split between Abanyole and Banyole (above), this story is also told among many lacustrine communities. Mr Afubwa (interviewed 3 January 2007) said that the Luo of Kenya say they separated from their Acholi cousins in Uganda because one of them trampled on the raw wounds of an Acholi man and they were told to leave.

[21] For instance in the Kabras, Bukusu and Tachoni circumcision chant: *Niwaria khusebwa sochiebunyolo* [If you can't stand the knife/are terrified by circumcision go to Luoland!].

In the second assertion, Muchel'le's list of the descendants of Mwenje includes Tongoi (his Abatongoi clan ancestor) who settled at Musikoma (Es'saba) in the current clan land. Tongoi was with Subwe who proceeded and settled at Itumbu from where his descendants established the Abasiekwe clan. Others like the Abamukunzi, Abas'sama and many other clans, he asserts, are not Abanyole. They came in to perform miscellaneous chores for Mwenje and help him in his wars. As noted above, the Abamukunzi affirmed that they are not Abanyole. Paradoxically, some narratives assert that Tongoi like Asakami, Mwiranyi, Amang'ali, Asiekwe (Asubwe) and many other clans arrived later (Olumwullah 2002: 49) and are located on the margins of Nyoleness. Besides, the Abatongoi are often called Abatombolio/Otombolio and linked to the Luo (Ot'tiali Ombima, interviewed 18 December 2006; Olumwullah 2002: 47). However, Muchel'le's narrative inserts them in the initial events of the founding of the polity and thus reorganizes Nyole time and interrogates the suppositions of the order of the founding events. Thus, Muchel'le's dislocation/relocation of Tongoi in Nyole pasts affirms White's (1978: 125) assertion about the significance of the historian who fashions the fragments of the past in historical representation rather than the fact/events themselves and Barber's (1989) notion of composition by fragments.

#### 2.4.2.2. Okweingoti and the Enandete perspective of the Nyole cradle

Christopher Om'masaaba Okweingoti (b.1928) is from the Abahando clan which is settled in Ebuhando (Bunyore) Hills. Okweingoti (interviewed 24 January 7 February 2007) dropped out of school after (the class four) Common Entrance Examination (CEE) and enrolled for a carpentry course. Apart from teaching carpentry, he also was involved in the administration

of the African Israel Church. Now retired, he is involved in subsistence farming, small scale business, and in local party politics.

During the interview, Okweingoti mainly read a ten page text dated 10 January 1955. He produced the text himself as minutes of a meeting of 13 Abahando clan elders. It is not clear if the 13 elders represented the 14 houses of Abahando (with one not represented). The elders met to discuss and record the past to assuage the anxiety about the possibility of the past fading into oblivion. The objective of the meeting held in the home of Okweingoti was: *Okhwitsusia obuchendi bwa abakuuka* [Reminiscences of the movement of our forefathers]. Notably, the meeting which involved very prominent community elders and opinion leaders such as Retired Senior Chief Zakayo Ojuok Amatalo was apparently convened by the then 28 year old Okweingoti, which gestures both to changing perception of age and authority in the postcolonial Nyole society by this time, and to the gravity of the matter at hand; ordinarily, a young man of that age may not summon elders to a meeting.

Okweingoti's text starts with "*Obuchiachilo*" (the beginning/origin) and locates the source of the Abanyole to a place called Enandete the place of *amangalimwa* [giants], a four week journey from Ebukurene and Oranya (Iran). They moved to Syria, Babylon, then to Khuru/Khuruti/Abakhuliti/Mukhulu (Kurd/Kurdistan in Iraq), then Misraim (Misiri – Egypt); they stayed in Ebulamogi in Puti (Punt – Ethiopia). Then they moved to Sunda (Sudan), Eburuni (Cameroun), Ebimili[22] (Congo), Luanda (Rwanda), Burundi, and Bugiri and Jinja (in Uganda). At Jinja, Mwenje disengaged from Nanyumba and Anyoli[23] and followed the lake

[22] The meaning he gave for this is the "place of glitter", literally the "place of swallowing ghosts" - which echoes the first Nyole perception of the strange glitter of gold and diamonds (*inyuma/ebiuma*) in the Congo.
[23] Okweingoti says Nanyumba is the ancestor of the Banyoro while Anyoli is the ancestor of the Banyole - both of Uganda. So it means Mwenje, Nanyumba and Anyoli were together until Jinja. However, other narratives suggest that Nanyumba was the ancestor of the Basoga of Eastern Uganda. This might imply either some kinship bonds between Basoga and Banyoro or there simply were two unrelated Nanyumbas.

until he reached Ebunyole. In the Middle East Abanyole are associated with Shem (Ham) and lived there in the days of Emrod (Nimrod) who was a hunter in Babylon, and Mukati [literally Liar] Yakobo (Jacob), who lied to his father Iso (Esau). Two observations can be made here. First, as is apparent above, for every place/personality mentioned, Okweingoti gave the Olunyole translation of the name followed by the conventional version which I have placed in brackets. In this way, Okweingoti displayed consciousness of his role as a contemporary Nyole oral historian who needed to bridge the names of temporally and spatially remote places and peoples by giving the Nyole pronunciation and then translating them into familiar school terms both to grant them Nyole authenticity and also to carter for the possibility of a diverse audience. Secondly, these names echo those of Biblical personalities. But in the Bible, Esau and Jacob are brothers, and sons of Isaac. There is no reason to suggest that he might be referring to the same personalities and therefore reconfiguring the Biblical narrative and genealogies.

Okweingoti avows that both the three Nyole hearth stones and the three *olusambwa* [Nyole shrine] stones are some of the cultural vestiges that signify continuity with the times and spaces of Nyole origin; the cultures are carryovers from their pre-dispersal days in the Middle East. Makokha (1996: 196) seems to affirm this view when he claims that the deeper one goes into antiquity, the greater the similarity between the Luhya and the Biblical traditions. Rather than dismisss both Makokha's and Okweingoti's claims, perhaps they warrant a study to explore why only the Luhya would persistently make such claims and not, say, the neighboring Luos and Kalenjins.

Okweingoti's account implies that the group left Ebukurene[24] as Bantu and the initial phase of the formation of Abanyole began after the Bantu fragmentation in Cameroun to form the contemporary labyrinth of Bantu cultures and nations. In that case, Okweingoti's is one of the rare narratives which both explicitly link Abanyole with other Bantu and tries to account for the point and reasons of their fragmentation. The Abanyole entered the present Ebunyole in about the 14th century AD (Okweingoti's date). The old men, Okweingoti recalls, said that some people separated from them in Congo and disappeared in the desert "*tsio*!" [completely]; they are the Bantu communities of Southern Africa while the desert is the Kalahari. The rest of the text contains Nyole lineages complete with a family tree diagram; like Muchel'le, he traces all clans to "Abenje" (Mwenje?) as the Nyole ancestor not Anyole.

One of the connotations of Okweingoti's performance is that by 1955, the disruptive consequences of modernity on the memory of the past were already envisioned hence the decision to narrate the past with a view to keeping records. But the fact that the young Okweingoti convened and hosted the gathering of such high profile elders is conspicuous; it alludes to his foresight on the uncertain "future of the past." Paradoxically, he enacted that uncertainty through his reliance on reading the same 1955 minutes during the interview. The mode of presentation gestures to the dearth of opportunity to exercise his oral skills; hence it ominously figures the fulfillment of the prophecy which the 1955 meeting presages**.** However, given the remoteness of the period that Okweingoti's narrative focuses on, his manner of presentation with a lot of faltering and measured steps resonates with the assertion by Vansina (1992: 23) that in accounts of origin, earlier periods are marked with hiatus and presented with hesitation. Therefore, the recording of the story of the past might be said to be

[24] The name Ebukurene appears to be very significant both in the narratives of Okweingoti and Muchel'le. Muchel'le says that the son of the Queen of Sheba (presumably David II/Menelek) was called Simoni Omukurene. He says Abakurene is "the lineage of Solomon and Abanyole," while Okweingoti simply says Abanyole/Bantu passed through Ebukurene.

a way of circumventing what Vansina (ibid) calls “the floating gap”, the gap in the accounts, in order to make future performances as complete as possible.

The urgency of the 1955 meeting seems to point more towards the (perhaps subconscious) anxiety generated by the controversy of the location of the clan in relation to the Nyole social configuration. I have observed that Okweingoti is from the Abahando clan. The identity of Abahando like that of Abatongoi above has been a hotly contested issue. Some narratives assert that Abahando are a mainstream Nyole clan because they have some links with Anyole. According to this argument (Anduuru Interviewed 2 and 4 February 2007; Olumwullah 2002: 49), ten brothers arrived in Ebunyole: Wekhomo, Muhindila, Ekongo, Muhando, Musali, Ngome, Andimi (the ancestor of the Abalogooli), Tarime, Mugusi, and Etende. Not only are the Abahando the offspring of Muhando, the metonymic significance of Muhando to Nyole identity lies in the fact of the cradle of the Abanyole (Ebuhando Hills) being named after him. In this argument, the descendants of Muhando together with their cousins, the descendants of Muhindila (the grandfather of Anyole) are the mainstream Abanyole. This may validate Okweingoti’s claim of a coherent Abahando clan consisting of 14 “houses.”

However, another argument negates the possibility of a continuous and interconnected the Abahando clan. Etymologically, the Abahando derives from *abahaanda* (those who stuck). Many of them are chippings from other Nyole clans who refused to move down from the Ebuhando Hills cradle. Others are descendants of those who were banished to the hills on account of *esiluchi* (murder of a kinsman) (Ayub Muchel’le and Adam Kutai, Interviewed 23 December 2006) which connotes the seriousness with which Abanyole regard *esiluchi* and the bearing of *esiluchi* on clan configuration and settlement patterns. Moreover, claims that

some Abahando sub-clans such as the Abakuya and the Abalako separated from non-mainstream clans while others are of Luo origin means they figure the otherness in the concept of mumbo (west) and Luoness (Ababo) in Nyole consciousness which further complicates the matter. The matter is made even more complex by the fact that during the colonial era, some sections of the Abahando were administered as a part of Nyanza Province which is predominantly Luo. A few even speak and identify with the Luo[25] and own property on both sides of the border. The controversy of the Abahando identity has generated long running mutual suspicion/open animosity between them and the Abamutete clans over lands. The juxtaposition of the insider/outsider discourses of the location of the Abahando and the Abatongoi seems to produce their double-voicedness with regard to their Nyole identity and it is better explained by the nation as a Janus-faced figure replete with inherent contradictions and tensions (Bhabha 1990).

But how should the extraordinariness of the 1955 meeting, especially its disregard of the Nyole convention on gerontocracy (it was called by a young man) be explained? The meeting was called to evoke the memory of *abaakuka* (forefathers) which underscores the place of the forefathers in the configuration of Nyole social consciousness. But why was the memory of Abaakuuka at stake to oblige the meeting at this point in time? The import of the meeting is within the significance of the trope of *Ebilindwa bia abaakuka* (the grave sites of the forefathers) in Nyole cosmology. The capacity to assert the *Abene Liloba* status which authenticates claims of belonging to the mainstream is only validated by the ability to identify the graves of the forefathers (Olumwullah 2002). That is how the objective of the meeting: *Okhwitsusia obuchendi bwa abakuuka* [Reminiscences of the movement of our forefathers]

[25] A story is told of one prominent Omuhando man who repudiated Nyole identity and chose to pass as Luo. When boundary disputes arose between Luo and Nyole (Chapter Six) he sided with the Luo. In his will, he stated his desire to be buried under Luo rites with his head facing the lake, the metaphor for Luoland. However, when he died, Abanyole invaded his home, forcefully overturned his will and enforced Nyole burial rites. This struggle to reinstate and reaffrim the Nyole identity even in death underscores the gravity of the matter.

attains its significance. The 1950s was an important threshold moment in Ebunyole in view of the impending independence when community membership needed to be redefined and reaffirmed.

In that sense the meeting was as much about keeping the memory of the past alive as it was an opportunity for the Abahando clan to reassert authentic *Abaana ba Anyole* (progeny of Anyole) identity which has always been problematic and contested. The chance to tell the past of the Abanyole offered by my interview (24 January 2007) was therefore appropriated and converted into an opportunity firstly, to revisit and reahearse the minutes of the 1955 meeting which Okweingoti had painstakingly stored and which seemed to guarantee belonging, and also to publicise and keep alive the deliberations of the remote 1955 meeting. The importance attached to the minutes is implied by the faithful reading during the interview. The manner of (close) reading itself gestures to the perceived significance of documentary proof of authenticity of claims of peoplehood in postcolonial Ebunyole. The distance in time (1955) when the minutes were produced which Okweingoti deliberately emphasized, metaphorically gestures to Nyole ways of asserting the legitimacy of a story through underscoring the fact of the occurrence of the events in the remote past. Secondly, the opportunity to narrate the Nyole past offered the chance to claim and affirm the individual's (narrator) and community's (the Abahando clan) place within the Nyole mainstream for a ready audience. It was a chance to put the records straight. Hence, the real meaning of the story of the movement of the forefathers is in the affirmation of the reality of the clan *abaakuuka* (forefathers) at one time in the "remote" past by metaphorically gesturing to *tsing'ani tsiabaakuka* ( as suggested by Olumwullah 2002) to signify and affirm authentic Nyoleness.

The focus of the narratives of Muchel'le and Okweingoti suggests a form of experimentation with ideologies of community self-perception. Not only do these narratives subvert other narratives which truncate Abanyole past by restricting the discourses of the origin to Uganda and in the words of Okweingoti; to the last 400 years, the two re-conceptualize the limits of Luhyaness by foregrounding the pre-Uganda origin discourses. Thus, they imply the Uganda origin narratives are an insignificant tail end of the real story of Abanyole past. Hence, they extend the absolute limits of memory and the knowable pasts of the Abanyole to the 10th Century BCE. Such framing first overwrites and obscures narratives of the contemporary Nyole 'sub-nation' which bracket out *Abamenyibwa* by expanding the time-space frame within which Nyole identity can be conceptualized and appreciated.

Similarly, the texts interrogate the limits set by Luhya historiography which appears to eschew uncharted spaces suggested by the temporal, spatial, and cultural depths which the beyond-Uganda texts navigate with much ease, wit, and hilarity. Such reticence is perceptible in Were (1967: 83) when he relegates the Sudan-Misiri-Middle East connections to the realm of myth. In this sense, the two narratives may be understood as an intertextual engagement with Were on the limits of Luhya identity by foregrounding what he and the *Abene Liloba*/Uganda origin narratives silence to legitimate the Nyole social structure.

At another level, by highlighting the beyond-Uganda narratives, Muchel'le and Okweingoti resonate with Senghor who "celebrates cultural cross breeding" (Spleth 2002: 62) by similarly foregrounding the legend of the Queen of Sheba (ibid). Hence, understood within the framework of Africa and her detractors Muchel'le, like Senghor, operates within a nationalist structure that highlights "mythology and history which treat Makeda as a cultural heroine" (Spleth 2002: 62). But read against the background of the Nyole social sturucture,

the Makeda legend seems to gesture to preferance for a transnational conception of Nyole identities as a "composite of both African and Semitic cultures" (Spleth 2002: 68). That connotes a Nyoleness that transcends and overshadows the exclusionary Nyole social structure by seemingly gesturing to a broader, more illustrious, and more obliging Nyole identity. Hence they index the *Abene Liloba/Abamenyibwa* binary as disfiguring the multiple dimensions, rootedness in antiquity, and the temporal-spatial expansiveness of the concept of Nyoleness.

But, by asserting Abanyole descendence from Ham, Okweingoti narrative converges with Muchel'le's in so far as Makeda is often represented as rooted in Ham's lineage. The Makeda legend has been the subject of many controversial interpretations because of the claiming transnational/transcultural spaces (Arab/Yemeni/African/Ethiopian/ Jewish/Hebrew) it has traversed and the baggage of contradictory discourses of representations of her identity which it has to bear. First, her sexual appeal and opulence are contradicted by her deformed foot and hairy body (Hall 1995: 181) which are read as the signifiers of her nature as the demonic temptress with the body of a lustful animal beneath the silken robes (183). The attributes are intensified by her representation as a sun worshipper who was converted (Spleth 2002: 64), and her Ethiopian origin, all of which highlight her otherness as the descendant of the cursed Ham (Hall 1995: 182). Second is the Negast/Nebuchadnezzar controversy about the identity of her son referred to above which casts doubt to his Ethiopianness. Thirdly, some accounts locate the Queen of Sheba in Yemen and underline her Arabic, not African descent (Hall 1995; Spleth 2002; Bellis 1995). Paradoxically, the uncertainty of representation of the Queen resonates with the ambiguity of the same Queen as the sun worshipper and originating from the East, and the importance of the sun and the East in Nyole cosmology. These attributes of Makeda are associated with *Abene Liloba* and they

validate the otherness of *Abamenyibwa* whose exposé stresses the Nyole-Makeda bond. Thus, whereas the legend of Makeda is seemingly foregrounded to justify the case for an inclusive Nyoleness, the liminality of Makeda seems to interrogate and undermine the same**.**

Be that as it may, I have noted that first, both Okweingoti and Muchel'le had some basic schooling and they were both involved with the church. Secondly, their performances relied on literate technologies (Ong 1982) either by referring to diaries to prompt memory (Muchel'le) or outrightly reading texts prepared beforehand (Okweingoti). Thirdly, both did not hide the fact that they restructured the texts by embellishing them with knowledge they acquired at school/church. For instance, during performance, Okweingoti would juxtapose the Nyole rendition of the names of the now exotic spaces that the Abanyole traversed, as the elders translated them, with the conventional version (in brackets) acquired through formal learning. Muchel'le's rendered the Abanyole links with the Ethiopian dynasty thus: "Absinia… Ethiopia – it was called Abyssinia; that is what we…learned in history". Whereas their actions are not new because oral tradition is "continually revised and reinvented" (Barber 2006: 19), certainly exposure to school and writing gave the two "unprecedented opportunity for sanitizing…" (ibid), inflecting/editing, and thus inventing tradition (Hobsbawm 1983). Hence their performance did not just reproduce what they were told but they relied on intertextual inferences as a strategy to estimate points of convergence to harmonize the Nyole and school worlds. Thus, writing and insertion of written texts into the process of performance of Nyole oral history fundamentally alters the understanding of mediation (Barber 1997) and the Nyole pasts themselves.

The experience of school and the Bible makes Makila (1977: 23) like Were express reservations about the reliability of "educated" performers of tradition because they are

"particularly prone to exaggerations, such as trying to portray their ancestries as having originated in Israel"; and they are "influenced by the biblical myths especially those contained in Genesis and Exodus" (ibid). However, the paradox of the similarity of Makila's methodology with that of those he calls the "semi-literate" stands out. Where the "semi-literate," draw "artificial continuities" with the biblical traditions, he is anxious to truncate them because of his suspicion of "the pink [white] men" for their "Bantu phobia" (1977: 13). In contrast**,** I highlight the scale of imagination, not the veracity of the Egypt-Israel perspective and ask why it is inserted into the story of Abanyole past. Hence, the suggestion by Hobsbawm (1983: 6) that new traditions are "devised by borrowing from well supplied warehouses of…moral exhortation – religious and princely pomp [and] folklore…" is pertinent here. Besides, Eagleton (1984: 123) asserts that history easily lends itself to justification of totalizing discourses such as those of *Abene Liloba*. In that sense, one way of understanding the two narrators whose clans are marginalized by these discourses is to see them as re-contextualizing history to counter the exclusionist Nyole narratives. Hence, emphasis is placed on representation of the past as a discursive process (White 1978: 125).

As suggested earlier, by affirming the notions of the other Luhya sub-groups about the Sudan-Ethiopia-Misiri[26]-Israel/Middle East continuum as some of the places Abanyole journeyed through before arrival at Ebunyole, the narratives suggest that the core of Luhya identity predates the time and place both historiographers and *Abene Liloba* have framed and excavated for clues of cultural proximity/disparity of the Luhya 'sub-nations'. Okweingoti's and Muchel'le's narratives which seem to draw from a similar pool of events, experiment with bricolage and other resources of the fictional narrative (Hofmeyr 1994: 107) which

[26] I have in mind the Bukusu, Tachoni, and Kabras pre-circumcision instruction where the initiates are taken through lessons of the origin of their respective communities, as well as the observation by Were (1967) that at the time he did his research (1964), almost all the Luhya communities pointed to Uganda-Sudan-Ethiopia-Misiri as the place(s) of their origin. Abaluhya then seem to unite on an ancestor who lived before Uganda. Hence Muchel'le's Simoni Omukurene/Menelek offers a viable possibility however fantastic.

Okpewho suggests are summoned in the process embellishing the past of a community with the grandeur of an epic (ibid).

At another level, the two stories delve into Nyole antiquity to render an Odyssean/Gilgameshean type intercontinental, transnational, and trans-cultural exposé of a Bantu journey which transcends and alters familiar racial/ethnic/cultural boundaries and times to produce a network of links between Abanyole-Bantu, Abanyole-Amharic, Abanyole-Jewish, and Abanyole-Arabic traditions in an imaginative and novel manner. The temporal span produced by the texts resonates with the opening lines of Armah (1979): "We are not people of yesterday. Do you ask how many seasons we have flowed from the beginning till now? We shall paint them to the proper beginning of their counting…." However, if as Hobsbawm (1983: 14) suggests, nations claim roots "in the remotest antiquity" then beyond-Uganda narratives seems to interrogate the *Abene Liloba* concept of antiquity by superimposing on it a conception of antiquity that displaces and invalidates Uganda origin as the basis of the Nyole clan hierarchy. Hence, narrating is both a creative process of contestation, dislocation, restructuring, and inflection of past events to claim space/insert the self and community into the events of the nation (Freeman 1993).

I have explored the notions of origin of the various Nyole clans and how each narrates them with the objective of understanding the ambivalence and discontinuities in the day-to-day expression of Nyole identity and how this is reproduced in the narratives of community past. It is apparent that the fractured expression of Nyole identity is a metonym of the typical daily life in the intra- and inter- Luhya 'sub-nation' interactions and it figures the origin, migration and settlement process of Luhyaland and the disparity of the clans which make up any Luhya 'sub-nation'. On the one hand, the two categories of narratives highlighted here – Uganda and

beyond-Uganda origin – share the objective to narrate the past and produce and sustain the integrity of the Nyole 'sub-nation'. The general convergences in the narratives suggest that the fragments of past events which the narrators weave together are drawn from a common pool of the community archive. Hence, despite the diversity in representation of the Nyole pasts, each of the two sets of narratives purports to illustrate reality which reproduces the extra-textual order of occurrence. On the other hand, the strikingly different narratives that are realized suggest that the meaning of the narratives and what they claim lies not in the narratives themselves but in the process of narration and the purpose served by narration.

Therefore, on the basis of investigation of the dialogue between the two categories on the authentic locale of origin of Abanyole, this study underscores the significance of the imagination of the nation and its beginnings; not in the veracity of any of the two sites chosen but in the manner it figures the contradictory desires to untangle/uphold the Nyole social structure in order to make the nation more accommodating of its own diversity. Hence, the dialogue between the two on the notion of where to designate as *obuchiachilo* (the beginning) and the definition of national time is not about arriving at the truth of either the Middle East or Uganda as origin but is more about a discursive validation/counteraction of the social structure and inclusion/exclusion criteria.

In the context of the contemporary Ebunyole where land is scarce and has often been the cause of inter-clan conflicts (such as between the Abahando and the Abamutete cited above), the threat implied by the outsider/insider binary which has implications on the rights over land and sense of belonging would be ground enough for the generation of discourses and counter- discourses on the issue of authenticity of membership of the 'sub-nation' as well as the need to fashion an inclusive definition of the ethnic nation to accommodate the

multiplicity of clans that assert membership. Hence, the meaning of narration of Nyole pasts is to be found in the language and rhetoric and the textual strategies that are deployed to narrate the past of the community to make it more compliant and inclusive. Later in Chapter Six, I have explored the implications of similar set of events of migration and settlement of the lacustrine region of Kenya, and perceptions of the Nyole social structure on Nyole representations of their own identity and spaces vis a vis the identity and spaces of their Luo neighbors. Meanwhile, in the next chapter, I look at ways in which the context mediates narration of the past.

# Chapter Three

# The Micro-Politics of Narrating the Past

## 3.0. Overview

The focus of this chapter is on the circumstances of production of the historical narrative. I shift attention from the oral historical narratives themselves to the social and performance contextual micro-conditions or what Keesing (1985) calls micro-politics that underpinned the performances and production of my field data. This chapter is informed by my field experience where, on the one hand, I had the opportunity to interview some resource people on two or more diverse occasions. When their narratives were compared, consistency was in most cases not their strongest characteristic. On the other hand, word about my impending visit to a particular area would precede me, and I would often find many more people waiting to participate, other than those I had been scheduled to meet.

One such occasion in Ebukanga village of West Bunyore (21January, 2007) merits mention here. Daniel Omukatu, who was not initially invited, got wind of my presence and purpose and came to the site of the performance. By the time we were midway through the interview, he had resolutely silenced the two resource people who had been identified by my field assistant. However, the exchange between Omukatu and one of the invited resource persons, Rev. E. Odinga caught my attention. Odinga thought that Omukatu was selecting and exposing unapproved versions of the past from the community archive (Desai 2001: 5) and warned him about the consequences if Abakanga got wind of his 'transgression.' But for

reasons clearly deriving from the context itself,[27] Omukatu disregarded the warning and easily shut out the two to give a very lively account of Abakanga past. Likewise, Odinga and Ngota Akutu, the other invited resource person, got into an argument because Odinga thought that Akutu who is from the neighboring Abamabwi[28] clan (he is also Odinga's maternal uncle) was meddlesome for talking about Abakanga past instead of his own Abamabwi. It emerged that the history of the interaction between Abakanga and Abamabwi, is interspersed with narratives of Abakanga intervention to forestall the extermination of Abamabwi by their Kisa enemies. Odinga even mentioned certain mnemonic features in Ebukanga (for instance, *Esitaho sia Abamabwi* [the Abamabwi Well], the site of Abakanga's intervention which prevented the annihilation of Abamabwi by their Kisa enemies. For this, Odinga obviously expected his uncle to feel beholden[29] to Abakanga if only by shielding the not so ideal past of Abakanga from public scrutiny.

This experience draws attention to the issue of the extent of the manipulation of the narratives by the dynamics of the performance context, making the text a product of a particular context. In this chapter, I highlight similar field experiences in the interviews I did in Ebusilatsi Ebulonga on December 18 and 26, 2006 in which one resource person participated. Whereas in the example cited above it appears that Odinga was partly anxious because he wanted to mediate the past of his community, to control what I as an outsider might access,

[27] I have in mind the need for Omukatu, initially not invited, to cut a niche in this context which made him bold and ready to transgress the boundaries of what can be exposed to outsiders in a manner that unsettled Odinga. For instance Omukatu freely broached the topic of certain secret community ritual paraphernalia, a topic that was off limits for Odinga because of his Christian religious stance and his position as reverend in his church.

[28] Apart from a history of occasional united effort against an enemy, Abakanga and Abamabwi are two separate Nyole clans. One interview for the two men was planned purely for convenience because of time constraints. But the planning was to the detriment of Abamabwi because it is clear from my data that Abakanga seem to dominate the interview space, probably because the event was in Ebukanga and Akutu had to defer to the hosts. But again Akutu had a voice projection problem which made it easy for the others, particularly Omukatu who was very dramatic, to ride over him. So the occasion seems to call attention to the ethnographer's silencing of Abamabwi past by the interview scheduling.

[29] Odinga was irritated by Akutu's suggestion that Abakanga are Luos. He then made it clear that Abamabwi were cowards and would have been exterminated by their Kisa neighbors were it not for the decisive intervention by the Abakanga. But then, as if to bear out Akutu, Omukatu who liked to burst into song during his performance would easily slide into a Luo tune further irritating Odinga.

the interviews of December 18 and 26 are different because the resource person and I are from the same clan and lineage. How might this have influenced his performance for the benefit of a clansman by age and generation younger than him? And how did my own father's presence affect the texture of one of the performances? Thus, this chapter explores the occasion of oral history narration, not just as an occasion to collect inert data, but as a prospect for social interaction and power play among the participants, and methodological implications. The issue is how meaningful ethnographic data might be without background information about the contextual dynamics of its collection.

What interests me about my experience in Ebukanga as well as in numerous other areas in the field is the concept of narration of the past as a performative phenomenon (Sklodowska 1982: 379 quoted in Beverly 2000: 557). Far from yielding certain core kernels of history, the contexts consistently emerged as occasions for continuous anxious argument, tensions and power play (Ibrahim 2001) over what aspects of community past would be prudent to expose or what/whose versions of events are apposite. For instance, Odinga's prior knowledge of Omukatu as a loose canon because of his unrestrained reading of the community archive certainly increased the tension when the latter arrived. But why, on the one hand, did he position himself strategically to try and curtail Omukatu? And on the other, why did he consistently deflect his uncle Akutu's forays into Abakanga history even as he talked about Abamabwi freely? I proceed below first by framing my study within the text/context debates before I focus the rest of the chapter on the three aspects of context I have identified: gerontocracy, gender, and the ethnographer.

### 3.1. The context of the text

My concern is how to understand how the opportunity to narrate the past such as that provided by my interest is always burdened with what Ibrahim (2001) calls the unfinished business, such as that of the old relationship between the Abamabwi and the Abakanga. How did my person and my planning help steer the performance? A number of studies have called attention to the performance context and the discursive properties of the text (Ibrahim 2001; Hofmeyr 1994; Kaplan 1992; Barber 1989; White 1987; Keesing 1985). Ibrahim (2001: 113) speaks for all these studies when he says that during his research among the Kababish of Southern Sudan, he had to reckon with "two schools" of the past because each version defied attempts to "smooth them into histoire cleansed of lapses of memory, falsehoods, and biases." Subtle local contextual dynamics would be one explanation for the dichotomy between the ethnographer's anticipation and actual field experience**.** These dynamics, which Keesing (1985) refers to as the micropolitics of narrative production, are ever present with implications for the performance space.[30] However, they would not be obvious to anyone looking only at the narratives themselves to the exclusion of their conditions of production. Yet such contextual circumstances[31] construct the narrative space and must be accounted for as a part of the plotting of narrative events. Narrators often emphasize some events while silencing others. This chapter therefore also highlights the areas that are silenced by the process of the performer's legitimization of his authority over the story of the community to account for apparent selective memory and aporias.

[30] Keesing elicited the biographies of the women of Kwaio on Solomon's Island, a task that required patience, ingenuity and conscious "engineering" of the contexts. Nevertheless, his patience paid dividends because he succeeded in eliciting the views of women whose voices had been muted in an overbearingly masculine Kwaio society (1985: 27).

[31]For instance, Keesing says that during the interviews, male relatives of the female subjects would "interject […] to prompt her, telling her almost word for word what to say" (1985: 30). Furious but unable to intervene, he was forced to end the session by "ostensibly running out of tape."

My argument is informed by a Foucaldian distinction between archaeology and history whereby he characterizes historiography as a product of selective sifting of the archive to construct neat, linear, overarching narratives at the expense of possible, contesting narratives that could be fashioned from the same archive. Archaeology underscores the areas of popular memory, which are silenced by the methods of production of tidy narratives while masking discontinuities. Georgakopaulo's notion of narratives as talk-in-action rather than self-contained, autonomous units (2006: 83), informs my reading of these contextual debates in methodological terms. Hence, in addition to discussing the ethnographer's influence, I explore how to comprehend the contribution of two hegemonic discourses (Kiesling, 2006): gender and gerontocracy which shapes how the roles and views of participants are "ratified and taken on board by others, or equally challenged and delegimated" (Georgakopaulo 2006: 85). I also investigate Georgakopaulo's assertion that some discourses such as participant standing *vis-à-vis* one another, and relationships such as old friends who share interactional history (85) spur interaction by subtly demarcating frontiers and assigning authority within the narrative context. By making the broader context of production of the narrative the focus of this chapter, I am able to interrogate the interactions of the narrator, the audience, and the ethnographer as framed by the aims of the ethnographer. Thus, I highlight how, on the one hand, the prejudices of each are contested and reinterpreted (Ribeiro, 2006), and on the other, how they are implicated in the historical texts thus produced.

Foucault's concept of power knowledge generally frames my understanding of contextual interaction. Through the concept he broadly calls dividing practices (Rabinow 1984: 8-11), Foucault suggests the "lowest common denominator for all human action is power" and that "power is a means through which all the marginalized are controlled, and the thing that the marginalized (Other) seek to gain." At the same time, Foucault asserts that "power and

knowledge relations… invest human bodies and subjugate them by turning them into objects of knowledge" (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982: 208). In exploring the significations of power and authority in the context of narrative, I try to expose the dynamics of power contest in Foucaldian terms. However, the implied duality of power is crucial to the understanding of power play in the Foucaldian sense of the panopticon (Smart 1985; Rabinow 1984) where those over whom power is exercised through the social surveillance technologies, embodied by such institutions as gerontocracy, subtly challenge and destabilize the authority of the panopticon to regain control over their socially subjugated bodies and resubjectify or install themselves as subjects of discourse (Rabinow 1984: 10-11). Hence, I underscore the narrative space as an unstable site of power struggle where all actions are inspired by the asymmetry of power. Thus, this chapter explores the subtle actions of the participants to highlight how the narrative space grants them latitude to signify, in a socially acceptable manner, the limitations of the omniscient authority of the social surveillance systems as a way of justifying a more democratic narrative space in a context such as Ebunyole which is in the grip of social crisis due to population pressure.

This chapter emphasizes the assertions of Kirby (2008), Thompson (2009) and Deleuze (1990) that the process of narrating the past is not for the past itself but for the present. The present here involves the narrative as well as the social context. Freeman (1993) and Kirby (2008) assert that narrating the past is an after-the-event process in which the past is understood retrospectively, allowing a level of flexibility and malleability that makes possible re-imagination and reconfiguration of the temporal order of the events (Ricoeur, 1980). But the product of such understanding of the past has no direct correspondence to the past-as-lived because its meaning is in the present rather than the past-as-it-was (Freeman, 1993). Thus, emphasis is placed on the dynamics of the context of production. Hence, in exploring

the influence of context, I pay attention to the assertion by Sklodowska (1982: 379 quoted in Beverly 2000: 557) that the performative aspects of the narrative space as the location of meaning shifts focus on the narrator, not as an inert container of the past, but a discerning reader whose perceptions are framed by such contextual issues as "vicissitudes of memory, intention and ideology" This assertion affirms the notion of the story as "contextually situated, and socially [and culturally] implicated" (Keesing 1985: 32). The issue therefore is to appreciate the dynamics of the contextual and social circumstances of narration.

As is shown below, a major factor in the difference between the two performances in which Mbalukha Makaali (discussed in greater detail below) participated can be traced to cultural understanding of gender, on the one hand, and, on the other, to the veneration of gerontocracy among Abanyole, and how these pepper what Smagorinsky (14) calls the social climate of the performance space and its influence on the interpretation of texts. However, in asserting that the interview occasion is "opportunity for social communication, unfinished business," Ibrahim (2001: 112) reaffirms that the ethnographer's objectives are appropriated and reread within the structure of familiar social continuum. That makes possible, for instance, the concept "voting by performancee – using performance opportunity to settle scores, express opinion over others" (112). It also affirms the notion of sources operating within a context of unbounded culture which allows them to assert their individuality rather than operate as "robots programmed with cultural rules" (110).

Below, I focus on three aspects of context: first, I look at two contextual dynamics: age and gender and how they embellished interactions during the performance of the events of December 18 and 26 making each productive yet unique in the way they called on the performers to apply their ingenuity in order to make their views relevant and preferred for the occasion. Then I turn to the ethnographer and how s/he might influence the narratives s/he

collects. For each aspect, I look at how one participant in both events manipulates the limitations and prospects implied by the feature of context highlighted either in order to circumvent social order to be heard or to reinforce social order in order to occlude other opinions and dominate the performance space.

## 3.2. Performing community: contextual dynamics

### 3.2.1. Gerontocracy

The issue of age is a convenient point of departure for this section to enable me to introduce Mbalukha Makaali whose actions are fundamental to the understanding of the other two sections below. The performances involving Mbalukha surfaced nuanced power play, mostly revolving around the issue of age as a legitimation of epistemological claims in Ebunyole. As is shown below, Mbalukha's claims were as much authorized as undermined by such socially endorsed discourses as background knowledge (Kiesling, 2006: 266; De Fina 2006: 256-7) framed by the authority of age to which all other experience is subordinated. Most of the tensions in the two performances on December 18 and 26 in which Mbalukha participated were brought, either by his determined stab at circumventing/subverting, or harnessing the legitimating authority of socially approved ideologies. To authenticate his views, Mbalukha would often subtly dilute or divert attention from such institutions that encumbered or undermined his version of events. Hence, the proceedings of both days are configured by Mbalukha's determination to appropriate the performance space, which calls for exploration into the background of Mbalukha himself to discover possible motivation either to undermine, or harness the power of gerontocracy and masculinity. Below, I give a brief background of Mbalukha to help make sense of his crusade to give his views prominence.

### 3.2.1.1. Mbalukha Makaali and selective memory

Although Mbalukha did not go to school because, as he says, he "refused school", he was very firm about 1917 as his year of birth, putting his age at about 92 in December 2006. Whereas it is not clear why he did not like school, going to school would have meant going to Kima, the only school available in the whole of Ebunyole in his time. But Kima is in the land of the Abamutete clan. Paradoxically, in his narratives, many acts of heroism among Mbalukha's Abasilatsi clan as in the narratives of other clansmen such as Erasto Nyong'a (interviewed 3 January, 2007) were achieved either fighting against the Abamutete clan or supporting the Abamutete against the Abalogooli, a neighboring Luhya 'sub-nation'. However, the hazard of going to school in Kima is made explicit in an incident where the Abasilatsi football team which went to play in Kima in the late 1930s was attacked when it became apparent that they were going to beat the Abamutete team (Nyong'a, 3 January). It took the football experience to convince the Abasilatsi about the duplicity of Abamutete, and the need to chart their own destiny, first by expelling the Abamutete from a section of Abasilatsi land at Ebulonga (which, according to Nyong'a, Mbalukha, and Kutai [my field assistant], the Abamutete had occupied till then); and secondly, to rebel against the Om'mutete *lugongo* (sub-chief), Robert Libale, who had been imposed on them by Sangolo, a colonial chief from Em'mutete.

Olumwullah (2002) affirms the inter-clan tensions between the Abamutete and other Abanyole which seem to speak to Mbalukha's choices. However, his assertion that the fissures were along the lines of *Abene Liloba* (owners of the land) as direct descendants of Anyole, the eponymous ancestor and *Abamenyibwa/Abarende* (tenants, clans which were not

direct descendants of Anyole – see Chapter One) fails to account for the wars between Abamutete and Abasilatsi clans, both of which claim the *Abene Liloba* category. The episode in Kima is nuanced with delicate hints of Nyole selective appropriation of the new to reconfigure the old. The way an exotic sport such as football was deployed to rally clan identity and to mediate old unfinished inter-clan conflicts in a manner that exceeded the potential of school exemplifies this phenomenon.

In his manuscript of Nyole past, Aggrey Anduuru (interviewed 2 and 4 February 2007) affirms the central place of football as a novel defining feature of emerging postcolonial Nyole identity as far back as the 1930s. But the incongruity in Mbalukha as an ardent supporter of his clan football team, Siafu[32] well into his old age, and his antagonism towards formal school, through which football was introduced in Ebunyole, is conspicuous. It suggests the manner in which Mbalukha was ready to selectively appropriate the new to prop up his claim to space within the old framework. Of interest is the way he ambiguously claims "modern temporality" of which school is the metonym by locating and affirming his exact age and year of birth using the western calendar and recording tradition: "I was born in 1917. Nicodemu wrote it down. 1917 January, How old am I now?"

Rejecting school was a challenge to the legitimacy of the same tradition of which the Abamutete and Kima became the synecdoche. As the headquarters of Church of God Mission in East Africa (the reason why the Abamutete claimed the appellation *Abasungu/Abalafu* [whites] and their land *Ebusungu* [white man's land] as the launch point

[32] Personal communication from Moses Esilaba, a former player. Moses says that as an ardent supporter of Siafu (red ants), Mbalukha took the team very seriously and went with it wherever it went to play. Preparation for matches took a battle formation with the team being prepared the same way the youth would be prepared before they went to war by being taken to sleep by the graves of deceased legendary Nyole footballers, being escorted to the venue of the match in war formation complete with battle drums, and given certain roots that inspired courage in battle. Football became a socially acceptable virtual postcolonial battleground although as Moses says, of Mbalukha's friends, they often demanded the shedding of the opponent's blood to end a goal drought.

and seat of Western imperialism in Ebunyole, Idakho, Isukha, Butsotso, and Kisa), Kima and Abamutete figured imperial hegemony. In addition to the expansionist image of Abamutete (as Nyong'a and Mbalukha suggested), and their metonymic association with Kima, the early colonial chiefs in Ebunyole such as Otieno Ndale and Sangolo Alubaka were from Em'mutete, hence Em'mutete embodied colonial dominion. Besides, the tensions between Abamutete and other Abanyole clans[33] derived from their self-representation as the legitimate and sole claimants to the office of the chief and their self positioning as the synecdoche of new postcolonial Nyole identity (as *Abasungu*). Thus, they enhanced their figuration of hegemony via their association with, and celebration of the imperial sign.

Most of the stories Mbalukha tells about the relationship between Abasilatsi and Abamutete are characterized by affirmation of masculinity and courage, on the one hand and, on the other, by a sense of ambivalence ranging from outright hostility to a sense of brotherhood, however ephemeral (both claim to be descendants of Anyole), to mutual desire to annihilate/assimilate each other. I have discussed this ambiguity in Mbalukha as a typical postcolonial Nyole phenomenon in Chapter Four. Mbalukha tells a typical story where an Omusilatsi man raped a fellow clanswoman and fled to his maternal uncles at Em'mutete, where he died. The Abamutete performed rituals on the body before burying it to ensure that Abasilatsi would lose future wars against the Abamutete. A few years later, an army of Abasilatsi went and opened the grave and burned all traces of the body together with the paraphernalia that were buried with it before they went on to routthe  Abamutete in the ensuing war.

[33] For instance, one source, Anduru (interviewed 2 and 4 February 2007) suggested that Abamutete got to the office of the chief by using trickery. Originally, Munala from Abasiekwe clan had been proposed for the office to the colonial administration by King Mumia of the Luhya, but Abamutete tricked Munala by giving him too much beer so he was too drunk to avail himself for the coronation. Abamutete immediately proposed one of their own, Otieno Ndale, who got the appointment. According to Anduru and Muchel'le (interviewed 23 December 2006), this is the cause of mutual suspicion which often turns into open hostility between Abamutete, and Abasiekwe and Abatongoi clans during parliamentary elections.

Among the Abanyole, incest (*olubo*)[34] is next only to *esiluchi* (murder of a kinsman) as the extreme of the abominable; anyone against whom such a case is proved is usually banished to his motherland as it was in this case, and very intricate cleansing rituals are subsequently conducted. Mbalukha affirmed his authority and role in matters pertaining to such ritual decontamination. However, what sticks out conspicuously in the story is that inexorably, the offending young man has Abamutete blood. Hence, the proximity here of the Abamutete to the Luo (Ababo) as the contaminated other is inescapable. At the same time, incest is an effeminate act hence the banishment of the offender to his motherland. The insinuation is that Abamutete blood in him already prefigures the incestuous streak; hence the expulsion of the outcast is an act of exorcizing the offending blood. The figuring of Abasilatsi masculinity here attains its full signification as a binary pair with Abamutete as the effeminate. Therefore, triple act of the Abasilatsi routing of the Abamutete in their own land and the pulverizing of the *olubo* metaphor, the near routing of the Abamutete football team at Kima (the signifier of Abamutete masculinity) which exposed their duplicity, and the subsequent purge of Abamutete hegemony/masculinity through ejecting them from Ebulonga land and expelling of Chief Robert Libale all signify affirmation of Abasilatsi masculinity through discursive subversion of Abamutete hegemony.

In the preceding context, the subtext that the pariah status of the man is precisely what transforms him into an asset in Em'mutete is predictable, thus representing Abamutete as the embodiment of monstrosity and as the ultimate pariah. Hence, the story of invasion and routing of Abamutete in their own home is as much the peak of representation of Abasilatsi

[34] Etymologically the term for incest, *olubo* derives from the name of the Luo (Ababo). Who are neighbors of Abanyole. But it also echoes the term for the direction where the sun sets (*imbo* – west), the direction where the sun empties the ill omen it has collected along the way from the time it rises in *ebukwe* (east) till it sets in the west. The proximity of the *olubo*/*imbo*/*Ababo* hints at the perception in Nyole cosmology of the direction (west) as well as the Nilotic neighbors who live to the west of Abanyole.

masculinity as it is discursive severance of genetic links with their nemesis through the burning of the perfidious body. Another subtext of Mbalukha's story is that Abamutete's desire to destabilize and dominate Abasilatsi is inspired by sibling rivalry between the offspring of the third (last) and second sons of Anyole respectively. Hence, Mbalukha's narrative represents them as upstarts who must be put in their place. But also, as the embodiment of the untainted ancestral wish, Mbalukha's repudiation of Kima School signifies determination to avoid personal contamination. As noted, school and learning in Ebunyole is associated with the Abamutete. Hence, the part of Mbalukha's narrative on Abamutete seems to develop as a form of contest of what Em'mutete and Abamutete signify. Ibrahim (2001: 114) provides an appropriate frame within which to read Mbalukha when he suggests that testimonies of historical discourse be seen in relative terms:" one testimony of a historical discourse builds on other testimonies and polemisizes them…the issue here is not how these testimonies are derived from the event…but how they record that event while reacting to one another." In this case, the masculine self image he likes to project of the self and the clan suggests a possible way of understanding Mbalukha's narrative through an intertextual relation with the Abamutete hegemony narrative which threatens the desired masculine image he constructs of the Abasilatsi.

Mbalukha leaves no doubt about the fact that the height of personal fulfillment was when he joined the East Africa Second Division of the Kings African Rifles (KAR) in 1939 during the Second World War and was deployed to India, China and Japan after a stint as a laborer for two white settler farmers at Naivasha in the Rift Valley Province and at Masongaleni in Kibwezi, Eastern Province. But the peak of his masculinity was reached by his presence as a participant at the historic moment when he witnessed "the Americans bomb Japan in 1945, which ended the war" before he left Japan to demobilize in Kenya in June 1946. Back in

Kenya, he joined Tribal Police (TP, now called Administration Police, AP) till his retirement in 1961, to settle permanently in the community where he has been a very influential opinion leader since.

During the fieldwork, Mbalukha pressed me to visit (and finally led me to) a shrine built from the proceeds of his mobilization for Amukhoye, the ancestor of Abasilatsi clan, to which he affirmed his role as custodian. The shrine was built at the foot of Musikulu wa Amukhoye (Amukhoye Hill) where Amukhoye established his home inside a cave. Mbalukha's assertion of custody over the Abasilatsi cradle as it were, as well as his World War II heroism as much underlies his interaction with the rest of the clan as it determines the way he perceives the other Nyole clans. Hence, he always makes clear that his position is not by fluke; he occupies it by right because he is from the lineage of Matakho,[35] the third son of Amukhoye and the only son of his second wife, Nekondi,[36] to whom Amukhoye bequeathed warriorship.

Mbalukha proudly recounted several times the legendary act of courage which bestowed leadership and authority on Matakho's lineage. Following an attack by Abarwa/Ebitukuti (Nandi) raiders, who mortally wounded Amukhoye before they drove away his cattle, Matakho single-handedly gave chase and confronted the raiders at Wamahande where he killed two, scattered the rest and seized back his father's herd, most importantly his cherished bull, *okwananga* (literally 'one that bellows'). While on his death bed he heard his bull bellowing; Amukhoye was so pleased that he wished Matakho a multitude of descendants. But significantly, he gave him a spear and shield and willed him and his lineage the responsibility of warriorhood to expand clan land as well as be guardian, leader and defender

[35] Matakho literally means buttocks. Legend has it that he acquired the name because of his big buttocks and huge frame. Many texts acclaim his battle prowess as the fulfillment of his father's wish. However, Mbalukha would occasionally get uneasy calling him by the name Matakho, especially on 26 December, because of the derogatory connotations in Olunyole language, preferring instead his proper name Chitwa.
[36] Others such as Erasto Nyong'a Amatinye call her Mwechenye. Apparently, she is known by the two names.

of the entire Abasilatsi ‘sub-nation’. Hence, the supposed war acumen and demographic superiority of Abamatakho clan fulfills the ancestral wish. In affirmation of Mbalukha’s story, Nyong’a attributed the unique settlement pattern where Abamatakho spread across clan land to Amukhoye’s will. They were always at expansionist wars. Hence, their settlement in the conquered lands at the fringes of the clan territory signifies Matakho masculinity.

From the forgoing, it is apparent that Mbalukha perceives the story of his life as manifestation of the prophecy of old, of which he is the contemporary fulfillment. This understanding seems to frame his interpretation and justification of all events and actions. Hence, he represents himself as the paragon of endurance and opposition, of torment and of betrayal in his bid to actualize the ancestral wish. Varied events in his life such as the Second World War experience in Asia, his leadership in wars against neighboring the Abasikhale and the Abamutete clans, and even his guardianship of the shrine, are all motivated by the desire to fulfill the ancestral wish. The decision to shun school is thus, a more potent statement on his part. Rejection of school in this context is an act of rebellion against the new order that might burden his role; an act of performing the masculine role of custodian of the ancestral wish.

One fundamental contradiction about how Mbalukha understands his life is in the way he sees unproblematic continuity between his traditional and the postcolonial roles. Mbalukha asserts that before they left for war in Asia, they were blessed by clan elders who usually would bless those going to war to defend the clan’s cause, thus suggesting unproblematic continuity in clan-colonial/western interests. That position is reinforced by the indictment of Ndele, his main detractor on December 26, for his absence from the war front when he asks Ndele: “When we were going to war where you were?” Thus, participation in Second World

War ambiguously figures simultaneously, fighting the white man's war and achieving Matakho clan heroism. A fellow clansman, Okola Ekhuya, affirms Mbalukha as clan hero (*etswoni/echekhe*) because fighting in the Second World War, however remote the battle field and the cause, was fighting for the clan. Hence, Mbalukha's indictment of Ndele as having abdicated his warrior role as the progeny of Matakho finds its meaning in this conception. As a contrast of Ndele, Mbalukha asserts that whereas some people were forced to register in the army, he sought the conscriptors and signed up voluntarily.

One of the connotations of Mbalukha's account is that the multiple story of the meaning of the World Wars is far from told. The prominent narratives of the World Wars silence other narratives such as Mbalukha's which, though grafted onto the dominant one, are motivated by desires different from all the others and are even tangential to the meaning of the master narrative. The synecdochic space he claims in relation to Matakho suggests that his presence at the decisive moment when American bombs resolutely ended the war entails, on the one hand, the internationalization of Amukhoye's wish and its fulfillment, and Matakho masculinity, and on the other, the localization of the cause and meaning of the world wars.

I have tried to show that Mbalukha's actions can be explained through appreciation of his background and his desire to position and project himself as the heir and embodiment of the fulfillment of the will of his ancestors. One way of understanding Mbalukha's obsession with Matakho and the way all actions are justified by the desire to fulfill his ancestral wish is provided by Vansina's notion of euhemerism (1992: 23). Of this concept Vansina says: "whole bodies of group accounts [are] collapsed into a single cliché or crystallized around the figure of a single cultural hero who stands for long periods of time. Some may be logical constructs or were perhaps once revered spirits and later humanized into cultural heroes"

(1992: 22- 23). This underscores logic and imagination rather than factuality in the construction of community past. Below, and in the rest of the chapter, I try to exemplify how Mbalukha tries to navigate the performance space to actualize his desire.

#### 3.2.1.1.2. To be seen; to be heard? Age and legitimation of knowledge

On December 26, Mbalukha was cognizant of the fact that apart from Kweya Senior (KS) who, at 92 was his age mate, the rest of the elders were younger than him. At the same time, having been a magistrate and well-known farmer and businessman after retirement in addition to serving as member or chair of many community and government bodies, KS's opinion was sought regularly. Thus, by constantly seeking KS's approval and solidarity for his assertions while talking down to the other participants, he signified an intention to harness and deploy the authority of age and social position to justify exclusion of other views. For instance, when Mbalukha was hard put to explain the origin of one clan, he asserted his position as he sought the solidarity of his contemporary, thus:

> Mbalukha (M): Omusikhale came from among the Abalogooli. Kweya, do I lie?
>
> KS: I talked about all that yesterday.

The ambivalence or lack of enthusiasm in KS's answer did not escape Mbalukha's notice, although he still recognized KS's potential as an ally if he could be hooked into it. However, not confident about extracting KS's collaboration, Mbalukha resorted to the triple strategy of gesticulating with his staff by repeatedly driving it into the ground to stress his point, walking to where Ndele was seated and dwarfing him by towering directly above his head, and to further cajoling KS to enlist him to validate his authority. Among Abanyole, an old man's

staff has the dual symbolism of old age (the old man supports himself on it), as well as authority of social status as an elder: both signify power over hegemonic social discourses (Kiesling 2006) and legitimize infallibility of knowledge claims of the owner. Instructively, Ndele too had his staff, but at no time did he similarly summon its authority during the argument with Mbalukha. That suggests subordination of the clout of Ndele's staff relative to Mbalukha's. Hence, the staff acquired the symbolic value as a performance prop, but it also conferred on Mbalukha the aura of authority which it appropriated from other staffs, but which was determinedly if obliquely contested by detractors. The apparent challenge to age as wisdom may also be understood within the structure of other extraordinary contextual dynamics which I discuss in the next section. But the argument below, in which Mbalukha is at pains to link his lineage to clan heroes and deflect stiff opposition from his detractor Ndele, illustrates the point:

> M: (Repeatedly thrusting his walking stick into the ground emphatically) Look here, we are from the people we call… the ones among whom Ochango was chief. Our family line heads into them**.**
>
> Ndele (N): (Regaining some lost ground) Why don't you give us its name!
>
> M: The family line of Abananda! It meets…
>
> N: These Abananda, our meeting point is Namilu!
>
> M: Who?
>
> N: Namilu, Ananda is the brother of Namilu.
>
> M: Ah! You are making me lose my trail (prolonged audience laughter). Kweya, if I miss the mark… (Looks at KS who either ignores him or simply wishes to stay out of the argument) if I miss the mark…. Our lineage joins Alwala son of Oluchina. Then it joins the Ochango family….

Alwala was a war hero from Mbalukha's clan with whom he consistently sought to be associated. Mbalukha and Ndele had reached consensus earlier on the issue of Namilu/Ananda as the point of convergence of their lineages. But that resolution was clearly inappropriate at this juncture because it would blur Mbalukha's preferred image as descending directly from a lineage of heroes which the tortuous connection with past clan heroes, Alwala and Ochango, grants. This contest over truth resonates with Kiesling's (2006: 267) assertion that "stories do not 'mean' in the conventional (symbolic) way, but rather take their meaning from their relation to the context of speaking." It also underscores Sklodowska's caution ( quoted in Beverly 2000: 557) against looking for "direct homology between text and history" but instead look out for "refraction determined by the vicissitudes of memory, intention and ideology**",** and Georgapaulo's (2006:83) notion of narrative as talk in action.

At the same time, Ndele was conscious of his age in relation to most of the others in the audience. Whereas he too occasionally sought the approval of KS, he was conscious of the pecking order granted by age *vis-à-vis* the rest of the male audience. For instance, he referred to one elder, Imbaya Mandu, as *omusiani uyu* (this young man) even though at 78 he was not much younger than Ndele. Simultaneously, sensitivity to age/generation cohort is enhanced by the term he used to refer to me in contrast to Imbaya. When I raised the issue of why my ancestor moved from the original home near current Ndele's residence, Ndele expressed surprise and asked:

(Laughing uneasily[37])… Kweya did you tell *this child*?

KS: Just go on (Extended audience laughter).

The terms *omusiani* (young man) and *omwana* (child) allude to the ambiguity in the Nyole social discourses with regard to age and generational difference. Hence, from this exchange, it is possible to tell two things: first Imbaya and Ndele belong to different generational cohorts, but also Imbaya is relatively younger; but the presence of my father in this context made me a perpetual child. So, my father and not I, was responsible for my knowledge gap. In a sense, even my position as leader of the discussion rather than a passive listener asking for occasional clarification constituted a form of subversion of the convention governing the institutions of *esitioli* (evening bonfire) and *emukitsi* (courtyard). That Mbalukha frequently easily appropriated the interviewer role from me to destabilize Ndele and get his way is framed by these age dynamics. Secondly, in methodological terms, my age and supposed ignorance and naivety as the interviewer are turned to good use (Thompson 1988: 196) because they seem to inspire the performance of Mbalukha and Ndele to roll out history to get me informed, but it also abets the process of undermining each other.

Similarly, age seems to be the major factor in the contrast between the performances on December 18 and 26. On December 18, Mbalukha came to the home of William Ot'tiali Ombima (100 years). The choice of venue was dictated by two factors. First, in view of Ot'tiali's ill health and old age, he could not be expected to move out of his home. Secondly and most crucially, a socially recognized pecking order predetermined Ot'tiali's rather than Mbalukha's home as the venue of the meeting because of the age differential. But the two

[37] The cause of Ndele's unease as he broached the topic of my knowledge gap is twofold: first, he demonstrated awareness of authority of social status and age which Kweya Senior commanded. But also he wanted to demonstrate sensitivity to the nature of information he thought my father had withheld from me about *esiluchi* (murder of a clansman) in my lineage which happened about 10 generations ago and caused the migration.

factors: age and host potentially handed Ot'tiali veto authority over the proceedings because it privileged Ot'tiali *vis-à-vis* determining the plot of the talk. However, Mbalukha's competence in matters of the traditions and the past of the Abanyole was not subject to question as he proved on December 26. For a long time, Ot'tiali was the acclaimed leader of the funeral ritual *(esilemba*) in Ebunyole. He retains the symbol of that office – a specially made spear that was always associated with him during such ritual performance, which he said he brought from Kano in Luoland, and which he proudly displayed during the interview. But Mbalukha is also well known as the kingpin of traditional social order, often taking on other elders in fierce argument or regaling the youth with stories of past heroes of the community.

On December 18, it appeared to fall naturally on Ot'tiali to start to answer my question; who Abanyole are and where they came from. The play on the age/power/knowledge paradigm evident on December 26 was manifested when Ot'tiali starts early to appropriate and stamp his authority on the performance space by dwelling on issues that emphasized his age to buttress the infallibility of his narrative. His very first words were meant to assert this authority and grant him unfettered access to the narrative space:

> Ot'tiali (O): ….You heard me …I grew up… 1906 to date, how old am I?
>
> K: As you said, one hundred.
>
> O: What I know I will say. You heard me say from one up to ten. Once we reach ten, once we finish all that, we will start another story. When we get to ten, we again will ask for more to talk about. (Chuckles, warns) I will take time! (Chuckles).
>
> I was born in1906. [In] 1908 …I started to know a e i. We had a teacher here called Enos Akhwaba…. Should I start with birth lineage, or should I talk about when *abalafu*

[whites] came, or when there were rains, who were the rulers? Were there rulers or… [not]? ....

Both this excerpt and the tussle below emphasize the premium Ot'tiali invests in age as authority, hence the struggle to keep Mbalukha in his place by restating his age while vigorously resisting Mbalukha's attempt to discursively narrow the age gap. The age/knowledge relationship as validation of the right to speak is inescapable here. The age disparity justifies the intention to claim absolute control over the narrative space. Hence, from the outset, Ot'tiali indicates his intention to totally eclipse Mbalukha by stressing the time frame that "I" rather than "we" (with Mbalukha) need to tell the story (above). This development masks the fact that ordinarily, the two are close friends and are always in each other's company, and that I invited Mbalukha on Ot'tiali's strong recommendation:

M: I was born in 1917. Nicodemu wrote it down. 1917 January, How old am I now? I was born the same year with Kweya.

O: This one (Mbalukha), Kweya, Evan Teela are age mates.

M: After the end of this year we will have turned 100.

O: No, not yet!

Kutai (Ku): It is about eleven years less.

M: We are 90 now?

O: Yes, more like it.

Simultaneously, the vastness of Ot'tali's knowledge is variously alluded to by the insinuation of the 10 stages of each of his narratives as only a convenient launch point into a potentially infinite knowledge reservoir which one attains by age: "You heard me say from one up to

ten…. Once we finish all that, we will start another story. When we get to ten, we again will ask for more….I will take time!" The forewarning about the time required to exhaust the full repertoire, the emphasis on his age and his tutelage under a respected community elder, and the events he witnessed such as the arrival of the first whites, all emphasize his age and legitimate his authority over the performance space. Hence, the rhetorical play on his age/experience in the two excerpts above has the effect of ceding control to him so that the questions that I ask subsequently are unambiguously presumed to be directed to him. Mbalukha positioned himself similarly in relation to the event of December 26, but the dynamics of December 18 in relation to Ot'tiali crowd him out of the space. Both events were marked by dramatic silencing of the younger; on December 26, Mbalukha as the eldest member deliberately paused for a while with no one attempting to break the ice before he started to speak. That contrasts with December 18 when Mbalukha initially accepted the support role, usually to suggest answers to Ot'tiali's rhetorical puzzles or finish his sentences as below:

O: …Abasikhale I don't know, Abasiekwe I don't know, Abasakami, I don't know.

Mbalukha (M): (Speaking for the first time) Abasikhale I know. They came from Ebulogooli!

O: (Ignoring him). What I know, the Luo followed the lake. They came from Nubia. But the Kikuyu I don't know. Abetakho I don't know. They have their elders who explained to them. In the past, such explanation was made at *khusitioli* (evening bonfire).

When the youth sit among the elders, don't spite such a child. He has quick brains. He is told: "Bring food from the house of so and so". He brings it and then eats with the elders. Such a child is curious and seeks for clarification for what he doesn't understand. But the

son who avoids the bonfire is a ne'er-do-good. Understand me? So our Abanyole clans are Abamutete, Abasilatsi, Abamuli.

M: (Emphasizing, gesticulating) Three!

O: So, Abatongoi, which lineage do they come through? They are called Abatombolio who are Abatombolio people, which way did they come? Abasakami are called Kasagam. I have traversed their land…. I used to fish in the lake. I discovered the majority of Omusakami is in Kano….From Kisumu up to Koru are Abasakami…. When you are told "*Kamagambo nolumile*"; the Kamagambo – you can't marry from them!

M: They are Abasilatsi![38]

O: (Sings) *Kamagambo nolumile*. They are like *olumile* [a species of birds which feeds on eleusine]. (Emphasizing my age) you never saw *olumile*. They used to hide in eleusine fields.

M: Then they would fly off in a single file.

It is apparent though that Ot'tiali simply ignored Mbalukha and his futile attempts thus far to enter the performance space, conscious of the metonymic relation he (Ot'tiali) enjoys as the gate keeper of the past of the community because of his age.

Anxious to claim a piece of the narrative space, Mbalukha discreetly passed to me a written document whispering: "Here, take this. This is my story. I wrote it down with *echekhe* [war hero]". This incident further instantiates my observation above that Mbalukha summons the modern to enhance his authority over the old. The incident is noted here for the way literate technologies (Ong 1982) which Mbalukha had repudiated are appropriated to circumvent the

[38] Ot'tiali, Mbalukha, and I share the clan, hence the counsel. We all are Abasilatsi albeit from different lineages. Mbalukha and I share the same lineage – Abamatakho.

limitations imposed by gerontocracy. This and similar episodes in which performers handed me written texts and documents, are the focus of Chapter Five. In other contexts, such as that of December 26, Mbalukha vigorously defended his controversial triple view of the Abatongoi as the offspring of Mwenje/Anyole; the Abasiloli, who as the offspring of the first son of Mwenje, blessed them before they went to war; and the Kikuyu as having migrated together with the Abanyole and separated in Kisii. But on this occasion, he made no attempt to assert his knowledge to fill the self confessed-knowledge gap of Ot'tiali. By this demeanor before Ot'tiali, he cut the image of the metaphorical diligent apprentice that Ot'tiali idealizes. That clearly is the position Ot'tiali expected Mbalukha and I to occupy in relation to him, effectively blurring the vast age and generational disparity between Mbalukha and I.

Having established his authority over the performance space, Ot'tiali secured it by resorting to an array of strategies that abound in Nyole traditional ideologies. One of them is to play on the social attitude towards a man who follows his mother around (*ochendanga na nyina*). The effeminate image here resonates ambivalently and awkwardly with the label of ultimate effeminacy and social marginality for a man – *omuchenda na nyina*,[39] the complete reverse of Mbalukha's ideal masculine self-image. Ot'tiali underscored this position at least three times to gesture to Mbalukha's lack of authority to comment on certain events. For instance, when Mbalukha tried to talk about the heroic wars between his clan and the neighboring Abamutete,[40] Ot'tiali simply dismissed him thus: "You were not here; you had followed your mother to Em'mutete!" Then, "He came back from Em'mutete with his brother Omwoha. They grew up at Em'mutete." In this context, the motif of exile and return undermines

[39] *Omuchenda na nyina* (one whose mother has brought along to her new marriage already born) contrasts with *omwibule* (legitimate member of the nation by birth). The label *omuchenda na nyina* has implications on the rights of one so labeled. But related to this is *ochendanga na nyina* – one who follows his mother around/mother's boy, who is the Luhya figure of absolute spite.

[40] Presumably, this was the war that expelled Abamutete from Abasilatsi land at Ebulonga after the fight during the football match at Kima in the 1930s (discussed above). It is the last major clash between Abamutete and Abasilatsi in the recent memory.

Mbalukha's authority by implying that Mbalukha's absence from Ebulonga while with his mother fractured his knowledge, making him unreliable as the custodian of the story of community experience. The exchange below further illustrates these points:

> M: [Etwenya people] came from here! They had taken up land in Epang'a. All Epang'a was Ebusilatsi! Then they thought the space was small.
>
> O: (Dismissive.) They didn't just leave to take up land there; they were expelled from here! They were chased by Abalogooli. *Did you not see…? But you were still in Em'mutete*. It is Okulo who expelled the …eeeh… [Abamutete] from the [site of the] present home of Etubuli Ndengu.

The extreme measures that Ot'tiali had to adopt to retain the power over the narrative space are apparent. In Ebunyole, one can only talk about another's *nyina/ m'mawo/mao* (mother) if one is older than the interlocutor. Any other way, it is an act of extreme provocation because of the ambiguity in the nuanced terms *mao/m'mawo* as mother and an insult to one's mother. Only the elders can use these terms; others would use the longer acceptable version – *mama wuwo*. Therefore, Ot'tiali legitimately asserts the authority of age to "index background knowledge discourses" (Kiesling 2006: 266) around Mbalukha. Mbalukha uses a similar strategy to silence Ndele on December 26. The concept indexicality (Kiesling 2006: 266) therefore explicates the strategies the opponents adopt in the struggle to exercise hegemonic authority over each other. The struggle affirms Foucault's notion that "power is productive and useful for society," thus, the discourse areas to which each of the opponents resorts instantiate the areas of such power (ibid). Kiesling adds that "by being accessed through indexicality, [the discourses] make interaction much more efficient as background knowledge does not need to be spelt out" (2006: 266).

Mbalukha's story of heroism rests on his claim of a courageous challenge to the Am'mutete crusade to establish hegemony over the Abasilatsi, a story he has told consistently. However, the paradox in Ot'tiali's claim that in fact at the time of these wars, Mbalukha was living in Em'mutete deliberately contradicts and severely dents the veracity of Mbalukha's story and by implication, seriously undermines his claims of suffering and heroism. Age thus grants Ot'tiali authority to subject Mbalukha to scrutiny and refer to him and his mother in a manner no one else can dare do. And he makes effective use of it to silence Mbalukha so that he reverts to his support role while yielding space to Ot'tiali.

### 3.3. Men raconteurs; women patrons: gender and the performance space

One of the major methodological challenges posed by the performance of December 26 derives from its unprecedented character; it was called by women who framed the agenda and executed it. Specifically, the fact that this meeting was called by women married into the community put a lot more at stake; the elders were called to the meeting by younger women, the majority of whom were their daughters- in- law and their "wives".[41] It is also notable in so far as it bears on the performance space that the majority of the audience were women, members of Ebulonga Cultural Association. The association is mainly a women's concern whose objectives, they said, range from cultural matters to care for HIV orphans. However, this meeting was unique because the women mediated the assembly of elders to perform their

[41] The elderly women were not necessarily their real wives. In the Nyole/Luhya as in most of the Bantu cultures of the interlacustrine region of East Africa, the wife of one's age mate, with whom one shares the same generation, is symbolically one's wife. This implies that the man is as anxious to retain his masculine social image before such a woman as he would before his own wife. However, the official term is *mulamwa* (sister-in-law) but this one can be used by all in the way symbolic use of "wife" cannot. Similarly, the younger women were not necessarily their actual daughters-in-law; they assumed that status by virtue of being married to the sons of the elders' age mates, which did not water down the relationship characterized by veneration as between the actual father-in-law and daughter-in-law.

social function – to discuss matters of culture and the past so that the youth could learn from the parley. Thus, the women subverted the familiar social norms governing who is authorized to convene/attend such meeting.

In her opening address, the chair Mrs. Martha Koki said she called the elders to their meeting because, "It is apparent that we are losing track; we have ignored the elders. I don't have time to sit with my father-in-law. If we meet, then the youth who may get the time can learn from you…. the youth are losing track because we have ignored you the elders. You have no time to sit with them. Time has come. We will have to sit together in order to learn from you." In effect, the women designed the meeting as an educational opportunity for the youth in matters of traditions and the past of the community. Hence, the oxymoron in the title of this section calls attention to the changed social landscape in Ebunyole which makes the contradiction in women as hosts/patrons of a traditionally masculine parley seem obscure to the elders as the guardians of patriarchal institutions. The event destabilizes the typical Nyole and the larger Kenyan model where women's submission to male patronage is the norm.

To appreciate the iconoclastic nature of the events of December 26, one needs to understand the discourses of gender relations and the social locus of women, as well as the designation-by-gender of the home spaces in Nyole cosmology (Olumwullah 2002). In Ebunyole, as in most other lacustrine Bantu communities of East Africa, the woman is figured as a perpetual outsider/traveler. Hence, among the Abatsotso, the Abanyala and many other Luhya 'sub-nations', the expression: *uno nomucheni wa lebe* (this is the guest of so and so), in reference to a wife or girlfriend is common. Thus, a woman's otherness is foregrounded by the social mode of recognition – as an add-on to her husband. Alembi (2002) confirms the peripheral locus of the woman in Nyole worldview in his observation that a woman is missed only after

death because of the sudden grasp of the gap she has left in respect of her gender conferred roles.

The configuration of *litaala* (home) enhances the marginality of the woman. *Litaala* is a gendered space comprising *omukitsi* (courtyard), also called *ebulunji* (front, literally the straightforward space), *esilibwa* (entrance, but also means lineage), or *ebulafu* (front yard, literally the place of the light/open); it is also the site of *olusambwa* (shrine). It is therefore the male domain (Olumwullah 2002: 89-90). The contrast, *indangu* (backyard) or *m'makomia* (in the banana grove), as the woman's space is "asymmetrical to *emukitsi* (infront)" (90). *M'makomia* as the uncharted or "Other" space is only rivaled by *mulubanda/m'mwalo* (valley [both are in the same direction from the homestead]) to denote the fringe space, realm of darkness, evil, the occult, the unfamiliar, as well as the space for the mediocre and the failures. Hence the song: *Abakwa kape bahenyelanga/bahengelanga mukubanda mulukose* (Those who failed KAPE[42] gawk/lurk in the Olukose River Valley). Hofmeyr (1994: 94) similarly highlights the peripheral location of Sotho women in relation to *Kgoro* (courtyard) in which historical lessons were taught thus ensuring that "women were never made entirely articulate in historical knowledge." The little they knew was gleaned "informally from their husbands, sons, and fathers". This implies that the exclusionary gendered configuration of the home space applied more broadly across Africa.

The preceding reading of spaces and gender roles in Nyole cosmology frames my understanding of the events of this day, not in terms of conformation to the worldview, but

[42] KAPE, Kenya African Preliminary Exam, was a qualifying exam for secondary school entrance in colonial Kenya. The song captures the emerging ethos of the 1950s colonial Ebunyole in particular and Kenya in general whereby school and passing exam gradually attained premium rating as signal of entry into modernity. The attitude of a Kikuyu young man captured in an exchange of letters with his girlfriend in the early 1960s colonial Kenya illustrates this. The young man rejects her because she has not gone far in school, thus she is not 'modern' and therefore cannot be his wife (Thomas 2006). Hence, the concept of the otherness of failure/inferior versus success/value in Nyole cosmology was adapted to the new phenomenon of school exams.

rather, in terms of the tensions and contradictions generated, on the one hand, by the subversion of that worldview by the unprecedented and subtly assertive presence of women in the hallowed ground and affairs of *emukitsi*. On the other hand, even if the meeting was called by women, the majority of them said very little; instead they were reduced to smiling, laughing or gesturing their discomfort with the tensions engendered by the contests. Effectively, only four women spoke; three of them old and widowed. Nevertheless, the authority of the women as convener, and host of the men in their own *emukitsi* space of ultimate signification of Nyole masculinity was palpable. Oxymoronically, where at once, the "guest" took over the hearth, and the differentiation of the *indangu* and *eluyia/ebulunji* spaces were blurred by destabilization of the ideologies that frame the social relationship between the two spaces. Hence, the notion of men as the authority over the discourses of the past was symbolically neutered by the annexation of the space that legitimizes that perception.

Crucially, the meeting potentially challenged the knowledge and authority of the elders; it entailed summoning their best before daughters-in-law/wives, and the youth to retain their social status. That provides the background against which to understand the seeming subversion by Ndele of the authority of hegemony by openly challenging or taunting Mbalukha; what was at stake is implicated in the gender composition of the audience. But the unpremeditated sitting arrangement which placed the two adversaries next to each other turned out as much to build the tension, the consequence of regular confrontations and menacing gesticulations, as to unfurl the performance and give it a life of its own.

The fact that of all the performances I attended, this one seems to have demanded the best from the men calls for some conceptual reflection. It is discernible that whenever any one of the four women who participated in the discussion (and particularly so Mrs. Ndege) spoke,

the men seemed to feel called upon to take up or elaborate the topic she introduced. In this sense one participant, Mrs Ndege, and not the men as traditional custodians seemed to assume the role of identifying aspects of community memory appropriate for discussion. The example below illustrates the way she seemed to dictate the direction at one point:

Mrs. Ndege: […] When Abalonga[43] had won,[44] this song was sung during beer revelry: *Balonga basambila Otumba mwipoma/ sibaliebula/ banina khumukhuyu ikulu*. (Abalonga burned Otumba in his home/they will never own up/they have scaled to the top of the fig tree). Have you ever heard that song? They would sing and dance as they drank!

N: That is it; that is it! The fire that burned Otiato; after he left office he did not budge…. So Abalonga schemed and took a burning splint, they passed by Amoni's house and…set his home on fire. Then Otiato thought: "Ha, this is no place to stay; these Abasilatsi are treacherous." Some… Abasilatsi people like Amoni… were arrested.

Imbaya (I): Amoni said "I was all eyes (*Ise ndalitsa moni*)

N: I just watched.

…….

Mrs. Ndege: Otumba is Otiato. That is when they sung the song (she repeats the song). Then they would dance vigorously because they had disowned: "We have not the slightest idea".

[43] Abalonga are a sub-clan of Abasilatsi. Otiato/Otumba, the second colonial chief of Ebunyole, was from the neighboring Abasikhale clan with whom Abalonga fought many wars over land. Mbalukha and Ndele said Otiato built his home in Ebulonga, ostensibly for easy access to the colonial District Officer's office in Emuhaya. Imbaya added that he then invited members of his Abasikhale clan to live next to him as his security. However, he apparently refused to move after he was relieved of his duties in 1926 (apparently for siding with his Abasikhale clan against Abalonga in a dispute over land), hence the arson and forced eviction

[44] She refers to the war between Abalonga and Abasikhale to evict Abasikhale who were settled in Abalonga land by Otiato, which I have discussed in detail below.

The gender struggle for control of the ethos is apparent in the way Ndele seizes the reminiscences of the song. It is after this that he entered into a fierce argument with Mbalukha over his role in the war to evict Otumba (discussed in Chapter Four). But the irony in the fact that Mrs. Ndege, a woman, mainstreamed the agenda of the heroism of the Abasilatsi, and managed to divert attention to the issue of the contentious relationship with the Abasikhale is inescapable. Through her song, she indexed the popular background knowledge discourses (Kiesling, 2006) of Abasilatsi as *abakalama banin'nanga omusala omukongo* (pranksters who scale to the tree top on the back). Mrs Ndege's action is iconoclastic in so far as she sets the agenda for a typically male parley. Thus, she destabilizes the notion that "women can only represent themselves in scripts that men have constructed for them – as wives, witches…" (Bergland 1994: 132). But interrogation of the institutionalized gender bias that justifies her exclusion from deciphering the past (a predominantly male space) by designating her as the Other (ibid) is moderated by her choice of the less provocative prompter role. Consequently, her challenge to tradition is self-limiting. To echo Gates (1988b), her double-voiced discourse connotes the dilemma of speaking the self into being through appropriating the subject, language, and experience of the dominant gender by making the clan heroism text to speak with a female voice.

Through what Desai (2001: 5) calls retrieval from the community archive of the memory of the Otumba arson incident and the comic plea of innocence: "We have not the slightest idea", Mrs. Ndege asserts her authority over this community archive by gesturing to the *abakalama* appellation that usually excites clan vanity. Amoni's plea of innocence, *ise ndalitsa moni* (I was all eyes) figures this Abasilatsi penchant for trickster pranks in the way he plays on the phonological ambiguity in Amoni (his name), *imoni* (eye) and *moni* (blank unperceptive

stare). One way to understand the hyperactivity of the men, on the one hand, and the entry of Mrs. Ndege as an assertive player in exclusively masculine affairs of *omukitsi* (courtyard) to which she is peripheral as a woman and wife/outsider (married into the community from a different clan), on the other, is suggested by the concept passivity (Still and Worton, 1993: 16). Still and Worton assert that men and women are "haunted by fear of passivity [as] a shared [psychosexual] human condition" (16). In other words, each gender tries unconsciously to extricate itself from the menace of being a passive recipient of the utterances and actions of the other. Both escape the quandary by "resexualis[ing] – and ultimately retextualis[ing] – themselves, and so inscribe themselves in the new psychosocial order" (Still and Worton, 16).

However, Mrs. Ndege's authority can also be understood within a framework of another strand of argument. Still and Worton (1993: 36) refer to the phenomenon whereby Queen Victoria of England only managed to assert her authority after she attained the asexual status following the death of her husband. Mrs. Ndege's speaking position as well as that of two of her four compatriots seems to be authorized by similar adversity, widowhood, reinforced by age. Her status makes her a loose canon: she is asexualized and authorized in a manner the others cannot be.

The overarching argument here is that when the meeting is understood within the context of the social crises in Ebunyole – HIV AIDS, pressure on unproductive land, unemployment, inability to participate fully in the economy of the nation-state because of poor education, and the general air of hopelessness which prompted the meeting in the first place, the events of December 26 seem to deconstruct the hierarchies and hegemonies (Still and Worton 1993: 37-8) that are mandated by Nyole cosmology which compartmentalizes spaces by gender and

canonizes exclusive male spaces. Still and Worton's concept linking testimony to testicles (1993: 42-3) brings out the paradox of men exercising their role as the custodians of culture and the past under the patronage of women. In playing roles allocated by women, men become witnesses to what they have lost control of. Hence, the tensions discernible from the outset were due to the iconoclastic nature of the event. Mbalukha and Ot'tiali had observed on December 18 that even in their heyday of such palavers, women were excluded and the closest encounter was when they brought food. Certainly, the boys/young men attended as passive listener-apprentices, not as judges/interrogators or pacesetters with license to ridicule the elders as was potentially the case in this meeting. In effect, the framework and the aesthetics of the palaver (Bell 2002: 110) were subverted on this occasion, heightening the tensions but also destabilizing and re-delineating the space of Nyole traditional palaver.

### 3.4. The ethnographer as context

Apart from gerontocracy and gender as part of the micropolitics of context, I also highlight the person of the ethnographer. Smagorinsky and Coppock (n.d.) calls attention to a factor that is easy to ignore in the performance context: the ethnographer. I place under scrutiny my role in the production of the texts that I collected because as Smagorinsky asserts, the dialogue of the interview and the understanding by the performer of what the ethnographer expects of him mediates the production and understanding of process and product (15). But Josselson (1996: xii) succinctly observes that the ethnographers blind themselves to "the role we play of inventing the questions we pose, shapers of the context we study, and co-participants in the interviews and their interpretation." Therefore, influenced by earlier experience, the ethnographer brings her/his discriminatory reading into the interpretation of texts "through eyes, and ears filtered by distorting perceptual screens we can never shed"

(Keesing 1985: 32). Thus, the ethnographer is also a translator/mediator who brings with him what Federici (n.d.) calls the translator's intertextual baggage. Crucially, the ethnographer's potential to manipulate the context by choosing either to challenge the action even if the performer "presents the action as admirable", or privilege the performer's worldview (Kiesling 2006: 266).

On the one hand, Beverley (1992; 2000), Kaplan (1992) and Tierney (2000) highlight the pivotal role of the researcher because a particular narrative comes into being since s/he has expressly called for it. That the performance is his/her initiative calls attention to how the ethnographer is understood by the subjects. In my own case, the extent to which my membership of the community may have placed me in a vantage position to access certain information, or may have denied me access to some other information (for instance because of gerontocracy as discussed above), needs to be addressed. For instance, some people openly expressed delight that one of their own was doing this research. To what extent might this rapport have "opened the flood of words" (Keesing 1885: 31) that Were[45] (1967), for instance, may have been denied when he did a similar study? In a typical example of the ethnographer's intention as a filter of what events make the narrative, and of what is admissible and what is not, Keesing (1985) reminds us that he found it necessary to "ostensibly run out of tape" in order to extricate himself from a situation where men kept prompting the women to give a particular kind of story. Only when he isolated the women was he able to collect the stories he was interested in. Hence, he consciously engineered the narrative context to make it talk directly to his objective by "catalyzing and deflecting talk" (1985: 32). Keesing achieved his objective by his overbearing presence, but at the cost of

[45] Prof Gideon S. Were was from a different Luhya sub-nation Abamarama. Many resource people thought that on that account he could not listen sympathetically to the Nyole narratives. Besides, some sources, KA for instance, claimed he was in Ebunyole for only one week and used the chief to summon potential resource people to Emuhaya (then the chief's center but currently the Emuhaya District headquarters)

subverting/re/decontextualizing the day-to-day processes of production and consumption of culture in the Kwaio society. In my case, when Ot'tiali talks (above) about the boundless narratives he might tell, and when he appears at a loss as to which narrative to begin with: "the story of the rain, the coming of whites…?" is he signifying upon my limited and potentially distortive/alien categorization of the past and the daily life of the community, so the occasion also grants opportunity to correct my misconception?

On the other hand, whereas the occasion belongs to the ethnographer because s/he initiated it, a subtle power dynamic develops between performer, audience and ethnographer (Beverley 2000: 557). For instance, the performance on December 26 was initiated by a women's association whose chair is my sister-in-law, Martha. The objective was, ostensibly, to get elders together to discuss matters of tradition and the past of Abanyole for the benefit of the youth. But how should this coincidence be read: Martha was aware I was doing research on this general subject, so could the timing of the association meeting and my research presence have been a fleeting happenstance? Martha sought my help to lead the discussion and record the proceedings on my field camera which had become part of my identity at the time. As a way of granting me license *vis-à-vis* which questions to ask, she told the audience that my brief was to "ask you questions as you answer. Instead of writing minutes, he will bring us a video recording of the discussion". In this way, it became apparent that my field technology was fundamental to the context as it signified innovative ways of record keeping. However, the desire to speak their condition to the outside world (Beverley 2000; Kaplan, 1992; Burgos-Debray 1983) appears integral to the endeavor to make sense of the timing of the event and my involvement in it. Hence my camera, itself a metonym of my outsiderness attained fundamental symbolism in that context. Two days prior to the meeting day, before I was even made aware of any meeting in which I had already been enlisted to play a

prominent role, a member of the association, Mr. Esikhunyi, had told me I was going to do a video shooting of their event which had no place in my diary. In fact, to attend the occasion, I had to postpone a scheduled interview. It was apparent that word of my project had preceded me and the community had wanted to both "assist" the ethnographer and harness him for their goal.

The question then is whether knowledge of the presence of the ethnographer might have anything to do with the timing of the meeting; was the planning of the meeting independent of the knowledge of my presence and objective? As a member of the community, this was the first time I heard of a meeting of this kind; a doubly singular event as a meeting called by a women's forum to discuss tradition with community elders as their guests. How might my objective have lent itself to appropriation by the association and how is such appropriation to be read in this context? Simultaneously, if this performance was solely for my attention, what were the anticipated benefits which might motivate the painstaking organization in my favor?

A possible explanation is in the restitutive value my interest may have imbued in a culture in limbo, for (as many performers observed) lack of an audience, and the opportunity for a performance life (Hofmeyr 1994). However, Esikhunyi's comment also seems to allude to the field equipment as a real possibility. The equipment was committed much in advance before I was even made aware of it, suggesting that my endorsement was already presumed. The question is whether signifying the power to deploy and become the subjects (Rabinow 1984) of the exotic technology might also grant a psychological respite from the constriction of village life in Ebunyole characterized by dire material conditions and the dearth of alternatives.

Some insights into how to understand the issues are suggested by Beverly (2000). The narrator/subject is conscious of "hegemonic norms of narrative form"; that his/her voice will be heard in the outside world through the story that the ethnographer makes out of the narrator's discourse (Beverley 2000: 557; Kaplan 1992; Joselsson 1996). The narrator, therefore, appropriates the occasion to stamp him/herself on the performance occasion; to tell the story s/he would like heard, which takes me back to the issue of speaking subalternity to the world. In that case, two conclusions can be drawn from Martha's action. The occasion enabled her to perform a series of subversions: the first is in the double paradox of her calling and chairing a meeting of the elders to discuss the community past, a matter traditionally discussed around *esitioli* (evening bonfire) from which she was excluded as a woman, wife and outsider (married in the community) because hers is the inferior *indangu* (backyard) space (Olumwullah 2002: 90). Hence, her action destabilizes the patriarchal foundation of the Abanyole cosmology.

Secondly, her desire to string the ethnographer into her subversive project implies metaphoric harnessing of the metropolis of which I am the metonym, hence, becoming the focus of my field camera symbolically undermined the barrier that both limits her access to the metropolis and also mutes her as a woman. The camera allows her to journey symbolically from her double restriction to *indangu* and to Ebunyole and be present wherever the video recording might be screened. The status again authenticated her subversive deflation of the patriarchy through the act of calling and chairing the meeting of elders. In this sense, Martha's actions amount to interrogating her dual marginality: her intra-community subalternity which marginalizes her as a woman/wife and her outsiderness in the nation-state in so far as the latter is an imitation and heir of the ethos of the traditional community (Anderson 1983; Bhabha 1990). The two explanations then constitute her way of coming to terms with

Ibrahim's (2001) notions of "unfinished business" and "voting by performance." In that sense the ethnographer, his mission, and regalia strategically camouflage her purpose – to "make [his] mission by subverting it" (Ibrahim 2001: 108); by using the ethnographer as her Trojan horse for the ultimate subversion and democratization/dialogization of the realm of *omukitsi* (courtyard) as the hallowed domain of the men (Olumwullah 2002; Wagner 1949, 1956).

It is apparent that both the reversal of gender roles through the women calling and presiding over the meeting of the elders, and the bid to undermine the institution of gerontocracy destabilize and displace the established hierachies that hold in place the the social structure which allocates everyone her/his place. What is to be made of the series of subversions of established traditional structures which hold together and give identity to the traditional Nyole community as highlighted here? The whole experience of the interview – the heated arguments, the subversions, and the tensions they generated – are manifestations of the liminality of a society in transition where the inadequacy of old ways of knowing has become apparent. Hall (1989: 21) speaks to the Nyole context when he casts doubt on the feasibility of the traditional stable collective identities – gender, race, classs, nationality – which justify the social hierarchies and "the pecking order" (ibid) that validate the traditional social set up of the old Nyole society.

From the foregoing, it is apparent that oral history is produced and consumed under conditions that are sensitive to the dynamism of both the wider social and the immediate performance contexts. The chapter has highlighted the occasion for telling the past as perfomative; one whose real significance is in power play and social interactions in pursuance of what Ibrahim (2001) calls the unfinished business rather than one for production of unaltered kernels of the past. I have underscored three aspects of the context of production

and consumption of the past: gerontocracy, gender, and the ethnographer as some of the contextual factors around which power play revolves. The social and narrative contexts interact around these features to impact on the narrative in a very fundamental way to validate the notion that the narrative is the context and context is discursive. Hence, I have emphasized a shift from product to process as the location of meaning. In a social context typified by social crisis because of reduced land size due to severe population pressure, poor farm yields due to overuse, unemployment due to poor education, and public health challenges in the wake of the HIV pandemic, the authority of the hegemonic institutions such as gender and gerontocracy is placed under scrutiny because of the current circumstances in Ebunyole where women have determinedly displaced men as the core providers for the families through petty trade**.** It is my assertion that the tensions resulting from such structural dislocation produce the need to either interrogate or to preserve such venerated pre-colonial institutions as age and gender roles. Performances such as those discussed here therefore, offer prospects for interrogating the ideologies of the institutions circumscribed by a diminishing social order than they are about reproduction of the past. In such circumstances of instability, the ethnographer's interests are appropriated to revisit and either reassert or interrogate the relevance of such social institutions in a redefining moment for the community. Hence, I have underscored the narrator's intention as the locus of the motivation for discriminative reading of the archive of community past.

# Chapter Four

# Narrating community, narrating the self: the interface of personal and public histories

## 4.0. Overview

This chapter investigates the issue of the forms of the narratives and the modes of narration of the past. The chapter explores the perception of the genres of personal and community pasts and how the narrators select and navigate between them. The chapter is compelled by the field experience whereby two observable modes of narration kept begging for explanation. The first mode was characterized by the distance produced between the narrators themselves and the present of narration, and the narrated events of the past. Many of the narrators talked about the story of the past of Abanyole: origin, migration, founding heroes, genealogies, and experiences since the time of migration and settlement of Ebunyole in a manner that created a clear dichotomy between the times of their ancestors whose experiences they were storying and the narrators' own times.

For instance, when retracing the migration route from Uganda, Brown Eyahuma (Interviewed 19 December 2006) said "Then *they* came to Wangarodi, here at Wangarodi;" "*Those* people…." And talking about how Abanyole arrived, Nyong'a (interviewed January 3, 2007) says: "*They* disembarked in Kisumu, so each person looked for a place which he thought appropriate [to settle]." Hence, the two consistently selected the third person, the neutral observer perspective (Rubin 1995: 9) of their community history resulting in a sense of a temporal and spatial distance between the time of narration and the narrators, and that of the narrated events. A similar trend was observable in the relationship many other narrators

created with the past and their ancestors; they consciously and consistently reproduced the spatial and temporal distance that separates them from the experiences of the pioneering ancestors by choice of narrative perspective. Thus they made clear they were talking about people and experiences of a different time from their own regardless of the fact that those people and events are implicated in their being.

The second mode, which interests me, manifested itself in two ways: the first was made conspicuous by the way it blurred the distance between the narrator and community heroes, and the events which produced them. The narrators talked about events from the distant past as if they were witnesses or participants in those events. They consistently preferred the first person perspective of the "experiencer" (Rubin 1995: 9) of the events using the personal pronoun "I"/"we" and their derivatives even when describing events that were clearly temporally and spatially far removed from them. For instance, while emphasizing how the Nyole and Luo ancestors migrated together to the lacustrine region of Kenya, Afubwa (interviewed 3 January 2007) asserted: "They [Luo] walked on the inside along River Nile while *we* (the Nyole) walked on the outside." The second way is well illustrated by the manner in which Ayub Muchel'le (interviewed 23 December 2006) while narrating the story of Abanyole suddenly and without warning detoured into his spectacular experience of the coveted institutions of learning in East Africa of the early 1960s: "I had to go further, reading.[46] I went up to Tabora St Mary High School. I went up to Makerere! I met Oboth there. Then he asked me, "What are you looking for here?" Then I told him, "'I am looking for education! *I have always heard of Makerere, I decided that I must reach there*.' You understand?"

[46]In Olunyole language, the term he used, *okhusoma*, means both learning and reading. Muchel'le talked about reading the biographies of Sir Winston Churchill, Napoleon Bonaparte, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, and many others. But the assertion attracts attention in the apparent deliberate play on the ambiguity between reading the biographies, as he said, to gain wisdom beyond class 8 education and going for further studies. Ordinarily, the term *okhweka* (implying formal learning) could have eliminated the ambiguity.

Muchel'le had stressed shortly before this that he reluctantly terminated his education after KAPE (class 8) to take up a job with the (then) East African Railways and Harbors (EARH) because he lacked fees to take up the offer of a form one place at the coveted Alliance High School. The contradiction between his highest level of formal educational and the answer he gave to Oboth (Ofumbi) begs the question how to understand his experience of Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda as an event in the narrative of community past and what strategic purpose the Makerere story might have served for him in this context. The answer may partly be in the prominence and reputation of Makerere as the seat of learning captured in the song of the 1950s and 60s: *Mwalimu yeka Makerere* (Our teacher learned at Makerere). The song represented Makerere education as the ultimate dream of the youth of the time. Was Muchel'le telling the story of how dire economic circumstances scuttled his ambition and how he transcended that via the sublime experience of the greatness of Makerere through his short visit? Did the visit become the best and practical alternative to the ultimate but unrealized desire to become a Makerere alumnus? If that is the case, how may the story of a deferred dream and the oblique transcendence of personal obstacles be read as part of the story of community past?

The challenge inherent here is how to recreate through words a sense of pastness in the present, notwithstanding a pattern discernible in the four examples. Both sets of narrators purport to be telling the same story of community past. But the endeavor is complicated by a phenomenon wherein one set positions itself temporally and spatially outside the narrated events. Remarkably, the other set locates the narrating self at the center of the narrated events and experiences thereby making the narrator appear as a witness and participant in those experiences regardless of, on the one hand, the apparent individuality of the experience and,

on the other hand, the spatial and temporal distance that separates the two. In the words of Freeman (1993: 7), they are rewriting the past and the self by inscribing the self in the community past, a procedure by which "the past is figured anew through interpretation" (ibid). However, if meaning is located in the choices people make (Rubin 1995: 9) then the dissension between the two sets in choice of perspective begs the question of the extent to which we can talk about the meaning of the past. Thus, the issue to speak to is the extent to which the two sets of narrators could be said to be doing the same thing – narrating the popular history of the community. The experience demonstrates that the various stances each of the narrators adopted contributed to divergence of opinion about the past of the community. Essentially, the multiple meanings created a new relationship between the present and the past (Freeman 1993: 11); the past was re-imagined through narrating in order for it to remain relevant to the present which includes the present of narration/narrator (ibid)**.** Hence, should the story be read as figuring a personal experience of the paradox of the economic challenges in Ebunyole where education had already started to define the emerging Nyole identity and livelihood and the economic impediment to accessing education? In that case, how might personal experience be understood as a metonym of community experience?

These representations of the past raise a number of specific issues which direct my inquiry. First, how do the two sets of narrators understand kinds of history and the implications for the issue of the stability of the indigenous genre? Why do narrators insert the self at the center of the narrated events and what kinds of history are thus produced? Second is how to account for the way the two sets of sources understood time: the present time of narration and the time when the narrated events of migration and settlement of Ebunyole happened. I am interested in how to explain the way one set produced a temporal and spatial chasm between themselves and the narrated events, meaning they observed linear historical time, while the

other set inserted itself at the center of the events. This means that the process of narrating was an opportunity for temporal and spatial restructuring to give the last set agency in the events they narrated (Ochberg 1996: 98; Beverley 1992, 2000; Freeman 1993). But why did they re-imagine both community time and history, and personal time and history? Freeman (1993: 30) suggests that narrating the past is an interpretive endeavor and narrators create frames of interpretation of the past some of which may allow personal histories to be read as the extension of the wider community history. But the suggestion still gestures to the need to explain the disparity in the choice of the frames between the two groups. Third is how to account for the motivation and intention (Freeman 1993) of the narrator to appropriate the occasion and convert it into a context of self-interpretation. Below, I locate this study within the arguments about genre, time and the self before I center the rest of the chapter on the implications of these arguments for how the narratives of community past might be read.

### 4.1. Time, the self and the genres of history

Personal or life histories belong to the wider category which Beverley (1992, 2000, 2005), Kaplan (1992), Freeman (1993) Ochberg (1996), Davis (1992) Watson and Smith (1992) among many others, generally understand as biographies. Two closely related sub-genres of biography, life history and testimonio (testimonial), are relevant for my purposes. Individuals resort to testimonio and life history to make sense of their lives, to tell the story of their contribution to the community (Beverley 1992, 2000: 555, 2005; Freeman 1993). For the purpose of this chapter, I foreground testimonio because of two aspects: first, because testimonio is prompted by community oppression and personal sacrifice of the narrator to eliminate the threat to community survival, the wider audience of the testmonio narrative is the immediate national/local context (Beverley, ibid). Second, the community may be one in

which the narrator lives or one distant in time and place or fashioned out of the imagination of heroes and heroines selected from community history (Ochberg 1996: 98). Hence, unlike life history proper, what makes testimonio appropriate here is that it is produced not out of the ambition to replicate historical truth but by the desire for solidarity (Beverley 1992), to get the interlocutor/audience to identify with the collective suffering/oppression of the narrator/community. Significantly though, Beverley deemphasizes the distinction between life history and testimonio by acknowledging that the two really have a similar purpose. The difference between them is in terms of whose initiative brings out the narrative. Life history proper is the initiative of the ethnographer and therefore reflects her/his needs, while the testimonio narrator appropriates the intention of the interlocutor and converts her/him into her/his audience (Beverley 1992: 98). For my purpose, the more useful approach is to explore how the boundary between life history and testimonio gets blurred in narrative.

Simultaneously, the conception of time is central to this chapter. First, in what context is the homodiegetic (Simpson 2004; Abbott 2002) "we", as a derivative of the first person singular perspective (Arac 2008: 7), possible when narrating past events which are temporally and spatially remote from the moment of narration? On the question of time and place, Ricoeur's (1980: 175) assertions that "the art of storytelling is not so much a way of reflecting on time as a way of taking it for granted**",** and narrative activity "participates in the dissimulation of both historicality, and… of the deeper levels of temporality" form the basis of my understanding of restructuring or dechronologization ("the logical abolition of time", 1980: 184]) of narrative time. Reagon's (1982) experiment with dechronologization produces a form with the autobiographical voice that speaks in plural "we" and thus inhabits a temporally ambiguous space in which the actual speaking voice presents the historical experience of American women as if she was a participant or eye witness of all the historical

epochs the story implies. Reagon's conception subverts the rules of genre and chronology, firstly by writing a collective autobiography, secondly by doing so in verse (Kaplan 1992). Kaplan (1992) and Tierney (2000) suggest that in conditions of oppression, such violations permit the subject to speak his/her subalternity (Spivak 1994; Beverley 1992, 2000). These conditions are conducive for the production of testimonio. Reagon's violations of the law of genre[47] (Derrida 1980: 203-4; Kaplan 1992; Jacobus 1984[48]) which produced an innovative category called cultural autobiography (Reagon 1982; Kaplan 1992) underpins my understanding of the tendency by some narrators to adopt the inclusive "we" perspective when narrating past events clearly separated from her/his time by several intervening epochs. They restructure time to create a hyperreal temporal structure which allows them to become part of the events that happened much before their era. So, two trajectories are emphasized: the dialogization of the law of genre (Derrida 1980; Kaplan 1992; Jacobus 1984) and its conditions of possibility (Foucault 1972; Scheurich and McKenzie 2005), and the manipulation of time to inscribe the self into the narrative of community past.

In the rest of the chapter, I focus on one narrator, Mbalukha Makaali, whose narratives embody the phenomena discussed above. I have already discussed Mbalukha Makaali in depth in Chapter Three in relation to the narrative context as the site of power play during performance. This chapter takes over from there to explicate the intention and motivation of the narrator to engage in temporal and spatial, and generic restructuring as strategies to

[47] In the essay "The Law of Genre" (1980), Derrida's oxymoronic conception of genre highlights the unstated part of that law with which it exists in an intertextual relationship, effectively neutralizing that same law. Kaplan (1992: 117-8) summarizes it thus: "The 'law of genre' is based on a 'counter law'… the possibility of genre limits is always already undermined by the impossibility of maintaining those very limits."

[48] Jacobus (1984: 55) places genre within the realm of rhetoric, and hence blunts the edges of the law when she assert that genre is, "a figure of reading or of understanding… a means of stabilizing the errant text by putting a face onto it, and so reading into it a recognizable, specular image of our own acts of understanding." Importantly, Jacobus echoes Foucault's elevation of the concept of genealogy over descent in the conception of history by suggesting that even as a sept ("… tribe claiming descent from one ancestor") is impossible in that puritanical sense, the individual members of the set exhibit some similarity without necessarily sharing any features. The looseness and ambiguity of genre boundary avails them to polemics of performance.

inscribe the self into the community narrative. However, I revisit the events cited in Chapter Three and Mbalukha's background where necessary to illustrate my point here.

### 4.2. Popular history and the fashioning of mongrel genres of the past

In this section, I investigate Mbalukha's positioning of the self and lineage in relation to the past of the Abanyole and the implications for the interpretation of the past. The two performances that Mbalukha was involved in, 18 and 26 December 2006, patently obtrude through his preference for events involving his ancestors/lineage especially the wars fought from the time of arrival in Ebunyole more than six centuries ago (Olumwullah 2002; Were 1967; Ogot 1967; Osogo 1966) to the recent wars in which Mbalukha actually participated. Two trajectories, which I highlight below, emerge in Mbalukha's narration both of which have implications for temporality and spatiality, and genre.

#### 4.2.1. Community past as the story of the exploits of the narrator's ancestors

Here I highlight the trend that emerged whereby Mbalukha frequently interjected to emphasize episodes of the exploits of his ancestors at war. For instance, on 18 December while talking about the heroes of the past, Ot'tiali lined up a long list of community heroes: Asiachi, Atemi, Buliilo, Ong'anya, and many others. Apparently, for Mbalukha, the list was deficient in so far as it bracketed out his lineage. Hence, Mbalukha who had been listening keenly suddenly interjected in the following manner: "My grandfather Akhwale was daring. Together with Mung'au who killed Imbwana. They were dreaded…. My grandfather. Very awesome people…. They would not leave the battlefield empty handed. They must kill an enemy!" Similarly, on 26 December 2006 during an argument, he tried to gain the upper hand

by emphasizing his connection to the past war heroes and famous people by lineage: Ochango Eyahuma, Oluchina Alwala, Makaali (his father), Akhwale (grandfather), Oluya (great grandfather), Mung'au, and others.

A contrast between the way he dramatizes his connection to Ochango Eyahuma and the way Brown Eyahuma (Interviewed 19 December 2006) talked about the same Ochango, his father, underscores Mbalukha's emphasis. Brown referred to his father only once and he created some distance between himself and his father by referring to him within the wider heterodiegetic frame (Simpson 2004; Abbott 2002), using third person "he" or simply saying "Ochango was…." Hence, one had to have prior knowledge to discern the father-son relationship between Ochango Eyahuma, the revered community leader and hero, and Brown Eyahuma, the narrator. In contrast, during an argument, Mbalukha tried to highlight the bond between his lineage and Ochango Eyahuma thus: "Our lineage joins Alwala son of Oluchina. Then it joins the Ochango family…. Abakhuliti [Ochango's lineage] are the eldest among all the Abamatakho, then we come after them". It is noteworthy though that despite their implied prominence, this is the only time that Abakhuliti lineage was ever mentioned. Nonetheless, for the second time Mbalukha consciously highlighted the relationship between his lineage with both the community heroes and their lineages while appearing to deflate the acts of other heroes like Njeli from the Abasakami (one of the clans located in the *Abamenyibwa* cohort of the Nyole social structure. I discuss Njeli in Chapter Six) whose war exploits are otherwise generally acknowledged in Ebunyole. For instance, Njeli is widely acclaimed as the *echekhe* (war hero) who directed the crucial war that expelled Abalogooli from Nyole land.

Two more episodes from 18 December demonstrate the consistency in this trend that characterized Mbalukha's choice of pronouns. First, at one point Ot'tiali who had all along

dominated the narrative space introduced the topic of Mwhihiakalo, a sacred knoll on which stands a ritual tree, *esikhale*, under which a special ritual stone, *lihiakalo*, was placed. Before they went to the battlefield, warriors gathered here for elders to sharpen their spears on *lihiakalo* as they instructed/blessed them. That is when Mbalukha chipped in to carve a niche for himself in the performance space from which he had been crowded out all along. He said: "That [Mwihiakalo] is where Oluya, *my ancestor* used to address all the Abasilatsi telling them: 'Go and fight with courage and dexterity, not half heartedly!" In that way, he managed to center his pet topic of war and community heroism and the fundamental role of his ancestors in the war action. Second, while Ot'tiali was talking about the war between the Abalogooli and the Abamutete, Mbalukha demonstrated his consciousness of the diversity of his audience by speaking directly to Kutai from the neighboring Abamutete clan, who was in the audience**:** "Let me tell you. What happened…. You [the Am'mutete] were no match for them [Abalogooli]. Then Mung'au came from *among us* together with Akhwale [Mbalukha's grandfather] – two brave men. They killed…Imbwana – the daring lead warrior of the Abalogooli. He [Imbwana] used to make men around here tremble". The dichotomy between the vulnerable "you" who ought to be beholden to the inclusive "us" holds the meaning of this interjection

Remarkably, Nyong'a (interviewed 3 January 2007) who is from Mbalukha's clan but different lineage mentioned a revered war hero, Liyaala, whose home was a stone's throw from Mbalukha's home, and who apparently was with "Mung'au wa Kwamulieli from Elukongo" (a different ridge from Mbalukha's) when he killed Imbwana the agile and ferocious Abalogooli war hero. But Mbalukha never mentioned Liyaala on any of the two occasions. But again, none of Mbalukha's ancestors whom he represents as great warriors were ever mentioned by Nyong'a or anyone else. It is not my argument that Mbalukha is

making up the story of the exploits of his line of ancestors at war. I am also not suggesting that they might not have been in the war. Rather the issue is: if they were in the war whose memory has been kept alive on all the ridges of the 'sub-nation', how should the apparent silencing of their heroic acts be explained? If as Mbalukha says his grandfather together with Mung'au killed Imbwana, why is Akhwale bracketed in all other versions except Mbalukha's? Nyong'a says thus of how Mung'au stalked and killed Imbwana: "Mung'au…went through…Itabalia and came from behind [enemy lines] …. His *imbili* [weapon] he had given to another man who was dancing with it. They [enemy] did not know him. Then they thought, 'Mung'au wa Kwamulieli is there'. He was so fierce you could not joke with him. [Unknown to them] Mung'au had gone through Itabalia". Could Mung'au's shadow who remained dancing with his signifying *imbili* (weapon) to distract the enemy be Akhwale, if we take Mbalukha's assiduous claim that they were together? In which case, the role he played was perhaps minor enough to warrant the persistent silencing. This tussle echoes Desai's assertion that the [community archive] is the site of epistemological contests which are characterized by resistance, collaboration and accommodation (2001: 4). The texts are therefore better read "for rhetoric rather than…for sense" (2001: 5). This conclusion may gesture to the rationale for Mbalukha's spirited attempt to restore the visibility of his kin in the popular memory of the community.

It is apparent from these notions of the past and heroism from the narrative conception of the three that Ot'tiali's list of heroes is mainly sourced from much earlier generations which apparently are not prominently endowed with membership of Mbalukha's lineage. However, Mbalukha's heroes are from relatively recent memory to include his grandfather who might have been born 150-200 years ago. Hence, Mbalukha's interjection to highlight heroes from his lineage seemed to be partly inspired by the desire to revise narrative conception of time

and heroism in order to find a place for the heroic acts of his ancestors bracketed out by narrative framing of Nyong'a and Ot'tiali.

Therefore, on the one hand, Mbalukha's version seemed to be a subtle cue that narrative conception of the community past must underscore events which reverberate directly with the present against which the rest from the more remote past can be read. Effectively, while talking about the past, it must remain relevant to the present (Freeman 1993) by emphasizing events that are still in living memory. On the other hand, the urgency and persistence with which he emphasizes and mainstreams the role of his ancestors figures the perception that appears consistent in Mbalukha that the contribution of his family and himself have not been granted the deserved recognition and are in danger of being deleted from community memory. Hence the opportunity to narrate the past offers the prospect to revise/reframe history to accommodate one's own story of that past (Freeman 1993); a chance to redress the sense of exclusion from history. Hence, his narrative falls in the category of "resistance literature" (Tierney 2000: 540) which empowers "those who have been silenced excluded and marginalized by their societies … [often] individuals who cannot write" (Beverley 540), to affirm their individual subjectivity (Beverley 1992). This position is affirmed by Ochberg's observation that "narrators choose what events to tell us and what constructions to put on them to preserve their idealized histories" (1996: 106), hence people narrate to persuade, not merely to describe (1996: 97).

### 4.2.2. Community history as the exploits of the narrator

In this section, I explore Mbalukha's unrelenting attempts to frame personal exploits and experience as central to the imagination of the popular history of the community. In the

previous section, he consistently highlighted and associated himself with the contributions of his ancestors using the possessive pronoun "my"; "my grandfather did this". Occasionally, he subtly inserted himself in the narrative by using the inclusive "we" even when narrating events from epochs temporally and spatially separated from his own. Conversely, this section is distinguished by the way he centers himself directly in the narrative using the personal pronoun "I"/"we" to read community events in which he claims direct pivotal participation at an immense personal sacrifice. Incidences of prominent use of the homodiegetic "I"/"we" abound in the performance of 26 December 2006. I have observed in Chapter Three how gerontocracy and other ideologies might have inhibited his penchant for highlighting such personal history on 18 December 2006. Conversely, during performance of 26 December 2006, Mbalukha unexpectedly diverted the performance to highlight incidents which focused prominently on events in which he claims to have participated. Below, I highlight three which establish this trend.

The first episode was during the contest over lineages and the sons of the first Nyole ancestor. To deliberately trap his interlocutor in this episode, Mbalukha challenged Ndele to enumerate the sons in order of birth. When he noticed what on this occasion he deemed as silences in Ndele's narrative, he suddenly came in thus:

> M: And where are you leaving the eldest sons [of Anyole]? Abasiloli, Abasuubi…
>
> Imbaya (I): Their authority can not be underrated.
>
> M: *They are the ones who came to address us before we went to war*.[49]

[49] Mbalukha fought in the Second World War. He always talks about the countries he visited and the theatre of the war action with excess pride and sense of achievement. Often he sees things in terms of those like himself who fought and the others who did not, and he expects them to keep quiet while he is talking. Quite often his body language suggests that he expects them to defer to him on account of the singularity of his experience.

*They are the ones who instructed us and blessed us. They performed rituals and prayed before we departed.*

N: (Trying to deflate Mbalukha's rising ego) going to war, where was that?

M: Going to war! When we were enlisting to go to war, where were we going? We were going to war! (Ndele raises his open hands while smiling broadly to draw attention to the obvious ambiguity). Sons of the great man! You cannot put them aside.

Two things are apparent in this episode: first, in this particular case, Abasiloli seem to come in as the descendants of Anyole in so far as they blessed Mbalukha before he went to war; he did not mention them anywhere else. Second, the conclusion that Mbalukha tried to bring in the Abasiloli angle on this occasion to underscore Ndele's lack of war experience which would authenticate his membership of the warrior Abamatakho lineage (as highlighted in Chapter Three) is inescapable. That would explain the unexpected and apparently misplaced insertion of the episode about the role Abasiloli played when they were going to fight in the Second World War. Notably, this insertion highlights what Mbalukha considers Ndele's irredeemable flaw which disqualifies his authority on the lineages of "the great man."

However, Ndele's response to Mbalukha's assertion is simply to draw out Mbalukha because it is improbable that anyone would be unfamiliar with Mbalukha's war stories which have become his village identity. Certainly, a man of Ndele's age (over 80 years) ought to have seen the spectacle and the social influence of the war returnees such as Mbalukha. The veterans of the two world wars were so revered that for instance, many popular songs were composed to catalog the enigma they embodied, signified by their spectacular army wear and stories of their experience of novel weaponry and war strategy, travel over the seas by *manuari* (man of war – this term from the war experience has now been appropriated and

made part of Olunyole language to signify gigantic size. *Waragi/woriji* [war gin[50]] is another such term), other lands and peoples, and other anecdotes. One of the most popular songs was: *Omundu wa keya/Omundu wa keya/Omundu womukabuti/nomundu wa keya*. (The KAR[51] man/The KAR man/The man in a coat/Is the KAR man). Often, some returnees paraded through the villages matching or teaching the youth synchronized military formations to the tune of the songs.[52] Besides, the spectacle of the returnees parading in the villages draped in army issue won them such admiration from the community that some children born at the time were named Keya in line with Nyole naming system after a dead relative or a momentous event. But then their display equally evoked such perplexity that they were perceived to be demented and in need of special Nyole cleansing rituals (*okhutisa*) because they had murdered or witnessed murder on a large scale. Hence, Ndele's puzzle: "Going to war, where was that?" could only have been to draw attention to the issue of the relevance of the war to the past of the Abanyole.

The second episode is about the boundary contest between Mbalukha's Abasilatsi and Abasikhale clans. When the second colonial chief of Ebunyole, Otiato was appointed, he annexed Abasilatsi land at Esiamayayi and built his new home, ostensibly to be closer to the headquarters at Emuhaya where he was expected to report regularly. But apparently, he invited his Abasikhale clansmen to help him reinforce his grip on the land. Seemingly though, he experienced such stiff resistance from the owners of the land (Chapter Three) that he resorted to repression to sustain his hold on the land:

[50] Telephone interview with Nelson Muyela (20 January 2010). The gin is distilled locally in East Africa. In Kenya it is also called *chang'aa (for power)/woriji,* but it is illegal. In Uganda it is *waragi*. Seemingly, the brewing process was introduced by war returnees.
[51] Kings African Rifles
[52] It was common as late as the late 1970s for elderly war returnee such as Amalachi Omuhulu who, after a drink, would summon kids and order them to match to the tune of war songs, and to "*Lef, Ruat*!" (Left, Right) and "*olingolio*!" commands. Then after inspecting a "guard" mounted by the children, he would start regaling them with stories of war experience. Hence, Ndele understood Mbalukha very well.

N: …he started to arrest people from Ebusilatsi and tie them….

M: What he did to them…, we cannot talk about it here. He tied them in a way we can not mention.

N: He tied them in a very terrible manner; a much undignified manner. If we talk about it these ladies will ask, "Why are you saying such shameful things, such old men ….?" If you imagine the bull held and tied with a rope and pulled, you see this? Could people be happy? So the person who left here was Omwola

M: Omwola went to Es'sumo to inform the white man.

N: ….Omwola went and said [to the DC at Enyahela] "The people have been killed; the people have been finished, they have been trussed tightly, tightly. They're weeping miserably but he is pulling them with a rope as they follow on, howling in pain". So an *askari* [government orderly] was sent. He found that Amaswache and others had been trussed tightly, in a manner that is not acceptable: not on the hands! .....Then they were untied. Just as they were released a foamy substance leapt out with the urine…. So the DC… [sacked] him…. He… told him, "I did not know you were a bad ruler!" He [Otiato] trembled in shock…

Remarkably, the colonial DC is represented here as the remorseful victim of his own limited knowledge of his trusted agent, Chief Otiato, leading into the erroneous appointment. Hence, the rush to summarily dismiss Otiato in concord with Abasilatsi opinion of him seems to be the DC's way of acknowledging his error of judgment. The contradiction between the DC's infallible colonial authority and his belated realization of his patently wrong choice of chief reinforces the popular notion of western misjudgment of their own limitations and vulnerability when dealing with intra-Nyole dynamics. Hence, it is apparent here that as

victims of this lethal ignorance, the Abasilatsi have to bear the responsibility of disentangling themselves from its consequence. Significant therefore, is Mbalukha's conception of this incident as the culmination of the Abasikhale intent to humiliate and annihilate the Abasilatsi through "phallic arrest" (stringing their phalluses) and making them weep. A weeping man signifies regression into infancy, defeat, the ultimate degradation and death in Nyole imagination. The oxymoron in the funeral chant for a deceased male: *Ingwe elalila/Omulika nomumila/Nesikumba khumunwa* (The leopard is weeping/[Spattered with] Tears and mucus)/[or] With a bone in its mouth) captures the absurdity of a weeping and helpless man in Nyole imagination.

The leopard is generally the signifier of Luhya masculinity, courage, stamina and enigma. Perhaps the enduring association of Luhya peoplehood and felineness and the impossibility of imagination of Luhya identity outside that structure is best captured in the response to the government directive of the 1980s which banned overtly ethnic names for sports clubs. Anxious to be both compliant and retain the signifying connotation of the association, Abaluhya Football Club (AFC), ingeniously navigated around the ban by changing the name to AFC Leopards. Thus, while appearing to obey the directive, the new name paradoxically made the club doubly Luhya through retaining echoes of Luhya in the initials; AFC, while intensifying the Luhya identity with the addition of the unmistakable signifier of Luhya masculinity – the leopard. Hence, the import of the song above is in its imagination of the devastating subversion of Luhya masculinity by death as the only enigma that silences the song of Luhya valor: *Ifwe Abaluhya/Khuli tsingwe* (We the Luhya/We are leopards). The song captures Nyole conception of death as the enigmatic leveler which reduces the mighty leopard to the unrecognizable shadow of the despised scavenging hyena or a bewildered vulnerable cry baby. The foregoing rendering contextualizes the reading of Mbalukha's

imagination of the call of duty; his onerous heroic role in eliminating the threat derives from the desire to restore the leopard/warrior stature of Matakho. Hence, a little later he recounts his daring acts of heroism to stem Abasikhale threat which contrasts with Ndele's absence from the theater of action:

> M: They [Abasikhale] crossed the river and took our land. The trees which [Chief] Sangolo planted [as a boundary marker between Abasikhale and Abasilatsi clan lands], what time did we uproot them? Ndele it is you I want to ask!
>
> N: Listen, aaah!
>
> M: We uprooted the trees at 2 am! We cut it and left a tiny invisible stump in the ground (he has already stood to dramatize all this using his staff). Our idea was that once they arrived to demarcate the boundary, we would ask them, "You say Sangolo planted a tree where is the tree?" We uprooted the tree at 2 am; you were not there! (By this time he is directly in front of Ndele, talking down to him)**.** So if we had not uprooted the tree where Oriiko has now built his massive mansion, he would never have built there. We uprooted that tree at 2 am in the company of courageous young men who had blocked their ears and said, "Thuup, over our dead bodies!"

Two things emerge from the two excerpts above on Mbalukha's version of events that led to the sacking of Chief Otiato: the time they uprooted the boundary, and who the holder of office of chief was invite comment. First, records indicate that Otiato handed over office to Sangolo in 1926. By this time, Mbalukha was about 9 years. It is unclear whether he connotes that by then he already had attained the level of consciousness to engage in acts of defending the community. Besides, if Sangolo succeeded Otiato as chief, it is unclear how the contested boundary could have been planted by Sangolo.

Secondly, some accounts suggest that Otiato's sacking was as a result of starting a war against the Luo over the contested Luo/Nyole boundary. This would place the events that led to Otiato *okhupwa ekalamu* (the DC crossing the pen through Otiato's name as Ndele put it) temporally and spatially much further away from the time (1950s) and the place of Abasilatsi-Abasikhale contest implied. So, could the Abasilatsi re-imagination and self-insertion at the center of the events that led to Otiato's sacking figure their desire to be at the vanguard of the events that emasculated him (by making him tremble)? If so, then refashioning the events might serve the objective of reinstating Abasilatsi masculinity which Otiato assailed by trapping their manhood. Thus, centering Abasilatsi agency in the story of their effeminization by Otiato implies granting them discursive victory, rendering an acceptable resolution to the knotted inter-clan contests over land, and thus reinstating their masculinity. Whatever the case, narrative time seemingly reconfigures the order of the events in linear time, a phenomenon that instantiates Ricoeur's (1980: 184) notion of spatial/temporal restructuring in narrative or dechronologization.

The incidence of "vanishing boundaries" as a weapon in the contests over territory echoes the observation of Hofmeyr (1994) of the controversial issue of the exact location of the Sotho chiefdom/white farmer boundary in Mokopane in Limpopo Province of South Africa at the time of forced removals; the Sotho repeatedly uprooted and pushed the fence discreetly to signify their objection to the annexation of their land by white farmers. Uprooting and blurring the boundary was a veritable weapon of protest against apartheid's attempt at social re-engineering. But by crossing the river, thus desecrating its signification as the natural inter-clan boundary in Nyole imagination, and replacing it with trees (the erasable postcolonial notion of boundary), the Abasikhale subverted Mbalukha's concept of the

ontology of, and ways of knowing boundary and lineage. Paradoxically, by clandestinely uprooting and successfully erasing traces of the offending boundary that had carved a huge chunk of his Abasilatsi clan land into Ebusikhale clan territory, Mbalukha demonstrated the ephemeral nature of the new notion boundary by manipulating it to restore the integrity of his clan territory. The episode signifies the bold act of sabotaging colonial order to retain some semblance of familiar pre-colonial status quo and deflect threats to survival of the community. The issue of boundaries is discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

Effectively, this episode constructs an Abasikhale/Abasilatsi binary that underscores the Abasikhale as aggressors and atrocious, and the Abasilatsi as a good convivial people.[53] Thus, Otiato not only abused Abasilatsi good turn (allowing him to build a home in their land), but he gestured to his desire to annihilate the Abasilatsi through phallic constrainment and attempted strangulation. The enormity of the act comes through when understood within the context of the ancestral wish and the metonymic significance of the phallus for Abasilatsi masculinity, fertility and regeneration; in effect, Otiato attempted to scuttle the fulfillment of the wish of Amukhoye (first ancestor, discussed in Chapter Three) for a populous warrior nation (highlighted in Chapter Three) by symbolically curtailing their phallic freedom. Hence, Mbalukha's onerous sense of duty to restore conditions conducive to the blooming of the ancestral wish seems to stem from this threat. In the words of Comaroff and Comaroff (1993: xxv), Abasikhale must be represented in predatory and a monstrous figuration akin to "witches" who in their "antisocial lust … [threaten] the process of social reproduction itself" to justify the restorative action. Accordingly, they deserve to be confronted and expelled to preserve Amukhoye's wish for the clan. This understanding justifies Mbalukha's emulative acts of heroism to end the threat to community survival. Therefore, the act of leading the fight

[53] Mbalukha keeps returning to the theme of Abasilatsi as victims of their own goodness by losing land to the people they welcomed. His acts of heroism are often directed at reclaiming some of the land.

fell on him as the heir of the warrior lineage and justifies the stoical endurance of the pain he suffered in the struggle to end the threat of Abasikhale hegemony as he made clear to Ndele.

The third episode involves the land wars against Abamutete who had occupied a big swathe of Abasilatsi land which crucially included Amukhoye Hill, the site of the cradle. This episode differs from the others in two ways; first in Mbalukha's persistence in the struggle to wrest the land back from the Abamutete despite the suffering and the humiliation he had to withstand in the process. Second, he mentions a list of the people who teamed up with him in the fierce battle to reclaim the land. In that way, he demarcates the line between the heroes of the action and those like Ndele whom he perceives as the traitors as the excerpt below illustrates:

> M: Again the land next to [Abamutete] was going. Now the people who fought heroically in this area: Nganyi son of Om'bayia, Etubuli, Etuli; *the men I was with when we slept in Emuhaya*[54] in people's urine! The following day we were stinking! Then we asked, "Might we have killed anyone?" They said, "No, it is you who are breaking the peace!" We were digging a trench with the son of Mung'au. Suddenly, we saw six *askaris* [orderlies] arrive. They said, "You come, you come…." Abwiri…, the men who fought wars around here: Abwiri, Eselo Tete…. What about these people who strut arrogantly around here!
>
> N: People! You just narrate history, why are you squabbling?

It is apparent that Mbalukha foregrounds both his suffering and his resilience because this brush with colonial authorities only seemed to embolden him: soon he would be confronting

[54] The place where they were locked up by the colonial administration.

the colonial administration directly about the clan land that had been annexed by Am'mutete. The exchange on his confrontation with the colonial District Commissioner (DC) at Kisumu is worth reproducing in full:

M: [This was] a very complicated matter. Had this son of Okoba gone on his bicycle in days like these…we would have been expecting him there[55] when he had already been murdered…. Kweya got on his bicycle deep in the night right here in this home where he is now. Where did he go? He went to Atala's house. Ask him, here he is….Now we see people strutting about here; this world you now roar in, the man I value in the home of Tela [Ndele's father] is Ombima, the other one is Etubuli, understand?

N: (sarcastically) Yeah!

M: Those are the people *we suffered with*. Kweya had delayed. The white man had just asked: "*Wapi Kweya*!" [Where is Kweya!] Kweya and his people, where is he?" Then suddenly Kweya appeared with his bicycle. Our hearts were pumping hard; we were hot all over asking, "Oh! When will he arrive?" Then Kweya came in, Kweya is here, let him tell us. If I am telling lies let Kweya complete it! Kweya tell these people what we met in Es'sumo.

N: (Shielding his face in apparent embarrassment, amidst laughter from the audience) Listen!

Kweya Senior (KS): The story of Es'sumo is well known.

M: Known how?

N: Es'sumo was just the other day!

M: This one did not appreciate it. Ndele did you participate in the struggle over the matter?

[55] Kisumu, about 35 km away, is where the offices of the colonial PC and the DC were. Land disputes were reported and sorted out there. Kweya followed them behind apparently because he detoured to the home of Atala, an influential Nyole politician and trade unionist, presumably to discuss strategy.

N: *Befwe*! [Come-on] (Prolonged laughter from the audience)…While Teli was here…didn't I built a home here? Then they ordered that it be demolished? Then I slept in that night, all alone!

M: Don't tell me that childish stuff, Ombima!

N: Yeah!

M: Etubuli!

N: Yeah!

M: Petero, no…this one... Nganyi! The DCs vehicle, a pick-up… *when we held the pick-up firmly and we wouldn't let it go* (goes to table, demonstrates by holding the table)…, this Kweya knows, Ndele were you there, were you there?

N: I disappeared into the bushes (laughing), so what do you want! What do you want?

M: *If I came to your land and asked you to give me a piece wont you send me off brusquely*? (Laughter from audience).

N: You were simply saving my land, you were concerned that, "My brother should not lose his land while I am around." (Applause from the audience).

M: *The things we did around here, you can not play around with us!*

N: Osale was over there, he used to go there, Opola was there…

M: *I only want to hear the people who grappled with the matter*….

Osale (OS): When our people wanted to push them [Abamutete] beyond the well where Nyanja is, they were told, "Ah, ah, that is enough, let them stay there".

In no other event does Mbalukha's notion of the suffering he and his compatriots endured to preserve the integrity of both community and territory become so visible, so explicit, and as vehement as in this last episode. I underscore his representation of their persistence despite the personal danger they exposed themselves to: Kweya's potentially hazardous dead-of-the-

night ride to Atala's house and onwards to the District Commissioner's (DC) office in Kisumu about 35 kilometers away; the arrest of Mbalukha and his comrades but the failure of the humiliating conditions of incarceration at Emuhaya to weaken their resolve; and their unremitting fortitude signified by their dare devil confrontation with the colonial DC, an unprecedented exploit in Ebunyole, by attempting a bare knuckled obstruction of his pick-up presumably to stop him from driving away until the matter was resolved.

But by asserting that only those who "grappled with the matter" can be mentioned, Mbalukha's representation seemingly creates a dichotomy between those who stood up to defend the offspring of "the great man," and community land and reputation (expounded in Chapter Three); those generally identified by the homodietetic narrative perspective, and those referred to from the heterodiegetic point of view. Visibility and participation in events of community past therefore becomes a crucial epistemological condition which grants speaking authority, hence the larger than life ubiquitous figure Mbalukha cuts for himself through association with ancestral war acheievement. Notably, those in the last category awkwardly share the same side of the binary with the ultimate enemy for whom the estranging pronoun "they" is reserved. In effect, Mbalukha's narrative conception creates two possible adversaries: the actual enemy with demonstrated desire to annihilate the lineage of Matakho and the potential enemy-from-within who eschewed the ancestral warrior responsibility thus abetting the genocidal intent of the tangible enemy in so far as the turncoats are exterior to the in-group which "grappled with this matter". Implicated here is the prospect of the two groups on the margin of community ethos – the real enemy and the turncoat – being a part of the series of historical threats to social survival, hence each generation produces its line up of *etsichekhe* (war heroes) through confronting the threats.

It is in this sense that I understand Mbalukha's use of the associative "my" and the collective "we" in reference to events of the time of his ancestors well before he was born. They signify envisaged continuity through generations in the battle to dislodge all threats to clan survival. This argument resonates with Freeman's assertion that through narrative, a new relationship is being created between the past and the present (1993: 11). Effectively, he envisions his suffering and endurance of pain vis-à-vis the community in metonymic terms. Below, I explore the implications of Mbalukha's relationship with the past and the inferences to be drawn for genres of history.

### 4.3. Popular history, mongrel genres, and mainstreaming the self

It is apparent from the foregoing that Mbalukha's narrative had a noticeable preference for events that explicated his role as well as that of his family in a manner that seemed to appropriate and overwrite the needs of the interlocutor. On the one hand, this trend in Mbalukha pointedly suggested a clear intention to mainstream the aspects of personal experience such as when at one point he took over the interviewer's role and turned him into his shadow or Trojan horse. Part of his take over strategy was to appear to assist the interviewer while in reality, he seemed to be motivated by the desire to engage his opponent in what Ibrahim (2001) calls the unfinished business. Hence the significance of the exchange was pointedly within the realm of rhetoric whose aim was more to destabilize and silence the opponent in order to get his voice heard (Freeman 1993). The following argument about lineages is a typical example:

Mbalukha (M): We are Abasilatsi. Mulanda called Abachitwa.

Ndele (N)**:** He asked us to trace Abasilatsi

Imbaya (I): He asked us to trace Abasilatsi; Abachitwa is crossing over to Em'mutete, can't you see?

M: Ah, ah, what do you mean going to Em'mutete?

I: That Abachitwa matter you are introducing the affairs of Abamutete.

M: I wanted to say: this child…said he wanted to know…

N&I: Only about Ebusilatsi.

M: Yes, so Mulanda sired Chitwa…

N: Ah, ah, I won't have anything to do with that Mulanda!

M: (Persists, ignoring him) So Mulanda sired a son called Chitwa, and Amukhoye also sired a son called Chitwa. They are these Abamatakho. Why do you keep interfering? Do you think I am lying? Even if you went to the records you would find it (confused mumbling from the audience).

I: He has said what he wanted to say.

The point of argument here about the lineages of two different Chitwas looked completely misplaced because both parties knew the difference very well. The only sense it might make in this context seemingly is to defamiliarize the familiar and frustrate the opponent into silence so Mbalukha could dominate the space and manipulate it to pursue his objective and highlight his experience. The reaction of the audience, and Imbaya's: "He has said what he wanted to say" seems to signify the success of his strategy.

Conversely, two incidents both related to Muchel'le (whom I discussed briefly at the beginning of this chapter) suggest that the tendency and the motivation to mix genres to give vent to the personal is potentially widespread. The first concerns the episode about Muchel'le's arrival at Makerere University; an episode that demonstrates his transcendence

of the limitations imposed by his material conditions. But the mention of Oboth Ofumbi, a famous Ugandan politician ingrained in memory because of his assassination by Idi Amin, seems to subtly insert a new subtext in the narrative. When the fame of Makerere and Ofumbi are read together they seem to connote (Muchel'le)'s desire to associate with their enigma and to figuratively locate himself in relation to them. It would thus appear that the strategy psychologically freed him from the socially and materially bounded Ebunyole space.

This conclusion is buttressed by Muchel'le's narration of the second incident which involved his encounter in 1952 with Sir Evelyn Barring, the colonial governor of Kenya. Muchel'le narrated how as a teenager, he led his fellow scouts to camp at Iguhu in the Olukose River valley near Kakamega, the Western Provincial capital. Not until they were asked to mount the final guard of honor did he discover that the governor, who inspected the guard of honor, had been camping with them for two months. But of note is the way he introduced this episode in the narrative: "*If I might go back a little…I might forget to say this*. While I was still in school in 1952…we went to Iguhu Itakho…." That he thought it important to interrupt the flow of community history to insert this episode lest he forget signifies its value in his narrative conception. Thus, where Mbalukha deliberately mixed up familiar events to bewilder his opponents and insert himself in the story of community past, Muchel'le explicitly detoured into the story of his past and superimposed it onto popular history. For both, the event offered them an opportunity to make sense of their lives (Tierney 2000: 555) gesturing to the explicit or implicit connection of their life experiences with the circumstances of the community.

The foregoing arguments have demonstrated that Mbalukha's, and to a lesser extent Muchel'le's narrative conception of the past deviate in a fundamental way from that of the other narrators because of the narrative point of view they chose and the way they inserted

into the narrative of community past what would appear to be personal history; a form which Mbalukha's opponents understood to be extraneous to my primary interest. The arguments that often exploded between them were the best indicators that they were conscious of what they considered a generic shift. An example from a study of the Sotho (Hofmeyr 1994: 95) affirms this general generic consciousness. The people's conception was clear about genres of the stories that "self-consciously set out to record the past". Such genres included "origin, founding heroes, secession, migration, settlement, genealogy, and historical narrative", a position that is affirmed by Junod (quoted in Hofmeyr 1994: 95). Therefore, overt personal histories are excluded from this category. Crucially, the Sotho experience diminishes the possibility that Mbalukha was not conscious of the difference, and that including his personal history served a particular personal purpose. In Chapter Two, I highlighted how in Muchel'le's narrative, the Banyoro and the Jopadhola, two distinct Ugandan ethnic groups, merge into each other and become one. This mode of composition seems persistent in the way Muchel'le and Mbalukha mix genres and events. This mode of composition exemplifies what Barber and Farias (1989) call composition by fragments where fragments from unrelated events are fashioned together during narration.

Consequently, Mbalukha's narrative conception seems to deliberately subvert convention and both gesture towards the testimonio and deviate from it in a number of ways. First he refocused the narrative and placed himself at the center which Beverly (2000: 555) suggests is one of the characteristics of testimonio: "by placing [his/her life] in a larger context…[the narrator] give[s] sense to [that life]… by telling the story of [his] contribution to the community". Hence, his location in relation to the community coincides with that of the testimonio narrator in so far as it affirms the assertion that the testimonio narrator believes that the story of his/her experience of certain moments of crisis in the community is

commensurate with the story of the experience of the same events by the community. His location in relation to the story further conforms to Beverley's assertion about the metonymic character of testimonial discourse, "the sense that the voice that is addressing us is a part of a larger whole…" (2000: 557) as part of the testimonio convention which is located in the implicit narrative contract with the reader (ibid).

Another crucial link between Mbalukha's narrative and testimonio is underscored by the experience of Elisabeth Burgos-Debray at the time she was recording the canonical testimonio text, *I, Rigoberta Menchu.*[56] The interlocutor gave Rigoberta Menchu a template in which to fill her story but Rigoberta "generally upset my chronology by introducing digressions". Finally Burgos-Debray had to submit to Rigoberta's subversion of the structure she originally planned to use in recording the story of Rigoberta's experience during the Guatemalan revolution of the 1970s and 1980s (Burgos-Debray 1984: xix). Typical of the conditions of production of testimonio, Rigoberta effectively "converted the ethnographer into her listener" (Tierney 2000: 540).

My experience echoes that of Burgos-Debray. The difference is that, in the two cases subversion of the interlocutor's intention is meant to serve different purposes. Mbalukha subverted my intention in order to give space to his contributions to society while appearing to narrate popular history. Conversely, whereas Rigoberta and Burgos-Debray set out to expressly do a testimonio, Rigoberta subverted the interlocutor's chronology in order to prioritize/foreground the aspects of her experience which she considered more crucial. Otherwise, her narrative generally operated within the conditions of the testimonio form. But in the case of Mbalukha, he appeared to be narrating popular history but constantly digressed

[56] Rigoberta Menchu. *I, Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Woman In Guatemala*. Edited and Introduced by Elisabeth Burgos- Debray. London: Verso, 1984.

and dwelled on personal and family experience in the process of which he created a hybrid form from community and personal histories. This observation conforms to Kapchan's view (1996: 6, quoted in Kapchan 1999: 243) that "hybridity is effected whenever two or more…separated realms come together".

However, from the view point of genre and method, Mbalukha's subversion can yield another interpretation. The difference between Mbalukha and Rigoberta is that Burgos-Debray explicitly intended to elicit Rigoberta's personal experience as a witness of the brutality meted out to the Indian population and as a participant in alleviating suffering during the Guatemalan revolution. However, my question did not explicitly focus on Mbalukha's personal/family/lineage experience which he dwelt on. Although the personal inevitably surfaces in such situations (Freeman 1993), in Mbalukha's case the "disproportionate" space taken by the personal makes it difficult to ignore. So where Rigoberta overwrote her interlocutor's chronology, Mbalukha both subverted and overwrote my intention to collect community history and the form itself (by hybridizing it). This conception is crucial to understanding Mbalukha's determined blend of the two contiguous genres of personal and popular histories as a strategy to undermine the hegemonies he tries to free himself from (Davis 1992).

I have observed that Mbalukha actions seemed to be inspired by the need to struggle against both colonial and socially sanctioned Nyole hegemonies which threatened to undermine the ancestral wish. The concept neobaroque (Salgado 1999: 316) as the method of hybrid composition in the struggle to emancipate Latin American literature from Western hegemonic cultural forms seems to have some relevance to the understanding of Mbalukha's strategies. Hence, all the other actions of Mbalukha; the reconfiguration of time through dissimulation/

dechronologization **(**Ricoeur [1980: 184]), the emphasis of the homodiegetic point of view, the use of inclusive plural pronouns ‘we” even for events that predate his epoch by a wide temporal and spatial gap, the fashioning of a form that resounds with aspects of what Reagon (1982) calls cultural biography, are all strategies for speaking personal/collective marginality.

I have tried to understand all the actions of Mbalukha; his claiming of authority on the story telling matrices to give him advantage over his detractors by positioning himself as the legitimate guardian of the community ethos and ancestry, and his subversion of genre, are all meant to legitimize his contested claim to the legatee position. In that process he intends to assert the notion of his metonymic relationship with community and its past. Simultaneously, even as I am Nyole, I potentially figure the symbol of authority in contrast to Nyole subaltern marginality because of my location in the “metropolis”, the seat of that oppressive authority and potential audience for his narrative. At once talking to me and into my equipment is a form of talking his subalternity to power for which I become the metonym. In that way, the narrative becomes the metaphorical meeting point of the two ends of the divide. At the same time, the fact that he is the center of attention of that same metonym of the oppressive power, authorizes him, blurs his marginality, and demystifies that power. Being the focus of my attention destabilizes the sense of subalternity and reinstates his status among the audience, which instigates his desire to perform power as authority over the past and thus reassert his authority over the performance space and over the audience (which includes myself as the metonym of the oppressive power), as well as make sense of his life experience.

The foregoing arguments suggest that the urge to narrate the self, both as an individual and as the collective (lineage, clan, and ‘sub-nation’) may derive from the feeling of outsiderness. In the case of Mbalukha, the conditions abound in the way he perceives his place: first, resisting

his fringe location in the intra-community context where those "ingrates" on whose behalf he suffered the indignity of sleeping in people's urine at Emuhaya try to undermine his authority. Second is the colonial administration which ignored his sacrifices during the Second World War and his contribution to the colonial administration as a Tribal Policeman (TP) by subjecting him to the indignity of sleeping in people's urine. Third is the apparent disregard of the plight of the 'sub-nation' by the successive post-independence Kenyan governments, and by those responsible for the material conditions of his lineage, clan, and 'sub-nation'. On the one hand, these are the conditions which threaten the fulfillment of the desire for a numerous and prosperous community as the first ancestor, Amukhoye, wished for Mbalukha's lineage through Matakho. In this respect, he talked about the danger of people dying because of hunger – they are hemmed in for lack space for expansion. On the other hand, modern social transformation in Ebunyole has erased the possibility of war which may well have produced the *echekhe* (war hero) and *olutswoni* (honor of war heroism) he easily identifies with, in the process of redressing the situation of lack and uncertainty through war. Similarly, modernity has undermined Abamatakho masculinity by underwriting the conditions that produce the emasculation of its metonym, Mbalukha, in the process of performing the "guest of the guests" – of the women married in the clan.

# Chapter Five

# Verbal inscriptions: oral history, documents and the emergent Nyole Identity

## 5.0 Overview

This chapter explores various ways in which modern textual practices are deployed in engagement around issues that are fundamentally Nyole. Some of the areas in which such textual practices are now slowly being taken for granted are: (a) keeping diaries of business or events of personal life (b) collection and submission of documents both to support claims and/or to counter other claims and documents in land, boundary or other disputes (very crucial in a context of land shortage in Ebunyole) and in other facets of Nyole daily life (c) the use of literate technologies such as writing and print (Ong 1982) to collect and record Nyole culture and oral histories for use as authority and as memory fixing mnemonics during performance of the past. Thus, part of the purpose of the chapter is also to establish conditions under which the world of *olupapulo* (book), *okhuhandika* (writing), *okhulia/ okhwekhamisia/okhwinjisia/okhukanjila enyokuta/esitapu* (literally to eat/absorb/inhale/ suffuse/load up the alphabet/book – (which underscore Nyole notions of learning and excelling in the world of books and learning) was made Nyole and the ramifications for Nyole identity.

The incidence of literacy and literate technologies and documentation in the day-to-day life in Ebunyole is not altogether new. At inception of the Kima Mission Station in 1904 by the South African Compounds and Interior Mission (SACIM), later sold to Indiana (USA) based Mission Board, pioneer missionaries led by Omusipeka (Miss Mabel Baker) quickly learned

Olunyole and embarked on translation of the Bible and Christian hymns. Afterwards, they took in the first Nyole converts and started teaching them Olunyole literacy with a view to reaching as many people as possible using local manpower and language (Makokha 1996; Goodrick 2005). However, for some time, literacy and documents were seen as the affairs of *abasomi* (literally 'readers' – school children/church people) with no place in Nyole daily life precisely because of that association.

So the manner in which the same literate practices were gradually appropriated signifies changing perception of the world of literacy. For instance, through deployment to mediate the desire for spatial bridging and virtual reconnection between, on the one hand, *abatsia emukulu/elwanyi* (kin who have migrated to the urban centers to sell their labor) and *abaatikha/abatsia olukala* (the Nyole Diaspora created by those who migrated in search of new land) and, on the other, *abasikala/abalinda hango/ingo* (those who have remained at home [Ebunyole]) through letter writing; and adaptation for the bureucractic practice of filing grievances with relevant authorities, literacy and literate documents started to figure modern conception of Nyoleness. Therefore, recognition of the world of letters as part of Nyole daily life is the significant upshot of the changed mode of livelihood in Ebunyole, from subsistence farming to wage labor, and of the reality of Nyole dispersal. However, what calls attention is both the use of literacies to keep enduring records of social life, to research and document Nyole past, to gather specific documents, and to produce manuscripts of community past. Of interest too are the envisioned audiences and the uses of such manuscripts and documents, the mode of storage, and the possibilities that such records suggest for those who produce them.

My interest in the uses of literacy and the deployment of literate documents in Ebunyole is inspired partly by the need to explain incidences in my field experience wherein a number of

participants would declare that they deliberately repudiated school for various reasons or they were non-literate yet some of them would carry papers and flip them regularly like a fetish of sorts during the performance in a manner that made the contradiction in such signifying difficult to ignore. One such variously literate performer even offered me a six page document he had been holding in his hands all along asserting that it contained all that I needed. And in a manner that contradicts the conventional notion of the author as the actual writer (thus implying authorship as synonymous with literacy), he exemplified the Foucauldian notion of the author function (Bouchard 1977; Gutting 2005) by asserting his agency as a co-author of the document. Some participants would refer to meticulously kept papers and diaries which contained details of Nyole clans and lineages in a manner that echoed modern school and bureaucratic practices. Others would bring in pre-prepared documents and notes akin to handouts and distribute them (sometimes at a fee) apparently as a guide to their talk on Abanyole pasts. These experiences suggest that literate and documentary culture is becoming increasingly accepted, domesticated and deployed in ways that redefine Nyole identity by inserting it as a fundamental feature of Nyole daily life.

The phenomenon of simultaneous renunciation and abrogation of literacy as shown above is well known. So is the fascination with literacy in Africa; Ebunyole has its own manifestations of this experience. For instance, anecdotes abound of the Church of God Mission policy which sought to limit Abanyole access especially to literacy in English language. But instead, a number of Abanyole not only redoubled their determination to access English literacy, they also consciously employed it in their interaction with the banning authority (the church), despite the imminent consequences of corporal punishment. This manifestation of literacy as a site of postcolonial struggle draws attention to the contradictory experience of literacy in Africa both as an instrument of oppression and as potential symbol of liberation (Barber

2006: 4; Hofmeyr 1994: 41). The ambiguous perception of literacy affirms the notion that first, acquisition of literacy is political rather than a value free skill (Hofmeyr 1994: 41; Stuckey 1991). Second, the fact that Abanyole appeared to struggle to acquire literacy and the associated capabilities such as the preparation and storage of documents despite the banning of Abanyole from speaking the "language of literacy" (English), while the Sotho of Valtyn, South Africa, appear to have resisted literacy because it was "deeply associated with Boer violence" (Hofmeyr 1994: 42) further underscores literacy, its acquisition, and its deployment as profoundly political. Hence, the context underpins the way individuals and communities "appropriate sections of the technology" or even entirely repudiate it as the Ndebele of Valtyn did because literacy was conducted in the language of Sotho commoners (Hofmeyr 1994: 41).

Again, it is recognized that orality and literacy are not incompatible in the mediation of oral history; the "porousness and hybridity [and adaptability] of popular genres and media" (Barber 1997: 8) makes them complementary rather than antagonistic in the performance of oral history. Such flexibility suggests that literate and oral techniques are profoundly interwoven in the Nyole practice of daily life and they augment rather than contradict each other or undermine the integrity of popular history as an oral genre as Richie (2003) claims.

However, what is remarkable is the materialization of documents as a matter of course during the performance of Nyole past. That calls for exploration of ways in which literacy, documentation and bureaucratic culture are gradually appropriated, made Nyole, and adapted to the range of strategies and processes of everyday engagement with both the community archive (Desai 2001) of oral memory, and with any documentation on Abanyole and how it represents certain community experiences. This chapter takes a different approach to

investigating other possibilities for production and mediation of oral history to expound on the experience wherein community oral historians build their own archives, and how this endeavor plays out during the interview and in the dynamics of daily intra-community interactions.

Two community oral historians come to mind: the first one (Rev. Aggery Anduuru, discussed below) deliberately went out to conduct formal interviews on the origin, pasts, and lineages of Nyole clans using elements of modern research methods. He even explicitly declared his research methods and procedure, something unusual in a typically Nyole way of narrating the past. Out of this research, he produced stacks of handwritten documents from which he compiled a manuscript on Abanyole pasts, both of which are meticulously stored in his house. The second one (Hezekiah On'gondo, see below) has collected stacks of documents and minutes of meetings, some of which were meticulously produced, organized and filed by him in a particular order and kept in his house. During the performance of the past of his clan, he consistently referred to a document, often reading it aloud to illustrate his point. My interest therefore is first, in what such writing, ordering, and creation of a special kind of archive (Barber 2006: 12) says about the identity of the self archivist and the archive itself. Secondly, how might one understand the relationship between such personal collection of documents and those in the public domain (both the communal archive of oral memory and documentation housed in formal public archives such as the Kenya National Archives [KNA])? This issue is particularly underscored by the context where some of the documents in the personal archive are selectively appropriated from the community and national archives and refashioned to foreground issues of local and personal concern in the order of importance as perceived by the self-archivist.

The writing, collection, sorting out, and personal storing of documents in the house such as the two community historians have done is what Barber (2006) calls tin trunk literacies, which is a personal archive whose fashioning figures the collector's imagination of how community history and experience should be understood (Hamilton, Harris, and Reid: 2002). However, the endeavor raises a number of fundamental issues: What is an archive: is it the material records stored in the magnificent and sophisticated institution such as the Kenya National Archives (KNA) sponsored by the state? What system of collection and organization of information should constitute an archive and what is the effect of organization on knowledge? If the archive configures power, what then is the effect of the reconfiguration of power from the margins? Below I locate the study within the arguments on literacy and archives in Africa. I then follow that with discussion of the two oral historians who instantiate diverse manifestations of the documentation culture in Ebunyole and the implications for the day-to-day life of the Abanyole.

### 5.1. Reconfiguring community pasts

This study emphasizes first, the nature and location of the archive in order to highlight the diverse notions of the archive culture and the forms of its manifestation in Ebunyole. The conventional understanding of the archive as a building containing records and documents leaves out what Hamilton, Harris, and Reid (2002) call marginal (personal) archives. Thus, understanding the archive, not just as the exclusive realm of government bureaucracy and academic researchers but as a "part of the everyday activity of identity formation and maintenance by ordinary people" (Hamilton, Harris, and Reid 2002: 11), accounts for archives of oral memory, oral cultural activities (Hamilton, Harris, and Reid 2002: 10) and personal archives, which Barber (2006) calls tin trunk literacies. The suggestion that the

personal archive which often both interrogates other archives and frequently appropriates from one or more of those archives implicates: (a) the selection and processes which give the personal archive a particular bent, and (b) the archival space as both malleable and a site of contests and tensions because it produces a multiplicity of meanings. Hence, the assertion that archives are always partial and incomplete (Hamilton, Harris, and Reid 2002) is pertinent for this study because of its consequences for identity formation.

Second is the notion of the archive as a construct which is shaped by the "kind of material collected, and the way it is arranged and described" (Hamilton, Harris, and Reid 2002: 11-12). Hence, the archive is the creation of a deliberate "process of both preservation and exclusion". Thus, the concept of refiguring the archive is crucial. Hamilton, Harris, and Reid assert that because of the deliberate bias in the selection of the documents to make the archive, its representation echoes particular hegemonic discourses. Refiguring refers to the manner in which the archive has to adjust to reflect the social dynamism which either adds to it or subtracts from it. Refiguring is the alternative visions that the archive requires to remain relevant to the vibrant environment (ibid.17). Thus, figuring/refiguring is a process of configuration and claiming of power over how the archive should be constituted.

The third set of themes pertains to the meaning of the inclination to write, collect, and keep records in tin trunks (Barber 2006: 3) which make possible the production of personal archives. Barber (2006: 5) suggests that tin trunk literacy often embodies "aspiration founded upon lack, a sense of personal inadequacy associated with an education perceived as incomplete." But, the assertion that tin trunk literacies or personal archives "is a site where cultural innovation can be observed allowing us to witness new genres in formation and with them, new conception of social being" (Barber 2006: 7) is crucial here. Thus, the personal

archive as "constitution of a new kind of self-representation and personhood" (ibid) is important for the way it suggests what writing and archiving also does for its creator.

## 5.2. Literate documents:[57] textual haunting in Nyole oral history

My interest in this section is in the motivation of a community historian to deliberately and painstakingly produce and keep an assortment of records of the past and culture of Abanyole. If the imperative to produce texts gestures at the desire to influence the way the past is configured, then the two community historians in this section are unified by aspirations that seem to both enclose and transcend such needs.

### 5.2.1. Tin trunk literacies and community past: Rev. Aggrey Anduuru

Rev. Aggrey Indimuli Anduuru (interviewed 2 and 4 February 2007) was born in Ekamanji village of Abasiekwe clan in 1918. He went to a basic literacy school called Elementary B at the Church of God (COG) Kima Mission Station, the only school available at the time. I have noted that the objective of the school was to equip learners with basic literacy to read Olunyole Bible for deployment both to preach and teach Luhya literacy in church schools in Ebunyole and other corners of Luhyaland which the steadily expanding Church of God had reached. In this way, Anduuru became *omusomi* (literally reader), which refers to both those who go to school and church, and teachers (also *omwibali*). Petersen (2004: 75) has noted that a similar term (*athomi*) was in use in Kikuyuland in the 1930s, meaning that it was becoming commonly used in reference to the converts such as Anduuru.

[57] The concept literate documents is borrowed from Hofmeyr 1994

However, Rev Anduuru did not take up these roles immediately after school because even though his father had offered land next to the present home of Anduuru for the construction of Ekamanji Church of God, he wanted Anduuru to marry many wives to replicate his handsome figure. But that would have contradicted the strictly enforced church policy. Stories are told of how one missionary, Omusipeka (Miss Mabel Baker), who was directly involved in the church literacy programs would slap polygamous men.[58] However, Anduuru married only one wife; she died a few years ago.

In his working life, Anduuru performed mainly clerical duties in the tea industry in Kericho in the Rift Valley Province of Kenya till his retirement in 1972. Anduuru also served as a clerk at Emuhaya for the resettlement program in the early 1960s where he registered Abanyole applying to be resettled in Lugari Settlement Scheme to the North of Luhyaland in the farms which white settlers were vacating as independence approached. Only after retirement did Anduuru take up the duties he was initially prepared for at Kima Mission Station as a Church of God cleric and rose to become a Reverend. Although he retired recently from the church post, Anduuru is usually clad in his cleric's robes even when narrating the past and traditions of the Abanyole as he is often called upon to do. Hence, when I arrived for the first interview on 2 February 2007 Anduuru, who had been inspecting his farm, insisted on changing into the church robes before the interview could proceed. This suggests that he envisions some form of continuity between his clerical and community historian roles. The church education (which as Peterson [2006: 181] suggests, stressed book keeping as the primary duty), the clerkly, and church appointments must have introduced Anduuru to the writing/bureaucratic culture which was to become useful in his post-retirement engagements. As Barber (2006: 399) and Peterson (2006: 181-183) observe about

[58] Email correspondence with Maurice Amutabi on 9 December 2009.

similar situations (in Nigeria and central Kenya respectively) Anduuru's contemporaries who got immersed into the world of writing and self-archiving usually utilized the skills they had acquired from teaching, church assignments and clerkly engagements during the colonial era.

What started in 1972 as simple post-retirement activity to occupy his time and to fulfill the desire to corroborate claims of his own Abasiekwe clan's outsider identity as framed by the *Abene Liloba* ("authentic" owners of the soil)/*Abamenyibwa* (tenants clans – because they originally came as "guests" of *Abene Liloba*) dichotomy of the Nyole sets of clans (discussed in Chapter One) ended up thrusting Rev. Anduuru into a role Olumwullah (2002: 53) rather narrowly calls the "official" historian of Abasiekwe clan." In reality, Anduuru's reputation transcends the limits of his Abasiekwe clan. Anduuru plunged into research: to substantiate the claims of his grandfather Padre Erasto Kitoto that Abasiekwe came from Eburebe (Bunyala). Padre Kitoto had unsuccessfully tried in the early 1960s to implore him to come so that he (Kitoto) could bequeath to him the history of his clan, but at the time Anduuru showed little enthusiasm. Paradoxically, the sight of Kitoto's lifeless body in 1968 stirred Anduuru into the responsibility which in life Kitoto had tried unsuccessfully to bestow upon him. Anduuru took up the responsibility with a passion, starting with rummaging through what Kitoto would probably have formally hand over to him – the documents in Kitoto's own tin trunk, now badly damaged by ants. This was the beginning of a journey that would end up thrusting Anduuru into the world of formal research, writing, and production of volumes of documents. Apart from the piles of research notes, Anduuru has produced two manuscripts: "Aka Abanyole: Historia yo okhwechiaka khwa Abanyole nende obulondokhani bwo obwibulani bwabwe (Birth Lineage)", and the English translation: "The Abanyole".

The manner of Rev Anduuru's prompting to take up the role that propelled him into the world of writing, research and documentation (apparently after reading subtle signs emitted by the body of Padre Kitoto) resonates with the Nyole/Luhya notion of how people are nudged out of procrastination into action. Often, the spirits of long deceased relatives or, as in Anduuru's case, the body of a respected deceased elder lying in state is believed to subtly signal infallible verdicts in such situations. Olumwullah (2002) has underscored the importance of the spirit world in Nyole daily life. Thus, even as the world of literacy and documentation is alien to Nyole practice, Anduuru's experience seems to figure the conditions of acceptability of that world – through familiar signals from Nyole cosmology. Talking about a similar experience, Barber (2006: 391) asserts that a nominally literate Yoruba researcher and self-archivist also entered into the world of literacy at the behest of the spirits. So writing and documentation are localized through seeking relevance within, and by familiar signs which gesture to endorsement and acceptability within Nyole/African cosmolog(ies).

Rev Anduuru's extensive research and manuscripts have turned him into a revered authority on Nyole affairs. Hence, during my fieldwork, many resource people often referred to him issues on Nyole past that they felt inadequate to handle. Some even told me that it was utterly unnecessary for me to waste my time talking to other people when I could get everything I needed from Rev. Anduuru and his books. The assertion *Anduuru wahandika esitabu sia Abanyole* (Anduuru has written a Nyole book) which I heard often underscores his achievement in Nyole social milieu. Anduuru is consulted by many people from around Ebunyole, and researchers from Kenyan universities and other institutions and, as he said himself, others from as far as USA. They come to request for interviews and buy his manuscripts. Makokha (1996) corroborates the social status of Anduuru when he lists Anduuru as one of his major consultants when he was writing the history of the Church of

God in East Africa. Thus, Anduuru's research and books have become a part of his identity and they seem to reconstitute Nyole perceptions of the forms of the past – both as narratives and documents**.** First, by reorganizing the way the community relates to its past, Anduuru asserts his authority on the selection of what should constitute Nyole pasts and how it should be interpreted. Secondly, the mention of both the origin of those who consult him (USA) and the distance they cover alludes to the validation of Anduuru's imagination of, and the extent of his authority over Nyole pasts. Anduuru's consciousness of his enhanced social status affirms the notion that documentation, the "transfer from orality to literacy, [the] change of media, is a power game which diverts all authority" to him (Hamilton, Harris, and Reid 2002: 10).

That Anduuru has won such popular acclaim in Ebunyole, is remarkable. But significantly, on the one hand, Anduuru started his narration during the interview by proclaiming his outsiderness: "We [Abasiekwe clan] are not Abanyole," to deliberately underscore and affirm his *Abamenyibwa* clan category. On the other hand, he has dedicated his manuscripts "*khu Banyole banje bosi* [to *all my* Abanyole]." The contradiction produced by the two proclamations is apparent. But the issue is how to explain the conditions of possibility of an inclusive "*all my* Abanyole" category which both blurs the clan binary and tolerates explicit performance of otherness. Whereas the Nyole clan dichotomy is recognized, it is not always that narrators who come from the non-mainstream clans explicitly declare and affirm their otherness. Wagner (1949) speaks to the Nyole context when he asserts that many small clans within the neighboring Abalogooli 'sub-nation' which do not have direct family links with the mainstream clans would usually disguise the fact by creating links with the founder of the 'sub-nation'. So Anduuru's apparent reversal of this trend begs explanation.

A possible explanation is that dedication of a work is a feature of documentation which, first, would be unusual in a conventional orally mediated history event. But, second, it allows room for idiosyncratic expression of ways in which the work should be read. In that sense, the documentary culture seems to allow Anduuru more latitude by, on the one hand, enabling him to re-envision and restructure the Nyole "imagined community" which makes possible the imagination of a new Nyole polity, "*Abanyole banje*", which is more inclusive and turns its back to the exclusive Nyole social structure. On the other hand, the documentary culture makes it possible to create a liminal site outside the restrictive binary of Nyole clan structure. From there, he can signify the irrelevance of the dichotomy by both playfully affirming his marginality and imagining a refashioned non-dichotomized and inclusive "*all my* Abanyole" cohort without feeling his social position threatened. Thus, the net effect of the contradiction in declaration of outsiderness and the dedication of his manuscript is ultimately in the discursive reconfiguration of the Nyole social structure which blunts the hierarchy of clans. Such imaginative elimination of the binary also de-emphasizes the marginal location which the hierarchy confers upon his clan. Instead, he creates for himself an ambivalent site at the threshold between the extremes from where he can signify authority over the deflated teleology of the master narrative and paradoxically narrate and affirm the outsiderness of *Abamenyibwa* without feeling threatened by the implications.

But Anduuru's apparent reluctance to discursively dissolve the exclusive Nyole social structure also invites comment. It seems to gesture to the consciousness that modernity has already altered and disemboweled that structure. Hence, the liminal location he creates for himself allows him the distance from which to both engage and dialogize the Nyole structure, and celebrate its emasculation. Thus his explicit articulation of his outsiderness and the reluctance to discursively destabilize the authority of *Abene Liloba* suggests the desire to

retain a symbolic opposition to continue the dialogue between the two sides to render the irrelevance of the Nyole social structure. This state of affairs echoes Bakhtin's assertion that "outsiderness creates the possibility of dialogue" (Morson and Emerson 1990: 55).

The significance of Anduuru's reception in Ebunyole and beyond is in the fact of emerging from the marginal location of his clan in the *Abamenyibwa* cohort to the position of authority over the Nyole pasts, thus interrogating the Nyole clan binary. But the issue is how to explain the contradiction in Anduuru's conscious self-dislocation and his popular trans-clan reception. The inconsistency in a self-proclaimed outsider navigating to the socially influential position (with no precedent) of consultant for the popular history of all Abanyole is never lost to those who understand the passion that the outsider/insider identity can generate in Ebunyole. Grosz (1994: 3) speaks to Anduuru's circumstance when she says that dichotomies create hierarchies and "rank two polarized terms so that one becomes the privileged part and the other its suppressed, subordinated… counterpart." But Anduuru's entry into the world of research, writing and documentation seems to authorize him to displace the threat which, in Grosz's terms, the structure implies, and to fashion a non-dichotomized and less ominous "all Abanyole" community.

**5.2.1.2. Anduuru's texts**

The 227 page A4 bound manuscript in Olunyole language is more elaborate than the English translation. The Olunyole version is made up of three parts although the table of contents declares only two. Part 1 entitled "Obulafu" (literally "the light," which he translates as "dawn" in the English version) has 7 chapters in 37 pages (pp 16-53). Part 2 entitled "Obwibulani bwa Abanyole" (the birth lineages of Abanyole [pp 54-217]) also has 7 chapters

in 153 pages. The 9 page Part 3 is committed to "Tsingano tsia Abanyole" which he translates as "Riddles". Remarkably, chapters 9-12 are each committed to one of "*tsimbia tsia Banyole*" (the Nyole clans) – the *Abene Liloba* cohort. However, if he appears to affirm the essence of *Abene Liloba* as represented in the Nyole grand narratives by assigning each a chapter, the apparent veneration is nullified structurally by the fact that Chapter 14 "Tsimbia tsindi tsinyolekhanga Mubunyole" (the other clans found within Ebunyole) which groups together "*abandi fwesi khwetsa bwitsa*" (those of us who just came in from diverse places – the *Abamenyibwa* cohort), is paradoxically the longest (pp 88-217). Hence, orthography and documentation seems to facilitate Anduuru to query the exclusionary Nyole clan hierarchy by making the structural discrepancy between chapters 9-12 (pp 57-83) and Chapter 14 (pp 88-217), in terms of space allocation, palpable and difficult to ignore. At once, the structural representation insinuates that in reality, the *Abene Liloba* are the minority and thus interrogates the notion of the quintessence the *Abene Liloba* to Nyole identity.

At the bottom of the last page of section 2 (p 217), "The end" is declared which echoes *tinde* – the Nyole way of proclaiming the end of a narrative. Thus, Anduuru foregrounds the oxymoron in the notion that one has been "listening" to his writing. Hence the pertinence of Barber's assertion that "tin trunk literacies are… composed in a style of the speaking voice" (2006: 18). However, this ending turns out to be a false one because Part 3 entitled "*Tsingano tsia Abanyole*" (The riddles of Abanyole, pp 218 - 226) follows. Besides, the section has more than riddles; it also contains Nyole proverbs, aphorisms and other wisdoms, whose origins and meanings resonate with Nyole cosmology (briefly highlighted in Chapter One). The incongruence of the title emanates from the fact that in Olunyole, *tsingano* may generally refer to riddles, proverbs and stories. The nexus is in the fact that they all have a hidden meaning, arrived at via interpretation. However, usually all forms of *tsingano* in Ebunyole

have well known distinctive generic markers, the focal ones being form, the target audience and time of narration. Moreover, they each have other individual Nyole names, for instance riddles are *ebitatandawili*. Instead of using these specific names to categorize them, Anduuru has arranged them in alphabetical order, based on the first letter of the first word in each item which underscores both Anduuru's unique fashioning and the corollary of the literate mediation process. Such reorganization of the archive of oral memory makes Anduuru and his literate practices the instantiation of what Barber (2006) calls the cultural innovator.

Furthermore, in the manuscript title, Anduuru promises to give us the history of the origin of Abanyole. But he ends up giving us a blend of several genres of history, lineages and aspects of the culture of Abanyole in a manner unfamiliar to Nyole conception of these genres. All these genres share a continuous textual space, which constitutes a rethink of Nyole cosmology, especially the diverse sanctions which dictate conditions of narration and audience. I have also noted part 3 which comes after the end has been announced reads more like an addendum. At the same time, part three does not have a chapter number like the others, which seems to subvert the formal writing convention. This resistance to closure seems to echo oral culture wherein the end is potentially false because the topic can always be re-entered even after the end has been formally declared (Barber 1989). But the entire reorganization of Nyole genres and the forms in which they are recognized suggests that writing has offered Anduuru the chance to, on the one hand, revision the writing culture itself by inflecting it to accommodate Nyole oral culture and, on the other, to reconfigure the temporal, spatial and formal order by which the genres of Nyole oral memory are distinguished. Hence, Anduuru's tin trunk literacy practices at once replicate and attenuate the formal writing cultures by inserting the Nyole oral practices. It is on the basis of observing the foregoing tendency of tin trunk literacy practices to become the axis of

collaboration between oral and writing cultures that Barber (2006: 7) says that tin trunk literacy is a "site where cultural innovation can be observed at close quarters, allowing us to witness them in new conceptions of social being."

The Nyole version of the manuscript is: "Aka Abanyole: Historia yo Okhwechiaka khwa Abanyole nende Obulondokhani bwo Obwibulani Bwabwe (Birth Lineage)" which translates roughly as "About Abanyole: the history of their origin and the order of their birth lineages". I noted above that Part 1 is entitled "*Obulafu*" (The Dawn); Chapter 1 is "Okhwitsa khwobulafu" (The coming of the light"). The chapter focuses on the arrival of whites and the changes they introduced in Ebunyole which for him is synonymous with the arrival of civilization. However, titling part 1 "The Dawn" and Chapter 1 "The coming of the light" is controversial enough because of the allusion it produces about the nature of the Nyole society prior to this beginning. Besides, this conception awkwardly echoes the imperial discourses of the time Anduuru was growing up which designated Africa as the Dark Continent whose history begins at the onset of imperialism (Hall 1995). Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness* memorializes this conception of Africa. In Kima, missionaries relentlessly branded the Dark Continent metaphor into the *abasomi* (learners/converts) like Anduuru in the mission schools of the time to emphasize the place of Africanness in the hierarchical structure thus created (Makokha 1996).

Yet other features of the book bring this imperial discourse into question. The temporal structure produced by first, foregrounding section 1 through locating it at the beginning of a document on Nyole history and second, by putting section 1 (The Dawn) ahead of the section 2 (on Nyole lineages) totally refigures the way the Nyole pasts are imagined. *Obwibulani* (birth lineages) are not only central to Nyole conception of the past; they are the essence of a

typical Nyole narration of the past; they usually made up the chunk of typical *esitioli* (evening bonfire) discourses. Also, it is worth noting that Anduuru sees civilisation as inhering in very particular institutions. These include the arrival of the railway at Port Florence, the current Lake Victoria city of Kisumu (1901), the coming of the South African Compounds and Interior Missions (SACIM) at Kima (1904, bought out by the Church of God in 1921), and the Anglican Church at Maseno (1906). These not only validate a sense of Abanyole connectivity via the railway, but they foreground Anduuru's investments in Christianity. By equating the events associated with Western sojourn in Ebunyole with the dawn of the Nyole polity, Anduuru foregrounds his particular intellectual interests, but the structure of the book itself implies that there were other dawns before these more recent ones. Hence, another way of making sense of the book is to see it within the context of how this "dawn" obliterates other "dawns", especially those which validate his otherness.

However, the fact that the documentation culture seems to enable Anduuru to reconfigure the way Abanyole typically envision the order of the community archive gestures to the centrality of his agency in that imagination and its implications. So the issue would be why he would prefer a vision that reorders community self-imagination. I have noted in Chapters Two, Four, and Six that the arrival of Western order partly destabilized Nyole way of knowing which validated the social hierarchy. Thus first, the imperial order offered new possibilities to those who were marginalized by the pre-colonial social structure. The fact that the current ethnic formations can be attributed to the colonial imagination of African social set ups and the fact that the contemporary construction of ethnicities is the work of chiefs, headmen, and an educated, literate intelligentsia suggests the role of literacy in the imagination of contemporary ethnicity (Berman 1998: 326).

Secondly, when the contribution of the first generation of elites, who usually were Christain converts (ibid) such as Anduuru, is taken into consideration, Anduuru's reconfiguration of Nyole ethnicity in his writing locates itself within the body of works of the first intelligentsia he is associated with. In effect, literate technologies and formal research methods enable him to both destabilize old Nyole identities and imagine new ones. Hence, the technologies enable Anduuru to subvert exclusionary cultures of empire and Nyole mainstream by destabilizing the teleological trajectory of history through revisioning and dialogizing their monolithic models (Ogude 1999: 145). In this sense, Anduuru's refiguring of the community archive may be said to celebrate the change which grants him authority to signify to the disemboweled Nyole mainstream. Thus, he might be seen as celebrating the civilizational, edifying and liberating capacity of literacy (Barber 2006: 2). But Barber (ibid) has also noted that one of the characteristics of tin trunk literacies such as Anduuru's is that they experiment with genre and produce new genres. Anduuru's actions here may also exemplify that assertion.

At the same time, sections of "The Dawn" are committed to anecdotes of the first encounters between Abanyole and the West. One of the notable aspects of this part is the attempt to harmonize the Western and the African world views often by appropriating and reassigning signifiers from either world. For instance, Robert Wilson, the South African pioneer missionary at Kima in 1904, was well aware that in Ebunyole, drums summon people to an important gathering. Thus, as Anduuru notes, when he wanted to conduct his first church service, he simply deployed that familiar signifier to a different signified to great effect – he got a big congregation for the first ever Christian service in Kima, Ebunyole.

Themes in the book stress that far from precipitating a break with the old, the new postcolonial institutions are the new front of continuity of typically Nyole inter-clan/inter-family rivalry. This idea emerges clearly in an anecdote about the death of Rev. Paul Mabwa of Ebusikhale in 1938. The pastors who worked in the church district that was headed by Mabwa wanted to eliminate him so that they could inherit his office. Aware of the plot, Mabwa went to hospital far away in Kaimosi when he fell sick. But his single-minded adversaries finally traced him and bribed a nurse to overdose him. The role of the nurse in Mabwa's death is significant and seems to gesture to the manner in which the new had to find relevance in indigenous discourses, not by dislocating the old as the new has usually been represented, but at times by doubling up as the agent of continuity of Nyole ways of knowing.

Thus, Anduuru's representation of the circumstances of Mabwa's death resonates with the Nyole conception of death – as caused by "the jealous house' hence the dirge "*inyumba esimbanga khuliakan'na yio*" (The jealous house we will meet out there/ in the battlefield). In Chapter Two, I have talked about the disparity in the composition of Nyole and other Luhya clans which highlights the diversity of origin, which often generates mutual inter-clan/inter-lineage suspicion. Such mistrust is usually investigated for motivation to cause harm (Olumwullah 2002). In addition, in Nyole discourses nurses, particularly Catholic nuns (probably because of their eccentric dress code and life style) have been objects of suspicion. However, the assertion that one missionary nurse was "rumored to have eaten [a chief] who died in 1915 while under treatment in Tumu Tumu Hospital" in Central Kenya (Peterson 2006: 179-80) suggests that in colonial Kenya such mistrust for hospitals and their staff was widespread. Therefore, the agency of the nurse at Kaimosi Hospital in the mediation of the malevolence of "the jealous house" paints the familiar nurse figure in Nyole and Kenyan discourses. The consequence is the victimhood of the hapless good and generous man.

Anduuru stresses his links to Mabwa: “I, the writer, was one of the people sponsored by Mabwa to attend Bunyore Central School” (although it must be noted that in the English version I saw, these two lines are neatly crossed through in green, possibly to signify deletion from future English editions. This might explain the fact that these lines are absent in the Olunyole version). This anecdote like others in the chapter, gives the manuscript the texture of a memoir. It seems to foreground Anduuru’s own experience of western education and his enduring struggles and persistence to establish more schools so that others could also experience the social advantages of education as in Anduuru’s case.

But what is to be made of Anduuru’s linguistic imagination of his audience as can be inferred from the apparent contradiction in double defamiliarizing of Nyole pasts by first textualizing it in Olunyole and then translating it in English? Who does he have in mind as his reading public? The assumption is that Nyole oral history would speak meaningfully to Ebunyole where he lives. Why then would the English translation be deemed urgent and necessary? One way is to understand his action as a way signifying aptitude in a language which imperial culture made inaccessible. I have noted that his contemporaries were denied access to the English language by the missionaries. Stories are told of those of his age who were punished for speaking English. One Herbert Kutai was whipped by La Font, the missionary in charge at Kima Mission Station, for answering him in English. Another one, Abukutsa of Elukongo village, was also whipped by a Mr Bell, nicknamed Bwana Emitalo (literally Mr Terraces) for his role as the colonial agricultural officer who enforced the order to dig terraces in order to check soil erosion. Abukutsa’s transgression was in making unauthorized translation for his people of what Bwana Emitalo was saying in English. These examples locate the process of acquisition and uses of literacy and the English language in Ebunyole into the realm of the

politics of literacy (Trimbur 1990; Tusting 2000). The process was characterized by exclusion and the struggle for inclusion despite the risk of violence and pain either through sanctions as above or punishment at school for falling short of expectations. Hence, the translation signifies command of the forbidden language and triumphal arrival at the debarred destination. The experience illustrates Stuckey's notion (1991) of the violence of literacy.

But the earliest and most profound experience of the politics of literacy and the English language is more tangible in Anduuru's regard for one Ishmael Osoka Alendi. In the manuscript he extols Osoka as the first Omunyole "to learn and speak English so fluently that one would think he was a Briton". The epitome of Osoka's accomplishment was in 1924 when he translated from English into Olunyole the speech of Dr Aggrey Achimota,[59] the legendary intellectual of the then Gold Coast, when (as Anduuru suggests) he visited Ebunyole in 1924 (Anduuru 2007: 37). Dr Aggrey's achievement was widely celebrated in Africa as the repudiation of theories of black intellectual mediocrity. However, the celebration of Osoka's mediation of the Abanyole-Dr. Aggrey interaction and Dr. Aggrey's reputation is nuanced. The choice of Osoka as translator signified a lot more than mere mediation of Aggrey's message. If Aggrey is the metonym of the accomplishments of both modern Ghana and Africa in general, then Osoka is his modern Ebunyole equivalent. Like Dr. Aggrey, Osoka was a polyglot. In addition to English, "he spoke Kinyole, Dholuo and Kiswahili as a native of these communities would". Besides, literacy seems to have given

[59] Presumably, Anduuru has in mind Dr. James Kwegyir Aggrey, one of the founders, first deputy principal, and later principal of Achimota College in Ghana. Anduuru says that he was the first African medical doctor, perhaps because of his PhD in osteopathy. However, Aggrey also specialized widely in languages and theology. He got the first PhD in theology in 1912, and then got another PhD in osteopathy (1914). Aggrey traveled widely in Africa between 1920 and 1921, sent by Prof Paul Monroe, on a research mission to establish how education could be improved in Africa. However, Kenya does not appear to have been on this itinerary. He might have come to Kenya on his own in the year Anduuru mentions (1924) when he was appointed director of Achimota College.

Osoka some latitude to comment on the rigid Church of God doctrine by embodying the conjuncture of the Nyole-CoG extremities as "a practicing Christian, a politician, and very polygamous" (Anduuru 2007: 37).

In Nyole imagination, literacy and fluency in English are synonymous and perceived as big accomplishments. Hence, of one with such aptitude, it is said: *Anyanyanga olufodi fodi/olusungu/olugelee nafutsa* [s/he chews and spits English]. The first president of Kenya Jomo Kenyatta was represented as the match for the colonial regime because he could speak their language, an aptitude celebrated in the song: *Kenyatta nakhasunga English yeee/Kenyatta nakhasunga olufodi fodi* (Then Kenyatta spoke English/Then Kenyatta spoke *olufodi fodi*[60]). However, the Church of God mission and colonial policy made the acquisition of literacy and English and arduous task. But Anduuru seems to celebrate Osoka's capacity to undermine, violate and circumvent these limitations imposed by the sanctions to both embody the Nyole notions of literacy and symbolically subvert the rigid church policy (Osoka being both polygamous and a CoG faithful). Osoka's linguistic competence and rebellion negate Nyole Otherness which La Font and Bwana Emitalo tried to impose and enforce. Thus, Anduuru's literate endeavors seem to be emulative of his two icons; Osoka and Anduuru's namesake Dr Aggrey and their flair for subversion. This position resonates with Stuckey's (1991) notion of the violence and liberating capacity of literacy. Thus, writing Nyole history and translating into English also domesticates the possibilities of both literacy and English by making (to use Hofmeyr's [2004: 26] words) "print literacy … ancestral and [to be] seen to emanate… from [the] realms of tradition".

[60] *Olufodi fodi/Olufoti foti* is a Nyole/Luhya term for English. It is onomatopoeic in so far as it estimates what English speech sounds like to a typical Luhya. Hence, it connoted the bewilderment at the mystery of the language and its owners. The capacity to speak the language was celebrated. Thus, Abanyole are usually puzzled when anyone perceived to speak and write English very well fails to find a job.

The foregoing suggests that the attempt by Anduuru to set a new beginning of the community through "the Dawn", the poly-vocality of his writing and his admiration of Osoka, the polyglot, and the attempt to find conjuncture for African and Western ways of knowing underscores both the role of the literate intelligentsia in the imagination of ethnicity, and the dual character of African ethnicity: "both modern and traditional, reactionary and progressive, eclectically combining elements of African tradition and European modernity" (Berman 1998: 327). His imagination of community underscores the experience of both the contradiction of being Christian and Nyole, and the attempt to surmount the incongruity. So the refiguring of the community archive through writing is also an endeavor to "justify his position in community and clarify his relations with indigenous culture" (ibid) as a Christian, as a part of the process of creating a community that is more accommodating.

Anduuru's assertion of his claim to the world of the printed texts, the graphology of his texts, the attempt to domesticate English and, to borrow the words of Peterson (2006: 178), "the trafficking in diverse genres" by deliberately placing together wide-ranging and ordinarily mutually exclusive Nyole cultural genres is a significant statement about the kind of transformation the postcolonial communal archive needs to go through to remain relevant and responsive to all who look up to it. Therefore, intertextuality which brings into dialogue the various ways of being Nyole, on the one hand, and the imperialist views which underrate Nyole epistemology, on the other hand, is fundamental to his purpose. This mode of rendering of Nyole history highlights the significance of rhetoric for the politics of composition and production of acceptable Nyole pasts. Overall, to rephrase the words of Peterson (2004: 89) on similar circumstances of deployment of texts in Kikuyuland, through the organization and presentation of the book, Anduuru intends to teach Abanyole about the changing times which invite reconfiguration of the way Nyoleness is imagined.

### 5.3. Literate documents and witnessing to postcolonial injustice: Hezekiah Ong'ondo

My interest in Hezekiah Ong'ondo Atieli (B.1945) arises out of the large collection of documents he seemed to have prepared in advance and the ingenious ways in which he used them during the interview. This was striking from a man who claimed to have cut short his education aspirations at Primary 8 for lack of school fees and due to intrigue (he says he was barred from entering Maseno School because of the Nyole/Luo ethnic politics), and poverty induced by the same circumstances that inspired his entry into the world of documents and self archiving (see below). My focus is on (a) how to understand Ong'ondo's venture into record keeping, which is unusual for someone in his station, and (b) what the interview occasion meant for him, going by the manner of his presentation and deployment of records. Ong'ondo (interviewed 28 December 2006) learned rudimentary nursing skills through apprenticeship with a white missionary nurse at Maseno Mission Hospital and eventually became his handyman. Armed with his new skill, he established a successful practice in a Ugandan village where he blended Western and African healing procedures only to be destabilized by the political upheavals of the 1970s, produced by the Idi Amin era in Uganda. On return to Kenya he opened practices in various urban centers but he eventually returned home where, in addition to local party activism and his role as the chairman of his Abasakami clan welfare association, he practices from his house.

Ongondo's motivation to plunge into the world of writing, collection of documents, and self-archiving, a preoccupation his material circumstances and consequent inability to further his education ideally excluded him from, reflects some of the ways in which the estranging literacy practices can be harnessed in his favor. In his literacy practices, Ong'ondo is

preoccupied with the contentious issue of the ownership of Maseno Veterinary Farm (Maseno Limited of the colonial era) which adjoins his home. But the issue is part of the knotted politics of ownership of the lands of the larger Maseno Township on which now stands the headquarters of the Anglican Diocese of Maseno South (the headquarters of the colonial era CMS mission and Maseno Diocese); health, educational, administrative and commercial institutions. Woven into this picture is the issue of who, between the Luo and the Nyole, could legitimately claim exclusive authority over Maseno. I have focused on the complex manifestations of the contests over Maseno in Chapter Six. In this section, I zero in on authority of documents and their deployment to legitimate claims and interrogate counterclaims over a section of Maseno – the Maseno Veterinary Farm.

Ong'ondo avows that through a verbal agreement between Njeli, the Abasakami clan leader and Nyole war hero (referred to in Chapter Three), and the Seville brothers, the managers of the CMS enterprise arm, what later became Maseno Veterinary Farm was temporarily surrendered for agricultural experiments in the early 1900s on the understanding that it would revert to the clans that originally owned the lands. But one day, in circumstances that ended up radically and permanently altering the scenario, Njeli, perhaps thinking of the provisional nature of the agreement with the Sevilles decided to take a stroll through what he presumed to be legitimate clan land. But in a manner contrary to Nyole notion of land lease (*okhwar'ra*) as opposed to ownership (*okhutila omukunda*), he was confronted by the Sevilles on charges of trespass. In the subsequent brawl, Njeli ended up beating the two brothers. In the long run however, Njeli's was pyrrhic victory because it marked the beginning of the now five-generation-old problem. The Abasakami and the Abanyole generally lost the favor of the whites missionaries who steadily replaced their Nyole benefactors with Luos – benefactors because Ong'ondo asserted (corroborated by other sources like Kasuku, Tenga, and Kuya –

Chapter Six) that in addition to the farm, the rest of the land on which the CMS mission was set up was offered to the missionaries by Njeli and other elders.

Significantly, the misunderstanding between Njeli and the Maseno Mission Station embodies the divergence between Nyole and Western conception of agreements and their mediation. What started as a verbal agreement between gentlemen in a typically Nyole way of executing similar transactions ended up being concretized through subsequent documentation which deliberately altered or repudiated the verbal agreement and excluded the other party to the deal, and finally resulted in the farm coming under missionary control. The discrepancy in the way the Sevilles and Njeli understood the implications of their commitments and the ease with which the Sevilles and the missionary establishment seems to have repudiated and replaced the temporary verbal agreement can be explained by what Marcus (1984: 1024) calls the rhetoric of vision whereby the Western ideologies favor "visual metaphors over those derived from other senses such as the aural/oral" which is rooted in renaissance politics in Europe (ibid). This view underscores both the importance of documentation which the Sevilles already understood even as they entered the oral agreement with Njeli, and the duplicity of records as Njeli and the clans came to appreciate after the event. The context represents Njeli and the Abanyole as victims of ideological diversity between Europe and Africa, while the Sevilles and the missionaries appear to deliberately capitalize on the ideological discontinuity to achieve their objective. Hence, in their narrative, Ong'ondo and the Abalukhoba (Chapter Six) consistently underscored the duplicity of *abasungu* (whites).

Ong'ondo avers that by independence the Luo majority at Maseno were strategically positioned to influence the boundary demarcation process to claim the farm and annex it to Luo territory. Apparently, the Abasakami still hoped to get the land back, but the matter was

further complicated by the recent allocation of the land to Maseno University which is perceived as a Luo institution (discussed in Chapter Six). Perhaps conscious of the chequered history of the land and the Nyole perception of exclusion from the institution, the university tried to fortify the land behind a high chain link fence, reinforced with concrete and buttressed by 24 hour armed Maasai Moran surveillance. But determined to assert their claim, the clans came together recently (2009) and destroyed the fence and buildings the university had just constructed in the contested land. These twists around the knotted issue of Maseno farm embody the consequences of diverse understanding of agreements, their mediation and implications; the ephemerality and vulnerability of verbal agreements; and the duplicity of *abasungu* (whites) as represented in On'gondo's narrative. Hence, the history of enforced suffering, dispossession, abuse of faith, and victimhood of the clan which dominate the narrative is represented as the direct upshot.

However, to lend credence to his claim, Ong'ondo is still able to point from his doorway to the site of what was once his grandfather's home complete with a prosperous banana grove and other Nyole signifiers of family prosperity on the now estranged land. Ong'ondo asserts that partly because of this dispossession, the material circumstances of his lineage was so fundamentally altered that like him, many could not advance their education for lack of fees. The other reasons he suggests included ethnic intrigue rooted in the contest over Maseno lands. Crucially, the Ong'ondo family destitution is spatially represented by the huddled-together settlement on an adjoining half-acre plot from where, paradoxically, they have a clear view of the rolling expanse of Maseno Farm hardly 20 meters away; now a psychologically distant and antagonistic site of what once figured the prosperity of home. Now the fractured narratives of the hostility and the inaccessibility of home behind concrete fences both mock and subvert Ong'ondo's very fresh memory of the point on the farm where

his grandfather once owned a huge chunk of land. Significantly, Ong'ondo's memory surfaces other details about the issue through highlighting the importance of certain physical features and spaces. Such aspects would not be captured by formal national archival records. This incident confirms the assertion by Hamilton, Harris, and Reid (2002: 12) about the important "mnemonic devices such as features in the landscape [which] elude the archive and can resist being captured even by oral testimony". Such exclusions challenge established notions about the nature and location of the archive and affirm the notion that at best, the archive is partial and is a reflection of the objectives of who preserves it (Hamilton, Harris, and Reid. 2002: 10).

The need to mediate a solution to the generations old problem is made imperative by the sense of personal responsibility by virtue of Ong'ondo's office as the current Abasakami clan chairman. His office makes him heir to Njeli, the pre-colonial *echekhe* (war hero) of Abanyole (For Nyole notion of *echekhe* see Chapter Four) who also spearheaded the fight to claim back the community land which he had been tricked into giving away. Hence, by virtue of his office, Ong'ondo seems to carry the burden of memory and the duty to emulate the legendary actions of Njeli and remedy the injustice, which the destitution of his lineage embodies. That is how I understand his motivation to collect and meticulously store documents, which often entails committing his humble means to travel to the Kenya National Archives (KNA) in Nairobi to select and photocopy some documents on the issue of the contested land of Maseno. Often, he painstakingly hand copies others piece by piece, as well as obtaining relevant news paper cuttings.

Some of the documents he has copied include records of those compensated in the 1930s and 1940s for the expropriated land. Ong'ondo methodically highlights their Nyole names and

traces their family lineages to the Abasakami clan to validate his claims. Thus, his actions gesture to the significance he attaches to writing and documentation seemingly because of the consciousness that the problem he is dealing with is the consequence of the incapacity to participate in the culture of literate technologies to the detriment of the clan. Hence, in the words of Hamilton, Harris, and Reid (2002: 10), recognition of the permanence of documents and the change of media through transfer of records from orality to literate documents is a signifying practice which diverts some power over the land issue to him.

Moreover, in addition to clandestinely obtaining minutes of meetings of rival groups interested in the matter, which he then systematically invalidates, Ong'ondo has kept detailed minutes of his clan deliberations on the issue. Thus, when I arrived at his house, Ong'ondo had laid out numerous files of records on the Maseno land issue focusing on the injustice committed against his clan by the colonial administration, the Luo and their Abanyole accomplices; the CMS and Abanyole altar boys; and the post-independence administration. Notably, he tabled news-paper cuttings of President Mwai Kibaki's speech[61] in 2006 on the occasion of the centenary celebration of the founding of Maseno Mission Station. All these documents he systematically invalidated by tabling alternative documents such as the compensation list referred to above. Remarkably, both the views Ong'ondo foregrounds and those he disputes are authorized by partial readings of the same archive, which underscores interpretations of the archive as a configuration process with the potential to produce an infinite number of archives from the same set of documents (Hamilton, Harris, and Reid (2002: 2). Hence, the decision by Ong'ondo to create a personal archive seems to respond to the consciousness of the potential to both alter and excise from records either physically or

[61] Apparently, the current Kenyan president Mwai Kibaki said that the farm was given to the missionaries by one Ogola, a Luo. But Ong'ondo went on to tell the story of how Ogola came to Maseno on the invitation of the Nyole residents to make shields for them, so he had no land rights, a view corroborated by the Abalukhoba clan historians.

through interpretation. Thus, creation of a personal archive is an attempt to fashion an institution which defers to his authority and establishes a center around himself. This position resonates with the notion of the archive as a part of "everyday activity of identity formation and maintenance by ordinary people" (Hamilton, Harris, and Reid 2002: 11) and not just the concern of government and researchers.

The issue of Africans surrendering land to the British only for the British to unilaterally vary the terms of tenure is pervasive in the history of colonial Kenya and offered ready justification for the anti-colonial struggle. Peterson (2004: 90) talks of the anger in Kikuyuland in the 1930s because Africans gave the British land in trust but the "greedy [ungrateful] British clients [broke] their trust by appropriating [the land] for their own use." The Kikuyu insisted that their generosity "should be rewarded by returning the land alienated by the avaricious whites" (ibid). These views speak to the manner of acquisition of Maseno land as presented by Ong'ondo and his campaign to have the problem resolved. When viewed from this perspective, Ong'ondo's campaign transforms from an issue of local significance to a bigger national issue of the unaddressed grievances of colonial occupation of Kenya. In this way, first, Ong'ondo reconfigures the understanding of Kenya's history by attracting attention to the issue of land alienation and the grievances it leaves in its wake as an issue not just in Central and Rift Valley provinces of Kenya (or the so called White Highlands) alone as it is usually presented in Kenyas historiography and public discourses, but as an issue whose manifestations in other parts of Kenya is silenced. Secondly, his disagreement with the president is a statement about the seriousness with which the leadership of the country read the archive and understands the history of the nation-state in all its manifestations.

The manner in which Ong'ondo made his presentation and used his archive calls attention to his understanding of the significance of his self-archiving endeavor. The issue here is how Ong'ondo's conception of the broader changing context and the immediate context of narration might have influenced his record keeping and use. First, the meaning and significance Ong'ondo attached to the interview event is discernible both from the seriousness of his facial expressions and the measured tone as he spoke as if to ensure nothing were missed. Moreover, he specifically called his son and grandson to listen and take minutes of the event for their records as if to appropriate the occasion to prepare for succession in the long drawn battle. Secondly, as he spoke Ong'ondo would hand over to his audience documentary proof of most of his claims. He even undertook to send me photocopies of other documents on the issue to which he now seems to have committed most of his time. Thus, one inference that can be drawn from the earnestness which characterized Ong'ondo's presentation is about the way he understands the weight of his responsibility as the clan leader and his perception of the potential of the interview event to expose his grievance.

It is apparent that Ong'ondo's meticulous records and their actual deployment during the interview frame him as one whose consciousness invites multiple understanding of the event, both as simulation and the real thing, or what Baudrillard calls hyperrealism (Storey 2007: 134-5). In this sense, the event may be a simulation, a dress rehearsal and the reenactment of the life he lives. But for him, the life that is simulated does not strip itself of the pain of the real life it echoes because, to use the words of Fiske, "secondary representations of reality… affect and produce the reality that they mediate" (quoted in Storey 2007). Hence, the consciousness of the historical injustices pertaining to the Maseno land question seems to have made Ong'ondo cognizant of the dichotomy between 'African' ways of knowing

underpinned by oral mediation of social issues and the postcolonial fetishization of written records to back any claims (Ashforth 1990: 5). As Njeli's heir, Ong'ondo ought to be alive to this consciousness because the problem he has committed his life to resolving has at least part of its roots in the disjunctive conceptions of media. I have noted that Njeli ceded the controversial land to the mission station through a verbal agreement and trust. So his tragic imagination of the transaction with the Seville brothers in Nyole terms is responsible for the current quandary. Hence, Ong'ondo's embrace and deployment of records connotes the consciousness that the dispossession was through Njeli's inability to manipulate literate documents.

Concurrently, the meaning of the Nyole translation of the English word agreement (*ekilimiti* – trusting fool, ultimate dim wit) which complements the expression: *omuingwa wamenya khwisisi wa Kaita olimilanga om'bano* (one who signifies his definitive foolery by locating himself on the periphery of community and uses a knife to till the land) connotes community consciousness of the hazardous history of colonial agreements and trust. Thus, the Nyole narrative echoes other narratives of similar experiences in Africa further imperiled by lack of command of literacy and documentary culture which underpin postcolonial transactions. Njeli's experience of agreements affirms the notion that whereas the verbal discourses may generate ways of knowing, and expressing power, "the real seat of [postcolonial] power is the bureau, the locus of writing" (Ashforth 1990: 6). Therefore, Ong'ondo's immersion in bureaucracy affirms the view that in the postcolonial state, language as a source of power has sophisticated itself by appropriating literate technologies to confound those over whom it exercises authority. But by making his presentation as if it was to a commission of inquiry, not only is Ong'ondo in a state of permanent dress rehearsal, he also seems conscious of the

manner in which state machineries address similar problems – through "commissions of inquiry, [the] symbolic rituals of the state" (1990: 6).

Simultaneously, the manner of the presentation suggests both his desire for an audience he can trust and the possibility of such an audience helping to change the course of the struggle thus signifying the seriousness with which he regarded the interview event. But also, the trouble to produce documentary evidence for every claim he made suggested both a skill honed through making numerous fruitless representations on the issue and the possibility of understanding the ambiguous relationship between the event and its simulation. Thus, the original conception of the interview as occasion to narrate the past of the clan was exceeded by Ong'ondo's re-conception of the event in terms of the injustices arising out of the issue of the "lost territory" because of the dearth of documentary culture, and the need to demonstrate the power that the world of documents grants him in his bid to reclaim the lost territory. Hence, the event resembled the simulation of a commission of inquiry into the Maseno land question before which he was giving evidence of the historic injustices suffered by the community for which the material circumstances of the community is the metaphor.

Ong'ondo's decision to keep meticulous files ironically gestures to the postcolonial contradiction whereby the urge to mistrust state bureaucracy is dialogized by the consciousness of the potential power of the same bureaucracy to take decisions that can permanently impinge on the lives. Therefore, the act of self-archiving paradoxically also denotes expression of faith in the state that marginalizes him. When seen through the prism of commissions of inquiry, then the file loads of documentary evidence gathering dust await opportunity to be useful, ironically most probably at a state constituted commission. Hence

the need for Ong'ondo to turn his audience into a sympathetic listener, witness, and judge, as well as the bouncing board for his rehearsal for the real thing in that future time.

### 5.4. Community identity and the power of literacy and documentation

I have explored the role that is assigned to literacy in the lives of ordinary people in Ebunyole. It is apparent that whereas the motivation to appropriate and inflect modern literate and documentary culture to accommodate matters that are typically Nyole is diverse, the innovators discussed here and others like them are united by the desire to interrogate aspects of the past within the framework of the social contexts of the present. Both men discussed above seem to demonstrate that their entry into the world of literacy and documents is inspired by the experience of marginality or Otherness in relation to the Western ideologies which informed policy on Africa; and Christian mission doctrine as practiced by Church of God where free access to literacy was curtailed and the sanctions enforced by corporal punishment. The men demonstrate a sense of personal and social vulnerability arising from an inability to participate meaningfully in the world of documents, as in the case of Njeli and the Seville brothers which produced the knotted issue of the ownership of the Maseno Veterinary farm. Therefore, Anduuru and On'gondo have embraced writing and documentary culture as "a strategy of mobilization" (Peterson 2006: 183) to find acceptability for a politically reorganized Ebunyole, produced by their re-imagination of the community archive.

In the context of Ebunyole where the traditional ways of knowing have been fundamentally altered by the same circumstances of which the literate and bureaucratic culture is the metonym, signifying presence in the world of literate technologies even for the variously literate, and using textuality to interrogate the Nyole hierarchy of clans is not necessarily

using an exotic idea. The suggestion by Peterson (2006: 181) that in Central Kenya, writing was used as a political tool to seperate *irore* (those who opposed circumcision – they wrote their names in a book) and *iregi* (those who supported it) highlights the growing significance of the documentary culture in Kenya. It speaks to the centrality of textuality and the burden that textuality has to bear in Nyole identity politics. That is what Rev Anduuru makes it do by using literate technologies and mimicking western research traditions to affirm the paradox of his outsiderness in the Nyole mainstream even as he relocates himself at the center of the discourses of Nyole identity as the custodian of the Nyole pasts.

From the foregoing, it is apparent that deployment of literate technologies and the innovative practice of personal archiving have enabled Anduuru and On'gondo to re-engage the politics of Nyoleness and interrogate the representation of events in various aspects of the Nyole past and culture by the official state archive, the archive of community oral memory, and the documentation created by the church – the earliest written records on Abanyole. On the surface their innovative mode of arranging and storing information is unprecedented in the Nyole practice of daily life in a context where the issues that preoccupy them would usually be orally mediated. However, the fact that the innovation of the two has found popular social acceptability and made especially Anduuru the reference point on matters of Abanyole suggests that the world of literacy and documentation is becoming increasingly acceptable as part of the life of the ordinary people in Ebunyole. In a context where the pressure on land has entailed the dispersal of Abanyole from the original geographical territory, literate practices will increasingly mediate Nyole interaction and become a key defining aspect of the Nyole ethnic identity through mediating emerging notions of Nyoleness which have to take into account Ebunyole itself and its diaspora. And given that such dispersals and creation of

diasporic populations is becoming the norm in Kenya and in Africa generally, literacy and documentation increasingly define emerging notions of ethnic identity in modern Africa.

At the same time, the discrepancy between the social position of the two men discussed here within the conventional Nyole social structure and the new social position that their engagement with literacy and documentation has conferred to them suggests that the participation in the practice of literacy and documentation is both a process of refiguring of the Nyole imagination of the social relationships among the clans, and Nyole entry into modernity which is embodied by literacy and documentation practices. Thus, the state of affairs gestures to the unsustainability of the old social structure. In which case, participation in the creation of what Barber (2006) calls the do-it-yourself archive has, on the one hand, created a new space in which to engage with and familiarize the alienating practice of literacy by making it reconfigure local issues through mediating them. On the other, it has expanded the space for the practitioners to interrogate the old and the emerging social circumstances, and in the process enabled the practitioners to create a new personal profile within society as well as create a new set of values which define both the emerging Nyole society and the new notions of Nyoleness.

# Chapter Six

# Imagining the post-nation: Maseno border and the production of cultural fluidity

## 6.0. Overview

The core of this chapter concerns the various identities that are apparent at Maseno Township which is cut through by a series of superimposed boundaries. These are: (a) the boundary between Nyanza and Western Provinces; (b) the boundary between the new Holo District recently hived off form Kisumu District in Nyanza Province, and Emuhaya District recently hived off from Vihiga District in Western Province; (c) the divisional boundary between Maseno Division of Holo District and Luanda Division of Emuhaya District; (d) the boundary between Emuhaya and Holo County Councils and; (e) the interethnic boundary between the two communities of the Nilotic Luo of Nyanza Province and the Bantu Abanyole of Western Province, each of which asserts claim on the township as part of their ethnic territory. There are many other miniature local boundaries which are overlain by these main ones and these only complicate further the multiple notion of boundary at Maseno.

My inquiry into the Maseno boundary issue is validated by the way the narratives of a number of clans on the Nyole side of these superimposed boundaries seem, on the one hand, to both contradict and antagonize the notion of Nyole nationness even as they claim Nyole identity. On the other hand, the narratives blur the difference between the Luo and the Luhya identities by claiming both contiguous Luo territory and clans as Nyole; they assert that the colonial demarcation of the administrative boundary which purported to preserve the interethnic boundaries deliberately truncated their people and territory and enclosed them into

Nyanza Province/Luoland to achieve the desire to make Maseno a part of Nyanza province because of the politics I illustrate below. This phenomenon where a boundary is represented as running through and halving one people, sequestering one section in the Other territory calls attention both to the nature of the interethnic boundary and the history of the relationship between the two ethnic communities. How might this history and social set up have influenced colonial and post-independence imagination of ethnicity in this region?

In this chapter, I focus on the narratives of one of the Nyole clans at Maseno to explore the identity of Maseno not just as a town cut through by conventional boundaries but also as both a site of shifting boundaries and a space of social interaction and cultural engagement between the Luo and the Nyole through religion, commerce, education, marriage, and language and culture. Hence, I look at how, as an interstitial space, Maseno both augments and interrogates its own identity as a site of ethnic convergence and divergence. How is the nature of Maseno as a border space whose identity is always in flux and contested reproduced in the identities of the Nyole clans located there who prefer an open border? And how does this fluidity mirror the nature of Nyole identity? Below, I discuss the character of the boundary at Maseno followed by a brief historical background to the controversy of the boundary issue. Then I briefly highlight the background of Abalukhoba, one of the Nyole clans located at the Maseno border area, whose narratives I have used to illustrate the identity manifestations of Nyole clans in that region. Specifically, I investigate how, on the one hand, location at the border augments Abalukhoba self-perception as a special people (Abandu Belisili/Bomukasa – people of the copper amulet) to illustrate the dynamics that underpin internal rupture within the Nyole 'sub-nation'. On the other, I explore language use and place and space names as an Abalukhoba strategy to contest/undermine the authenticity of Luo identity.

### 6.1. Materialization of the boundary at Maseno

Maseno Township is crossed with several notions of boundary: first, although administratively part of Nyanza Province, Maseno is the site of the administrative boundary between Western and Nyanza provinces of Kenya. However, the disjuncture between the administrative location of Maseno in Luo Nyanza and the Abanyole claim on it as the cradle (the home of their first ancestor) makes the identity of the space complex and fluid. Secondly, Maseno is the cultural/ethnic boundary between the Abanyole/Luhya (Western Province) and the Luo (Nyanza Province). In this respect Maseno is imagined as the absolute limit of, on the one hand, the Nyole-Luhya-Bantu, and on the other, the Luo-Nilotic cultural and linguistic reaches in so far as it separates two spaces and cultures perceived as mutually exclusive. However, the working of the ethnic and administrative boundaries calls attention to the notion of boundary as the stabilizer of ethnic and cultural differences as well as the marker of the limits of ethnic spaces because of their fluid character. One source, Kuya, says the instability of the boundary is usually at the expense of some sections of Nyole clans which have been hemmed into Nyanza Province by the “mobile” boundary. The upshot of the boundary instability is that Abanyole often see it as a travesty because it separates the same people. The implications of such psychological effects of boundary are exemplified by the experience of the boundary between Lesotho and South Africa; the Sotho people contest this boundary because it separates the same people who straddle the boundary (Coplan 2001).

Thirdly, Maseno houses several institutions: the Anglican Church, educational and administrative institutions, a hospital and a market which have intensified interaction between Abanyole and the Luo. However, as the headquarters of the Church Missionary Society

(CMS), Maseno acquired a contradictory figuration. On the one hand, it embodies mediation of cross-border cultural flows because both communities converged there for church service. On the other, it symbolizes impediment to cultural/social engagement because denominational politics between Church of God (CoG) in Kima, Ebunyole and CMS at Maseno (see below) discouraged the phenomenon of Luo-Abanyole trans-ethnic intermarriage which had mediated Nyole-Luo interaction (Owen 1932) before the advent of imperialism. Thus, Maseno embodies a religious boundary because the church policies imposed frameworks which tried to set limits of possibility of interethnic social free-flows.

The fourth notion of boundary is embodied by the Equator. The Equator runs through Maseno cutting it almost neatly into two equal halves. However, because the exact location of the boundary between the Luo and the Nyole/Luhya has been a contentious issue, at one time the Equator appeared a convenient site to locate the boundary between the two peoples and territories. Consequently, the institutions at Maseno were at one time split almost evenly between Nyanza and Western provinces. But the result was spectacular in the case of Maseno School. As one source, Kuya asserts, the school which sits astride the Equator was split into two halves, placing the classrooms in Nyanza Province and the dormitories in Western Province. This convenient placing of the boundary is reminiscent of the Biblical Solomonic notion of justice in the case of the contested child. The matter is further complicated by the fact that Maseno Hospital which is administratively in Western is supplied from Kisumu, the headquarters of Nyanza Province. Hence, Kuya asserts that the ambiguity of the border at Maseno has often led to conflict between the administrations of the two provinces over the exact site of the tax boundary. Last but not least, the Western Province side of the border is the home of such Nyole clans as Abalukhoba, Abamutsa, Abasakami, and others whose Nyole identity has often generated heated debates about the nature and limits of Nyoleness.

Hence, as the legendary home of the eponymous Nyole ancestor, Maseno as the Nyole cradle embodies the aphorism, *inda nolwakho/inda elimwo olwakho*[62] (the womb is a boundary/the womb is crossed with multiple boundaries) because it figures the spectacular contradiction whereby the Nyole clans resident in the Maseno, symbolically the guardians of the womb/cradle, often feel excluded from the ethos of the Nyole nation on account of not being direct descendants of Anyole.

It is apparent that Maseno symbolizes several contradictory categories of imagination of boundary, space, and the ethnic nations and territories it demarcates, therefore boundary is understood both in physical and metaphorical senses. The ambiguous signification of Maseno as uniting what it separates call attention to its identity as the site of the border separating two ethnic and administrative territories. In a context where the border is fluid and contradicts its ideal conventional role by enclosing into one territory peoples and spaces it was imagined to disengage, what is the nature of the bounded ethnic nation space (Khagram and Levitt 2008) it imagines and produces? Of importance is the issue of how the unstable identity of the township reflects in the expression of ethnic identities of the residents on both sides of the border and how those identities are composed in narrative. Specifically, how is the Nyole identity manifested in the margins of the nation? If Maseno border is the site of interaction of peoples and cultures through time, rather than the embodiment of a cultural disconnect, to what extent is it possible to read Luhya/Nyole and Luo history separately; and what are the methodological implications of a transnational historiography for the concept of the ethnic nation and by extension the nation state? In the words of Khagram and Levitt (2008: 6), to what extent does the "topography of social life map onto traditional geographies of inquiry

[62] This explains away the phenomenon whereby children from the same womb can be so starkly different from each other or from (usually) the father. The aphorism both captures the notion of uncertainty of proof of fatherhood, and therefore the need for the husband to accept all the children because of the limitations of the human capacity to prove infidelity.

such as the nation?" These issues are underpinned by circumstances where seminal historiographies of the Luhya (Were 1967) and the Luo (Ogot 1967) point out the complex interconnectedness of the pasts of the two communities but do not pursue or are ambiguous on the implications of cross-border cultural circulation. The issue that arises is how meaningfully the history of the two ethnic communities can be understood in isolation of each other.

### 6.2. Exploring the post-nation

The foregoing discussion suggests that social life at the border between the Abanyole and the Luo defies the nation as the fetish mould of cultural dynamics because the inside of the nation is never an unproblematic and homogeneous cultural space; it is striated and displays the characteristic which Appadurai (1995) and Khagram and Levitt (2008) call allomorphs to capture the ruptures and discontinuities which highlight the fluid and amorphous character of the inscapes of the national landscape (Yehwah 2001). I am therefore guided by two assertions which gesture beyond the nation: one rejects the assumption that "social life is automatically or primarily organized between nation states or other types of bordered or bounded social system containers" (Khagram and Levitt 2008: 8) and the other avers that social life is a result of "complex interweaving of history and the culturally contingent borderlines [of nations]" (Bhabha 1994: 5). Therefore, I explore the concept of transnation[63] (Ashcroft 2007) as a strategy of understanding cultural life and identity in a transcultural

[63].Terms such as transnationalism, cosmopolitanism, globalization, glocalization (Roudametof 2005; Ang 1998; Beck 2002; Menon 2009; Klein 1996; Appadurai 1994; Bhabha 1990; Bhabha 1994, binationalism (Klein 1996) and Mestizaje (Anzaldua 1987) have been suggested to capture each scholar's point of emphasis on the multiple attributes of the border as the site of cultural, engagement. All the concepts imply a space that transcends limitations of the nation. Soto-Crespo (2006: 733) uses the concept post-nation for this culturally innovative, fluid and ambiguous space "the traversed site in between nations" which displays ambivalence towards, and transcends the national essence. I have adopted the concept transnation (Ashcroft 2007) to describe the post-nation phenomenon.

beyond-the-nation space such as Maseno whose diversity resists ready made ethnic compartments. Transnation implies **"**the *interpolation* of the [nation] as the focus of power, the *erasure* of simple binaries of power, the *appropriation* of the discourses of power, and the *circulation* of the struggle between the global and the local" (Ashcroft 2007).

Three characteristics of the transnation are relevant here. First is its cultural fluidity and mobility. Emphasis on movement figures the subject of the transnation as a journeyman (Benjamin 1968; Menon 2009), or as a nomad (Deleuze and Guattari 1988). Journeying is understood in two ways here: as physical movement which implies interior change, and as "journey into space which symbolizes the passing of time" (Todorov 1995: 60). Hence, journeying into space, not physical movement captures the boundless imagination of the border space at Maseno. When journeying is put together with (psychic) nomadism (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 53-4), the process is rendered dynamic and multi-directional. Nomadism removes boundaries, resulting in deterritorialization (ibid) which makes the crisscrossing movement across the threshold less problematic. This character implies flexibility, looseness as vital defining attributes of the transnation. For my case, the character explicates the incommensurable and contradictory identity signs of collaboration and contestation, affirmation and antagonism (Bhabha 1994: 2) by the Nyole clan which I discuss below – always desiring a loose definition of clan, Nyole, and Luo identities which they can journey through willfully and whimsically.

The second character of the transnation is its liminal or interstitial nature (Bhabha 1994) or its inveterate in-betweenness (Ashcroft 2007; Bhabha 1994; Khagram and Levitt 2008). The unhingedness or lack of, even resistance to physicality of the boundary makes the possibilities of the transnation more infinite in so far as it transcends the "geographical

cultural and imaginative boundaries" (Ashcroft) making the nomadic culture possible because of its unboundedness. This versatile character of the transnation ought to facilitate transactions with the nation which it also gleefully subverts**.** But the issue is how the implied diffuse, fluid ontological status (Khagram and Levitt 2008: 9) which makes engagement in the space more of a discursive phenomenon (Ashcroft 2007) explains the double vision in clan narratives below. The third character is articulation as the process of identity formation in the transnation. I have in mind here interstitial identity formation as a process of hooking onto and dropping, cannibalizing, and circulating other identities in the mode of a coupling train (Ashcroft 2007); a convenient fashioning of a sense of belonging from a heterogeneous assemblage. Consequently, I explore border identities as rhizomous rather than originary (Deleuze and Guattari 1988; Ashcroft 2007).

Below I give a brief background to how Maseno came to acquire so many fragmentary notions of boundary as a way of highlighting the implications for individual and community identities.

### 6.3. The background of the Maseno boundary controversy

The recent history of Maseno is better understood within the framework of events in the Abanyole-Luhya and the Luo inter-ethnic relationship, and the history of imperialism in East Africa. I highlight below three trajectories in the otherwise very complex history: the history of the settlement of Ebunyole, the history of the Abanyole-Luo encounter, and the postcolonial history of the Lake Region of Kenya.

### 6.3.1. The Story of the formation of the Nyole nation

The story of the formation of the Nyole nation is best summarized by the background of the *Abene Liloba* and *Abamenyibwa* dichotomy between Nyole clans. I have noted in previous chapters (particularly Chapters One and Two) that the *Abene Liloba* (owners of the land) group of clans claim direct descent from Anyole, the Nyole ancestor, whom legend designates as the founder of the Nyole nation. This chapter takes over from Chapter Two which examined the implications of this dichotomy for intra-community relationships. By contrast, this chapter looks at how the same set of events impacts on the conception of the Nyole-Luo relationships.

*Abene Liloba* assert their identity as the bona fide *abaana ba Anyole* (the children of Anyole) or *Anyole Lichina* (solid rock Anyole/legitimate sons of the soil/authentic descendants of Anyole). Ironically, all Abanyole including those whom these terms subtly exclude use the same expressions to assert their authentic Nyoleness. The other set of clans (*Abamenyibwa* – tenant clans) are those that are said either to have been welcomed by Anyole or by his progeny and therefore were perceived as perpetual outsiders accessing land at the pleasure of *Abene Liloba* group of clans[64] (Olumwullah 2002; Wagner 1956; Owen 1932). However the issue of the identity of the Abene Liloba has been a source of conflicting discourses which undermine the integrity of the category itself, especially taking into consideration the circumstances under which Ebunyole and the lake region as a whole was settled.

[64] Owen (1932) suggests that only third generation *Abamenyibwa* could lay claim to the title owners of the land and even then after becoming *Abamirikha* (those who are swallowed/absorbed). Effectively converting to *Abene Liloba* entailed repudiation of an old identity. Olumwullah (2002) says that even after that one never became fully accepted in the main stream of the *Abene Liloba* clans, hence the dichotomy remained.

I have noted in Chapter Two that there are diverse accounts of the identity of the *Abene Liloba* group of clans. Many narratives put their number at three: Abamuli, Abasilatsi and Abamutete (Anduuru 2007) out of the more than 78[65] clans in Ebunyole. But other accounts (Anduuru 2006, for instance) put the number at five including Abamuhaya and Abahando. However, some narratives complicate the matter by expanding this number to 12 (Were (1967: 10), which includes such clans as Abasikhale, Aberanyi, Abamang'ali, Abatongoi and others that are designated as *Abamenyibwa* in other narratives. *Abene Liloba* clans are generally distinguished by the location of their clan land in the East of Ebunyole, and closer to Wekhomo rock, the legendary home of Anyole. However, the location of Abamuli in the West at the Nyole/Luo border and the fluidity in the number of Abene Liloba clans (drawing in others that do not necessarily conform to the neat settlement pattern) contradicts proximity to the cradle as the defining factor. The rest of the clans live further away from this center of the Nyole nation, mainly to the west. Consequently, both location in the East as opposed to the West, and proximity to the cradle which is also near Emuhaya, the headquarters of the new Emuhaya District, is a code which is the subject of complex discourses about the nature of Nyole identity. For instance, the Emuhaya District headquarters is located in the land of Abakhobo clan, who by this classification are in the *Abamenyibwa* category. But Abakhobo also lay claim to the cradle site; Wekhomo itself. Nevertheless, the *Abene Liloba/Abamenyibwa* dichotomy implies two assumptions: first, Anyole ancestors were the first to set foot on the land and therefore the land belongs to them and their direct descendants by right. Second, the other clans in the *Abamenyibwa* category were welcomed by Anyole. On the contrary, both assumptions are hotly contested by the clans that they marginalize.

[65] The number depends on how one counts them. But this figure was derived from a discussion between Mr Adam Kutai, a prominent Nyole oral historian and Mr. C Okweingoti. Others like A Anduuru (2006) give different figures. My emphasis here is on the fact that though the *Abene Liloba* group of clans are demographically big, they are in the minority in relation to the total number of clans in Ebunyole.

However, other narratives reveal a completely different order of events of how Ebunyole was first accessed and settled. One source, Rev. Aggrey Anduuru (interviewed 02 and 04 February 2007)[66] suggests that Anyole was the son of Muhindila, one of the brothers who arrived at Wekhomo. The others were Wekhomo[67] who gave his name to the first home, Ngome, Musali, and Muhando after whom the Ebuhando (Bunyore) Hills were named. Hence, in its entirety, Ebuhando Hills on which Wekhomo and Maseno are located is the signifier of the Nyole notion of cradle. Wekhomo and Muhindila went on to settle at the Wekhomo cave. Paradoxically, Wekhomo seems to disappear suddenly at Wekhomo; Anduuru says it is not clear what happened to him.

Nevertheless, the shifting identity of Abahando is the best hint of the fluid and controversial notion of Nyole identity. On the one hand, Reuben Olendo (interviewed 07 February 2007) asserts that in fact Muhando was the ancestor of all Abanyole. Conversely, Kutai, and others avow that there is no clan called Abahando: etymologically, Abahando comes from the term *okhuhanda*, which means to stick. So Abahando are the remnants of other Nyole clans who refused to leave the cradle. Hence, they are *abahaanda* (those who stuck). But other sources suggested that in fact Abahando are those who were expelled from the mainstream clans for one social transgression or the other. In this sense, Ebuhando Hills attains the Janus-faced figure of both the cradle and the repose of social castoffs, on the one hand. On the other, the evolution of the fragments of Nyole clans into Abahando clan best exemplifies the notion of Deleuze and Guattari (1988) of the rhizomous nature of social formations: the components merge into each other imperceptibly masking their disparate origins and thus, fashioning a

[66] Olumwullah (2002: 49) corroborates the order of events. But this is expected because he also interviewed Anduuru.

[67] Rev Anduuru consistently referred to Wekhomo as the name of one of the brothers, repeated by Olumwullah (2002). But in Olunyole language, Wekhomo (wa Ekhomo) would mean the place/home of Ekhomo. This implies that the cradle cave was the home of Ekhomo, but it is now more associated with Anyole.

simulacrum of sorts. In this sense, the coalescence of Abahando into a clan with narratives of origin might figure what the Nyole nation has desired but failed to achieve.

The foregoing makes Nyole nationness a complex issue. Part of the reason is the diversity of origin of Nyole clans some of which retrace their steps to other Luhya nations, as well as to such far removed sources as the Maasai, the Kalenjin, and the Luo (Were 1967, 1972). Hence, some historical sources (Were 1967; Olumwullah 2002) undermine the basis of the categories by suggesting, for instance, that Abamuli, often represented as the offspring of the first son of Anyole, are really of Maasai origin. But importantly, the legend of Anyole which legitimates the exclusionary insider/outsider dichotomy and often determines access to social privilege and opportunity can be the source of tensions which put the idea of the Nyole nation under scrutiny. A solid Nyole nation is undermined by emphasis on inter-clan *tsinsakho* (boundaries) which creates a sense of dislocation among *Abamenyibwa* in a context that has been historically defined by competition over scarce land thus, creating dynamism in inter-clan relationship (Olumwullah 2002: 48). These fractures underpin my reading of how the Abalukhoba (below) perceive and narrate their Nyole identity.

### 6.3.2. The story of the Abanyole-Luo interaction

The historiography of the Nyole and the Luo (Were 1967; Ogot 1967, 2009; Osogo 1966; Ochieng' 2002; Olumwullah 2002; Owen 1932) suggests that the Nilotic Luo arrived to find the diverse lacustrine Bantu groups in various stages of settlement. However, the relationship between the two communities has been characterized by contests over territory where the later arrivals often got involved in skirmishes with the Bantu communities. Were, Olumwullah, and Osogo suggest that the Luo would take over some land from the Luhya

groups but they would often incorporate into their communities the Luhya who either remained or returned to claim their land after the skirmishes. Hence, there are clans of Nyole/ Luhya/Bantu origin in Bondo, Akala, Sakwa, Kadimo Seme, and many others areas which are now in Luoland (Olumwullah 2002: 38; Ogot 2009; Ochieng' 2002, 1976; Ot'tiali – interviewed 18 December 2006). Abanyole occupied most of what is now Alego but many retreated as the Luo advanced. However, many Nyole clans such as the Jousere and Walago[68] remained and took up Luo identity (Were 1967: 73). This malleable notion of Luo and Luhya ethnicity was witnessed well into the colonial era when the Waholo were Luoised (Were 1967).

In addition, a history of commerce between the Luo and the Luhya/Nyole ensured circulation of the cultures deep within the two territorial spaces. Luanda (in Ebunyole), Maseno and Kisumu markets, for instance are renowned as the place to access goods originating from the two communities. The fact that code switching typifies the exchange validates the assertion that bilingualism typifies the daily life in the border region and underscores the "power of everyday life in the constitution of ethnic boundaries and identity" (Cohen and Odhiambo 1987: 270). This phenomenon of circulation and exchange of cultures and peoples between the two ethnic nations has blurred the cultural and physical border between the Luo and the Bantu groups all the way from Busia to the Nyang'ori area. That phenomenon affirms the assertion by Medard (2009: 278) that interethnic boundaries in the Great Lakes Region of East Africa "melted slowly away in undefined frontiers".

[68] Were (1967) says Walago in Luoland are the same clan as Abalako in Ebunyole. Olumwullah's (2002) suggestion that Abalako are the same as Abahando is problematic given the assertion by Kutai above that Abahando consist of fragments from other Nyole clans. In Kutai's sense, Abalako would just be one of the clan fragments that form the Abahando.

This state of affairs makes hazy the issue of where one community ends and the other begins. Hence, Reuben Olendo (interviewed 07 February 2007) asserts that the Nyole clans spread across the border all the way up to Awasi, the extreme south east end of what is now Luo territory. On his part, William Ot'tiali (interviewed 18 December, 2007) asserted that the people of Kano (Kasagam), Nyakach, and all the way to Kamagambo at the south western frontier of Luoland are *olumile* (have Nyole – specifically Abasilatsi clan – origins). Many other narratives suggested that Luoland is dotted with communities that were once Nyole/Luhya. The matter is complicated by free intermarriage between the two groups where the Luo particularly married Nyole/Luhya women (Olumwullah 2002; Owen 1932; Ot'tiali 18 December 2006). Hence whereas Abanyole like to identify themselves with the space that is now Ebunyole, in practice they are dispersed with sizeable clusters in Seme, Sagam, Kisumu, Kano and many other places in present Luoland (Olumwullah 2002: 41).

It is apparent from the foregoing that in pre-colonial times, the ethnic and territorial spaces between the Luo and the Nyole/Luhya flowed unproblematically and ambiguously into each other because of the settlement patterns of the time and a long history of intermarriage. Most importantly however, this notion of borderlessness/interstitialness might explain why one source, Kasuku, suggests that the Luos at Maseno were invited there by his clan ancestors to make war weaponry for them. The veracity of the claim is not as important as the connotation of frequent pre-colonial cooperation and trans-border interaction between the two communities. But this is how the present controversy over Maseno is produced. Maseno may well embody the notion of cradle for the Nyole but it would appear that no contradiction was experienced between this symbolic value of the space and the free mixing it mediated between cultures. Consequently, it is possible to say that the cultural circulation (McKay 2004) in the region produced a new hybrid culture which incorporated elements from both

cultural spaces. Hence, the concept shadow nation (Mitchell 2001)[69] might explain the cultural blend produced within this region. Thus, as Medard (2009: 275) aptly observes, the relationship between "societies and spaces translate[d] into territories that in turn produce[d] modified imagined communities."

However, if the border between the two communities was that fluid then why does it excite so much passion in the postcolonial era? A possible explanation may be found in how Abanyole understood the porous border, on the one hand, and the fact that the Luo and the Nyole never cease to be distinct identities in Nyole imagination, on the other. The fact that the cultural exchange across the border seemed to proceed almost unabated does not necessarily suggest that the consciousness of difference between the two communities suddenly ceased. The rivalry and skirmishes which led to territorial gain and loss always remained within view. Whereas the boundary between the Luo and the Nyole was blurred, Nyole identity was spurred partly by the anxiety engendered by the "fear of being hemmed in" (Olumwullah 2002: 46) through Luo expansionism. Nyole identity therefore evolved in part as a counter strategy to the surging Luo encroachment.

Conversely, it appears that the entry of the Luo offered new possibilities, especially in a context of uncertainty among the Nyole clans marginalized by the constrictive Nyole clan dichotomy. The Luo presence opened new latitudes and made it possible for the *Abamenyibwa* clans near the boundary to signify the autonomy of the national periphery and disinterest in the Nyole center (to appropriate the words of Bhabha 1994: 2) without necessarily fully adopting Luo identity. Hence Nyole identity at the border was characterized by indeterminacy and interstitialness: desiring both to be part of the nation and to escape its

[69] Mitchell's concept is the shadow state, the entity that develops between two states. I have borrowed the term to refer to the entity that forms between two ethnic nations which borrow from both sides but transcend either of them by its cultural mix.

limitations. It would appear therefore that the anxiety over the issue of where Maseno belongs is the upshot of (and is intensified by) the postcolonial concept of the boundary as a permanent line that precisely delineates the two territorial/ethnic spaces and peoples. It is a response to the psychological apprehension of the implications of some familiar spaces suddenly becoming alien and inaccessible and the dread of getting swallowed by Luoness becoming real through the way the mobile boundary continues to quarter Nyole clans. In this sense, the contemporary anxiety about the border is a postcolonial phenomenon (Medrad 2009: 276; Doyle 2009). It is a response (to use the words of Cohen and Odhiambo 1977: 277), to the postcolonial oversimplification, through insertion of linear boundaries, of the familiar but complex precolonial interethnic spatial organization.

### 6.3.3. Imperial history of the Lake Region

The local inter-ethnic rivalries and anxieties discussed above as well as the identity of the inter-ethnic border seem to have taken a different turn at the beginning of the 20th century. This was with the entry in the Lake Region of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) (1906), and the South African Compound and Interior Mission (SACIM, active in Ebunyole since 1904) which was bought by the Indiana (USA) based Mission Board in 1921 (Makokha 1996) who are the sponsors of Church of God (CoG). Friends (Quakers) were already active in Kaimosi among the Tiriki, the last Luhya 'sub-nation' to the south east bordering the Nandi (a Kalenjin 'sub-nation' of the Plain Nilote group of the Rift Valley Province), since 1902 (Makokha 1996: 1).

The relationship among these missionary societies seems to have been heavily influenced by the disastrous events in Buganda Kingdom in the late 19th century. The colonial

administration in Kenya was anxious to prevent a repeat of the lethal rivalries between denominations witnessed in Buganda in the 1880s and 1890s which culminated in the open and vicious interdenominational warfare in 1892 between adherents of two missions, the *Wangereza* (English – CMS Anglican Church Protestant converts) and the *Wafaranza* (French – converts of the Catholic White Fathers mission which originated from France). The war was triggered by each trying to outdo the other to win over the Kabaka (King) and thus become the dominant denomination in Buganda Kingdom (Anderson 1981: 34-37; Alpers 1974 [1968]). The war in Buganda was as much religious as it was the manifestation of Western nationalism which was reflected in the jostling over colonies in Africa.[70]

The British were so embarrassed by the events in Buganda that they were anxious to avoid their replication. Consequently, to minimize conflict in Kenya, a colonial policy was enacted which gave each Christian mission its sphere of influence. Hence, the Presbyterians were allocated parts of Central and Eastern provinces, African Inland Mission (AIM) and African Inland Church (AIC) were allocated the Rift Valley Province, while Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) was given South Nyanza. In the case of the Nyanza Province (which then incorporated the present Western and Nyanza provinces until just before independence in 1963,) the colonial Provincial Commissioner (PC) summoned the denominations and demarcated the sphere of operation for each of them. CMS was allocated the Luo, COG the Nyole, Kisa, Marama, Idakho, Isukha and Batsotso;[71] and Quakers the Tiriki and Maragooli.[72] Thus, the events in Buganda instigated a religious scramble of sorts with great ramifications for the

[70] Anderson (1981: 36) for instance asserts that at the height of the rivalry, the two hostile denominations carried guns to church in a Wild West fashion. When open war broke out in 1892, the British representative Lord Lugard, realizing the Catholics (French) were better armed turned his machine guns on them, a decisive action that ensured subsequent British-CMS domination of Uganda.

[71] Personal email communication with Maurice N. Amutabi (23 April, and 16 May 2009). Prof. Amutabi has done extensive work on church history in Western Kenya including his MA thesis, (University of Nairobi 1993, unpublished): "A History of the African Interior Church, 1946 – 1990".

[72]Makokha (1996:1) seems to corroborate this position when he says that about 1904 when Robert Wilson of SACIM first arrived on a reconnaissance mission, he found CMS active in Vihiga (Maragooli) but CMS yielded the space for the Quaker church mission

way Christianity would quarter and share the African peoples in future and invest ethnicity with fresh meaning. The colonial state seems to have achieved its aims of separating the Kenyan ethnic communities using the church, but the quartering process which seemed to map religious spheres on ethnic territories was not without consequence for the inter-ethnic engagement as will be apparent below.

The foregoing context underpins my understanding of the perception by many of the sources (such as Anduuru, interviewed 02 and 04 February 2007; Kuya and Kasuku, interviewed 01 and 11 February 2007; and Hezekiah Ong'ondo, interviewed 28 December 2006) that the CMS venture in the lake region of Kenya was predetermined as a mission for the Luo. This perception is implicated in the reading of the intentions of CMS which seemed to highlight and invest ethnic differences with new agenda that altered prior conception of interethnic relationships. Kasuku captures the mood and gist of the disquiet in his misgivings about the choice of Maseno as the CMS headquarters because the right place for such mission would have been Kisumu.[73] The contradiction in the CMS as a "mission for the Luo" with the headquarters at Maseno over which Abanyole asserted claims as their cradle looked mischievous and ominous, and over time produced a sense of rupture and renewed consciousness of Luo outsiderness in Maseno. The new consciousness was intensified by the role the Luo played in colonial administration at Kisumu, the larger colonial Nyanza Provincial Headquarters (before the split into Nyanza and Western provinces in 1963) which was perceived to be to the detriment of the Nyole especially the border clans.

[73] Anduuru and Ong'ondo say that CMS chose Maseno because it was cooler than Kisumu. However, at the time the whole region was still under the greater Nyanza Province (until 1963) which incorporated the Luhya and the Luo areas so the sharp sense of contradiction did not begin to surface until the demarcation of the Central and North Kavirondo Districts of the greater colonial Nyanza Province became necessary.

The sense of injustice is intensified by the assertion by Ong'ondo and Kasuku that in fact the first CMS missionaries were welcomed by their grandfathers who surrendered the land on which they pitched their tent and around which the current Maseno Township developed. Both aver that the problem between them and *abasungu* (whites) at Maseno started when one of their grandfathers got into an altercation which ended with him beating the Sevilles, the two missionary brothers of Maseno station. Consequently, the missionaries curtailed their relationship with Abanyole and replaced them with the Luo (expounded under the issue of the ownership of Maseno Veterinary Farm in Chapter Five). Therefore, the narratives of Abalukhoba, Abasakami, Abamutsa, and Abahando clans highlight the paradox of the clans as victims of their own generosity: they welcomed the missionaries and gave them land to set up their station only to be shunted aside and the facility turned over to the Luo.

However, some observations can be made about the postcolonial history of Maseno. With the establishment of schools, the Anglican Church and the government administrative offices, and the market center which enhanced the interaction between the two ethnic communities, Maseno boosted its pre-colonial figuration as the site of engagement and circulation of the two cultures. But when Anduuru and many other sources, corroborated by Makokha (1996), say that suddenly Church of God (CoG) banned marriages between its adherents and those of CMS especially, Maseno and Kima as the headquarters of the two churches embodied insurmountable intra- and inter-ethnic borders. Effectively, the ban constrained intermarriage between the Luo and Nyole on the one hand, and between the Nyole clans in the East which were mainly CoG and those from the West which were mainly CMS adherents, on the other. In that way, the ban inadvertently concretized the *Abene Liloba/Abamenyibwa* dichotomy. Thus religion further fragmented the intra - and interethnic rapport.

Simultaneously, the denominational boundaries based on imagined interethnic boundaries reconfigured identities in the west of Ebunyole. The policy identified the Kisumu-Busia road deep inside Ebunyole as the boundary and further complicated ethnic identities by hemming into Luoland the Nyole clans that fell to the west of this road. The implications of the policy are apparent because the colonial interethnic boundary was influenced by the denominational boundary. Hence, the Nyole clans such as Abamuli, Abalonga, Abalukhoba, Aberanyi, Abamutsa, and others were administered from Kisumu in colonial Luo Central, and not Luhya North Nyanza District. In this sense, Maseno as the symbol of both imperialism and ethnic engagement acquired the paradoxical image of a space of the Luo-Nyole interaction through religion, and, commerce; and also the symbol of rupture because of antagonistic CoG and CMS doctrinal policies. At the same time, the colonial binary made speaking Luo a necessity for the Nyole clans and other Luhya 'sub-nations' hemmed into Luoland by the Luo/Nyole-Luhya boundary to access services at Kisumu in Central Nyanza District. The lasting impact is that the Abanyole around Maseno, as such Luhya 'sub-nations' as the Samia of Busia, either speak the two languages or mix them. But this polyglot disposition only complicates the identity of the Nyole border clans further because it confirms the perception within the Nyole community of their outsiderness, already signaled by their *Abamenyibwa* status. Hence, many sources especially in the interior of Ebunyole told me that these clans have Luo origin.

At the same time, the Luo/Nyole colonial boundary which estranged the clans from Ebunyole makes them bitter and suspicious of the Nyole center. This further deepened the intra-Nyole clan fissures. Kasuku and Ong'ondo assert that if the 'nation' was cohesive, then the other Nyole clans would have protested their sequestering into Luo territory and come to their rescue. They however never even raised a finger while the border clans were hemmed into

Central Nyanza District where they were discriminated against by the Luo during the colonial era. Thus, the aloofness of the rest of the Abanyole and their indifference to the suffering of the border clans undermines the possibility of unconditional loyalty to the Nyole center and to a monolithic Nyole identity.

It is clear therefore that the relationship between the border clans and the rest of Abanyole is governed by the sense of injustice against them by the rest of the community, on the one hand, and a sense of suffering under Luo and imperial hegemony to which the Nyole kin abandoned them, on the other hand. The feeling of the border communities towards the Luo because of the suffering under Luo hegemony during colonial rule resonates with what Berman (1998: 305) calls "the complex dialectic" of the "pervasive patron-client relations". Berman adds that this is a colonial legacy which has endured in the post-colonial societies.

But again the issue of the dynamics of power relations in the pre-colonial era and how that might have contributed to the ambivalence and contradiction in the manifestations of ethnic identity at Maseno needs to be explored. What was the nature of the pre-colonial power relations among the communities that formed the Nyole 'sub-nation' and what might be its contemporary manifestation? Berman (1998) makes two crucial observations which can illuminate the identity signifiers at the border. First, the advent of imperialism at Maseno reconfigured the understanding of sources wealth, being and power which has made it possible to interrogate and challenge "former understandings of moral economy and political legitimacy which defined… [the pre-colonial relations]" (1998: 323). Secondly, the interaction between the border communities and the Nyole center on the one hand, and that between the same communities and the Luo, on the other hand, suggest relations characterized by patronage, "domination and dependence, based on patriarchal power

excercised across differences of gender, generations, lineages, clans, languages and cultures" (Berman 1998: 310). In that case, the expression of Abalukhoba identity may be said to be a sub-conscious resistance to the unequal pre-colonial relations of power, patronage and servitude which dealings with both the Luo and the Nyole center implied. But also it highlights the contradictory impact of colonialism which severely undermined and threatened Abalukhoba peoplehood through boundary demarcations as has been shown here, even as it offered Abalukhoba the latitude to pursue a relatively inimitable course for the community.

The consequence of the foregoing is that the identity of the Nyole clans in the border area is underpinned by a sense of suspicion because of exclusion by the Nyole center, the consciousness of the threat of assimilation by the Luo neighbor, and the desire to either retain Maseno or have some foothold on the township. Hence, the practice of daily life consists of gesturing to the silences which a monolithic Luoness and Nyoleness entail. The experience of the clans resonates with the assertions that "what ethnic identity constructs as pure is undermined by the dynamics of practice on the ground" (Khagram and Levitt 2008: 5); and the border is both a site of cultural engagement produced performatively (Bhabha 1994: 2) and a space for circulation of identities and cultures. In manifesting the mobile and porous possibilities of the border, Maseno points to the prospects of the border as the site of free play of meaning. Therefore, the desire to either have exclusive authority over Maseno or at least to guarantee unconstrained access to it creates conditions for emergence of its cultural fluidity embodied by articulated identities as the cultural manifestations of the township.

Below, I explore the Abalukhoba imagination and discursive manipulation of Maseno border to deal with the threat of marginalization as the exemplification of the foregoing issues. First, I focus on the background of Abalukhoba and the strategies they adopt to respond to the

anxieties of exclusion by the Nyole mainstream followed by how they deal with the threat of assimilation by the Luo.

### 6.4. Abandu Belisili and their malcontents

The Abalukhoba, one of the demographically smaller Nyole clans, is located to the west of Maseno Township. Because of the complex boundary between the Luo and the Nyole, part of the clan has been hemmed into Luoland. The Abalukhoba clan asserts a distinctive identity as Abandu Belisili. One source Mr Tenga asserts that *lisili* (plural *amasili*, also *omukasa*), a copper amulet worn at the upper arm, signifies royalty and distinguishes one's clan from other Nyole clans, which are subaltern and non-royal. Muchel'le (interviewed 23 December) asserted that *lisili* is the traditional hoe which points to the need for further inquiry into the coincidence of names for what it might yield about the origin of smithcraft (*okhurula* or *okhwiranya*) and the rise of the institution of royalty symbolized by *lisili*. Nevertheless, *lisili* also signifies wealth because in all the Luhya language clusters the royals are *abaami* which means both the rulers and the wealthy. This may be because like in many other African social set ups, wealth also figures authority and wealth is generally synonymous with community office because such office is habitually conferred to the wealthy.

However, Olumwullah (2002: 77) suggests that *amasili* have their origins in Pemba Island and Tanga in Tanzania and were used as protective charms. The argument implies that like other protective charms such as *ebikanda* (77), *amasili* have Arabic origin. In the Nyole context where population pressure aggravated inter- and intra-clan struggle over limited land (48; 77) the double and ambiguous attributes of *amasili* must have unlocked new possibilities because Arabic charms were revered in Ebunyole. Hence, what further advantage *amasili*

might grant the Abalukhoba who resent the loss of land, space, and authority to the mainstream Nyole clans is open to speculation. In this sense *amasili* represent transnational possibilities in clan-nation struggle to authenticate Abalukhoba claims over the limited land on hand. But as the symbol of the Abalukhoba royalty, *amasili* story seems to refer to the Nyole nation center by insinuating its lack of legitimacy which is granted by the royal amulet. Effectively, the *lisili* narrative contests and displaces the *Abamenyibwa* narrative which undermines the distinct and superior Abalukhoba sense of the self.

The clan's sense of community derives from the popular history of its royal heritage but the same identity has been the curse of the Abalukhoba. Hence, the *lisili* narrative which projects the ideal figuration of the clan also has etiological connotation in so far as it explains the absence of a single continuous Abalukhoba territory as well as the phenomenon where pockets of the dispersed Abalukhoba are identified under different names everywhere they settled. The sense of the quartering and dispersal of the community is best captured in Imbaya's (interviewed 26 December 2006) exasperation when he says: "Abakhobo…live…in many tiny settlements – my uncles, they are….M'bumang'ali, they are there….M'busiloli they are there….Up there in the [Bunyore] hills they are there. [Many] are [at Em'mutete]. Others are… I don't know where". Below, Abalukhoba elders, Tenga and Kuya, (interviewed 1 and 11 February 2007) illustrate some of the vulnerabilities the *lisili* role exposed them to, which nearly annihilated them and caused both their dispersal and the multiple manifestations of their name and identities, the phenomenon which bewilders Imbaya:

Tenga (ST): *Lisili*, that is what is causing trouble.

Kasuku (KA): [Abalukhoba changed their name] to disguise themselves so they are not targeted by other *tsimbia* (clans). So they changed their name to Abakhobo not Abalukhoba [anymore]. So that they would not be followed.

Kuya (KU): [They] changed because they had caused trouble (*induli*) and finished people. They were afraid they might be killed. So they said, "If we don't disguise ourselves and take another name, we will be told, 'They are still the same people!' So when they brought the word '*khobo*' now [they will ask], "Which people are these, are they those who were oppressing us or they are different?" They have disguised themselves!

This excerpt suggests that the Abalukhoba changed their name to disguise themselves because they were targeted by the other clans. The reason was that in performing the authority bestowed upon them by *lisili*, they indulged in excesses which earned them lethal enemies among the subject (non-royal) clans. Apparently in response to their oppression, their Nyole subjects rebelled and nearly succeeded in annihilating them, hence their dispersal and name change to disguise themselves. Thus, at Maseno, in Tiriki and in Wanga, they are the Abalukhoba; at Emuhaya, they are the Abakhobo; in other parts of Ebunyole, they are called the Abakhoba. In neighboring Kisa Location, they are the Abakhobole, while in Kisumu and Siaya in Nyanza Province, they are the Kamakowa. In Bukoba in Tanzania, they not only appear as the Bakoba but they also give the Lake Victoria Island town Bukoba its name. Elsewhere in the region, they appear under other names all of which, Kuya (interviewed 1 and 11 February 2007) avers, retain the root "khobo," the subtle signifier of their sense of homologous origin.

Tenga, the Abalukhoba community historian and opinion leader (interviewed 1 February 2007), asserted that all Abalukhoba in their different manifestations came from Bukoba. In the case of Kisumu and Siaya, the translation of the names to suit the linguistic imperatives of the exotic environment still retains a sufficiently recognizable echo of the root '*khobo*', the eponymous ancestor. Tenga adds that whatever name they call themselves, the original name is Abalukhoba and they are spread throughout the East African region. The names at once appear to mask the relationship among the pan-Abalukhoba[74] identities they signify even as they retain certain sounds that they recognize as discrete mnemonics of their peoplehood. In this sense, Abalukhoba narratives seem to materialize their communal self-representation in the martyr image; as a people whose present circumstances especially their spatial distribution is a metaphor of the occupational hazards of performing the role of Abandu Belisili. Importantly, the connotation that as the signifier of their power, *lisili* undermines smooth flows between clan and nation because of Nyole envy is inescapable. It is apparent that as the signifier of their difference from, and superiority over the rest of Abanyole as a royal clan,[75] *lisili* has been a source of both pride and cataclysm.

The perceptions of past relationships with other Abanyole have hindered the possibility of total identification with Nyoleness. Hence depending on the circumstances, they either assert or repudiate Nyole identity as in the following:

[74] By pan-Abalukhoba, I refer to the intricate manifestations of Abalukhoba under various names. Going by what the elders said, what I have indicated here are just some of the names by which they are known. There are many more which they either could not remember or did not know. I therefore use the term to accommodate all the possibilities of the overt and latent expressions of the multiple Abalukhoba identities. For instance, the elders say the name Kondele in what is now the suburbs of Kisumu is a Luo translation of Abalukhoba name, "the home of Ondele", an Omulukhoba ancestor. The place has many Abalukhoba.

[75] Reference has been made to this attribute of Abalukhoba in a number of places. The royal repute of Abalukhoba as Abandu Belisili or Abandu Bomukasa (copper amulet) is also mentioned at this link: http://www.abeingo.org/SUBTRIBE_DOCS/ABATIRICHI.pdf. The word *omukasa* now has a generalized reference to any quasi-traditional leader such as headmen and other government agents at the community level. More discussions on Abalukhoba can be found under other sub-ethnicities of the Luhya such as the Wanga/ Abawanga at http://www.abeingo.org.

ST: We are not Abanyole…

KA: The first people, our ancestors, preceded these Abanyole.

Kuya and Tenga asserted that their ancestors were the first to arrive at the Wekhomo cradle, an assertion reiterated by Kasuku above, but they were dislodged from there by Abanyole. I have referred above to the assertion by Rev. Anduuru that one of the first Omunyole to arrive at the cradle who gave it his name, Wekhomo, seems to inexplicably drop out of the narratives of origin and settlement of Ebunyole. Such disappearance would be unusual for someone associated with events of such historic and mnemonic magnitude. If Abalukhoba version of events is accepted, could Wekhomo be the ancestor of Abalukhoba or could he be associated with them in any way? In which case the disfiguring of, and erasure from memory of the events associated with Wekhomo might be read as deliberate reconfiguration of the past through excision (Hamilton, Harris, and Reid 2002) from the master narratives of Abanyole, which are associated with clans that Abalukhoba narratives suggest were behind their ejection from the Wekhomo cradle which they established. That might explain the passion with which Abalukhoba seek to destabilize the remotest possibility of a continuous Nyoleness as Kuya does here:

KU: …Someone will say: I am Omunyole. Once you say you are Omunyole, they will ask: which clan? So to get to the core of Obunyole [Nyoleness], that Anyole himself, who is he…from whom all the clans are said to descend?"

Similarly, Kasuku, Tenga and Kuya highlight a spatial disparity between their origin and that of other Nyole clans. Unlike other Abanyole who came from Uganda, they "came from Bukoba!" Besides, they are anxious to construct a temporal order that underscores their

arrival in Ebunyole before (and thus bolster the legitimacy of their claim on the Wekhomo cradle), not after other Nyole clans. But this dilution of their Nyole identity belies the fact that all Abalukhoba participants in the interviews explicitly affirmed themselves as Abanyole.

It is apparent therefore that the Abalukhoba prefer looseness and ambiguity in the conception of their identity in order to conveniently both assert claim to Nyole identity and renounce it. A totalized Nyole identity excludes them and is inimical and antagonistic because it threatens by signifying their absence and undermines their claim on Wekhomo. But the threat of alienation and marginalization is diminished, not by asserting Nyoleness but by putting under scrutiny and destabilizing the integrity of this category which excludes them. Hence, the counter-narrative of the diverse origin of the Nyole clans and their subalternity strategically dislocates the threat posed by exclusionary mainstream narrative in a manner that corroborates the assertion that the border "transcends the operations and orderly impositions of the power of the center" (Ang 1998: 15). The performance of their Nyole identity manifests a "peculiar psychology" of double consciousness (Gates 1988: 207) whereby the contradiction in their representation of clan and Nyole identities does not seem obvious or is tolerated. So from the outset, the procedure of daily performance of Nyole identity is typified by playful picking and dropping of identities which echoes Todorov's (1995) notion of open-endedness or absence of permanent identity which epitomizes the Abalukhoba narrative

What emerges here is that the Abalukhoba emphasize disparity and attempt to destabilize Nyole teleology as a strategy to assert their subjectivity through a diversified rather than monolithic Nyole identity. Hence the *lisili* narrative is a strategy for displacement of the anxiety produced by the exclusionary Nyole mainstream narrative. However, the thrust of the narrative both authenticates clan identity and assures belonging by asserting Nyole identity

but on their terms. This argument resonates with Bhabha's (1994: 2) assertion that the "representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition". Hence, dealing with their double consciousness entails subverting the Nyole master narrative through both decentering it and constructing a less hostile adaptation of popular history. Their strategy corresponds to what Desai (2001) calls selective reading of the community archive, or what Freeman (1993) and Weedon (2004) call rewriting history. The compelling urgency to accentuate a sense of their superiority that is refined by the assertion of their separate identity makes sense in a context where they desire to contest totalized Nyoleness by affirming their difference to counter the exclusionist *Abene Liloba*/*Abamenyibwa* dichotomy which authorizes their marginalization.

It is apparent from the foregoing that the Abalukhoba use the subalternity of other Nyole clans and the Abandu Belisili narratives to displace the threat of a monolithic and exclusionary Nyole identity. Below, I explore the use of the etymology of place names and language both to assert and authenticate their claim on Luo spaces and peoples, and both to dilute the authority of *dholuo* (Luo language) and challenge the possibility of a monolithic Luoness.

### 6.4.1. What we name we own: contests over place names

The response of the Abalukhoba to the fact of the unstable and shifting boundary which steadily hems them into Luoland has been to interrogate the authenticity of Luo peoplehood and their authority over the spaces they occupy. I use the example of the name Maseno to illustrate my point. The name Maseno has acquired layered and ambiguous meanings over time. Kuya, Kasuku and Tenga assert that Maseno is simply a Luo translation of the Nyole

name Emuseno. The three highlight two aspects of the background of Emuseno to justify their claims on it as a Nyole space. The first concerns the site of the *omuseno* tree from which Maseno derives its name. They emphasize the site to justify the assertion of Luo outsiderness in Maseno; by virtue of its location on Bunyore Hills, the site of *omuseno* around which Maseno Township was established belongs to the range of Nyole notions of the cradle. The second aspect is that the *omuseno* tree itself specifically resonates with Nyole identity because as one Imende asserted, it is under *omuseno* that the Nyole ancestor established a home on arrival before finally moving to Wekhomo. Hence the tree, its name, and its site bear community specific connotations that resound with the Nyole notion of origin.

However, this exclusive meaning of tree and space which comprise the Nyole peoplehood is undermined in three ways. First, Kuya, Tenga and Kasuku assert that it is under the tree that the first CMS missionaries set up their camp on arrival. Around *omuseno*, they eventually established the headquarters of the CMS Diocese of Maseno which grouped together the Luhya and the Luo. Hence, a tree which had previously specifically signified Nyole peoplehood suddenly became the overarching symbol of three disparate and contradictory cultures: Nyole-Luhya and Luo which were already there, and the imperial culture embodied by CMS and the colonial administration. The third way has to do with the death of the tree. According to Kuya, the tree died only recently. But it is the dying act that brings out its extraordinariness: the tree split down the middle, with the trunk and branches of one half falling towards the Nyole side and the other towards the Luo side of the border. Kuya's interpretation is that this splitting signified the death wish of the tree to have the Anglican Diocese of Maseno split into two: The Diocese of Maseno South (Luo) and the Diocese of Maseno North (Luhya**).** Remarkably, instead of the tree signifying rejection of the alien

imperial culture which undermined the purity of its sign as the cradle of Abanyole, its dying wish appears to have been accommodative of those initially viewed as intruders.

Nonetheless, it is not apparent that the splitting process uprooted or completely dismembered the tree deep down to its roots. So the severance process would appear superficial, affecting the section above the ground while leaving the important underground segment intact. How should the signification of the dying act of the tree be read – reaching out towards the Luo and the Nyole in complete disregard of the contradictions which the sign engendered? By reaching out to the Luo, *omuseno* ambiguously both blurs the distinction between the Luo and the Nyole and gestures to the possibility of simultaneously embodying Luo, Nyole, and imperial meanings. Hence in the manner of its death (paradoxically because the purity of its space had been violated as Kuya says), the tree affirms its own figuration of cultural liminality that defines Maseno. It is as if the tree recognizes the need to remain relevant by affirming itself as the metaphor of indeterminacy and open-endedness (Gates 1988: 21) to accommodate and remain the symbol of the cultures which engage in its space. Two aspects of the story of the death of the tree are significant: first, the fact that the core of the tree remained intact echoes the retention of the name Maseno by the two dioceses to permanently figure Maseno as a divided unity. Second, that the essence of the tree, its the roots, remained intact seems to symbolize the possibility of regeneration, not necessarily of a single monolithic entity, but as a hybrid one whose two sides must be in constant dialogue (Morson and Emerson 1990), being as they are nourished by the same source. In essence, in death, the tree seems to gesture to the history of Luo-Luhya engagement to signify their ethnic extremes as superficial. Hence, the *omuseno* tree seems to recognize and gesture to the complexity and futility in the attempt to disentangle Luoness and Nyoleness because of their tangled past.

This understanding of the dying act of the tree suggests that the tree settled for a sort of mongrel figure where two aspects that would be deemed to be completely disparate and incongruent on the surface are grafted together on its stem without any apparent sign of rejection. This ambiguity reflects the daily relationship between the Luo and the Abanyole-Abaluhya: at soccer matches, at Luanda market, at Maseno, as well as in many social engagements. This model of ethnic identity which displaces the notion of origin and tolerates multiplicity resonates with the concept of the rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari 1988) which emphasizes diversity or multiplicity as the true character of all social formations, but which is presupposed and undermined in daily social performance.

But could the double-voiced figuration of the tree signify Abalukhoba desire for less exclusionary conceptions of the cradle? That would be consistent with the paradox in the figure of Abalukhoba as the utmost defenders of the meaning of Maseno as the Nyole cradle even as that conception marginalizes them. According to Kasuku, Abalukhoba were at the forefront of the struggle to reassert Nyole ownership of Maseno. Kasuku himself risked his life by confronting an armed *machoni* (Jonnies, British soldiers) just before independence when skirmishes erupted between the Luo and the Abanyole over the boundary. So the struggle by the Abalukhoba to reinstate Maseno as the exclusive signifier of Nyole ethnic nationhood while their attitude towards Nyole identity vacillated between outright repudiation and conditional reception stands out for the incongruity it projects. Maseno and Bunyore Hills imply the negation of the Abalukhoba because it gestures to their outsiderness in three senses: as the mnemonic sign they lost to the Nyole mainstream, as the sign of their exclusion from the Nyole mainstream, and as signifier of their double alienation from the township now as a Luo space. Hence the incongruousness of the fight to reinstate it back to

Ebunyole is apparent, but it is consistent with the contradictions and inconsistencies that Maseno itself has come to symbolize.

### 6.4.2. Language use and restoration of authority

The way the Abalukhoba use language reflects consciousness of the recent history of their relationship with the Luo especially during the colonial era when they were hemmed into Luoland and forced to speak Luo to access government services at Kisumu. It is apparent that their daily linguistic practice is characterized by frequent slips into Luo language, but at the beginning of the first interview (1February 2007), the elders condemned the habit as duplicitous and constantly reminded everyone about its implications. However, these slips undermined the desire demonstrated all through the interview to define peoplehood, territory, and boundary by language and genealogy. This challenge is ironically experienced also by the Luo in so far as their bilingual tendencies inhibit their ability to clearly delineate Luo territory and boundaries in daily life (Cohen and Odhiambo 1987: 270). That affirms that the interstitial psychology is not necessarily observable only among the Abanyole at the border.

An episode during the interviews illustrates the burden of the politics of language in the daily life expression of Abalukhoba identity and how that ties in with the ever emerging politics of inter-ethnic relations. At one stage, a very serious disagreement broke out among the elders. Immediately one of the elders slipped into Luo for a moment, which seemed to provide his adversary with ammunition against him. The adversary (80 years) charged that the language habits of the first elder (75 years, and his cousin) were evidence of treachery just like his Luo uncles (his mother was a Luo). This accusation so infuriated the first elder, no less because it

brought in his mother; an act considered to be the height of spite and irreverence in Ebunyole (I have discussed this in Chapter Four). The first elder stood and confronted the adversary. Ironically, in the confrontation that followed, the adversary asserted the authority of his age and experience and immediately started cursing his cousin in Luo and English completely oblivious of his own assertion a short while earlier about the meaning of speaking Luo.

The immediate issue that needs explanation is what Luo language means, and why its use should be repudiated even as they revert to it unconsciously. These language habits seem to point to the recent history of their relationship with the Luo. The Nyole clans which were placed into Luoland by the colonial border not only adopted linguistic polyphony as a resistance strategy to Luo/colonial hegemony, but for a long time they also resisted circumcision, long accepted as the physical sign of Luhyaness or non-Luoness.[76] Ironically circumcision, the most visible symbol of contemporary Luhya identity and espoused by Abalukhoba of Tiriki, was for a long time resisted by Abalukhoba of Maseno. Conversely, some borderland clans often adopted the Luo initiation practice of removal of the lower front teeth. So, their corporeal significations such as dental reconfiguration and linguistic hybridity intensified their unrecognition as either Nyole or Luo, and thus affirming their liminality.

A possible explanation of the contradiction in the incident above is that Luo language was for a long time the language of authority hence the language seemed to bestow its authority on the user. At the same time, use of the language is itself a code both because of the famed Luo love of English, the ultimate language of dominion, and the popular Luo designation of their language as 'English', which intensifies the metaphorical association of Luoness with British

[76] Among the Luhya, one who is uncircumcised is called a Luo. One of the Luhya circumcision songs challenges the initiates: *Niwaria khushebwa/omubano shotsiEbunyolo* (If you are terrified by circumcision/ can't stand the knife, why don't you go to Luoland?). Hence, the ambiguous perception of the border people because, till recently, they eschewed circumcision like the Luos, making them unrecognizable as Luhya/Nyole.

imperialism. Hence, the slip into Luo during the altercation highlights the extent of the impact of the colonial legacy on inter-ethnic relations. The phenomenon reflects lessons learnt from European colonial officials' self-designation as "agents of a superior civilization with a right to rule over people of inferior culture" (Berman 1998: 329). The Luo attitude towards the Abalukhoba and other border communities and the perceived 'superiority' of Luo language has roots in the desire to replicate and re-deploy the colonial "bureaucratic authoritarianism, patron-client relations and a complex ethnic dialectic of assimilation, fragmentation and competition" (ibid) to construct and validate an inter-ethnic hierarchical order. The Abalukhoba language use therefore gestures to their notion of the advantage the order grants the Luo. The image of the Luo closeness to the British colonial officers as junior civil servants, and the accruing prestige from this association helped enhance the Luo status. However, the state of affairs also points to the contribution of the colonial legacy to the transformation of the inter-ethnic attitudes and interaction

Therefore, as the metaphor of hegemony, the language gestures to the Abalukhoba outsiderness in relation to the powers it symbolizes. However, that the Abalukhoba should use it in intra-clan power contest suggests that the Luo language is deployed precisely because it resounds with the authority of the ultimate (British colonial) hegemony, the singlemost threat to their peoplehood. In this case, the hegemony of the language combines well with the hegemony of age to signify ultimate and unassailable authority of whoever deploys the two, and to justify his claim to the right to speak during an argument. However, it is apparent that, on the one hand, the use signifies to the Luo owners (and ultimately to the British whose shadow the Luo are in this context) the cracking of the code and the demystification/domestication of the Luo language and authority through the capacity to manipulate its authority by speaking it. But in making itself amenable to such manipulation,

the language is disemboweled of its negation of the Abalukhoba identity. On the other hand, the shift into *dholuo* during intra-clan discord suggests that though the language is divested of actual Luo authority, it retains its shadow, its mask. In that form the shell is obliged to carry the authority of the Abalukhoba user to signify his new authority and unassailable social location in relation to his own Abalukhoba detractors.

Thus, the hegemonic authority of *dholuo* is displaced through (the language) being manipulated and made to bear the meanings of those it marginalized during the colonial period. For the new user, play on language is a strategy to signify his derivative authority through parodying the authority (Gates 1988: xxvii; Bracket 1992: 311) of hegemony by disemboweling and reauthorizing the language. This situation resonates with what Bhabha (1994: 2) describes as cultural engagement produced performatively. Hence, the attitude towards the other should not be taken at surface value because its objective is to produce "social articulation of difference from the minority perspective…to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation" (ibid). This episode instantiates a phenomenon I call resistance by affirmation whereby they exhibit a postcolonial characteristic of polyphonic rebuffing of Luo and Nyole identities using Luo and Nyole languages and cultures (Ashcroft 1989). However, the deliberate use of *dholuo* by the Abalukhoba also instantiates language use as a strategy of empowerment (Bhabha 1994: 2). Language use serves, paradoxically, as a strategy to psychologically unburden the self from the patron-client relationship, the threat of assimilation, and fragmentation (Berman 1998: 305), which the Luo hegemony implies; language use is also deployed to signif the restoration of the self into discourse.

From the foregoing, it is apparent that the performance of identity at the border between the Abanyole and the Luo is greatly determined by events (however metamorphosed) which started unfolding at the time of the settlement of the Great Lakes Region of East Africa where different communities, responding to the needs of the time, merged to form ethnic nations complete with myths of origin which they institutionalized and projected back into the past. On the one hand, consciousness of their different origins and rivalry over resources such as land has always provided impetus to spawn such narratives as *Abene Liloba/Abamenyibwa* which justify the marginalization or exclusion of some clans. But the threat of exclusion has been met with counter narratives which highlight the disparate origins of the Nyole clans in order to interrogate the legitimacy of the 'artificial' social formation that excludes clans such as the Abalukhoba.

On the other hand, the history of the encounter between the Abanyole and the Luo neighbors has left in its wake a settlement pattern where the inte-rethnic border meanders seamlessly into both territorial spaces, undermining notions of ethnic disparity and making the boundary "melt slowly away into undefined frontier" (Medard 2009: 278). It is this phenomenon that Cohen and Odhiambo (1987: 270) have in mind when they speak about the "power of everyday life in the constitution of [the Luo-Nyole/Luhya] ethnic boundaries". But in the postcolonial context where linear and fixed boundaries have become the rule, boundaries have taken a new meaning by truncating clans/communities and enclosing them on the other side of the border, thus destabilizing and complicating the imagination of the self and the other. Hence, even when the Abalukhoba contest Nyoleness, the threat of total dismemberment and relocation in Luo Nyanza has produced an ambiguous reaction to Nyoleness whereby they also affirm it. But the fact that the boundary has already carved off sites and peoples that the clan and other Abanyole identify with makes the clan

psychologically desire borderlessness akin to the pre-colonial seamlessness of the Luo-Nyole border whereby it can continue to enjoy unhindered access to the spaces and kin now enclosed by the border in the space of the other.

Therefore, one way of reading the inclination to highlight clan ethos and perform difference and disconnection from the wider Nyole community is to see it as a strategy to contest exclusion from access to such opportunity and power as are possible within the Nyole nation. But also, performance of clan identity resists physical and inflexible British imperial territorialization of the region which entrenched and accentuated social difference between the Abanyole and the Luo because it ignored the history of engagement between the two communities, and thus distorted the ambiguous self-imagination of the communities as well as their knowledges of the region. Therefore, the culture that is produced at Maseno border out of perpetual engagement between the two communities suggests the desire to blunt the sharp edges of the two nations that exclude the people of the border. This is done by cannibalizing the cultural extremes and forming an in-between culture which offers psychological assurance of freedom to journey into both sides of the border for spiritual reconnection with sites and spaces which anchor their identity. It also helps them to escape the constrictive hold of either of the national ethoses.

# Chapter Seven

## Conclusion: Narrating *Akakhale* as a window to the contemporary Nyole social configuration

The Abaluhya people of western Kenya have been represented in the Kenyan public space as instantiating the most factitious and internally contradictory ethnic nation because of their perceived incapacity to envisage and sustain a vision of collective being. It is suggested that the consequence of this supposed inadequacy is the tendency to self-interrogate even the quintessence of Luhyaness itself. In effect, their modus operandi is seen to signify the pinnacle of social dissonance and self-contradiction. The extremes of the fracture generate abrasive intra-community sentiments which abnegate the sense of community that authenticates the basis of the Luhya ethnic nation.

In the light of these sentiments, it is compelling to observe that the manifestations of the intra-Nyole 'sub-nation' fissures, distinguished by clan/'sub-nation' duality as discussed in the foregoing chapters, are microcosmic to the extent that they figure the ontology of the larger Luhya ethnic nation. The cleft between allegiance to the nation and the desire for clan self-determination gestures to the instability of ethnic identity and the uncertainties engendered by the mode of the constitution of Nyole identity which this study has foregrounded and placed under scrutiny. But how much of the phenomenon may be attributed to the trauma of the consciousness of the ambiguousness of belonging and outsiderness all at once as demonstrated in this study, which yields a sort of double vision with regard to the location of the self within the ethos of community? This chapter discusses the significance of the issues surfaced by the multiple expressions of Nyole identities as laid down in the preceding chapters and the implications of that for understanding Nyoleness.

One of the issues is how the integrity of the Nyole 'sub-nation' is seemingly retained despite the apparent internal chasms which this study has uncovered. The functioning of Nyole nationness whereby it is neither unproblematically accepted nor wholly renounced as argued in the preceding chapters seems to figure the way in which the issue may be approached. One of the concerns of this study has been to investigate ways in which narrative and the process of its rendering seem to lend themselves to the incongruous tasks of both exposing and bridging the chasms. This understanding connotes that narrating *akakhale* (the past) can be a process of both legitimating and interrogating the status quo. In the Nyole case, the contests are around the anxieties that the Nyole social hierarchy engenders both for those it delegitimates and those it legitimates. The study has shown that the existence of the hierarchy as such is in itself reason enough to sustain the desire to narrate the past. The assertion that "hegemony has never been strong or thorough enough to eliminate active… counter claims" (Lemert 2003: 106) provides a rationale for that position. This is because hierarchy invites ways of undermining its teleology. The contests and the legitimation/delegitimation desires they engender on either side of the Nyole binary may be read as a performative practice which instantiates the notion of narration as a dynamic cultural editing process (Barber 2006: 19), history as dialogic and decentered, and ethnic identity as invented (Berman 1998: 326).

The operations of the intra-Nyole relationships deflect attention to the issue of the location of the ethnic nation. The manner in which the narratives of the Nyole 'sub-nation' ambiguously verify and put in abeyance the authenticity of sections of its citizens raises the issue of the integrity of the concept of the Nyole 'sub-nation' and how that might be implicated in the instability of its narratives and history. The fluidity of the concept as demonstrated in Chapters Two and Six affirms the Nyole ethnic nation as attaining its materiality through

narrative and discourse rather than as a tangible phenomenon defined by the physical boundaries which delineate the geographical space and validate what they signify. In that sense, the Nyole case affirms the national space as the metaphor of diversity which casts doubt upon what it signifies rather than as the embodiment of stability. Thus, the manifestations of Nyoleness conform to the observation by theorists of the nation such as Bhabha (1990, 1994) about the convoluted disposition of the nation.

The inadequacy of the boundary as a physical signifier of national continuity affirms Nyoleness as a psychic and cognitive concept (Hall 1989: 20). As Bhabha (1990, 1994), Anderson (1983), Hosbawm and Ranger (1983), and other theorists of the nation suggest, the nation is ideally experienced as rhetoric. In that case the physical boundaries of the nation enclose as much diversity and Otherness as its outside which the national ethos usually prefers to represent as the epitome of Otherness. Therefore, outsiderness and insiderness overlap imperceptibly to the point of erasing the notion of origin (Deleuze 1990; Hall 1989) and replacing it with the notion of the rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari 1986; Ashcroft 2007) which exposes and counteracts the illusion of the possibility of ever arriving at the origin. The concept of the nation and identity as entities without origin (Hall 1989) generally yields to the notion cosmopolitanism (Menon 2009; Appiah 2006) as a way to read the constitution of Nyoleness. This understanding is crucial especially in a context where the incapacity of the Nyole space to accommodate the needs of all it encloses leaves room for the possibilities presented by the outside of the nation. Paradoxically, the possibility of imagination of belonging beyond the frame of restrictive boundaries of the nation seems to offer new prospects for the survival of a reconfigured Nyole identity rather than its demise. That position is underscored in Chapter Six.

At the same time the ease with which Nyole identity is claimed and repudiated simultaneously by the *Abamenyibwa* cohort of clans as is apparent in Chapters Five and Six highlights internal struggles with the system of meanings and connotations that Nyole identity has accumulated over time. It underscores the process of asserting Nyole identity as mentally burdened and tension filled rather than a straight forward project. Two things are apparent. First, the phenomenon affirms the "instability of the logic of the discourse of identity" and its incapacity to produce a 'true self' which identity discourses promise (Hall 1989). Therefore, community histories which both justify and derive their justification from such discourses are best understood within the framework of telling history as political and as continuous dialogue; as a mode of authenticating and locating the self in the present through retracing one's path. That is what this study has emphasized.

Secondly, claiming and repudiating Nyole identity points to the systems of meaning and connotations that Nyoleness has acquired. It underscores the process of assertion of identity as a linguistic phenomenon. In that sense, claiming Nyole identity is also a process of fighting against other meanings of Nyoleness which are inimical to the claimant's cohort. The claim/repudiation surfaces the metaphorical structure of the politics of Nyole identity and it reveals the struggle to dislocate the constrictive and exclusive meanings of Nyoleness "in order to make [Nyoleness] mean something new" (Hall 1989) and more agreeable. So, as Hall (1989: 20) suggests, this is a language issue in the Saussurean sense. Hence, in the process of trying to authenticate one's experience by locating the 'true self' within the discourses of community which are underpinned by history, "one suddenly understands that one is always inside a system of language that … speaks us" (ibid).

The issue then is what is Nyoleness, how is it constituted and how should it be discerned in a context where its manifestations are multiple and contradictory, and negate the veneer of Nyole public self-representation as monolithic? The issue underscores the significance of the forms and modes of expression of Nyoleness, especially how their nature makes them amenable to deployment in a context where the question of who can legitimately claim the niche of authenticity is vexed and in flux. The significance of the study is in demonstrating that diversity and incommensurability are at the core of the imagination of the Nyoleness even as the narrators strive to represent it in monolithic terms.

The study has explored the conditions of possibility of the dialogic or multi-voiced conception of Nyoleness in a context where it is often superficially represented in public as an unproblematic neat pattern of genealogical interconnectedness. But the question arises as to why there is a doubleness/non-singularity/poly-vocality in the voicing of Nyoleness. Specifically, why, on the one hand, is the erasure of difference during performance of Nyoleness to a non-Nyole audience seen as patriotic duty? And why is the same Nyoleness discursively displaced in the context of non-Nyole attendance, on the other hand? The net effect is that the two positions seem to highlight the seamlessness of Nyoleness. Nyoleness is a concept that has not become; that is incomplete but in a state of continuously coming to be. So to understand the mode of expression of Nyole identity at any one time entails exploring what is at stake. This underscores the circumstantial nature of the expression of Nyoleness.

This study suggests that one way of looking at the issue is to understand how the nature of narrative augments the mobility in Nyole identity. This is especially in the light of the assertion that “narrative is an ontological condition of life” and “stories guide action” (Somers and Gibson 2003) and accommodate a people’s notions of who they are. Yet the

narratives on which people base their "projections, expectations and memories are derived from a multiplicity but limited repertoire of available social, public, and cultural narratives" (ibid). This position holds a mirror to the uncertainty and the multiplicity that underpins Nyole identity. First, the creative disposition of narrative and the desire of the narrator to arrive at predetermined ideal perceptions of the community on the basis of the "limited repertoire" of the community past are certainly at play here. Secondly, the importance of memory for narrative has been emphasized. Yet Deleuze (1990) casts doubt on the integrity of memory when he says the past exists in memory as a "collection of past instants or percepts… not organized in any particular way [but] as dissociated singularities". Therefore, the organizing principle of memory and its ephemeral nature combined with the nature of narrative and the diverse and shifting purposes narrative is expected to serve might suggest where to search for the meaning of the unproblematic shifts which underpin the expression of Nyoleness as demonstrated above.

Consequently, in this study, the multiple and ambiguous ways of being Nyole are seen as attributes of attempts to recontextualize the past in response to contextual factors and to harness the nature of narrative (which mediates the past) to validate a position. But the multiplicity and ambiguity unveil the interstices within the structure of the Nyole 'sub-nation' which the claims of genealogical continuity have not successfully masked. Paradoxically, it would appear such liminal spaces act as social safety valves of recourse; as alternative sites from which those excluded by the prescribed ways of being Nyole can assert their membership of the 'sub-nation' in ways that to all intents and purposes interrogate their exclusion. The assertion that the constitution of the alternative center around Malondole (Esibila) Hills in the west moderates the teleological conception of the east of Ebunyole rather than completely jettison Nyoleness (Olumwullah 2002) echoes this conclusion.

The multi-voicedness of the discourses shifts the focus from the possibility of discovering the essence of Nyoleness through somehow managing to isolate unassailable and objective facts about who Omunyole is/is not to the processes of the discourses themselves. This assertion is reiterated by what White (1978) insinuates in the question: What were they [narrators] saying when they were saying? White connotes the need to take into consideration the duality of any historical utterance by shifting emphasis from its representation as historical evidence to elucidating the mode of its constitution. On this basis, the study has highlighted Nyole identity as a sociolinguistic phenomenon whose significance is in the discourse and play on meaning, which challenges the monologic desire of the Nyole master narratives. Crucially, the multiplicity, double-voicedness or ambiguity, ambivalence and double consciousness in the manifestation of Nyoleness underscores the unstaticness of Nyole identity which allows for the co-existence of difference and similitude (Irvine 2006; Taylor 1992) to reflect what Bakhtin (1986) calls sociolinguistic speech diversity as shown in the preceding chapters

This study has investigated how the Nyole narrate *akakhale*/*akabira* (affairs of long ago/what is past/gone) or *akaabakuka* (affairs of the ancestors) as the site of these contests over the notion of legitimate Nyoleness. Accordingly, the study has ventured into locating the motivation for multiple and contradictory manifestations of Nyoleness. The study has also explored how the nature of narrative is brought to bear on the Nyole conception of *akakhale*. In this respect, the study has taken cognizance of the claim that the fictional and factual narrators use the same techniques and strategies of composition and any difference that may exist is at the dictional level of their sub-texts (White 1978: 121, 1985; La Capra 1998). The study has therefore called attention to the importance of the present of narration (as emphasized by Cohen and Odhiambo 1987) to which the narrativized Nyole past must speak

to be relevant. That is implicated in the assertion that "people make sense of what has happened and is happening to them by attempting to assemble or… to integrate these happenings within one or more narratives" (Somers and Gibson 2003). Therefore I see the affinities produced with various past events as the embodiment of the desired contemporary self-perception of those who foreground the events, in resonance with the argument of Barber (1991) about the capability of texts to signify a people's own self-perception.

So far, the foregoing seems to be based on the premise that the contestation of Nyoleness is only evident in the interaction between the *Abene Liloba* and *Abamenyibwa* cohorts of clans. Whereas that may be the most tangible dividing line between the Nyole clans, what do the contests between Mbalukha and Ndele (Chapters Three and Four) who share clan and lineage say about Nyole identities specifically, and ethnic identities and their general manifestations?

Interrogation and endorsement of conceptions of age, gender and generational relations in Ebunyole appear very significant in the contests in Chapters Three and Four. The contests point to the consequences of the colonial legacy which disrupted the old social order and rendered the traditional Nyole social relations extraneous. The contests underscore the view that the relations between the generations and genders, the changing economic value of land and the new sources wealth (money and paid labor) in post-colonial Ebunyole have undermined the Nyole traditional patron-client relations and introduced or reinforced emerging social cleavages (Berman 1998: 325). What these changes do is to undermine, further weaken, and validate the redundance of the traditional Nyole social structure.

One thing these contests do is to deconstruct the neat lines that purportedly separate insiders and outsiders through Mbalukha's recourse to all means including appropriating both the role

of the ethnographer and the authority of social institutions to consistently metaphorically represent Ndele as the outsider. To the extent that the palpable effect of the argument is a semiotic deconstruction to defamiliarize what is ordinarily understood as fact for the sake of gaining the upper hand in the contest of the moment, the other functions the endeavor might be summoned to serve are left to the imagination. For this reason, the study highlights three things. First, it underscores the uncertainty of the exact location of the outsider/insider divergence and reiterates the importance of apparently extraneous matters such as the significance of winning an argument for its own sake, the desire to win the ethnographer's endorsement, and the issues of the moment such as scarcity of land as the incentive to narrate the past. Therefore, it is notable that Mbalukha mentions in passing that those like Ndele who benefitted from his patriotic endurance of pain to reclaim lost territory would never welcome him to a portion of the land he helped recover. The significance of land scarcity in determining ways of designating insiderness/outsiderness, ways of knowing community, and as the major motivator of narrative is instantiated here. What this scenario unveils is that knowing and asserting belonging to clan, and not just the 'sub-nation', is discursive and contextual rather than a genealogical given. This is crucial in a context where clan integrity is the last line of defense to legitimate the claims of belonging which this work has put under scrutiny.

Secondly, this work has demonstrated how the opportunity to narrate is abrogated to what Ibrahim (2001) has called the unfinished business of daily life of the community. Thus, the politics of daily social engagement are superimposed on the initial objective of the narration of history as is apparent in Chapters Three and Four. For instance, I have shown that the occasion offers the prospect of sanitizing and repackaging the narrator's own past to surface two notions of the past imperceptibly merged so that the real significance of the occasion is in

the opportunity it offers for re-engagement on the issues of the daily life of the community. That seems to explain why the issue of genre and time are taken for granted (to appropriate Ricoeur's words), and genre mixing and cross genre flows constitute the process of the narration of the past. On the basis of the foregoing, it is possible to conclude that narrating the past has a cathartic effect and helps the Nyole deal with the intractable in so far as it provides acceptable discursive solutions for the current inscrutable state of deficiency and uncertainty that underpins the prospects of living in Ebunyole.

This study has emphasized the significance of each action, or even the lack of it, as fundamental to meaning in a performative context such as has been its focus. But what is to be made of the tendency by narrators to bring on board all manner of props to lend authority to their postcolonial imagination of community and the past? In this regard, I have in mind for instance the paradox of rendering Nyole oral history in writing such as is demonstrated in Chapter 5. But such occurrences feature so persistently, for instance with Mbalukha (Chapter Three and Four), Okweingoti and Muchel'le (Chapter Two), Samson Ansatsi (interviewed 29 January 2007), and many others. They cannot therefore be ignored. What they gesture to is the need to demonstrate consciousness of the postcolonial context of which the ethnographer is the metaphor by rendering the Nyole past in a manner that resonates with the contemporary.

These episodes gesture to the significance of the positioning of ethnographer in research. By abrogating the props that in this context figure the world of the ethnographer, the performer may be signifying belonging in the ethnographer's world by implicitly saying, "Look, I am like you". This bid to identify with literate technologies is significant especially in a context where the world which writing and documents figures was put off limits by the Church of

God doctrine, and for a long time signified the unattainable and the otherness; the outsiderness of the Abanyole. In this sense, narrating the past in the presence of the ethnographer who figures the world of the forbidden technologies has a sentimental value in so far as it also presents the opportunity to showcase the emergent ways of surmounting the obstacles which could potentially encumber one's capacity as a post-colonial Nyole community historian. So, the process of narration is characterized by certain semiotic expressions which on the surface seem of little significance yet they call for reading for the full meaning of the narrative to be accessed. Significantly, by meticulously focusing on the ethnographer, this study has demonstrated consciousness of the implications of my insiderness in the community under study. Thus, the study has extended the literature by drawing attention to an area that has not typified the objectives of similar studies. Hence, this study has explored the methodological implications of the obscure and explicit imprints of the ethnographer a propos the procedures of the imagination and interpretation of the ethnographer's purposes and the conditions of their relevance to the texts collected.

The Struggle to introduce certain bends in the story of community underscores the seriousness of the struggle over access to resources. Whereas this has been an ongoing debate the study has demonstrated that access to literate technologies has made possible for the Nyole practitioners to re-examine the community archive and interrogate the meaning of Nyole cultures and traditions, and social identities as well as the pre-colonial Nyole moral economy which validates the social order. But by granting the practitioners the capacity to refigure the community archive away from live audiences, literate technologies have enabled them to fashion an alternative community and national archive which is more receptive to their ways of imagining a more just and inclusive community.

The gestures point to the significance of the spectacular in the endeavor to retain the attention of the audience. This is particularly so in a context of the instability of the narrative of the past. That suggests that meaning and truth is not intrinsic to what is said but resides in popular approval from the audience. That means that even in circumstances where there is one narrator of the Nyole past, consciousness of the possibility of other competing narratives demands of her/him to stop at nothing in her/his bid to convince. Therefore in the first place, in the immediate Nyole case the insidiousness of the social structure may demand new ways of imagining authenticity, which the deployment of literate documents may grant. In the second, a text attains significance in relation to others "already in place and which create the possibility of the new work" (Culler 1998: 20). Crucially, the importance of intertextuality in the rendering of Nyole past is implied here by the assertion that "narrativity and relationality are conditions of social being, social consciousness, and social action" (Somers and Gibson 2003: 65).

That connotes that the Nyole narrator has sometimes to resort to trickster antics (Irvine 2006: 164; Pelton 1980; Gates 1988; Finnegan 2007) by reconstituting what is already known (Pelton 1980) and its mode of rendering to convince her/his audience and carry the day. In the case of the two narrators in Chapter Five, the trickster antics are in the abrogation of technology to "recreation and retelling of traditional stories in new contexts" (Irvine ibid). That reasserts performing the past as a creative process open to judgment by the audience (Ibrahim 2001); not in respect to what is said but how it is said. The abrogation of the occasion to infringe on and reconstitute genre boundaries by, for instance, narrating personal history as community history as Mbalukha does may be understood in the same light in resonance with the assertion that tricksters "transform, shape culture…, tie cosmic processes

to personal history, change boundaries into horizons, and reveal the passages of the sacred embedded in daily life" (Pelton 1980: 3).

By interrogating the Nyole narratives of the past, this thesis provides an alternative way of looking at Nyole and Luhya ethnic claims through focusing on how the past is narrated. Through investigating the intra-'sub-nation', inter-'sub-nation', and the inter-ethnic relationships, the study has deconstructed, on the one hand, the Nyole and, on the other, the general conventional understanding of the function of boundaries by demonstrating how boundaries are erected and deleted in response to immediate issues of the day-to-day life. Although boundaries may be represented as permanent and naturally given, in reality they are imagined in more fluid ways and sustained by the fluidity of the narrative process which makes double-voicedness and double consciousness that underpin the conception of boundaries and diverse ways of belonging possible.

As Berman has observed, the study of ethnicity in Africa has usually revolved around the external dimensions (tribalism) at the expense of the internal processes. In the process, the studies have created the impression that ethnic identity is synonymous with post-colonial struggle over resources and patronage. By focusing on the moral economy, this study has shifted attention to internal processes of ethnicity to highlight the intra-community dimensions of "the search for a moral community of rights and obligations" (Berman 1998: 324) and highlighted this as an area that needs new attention. Whereas expression of postcolonial ethnic identity can not be devoid of the influence of colonialism, the study has called attention to the manner in which manifestations of ethnicity both echoes and departs from pre-colonial mode of representation of ethnic identity. This study has shown that contradiction, multiplicity, ambiguity, and double-voicedness is the trademark of expressions

of ethnicity but the fact that ethnic identity guarantees the fall-back position for a sense of "belonging and continuity with the past in a world of increasing flux and conflict" (325) suggests that moral ethnicity is a social phenomenon that warrants further study.

The study has also explored other ways in which biographies could be understood other than as genres of history, which is the prevalent way in which the biographical genres are approached. By highlighting the manner in which the narrator's life story is infused into the story of the community, the study has emphasized the impossibility of generic purity by highlighting the manner in which the narrator dialogizes the notion of generic purity by infusing the personal or "the logic of the true self" (Hall 1989: 20) into the community story. Hence, I emphasize the fact that if the narrative of the community past delineates the identity of the community, the narrator inflects and diverts the event to speak the ideal self to the world.

What does all the foregoing say about Nyole identity, on the one hand, and ethnic identity in Africa generally, on the other? Specifically, if Abanyole have lived together and in moments when nothing is at stake, they have interacted smoothly, in what ways can the outsiders or *Abamenyibwa* not be Nyole and in what ways can the insiders or *Abene Liloba* not be outsiders? The issue underscores the downside of the illusive and essentialist philosophy that informs the constitution of the *Abene Liloba* as the final and sufficient identifying "We" group (Lemert 2003: 104) to the extent that it connotes that "true knowledge and… freedom require allegiance to the universal essences [of the "We" group]" (Taylor 1992). But if this conception is what generates the double-voicedness and double consciousness in Nyole narratives as has been demonstrated here, then the issues might be to explicate how these two may be said to be a response to the exclusive binary.

What the Nyole case demonstrates is that manifestations of Nyole identities affirm the notion that plurality is at the core of both the human condition (Arendt 1958) and the constitution of nations because of the paradox of nations being built on diverse and limitless ideologies and relationships (Irvine 2006: 164). Fanon (1963) partly had this in mind when he cautioned about the limitations of national culture and national consciousness because what is unveiled as the national culture is merely the essentialist dominant/domineering culture which can only superimpose itself rather than delete alternatives that interrogate it. Therefore, the "national culture is unlikely to erase differential identifications" because as demonstrated, similitude is marked by difference just as distinction is punctuated by common recognition (Taylor 1992). Consequently, as the common denominator in Nyole origin narratives the importance of double-voicedness and double consciousness is first in presenting Nyole identities not dialectically but dialogically which allows for the significance of both similitude and difference (Irvine 2006: 164). This connotes that first, Nyoleness is a phenomenon that is constantly in negotiation and in a state of becoming. Second and consequently, the various stories of Nyole identities are equally valid and therefore disrupt the modes of conception of alterity or difference that validate the binary.

In this sense, the stories of Nyoleness are situated in an ambivalent locus; a space in which apparently antagonistic modes of representation can co-exist: "one that recognizes sameness between the self and the other; the other that suggests a certain non-transparency, an opaqueness between the self and the other that cannot ultimately be bridged" in so far as each human being is distinct from the other (Irvine 2006: 164; Taylor 1992). Thus double consciousness and double-voicedness gesture to the necessity of difference and caution against fundamentalist conceptions of the inside and the outside. This affirms the conclusion

that, in conditions where blood is already mixed the purity desired by the Nyole dichotomy is a mirage. Under such circumstances Nyoleness/ethnicity cannot be a feature of origin/genealogy but that of the rhizome where distinction always exists albeit muted.

The work has also challenged the disciplinary and geographical understanding of history and ethnicity to highlight the operations of language and language use in the conception of peoplehood. In this sense, the work has interrogated conclusions of other scholars on Luhya identity such as Malusu and Aswani (highlighted in Chapter Six) and Were where they have emphasized certain essentialist aspects of various Luhya cultures and discerned discontinuity/continuity in the manifestations of Luhyaness. The work has suggested alternative ways of arriving at Luhyaness/Nyoleness which requires a deeper investigation of what it means to claim these identities on a day-to-day basis through looking at the language use. It is suggested that a deeper investigation of how the Nyole clans have interacted and how that informs the attitudes towards each other may yield a result that may supplement this study.

The work has primarily focused on how Abanyole narrate and explain certain incommensurables in their peoplehood through scrutinizing the narratives of origin. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the process of narrating who they are is also a process of narrating who they are not. It is as much a process of highlighting and sustaining the the intra-Nyole clan distinction as it is a mode of differentiating themselves from other Luhya 'sub-nations', and from other ethnicities such as the Luo. It would be interesting though to investigate what the other ethnicities that Abanyole distantantiate themselves from say about Abanyole. Such a study might also try to investigate how the other communities such as the Maragooli narrate events such as the war between the Abanyole and the Maragooli in which

the fierce Maragooli war leader Imbwana was killed (Chapter Four). That however is beyond the scope of the current study. A similar study might also investigate what the Nyole who are said to have been carved off into Luoland by the post-colonial Nyole/Luo boundary say about their suppressed and overlaid Nyole identity. In view of the fact that their Abanyole kin in Ebunyole bewail this truncation, would they desire any form of reunion with their one time Abanyole kin? This becomes a pertinent issue now more than ever because of the ongoing re-constitution of boundaries in Kenya which has rekindled the nostalgia for reunion among similarly separated peoples. At the same time, given the downturn in the fortunes of Abanyole because of the population explosion and diminishing means of livelihood, would the "lost" Abanyole still identify with their Abanyole kin who claim them? And what would be the implications for the conceptualization of ethnicity if they do? Simultaneously, it would be interesting to establish what aspects of the memory of their past Nyole identity the "lost" Nyole have preserved and would be ready to narrativize if at all. Such investigations would complement the current study to the extent that they would use similar methodology in rendering the discourses of how Nyoleness is perceived from without.

# Appendices

## Interview Excerpts

### Excerpt 1: Interview with William Ot'tiali Ombima and Mbalukha Makali
### Date: 18/12/06. Place: The home of Ot'tiali Ombima

……
Kweya (K): … Where did Abanyole come from; who was the first Omunyole; what brought him/ them here; how did they move from their origin …; which route did they use up to where they are now; how did Abanyole sub-clans start.... This is what I would like to know, but I will ask the questions systematically... as we go on.
Ot'tiali (O): As for me, you heard me tell you I grew up – since my childhood, 1906 to date, how old am I?
K: As you said – one hundred.
Ot'tiali: What I know I will say. You heard me say from one up to ten. Once we reach ten, once we finish all that we will start another story. When we get to ten, we again will ask for more to talk about. (Chuckles) I will take time! (Chuckles).
I was born in1906. From 1906 I came to 1908, then I started to know a e i. Then we had a teacher here called Enos Akhwaba.
…. [S]hould I start with birth lineage, or should I talk about when *abalafu* (whites) came, or when there were rains, who were the rulers? Were there rulers or were there no rulers? Then we get that were rulers through God. Starting with Ebunyole, the name Ebunyole is a good point to begin from for now.
The person known as Omunyole, where did he come from; and which route did he use to come to Ebunyole. Then let us say Anyole came and built at a place known as Ekima. But how did Anyole live at this place? This Anyole had a woman. They had a child called… Amuli is the first born. Amuli was born first. The next was a man called Amukhoye, who is Omusilatsi. He then had a third son. His name is Amutete
Amuli went and took land at the border with the Luo. And this Asilatsi followed his brother; he was told: take that side. Wherever you want to place the boundary…it's up to you.
Then he had a third son. They call him Matakho but this name Matakho is a mistake. His name is Chitwa. Chi – twa. That is the third son.
K: Allow me to ask: This Chitwa, is he Amukhoye?
O: No! Amukhoye is us. Amukhoye is Kaita. Abasilatsi. Amuli's brother. Amuli first, Amukhoye second, Chitwa third. He remained at the cradle at Wekhomo.
The one who went to take land next to the Luo… I don't know his sons. So let me come to Amukhoye, my line. Amukhoye had a son Nakuti, and another son Asilatsi. I belong to the fifth generation. Now as for Abasiekwe I don't know. Idakho I don't know. Ebulogooli I don't know. Because each group had a particular elder charged with the responsibility of keeping the lineages. What I know well is about the Anyole lineage, the lineage I have followed closely in my 100 years. If I talk about Machika… this place where you stay, where Kweya has built, would you know what it is called?
K: I just know we usually say, "I am going to Machika's well."
O: That well. There was a man, a Mulogooli man, a dangerous man, a murderer. A woman was going to that well. Suddenly she saw a man sneak behind a tree trying to trap her. But the woman had seen him. Then she got mixed up. Should she go forward or go back? Then she detoured. She said (whispering): Hey! There is a strange man moving stealthily among the

shrubbery. What is he doing there? Then he told a number of people. Machika was a dangerous man, a courageous man. Can you imagine that man, when the Abalogooli came through Kima and pushed all Abalonga; Abalogooli chased us up to Ebusikhale. That is where our people of Ebulonga had been pushed to!
So no one can beat Abasilatsi in numbers: Om'mutete can not beat us. We are the majority. Imagine Am'mukunzi are part of us, Abakhaya too. So whatever threatens Abasilatsi threatens Abakhaya; whatever threatens Omusilatsi threatens Om'mukunzi.
As for Amutete, you know he used to be arrogant because his is the cradle[77]; that is where we began. What I can tell you is Abasikhale I don't know, Abasiekwe I don't know, Abasakami, I don't know.
Mbalukha (M): A (Speaking for the first time) Abasikhale, I know. They are came from Ebulokooli.
O: (Ignoring him) What I know, the Luo followed the lake. They came from Nubia. But the Kikuyu I don't know. Abetakho I don't know. They have their elders who explained to them. In the past such explanation used to take place at *esitioli* (the evening bonfire).
When the young sit among the elders don't spite such a child. He has quick brains. He is told: "Bring food from the house of so and so." He brings it and then shares with the elders. Such a child is curious and seeks for clarification for what he doesn't understand. But the son who avoids the bonfire is a never-do-good. Understand me?
So Our Abanyole sub-clans are Abamutete, Abasilatsi, Abamuli..
M: (Emphasizing, gesticulating) Three!
O: So, Abatongoi, which lineage do they come through? They are called Abatombolio, who are the Abatombolio people, which way did they come? Abasakami are called Kasagam. I have toured their land thoroughly. You know I used to fish in the lake. I discovered the majority of Omusakami is in Kano, all the way from Kisumu up to Koru are abasakami. Then I came to find Abasiloli are there too. When you are told "*Kamagambo nolumile"*; the Kamagambo – you (pointing at me) can't marry from them!
M: They are Abasilatsi[78]!
O: (Sings) *Kamagambo nolumile*. They are like *olumile*. (Emphasizing my age) you never saw *olumile* (quelea birds). They used to live in eleusine farms.
M: Then they would fly in a single file.
……
O: When you hear the song: *Kamagambo nolumile*…
M: Those are Abasilatsi!
O: … Kamagambo starts from Kisumu, borders Abasakami all the way up to Kisii – those Kamagambo, those Abasilatsi.
Now these fellows who call themselves Luo: these are Abanyole sub-clans! They are Abanyole who used to leave here to embark on a journey.
When we were told to face the East, did we not go to the East?
…….
So, these Abalonga who are known as Atonji, they were the first to take up land in Ebulonga Etwenya [South Bunyore].
M: These ones who have settled across here [Esiamayayi] are some of them.

[77] Emmutete is seen as the cradle in two ways: as the point of entry of Anyole (Wekhomo) which home Ommutete (as the last born son) inherited; as well as the point of entry and the home of *obulafu* (light) through Church of God at Kima. That this church is the axis of Abanyole life can not be overemphasized, hence the self-representation of Am'mutete as *abalafu/Abasungu* (whites). The perceived arrogance of Am'mutete derives from both facts.
[78] Ot'tiali, Mbalukha, and I share the clan. We all are Abasilatsi albeit from different sub-clans. Apparently Mbalukha and I share the same sub-clan – Abamatakho/Abachitwa or Abamwechenye (after Chitwa's mother).

…….
M: Yes. Their kin are the other side [Etwenya].
……
O: They are Abasilatsi… through the second wife who was found walking along the way beseeching: "If anyone could marry me." These people are Abasilatsi. They are the progeny of Amukhoye. [Atonji] is the fourth son of Amukhoye. Amukhoye *yababalila* (gave them a name, so accepted them as his children). Didn't he do that because they were his children?
……
O: *Okhubalila* is to sacrifice a he goat (for the child naming ceremony). On the day a child was to be given a name …. Didn't we have grass thatched houses? They would take *olubumbu* (the young, supple central banana leaf), spread it below the roof and lay the baby on it. They would then throw water up on the roof. Once the water splashed onto the baby it would shriek, ahaa! Then they would say "So and so has spoken." The child would then take that name, the name of a dead kin….
Now, Anyole is man from Uganda.
M: (Offering a paper) Here. Take this. This is my story. I wrote it down with *echekhe* (war hero).
O: (Ignoring Mbalukha). You heard me talk about Machika? That land on which you (my family) now live… our people killed Omulokooli man there. He was noticed by a woman. He wanted to kill…aaah! Who was this now?
M: An Omusilatsi man? Amwayi?
K: Was the Omulokooli man planning to kill…
O: Machika! He was hunting down Machika. When you hear Musikulu wa Machika (Machika's Hill) that is your home!....
M: This place where Oluko has built his home. That is where our people discussed war strategies before they left for the battle field. That is where Oluya, my forebear used to address all Abasilatsi telling them: Go and fight with courage and dexterity, not half heartedly.
O: I heard you mention sharp weapons. Those days we did not have spears. We used to have *amakhango*. *Esikomoli* tree would be cut and sharpened very meticulously. That was our spear. Or else *olutakha* (a long pole) would be carefully sharpened for that purpose. If he pierced you with it you would not survive. Once he stabbed you, he would give way for his comrade immediately behind him to finish you off completely. When he died it is this comrade who would take a spear and run around the home shouting wildly in mourning saying: When we went to this place (in the battle field with the deceased) we did this; when we went to that place we did that! (Stabbing the ground – an imaginary enemy)
……..
M: [The hill on which Oluko has built his house] That is where the people used to assemble so they could be prepared…
O: You identified at that point the war hero who would to exterminate the enemy. When you go to war, such a man can never return before he kills. At the battlefield such a man does not expose himself; he disguises himself among the shrubbery. As the enemy advances, he lies in ambush to pick out their leader. Once he has located him, he bolts out of the bushes and spears him. This my comrade (Mbalukha) follows me closely. Once I fell the enemy he stabs him some more saying: Don't rise! (The order here is clear. Mbalukha can only do the subordinate duty of finishing off. But the heroic act of courage is associated with the narrator himself).
…….
M: [The present Oluko's home] is where the warriors were addressed before they set for the battlefield!

O: It is called Mwihiakalo – the place where the war arsenal was sharpened and blessed.
M: You know Oluko should not have built there. He was told but he wouldn't listen. He should not have built *musilwan'no* (battleground).
O: The point from which our people set off for the battlefield.
M: All Abasilatsi – that is where they were blessed before they set off.
The Kikuyu…we have it all here (Pointing to the paper he gave me earlier).When the Kikuyu came down from Kigumba (Uganda), where we also came from, they detached at Kisii …. While Mwenje came to build at Kima – which Ot'tiali referred to – the Kikuyu went to Fort Hall, Murang'a but the Kisii remained.
O: (After listening disinterestedly) Zakayo (confusing me for my elder brother), I inquired because I wanted to know... The Luo are our adversary.
M: They are Sudanese people, together with the Nandi. They are not Bantu.
……..
K: Let me ask, did you say all these people came from Kigumba?
M: (Gesticulating emphatically) Yes, we came from the same place and separated at Kisii!
Ababayi, these Ababayi you see; they are Abasiekwe if you didn't know. They (Abasiekwe) just went up there where your (my maternal) uncles are because of land.
O: (Reflectively) These Abasiekwe… You were talking about Ababayi, right? How do they end up in Tiriki? Are they there to take up land or…?
M: Ababayi in Tiriki went there with Abamutete, and Aberanyi, and Abamuli…Our people are there… Abakhobo are there.
K: Why did they leave?
M: They went there to take up land. Can't you see these Abakhobo, your (my) grandfather's uncles? Abakhobo migrated from here to take up land. Or else one would be cast out if he committed an abomination such as *esiluchi* (murder of a kinsman). Such a person would go anywhere even Bungoma….
Now Abatongoi are descendants of Anyole. They came after Abasiekwe – your uncles. They are descendants of Anyole. Even your uncles are descendants of Anyole too. We have it all written there (Pointing to the papers he gave me).
…….
M: … Ababayi are Abasiekwe! They migrated from here (Pointing towards Ebukhobo) and went to take up land where they are now, the same way we left here to take up land in Etwenya.
……..
M: [Etwenya people] came from here! They had taken up land in Epang'a. All Epang'a was Ebusilatsi! Then they thought the space was small.
O: (Dismissive.) They didn't just leave to take up land there; they were expelled from here! They were chased by Abalokooli. Did you not see… But you were still in Em'mutete. It is Okulo who expelled the …eeeh… from the present home of Etubuli Ndengu.
M: Put it this way: Abamutete Abachitwa had their homes way up to the present Javan Namema's home. That is where this Adam who died recently was born.
……..
M: Yes, he was born here! Abalokooli had dislodged them from their land. Abalokooli seized the land of Abamutete.
Kutai (Ku): Just across here, Wemilabi was Ebulokooli.
O: How did they (Abamutete) leave here? There was a man here known as Okulo wa Aswani. He told them: If you claim that this is your land, let me get *injeso* (scythe) from Ebusiekwe so each of us can drive it into the ground. When Abamutete heard about *injeso* they vanished immediately. They said: From today we shall never come up to this place. Let the river be the frontier. So now we have this small river we call Esiolasi. That is where our land and theirs

part. All the way from Esiamahande to Waasimba to Musiolasi descending through Ababiiba, that is our land. The boundary put Ababiiba on our side.
M: This place where Omukuba has put his home that is our land. We used to live there. That is where Nyanje your (my) ancestor lived. Nyanje is your great, great grandfather – the grandfather of (my grandfather) Okoba.
He migrated from that place before these people took up the land. One of our ancestors murdered his brother. Then they were forced adrift because of *esiluchi*.
……..
M: The land that was abandoned was taken up by Ababiiba. It is from the same place that [Abamatakho] headed off to go and rescue Amukhoye's cattle. They halted those people and seized back our cattle.
……..
M: Amukhoye's sons had left to look for women. When they returned they found their mother wailing. They asked her: What is the matter? She said: Your father's belly has been ripped open. His bowels are drooping out. His assailants have driven away all the cattle! Abamatakho had spent the night away with their women. Then they asked her: Was Nakuti here? Was Abetsa here? Why didn't they challenge the enemy?
O: They were told but they said: Let us finish with the farm work first.
M: The cattle have been stolen, yet these two houses insist on planting their farms first! Abamatakho took their shields and trailed those brutes catching up with them at Wamahande… this place where people take beer, now also called Esamwenyi.
……..
M: …. They challenged those people and killed two. The rest fled but with only one cow. The rest were brought back. Amukhoye heard his bull bellowing (*nekumulaa*). Then he asked: Is that Obuyi (the bull)? He was told: Yes. He asked: Who brought it back? He was told: Your son from the younger wife.
O: Chitwa
M: This world has wonders! Anyway, your ancestors used to stay up here. What brought trouble was *esiluchi* (murder of a kinsman). If I were to kill you… you see?
…….
But your original home is up this side, you are the people of Buliba.
……
M: … your lineage had three tough men…. Bulilo the father of Ndanyi….
…….
M: Ndanyi died the other day while this child, this Opati was already in Njoro, in Nakuru where he stays now.
M: …. Those ones… , the likes of Ong'anya…that is your line.
O: They were very ferocious men. Someone like Atemi and …eeh… now, this brother of … they were two young men. There was this one… who was the third. Your line, the progeny of Chitwa had very good battle prowess. All the way up to Ebukhubi and Elukongo.
M: My grandfather Akhwale was daring. Together with Mung'au who killed Imbwana. They were feared…My grandfather (evincing his pride).Very awesome people… They would not leave the battlefield empty handed. They must kill an enemy.
O: (Has been looking aside impatiently) Let me tell you Zakayo. No one would leave for battle with a clear idea about who was going to bring down the enemy. These tough men you are hearing about now, they used to ambush their target. Once he shot out of his hiding and thrust his spear into you that would be the end, understand me? He would ambush. That is why they would call such a man *omusileta*.

There was a man known as Imbwana. He used to sneak and lie under a heap of rubbish cleared from the farm. Once one busied himself with digging and heaping more rubbish in his

wake Imbwana would move stealthily, shift the rubbish quietly and lie beneath the heap together with his shield.
M: He would then cover his whole body with the rubbish, the same way you have covered your lap with papers, watching you all the while.
O: Once you and your wife dropped your guard and concentrated on digging he would bolt out of the rubbish wielding either *imbili* or whatever other weapon he might be carrying in his left hand. Before you knew he would have killed you.
…….
O: (Laughing). He stabs you in no time, and then the wife takes off running wildly.
M: The wife runs back home. Can she dare wait in this kind of danger?
……..
O: Those people were exterminators.
Now the people became wise. Whenever they went to work on the farm, they would push all the rubbish completely out of the way to ensure no one was hiding there.
……
K: …. We are Abasilatsi. We live here; or rather Abalonga live here where we are…. Across the other side are Abakhubi.
O: Abakhubi, Abelukongo….
K: So you find people of a particular sub-clan settled in one place. Then you find a different clan completely settled right in their midst. How did this come about?
…….
O: Amukhoye is our ancestor. He separated from Amutete his brother.
……...
O: I want to tell you… Didn't I tell you now Abamutete remained in the home where (all Mwenje's sons) were born? The eldest son was Amuli. He went and planted Abamuli next to the Luo. Now Asilatsi was shown this place and told; "This is your land. Should you want to go up to Ebwakwe… Wherever you want to reach that is your land….
M: He tracked his land up to Musikholobe.
O: …. Anyway there weren't too many people those days. The men from nearby homes shared a bonfire in one home. If the entrance is closed with poles you can't dare remove them. The bonfire was not lit too close to the fence lest anyone with bad intention stab your back through the fence.
……..
M: They all sat together and food was brought in from all their homes. If a woman brought in hers after they had had enough they would decline and say: "Mama, not any more. We will eat your food tomorrow. They would only leave the bonfire to go to bed. They would never enter their houses early. The reason why we despise the youth… If you tell a young man like yourself about the tradition of Abanyole, he tells you: "Tell someone else that nonsense, those foolish things." But when you come back smart in your tie and make yourself comfortable in the house you don't want to know anything else. Now let me ask: Is there any one around here who might perform cleansing rituals if anyone committed an abominable act? If you have not performed such a ritual you cant dare do it. Your body will simply turn a crimson color then you die immediately. Very perilous!
K: You said Abanyole came from…
M: Kigumba.
K: Why did they leave?
M: They just decided to migrate before they (eventually) entered this land. Mulanda is in Kima. And we are in Amukhoye's hill. We have written down all that. Their father Mwenje… we have written all that in this paper. Abanyole have three main sub-clans. Then Om'mang'ali is next – the son of Anyole. The big clans here: Abasiekwe – descendants of

Anyole. They are numerous too. Don't you notice them? While in the train you pass among them. Who do you think are in Esibembe? Are they not Abasiekwe? Abasiekwe are numerous; Abamutete are numerous. Abasilatsi are numerous too. We have written all that here. If you can check…
M: Am'mutete. Abatongoi…. The sons of Anyole – all of them. But the older sub-clans are us. But Abasuubi are the absolute eldest. They can perform rituals effectively. Once they come together with Abasiloli, they will talk first before any of the other Abanyole can do. The flamboyant Abanyole!
K: You said Abasiekwe are the offspring of Anyole. Were all the sons of Anyole born to the same woman?
M: We told you Om'muli is the first born, followed by Omusilatsi, then Om'mutete. Those three clans came from Wekhomo.
K: … when Abanyole came from Kigumba how did they move?
O: Those people came from the direction of Uganda. Then they came to Kigumba. From Kigumba… That is when they came to establish in Ebunyole.

Where did they originate from? Uganda. From there they came to Kigumba. From Kigumba… Don't you know land was set aside at Kigumba where some people from here were resettled not long ago?
Ku: Can I chip in? We talked about Anyole. Another name has come in – Mwenje, yet another name is Muhindila. Ever heard of these names?
M: Yes, We have written all that; they are all in this record! It also has the record of Abasilatsi**.**
Ku: Among Abasilatsi we have such clans as Abamusila, Abakhaya, Abamukunzi,… as well we have people called Abasaatsi. Don't we have Abasaatsi?
O: Abasaatsi are Abasiralo.
M: These Am'musila you talk about came from Luoland.
O: Which people?
M: Abamusila.
Ku: Am'musila came from Luoland? How did they come to Ebusilatsi?
M: Relations!
O: This matter revolved around relations. They usually settled on the strength of relations. These Am'musila … started with only one man. Such a person might have a friend in a particular place. Then he might visit and stay on say for a week while trying to understand the community. Then he might be told: "Need you go back? Just take up that land." Once you have been given land you have been given a wife. You now belong. These Abakhaya here…They are justified. The cows that were taken away in the raid… Omukhaya was one of the people who rushed to save them.
M: Amukhoye's brother-in-law.
O: Because Abetsa was still busy saying: "Wait, let me finish with the sowing then I can give chase. Then Nakuti says "Let me sow first before I can give chase." Then they were told: "Look at them, the cattle are gone!" The bull – Okwananga…. Now this other son went together with his brother-in-law… saying: "We must rummage everywhere…. Then they wrested back the cattle at Esiamahande. Do you know Esiamahande?
……..
K: You said Omukhaya was the brother in law of Amukhoye?
M&O: Yes.
Ku: Where did Amukhoye marry for this relationship with Omukhaya to come about?
M: He married a woman from Ebukhaya. The woman who gave birth to Abamatakho was from Ebukhayo. Her name was Nekondi. If we went [to Ebukhayo] and said we wanted land, they would say: "Oh, you have come to see us? You are our kin!"

O: Just like you heard me talk about Nyakach. You can not marry from there. They will ask: "How can Omusilatsi marry from Ebusilatsi?
Ku: Someone told me something.… That whenever there was war between Abalokooli and Abamutete Abasilatsi would go to join Abamutete. But while Abasilatsi were in the battlefield, Abatongoi would sneak in and steal the wealth of Abasilatsi? Again it is said Abalokooli occupied all the way up to Khusikulu. That they even came up to here (Ebulonga). How were they expelled from here?
M: Let me tell you. What happened… You [Abamutete] were no match for them. Then Mung'au came from among us together with Akhwale – two brave men. They killed a man called Imbwana – the daring war leader of Abalokooli. He used to make men around here tremble.
O: He wanted to know: when those Abalokooli came to fight Abanyole… You know they [Abanyole] never used to work together. Whenever Om'mangali launched a war against Omulokooli, the other clans would not go there. So Om'mang'ali would face Omwakwe or Omwitakho on his own because they share a boundary. This Omulokooli, whenever he engaged Om'mutete in a fight, Om'mutete would have to confront Omulokooli on his own. Abanyole never used to form a united front against the enemy.
M: They never used to work together.
O: Once they [Abatongoi] discover: "Oh, Omusilatsi has joined Om'mutete at war; they have gone a reasonable distance to lay an ambush…. At such a time all the cattle belonging to Abasilatsi would usually have been brought to Ekwanda and placed under the watch of scouts. Once they learn: "Oh, Omutongoi has finished the cattle of Omusilatsi!" They would abandon the war immediately saying: "The war can wait" and run through Ebukhaya at high speed. to block Abatongoi. Once Abatongoi are told: "Oh, you have been blocked. You will be exterminated!" They would scamper away and abandon the cattle.
M: That is what used to cause problems here. Omusiekwe could not join Omutongoi to follow Omusilatsi and Om'mutete to war. You see they lived badly.
……
M: …. Those who worked together came from they same womb!
O: …. That attitude is still in us. You may not see it but it is in the youth. There might be a task to be performed. And it might be the turn of Omusilatsi to do it. Omutongoi will say: "Ah ah! How would you give our opportunity to Abasilatsi? It can't work." Is it that way or is it not? If Om'mang'ali had joined hands with Om'mutete, or for that matter, with Omb'bayi, then Omusilatsi came in, Omulokooli would never have endured the force.
M: … we used to work together with Om'mutete and Om'muli.
……
O: Let me give you an example. We are going towards elections. Omusilatsi is standing; Omutongoi I am not sure but Em'mutete there are about four or more. Ab'biba too have one woman who is a doctor. This is not right. You want to know whether we worked together or not. Do we? If we agree on one contestant then all Omusilatsi says it is him, there is no one else. Old men and women and all…
M: You know what we will demand when everything comes in the open…
O: Hey you, let me finish! Am'mutete, haven't we given them our votes on three occasions? When they know Omusilatsi is a contestant, why can't they also give us their votes? Is that fair? So now we leave it to God. And to find out how did so and so work? We demand: Khasakhala worked: what did he bring? Muchilwa worked: what did he bring? Whoever else worked, what did he bring? This is a game they play. Omutongoi came boisterously declaring himself the ultimate. We used to stay there all day. We ate quite a lot there. Eventually all Omusilatsi voted for him. Then again Muhanji came. Everyone sang his name. Although he had hardly worked, then he died. Now tell me, how do we unite? Om'mutete will not vote for

Omutongoi. As for us we have never been lucky because we have split our vote. Now when we thought this would be our chance there are four of them.

…….

M: Can't we also rule?

O: Can't they say: Omusilatsi has given us his vote many times. Let us also give him this time.

Ku: That is selfishness. Let me ask my old men. This is Ebusilatsi Ebulonga. When *Lugongo* (headman) Robert [Libale] was in office Abalonga were administered from Em'mutete, not under Ochango. Why was it so?

O: The reason, I will give you a quick answer. We Abalonga, when there was war Omulokooli used to enter through Esamwenyi and chase all Abalonga from here. [Abalonga] would end up in Epang'a – Ebusikhale. Am'mutete wanted to take all Abalonga and make them Am'mutete. Omulonga came back here because of the army men. The young men in the army used to change the name and write Ebusilatsi Ebulonga. They are the ones who made Abalonga to come back. They would still be there now. And if you go into the fine details you will discover some are still there.

Ku: It is true. If you look closely at the current set up you discover Abasilatsi from Ebulonga, the way they do certain things is different from Abasilatsi from Ematsuli or Eluhobe. I have noticed this.

……..

K: Let me ask, Abanyole are said to be rainmakers. How does it begin?

O: The matter of rain, I will answer you my child. No, my grandchild; not my child. Abasiekwe met some luck. Didn't you hear me say we used to dig using sharpened sticks? There used to be a man across there. Who is this…This fellow who used to live at Emuhaya…?

M: That old man… Kabala who used to make scythes?

O: Yes Kabala.

Ku: Kabala who used to live by the roadside at Wemilabi.

M: He used to forge scythes for clearing farms.

O: There was another forge at a place we call Mungetsa in Ebukanga – two forges.

M: Yes Mungetsa Ebukanga. This soil we call murram. What do we call it in Olunyole? …. *Oburala*.

Ku: That type of soil is mined at Ebwiranyi.

O: (After demonstrating how the forges were worked to produce hoes and scythes). Then Abawanga came and arrived at Ebusiekwe in the home of a man called Saunya. They said: "We are from Ebuwanga. We are itinerant traders selling *ebisili"*.

M: They were used as hoes.

O: A flat metallic implement with a projection at one end. Then they (Abasiekwe) thought: "These implements are better. They stayed for a full week at Saunya's home, well taken care of. Then others started saying: "Why are they showing these things to him alone?" Remember all of them were the sons of Nganyi – they suckled the same breast.

Ku: Nganyi of Ebusiekwe.

O: Saunya got ill and died. (Turns to me) It is you who asked, are you writing down?

K: Yes we are recording here.

O: When he died all Abanyole came for *esilemba* (funeral dance). When a great man died all *esilemba* formations would gather at his home. Even Otieno went there –Otieno wa Ndale. A whole world of a man! If he as much as touched you with his shield you just tipped over! All along Abawanga were just taking in all the scenes.

……..

O: After that people resolved: “This stump of a man who knocks down everyone in his wake, he ought to be given leadership.
M: Otieno was plump with a protruding tummy, from taking beer. He was made a ruler.
O: Otieno came back to Em’mutete as a chief, the ruler of Abanyole. He was a good ruler. And those days, people respected authority. After some time Otieno simply said: “I have had enough. Look for another chief to take over my office.
……
O: …. At that time Otiato from Ebusikhale had just returned from Luoland in strangely decorated and flowing robes complete with a matching head gear. Then the people asked: “And who might this one be?” “This is Otiato who has just arrived from Luoland.” “Can he rule Abanyole?” “Yes he can.” “But what about his strange robes?” “Well, Otiato took over Otieno’s job. Otieno left because he was fed up. When Otiato took office he hardly finished three years.
M: He ruled badly.
O: In his third year, things went wrong. His home was not far from here. I was a big boy then. I was in school.… He, Otiato, grabbed the Omusilatsi manhood. And tied it with a string. His house had been burned down and he blamed it on Abalonga.
M: He tied the penises with a string. They couldn’t urinate. Abasilatsi bulls… their penises were tied! People went to petition the DC (District Commissioner).
O: To have a wise man amongst you is a good thing. Omuola ran to…
M: He ran to Es’sumo.
O: Not Es’sumo! He went to Abukuse’s home. Have you heard we had a ruler in Ebusilatsi by the name Abukuse?
O: Whose job do you think Ochango took over?
O: Abukuse used to dress in European breeches. (Demonstrates how he looked like: tight fitting at the legs but loose at the thighs). The shoes were fastened with leather strings way up to the knees.
M: He used to move through thickets with his horse.
O: Then he asked: “Omuola what is the matter?” He (Omuola) said: “The people of Ebulonga are finished! The men are all tied up [and] are wailing! Wailing!” “What about?” “His [Otiato’s] house burned down!” He (Abukuse) dressed, up immediately. They did not come here at Ebulonga; they bypassed straight to Enyahela. Then he said: “There is a chief in Ebunyole called Otiato. He has tied the people’s penises because his house got burned down. He has tied the people…”
M: Penises!
O: “The people are screaming in pain!” The askaris were dispatched in haste!
M: Arrest him!
O: Whenever the string was cut it splashed out – bloody! The people said, “What kind of ruler is this? This is murderous!” Then the peoples said, “No more of him!” Then Otiato was told, “If you are ever found in office you will regret it. You will be locked up! Otiato leaves that evening and starts war in…
M: Ebukami!
O: Ebukami Wonduso. He is already at war there!
……..
O: Then Enyahela is told, “What? The chief you relieved a while ago has just instigated a war! People are already fighting!” Again the government rushed there. Otiato was taken away, unrobed and warned, “If you are found in office again you will be killed this time.”
M: The chieftaincy went to Sangolo. Sangolo ruled, ruled. Oh! Then the ghosts came in! Five years. Leeches caused Sangolo’s removal from chieftaincy.

O: I too uprooted that that papyrus marsh. While the people were busy uprooting the papyrus the leeches were busy biting them bloody. Then the people said: "The chief you installed, Sangolo. Oh, come and see what has happened!"
M: "The white man found the leeches biting and bloodying the people.
……
O: Omusiala! Omusiala beseeched, "Please come and see." The *askaris* (orderlies) left Kakamega to go and see. Then they said [in Kiswahili], "What is this" "It is blood." "Human blood? Does this thing bite?" They picked the leeches, picked the leeches and took them to Kakamega. "He should never rule, this man who bleeds people!"
M: He was removed the same way Otiato was removed. He was never given *hembwo* (pension). Otiato never got it either. Their chieftaincy was for nothing, of no benefit to them.
……..
O: Oh! Woe unto him who did not sound his sub-clan horn. He would be asked, "Where was your horn?" He would be thrashed thoroughly.
……
K: …. the old man told us he was born in 1906.
M: And I was born in 1917. Nicodemu wrote it down. 1917 January, How old am I now? I was born the same year with Kweya.
O: This one, Kweya, Evan Tela are virtual age mates.
M: After the end of this year we will have turned 100.
O: No, not yet!
Ku: It is about 11 years less. It is about 90.
M: We are 90 now?
O: Yes, more like it.
He came back from Em'mutete with his brother Omwoha. They grew up at Em'mutete.
……..
K: …. How did circumcision come to us?
O: …. Circumcision was spread by Abalokooli. Abalokooli circumcised but not Abanyole. Circumcision did not spread throughout Ebunyole at first; it used to be among Abamang'ali through to abamutete and Abasilatsi. They would circumcise big men not children. But this other side – Ebusiekwe, Ebusikhale…They never used to circumcise.
M: Your uncles. These days they do.
O: We used to be the end this side. And they would circumcise you when you are a big young man. When the knife slashed though you, you felt like you wanted to fly. People would shout to you: "Be strong, brave it. One minute and you are through!"
M: We were circumcised by the son of Tungani from Itakho. Many people developed cold feet. There are some people who failed to get circumcised completely.
O: The east of Ebunyole used to circumcise but not the west.
……
K: You are Abanyole, right? What makes you feel like one?
O: I am proud to be Omunyole because of my lineage. That is why I swear: "If Amukhoye didn't sire me…!" Who do I praise? Amukhoye. He is my father who sired me. That is why I strut as Omusilatsi. I could never do so as Om'mutete.
……
O: That is why at a funeral you would hear a mourner ululate and shout: *Amatsai ka Mwechenye*!" (Mwechenye's blood!).
M: Mwechenye the dark one!
O: I am the leopard!
Ku: What is Mwechenye?
M&O: Omusilatsi!

O: Lumale. If you hear Lumale… If I mire you, you are outgunned! These Abamutete: Omusilatsi had declared: "You can't go beyond my post!" If you hear the song: "*Inyumba esimbanga khuliakan'na yio*." (The house/clan that struts lets meet out there [in the battlefield]).
K: Sure, what does that mean?
O: Because if you challenge my masculinity I will meet you head on! I don't fear anyone.
**……**
O: …. Didn't you hear me say [Abatongoi] never integrated with the rest of Abanyole completely? All their activities were separate from the rest of Abanyole. The funeral dance was a very crucial ritual in Ebunyole. When you hear them sing: "Aaaah don't be downcast/ Don't be downcast/ Don't be downcast/ All soils stalk even the placid/ Aah don't be downcast. (*Aaah orabelelanga/ Amaingo kosi katunyilanga abakosi*).
M: (Has been singing along but his version is a little different: Don't be downcast/ All soils recline on the placid – *Amaingo kosi kayekhelanga abakosi*). Then they would raise their weapons and shout: Haaaah!
O: Why be folorn? Even great men surrender to the soil. It matters little what he was; his size.
……
K: I now understand. But how did *esilemba* (funeral ritual dance) start? What is its purpose?
O: *Esilemba* has been there since time immemorial. It was meant to broadcast to the world about a death in a particular place.
M: And horns would whine on.
O: *Esilemba* would approach the home under the command of the leader. Here among Abasilatsi we had heroes. Do you know Amulioto?
K: Amulioto, the old man who was our neighbor?
O: That is it! I am reading the list. Do you know Maina?
K: Which Maina?
M: If you know Amulioto do you know Maina?
K: Aaah, he died much, much before I was born!
O: Do you know Omuhulu? (Mbalukha, greatly enjoying this torture, laughs as he claps his hands).
K: I know the place where he lived. But I am a child! How could I start to talk about him?
O: (Laughing heartily) those things, God willing… When you are still alive you must strive to know. You are the son of Kweya, Kweya Okoba, Okoba the son of so and so, and so on. Did I tell you I am… which generation am I? The fifth: that is the pride I have grown up with.
M: You are the grandson of Okoba. If I should ask you: who sired Okoba? If you cant tell your lineage then they might even withhold land from you. Because they…
O: Tell Opati, as for me I start with Chilundu.
M: Your great grandfather?
O: Yes. Then Abwiri, the father of Ombima.
M: Let us start with your father. Are you not the son of Ombima? Ombima the son of who?
O: Abwiri, the son of Chilundu. I am of the fifth generation.
M: The father of my grandfather: Oluya. Oluya son of Mbandu, Mbandu son of Mabwabo, I have finished! This thing beats many people. [The lineage is: Mbalukha-Makaali-Akhwale-Oluya-Mbandu-Mabwabo].
…….
Ku: …. Long ago people used to name their relations from the same lineage. But if you try to search for this name Mwenje or Anyole or Muhindila, we don't seem to have any remnants here in Ebunyole. There is some inconsistency. This Chitwa: if you go back into my lineage you will find it. And now we have it in Ebusilatsi. That means we came from the same place?

O: That Chitwa among Abamutete… He is the most distinct and he is the ruler. Leave out Andeka. That is Abaasuundi. Leave out Esianda. Chitwa: If you attack Chitwa you have got to the core of Abamutete.
K: Both of you have lived long. This old man has reached100 now. You are 90. What difference might you say there is between this time and the time you were born?
M: The difference is this: when the age mates of this Ot'tiali went to dance, we would be in the company of women. But you would not dare start anything with a woman. Never! You always knew she was your sister. If you go to Em'mutete, Om'mutete might try that. And on your way back, you wouldn't touch her. But you children of today, you take hold of your sisters and take them wherever. Can you say you are ok? That is why you get distended tummies and swollen legs. You bump into unnecessary tragedies. You have no limits. Again….
O: If you murdered someone and it was known, or if you committed some abominable act you were not allowed to drink from the same pot with others. You were put aside with your own drink. You can not sit with the others because you have *esiluchi*. You killed your kin. Let me tell you something. If one day you slaughter a cow; or if you will want to install *olusambwa* (shrine), it is a weighty matter…. Because *okhubita* (blessing ritual) was conducted by a person specially chosen for his unblemished character; one that would not be struck by jealousy. It had to be a man without ill feelings.
M: One who doesn't take his brothers' wives.
O: One who does not admire what belongs to others. If it was said so and so can conduct the blessing ritual you had to be an elder. The most important thing which you must retain in all these is: a respectable old man would install *olusambwa* in his home – three stones with *olusolia* tree in the middle – where the blessing ritual can be conducted. Beer would be prepared for the occasion. That is the foremost thing in Abanyole culture. You would take *omuswasi* (flesh) from a cock and cast it in all directions, each time shouting incantations: "so and so that is yours; so and so eat from there…." Then the remaining piece he would cast at the entrance and say: "whoever enters this home with ill intention, I have no ill will against you," understand? That is profound Olunyole. After that he would call your first born son, then sip some sorghum floor into his mouth and spray on his chest saying: "grow well!" The sons would be followed with the daughters, then the mother, with the man of the home coming last. That is very deep culture of Abanyole. The old man (priest) would be given a very big cock. Then he would say: "When we grew up we were not associated with nuisance. We were never involved in any mischief or any abomination. So and so this is your chicken, let the spirits eat." He would then raise the chicken and smack it only once on the [shrine] stone. That chicken will never even gasp for breathe or struggle. It may look alive even though it is dead completely. The chicken would then be roasted. The priest would go away with the breast. But the rest of the chicken would be eaten with *obusuma* (finger millet meal). That was a powerful rite.

**Except 2. Interview with Brown Eyahuma, Okuku Mwambua, Otundo and Adam Kutai at Ekwanda – South Bunyore**

**Date 19/12/06.**

……..
K: …. Can you please tell me when you were born?
Eyahuma (E): I was born in 1935…. in Ebunyole – Ebusilatsi.
……..
K: You are well known for the way you talk about the past of Ebunyole there are many who talk about you how did you start?
E: Initially I knew from my grandfather Eyahuma you know I am the son of Ochango. And Ochango was a leader. Ochango is the one who employed Kweya (my father)…. When he was consulted he is the one who suggested Kweya was fit to be president at Khwiselo.
K: Can we say that matters about the past and culture of a people are known by leaders?
E: Anyone could, through birth or lineages. Unity made it possible for those people to learn about the past….
That is learnt depending on the way you are born this is what we call wisdom in English.
K: Ok but how were you attracted to it?
E: I use to stay with my grandmother. Then my grandmother started to tell me how one ought to live as well as the dangers and benefits.
……..
K: This matter of the culture and past of Abanyole…. You said the first person to teach you was your grandmother first then Caleb Ottichilo, while he was a pastor?
E: He was a pastor but he also middled …you see preachers of today once they become Christians then they say, "I have stopped any association with traditions." Then he covers completely what he knows. He was not that kind of person. He was a very free man. He use to sit with Raphael Nyawanga … Caleb, Raphael, Ochango – they used to sit at *khusitioli* (evening bonfire) of Abasilatsi. The person who specialised in such matters, teaching about the lineages of Abasilatsi was Raphael [Nyawanga].
K: …. I would also like to ask you, are there any changes you have noticed among Abanyole since the time of your childhood till now.
E: … there the changes. The reason why there is a difference is that the church brought a lot of changes…. It brought the changes by relocating us from *khusitioli* to the table.
……
E: [Abanyole of today are not] authentic. What saddens me is that teachers cannot teach authentic Nyole traditions.
K: It would appear many people have abandoned them?
E: Many people have "immigrated" they have abandoned their totemic traditions and adopted what is not theirs.
K: Therefore in the days to come, what do you think will happen?
E: In the coming days Abanyole are not there! Because Nyoleness has already disappeared even now. The idea of Bunyole, this generation is killing it. It adopts their mother's lineages.
K: Can you please explain what do you mean by their mother's lineages?
E: A child adopts the mother's character and ignores the father's.
K: It is common?
E: Very common. Aren't we losing track of lineages because if I should be called the son of Florence … yet I am the son of Ochango. The name Florence has given me is her clan name. So she has abandoned the name of Abasilatsi clan
K: Why do you think children copy …their mothers?

E: What brings this problem is that the church has brought the table….
Christianity, when it came it brought us from the bornfire and put us on the table it diverted us from our traditions and connected us to foreigners. Because when we used to sit at the bonfire a woman would not come there. That is where we learnt about life. One important lesson was that a girl does not sit at the bonfire. She sits with the [mothers]. Again at that place the father told off a dishonest child. Such a child could not sit there. Because [at the bonfire] they use to assess the situation of the world in general as well as the generations whether they are progressing or they are retarding…. But since the table came if we were seated discussing someone …then you are told the food is ready. Then you will have to stop because as a rule one cannot discuss his brother in the presence of one's wife. One cannot discuss his brother in the presence of children. Therefore our ways have lost steam. Our teachings are dead.
…….
K: Let me ask you another question. You said there are things you saw back in those days different from today. I am not sure, we people as squeezed as they are now?
E: I found when the people were sparsely populated.
K: So this population pressure is a recent thing?
E: Yes, because the birth rate is very high. In the past death was not common because there were fewer people but when people went to church the church has brought many things then they learnt "What can we do to multiply?" *Abasomi* (the faithful) sat together and prayed to God: "God let us multiply" because God had promised them. You see they [the faithful] used to find difficulty getting people to serve them wherever they went so people multiplied now there are too many people. And you know a high birth rate brings a high death rate…. If you die now we will name ten people after you.
**…….**
K: …. There are a lot of things I find complex among Abanyole. How did Abanyole begin? Where did they come from? How did we find ourselves where we are now?
E: Abanyole is one of the groups here in Kenya, one of the Bantu groups. They just migrated into this place. This was not their original home. When they were moving, they arrived here and said, "Let us live here," because those days human beings used to move like wild animals. Therefore Abanyole are one of the Bantu groups; they are not foreign, they are the authentic Africans.
K: So where did they come from?
E: Abanyole come from the Zulu lineages.
K: Zulu, from where?
E: Zulu? They are down there in Rhodesia.
E: Where are the larger Bantu groups? They are that side! Where we are is towards the end of Bantu groups. So there are other people here who are the guests of Bantu. Like we have other people here in Ebusilatsi who are the guests of Abasilatsi. So Omunyole came here looking for a place to live, he was not born here. This tongue we speak is Olunyole. Because anyone coming hare will say we speak Olunyole. So we are Abanyole. Where tongues part is where we pick different groups name.
K: And if we came from Rhodesia, do you have any ideas how they moved up to this place?....
E: I know a little (smiling). When I look at it carefully Abanyole came from the Uganda route. Because we have a group in Uganda known as Banyoro, we also have Abanyole among those Banyoro, we have Abanyole: Abanyoro then Abanyole. They meet on the tongue in other words.
Mwambwa (M): Let me ask you Kutai, you went to Uganda to visit Abanyole of Uganda, right?

Ku: That question …our secretary was Dishon here we went with him. They are not Abanyoro, they are Abanyole from a place near Tororo in that (Tororo) district. It was not Bunyoro which the old man is talking about. The old man had his ways of getting his information about Bunyoro but where we went with Dishon was Tororo District where we have another group of Abanyole.
K: You said they come from Bunyoro. Would you know what caused them to move?
E: Once people get congested like we now are congested in Ebunyole they start to look for ways to survive. Because if you look now, when Abanyole filled up this space they left for Lugari. We did not go there because of an abomination we committed…. They were looking for more space to settle in.
K: I would like to ask: can you tell us … how they moved, wherever they passed, any encounters as they came, if you know. How did they enter here…?
E: The first settlement of Abanyole, if you investigate, you find it was at Busolwe (consulting his records all through). Busolwe in the district of…. Lets say Uganda.
K: Tororo?
E: Yes Tororo… they moved again some remained…. They moved was it to Butalejja…?
K: Butalejja?
E: Yes Butalejja…. You see now they have moved away from the stage of the first settlement. Because they had Abanyoro …Abanyoro are there in Uganda, and Abanyole are also there. They are the same group. They left the place and moved slowly to the Kenya-Uganda border they were already congested where they were. When they arrived at the border they were in a group. They moved amidst, not Abakhayo; Butalanyi! This Butalanyi is among which people? Abamarachi. By this time they have arrived in Kenya. They were not two, they were many. Because some people say Abanyole who were born were 12 clans, but I don't think so. When I look closely I find that Abanyole came as a group. And this group... you know what makes a group are women. When these women are married then different houses start. The children are born to one man but the mothers are different. That is why the children call themselves, those of this house, and those of that house, and so on. When they left Ebutalanyi they moved sideways and came to the Siaya route. They passed among the Samia. When you go among the Samia you find Abanyole. Abanyole are there. They are now called Abalunya. They have their special place where they stay also called Ebunyole. When they left that place, they came down here in the midst of Luos among Abamuhana. You know Abamuhana are Abaluhya?
K: Abamuana are they among Luos?
E: They are among Luos. Then they came to Ebusenge. Then they came here at Wangarodi. Some of our kin remained there. We call them Abasiloli. You heard me talking about Abasiloli just now. They remained there because they were tired. They came … they were three groups. Omulokooli, Omukisii and Omunyole. When they got up here they passed by this side, and then passed in a valley in the centre called Ebusaali.
K: Ebusaali in Ebulokooli?
E: No, down here among the Luos. From Ebusaali they went to Obunga, you know Obunga down here in the valley near the hill they have built a cloth factory. …. Kicomi. Kicomi is in Obunga. They entered at that hill. Then they spread up to this market we call Kibuye where we have the Catholic Church. That is where they built their tent. That is where they quarrelled with the Kisii. There was no agreement. After the quarrel they shifted and came to the valley near Kibos. When you are at Kibos, you face the Nandi boundary, the Abarwa boundary. There they found Abarwa. Not Abanandi! They used to call them Ebitukuuti. They are still there to date. Ebitukuuti.
K: Abarwa were called Ebitukuti?

E: Eeeh! They followed the valley you see at Kibos. They climbed the hill up to Ekibaswa. They then brought their tent at Enyahela. They stayed at Enyahela but they did not find rest. Their mind was still restless. By now they were two. Omulokooli and Omunyole. They moved and came to the Ebutabwongo hill. Just up here. That is where they separated with Omulokooli, because of disagreement. But I don't know the nature of the disagreement.
K: Who separated there?
E: Abanyole and Abalokooli. Omulokooli moved to Weteleli. You see when they differed they both quit. Omulokooli went to Weteleli and Omunyole came to Wekhomo. At the rock. They came to the hill up here- Wekhomo.
M: By this time were they still in a group?
E: Yes a group. That is where Omunyole started to spread.
K: Where exactly did they (Abanyole and Abalokooli) separate?
E: They separated just up here, Habutabwongo up there on the hill.
K: Ok is this hill called…
E: This one called Em'matsi! Do you know this place planted with trees Esiababo?
K: Esiababo in Ebulokooli?
E: Yes, Ebutabwongo is near there. When they disagreed [Abalokooli] moved to Eteleli while Abanyole came to Wekhomo. You know up this hill, at Em'matsi, there is a lot of good land, it is not rocky. That is where their well was.
K: Now I understand you.… This route you have plotted is long. And you have detailed all the steps of the movement…. What puzzles me though is that I have been told only one man arrived – called Anyole, but now you say they were many.
E: (Whoever told you) was not wrong. One man cannot move alone. There were wild animals: elephants, lions, leopards… they were in the forest. It was wild. There was no human settlement. Can one man move?
Because when people talk, they say: Pa the first born of Anyole is Omusiloli, Pa Omusuubi, Pa whoever. All these people when you scrutinize closely then you discover, if Omusuubi is here, those who remained at Wangarodi are Omusuubi and Omusiloli, two brothers. They are there, Wangarodi. They are more than one location there.
M: Wangarodi South Nyanza?
E: Aah aah!
O:Here at Seme.
M: Is it this place where we went when we were going to Ridoli?
E: From Kombewa you ascend to the place.
O: From Kombewa you turn to the left then come to Wangarodi. Ok from Kombewa you go on and leave the road to Akaala then you get to two hills – one on this side one on the other – Wangarodi is in between.
K: Do they still speak Olunyole?
E: They speak Olubo (Luo)! But if you go with me, you will here them say we are Abanyole. But the tongue has sold us. The Luos call them Kasimoli
O: Abasiloli.
E: Abasiloli in Luoland are called Kasimoli. When you look keenly then you find many people do a lot of guess work. But the truth is … you see wherever you go, if you find Omunyole you will find these people. They are usually in pairs. If you go to Kibuye, you will find Abasakami there, Abatongoi are there. These people remained there. Abasakami are there, abasiloli are there. At that same place we have Abasilatsi too.
O: What do we call those ones?
E: Those ones, if you look for them in their gathering they are Kanyapela.
Ku: Kanyapela?

E: Kanyapela – among fruits. That is the home of Onunga. If you inquire about Onunga you will be told go to Kanyapela.
K: Who is Onunga?
E: Onunga is Omunyole man! A man from Ebutongoi
Ku: He was a chief.
E: He was chief. His son works in VOK [Voice of Kenya. Present day Kenya Broadcasting Cooperation-KBC].
M: In other words you are suggesting Abanyole people were not born in Ebunyole. They just walked to this place?
E: They walked.
M: It was a group that moved here; not a group that was born here.
E: They came, they were not born here.
M: But this man Muhindila … Because if you follow the birth lineage of Abanyole they bring in a man called Muhindila before they bring Anyole. Who is this Muhindila?
E: Ok Muhindila … if want to trace Muhindila properly, you have now gone to Ebuluhya the wider lineage. That is where you will find Muhindila. That is where you will find the Samia, Omukhayo …. All these people beyond this valley, all are descendants of Muhindila. The only one outside Muhindila is Ombukusu. Muhindila is the patriarch of all Abaluhya. That is Muhindila. His wife was called Liayela.
K: Liayela?
E: Eeh! You see for instance, we Abasilatsi people we proclaim Amukhoye. What was Amukhoye's wife called? (Emphasizing) I ask you who was Amukhoye's wife?
K: I don't know.
E: You stay at Amukhoye's hill!
K: (Hands up in surrender) I am beaten.
E: Amukhoye's wife is Kaita!
M: What did he do?
E: Amukhoye is the man, he used to stay in a cave among rocks. That is why you hear *lichina lia Amukhoye* [Amukhoye's rock].
K: Where is this stone? Is it in… Ebulonga?
E: Yes, near Onyino's home.
K: Onyino who was once an assistant chief?
E: Yes that is where it is.
K: Esiamayayi?
E: If you go at the cave you will find a house inside it. *Imbasa* (climber plant) likes to climb into it. But if you enter you can shelter from the rains. You are looking for big things but you haven't even organised you home front, where will you begin on these big things?
…….
K: Abasilatsi call themselves Kaita …
E: The women proclaim Kaita. But if you investigate you will find they make two different proclamations: Kaita Mwechenyi and Kaita Omurelele. The women take their praise name after their mothers. Let me demonstrate for you what that means. This one (Otundo) his sister takes her praise name after Kaita Omurelele and this one (Mwambwa) his sister takes her praise after Kaita Mwechenye.
K: How does all this come about? Amukhoye's children? Atonji proclaims Mwechenye, Nakuti and Mathakho proclaim Omurelele.
K: Omurelele?
E: Yes Kaita Omurelele, that is flat.
K: Mwechenye is Atonji and who else?

E: Atonji is all alone. He proclaims Mwechenye. And this one …Nakuti and Matakho proclaim kaita Omurelele.
K: Allow me to ask, where do they separate so one takes Mwechenye while the other takes Omurelele?
E: I have not come to that point. I have been listing them
K: Ok but who is this Atonji?
E: Atonji the first born son of Amukhoye.
K: How many sons did Amukhoye have?
E: Amukhoye? Three sons!
K: The first born is Atonji, followed by?
E: Nakuti… [then] Matakho. They are right here where we are seated.…! Are you (referring to me) not Nakuti? Just a question.
K: … I don't know.
M: Brown let me ask you. This name Atonji is also here at Ebulonga (Etwenya) . They always demand that they come first in everything happening here. Then we also have the people of Nakuti. Are they Ab'betsa?
E: This Abetsa is the son of an inherited wife somewhere between Atonji and Nakuti.
M: Aah aah! Abetsa …
E: They are *abaana bomwandu* (children from an inherited wife) because you will also find Abetsa there at Eluhobe. Namakanda is also there as well as Atonji.
M: Abetsa, so he is *omwana womwandu*. You know I always ask myself. When someone dies, if he is Atonji, they don't want Abetsa to inherit the wife. That thing is here in our place but other people don't want to explain it. Again – these Matakho people, when they cross to go to Atonji's you find they are not welcome.
M: Then we have someone by the name Kutata (literally- big pockets).
E: Kutata is not anywhere in Ebusilatsi ancestry. A joke, that one is just an appellation, clothing. If you have cloths with pockets where you keep things… that is just an appellation. People might say, "that fellow with pockets"
M: (To Otundo) but when we are here at home don't we say Abaakutata (the Kutata lineage)? They say that man used to walk with a bag. If you gave him food to eat, whatever remained you would not take it back, he would put it in his bag.
E: (Meaning) these people of Kutata. That is to say these descendants of the beggar!
M: True they are called *Abihebwa*; they want to be given all the time.
E: Let me tell you now. Matakho cannot inherit the wife of Atonji. Why would he yet he is the last born? So between Nakuti and Atonji … you know Nakuti came after Atonji ….
M: Again these Atonji people are said to have a certain unique character. They are said to stay very long and grow very old. They don't just die anyhow. They say there was a man now who….
O: Okello?
M: He is said to have grown so old that he started to crawl like a child. An active person but he couldn't even go to the toilet anymore. It is said that he would simply just go outside the house, dig a hole, relieve himself there, return the soil and crawl back to the house. So up to now you find that here in Etwenya we have elderly people in Atonji's house. But in the other houses, people usually die in big numbers.
E: You know now I have driven you into a very difficult spot. Didn't I tell you these are the children of Mwechenye? They are here!
K: You said I am Nakuti. What about yourself?
E: Matakho.
M: In this group it is said there is one who formed the habit of going to listen to other people's disputes and pass judgement. Because it is said the people of Ebusilatsi scale to the

top of the tree on their backs… (*banin'nanga omusala omukongo*). They might even go to Khwiselo and sit in judgement [in a case they know little about] was it Atonji?
E: Ok! No. Atonji is not anywhere in this matter. If I call you *omukalama* (trickster) I would be unfair to you. Atonji is not belligerent (*omurindi*). Omukalama in this one.
K: Matakho?
E: Yes! Matakho is the real *Omukalama wekhwisisi wa Kaita* (the prankster who lives at the edge of the polity). Even then this term emerged only yesterday. Just the other day. Akhwenyinya is the one who came up with this name.
K: Akhwenyinya… from Elukongo?
E: With Zachariah, his brother. They would go to visit a relative. If they found an issue they would get in. We usually call them those who claimed big office without much learning.
K: You have brought something I would like to know. What does *okhunin'na omusala omukongo* mean, how does it start?
E: *Obukalakalatsa* (slipperiness/elusiveness)! It is just a way of speaking. There is no tree involved. Omusilatsi, in matters pertaining to imagination, is very dangerous. If he promises to give you something, you better insist on it instantly or you will be sorry…. Omukalama!
M: These Abakalama used to take antelopes and sell them as goats.
K: Where?
E&M**:** Itakho.
M: They would come to sell an antelope to you, calling it a goat. But if you unleash it, it runs away.
E: That is a game of Abasilatsi. If you hear *omukalama,* that is like Amutaali.
M: Here we say *abakalamila*.
E: They are not abakalamila, they ar *abakalama*. Matakho are *abakalama* Nakuti are *abakalama*…. Those two are the real *abakalama,* but Atonji is not *omukalama* at all. Aah aah! Atonji straight forward and humble.
K: Someone once said, *Oli omuhingwa wamemya khwisisi wa Kaita* (You are the idiot who lives at Kaita's wall"
E: (Laughing) that one was just being provocative we usually say "I will follow/push you up to Kaita's wall" [the ultimate end].
K: What is the meaning of that?
E: That is (in Kiswahili): I will push you to the limit…. I will follow you up to the end.
K: This person actually told me: *Oli omuhingwa wamenya khwisisi wa Kaita olimilanga om'mbano* (You are the ultimate idiot who lives at Kaita's wall who uses a knife to dig).
E: That one just gave a new name *khwisisi wa Kaita* is now used in the whole of the land of Abanyole. Some one might say "Just play around. Whenever I catch you I will get you up to Kaita's wall.
Ku: It has become a common expression among Abanyole, *Ntsia khwosia khwisisi wa Kaita* (I will get you up to Kaita's wall) has spread throughout Ebunyole. What one means is: I will follow you up to the end.
K: Even others such as Abamutete say that?
Ku: Yes, even Ama'mangali, Abantongoi….
K: All this time I realize we have talked a lot about Abasilatsi. Does this suggest they were dominant in Ebunyole some time in the past?
E: No Abasilatsi sired children fast and they spread out quickly. When you go to government records you find that Em'mutete is 51 Abasilatsi is 52 Ama'mang'ali 53, … Abantongoi 54. Those are the people who make up Abanyole.
K: What does this mean?
Ku: My understanding it means sub-location; when the whites came they created these sub-locations.

E: So if you check keenly Abasilatsi used to live together with Am'mutete they lived together as brothers. When the whites came they separated them. Abasilatsi of the other ridge were separated. Then they found new friends among Am'mkunzi and Abakhaya. Abalonga remained with Abamutete. The people who pulled Abalonga away from Abamutete are Kweya – Kweya your father – and Ochango (his father).
Ku: I just want to confirm the story you have just told Dishon. This is a report from the Kenya National Archives. We had seven sub-locations at that time in 1947 Abamutete were 51 Abasilatsi 52 Am'mngali … just as he said that is how it came about, that was the colonial administration.
E: They grouped the clans as they were found living. If you check you will notice Ab'bayi are in Emutete. Abalonga were among Abamutete they were moved just the other day. Abasiloli, Abakhaya, Am'mukunzi, Abasuubi were within Abusilatsi…. I hope you understand me. Abakanga were within Abasiekwe, as well as Am'mabwi.
K: We now talk about Abasilatsi.
E: Abasilatsi, we just glossed over that. Our focus was on Abanyole.
K: It seems to me Am'mutete are the younger house, or did you say that?
E: No. Am'mtete … where they live now is their home I want you to learn. Em'mutete and Am'mutete, how does this elude you? Em'mutete is the land, and Am'mutete are the people who live there…. In Em'mutete Abakhobo are there, Abakube are there, Ab'biba are there, Abaingu are there. If you climb that hill Abahando are in, that is the soil of Abamutete. It does not belong to Abahando.
Ku: Even then the name Ebuhando does not make sense because we don't have anyone known as Omuhando. The people who live in the land called Ebuhando are Am'matsi, Abalako,Abamachika, and again there are some Abakhobo and some Ab'biba. So there is no one called Omuhando, but you hear "I am going to Ebuhando". So Brown is right. When you come to Em'mutete it is the land but those live there have their names.
E: You understand? You know you sat with very difficult old men so I think when anyone say Abanyole started here, that is not correct. Abamang'ali are Samia people. Samia are also here in Kisa, some are up there at Elgon while some are here in Ebunyole. So how could they have started here yet their cradle is the other side? If anyone tells you the clans of Abanyole are Am'mangali… and so on, these people are Abanyole who came when they were already born. For instance, Am'matsi Am'machika….
Ku: Abalako.
E: Let me tell you about Abalako. Abalako are here at Alego. If you go to Uganda, they are there. Which people will you say they are? So were they born here?
M: What would the land of Abalako be called? Abalako are the people.
E: Abalako live on Ebuhando soil. Ebuhando is a branch of Em'mutete when people entered up there at Em'matsi they realized that it was too cold. Cold conditions chased them from up there in the hills and brought them down the hill.
M: Zakayo was a ruler was he Omuhando?
E: He was not Omuhando, he was Omukuya.
M: How did they allow him to rule yet each group wanted one of their own to take that office?
E: Zakayo … his rule… he used this Omulako man – Osoka! Osoka was working at the PC's office Es'sumo.
M: I want to come to this Osoka. Our people moved from there to Es'sumo, then they come here. When our people wanted Maseno to be reclaimed, Osoka's people, where did they want Maseno to be placed?
E: The people of Osoka …Osoka used to leave here to go to Alego. They call themselves Kamlago, which is robbery! Take for example the way we are here. Ab'bayi are in this area.

Abamabwi are here. If Om'mabwi goes to school you know he can trash you interests? Because it is him who is known. For example… you (pointing to Mwambwa) when … you stay next to Ab'bayi. If they are people who are known, people with means, do you think you can be heard? Yes, that is what Osoka was like.
K: I would like to know, I think I heard you say the other Abaluhya separated from Abanyole here?
E: I said … how many groups make up Abaluhya? The same Abaluhya you will find Abakhayo are there, Abanyala, Abanyole are there. Can you accept that Ombukusu is Omuteso? Ombukusu is Omuteso, Omutachoni is his uncle.
O: There is a sub-location in central Bunyole called Ebusamia which people live there?
E: Ebusamia sub-location is Abasamia. They are Am'mangali. It used to be Em'mangali. Kulali used to rule it as Em'mangali. Em'mangali is like you might say Ebusilatsi. Abasamia are three houses that came here Mangalia, Ngunza and Samia now they have three sub-locations.
K: What I wanted you to elaborate is: where is the meeting point betweeen Abanyole and the other Abaluhya?
E: They meet as you heard this one say, on Muhindila. They meet on Muhindila far back there. Muhindila is the grandfather of Abaluhya.
K: You are saying Abaluhya came fro the same man?
E: Yes, Muhindila.
K: Where did this Muhindila live?
E: Didn't you hear the other end, in Uganda?
K: Was there any other Muhindila here in Ebunyole?
E: Aha Ah!.... Only his offspring came.
K: Something else I would like to know: these Abanyole, let us say for instance, his (pointing to Otundo) people are Abalonga. I am Omulonga too, so I can't marry here. But how does it happen that we have Abalonga here and there. How did they separated? Again how did Abanyole agree that abasilatsi, Am'mutete, Abasikhale etc should each live where they are now? Then it happens Abakhobo are among Abamutete. How did it all begin?
E: You see these Abakhobo you hear about, they are not Abanyole if you go to Etiriki you will find them. There, they are called Abalukhoba. Abalukhoba are Abakhobo. And if you go among the Luos they are there on your way to Kisii.
O: What did they call themselves there?
E: Wait I will check. We also have other people here in Ebunyole whom we call Am'muchina… (laughs). Am'muchina you cannot know them easily. Am'muchina and Am'mulele you cannot understand them easily. Abakhobo are better because it is a bigger house. These ones are very small houses. But they have spread in this whole world.
M: But why do they scatter?
E: Because of *indiri* (petulance)
K: *Indiri*?
E: You know some people are born warlike. After they fight and cause *esiluchi* (murder of a kinsman) they are expelled (*ni baarwa*). To answer your question, you know people entered in different ways enemies might come and raze down a settlement. Then a child might run away. That child might live in the forest but keep moving. Then he reached a place he was satisfied that he was alone in the bush, but he was next to someone's house. Because they used to live in scattered settlements. There might be one house here. Then the next house might be all the way at Mukhalakhala across the valley. On this other side, all the way up to Maseno. Because the boy was moving and thought he liked the place and built there he would be confident that he was well out of anyone's view. But a woman might be collecting wood once she sees him, she would then hide and run back home to tell her husband: Even if we are

living here confidently, there is a man living in the cave there. He then would leave to bring his brother. He would bring them from very far. Then they become hunters – hunting a human being…. Then they would catch and bring him. Then they would start to interrogate him! "Where did you come from? Which clan do you come from?" He would answer each question. After he is through, they would leave him in that home. To help in hunting, then they would tell him, "Haven't we put him into your hands? Here he is". He would stay there as a bachelor. Then one day the husband of the women who found the boy says "You will have to get this man a wife from your home". Once he gets the wife then he starts home. He would want to stay close to such a man so he can help him in the event of an attack. What made these people welcome others was war. If you are invaded, he would help you. Even children who came with their mothers were extremely valued because of war. It is not that they were accepted as the man's off-spring.
K: Do you mean to say that there were very many wars at that time?
E: Many, many of them. That was the way you would get land. If you didn't have a child you would not get land.
K: Can you tell me, which people fought for instance?
E: Those who fought Abasilatsi …. Omukhaya is Omukhayo, they came to assist Abasilatsi of Elukongo when a war broke with Abakhuliti. They fought at Elukongo.
K: Abakhuliti are not Abasilatsi?
E: …. That was a domestic war between brothers. Do you think we didn't have it? It was there *elabusi* [a stick battle] . They fought at Elukongo Abasuubi fought at Ebukhiliti, Abamukunzi fought at Eluhobe. These people came in that way. Then they would be asked to settle. They are Abanyole yes, but if you search them in other ways they will tell you, "We are Abaluhya. But we are from the bigger house." But they don't want to be made Abanyole.
K: Did Abanyole fight any other people?
E: Abanyole fought Abalokooli over land, Abanyole fought Abaakwe over land, and again Abanyole among themselves, Abasilatsi fought Abantongoi just the other day.
K: How did it go?
E: They say if you pushed your adversary you would have expanded you land.
K: Who usually had the upper hand in these wars?
E: Had they been beaten, they (Abasilatsi) would not have got all the way to Musikholobe.
K: Where is Musikholobe?
E: That way beyond Ematsuli school you descend into Ebwakwe. When we say we stretch from Musikholobe up to Musikulu. Do you know Musikulu Wombwanga?
……
K: I know Musikulu wa Amukhoye.
E: What about Wombwanga? You know there are very many names. How many names do you have?
K: Three.
……..
E: So which is Abasilatsi name? Which one is you totemic (*inono*) name?
K: Aha, you might tell me!
E: (Laughing) you see isn't he beaten? If we say Amianda, you hear the name Amianda. Where might you say he comes from?
K: Aha, Ebuntongoi?
E: You see! You know, what you ought to learn … you know names are people's identity (*olubamba*). What did this one tell you his name is?
K: I can't remember all but Mwambwa is one of the names.
M: My name comes from the Luo I am called Okuku. The grandmother of my father comes from Abas'sebu people. They came from Seme. She used to give birth but the children would

die. So she was told to give her child a name from Ebus'sebu. So she named her son Okuku and he survived.
E: The ancestral name?
M: Yes we come through that child. Mwambwa had three wives. Okuku was alone in their house. Oluchiri too was alone. But they used to go to the lake in Luoland when they were big and they were forced to change their names. When they get there Okuku became Oguk. Mwambwa became Michir. That way they would get well served at the lake.
E: A man's name is a man's fish.
M: If I go to the lake and I want to appear like Luo I will say I am Oguk. I will not say I am Okuku because Okuku sound [more Nyole] If you go to South Nyanza in Tom Mboya's place you will find the name Okuku there.
E: You see what I said? Mboya is Omunyole man. And that Mboya is which clan? Omwiranyi!.... Let me ask you what generation are you?
K: (After futile attempts) I don't know.
E: …. We have gone into lineages we don't understand women's lineages. If this one here has married from Ebwiranyi and his wife has given all his children names from Ebwiranyi are those children Abasilatsi? You know when he gets angry one day when he is old and blind he will ask the children " what is your name?" my name is Okuku then he says its ok. And you? This one gives a name from his mother's place. Then he says: I will not give you land. Go and ask your mother. Do you think he will be wrong? Because these names … how do these people find themselves here? These Aberanyi how did they come here? When anyone takes his grandfather's name he will crowd the entire land on him. His grandson who bears his father's name he will transfer all the land to him. You see the land belongs to the family. How can the others be given the land if they don't recognise the family name? Recognition is where the issue is…. Because names are disappearing; our lineages are disappearing because of names.
……..
Ku: It is possible that there are some cross border influences. In the pre-colonial days before the whites came we had a lot of relationship with Luos. Even then we were forced to live under Kisumu District up to 1920 many people in Ebunyole were forced to learn Luo because many official transactions in Kisumu were done in Luo if you wanted any service there you had to know Luo.
K: Before that we were not that way?
Ku:…. Before European came we had border wars which you heard the old man talk about.
K: But they used to intermarry?
Ku: Yes.
E: As for land wars, even now we still are fighting. Now we use money in the war. If you don't have money, won't your land been snatched? But those days it was the spear. You beat him into retreat.
K: Let me ask something else. If you said these Abanyole came as a group is it possible for you to follow through their separate lineages?
E: Let me go and search.
M: You see Adam might have a man with all this information. But the problem is he may not want to release it. You see in this area we had a man here at Ebwiranyi – Cornelia Otieno. He wanted this boundary to be pushed to put all these people in Nyanza. These Aberanyi you talked about in Rusinga if you go deep there you discover these Aberanyi people speak to one another in Luo. You find them speaking Olujaluo! (Luo) And if you read Were's book: *East Africa Through 1000 Years*, you will find that Abamuli people have been given a lot of space. But these Abamuli, if you follow them closely they don't appear in the mainstream of

Abanyole at all. Abamuli are said to have hived off from the Maasai in Mount Elgon. They were usually taken to battle fields by Mumia. They get into a fight quite easily.
Ku: What I can say about that book… whoever wrote it … might not be Omunyole.
M: It was Osogo?
Ku: … you saw me talk very forcefully at that place. I said matters concerning Abanyole must be written by Abanyole themselves. And this is the beginning. That is why you see Dishon as well as other people are interested in writing the matters of Abanyole. Because whenever these people came here they would go through the administration. Then the administration would bring people from a particular clan to write history. But whatever they wrote was in [their clans'] favor. That is why we have wrong information on Abanyole. I wanted to ask my brother Eyahuma: have you ever come across anyone saying the sons of Anyole are Abamuli, Abasilatsi and Abamutete, they came from the same mother, have you come across such a thing?
E: It is there…. I will talk about it. Didn't you see me exclude Om'mangali, didn't you see me exclude Abakhobo didn't you see me exclude Ab'bayi?
Ku: Yes. The reason why I say this is that you said the name is a people's lineage…. I find the name Chitwa [in Ebusilatsi]. When I come to my lineage, I find Chitwa is there. I found Ot'tiali is in Ebusilatsi, again you find Ot'tiali in Emute'te. You find some names have a similar origin because people name after their relatives or clan.
E: Let me explain to you. The name Chitwa … it came with a woman. You know, a name like Ebulonga has no meaning in Ebusilatsi. That is the work of the Amukhoye's wife… *Omulongi* (pot maker). Because she was the daughter of Abalokooli. "Let us go to the place of Omulongi". It is like when you build a house and leave it. If you come from town, build a house, put in a wife and run back. When people come there they find a woman. So when they come there they will say, "We are going to Mary's house". Even if you came back well dressed….
Ku: "We are going to Anyolo's".
E: "We are going to Anyolo's". So many of the names here are from the women who were married and were left in those houses. Take the name Elukongo for example. Elukongo was not a human being, it is land. It was like this: when the first born son of Amukhoye became obstinate and stuck with his woman and refused to get away from her, from the witch, he was told: "Leave with your wife and go to Mulukongo!"…in Olunyole it is *olukungu*. That is that *olukongongwe* – across the river, the other side. Because that place from Khusikulu (wa Amukhoye) was very far in those days.
Ku: And there were wild animals!
E: It was very far. So he was sent into the forests far away "on that ridge". "so and so has gone to live on that *olukongo* (ridge)". Then it was called Elukongo. Elukongo is just land. But those who live there… they have their (lineage) names.
…….

**Except 3. Interview with Ayub Patrick Muchel'le, Adam Kutai, Isaya Miya in the home of Ayub Muchel'le, Ebutongoi Emusire. 22 December 2006**

…….

K: As I have told you, I would like you to tell me what you know about the past of Abanyole. I would like the interview to follow a schedule I have.

……

K: When were you born and where?

Muchel'le (M): I was born in 1937, September 8 in Emusire Sub-location, Emusire village, Ebutongoi…. I was born in church. I was born in Kima hospital. The rituals performed at my birth were church rituals. I was brought clothes as well as coats with woolen collars by the missionaries from Kima Mission. When I got home the Christians were very happy because my mother had given birth to a baby boy. My mother had given birth to three other babies but they had died…. We used to live *mwitala* (Christian dormitory village) at Emusire. Sometimes I would leave the village to visit my grandfather, the father of my mother. While with him, my grandfather would ask me to prepare caterpillars for him…. He used to send me to collect caterpillars. Once I brought them I would prepare them by removing their entrails. I would then roast them in a special pot. I did all that without the knowledge of the church…. If the church knew it would have punished me. I too have eaten caterpillars. Other days I would trap farm rodents, roast them very nicely and give him. My grandfather then said: "I have blessed you. You will be a ruler." You know Okubo was a ruler himself, he was a warrior. The other ritual I went through was circumcision. I was circumcised in 1946. I was circumcised with my age mates. I was circumcised where Emusire Church now stands. That was my farm. My grandfather gave it to me.

K: You talked about rodents people of that time used to eat rodents?

M: Yes. People used to eat rodents, caterpillars, locusts – when they came. But caterpillars and rodents were eaten regularly. There was a special type of caterpillars…. If they knew they would excommunicate you: "Why do you eat rodents and caterpillars? That is food for those who do not know the church, why do you eat them?"

Kutai (Ku): They were called *Abeingo* (People of home – non Christians).

K: Let me ask, are the rodents still eaten these days?

M: This time they are no longer there. There were particular rodent that we ate. They were: *ifukho*, there was another one which was very sweet…

Ku: *Libendi*?

M: Yes *libendi*. That was the food we ate at that time; squirrels… we used to eat such food.

K: What I saw, whenever anyone killed a squirrel he would give it to the dogs to eat. Or better still they would not even bother with it. So when did these changes happen?

M: Some used to leave them alone because they didn't like to eat squirrels. Because when you married a wife and you did not have cattle (for bride wealth), you would kill a squirrel, dry it, grind it and put in your wife's food. She would never leave you. So some people distrusted it and always gave it to the dogs. But we used to eat it.

K: You have told us how you grew up and how you were circumcised, but where did circumcision come from?

M: Circumcision has always been there. However my father, for instance, was not circumcised because it was understood that circumcised or not, you still would be a Christian. It is written that way in the bible. As for us we thought the whole ritual was colorful. So we asked the elders: "Can't we get circumcised?" Then they said: "Yeah, circumcision is fine. If you feel like it just go ahead." But there were others who were older than us who were not

circumcised. They were circumcised with us in 1946. After 1946, circumcision became regular. People turned it into a regular habit. I remember there was a man in this village who was already married with children. His name was Silvano Mwenje. He was circumcised with our group because he had not been circumcised earlier since it didn't matter much then.
K: This means that just a little earlier there was no circumcision?
M: A little earlier there was no circumcision.
K: Then where do you think circumcision came from?
M: Circumcision: one, it came with the bible. It is the bible that brought it here because Jesus Christ was circumcised after a few days. Again Abraham's children were circumcised. But for us Abanyole, circumcision started with the coming of the mission. But other communities used to circumcise. Only we did not, especially here in my area, because I would not be sure about the others: Omusiekwe, Om'mutete, and so on. But if what I saw here affected all Abanyole, then it maybe all Abanyole never used to circumcise.
K: That means you would not tell what used to happen in Em'mutete and the other places.
M: I would not know that. What I know is what happened here in Ebutongoi. 1946 is when I witnessed circumcision. Many mature men came to get circumcised. Some old men came and said, "I want to get circumcised, I want to get circumcised!" Then they got circumcised.
K: When did you marry?
M: I married on 1 May 1961. I did not have a church wedding at that time. I just "stole" my wife. They nearly killed me. She was in standard six. I drove to her place in a car took her and fled with her to Nakuru (laughter). But recently when I went to church, I brought myself back into the light by doing what we call register – an elder's wedding. I did that in 1991. Otherwise I stole when I married her at first. I paid five cattle and I have not added anything else since. If I get any cows from my daughters I will take something to my brothers-in-law. My father was a poor man. He could not even afford to pay my school fees…. Actually it is this old man who educated me.
K: Which one?
M: (Pointing to two graves). This is the old man who educated me. His wife is here lying next to him. He is my uncle, my father's brother. My real father and mother remained the other side…. This one is his cousin, the son of his father's cousin…. He is the one who paid my school fees. In fact he also paid the twenty cents fee when I was circumcised. We used to pay twenty cents at that time.
K: Did he give you this land in which you have built your home?
M: Yeah. As soon as I was circumcised in 1946, he took me to his house. I started to look after his cattle as well as the home because he was working with the Railways out there. When I married, I even brought my wife to that house. I stayed with him very well and for a long time. As you know at that time, if he got dissatisfied with me he would have told me, "Ah, ah go back to your father!" So I used to till this land; I used to wake up at 3 am and take bananas to Luanda Station. I would leave the bananas with someone else to sell them; you know the old lady was a banana trader in Nairobi.
K: Which old lady?
M: This one sleeping here. I would come back, take bath and leave for school. Only then would the old lady recommend that my fees be paid. At that time the fees was two shillings.
The old man (gave me this land). He never had a surviving son. All his sons died. He remained with three daughters. I therefore took the responsibility for this home. He gave me this home. His house used to be here where the trees are now.
K: Should we say her took you as his own son?
M: He took me as his own son. He brought me up, he educated me, but at some point he realized he could not afford my fees. I passed exams and went to Alliance but he could not afford to pay my fees. I went to Kakamega. The late Daniel Wako struggled to get me to

Kakamega. I was in Kakamega for only one term. Then again I was unable to pay the fees. He then took me to Mwihila to take what was then called T3 course. When I got there, again 40 shillings, just 40 shillings caution money; you pay 40 and learn two years free; I could not afford. That is when I left and went to look for a job. I joined Railway and was taken all the way to Tabora! 1959 – that was when I started working.
K: Let us say that you impressed the old man. That is why he gave you this land. Is that normal in Ebunyole?
M: It is not very common. It all depends on the individual. Otherwise this old man might as well have sold it. He would have sold it saying," Let me eat all that belong to me, *kumaitso*." They used to call it *kumaitso* … which means "I will eat all that is mine, who can I hand over to?" But this one was very good hearted. He gave me this land, and again he gave me another smaller piece among those rocks… Some (brothers) were given sheep others goats, while others were given cows. He was a very generous man.
…….
M: We used to work together. In fact food was never eaten inside the house. The men would sit together and food would be brought to their sitting from all their houses. All the children would gather there and share the meals. The poor and destitute children would get their meals there. They called it *esiokhulia siokhusitioli* the (food of the bonfire). The bonfire was lit at about 5pm. At that time there were no lamps. We used what we call *ebiyayi*. Do you know *ebiyayi*?
K: Ah, ah.
Ku: A burning splint
M: They were made from elephant grass (*tsimuli*). The grass was tied together and bee wax put at the tip. Once it was lit, it would never go off. There were special people who used to make it. If you had two rodents you would buy one candle. Or if you had a gourd full of caterpillars you would get one candle. It was the lamp of the time. What I am telling you is what used to happen here. What happened in his (Kutai's) home I might not know.
K: If that was the practice among Abatongoi it might not necessarily mean that it was the common practice among all the other Abanyole?
M: I would not tell what Am'mutete or Abasiekwe used to do but what I saw is that they would exchange *esiyayi* for a gourd of caterpillars or two rodents. We had an old man here called Abuyeka. He used to live near this hill. He was the expert at making them. So you would hear, "I am going to Abuyeka's home to buy *esiyayi*. I have been lucky to get two rodents."
Ku: About circumcision you said you were circumcised in 1946. Were you circumcised by Omunyole or did your circumciser come from outside?
M: My circumciser came from outside. They came from Itakho. We used to have Abetakho and Abatiriki. They used to circumcise here. This means the practice started in their place.
……
K: So what happened after you married?
M: After I married I lived outside (Ebunyole). I worked in what was then Tanganyika, I worked in Uganda, and while in Tanganyika I reached a place known as Bukavu in [Democratic Republic of] Congo. That was the time *rhumba* was at its peak in Congo. I had a lot of young blood at that time so I decided to go there to enjoy. We were curious to see the people of Congo so we used to cross Lake Tanganyika to Congo. While I was still there, in order to get promotion I started climbing mountains. You would go up then come down, then after three days go up again. I did that for 24 days in three months.
K: Was it punishment?
M: That was the path when the colonial government wanted to promote you. You could not be promoted if…

Ku: If you were not healthy.
M: After that they thought you were fit to take over from a white yard master. After that I came back home and went into politics. I was first elected Kanu (party) treasurer in West Bunyore... I was then elected organizing secretary for the constituency. If I might go back a little, I might forget this. While I was still in school in 1952, when Mau Mau had become very hot, we went to Iguhu, Itakho. Do you know the place?
K: Iguhu, Welitambitsa?
M: Correct Welitambitsa, there by the riverside. We stayed there for two months but little did we know that the Governor Sir Evelyn Barring was there in a tent all this time. Till the last moment when I was just about to leave, that is when we saw the governor come out, a man with a stoop. I was the troop leader of our scout movement. We greeted each other very heartily, but unfortunately because of the many transfers I have misplaced the photographs. I remember at that time I greeted sir Evelyn Barring. He hugged me and told me, "Thank you very much, your troop has guarded me very well." That is when we were shocked, "What? We had the white man in our midst all along!" That was 1952; it is the incident I still remember well. I have been in politics; I have been a nominated councilor from 1988 to 1992. I had a break then I was elected councilor in 1999 to 2002. The other story is that of the church. I have been in church since childhood. We used to go to Kisumu, Eldoret…in youth meetings and we would meet Byrum (the current Bishop of Church of God) there as the youth leader.
K: These stories you have told me and many more you will tell me about Abanyole because I realize you know quite a lot, do you tell anyone else?
M: I have never told anyone. Only in December last year some children came. That is when I told them briefly some of these stories. I did not talk to them in as much detail as… I am doing with you now…. Or else when I am with this young man we are here with now, this Isaya, I sometimes just gloss over some of these incidents I have talked about. But he does not take them so seriously as to write them down. We regard it as light banter. So you are the first one.
K: Does that mean that you have no time to tell the stories?
M: The time to tell the stories and the people to tell. First you must see the interest, don't you have the interest? That is why you have come. But if I found anyone with the interest I would tell him, "Come at such and such a time. I will tell you."
K: Do you sit with these children to talk to them?
M: Yes I call them and tell them but I usually I just scratch the surface. I never go as deep as I have done today. Besides when I start to talk to these ones they say "Our father just likes talking a lot of not so useful things." They don't value it at all. If you were not here now they would have gone away by now. Since I had interest I used to sit with my grandfather Okubo. He is the one I got these stories from – 1944!
K: Allow me to ask you: how did you get the larger chunk of the stories?
M: As I told you my grandfather was called Okubo. He is the one who gave me the stories. After I had brought him caterpillars and rodents he would start to teach me how to live and how to walk as a man. He told me, if you were walking and you met a man swinging his spear violently in a forward and backward motion, then you must know that man is evil. Don't follow him too closely. Because swinging his spear that way on a road means that he will simply say, "I was walking with my spear and it pierced Kweya. I did not mean to do it." But how can you swing a spear on such narrow paths as we used to have? So he told me a good person points his spear upwards when he is walking with it. He also told me, "If you hear people whisper that Kweya is a witch/sorcerer, don't allow him to follow you behind. Because you do not know what he might be doing behind you." Tell him: "Please walk ahead." If he refuses then sit down and tell him, "In that case you go on." Because there must

be something he wants to do behind you without your knowledge. And it is true, that is the way it was. That is what he told me …. If he saw anyone walking in a manner that was suspect he would tell you, "Ah, ah; don't meet that one. The way he walks is suspect. He might be returning from collecting potent charms. Back here I used to sit with my father and another old man who was called Amayi. My father told me …, we are Abasuka here in Em'mulioto. Our curse is very potent. I should never say anything against you even if you annoy me to the extreme. I must remain very composed because the moment I utter any word, something nasty will happen to you that instant…. This old man (grave) we are seated next to for in stance, this one who gave me this land, his mother was called to a funeral at her home – she was from Em'mang'ali. Then the brother of my father went to the funeral and he was killed there. When they came back, they cursed her saying, "It is you who called us for the funeral. You have a made a young man from Ebutongoi get killed in your home. You will never give birth to a boy. But since this one was already born, the curse could not have affected him. So all her children were not able to bear sons; we have very potent curses. That is why if anyone offends me, I don't take any action. And I tell them, "Please leave this place because you are opening up things which will have unpleasant results" because if I was to say anything it would be to his detriment. Another old man called Sikunyi…he died just the other day…. He is the one who told me some of the stories I will tell you about Abatongoi. This other old man, Okubo, let us go back to the story of Abanyole, he told me that when the first Omunyole, whose other name was Mwenje, arrived at the cradle in Ebuhando… this place where we used to have Kanu office, near Osilo's place.

K: Wekhomo

M: Wekhomo. When they landed there Abasiekwe, that is Asubwe, and Abayi, Abayi is the ancestor of Ab'bayi… one followed the other at birth. They were brothers. Asiekwe came out first then he was followed by Abayi. The two clans never used to intermarry. The current generations are so lustful they have started to intermarry. But that time, regardless of how beautiful a woman was, they were sister and brother. When Asubwe arrived here he left Likondi. Likondi is the ancestor of Abakasala…. If you go to Emanyinya you will find Abakasala. And down here on your left on your way to Es'saba, we have Abakasala there. So his wife who was called Ambitsa…

K: Whose wife?

M: The wife of Asubwe, her name was Ambitsa. She gave birth to the Abambitsa and left them down there close to Ebukanga. Don't you know Ebukanga? That clan is settled there. Some of them went to the place called Emutsalwa. Abatsalwa are in Siaya and others are this side.

K: Siaya, meaning they have become Abajaluo?

M: Yes, they are Abajaluo! They are enumerated there. That is where they came from to join their fellow Abaambitsa. So one of his sons left the hill because his children were dying and came to settle closer here; he is the ancestor of my grandfather Okubo.

K: These people you called Abatsalwa, they do not speak Olunyole now?

Isaya Miya (I): They speak both languages.

K: Do they ever come back here; is there anything that brings them back here?

M: Those who are related to my grandfather come when there is a funeral. Those who can speak Olunyole are the older age groups. But the youth speak only Olujaluo now

K: So they are Abajaluo, have they forgotten this place completely?

M&I: They have forgotten!

K: So you have told me that there is no opportunity to tell your story, what do you feel about it?

M: I always fear that what I know will get lost because no one seems to be interested. I don't have the money to write a book so people can read. So what I know is as good as lost.

K: I notice you have a book here. What was your intention in keeping such records?
M: I have kept these records so that when I will be dying I will call a child, “Hey you come fast take this note book so you can see what I did.”
K: So whom will you give?
M: The father of the boy who left here a short while ago. His name is Tom
K: Your second born son?
M: Yes because only he has shown great interest in the issue of birth lineages.
K: Do you think this matter has any value?
M: Yes it has. First of all it teaches you to ask**:** “This home I have married from what kind of people are they? Because you might marry from a family which has a history of epilepsy; you know we now have advanced medicines. You may never tell that the family of your future in laws has a history of a horrible affliction. That is the first reason. Secondly you might marry from a home where … there was a man who murdered someone. You know if you kill someone, the blood moves within your family. Then one day one person with that blood will kill again. The third thing is to know about relations, the patterns of your relations. If Adam does not tell his children, “My uncles are Am’mulioto; my uncles are Abatongoi the children will start to intermarry anyhow. So it is very important, very crucial. I have always desired get someone I can sit with and tell him, “This is what I know.”
K: If you had your way, which is the best method for you to pass tell others what you know?
M: If the last word lay with me I would have written it down so others can read. Because if you bring people together so you can talk to them that will demand enormous resources and I don’t have the money. Besides, what I will tell them has immense value to them but still they will want me to pay them because I have called them. That is the way it happens when we go for seminars.
I: There are other old men who are much older than this one and they know a lot about Abanyole. But if you tell them to come and sit here to talk to you, they will demand a lot of money because they will say you are using them to make money for yourself. There are other people, like Jairo. If you sat with him, wouldn’t you make a book?
M: The problem with most people is that they will not just tell you what they know. You must pay them first.
I: When you ask anyone, “what used to happen in our clan; where did we come from?” That is something those of the younger generation like us might need to know. But they will tell you, “Wasn’t your father here, why did he not tell you?”
…….
K: Let me now come to the main topic of today. I wanted to know about Abanyole: Where did Abanyole come from; how did they move up to this place and what did they encounter on the way; was it one person or were they many?
M: As I told you I don’t know too much about this matter. What I know I will tell you. I was told by the old man I talked about called Okubo. It is Okubo who told me. I asked him: “Grandfather where did your people come from?” That is when he started to explain to me how two brothers Abayi and Asubwe. They were brothers and were born to a man called Mwenje. His other name is Anyole. Then I asked him, “This name Anyole, how did it come about, if his name was Mwenje then how did Anyole begin?” The he told me Anyole was a nickname that was given to him because of his prowess at the battlefield. Whenever they went to battle *yanyolanga abandu bunyola* (he used to pluck them like you would vegetables from the stalks). He would slash people at a lightening speed. He had that skill. If he thrust his spear into one man, it would pierce through as many as three men. But his name was Mwenje. Then I asked him: “Did this Mwenje have a father” The he told me: “The father of Mwenje was a man called Amuhinda, A man called Amuhiinda!” 1944: that is when he told me this story. Mwenje was born with three brothers: Mwenje, Andimi – who went and gave

birth to Abalokooli, Akusii, and the father of Abawanga – Kawango. The father of Amuhinda, whose name he did not give me, came from Egypt (Emisiri). He said that in Misiri there was King Solomon who married a woman from a place called Absinia – that is Abyssinia.
Ku: Ethiopia?
M: Ethiopia – it was called Absinia; that is what we later learned in history as Queen of Sheba. When she took some materials for the construction of the temple of God she united with Solomon and had a son from whom all Abanyole descended. His name was Simoni Omukurene in the bible, Simoni Omukurene. They are Abakurene. That is the family of Solomon and Anyole. They crossed and went to Emisiri. When they left Emisiri, they came and crossed Sudan and reached Uganda. There are a people called Abanyoro; that is what the old man told me – Abanyoro. When they were there with these Abajaluo, these Abajaluo called Jopadhola, it appears that Omujaluo man had many open sores. They would have established themselves in Uganda, but it appears one of our people pricked the raw wound of the Jopadhola man. Then it turned out, "Uhu! You have come here and you know the problem of our man, yet you go ahead and trample on his wounds? You must leave!" That is when Amuhinda leaves that place. He comes up to Es'sumo, and at Es'sumo he stays with his children, then Abakisii go that side. Abalokooli go to the other place which has now been carved out for them, Then Mwenje comes among the rocks at Wekhomo. But their departure from Es'sumo was not peaceful, because when they arrived there they became farmers. They planted millet and very many different foods. Then those others came from that side. They were fishing as they came, but our people did not know how to eat fish, so they used to exchange the millet for fish. Abajaluo used the millet to make beer while they made *obusuma* (meal) from the rest. Our people started to learn how to eat fish. While at that point, they clashed with Abajaluo. The old man told me a lot of things but at that time I had a small memory so some of them faded from my memory. But what I memorized well is from the time we came to our home at Wekhomo. They separated there, and then Tongoi came and settled at this place they call Musikoma at Es'saba. Subwe went beyond and left his first born son, Likondi, who gave birth to the Abakasala while Subwe himself proceeded up to Itumbu. That is where he sired the Abetumbu and Abasibila. Then I asked him, "How did the name Esibila come about?" Then he told me, "Esibila was a greedy man, he used to stop and rob people of their property. That is how the name Esibila came about. That is how far I can go on the matter of Abanyole. Then he also told me these Abanyole had some *abalosi* (witches) among them. They used to churn their charms to keep away the enemy so they were taken along for that purpose. He told me a bit more about those *abalosi*. For instance these Am'mukunzi, do you know them?
K: I know them.
M: Anyole brought them to bewitch the enemy. You see, instead of stabbing him with a spear, shouldn't you just have him bewitched? Let him die away! (Laughter) that is what the old man told me. He told me, "You see that so and so? Don't you ever marry from there, they are witches!" (Laughter) That is why these things can help our children. If you for instance were to get a woman from Em'mukunzi, find out, if she is an original Om'mukunzi, leave her alone! Those things are in their blood!
K: Does that mean Am'mukunzi are not Abanyole?
M: Am'mukunzi are not Abanyole, I do not know where Anyole got them from, but he wanted them for his wars.
K: Any others?
M: The others are Am'mang'ali…. Am'mang'ali are not Abanyole, they came from… among these Abakisa.… Ebusamia! They came from the original Ebusamia and came to settle here (pointing to Kisa). There used to be wars so they captured those men and brought them here.

K: Captured who?
M: Abanyole captured Abasamia and brought them as prisoners of war. They were then brought and told to settle where they still live now. The other people who are not Abanyole are Abasiralo…. but their origin I can not tell you. The other people who are not Abanyole are those in power now.
K: Abasikhale?
M: Abasikhale. There are three groups. The first one is…
I: How does the name disappear today yet I have always heard you mention it?
M: I always talk about it but they are the family of Atala and the MP. They are Abajaluo.
I: And Mbalanya?
M: Ah, ah Mbalanya is Omusikhale. Those like Joel who was very famous a while ago, he is not Omusiekwe; he is…. Tell my wife to give me the dairy for 1988!
K: Does it mean you record all this in formation down?
M: Yes I record and keep.
K: You must have kept a lot?
M: There is a lot. Even about your people Abasilatsi is there: Am'matakho, Nakuti, whoever… It is there I have written it all. The other thing I was told, those who are not Abanyole: Abakanga, Am'mabwi…These Abakanga, Mwenje came with them from this side. You know some were his herders. They came up to Esumba. Esumba is where they settled: Esiamatete, Abakobelo, Abaasamba, those are Abakanga. They are not Abanyole: the others are Abasakami. Abasakami are not Abanyole; they are Abatsiine, they came from Imbo (Luoland). The others are …Abahando: Abahando originate from the Abanyole clans. They went there because they transgressed the social norms. Like if you killed your brother then your father would tell you: "Can you see that hill? Go and live there, you are not a good man, go there! The others who are not Abanyole are Aberanyi. Aberanyi are said to be Abajaluo from Sakwa, the old man told me that way…. But Om'muli are said to be "*omwana womukoko*," [the son of a daughter of the Ebunyole] but I don't know which clan exactly. They remained among their uncles. Then we have the Abas'sama. Among Abas'sama we have Omusakami, Omusiloli, Omuwanga, and then we have Omutiriki. We have four Abas'sama groups. What brought them is the issue of murder. That is what usually brought them, and then they would be welcomed by Abatongoi. Like I told you if you killed your brother you would be banished.
K: Is that *esiluchi*?
M: Yes it is *esiluchi* (murder of a kinsman).
K: Let me ask you, you have kept very meticulous records. How did you start?
M: When someone says anything for instance during the time I was in politics, we might walk up to say Ebusiekwe. I want to win votes for Muchilwa, I must understand the history of that particular place. I must know who those people are. Then I would go and whisper to Muchilwa, "If you want those people to like you say this." And once you say this there a lot of excitement, "weeei, wei wei, weei wei wei!" Then would they ask, "But how did he know?" They would not know that I did some research and told Muchilwa. That is why Muchilwa kept winning…
K: Can we say that whatever you know beyond what the old man told you is because of politics?
M: It was politics. I used to try and find out: which name can you call them to thrill them. For example if you want Omutongoi to like you, call him Malimba. If you call him Malimba, whatever he might have hidden away he will give to you. Because he will say, "That means he knows me very well, that I am the owner of this land!" Malimba was a woman, the wife of Tongoi. We will come to that later.
K: So about Abanyole, can you continue?

M: …. As I told you I don't have very deep knowledge on Abanyole…. I was the organizing secretary. Muchilwa would send me say to Ebusiekwe, then I would go to investigate, "How is this place we plan to go like? Then when we meet I would tell him," When you go to that place you must talk about this. You will become very popular among those people. Muhanji as well; I helped Muhanji a lot. I did a lot of work for him: Ebukanga, Em'mang'ali, wherever, Because I was the organizing secretary for the party.
K: Which group did you say you were more comfort able talking about?
M: What I know very well is about Abatongoi.
K: Then please talk about Abatongoi: Where did Abatongoi come from?
M: Abatongoi: once Mwenje had arrived at Wekhomo, he started to show his children where to establish their homes. Then Tongoi came to Musikoma. At Musikoma he gave birth to four children: the first born was called Kobelo. He is the eldest son. The second son was called Ng'anga. This Kobelo, his mother came from Ebuchiebe – these Abakanga next to us. Ng'anga his mother came from Em'muatsi. While we are still at it, a man from the Kobelo sub-clan can not marry a woman from Ebuchiebe, or an Omuchiebe girl cannot marry among Abatongoi Abakobelo. She must be asked, "Which Abatongoi are you marrying into: is it Omukobelo or Omung'anga?" If she says it is Omukobelo she will be told, "Stop right there!" Nga'nga's wife was the daughter of the Am'muatsi. That is why we Abatongoi Abang'anga, I am Omung'anga, we cannot marry from Em'muatsi. If you make the mistake and marry from there then you will have ruined your entire family. (He goes on to give an example of a very well known politician who refused to listen to advise and married a woman from Em'muatsi despite all entreaties. Now his children he says "creep on the ground like caterpillars").

The third son whose name I do not have did some monstrous act on the fourth son whose name I also do not have. Did I not tell you they were four brothers? This third son, his brother, whose name I was not given, was milking. While he was milking a cow, the wife of the third son, can you see the inflammatory nature of women? I will explain to you. While he was milking, the third son also wanted to milk his own cow. Then the wife told him, "Umh, your brother has taken *ehari* (milking vessel), wont you let him finish milking first?" Then he said "Ah, ah, go and bring me *ehari* quickly; I am in a hurry because we have a meeting to discuss about a war which will be in some place we will have to stay away overnight." Then the wife went there. When she got there she was told, "Go and tell my brother to let me finish. Once I am through I will bring *ehari*. The wife left that place crying! "You sent me to your brother, now your brother has insulted me!" Then that one picked his spear *pup*! And he found his brother milking. He thrust the spear through him and killed him. After he killed him, then he discovered, "It was mere aggravation by my wife. Then Tongoi told him: "I- D-O- N-O-T- W-A-N-T- Y-O-U- H-E-R-E. L-E-A-V-E- A-N-D- G-O- A-W-A-Y- F-O-R-E-V-E-R! Go far away; I do not want to see you in my land." When he left that place he came here. You know this was a forest. And we did not have these white men's trees; these trees we are seated under.

These ones we are sitting under are all foreign, may be that *olusolia* (tree). He came to this hill (on the border of his compound). While he was here, Tongoi saw smoke. You know in those days smoke used to rise straight high up. Then he said, "Eh, who might have come in that place?" Then he sent his children, "Go and find out what is that smoke about, who has come in to this land? Go and kill that being!" When they went, they found Ng'anga and Kobelo: "Ehe, Isn't it our own brother! They went back and told Tongoi, "That is our brother, the one who carried out the outrageous act here." Then he said, "Who-told- him- to- go-there- he- has- brought- a- curse! I said he must go; there to the land of the Wanga!" He sent them, "Go and kill that man, and kill complete with the eggs!" That is if he has children kill them all so that his line is wiped out. Meanwhile, he sensed danger and thought: "Once my

brothers tell my father I will not live. So he took his team *kukukuku* up to Ebusamia. And those clans there, if you hear a clan called, Abadongo…"
K: Is that the Samia of… Busia?
M: Yes. Those are the people of Julia Ojiambo; this famous lady, that professor. They are Abatongoi. We don't intermarry with them; they are our family! In that place they are called Abadongo. So Among those Abadongo, if a woman wants to get married here, she will be asked, which clan is your future husband?" For example I will give you the case of the late William Okech from Es'saba, don't you know his wife is the sister of Julia Ojiambo? When she wanted to get married to him she was asked, "Are you going to Ebutongoi, which clan? You are going to Ebunyole near to Abatongoi, what clan! When they were told Abatongoi they said "Ah, ah! Abatongoi are us!" So they came to investigate, "Who is Okech?" Then they found Okech is an Omusuubi man. Then they gave their assent. That is when she got married. But that fourth son, we were never told if he had any people; because had he had children we would be seeing them. Now let us come to Ng'anga; Kobelo and N g'anga. Of these two sons who remained, the one who was loved most is Ng'anga. Why was he loved? When your father is alive and you do something for him, your father says, "Ah, the only worthy son is this Kweya. As for the others, let them just keep out there. His father grew so fond of him that he blessed him. He was told, "From now you will not be called Ng'anga, you will be Ng'anga Buyachi. Buyachi meaning you will hatch like ants. And sure enough we are more than Abakobelo! However Abakobelo always get their way because they have a leadership talent. That is they are so cohesive that Ng'anga can not match them. If we said anything here as Abatongoi, shall we not disperse after that? They will summon one another, "Come, come do you think a small boy will rule us? A small boy will not rule us!" You will discover where you agreed to meet, haven't they sat together and made their water- tight plans: "Today we Abatongoi are taking, Adam is our bull which will fight so and so." They have added their own; suddenly you discover you have two Abatongoi contestants. That is why we suffer, even in politics. When Ng'anga contests we never manage to get a block vote from down here (pointing to where they presumably are located); they always split it. For example when we had the late Mukuna, whenever he contested they would also put their own. Did you not see Ob'bayi fighting? Again when the white man came, they were told "We want a guard who will move with the DO (District Officer)," because we had just been removed from Kisumu District. "Someone to walk with the DO at Emuhaya! Who will walk with the white man?" They took a man called Amatsili… from… Abang'anga, in the family of Buyuka, near the new shops at the bus stop. I was a small boy then, I was common in such places. They agreed: "Amatsili you will be the DO's *askari* [security]." After the agreement, they went to sit again. Then they said, "How can Ng'anga's house, such a small house, rule us?" Then they bought out the son of Akunda – Philip Imbote. Then they told him, "Imbote, when you hear them call Amatsili we will raise our hands and propose Imbote; you must stand up." So we came from all over this place with *ebikuti* (drums), but they came in silently, and in huge numbers, many because they know the white man believes in elections. When they came, that is when the white man said: "I want an *askari*!" Then people said, "Amatsili, Wilson Amatsili!" But they said, "Ah, ha; ah, ah it is not Amatsili; it is Imbote!" Then the white man said, "Now you are giving me two people? How do you want it? *Kura* (vote)!" You know the white man believes a lot in the vote. "*Kura*? Eeeh! Amatsili stand here; Imbote stand here: those who want Amatsili (points to one side); those who want Imbote (points to the other side). Wee, we did not get anywhere: *rururururu* the queue up to the other side…. they snatched us!"
I: Because they had planned, they knew what they were doing!
M: They had planned! One thing they have which we lack is unity. They are not many, but they are united. Another example: when we split: east wants their chief while we remain here

– west. It was agreed that the office would be given to Anyasi Omuchele. All of us agreed in one meeting that it will be given to Anyasi Omuchele: All abatongoi sat in one meeting – Abang'anga and Abakobelo. Those ones went and sat again and brought the same Anyasi. They removed him from being the *askari* of the DO and brought him to contest for the office of chief. Abatongoi left here well garlanded with climbers and everything. When they got to Emuhaya these others came from the other direction. "Eh, what is the matter with our brothers? They have put Imbote at the head with cattle following him behind?" They took him to this man we used to call Obongita…. Obongita who was in the Regional Assembly.
…….
M: Francis Obongita! So Obongita was seated there waiting for Abanyole to bring him one man. And he had told Mukuna, "If you bring one man I will give him." And how many men do Abatongoi bring?
M&Ku: (Together) two.
M: Anyasi and Imbote; and Abasiekwe brought Komba, this Komba we buried yesterday. While we were in Emuhaya waiting, suddenly we heard horns at that corner, "*twi- twi-twi-twiiii*." Wherever we were we crumbled, *tuubu*! Abasiekwe have snatched us. And why have they snatched us? These brothers Abakobelo here! They are not good people. They have ruined it for all of us! The people left there, the old men were dragging their feet in the dust. "These Abakobelo people have destroyed us." That is why I said their intelligence is not matched by that of Abang'anga. Even though we are more populous; but when we stand, we want the vote; if they don't support us… they never all support us; then you find they have come here and taken some Ng'anga and added to their side. There is where they beat us. … We had come to the houses of Abatongoi. Let us come to my own lineage – Ng'anga genealogy…. Let us start with Ng'anga…. Abakobelo, we will come to that later. This Ng'anga (reading from diary) had two sons. The first son was called Ambe; the second son was called Ndakala. Ambe is the one who gave birth to Ab'boka, Abaluyala, Am'mulioto, Ap'pwopi and Abasulundi, five houses which Ambe gave birth to. And Ndakala gave birth to Nondi; he gave birth to Abalwanda, who are your (Kutai) uncles; he gave birth to Abatikhwi, who are called Abalwakhi; he gave birth to Naabo; then he gave birth to a man called Mulembo. Now let's come to Kobelo (opening a different diary). As for Kobelo, his first son was called Sihuli; the son who followed was called Khaanda. I should have told you …these Sihuli people, if you want to get them properly, Sihuli is Akunda who was *omwami* (leader). He is Muhanji (former MP) – let me tell you in brief those who are on that side. Now when you come to the son called Khaanda, Khaanda is Mika Ob'bayi. When I talk about those ones you (Kutai) would know them. Let us come to the third son, he was called Muhima. This Muhima gave birth to Teyie. Teyie was the first ruler; Abasihuli and Abaakhaanda grumbled: "this little man, how did he come to rule us?" (Chuckles) that is Teyie – in colonial times. They are the likes of Teyie, who else might you (Kutai) know? The likes of Joseck Khatiili, did you know them, on the other ridge?
Ku: Yes
M: While we are still there… because I told you these people were very intelligent—these Abakobelo. When they started to rule us, someone called Teyie: When Teyie got office, he started to bring Abakobelo. if he found that this is the home of an Omung'anga, Kobelo would come and plant Omukobelo man there. That is why you see Abakobelo people are very many around here…. this man called Teyie. Because they had intelligence: "We shall rule them!" (dimumitive).
Ku: They used to plan well.
M: Planning; governing, they know very well; we can not beat them. Now, let us come to the fourth son, he was called Nafulu, Nafulu is the fourth son. Among these ones there are other small houses which came and settled. Then we come to the first son who was called Sinaka.

Sinaka, the way she came the son who married her first was the son of Ng'anga. That son died…. the one who was killed. When he was killed he had not had a child…. Then the son of Kobelo went and inherited, and then they [gave birth] to these people we call Abasinaaka. So Abasinaaka, we have said we cannot give them leadership because the house is without *irel'lesi*.
K: What is *Irel'lesi*?
M: *Isesel'le* (laughs)
Ku: *Kona kona*! (Not legitimate).
I: An inherited house.
M: Yes, a child from an inherited house, that Sinaaka. That is the story of Abakobelo. Now those Abakobelo, where they outwitted us, they used to take other people from, say for example… Kobelo was a warrious man…. when he went to fight in Em'mang'ali he planted seed there…. he gave birth to a man called Mukhwana. Then he left the place and came back here. Then the boy grew, grew, grew, then one day when he came here, as I told you about hunting and *elabusi* (fighting), he climbed to the top of an anthill and thrust his spear into an elephant till the elephant fell down. Then he started to praise himself: "Right, Kobelo, Kobelo, Kobelo's spear is the one that killed!" Then those people said, "*Yie*, so this is not our man!.... so this is an Omutongoi man? Out! Out! Out!" Then he came Habutindi here. They are called Abatindi Am'mukhwana. Mukhwana is the one who killed the elephant and praised his clan. Then Kobelo told him, "No problem stay here, because you have come from far and your land has not been found yet." But Abatindi were already there. Abatindi who had come from what we call… Itakho; Abetakho from… Abasikunga

Abatindi came from Itakho! That is to say there are three groups of Abatindi: Abatindi Am'mukhwana – those I have just told you about; *abehwa* Am'mang'ali (Am'mang'ali are their uncles)…; there are Abatindi who came from Itakho; there are Abatindi of the Muchilwa family who came from Ebutiriki…. So we have Abatindi here, three houses.
K: But these Abatindi from Itakho and and Abatiriki, how did they come?
M: They used to commit abominations in their place!
K: *Okhwarwa* (banishment)?
Mu: *Barwanga* (they would be banished); apart from Omutindi Om'mukhwana.
K: That one is *omwibule* (legitimate)?
M: He is legitimate. What brought him from there … is *okhwetacha* (self exaltation). Am'mang'Ali never knew this was an enemy (outsider). So when he praised himself: "Kobelo's (spear) has killed!" Then he left the place (laughs).
Ku: Then they said: "*Ihi*, is that what you are!"
M: "Is that what you are?" Usually you see, when you hit the ball and exalt yourself, for example, who your uncles are (laughs). Now there; that is what I can tell you about Abatongoi. But we have not touched the other *tsimbia* (houses). There are others…. Abatsulia….
…….
M: Omutsuulia is the son of *omukooko* – daughter of the Abang'anga clan. She went to get married out there then she differed with her husband and came back here with a son. When they came here, the people of Muima… when Omutangaale died they inherited the wife…. The first daughter is the one who gave birth to the mother of Omuseeni; Omuseeni who we buried recently…. You used to hear Omuseni praise himself: "Abatongoi are my uncles!"…. that is what I wanted you to know. Those ones are not original Abatongoi. They are Abatangaale, the child of *omukooko*.
……..
M: That is it. So that is what I wanted to tell you; and anyone else who is here in M'butongoi whom you might know…. (Checking diary, after some time) Let us come to a man called

Teyie who went to the other ridge… Esirulo, while he was at Es'saba, his father died. [Then] an Omusirulo man came and inherited the mother of Teyie.[79]…. Teyie, as you heard me tell you, these wrestling bouts which I told you used to be there; a man called Etole had just been promised leadership, so while they were wrestling Teyie took Etole, lifted him and slammed him into mud. Then it was said, "*Eyie*, how can you take the ruler and slam him into mud? There, where your mother went, follow your mother! And *purrrrru*, there he is where his mother went! (Laughs). Then while he was there, war broke out with Am'mang'ali. Then Teyie looked at an Om'mang'ali man and struck him once: *chapa*! And brought him down! Then they said: "*Hee*, now he should not go back to his home. Let us stick on him." They have seen he is a fierce and precise man. That is the group of Tuti son of Amatang'u. Amatang'u, have you not been seeing Amatang'u here at Esiruulo?

……

K: So, the people of Esirulo went to fight Am'mang'ali?

M: Yah; didn't I tell you these people were intelligent? They said, "Let us rule Orung'anga;" and if we want to rule them let us put them in the middle. Then they were at Es'saba and where? Esirulo. So they put us in the middle.

Ku: …. I would like you to tell me, here Mubutongoi do we have people called Abakhokoli, and Abamukhono, and Abaluma, and Abatsiili, and if they are there how did they happen here?

M: (Who has been responding in the affirmative every time a name is mentioned) Let us come first to Abakhokoli, they are here. These Abakhokoli came from Ebuaanga. The person who brought them was Tongoi; and they were brought because they are wizards. Why were they brought? Wizardry! That is in stead of having to go to war, use wizardry to kill the enemy. They came from Ebuaanga and came to settle here at Mwichio. Don't you see Mwhichio here *lichio* is?

K: Hee.

M: They are close to Owino Buyuka, that area. The whole of that valley is where they settled. They went up to… Khubaas'sama. After they stayed for a long time, instead of using their charms against the enemy they directed them to us! When they started to bewitch us, the old men sat down and said, "These people, we are the ones who brought them here. What do we do? Let them go to their country!" When word reached them that they were about to be expelled they asked, "Why?" Then they were told, "You are witches". "Uh! Not all of us are witches, the houses which have witches are so and so, so and so, so and so. If that is the case select the houses which bewitch others. Then they said, "So and so is a witch, so and so in a witch, so and so is a witch. And it is true. Those who were mentioned would be brought together with their paraphernalia (*ebichiochio*): huge snakes in there, toads in there, then they would come here (pointing behind him in the direction of Mwichio). Now I want to bring you to the word Mwichio. They were brough with huge pots. The pots were broken and burned and they were told, "Go back to your home!" Those witches. They left, when they were about to cross that river… that one that separates Omukanga and the other side. And there was war there, a very bitter one between Omwakwe and Akaanga. Then Akaanga said, "Abatongoi have expelled these ones?" "Hee!" "Because they are witches?" "Hee!" "Ok, let us put them in the middle." So that when the enemy came from the other side, they would get to the witches first. They would kill the witches (laughs). Kweya, these was a tough affair. When they were settled there, they helped Abakanga a lot. And those who remained here with us, those who were good, they are still there. The others…

K: You were going to talk about the name Mwichio…

[79] I have tried to retain the in the transcript as it appears in the tape. It is clear though that Muchel'le might have got mixed up. He must have wanted to talk about Teyie's father rather than mother dying because husbands/men are never inherited.

M: Yeah, Mwichio, when the pots were broken there and set ablaze it had now become *lichio*: a place where pots had been set ablaze. Those were farms for Abaas'sama. Then Abaas'sama abandoned them saying, "We cannot stay where a snake has been burnt, where toads were burnt, not at Mwichio. That is where the name Mwichio… (Laughs).
K: Abaas'sama abandoned these farms?
M: They abandoned these farms and moved down there.where they now live.
…….
Ku: …. The others are people called Abaluma.
M: Yes. Abaluma, Omuluma is a girl called Omunaabo. She is an Omunaabo daughter. She got married… I can't recall the place, but if it is not Kisa, it is Ebutsotso.While there, she bungled. When she bungled, she came back this way. That woman told (him) "If that is the case let us go back to my home. Don't we love each other? 'Yes'. And they have rejected you here? 'Yes' Then let us go back to my home. Then they came and stayed, do you see this place where we have put a hospital?
Ku: Hee.
M: That corner there: they built there. That is where they migrated from. Some have gone to Esiruulo, others have gone to Emanyinya. It is the offspring of *omukooko* – an Omunaabo daughter. Did I not tell you about a man Naabo from the people of…?
Ku: The others are people called Abatsiili.
M: Now, that Omutsiili, his origin is not known. We have asked the old men; the old men told us: "That man, when there was a ferocious war between Abas'sa people (on one side), and Abatongoi and Abakaanga (on the other). And those who went to fight in that war were Abalwakhi people; they came from here at Elwakhi and went to fight in that war. When they came back from there, they stumbled on a man, a very shot one, staying in a cave. Then he was called Atsieeli. They did not know: did he come from that side, because he had become dumb? He was not talking with anyone so no one knew what language he might understand. So he tarted to learn the language slowly by slowly – now Olutongoi. Because he did not know… he left when he was a small boy and lived in a cave. Then he stayed in that cave, in that cave, in that cave. Then when he became a big man, they suddenly saw a man emerge; he was following the cattle, the cattle… (Throws arms aside in a surprise posture; the face wrinkled appropriately to imitate the reaction of those who made the discovery): "This is a human being, this is a human being!" "Where do you stay?" He points hand there. They go there and confirm that he stays in that cave. That is these Abatsiili. Their origin, we don't know, but they came from that side, where they went to fight.
Ku: And these Abasiekwe among Abatongoi, these Abakasala, how did they come to be among Abatongoi?
M: When Asubwe was coming from this direction (pointing to Wekhomo side – he had said earlier that is where all Abanyole came from). His first son… He found when Abatongoi had come and were already here. A war had broken out between Omutongoi and Omwakwe. Then tha war was going on. Then Tongoi said: "Asubwe, these people are pushing me; what shall I do, I don't yet have a large family. Help me to push these people up to the other side. Then the man who sired Abakasala was left here. And he had sired a number of sons. Whenever he threw a spear it would bring down two people. That is why he was put here and others came up to here. These are the likes of Omutiichia, if you have heard of Omutiichia. Omutiichia is Omusiekwe man, and he died in 1885, that is when Omutiichia died, 1885. That is what the elders told me about the time he died.
K: Something else: you said you know about Abatongoi and Abasiekwe…
M: About Abasiekwe, I wanted to read where I wrote. It ought to be in my diary of 1988. I think it is not here (pointing to a diary he has been consulting).
K: So it is not something you can remember?

M: It is not something I can recall unless I look through the records. I must read through before I tell you.

……

K: You have told us a lot. Now let me ask this: Abanyole have certain characteristics. What makes one Omunyole; what makes it possible to tell this is Omunyole? … if you meet him, how would you tell?

M: …. If you want to know Omunyole, you will tell from the language: the way he will pronounce the words which come from his mouth. When he pronounces his words, then you will tell this is Omunyole. For instance, I went to Tangangika, when it was still called Tanganyika, in 1968. The languages we used to speak, be it English, be it Kiswahili, I was able to detect: this is Omunyole, this is Omulokooli, this one is that ethnic community…. Once he speaks I would ask him, "You are Kenyan, are you not Omulokooli?" Then he would say (excitedly), "Yaa, but how did you know me!" Yet I knew it when he talked. That science, I used to have it. But for others who you do not have a way of telling. You can sit with a man, whatever the language he speaks, you can not know, you can not know his ethnicity.

K: How did you get that ability?

M: The way I am made! (Laughs) that is a matter of God; because sometimes we would be in darkness, then I would say, "You who is talking, you are Omus'sa!" Then he would ask, "And who are you who is talking; how did you know I am Omus'sa?" Then me, "I told you, you are Omus'sa, if you are not Omus'sa deny it!" Then he would say (trying to speak in the Kisa accent), "It is true I am Omus'sa" (Joined by Kutai in laughter). Hee, that used to happen…; it is the way one is made; you can detect according to the way God has made you. But after you have stayed with him…; because the first meeting you will conclude from his dialect, then as you continue staying you will see his mannerism. You will realize, his behavior is not like ours, it differs slightly. For instance, if you want to marry, you know those early days people would just pounced on a woman.You do not know what ethnicity she is, you just pounce. How you will know she is Omunyole, when she goes to the river, she will take the pot direct to its seat, right into the house where she got the pot. But if she is not Omunyole, she will never put the pot back into its seat; you will discover that she has put it aside. Then you will know, (low tone, surprise discovery) "Hoo, this one is not an Omunyole girl!" That used to happen here, I do not know how it was in Adam's area and yours. Then you find (in low thoughtful tone, hand on chin), "This girl who was seized, ah, ah." Then they would start to investigate, investigate: "Is she Omunyole Omutsiine… hoo, Abanyole who came in here!" But original Omunyole girl, once she comes here in Ebutongoi, she would take her pot direct into its seat (*musiina*). Because this is her area; she is not an outsider.

K: Ok. Something else I want to ask: these Abanyole, how did they relate with their neighbors: Luos, Kisa, Abetakho, Abalokooli, and… all of them, might you know how they related?

M: It was not easy, the way that old man (pointing in the direction of the home of his grandfather) told me, it was not easy for a Luo to sit with Omunyole. Even this time we are talking, if you take that my grandson then you take a Luo child and put him here, they must fight.

K: Even such small children?

M: Such small children! It is comes from that issue of the wound (pointing his finger to indicate how distant in time and space the issue is now) which I told you about: "These ones touched our raw wound; we should not sit with them. Omunyole touched the raw wound of Omujaluo, Jopadhola. You remember, I said that earlier, they in Uganda (pointing in the direction of Uganda). That Jopadhola might have been the brother of these Luos. So this one (Omunyole) scoured in the wound (demonstrates by scratching his left hand in the right palm

repeatedly to suggest deliberate action on the part of Omunyole and to imply the pain Jopadhola must have felt. All along a smile is dancing on Muchel'le's face as if to suggest intention on the part of Omunyole to inflict pain on his other) So that thing has sunk in (pointing to his chest). Like I told you it was not easy for Omunyole to sit with any one other than his own.They would say Omunyole might learn from you how he might fight you and take away your land. So those people were fearful. Even if you called him, if say he was Omus'sa and he was your neighbor, if you asked him to come and sit with you, he would be uneasy. He would say, "This Kweya is Omus'sa, and I am Omunyole; he may want to learn how to fight me, or I might learn how to fight him." So as a result of that they never would sit in the same place comfortably. What brought them together is religion.
K: Abanyole or who?
M: Abanyole, what brought Abanyole and the other communities; religion, that is what brought them closer, to sit together. But when they were in the world,[80] it was not common for them to sit together.
K: What about among Abanyole themselves: Abatongoi, Abamutete…
M: They can sit together, they used to sit together. But wait! It was not common for Am'mutete and us to sit together, ah, ah, it would be difficult. We would sit together with Omusiekwe. We even have the saying: Malimba and Imbako, Imbako are Abasiekwe, they wrestled who knew one another (that is even though they would fight occasionally, they were friends so the battle would not be ferocious and drawn out). But these ones (pointing to Kutai, Abamutete) are *inyumba ebindanga* (the house that growls), meaning they use their chest; when they want something and it is in M'butongoi (stressing, imitating the way Abamutete would demand): "You must give it, by force!" So it was not common for us to sit with them.
K: There is a woman married in my area who comes from Ebutongoi, she sang that song for me one day: "That house which growls let us meet out there!"
M: That is it! It is here (pointing to Kutai); the house that rumbles is here! Laughs) we will meet out there in battle, not in peace! (Sings the song) That house that rumbles, we will meet out there!
K: Is it an Abatongoi the song?
M: It is an Abatongoi song! The origin of the song is Abatongoi. When these ones had come out and were coming (to Ebutongoi), they had already passed Khusikulu Wemilabi; that is when Abatongoi started to put (communities) like… Ambuyo's community (Abakhaya) so that once they notice those ones coming they would come out and shout, "The enemy is coming, the enemy is coming!" Then Abanyole would come out. Their wars were fought there at Khusikulu Wemilabi – Abatongoi and Am'mutete.
K: Where would they fight?
M: Wemilabi – that was the battle field.
K: Abatongoi used to pass through Ebusilatsi?
M: They used to cross through Abasilatsi *tulu* (suggests determination, boldness.)…. Omusilatsi had no problem with Omutongoi man. No.
K: Were they friends?
M: (Sidestepping the question) Abasilatsi, their battles were fought in Ebalokooli. Your (pointing to me) lineage of Matakho and Nakuti, don't you know how it goes? Matakho and Nakuti! (Laughs heartily as he pats me).
K: You will have to tell me!
M: Matakho and Nakuti, and another one. There are two men from Abasilatsi (laughing). So, Abasilatsi and Abatongoi never fought any wars[81]…. He (Omutongoi man) went and took a

[80] In Ebunyole and most of the Luhya sub-groups, this expression (*abesibala/abeingo*) usually suggests some one who is not Christian; a man of the world.

girl from Abasilatsi Am'matakho of the Ot'tichilo family [and]… brought her here. Then the chief went to take out the girl. So someone came from here in Ebutongoi, that young man. You know, those days the home of the chief was well fenced with *tsifubu* (fence) You could not enter anyhow. He (the young man) came and disguised himself (within the *tsifubu*): "Why did they take away my wife?" When that one came from the other side singing…
Ku: *Niyemema* (happy dancing drunkenly)
M: *Niyemema*! You know when you have taken beer, and then that one went and speared him!
K: Who did he hit, the chief?
M: That ruler. I think he was the headman (*likuru*), because the real (assistant) chief was at Ebusilatsi. So the *likuru* was there, he was killed. Abatongoi left here. They said, "No, this man just stays among us. He is not Omutongoi. We have no problem with our brothers Abasilatsi. Abasilatsi, we work together. We push Abakwe up to the other side. (Change of pitch- higher) forgive us, this man just lives among us, don't put it to heart! That is when peace was made again. But Omusilatsi and Omutongoi were always together. It is Om'mutete that Omutongoi never liked. That is where there were wars…
K: Was that before the coming of colonialism?
M: Before the colonialists came. The reason was the person who brought chieftaincy was Omutongoi.[82] His name was Omulobole, they called him Omulobole. He got the chieftaincy from here[83] (pointing in the nothern direction), from Omumia's place. Om'mia came and gave him *obwami* (chieftaincy)[84]
K: Were colonialists here?
M: The colonialists were here. In the colonial days, those very early days.
Ku: When they had just arrived.

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[81] Muchel'le's position here contradicts that of Mbalukha, Ot'tiali, and many other Abasilatsi who said they were not such great friends with Abatongoi because when war broke out with Abalokooli and Abasilatsi went to help Abamutete, Abatongoi would sneak behind them and steal their livestock. Besides Abasilatsi say Abakhaya are the in-laws of their eponymous founder – Amukhoye. They say it is Amukhoye who brought them, yet Muchel'le claims Abatongoi placed them strategically in their present location more as scouts to warn about impending attack by Abamutete.

[82] This point is contentious. Abamutete claim they brought the first office of chief in 1904; but Mbalukha claims that the first chief (Otieno) from Em'mutete was appointed in Ebusiekwe. Otieno, he claims went for the burial of the man who welcomed the rain woman in Ebusiekwe and married her. During the mock fight (*esilemba*) Otieno knocked down everyone who challenged him because of his huge frame and beer belly. So it was there that he was given the office by consensus. Other sources (Osango from Ebusiekwe – he is chairman of the rainmaker's clan) claim that the office was given to Munala by Chief Mumia because Munala was Mumia's cousin, but Munala rejected the office because he wanted to retain his ritual office of the rainmaker. That is how Otieno got it. The Mbalukha version implies symbolic wresting of office from Abasiekwe which suggests that in the contest between Abasiekweand Abamutete Abasiekwe lost beause of the might of Abamutete; and that Abamutete challenged Abasiekwe in their own territory and won. However the Osango version implies that Abasiekwe simply gave away an office they didn't want, obviously because of its implied lowly status in comparison to the prestigious office of rainmaker. Yet others claim Otieno tricked Munala who was tipped to get it and gave him beer. When the white man came to install Munala he was too drunk to come for the installation. So Otieno was proposed and he got the office. Whatever the case this office has generated a lot of discourses to explain the bad relationship between Abamutete on the one hand, and Abatongoi and Abasiekwe on the other. This difference is still played these days especially when it comes to parliamentary elections.

[83] This is a typical Nyole way of representing distance. Mumias where Mumia must have come from is no less than 35 kilometers away. But the way Muchel'le talks about it and (in pointing its direction) points on the ground beside him, he creates the impression that Mumias is just across the fence.

[84] Strictly speaking all the people who speak about leadership use the word *Omwami/Obwami*. I have translated it variously as ruler, leader and chief, but in the strictest sense *Omwami* literally means king. But it has other connotations in Kenya and Uganda where *omwami* refers to: king, wealthy man, elder, leader, husband, chief and all administrative positions; anyone who is senior or one from whom you are begging for favors.

M: They had just arrived. Then a man came from here – Omulobole. He was given the chiftaincy by Om'mia. Now that chieftaincy, they wanted him to be chief, to be installed (formally) by all Abanyole; he was supposed to be installed at Emuhaya. But when they arrived at Khusikulu Wemilabi, … what happened? Abamutete came to know about it. Then they said, "*Ehe*, (why) should chieftaincy go that side? It is not possible!" Then they brewed[85] beer, they made it close to your home, near Khusikulu Wemilabi. When those ones came from (their) place with *esilemba* (dance) "Hooo, hooo, hooo," The DO is going to give them chiftaincy; DC, he had come from Es'sumo…
K: Abatongoi?
M: *Hee*, Abatongoi. Then they were told: "Hey, hey, hey Abatongoi, before you go listen, listen: wait, it is very sweet. Just to shake, shake only, just shake, the straw (*olutsekhe*).[86] When they went to shake, they forgot their mission! Then the DO came to Emuhaya and asked (in Kiswahili, imitating the condescending colonial attitude as well as the white man's Kiswahili intonation): "Where is Omulobole?" Because he had been told by Om'mia: "The person you will give is called Omulobole." (Changes to Olunyole, the condescension has disappeared) "Where is Omulobole?" Then Om'mutete man stood and said…, "He is having a little drink." "A little drink? No, no, no!" (In this line he imitates the white man's Kiswahili intonation, then in Olunyole), "Who is there!" Then Om'mutete man stood (tone of despair, waving his hand away) and he took office. From that day![87] Those people, we do not want them!
I: They were tricked with beer!
M: The second time, the person we call… the white man, he brought the mission here…. At Emusire! 1886, he brought the mission here at Emusire. Didn't that white man come from this direction (pointing to the northern direction – towards Mumias/Uganda). When he came in…, he brought the mission; (low tone) then he stayed at the mission, stayed, stayed, (sudden rise of tone) then Adam (pointing to Kutai. Kutai is from Em'mutete) got itched. "I know how to cook, I know how to cook!" "What?" (Imitating the dough kneading process), "Bread, which the white man will eat." That white man used to live here, here at the corner next to the school, leave alone inside the compound. Then he (the cook from Em'mutete) went on, kneaded, kneaded…; then the white man said, "*Heee*, (in Kiswahili) very good bread!" So when that Om'mutete man…
K: The Om'mutete man was the white man's cook?
M: He is the white man's cook. So what the Om'mutete man did, didn't we have rats those days? What he did, the *chapati* (bread) that remained, he threw it next to the tent…. [Then] the safari ants, they followed it *ku, ku, ku*. Then they entered the white man's tent. Then they bit the the white man, bit the white man…. Then it was said, "Ooh, the person who did that was an Omutongoi man, they do not want the white man" (laughter all round). Is it not

[85] There are many versions of the story: some say the coronation was in Vihiga (at Madzu in Maragoli) and the person who was tricked was Munala; others say Munala was tricked and taken to Emusengeli in Em'mutete where he he over indulged so that he was not available when the time for installation came. That is how Otieno from Em'mutete became chief. At any rate Muchel'le's version is the only one outside the Munala-Otieno rivalry axis.

[86] It is regarded a sign of respect, friendliness and absence of any ill will to accept invitation to a drink regardless of whether you know the hosts or not. As I was told by two sources from Em'mukunzi, declining such an offer is a sign of hostility and bad intentions and it can earn one a thorough beating to extract information about his intentions. Clearly in this story Abamutete are represented as treacherous people who have taken advantage of this precept and corrupted it to nail their opponents. This implies that they are not men of honor and they do not deserve trust.

[87] This expression in Olunyole: *Okhurula olwene ilwo*! (From that time!) is complete enough without adding what happened. It is a very strong indication of mistrust. It is more of a swear especially when it is said as Muchel'le does, as he rubs his palms once as if to clear something that has stuck on his hands.

Om'mutete who has done it? Because he is the cook; because he wants those things to do what? To go to his Em'mutete home. That is when they snatched the mission from us – 1905. That is when the mission went where? Kima!
K: The Church of God Mission?
M: Church of God, we are on (the issue) of Church of God (laughs) Church of God was number one. When it was still called African Interior Church, which came from where you are, South Africa. The person who came and changed it to Church of God was Miss… it was a man called Baker. Baker also came from South Africa, but he was an American from Indiana. That Baker, when he came he changed the church, then it was decided that now it should not be here because Abatongoi have refused. They throw safari ants at the white people (laughter all round), then it was decided that it shoul go where? It should go to Kima…. And once Baker had launched it he left it with his daughter. His… daughter who was called Miss Baker, (addressing Kutai) if you heard about her…
K: I know her.
M: *Hee*. She is the one who was left (in charge). Then she started to bring other whites until they made the mission. So the commotion of that deceit, (lowers tone, in measured syllables) it has not been easy for Omutongoi man to agree with Om'mutete.
K: Then it gets into politics?
M: Then it gets into politics. When Mukuna stands (for parliamentary election) Khasakhala also stands on the other side. That makes this Omukobelo man I told you about come in (and) pull the votes. They say, "If that is the case, if we go there direct, we are going to vote for Khasakhala." It is wrong. "We must put there our own. Let's spoil the votes of that Omung'anga"!
I: Our fellow Omutongoi
M: Uhm, that is what they used to do. So that thing is in them up to this minute we are talking. What nearly brought us together was this mission; then it was said, "No, in that case the mission was here (first) so let us start a struggle to get our own mission. Then it turned out: was it not Om'mutete who was in there (in charge)? Then he went up there and said, "In that case, if those ones want it let them be given, but all their things must pass through me. You have no aunthority to get things from here [Kima] and take them direct to those Abatongoi because they want a mission." Then they said, "If that is the case give them!" That is why they were given this (dimunitive) area you see here (pointing to Emusire)…
Ku: Special Area.
M: They were given Special Area, here at Emusire.
K: Which year?
M: They were given… 2000...? I think it is 2000.
K: Who gave them…?
M: It's Byrum who gave them…: (firmly) 2000.
Ku: Let me go back a bit. You talked about Omulobole being given leadership at Emuhaya. Which Om'mutete man took the office?
M: That Om'mutete man… that is where I am not sure; was it… was it the first chief…
Ku: The first chief was Otieno wa Ndale.
M: That Otieno,…; it is Otieno who took it! Because when Abatongoi heard Otieno had just been given, they united with Omusiekwe. Then they said, "Now Omusiekwe is our brother. If Abamutete have taken, let us lean towards Abasiekwe so they can go there and bring office." That is how Munala got office. If you ever heard of a man called Munala in Ebusiekwe…he held office at one time. When Munala got office; since Abatongoi said, "We do not want direct links with Abamutete, Abasiekwe; it is you who will get information for us from there. We don't want to go there, they snatched office from us; they snatched the mission from us.

Munala, you take it." That is how they put a man called Munala. That is how Munala came in to leadership.…
K: I used to hear Hamunala (Munaala's Place).
M: *Hee*! Munaala; he is the one who took that office!
K: So does it mean the mission was meant to be here at Emusire?
M: Yes! (Stressing) 1886! They came from this way; they came from here (pointing to the northerly direction). They came with Omumia when he was still the ruler.
K: They came from Mumia's place?
M: Tey came from Mumia's place…*ehm*, 1886!
K: They were whitemen…from where?
M: They were white men from…. I think those ones came from… France! They were French. They were neither British nor American; they were French. They are the ones who started the mission.
K: Here?
M: Here. They nartured the mission, and after that one went, they changed the mission to to become African Interior; it was called the African Interior Church. When Baker took it, and he had connections in America he changed it to become Church of God. It is Baker who changed.
K: So, you were still talking about how Abanyole lived with…
M: With other communities; it was not easy for Omunyole man to sit together with other communities. It was not easy because the other communities feared Abanyole. If you sit with Omunyole, he will study how you live. Then you will find yourself thrown out. Then he says, "This is my place!" So they were not easy to sit with.
K: Even the Luos?
M: Even the Luos! In fact the Luos were worse because they had a grudge over the ghosts of the wound as well as that of (Abanyole) being hounded out of their place – Es'sumo. Es'sumo is our land, *hmm*, our land absolutely. The land of Abanyole, the land of Amuhinda when he arrived from that side. After he touched Jopadhola's raw wound, he came and established his home at Es'sumo and started to plant sorghum.
K: And Abalokooli?
M: Abalokooli, because they are our brothers, the children of Amuhinda, of Andimi…. Those ones never had any problems with Omunyole. When the mission came, the African Interior, the other white men passed through and went to Ebulokooli, those Friends people. Because it was a mission from (the) French; but if they had stuck here, we would have had the Friends here, it would not have been the Americans. So we had no problem with them. And again they agreed and said, "You Abanyole, become Church of God, and we Abalokooli will become Friends.
K: They agreed?
M: They agreed. That is why Church of God is not in Ebulokooli. I am the one who took it there (recently). When I was councillor! I came through Kisumu, then a man called Andabwa, he comes from here. He came and told me, "How can we enter that town, are there no Abanyole?" Then I said, "There are Abanyole!" Then we started to seduce them (low tone) "We want you to start a church, where shall we be meeting?" I was the chairman of Town planning then. Then I said, "By virtue of my authority, you will be meeting in this hall. Abalokooli said "*Aau*! You Abanyole have started again…" Then I said "We pray before we start (the business of the day). Whoever says we can not pray here… we shall pray!" Then I became tough, Abnery became hot, Opeli got hot: (that is how) we started Church of God.
K: Where exactly?
M: In Vihiga! Church of God is there. I think they have now bounght a plot (laughs).

K: …. I would like you to tell me: … all you have said about Abanyole, you talked about what you used to eat, now it has changed; how do you find these two things: the church which was brought by whites, and the administration which was brought by whites, In what ways have they changed Abanyole?
M: They changed Abanyole through education. They did not have schooling which could bring us scientific education…. Even though they learned how to make pots, make fire, work the forge (*okhwiranya oburale*) and hit it to make *amasili*, (traditional hoes) but scientific education, they did not have.
K: What is Amasili?
M: *Amasili* is a type of ancient hoe. It was called *lisili* (singular). *Lijembe* is Swahili. In Olunyole it is *Es'sili, imbako*…. We had that kind of knowledge. The mission changed those things because of this scientific education.
K: So, the coming of *obuchesi* (education) has it changed Abanyole, in what ways?
M: It has made us… because of the global environment it makes us ok. Because if we were still there, you can not fly a plane, you can not drive a car or a train. Those things come with that education; that is how Abanyole join in.…
……
M: ….*Okhubita* (bless). That is what our grandfather, the son of Tongoi called Omuliolo used to do. He blessed very many people [at *olusambwa* – shrine].
K: That *olusambwa* was it in every home…
M: *Yaa*! It was in every… But some because they did not know how to pray… say like I am here, if I know some of the rituals, I would put *olusambwa* in my home. If Isaya (his neighbor) wishes he can come to pray at my shrine. Because he does not have the experience on the matters of the shrine. It was not necessary that every homestead must have *olusambwa*…, some had it, others did not. If Kweya has it and the neighbor does not have, when the neighbor wants to pray, he can come to Kweya's shrine.
K: Can anyone from outside come and pray there; if a Kisa person came…
M: Ah, ah, not a Mukiisa! Neighbors, only neighbors…. You can not allow him! If an outsider was allowed that would men Abatongoi would have a serious problem. Take for example the old woman who took rain to Ebusiekwe, she first came here in Ebutongoi, and Abatongoi sent her away. They told her, "You are a spy! You came to investigate how [we live] here." Then they chased her, and then she was found by the Nganyi family. Hardly did we know she had carried with her the rain witchcraft which you hear said, "Abasiekwe are the masters of rain."
I: It would have been here in Ebutongoi.
M: It would have been here in Ebutongoi! But they drove her out.[88]
K: Where did the woman come from?
M: She came from this direction (pointing to the general northerly direction).
K: But what is the exact place of her origin?
M: The exact place is not known because she pretended she was dumb, like when you meet a dumb person and all he does is to gesticulate. When she reached here in Ebutongoi, then Abatongoi said, "This person who does not speak, she might be a spy! Expel her!" Then she passed through Esirulo… up to Nganyi's home. They picked her. While she was there she started to tell them, "I want to do some acts." Then they saw lightening, lightening, lightening! Then she showed them that skill…Otherwise the rain would have belonged to Abatongoi.
K: So the rain belongs to Abasiekwe?

[88] Many narrators from different places claimed that the rain woman passed through their place but they sent her away because of her "witchcraft". That is how she ended up in Ebusikwe. Afubwa (interviewed 3 January 2007) for instance made a similar claim.

M: The rain… the witchcraft belongs to Abasiekwe.
K: That is why Abanyole are known as rain people?
M: (Laughing) *Yaa*! Because they are Abanyole, Asubwe the son of Mwenje is known.
K: Talking of Abasiekwe, I heard the people of Ebukami never invaded them, why was it so?
M: They feared, if you invade them, they will bring hailstorms; it would come down hard and spoil the crops (laughs). Even their daughters: to get an Omusiekwe woman having been seized by force (for marriage), ah, ah! People feared. They said, "Those people might finish us, they will bring hailstorms!" (General laughter) they got that priviledge!
…….
M: I would… like to say thanks because Adam is here. Adam knows me very well. He told me you were in Uganda; you went to look for some people…
Ku: We were with him (pointing to me).
M: You were with him? When you talked about it in there, that is when I knew you went to Uganda with him. Then I said you are doing a good job. May God help you, do not stop that work on the way. You must follow it through ….

May be the Abanyole who were here a while ago, people like Joel, but Abanyole of today… if I had two thousand shillings you will see me with a neck collar (signifying pastor). That has become some thing to be bought, which is not good. I don't wish to buy *olusimbi* (the collar). Let them give me because they think I am fit. Now let me say you must never leave it at this stage, go on, let God help you to go on. Pray to God to give you the way. Like I told you the children we have given birth to; or my agemates who are teachers, if they had started to pursue this matter, we would be very far. But when these children get money, it is beer, women. Then he is buried without anything.
I: Once he gets a job and gets money, his troubles are over!
M: That is the end! Take me now, I did KAPE (standard 8) but the wisdom I have right now is not KAPE standard! I did not just sit back and say I have now done KAPE; I had to go further, reading. I went up to Tabora St Mary High School, I went up to Makerere! I met Oboth there. Then he asked me, "What are you looking for here?" Then I told him, "I am looking for education. I have always heard of Makerere, I decided that I must reach there.You understand? (Laughs) so, those things, if you have will power, like the way you have now, if you seek and pray God you must find. Then you discover you have assisted those who come behind you. You see, I read the likes of (Abraham) Lincoln, I read Churchill, the books of Churchill, I read,I read Martin Lurther King…
Ku: Napoleon…
M: Napoleon Bonaparte, *yee*, I read those books! For that reason God makes it possible for me to show other people (because) I know something. You see what I have told you about the mission? These are things I got …how these people came. For instance if you look at this Vice-President, the father had a lot of determination, the father, he was...
Ku: Jeremiah...
M: *Heee*, the father of the Vice-President, he was…Canon Awori, a man of determination. When those people came, those white people, then they killed (Bishop) Hannington, the father was still a small boy, like those boys who have just been here; those who carry the candles (in church). When they realized that the white man had been murdered, the other children ran away. But he (Awori) remained silent, and then he observed keenly until he saw where they went to bury him. Once he notice the place, he sneaked and went and planted *olusiola*[89] Then that *olusiola* grew big and spread (*kwakumaala*) for years and years. Then

[89] *Olusiola* tree has a lot of ritual significance among Abanyole and Luhya generally. It may well be possible that the tree has similar ritual value among other lacustrine Bantu groups. *Olusiola* is the tree around which the shrine (*olusambwa*) is built. Besides, the trees are planted around the grave of an important person. In planting the tree next to Bishop Hannington's grave, Canon Jeremiah Awori was not only planting a permanernt grave

white men came from that side searching, “Where was he buried, where was he buried?” They searched but they did not get. Then they said, “If only we could get anyone to tell us where Hannington was buried, that person…. Then that boy (Canon Awori) came, then he said, “But why don’t you search?” Then they left and went back. They stayed there for a number of years. Then the boy came out and said, “Come, let me show you where he was buried. That place, *olusiola* had grown huge, it had stayed years and years. Then he said, “Dig here, here, here, Dig!” Then they dug and got to the body of that man. The khaki…as they were buried, the khaki, the skeleton lay straight in them. Then they removed… You know those days the white people used to wear khaki shorts and boots. The khaki did not decompose; the boots did not decompose, all those years! Do you see the miracles of the man of God? Then they carried the body and removed it from the grave. Then they said “Now we can not leave you (Awori), we are going with you and your family *injelekha* (to Europe).” That is where W. W. Awori (and his siblings) grew up. They got their education there before they… this Vice-President got the education of that side (*obuchesi bwe ila*). Because their father was a man of determination (laughs); Awori rules because his father was a man of determination. Otherwise it would not have been easy.

marker; in so doing he transformed Hannington into an important Luhya elder. In a sense the dead Bishop was “dressed” in a manner to make him conform to the understanding of the local culture, to make him “familiar.” Of course the question arises whether Awori could have been in Busoga where Bishop Hannington was murdered rather than Buganda which was the ultimate destination of all the early missionaries as well as that of Bishop Hannington; and could Awori have been born then?

**Except 4: Interview with Ebulonga Cultural Association**
**in the home of George Kweya**
**26 December 2006.**

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Martha Koki (MK): The aim of this association, this thing came through God…. It is apparent that we are losing track; we have ignored the elders. I don't have time to sit with my father-in-law. If we meet then the youth who may get the time can learn something from you. The girls must avoid mistakes; you can find a girl from here in Ebulonga in a relationship with a young man from Ekwanda. There are those who have got pregnant under such circumstances….
So the youth are losing track because we have ignored you the elders. You have no time to sit with them. Time has come. We will have to sit together in order to learn from you. My brother-in-law will ask you questions as you answer. Instead of writing minutes he will bring us a video recording of the discussion. That is the objective of this meeting. He is not the one who called you; it was me.
K: … your leader asked me to assist by leading the discussion. I will ask some questions in a particular way…. She has told me what you wish to discuss is where Abanyole came from; how many clans are there in Ebunyole; how they moved as they came…. (After some silence).
Mbalukha (M): These people came from Ebukanda [Uganda]. We followed the lake and came here. Ababo (the Luo) were closer to the lake while we walked on the outside.
K: …. did you come together?
M &Ndele (N): Yeah.
M: Ababo remained in Es'sumo, the others went to Kisii; didn't I tell you that recently?
N: Ah, ah just talk, forget that!
M: When we reached Kisii, the Kisii settled where they are. The Kikuyu left that place and went to Fort Hall while we left and came to Wekhomo.
K: Did you say you moved with Ababo…?
N: We were together.
K: Were you friends; were they familiar?
M: No, they walked together but they were strangers. Ab'bo came from Sudan and we came from our people who are at Kikumba. That is where we came from.
K: Are they Abanyole, or which people are they?
M: These same Abanyole!
K: So where did you say you entered?
M: We entered Kisii, Kisii is where we separated. The Kisii remained; the Kikuyu went to Fort Hall, Murang'a, while we went to Wekhomo. Mwenje came to Wekhomo. That is where he had his children.
The rest of the group, you have heard what *mzee* (the elder) has said. Do you have anything to add?
N& a few others: We are following.
K: But who was Mwenje?
M: Leave that alone! (Laughter from the crowd).
Mwenje was with all these people. But where he came from, I really don't know who his father was in Bunyoro.
K: Does it mean the first Omunyole here in Ebunyole was Mwenje?
M: The one who gave birth to all these people.
…….
K: His first stop was Kima, Wekhomo?

M: Yes. Kima is where all the people were. Where Abamutete are is the home where Mwenje came, as well as here at our home – Khwaanana. Amukhoye stayed at Khwaanana while those others were at Wekhomo, Abamutete.
K: If Mwenje is the first Omunyole, who were Mwenje's children? (Silence, Ndele looks at Mbalukha with a mischievous smile). It is not him alone, anyone else can answer.
N: (Clearing his throat emphatically) in the story I know, Mwenje was the brother of Muhindila. Mwenje went to Ebulokooli while Muhindila remained in Ebunyole. Then Muhindila gave birth to Anyole and Mwenje gave birth to Andokooli. Then Anyole gave birth to all these houses.
K: Does it mean that Abalokooli and Abanyole came from the same parents?
M: Yes.
N: They share their parents in the distant past, but they moved together when coming here. They separated up there at the hill. At Ebuhando.
K: Where the elder talked about?
N: Yes. Omulokooli went that side and Omunyole came to this side.
K: That is ok. There are many versions. We will accept them all. So either Mwenje or Muhindila has arrived at Kima, how did these Abanyole come about?
N: These Abanyole? Muhindila is the one who gave birth to Abanyole.
K: Can you explain?
N: These Abanyole…Anyole is the father of all these houses in Ebunyole.
K: Muhindila first then Anyole, so all these houses are the sons of Anyole?
N: Yes.
K: Please list them.
N: I know of Am'mutete, Am'muli, Abasilatsi, Abatongoi,
K: Four of them?
M**:** And who are the eldest? (He gestures the "I have got you" kind of gesture).
N: (Controlling himself) Am'muli.
M: Next?
N: Omusilatsi.
M: After Omusilatsi?
N: Om'mutete.
M: And where are you leaving out the eldest sons? Abasiloli, Abasuubi…
Imbaya (I): Abasiloli and Abasuubi!
M: They are the eldest sons of Anyole
I: Their authority can not be underrated!
M: They are the ones who came to address us before we went to war.[90] They are the ones who instructed us and blessed us. They performed rituals and prayed before departure.
…….
N: (Trying to deflate Mbalukha's rising ego) going to war, where was that?
M: Going to war! When we were enlisting to go to war, where were we going to? We were going to war! (Ndele raises his hands while smiling broadly to attract attention to the obvious vagueness).

[90] Mbalukha was involved in the Second World War action as a member Second East African Division of the King's African Rifles (KAR). He always talks about the countries he fought in: India, China, and Japan (where he was discharged in June 1946 after the war), and the war theatre of action with excess pride and sense of superiority. He asserts that he witnessed the American bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima which ended the war. He sees everything in terms of those like himself who fought and the others who did not and he expects those who did not to keep quiet while he is talking and quite often his body language suggests that he does not expect them to speak in his presence. The tension in this and all interviews he participated in is because of this, because the others often want their views heard, and often their views contradict his.

I: Truly Omusiloli and Omusuubi, those people are the eldest. You cannot…
M: Sons of the great man! You cannot put them aside.
K: (Trying to ease the tension because some people are becoming uneasy) we shall accept both: the old man (Ndele) says Anyole had three sons…. But these two elders have said no. The first was Omusiloli?
M&I: Omusiloli
K: The second?
M&I: Omusuubi.
K: Continue.
M: Those are the first sons. The other old man had given us his list. (Silence.)
K: Do the old men seated at the back have any opinion? (They have been discussing animatedly).
Alwala (Al): When the war was there some of us did not see.
K: Anyone with an opinion is free to put it forward so that those who are not here can be told.
Osale (OS): I saw them leave for the army and to go abroad where they went. My second father went there.
……
K: Ok….We shall talk about that later. We are still where these others were. We shall listen to other stories to see how they started.…
M: Let us say this. Among Abasilatsi, who are the eldest?
K: We are yet to get there.
M: Ah, ah!
N: You have been told the procedure, do you want to disrupt?
K: We shall go into all that. I want to ask: The old man Ndele told us there are four people, you have talked of two. You have not talked about these Abamusila. We have Aberaanyi the other side, Abasikhale, Abamukuunzi, Abakaanga, Am'mang'ali… Are they not Abanyole?
M: They are Abanyole absolutely.
I: Not Am'musila, we cannot count them. Those we can count are Abatongoi, Abasiekwe, Am'mang'ali, Am'mutete…
K: Omutongoi, son of Anyole?
I: Those and a few other houses. Those are what we can count. But not Am'musila: they are very few people up here, they are of no significance.
K: What about Abakhobo?
I: Abakhobo are with Abamutete, they are among Abamutete. They live there in many tiny settlements – my uncles they are. If you go [to] M'bumang'ali, they are there; if you go to M'busiloli they are there; if you go up there in the hills they are there. Some are across here. Others are… I don't know where.
K: We shall come back to that later on. Abanyole are many: when I count I get at least 78 houses. How many have you talked about?
N: All of them have not been listed, they are many. If we should face the truth, the people of Ebusulatsi only know about their own lineages and how they get up to Anyole. Take me for example I can list my lineage from Anyole to Asilatsi till I get up to my people.
K: Do all of you agree that all these people are the progeny of Anyole?
M&N: Yes.
K: But how do they come up to Anyole, or how they branch off from him?
N: We can not tell that…. It has escaped!
K: Meaning the information must be sought again?
M: These Ababayi you see here, Ab'bayi are Abasiekwe. Abasiekwe left this place across here and went to take up land the other side just as we left here and went to take land in Etwenya. But Ab'bayi are Abasiekwe.

K: What caused the migration of Abasiekwe from here?
M: It was land! Abasiekwe went to take up the land they are now at Esibila, Ebukoolo, where your uncles are, they went to take up land there.
K: Do the other old men accept, what do they say? Even the ladies too can give their opinion… we are talking about all Abanyole and all of you are Abanyole. Feel free to contradict anyone who says something you don't agree with. And say, "This is what I know." The old man had said Abamusila are not Abanyole.…Where did they come from?
I: They are Abanyole but they come from…
N: Why I…Let me explain that one…
Alwala (A): The secret is they are Abajaluo (Luo).
N: But with regard to coming here, it is a woman who came here…With her husband. Then Abasilatsi welcomed her, and they just regarded her as their niece.
K: Where she came from, would you know?
N: From Ababo.
K: Please now complete what you attempted to say, Alwala.
A: What we heard in brief is… I don't know whether it is true or false but Am'musila are said to have been Ab'bo. And they used to treat the children of Amukhoye as *abafumu* (medicine men). The evidence is, there is one who left here. His name was Achuoka. That is Omujaluo word meaning medicine man. In Olunyolo (Luo) he is called *achuoka* while in Olunyole he is called *omufumu*. We had him here. He died out there. So Amukhoye is the one who gave them this place where they live.
K: But who is Amukhoye?
A: Amukhoye is the father of Abasilatsi.
K: …. You have explained Abamusila well. But now let us say this: you said all these were the children of Anyole. What we want to know is how they all descended from him. And since we are now in Ebusilatsi do you think we should start with Abasilatsi?
All: Yes.
K: How did Abasilatsi descend from ….
N: Abasilatsi descended from a man called Muhindila.
K: Muhindila the son of?
N: He came from…he was on his journey to this place?
K: Among these people the old man said they came from Uganda?
N: They came from Uganda and came here. It is here that he sired Omusilatsi. Sorry he sired Anyole. So Anyole sired Omusilatsi from there.
K: You had said he sired Abasilatsi and the others?
N: Yes with the others.
K: Now I would like us to trace the birth lineages of Abasilatsi.
N: Yes, that is correct!
K: Ok. Let us try to trace Abasilatsi, then Abamutete…those that we can. What remains we will start again another day.
N: Then Omusilatsi sired Nakuti, he sired Abetsa, he sired…this other name?
M: We are Abasilatsi. Mulanda called Abachitwa.
N: He asked us to trace Abasilatsi.
I: He asked us to trace Abasilatsi; Abachitwa is crossing over to Em'mutete, can't you see?
M: Ah ah, what do you mean going to Em'mutete?
I: That Abachitwa matter you are introducing the affairs of Abamutete.
M: I wanted to say, this child said he wanted to know…
N&I: Only about Ebusilatsi.
M: Yes, so Mulanda sired Chitwa…
N: Ah ah, I won't have anything to do with that Mulanda!

M: So Mulanda sired a son called Chitwa, and Amukhoye also sired a son called Chitwa. They are these Abamatakho. Why do you keep interfering? Do you think I am lying? Even if you went to the records you would find it (A lot of mumbling).
I: He has said what he wanted to say.
N: Then that man called Chitwa came in. Then another man called Abetsa that is these Abanamakanda came in, making them how many men?
I: Three.
K: The sons of Omusilatsi?
N: The sons of Omusilatsi. Then Milemba came in, making them four sons. Among the four sons, if you asked me I would narrate my birth lineage up to, even up to Kweya. But the lineage of say… like this young man (Imbaya – quite elderly really), it is up to him to trace it up to where we meet….
K: …. Just go on and tell us what you know. The old men and women will also tell their story.
N: As for my lineage, I know that we come from Matakho. Those they call Ananda, the Abachitwa. I come from the lineage of Abachitwa.
K: Chitwa is Matakho?
N: Yes, he is Matakho.
K: But why do they call him Matakho?
N: Because he had big buttocks (prolonged laughter from the audience).
K: He was a big man?
M: N&I: Yes!
K: He must have been bigger than all the others?
N: Yes!
K: But who gave him that name?
N: Those same people
I: The people of that time.
N: They are the ones who named him. Whatever he looked like we don't know. Matakho sired Namilu. Then Namilu sired Abuliba and Siebisa. Abuliba is the brother of Siebisa. When I talk of Abuliba, I think Kweya might know. The same Abuliba is the brother of Rotso; the same Abuliba is the brother of Chitwa; the same Abuliba is the brother of Buliilo; the same Abuliba is the brother of…they were five men. The other man is called… Muhima! They are six, aren't they six?
K: Yes they are six.
N: Six – that is it! Abuliba came this side.
K: What do you mean by this side?
N: Here where you have your home.
K: This is Ebunanda, not so?
N: (Laughing uneasily) Yes. Kweya did you tell this child?
Kweya Senior (KS): Just go on (Extended laughter from the audience).
M: I will answer your questions.
N: Abuliba came here, and Siebisa remained up there.
KS: Why did he come here?
N: Because of a fight.
KS: You do not recall that one man threw another one onto a tree stump?
N: (Rather uneasy.) It was a quarrel. Then one of the men dropped his brother on to a tree stump, and he died.
K: That Abuliba…
N: The sons of Namilu.
K: Namilu…That Abuliba, is he the one who brought down his brother?

N: Yes, he dropped his brother on to a stump.
K: This brother of his whom he dropped, do you know the name?
N: The name I don't know but all I know is that he dropped his brother onto a stump. That is what made him migrate from there (the original home) and came here. Then he built here. He lived here while the others lived up there.
K: What was the quarrel about?
**N:** Uuuh! If it was beer… It might have been beer. They quarreled over beer! The other sons remained. One went Mumbo, the one called Rotso, he went Mumbo (Luoland/the west). I am able to follow my lineage in that way. But I am not able to tell how the Abanakuti birth lineage goes.
K: You don't know how that Nakuti…
N: Nakuti was born with Matakho. They came from the same womb. As for me I start from Siebisa. I am now going to Siebisa. I am going back to Siebisa the brother of Abuliba. He has his own progeny. He sired a man called Maselo, Have you not heard of these people up here called Abamaselo? Maselo sired Omutsochi; Omutsochi sired Tela, Tela sired Buchele, and Buchele sired Gilbert. Gilbert has sired his own son. So we are on the $8^{th}$ or $9^{th}$ generation.
K: Is that all the way from Anyole?
N: Yes, from Anyole.
K: Is Tela yourself?
N: Tela is my father.
K: So which generation are you?
N: Is it 7th?
K: So you have finished, what about Nakuti?
N: Nakuti? That old man can tell you (Pointing to Imbaya).
K: Can you try?
I: I will try to look for the information.
K: Don't mind you will tell us another day…. Is there any one else among these elders who can tell us about his birth lineage?
N: If it is about Abuliba, Abuliba is the brother of Siebisa.
M: (Obviously laying a trap.) And us, where did we come from?
N: You? You came through… through… (Mbalukha is enjoying it all. He contentedly surveys the reaction of the audience. The trap has worked. He points his tongue towards Ndele in a licking posture to the utter amusement of the audience.) Are you licking me? Can you tell us? Now I have refused.
M: You don't need to refuse! You see you are losing ground. Do you want to fail the test? Talk! (More laughter). I asked you this: Who did we descent from!
N: Where Chitwa came from is where …aah, this one…aaah…
M: (Thrusting his walking stick into the ground emphatically as he talks) Look here, we are from the people we call… the ones among whom Ochango was leader. Our family line heads into them.
N: (Regaining some of his ground) Why don't you give us the name!
M: The family line of Abananda! It meets…
N: These Abananda, our meeting point is Namilu!
M: Who?
N: Namilu, Ananda is the brother of Namilu.
M: Ah! You are making me lose my trail (prolonged laughter from the audience). Kweya if I miss the mark… (Looks at Kweya Senior who either ignores him or simply wishes to stay away from this argument) if I miss the mark…Our lineage joins Alwala son of Oluchina. Then join the Ochango family…
……..

M: The Ochangos are…
N: Abakhuliti?
M: Yes, Abakhuliti are the eldest among all the Abamatakho, then we come after them.
K: You being Abananda?
M: Yes! We come after those ones.
N: These are Abananda.
K: What about us?
N: You are the people of Abuliba.
K: Which people are Buliba; they (Mbalukha) are called Abananda, what are we called?
N: The people of Namilu! It is Namilu who sired Abuliba.
K: …. Is there anyone else who wants to add anything?
Mrs. Ndege: I have always thought that all of you are Abananda (sings) *Nder're, nder're papa nder're ing'ombe mwitse khumbukula*," (I have brought, I have brought, father I have brought the cow, Come and get me), are you not Abananda? I have always thought you are all Abananda.
M: Yes, who else are we?
Mrs. Ndege: Are you not Abananda?
N: Yes! The tiny little family lines are the ones that cause the discrepancy.
Mrs. Ndege: But you are all Abananda. Like Abatonji, Abanakuti, Ab'betsa, Abanambweka, right?
Mrs. Ndege: But you picked out little tiny family lines, is it not so?
Lady in Audience: I wanted to ask: you boast saying you go up to Musikholobe, what happened to make those at Musikholobe to get there?
K: Let me hold the question from the old lady and get others first before we can ask them to answer all at once. Is there anyone with another question? I want to ask this: Omusilatsi is the son of Anyole, and Anyole lived at Kima, Wekhomo. … where did (Omusilatsi) start before he spread; and the old lady is asking how did they get all the way up to the north? Is that what you asked?
Lady in Audience: Yes that is what I asked.
N: They came from this hill.
I: Here at Musikulu wa Anana (Anana's hill).
K: The old lady wanted to know how they spread.
Lady in Audience: Yes. I wanted to know: when he left the hill, did he just leave to go and take up land or was it because some disgrace compelled them to move to where they call Esikholobe?
N: It is the increase in population. They moved that way gradually as the population increased. In those days once one matured he would move out to take up land elsewhere, wherever there was room. Those days there were no boundaries. Boundaries started with the coming of whites. That is when Abas'sa were told, "Come up to here, Abanyole reach here, Abalokooli come up to that point." So those ones, once they had fought and got land they would go to settle their people in the land they had won. So as Abasilatsi fought so they expanded.
K: That old man is saying it was war, who were fighting?
Old Man: It was Abasilatsi war.
K: War among Abasilatsi?
Old Man: Ah ah, Omusilatsi is pushing you to give him way to take up his land.
K: So who were the Abasilatsi fighting?
Old Man: These Abas'sa. There are also some other people there. They have their name… they are Ab'bo… Ab'bwara! They are … at Mundaha. We Abasilatsi share a boundary with them. Those are the people who used to fight Omusilatsi.

K: So who used to overpower who?
Old Man: Abasilatsi pushed them.
Again a man called Alwala is the one who fought and won over the land.
K: Alwala?
Old Man: Alwala Woluchina.
K: Alwala Woluchina, could he be the one against whom this Alwala was named?
Alwala: I was already here, I was already here! (Laughter)
N: He just died the other day. We were born to find him still alive.
Old Man: He did great things.
KS: I did not see him but the story, I know.
N: This Alwala was named in 1931. It is not long ago. We saw him before he died.
Alwala: He died in 1930.
K: This hill is where Omusilatsi used to live. But now you hear: Anana Hill, Amukhoye Hill… How do these names start?
N: Anana: that one is just a bird… there were birds… we had birds there which had some names…
K: So Anana are birds? What about Amukhoye?
N: Wasn't he born to Omusilatsi?
K; Amukhoye is the son of Omusilatsi?
N: When Omusilatsi left that place having been born to Omunyole, he came and established his home here. It is there that he sired Amukhoye. Then Amukhoye had four sons.
K: So Amukhoye is the son of Omusilatsi?
N: Yes.
K: You have told us how they spread to the other side. But who went there first, was it Omusilatsi or Om'mang'ali?
M: Abasilatsi are on their own on one side and Om'mang'ali on the other, with the road passing in between.
K: Let me ask another question: How do Abasilatsi and Abakhaya meet?
M: Abakhaya? Abakhaya were the brothers-in-law of Amukhoye who sired Abasilatsi.
K: But then how did they come here?
N: They were just given land here. They once lived with Amukhoye up there.
M: He was living there as his brother in law.
N: When he left that place to take up land that is when he came down this side.
K: This means Omukhaya came in through Omusilatsi, Omukhaya comes in through his in-law? Then his in-law points out to him: "Go and build there." Is that why I keep hearing Abakhaya are the in-laws of Abasilatsi?
M: Yes.
I: Once you get land then you will call others and show them where to settle Then they are called the house of such and such people – the house of Abakhaya.
K: Then Abakhaya can not be the sons of Anyole?
M: Abakhaya came from among Abakhayo. The woman who gave birth to these Abamatakho I was talking about. My people I am talking about the other side came from Ebukhayo. Her name was Nekondi – that lady. She gave birth to the Abamatakho.
K: You see, now we have found that there are some people here who were not the sons of Anyole but they were welcomed and have now become Abanyole....
All: They are our people!
K: Now we are brothers. You see they too emphasize the fact that they are Abanyole, children of Anyole. We just want to know. Now you see it has become clear that there are other people here who did not descent directly from Anyole but we have accepted them. They

are our brothers. Do you know any other? (Silence). If you do not know or you have forgotten it is ok, we can leave that one.
N: Don't we have Ab'bakhi down here?
M: They came from… Ebutirichi.
Old Man: We stay with Abasaatsi here
K: Where do you stay with them?
N: Aren't they at Mulukongo?
M: They are Abasiralo!
K: They are not the sons of Anyole?
N: They are not the sons of Anyole. They are Ab'bo [Luos].
They are clearly Abaseme (from Seme).
K: That is fine because I have also benn told there are other Abanyole there in Seme and Imbo generally.
M: They are allover, there are many across the lake.
K: The other one you said was Omusikhale?
M: Omusikhale came from among the Abalokooli. Kweya do I lie?
KS: I talked about all that yesterday. (Silence).
K: Let us go on. Does anyone else have a different idea? (Silence) Think about that and share when you meet next. Now I want to ask this: We have other clans like Am'mutete and the others. Is there anyone who can tell us their lineages, or do you know only about Abasilatsi?
N: We just know that they were born together with Omusilatsi. That is all we know. About their birth lineages all the way back there, ah, ah.
K: Is there anyone behind who might know anything?
A: If it was possible for you to come back I would bring you a book. Raphael wrote that history of birth lineages.
K: Raphael?
A: Raphael Nyawanga.
K: Is he from Ekwanda?
A: No he is from Elukongo.
K: Do you have it?
A: Yes I have it.
N: It is correct. Raphael used to write a lot. He might have written down about all the birth lineages of Abasilatsi.
I: There is our old man from up there who died recently…Teka. Teka had memorized all that. He could explain to you everything: from Ebusilatsi, Ebutongoi, all of them.
N: There is also Anduuru from down here; he can also give you something.
K: For now let us agree to take whatever will be available…. Let me ask another question. How did these Abasilatsi live? You have told me they used to fight with Abakwe, is that all?
N: All Abanyole used to go to Ebwakwe to fight. All the clans used to gang up to fight Abakwe.
M: They never fought as one unit. Abasiekwe, for instance, might be aware that Abasilatsi have left for the battle field. Listen carefully, they would then come here and steal cattle. They would come to take the cattle once they knew they have gone to war in Ebulokooli. They used to take our cows. If Omutongoi had left together with Om'mang'ali…Omutongoi used to isolate himself; he would not follow Om'mang'ali to the battlefield once trouble began with the Abas'sa.
N: It is true. They were wild people, just as you say. There were people around here, when the others have gone to the battlefield…
M: Those ones…

N: Wait! But what I know, Omusilatsi…the entire Omunyole used to go war against the Abas'sa. They used to fight and push Abalokooli and Abas'sa. (It is clear from his body language that Mbalukha is extremely agitated now).
M: (Raising his hand impatiently) Look here (emphasizing each word) the people who pushed Abalokooli: here is Mung'au , here is Alwala, my grandfather Akhwale is here, a man died here called Amwayi, here. The men who pressed the war whenever it came from this side, there they are!
N: (Equally agitated, both gesticulating at each other) those were Abasilatsi. A man came from Ebusakami called Njeli, didn't he fight wars?
M: Listen, that one was helping that side (Laughter from the audience. Ndele suddenly drops his serious face and laughs too). But here we are saying that once war broke out Abatongoi always aimed at sweeping away all our wealth. Our cattle would be gathered at Ekwanda and some scouts left to guard them. Then some people would dash to the battlefield and report, "*Wee*, they are taking away the cattle of Omusilatsi!" Then those who had gone to war would ask, "Is that so!" Then they would dash back to pursue the thieves. I have been told all that by Eyahuma by…
N&I: Those were thieves, they were thieves!"
M: But they refused to come and sleep in the same place with the rest of Abanyole.
N: If you want to understand, haven't Abatongoi touch (bordered) the Abas'sa? Haven't Abasilatsi touched Abas'sa? Haven't Abamang'ali touched Abas'sa? … Abamutete have touched Abalokooli. What we want to know is what did they do to push these people?
M: Those who pushed them are the Abasilatsi bulls I have mentioned who are now lost.
K: I understand this old man to be saying it all depended on whether there was war. Then they would come together and go to the battlefront.
N: They would unite, that is how I know it!
M: This matter, this… told me everything. You don't know these things. It is not that I don't know them…
N: So did Omusilatsi push Omus'sa all alone?
M: Listen! (Prolonged laughter from the audience) What Eyahuma told me… the way they lived here, how people used to come to steal cattle from here…Eyahuma told me everything, Libutsi told me everything…
N: Yeah! Those were common thugs! But once there was war all would unite to go and snatch land.
K: Now the elder is saying that whenever there was war, the entire Omunyole would bring the men into one army and go to the battlefield; the other old man is saying if war broke out, if it was between Abakisa and Abasilatsi, then Abasilatsi would go there on their own. If they were lucky they might get some people to assist though that was unlikely. Because others would be watching keenly and once Abasilatsi left their cattle and went to battle they would come and take them.
M: That is the way it was! Haven't you got what you wanted?
K: Ok. Let me ask some more. It is said that Abalokooli used to stretch all the way up to, here in what is now Ebusilatsi?
M: Where Mung'au is now Abalokooli used to be there in that land.
K: Which Mung'au?
M: The area where Abukutsa is, that whole area Abalokooli used to live there.
K: But how did they move?
M: War broke out and they were bundled out.
N: When Abarwa stole the cows of Amukhoye, were those Abalokooli there then or where were they living?
M: Which ones?

N: When Abarwa came to steal the cows of Amukhoye.
M: Are they not our people who went to stop them and bring back the cows?
N: Yes they stopped them but where were those Abalokooli at the time?
M: Listen to me, the old woman is running wild with an axe when Amukhoye was living in the hill at the point where a stone inclines towards this side. She was running wildly this side to the Abananda (Mbalukha's clan) and said, "Rustlers have slit Amukhoye's stomach, the intestines are dangling outside. Then they asked, "Are our elder brothers at home, are the others there, are the others there? They did not go to stop them?" Those men had slept with their girls away from home. Wherever it was that they went to look for their women. So these ones (pointing to Abananda, no longer Abamatakho; on 18 Dec he had mentioned that the Abamatakho who rescued the cows lived near Samwel Akhwaba's present home. Now he points to where he lives) went to get their spears and ran after them. That is when they killed two Abarwa up here.
N: (He has bee itching to ask) But where were Abalokooli at that time! (Prolonged laughter from the audience).
M: Abalokooli were up there having been driven out!
N: Driven out? Were they driven out when Amukhoye was still alive?
M: Eeh! Wasn't this one…born here? Wait first don't start gesticulating yet! Wasn't Adam born here in Libutsi's farm?
N: Which Adam?
M: Adam son of Khakaali! Khakaali Lived here. That is where he bore these sons of his. Didn't he stay here only recently until they were evicted?
N: What I know Abalokooli went up to Musitsintsiba. That was the boundary between Abanyole and Abalokooli.
M: Musitsaba
N: There around Musitsaba. There is a hill at that point where our boundary and that of Abalokooli used to meet. That is where Omulokooli terminated. But Omurwa just passed them and came to attack Amukhoye while Abalokooli were up there. So when he says, aaah, Chitwa…his brothers – Nakuti, Abetsa, Milemba, they were there: they lacked the nerve. That is when Chitwa with big buttocks… that is when they called him Matakho. That is when he took he spear and caught up with Abarwa [at] M'busuundi. He found them there while they were driving away the cattle. That is when he speared two of them and brought back the cows.
M: He killed two Abarwa and wrested one cow from them.
N: Those Abanandi, those Abarwa, that is when they were killed and the cattle taken back.
K: You said they were wrested at Ebusuundi?
N: Ebusuundi. That is when he came back, that Matakho, that is when he brought back the cattle. It is then that Amukhoye might have spoken words of blessing to him and consecrated him as a dreaded war leader. Then he was called Matakho.
M: He asked, "That bull is that bellowing, is that my bull? The women told him, "Your bull has been rescued, it is coming." Then he said, the way I was told, he said, "Is Nakuti here, is Abetsa here, is Milemba here? Go take your spears and meet your brothers at Esamwenyi and come here singing the leopard is crying (shedding) tears (*ingwe elalila omusika*)." Then he followed that with the special instructions to the younger son and asked him to take leadership. Do you think he said that in vain? Had he not seen the...
K: (Having observed the building tension among the audience) Ok Haven't you all heard? This matter needs more thought. The advantage of their argument is that each of them brings out one side of the same story. They are not quarreling, each one is saying, "This is what I know." Can't you even notice that they are talking and laughing now? (Prolonged laughter from the audience)

I: No, they are not quarreling.
K: So Abarwa came to steal cattle here and they were pursued but how exactly they were pursued is what we need to go and find out.
M: Wait a minute. Amukhoye took the spear that had killed those people and poured water on it and called the people of Matakho, he told them, "Come here." Then he poured water and said, "Point it into your mouth, let the water follow the spear into your mouth." Then he said, "I have empowered you to fight whenever there is war." Now when young children are born, they say, "That was a matter for the old people. Is that any important?" *Yie*! Then you ask him, "Are you drunk or what might be the matter with you?"
N**:** That is it, ask another question.
K: The issue of Abalokooli is not yet clear. You had said Abalokooli used to live close by here?
N: Ah, ah, what I know is that they used to come up to somewhere in the hill, a place called Musitsintsiba.
M: This place…what do they call this place where they have built a hospital? This hospital in Ebulokooli… the place where Ndeke has built a flour mill?
I: Enaginga?
M: Yes at Enaginga. They had come up to the place where Ndeke has built a flour mill… Ndeke from Ebusuundi.
N: Yes Ndeke form Ebuusundi! That area…
K: Old man did their land ever come up to this place?
M: It is Am'mutete who came and built here.
K: So those you expelled from here were Am'mutete?
N: Am'mutete are the ones we expelled. They who started to transgress on Abasilatsi side. So we started war and pushed them out. They were all over; the whole of Esiamarwi was occupied by them.
M: Even the land where Masasi is in now.
N: Not too long ago they wanted to take us to court to make us leave the land.
K: Who, Abamutete?
N: Abamutete. Kweya may know that better. Those are the days he was working in the court.
Mrs Ndege: Talk about Abasikhale too. Don't you see Abasikhale have crossed up to this side?
N: Omusikhale? Omusikhale was brought by Otiato. Otiato is the one who brought Abasikhale here.
I: Otiato used to have a house up there, at Khusiamayayi.
Mrs Ndege: How did he move back to that other ridge, look into that too.
M: What she is mentioning was a very complicated matter. Had this son of Okoba gone on his bicycle in days like these…we would have been expecting him there when he had already been murdered. Those days the world was straight and calm. Kweya got on his bicycle deep in the night right here in this home where he is now. Where did he go? He went to Atala's house. Ask him, here he is. Let him say it with his own mouth.
K: Who is Atala?
N: Atala, Omukhobo man, he was a very good activist.
M: Now we see people strutting about here; this world you now roar in, the man I value in the home of Tela is Ombima, the other one is Etubuli, understand?
N: **(**sarcastically) Yeah!
M: Those are the people we suffered with. Kweya had delayed. The white man had just asked (in Kiswahili), "Where is Kweya! Kweya and his people, where is he?" Then suddenly Kweya surfaced with his bicycle. Our hearts were pumping hard; we were hot allover asking,

“Oh! When will he arrive?” Then Kweya came in, Kweya is here, let him tell us. If I am telling lies let Kweya complete it!” Kweya tell these people what we met in Es’sumo.
N: (Shielding his face in apparent embarrassment, amidst laughter from the audience) Listen!
KS:The story of Es’sumo is well known.
M: Known, how?
N: Es’sumo was just the other day!
M: This one did not appreciate it. Ndele did you participate in the struggle over the matter?
N: *Befwe* (Come-on)! (Prolonged laughter from the audience)…While Teli was here, didn’t I built a home here? Then they ordered that it be demolished? Then I slept in that night, all alone!
M: Don’t tell me that childish stuff, Ombima!
N: Yeah!
M: Etubuli!
N: Yeah!
M: Petero, no…this one... Nganyi! The DCs vehicle, a pick up… when we held the pick up firmly and wouldn’t let it go (goes to table, demonstrates by holding the table), this Kweya knows, Ndele were you there, were you there?
N: I disappeared into the bushes (laughing). So what do you want! What do you want?
M: If I came to your land and asked you to give me a piece wont you send me off unceremoniously? (Laughter from audience).
N: You were simply saving my land, you were concerned that, “My brother should not lose his land while I am around.” (Applause from the audience)
M: The things we did around here, you cannot play around with us!
N: Osale was over there, he used to go there, Opola was there…
M: I only want to hear about the people who grappled with the matter.
K: Ok, Let us say this: you did that so you could bring back your land…
N: Bring back Land! Yeah!
K: From Abamutete?
N: Yeah!
K: Ok, now we have understood.
Osale: When our people wanted to push them beyond the well where Nyanja is, they were told, “Ah, ah that is enough, let them stay there.”
M: Again the soil next to Abasikhale was going. Now the people who fought heroically in this area: Nganyi son of Om’bayia, Etubuli, Etuli; the men I was with when we slept in Emuhaya in people’s urine! The following day we were stinking! Then we asked, “Might we have murdered anyone?” They said, “No, it is you breaking the peace. We were digging a trench with the son of Mung’au, suddenly we saw six *askaris* (orderlies) arrive. They said, “You come,you come.” Abwiri: the men who fought wars around here – Abwiri, Eselo Tete. What about these people who swagger arrogantly around here...
N: People! You just recount history, why are you squabbling?
K: Which wars did you fight, whom did they fight?
I&N: Which war is this?
M: (Suddenly silent) Eeh?
I: Which war is this?
M: Which one?
Alwala (Al): (Mbalukha’s younger brother) were you not simply helping your brothers on that issue, why would you say they swagger?
M: (Agitated) I am talking about those who parade and show off around here when we stayed out there without sleep!
Al: Aah, aah, no. That does not have any worth! (Waving him away with his hand).

N: You see, he is cantankerous!
K: It is ok, he is not quarreling really. Everyone says what he knows the way he wants.
M: Your brothers who were in the heat of it all were Mung'au, Etubuli, those were the men we saw face up to the danger. You (Ndele) and Esikhunyi, can't talk. Okwatsima…
N: *Aah*, Okwatsima was not there!
M: Okwatsima was among us!
N: Are you saying everyone went to fight; when people go to till the land, do they all go really? (Laughter from the audience).
M: When we went to Eseme we went with Okwatsima!
N: (In low tone) Need you tell people that too? (Smiles).
M: Just let it alone!
K: The argument is ok. I hope you will continue in your next meeting. So this fight you are talking about was meant to push Abamutete back to their place?
M: *Eeei*!
K: We accept it. But the old lady asked about Abasikhale. How did it start, I remember you had serious tussle down here at what is called Mwibubula?
N: There at Mwikanga!
M: They crossed the river and took our land. The tree which Sangolo planted what time did we uproot it? Ndele it is you I want to ask.
N: Listen, aaah!
M: We uprooted the tree at 2 am! We cut it and left a tiny invisible stump in the ground (he has already stood to dramatize all this using his walking stick). Our aim was that once they arrived to demarcate the boundary, we would ask them, "You say Sangolo planted a tree where is the tree?" We uprooted the tree at 2am; you (Ndele) were not there (By this time he is directly in front of Ndele, talking down to him).
K: Let me ask you, why did Sangolo plant the tree?
M: The boundary!
K: But why did you uproot it?
M: We were claiming back our land; we wanted it back.
K: Do you mean he had distorted the boundary and given your land to Abasikhale in the process?
M&N: *Eeei*!
K: Ok, go on please.
M: So if we had not uprooted the tree where Oriiko has now built his massive mansion, he would never have built there. We uprooted that tree at 2 am, in the company of strong young men who had blocked their ears and said, "Thuup, over our dead bodies!"
N: (Who has been impatient all along) What she wanted to know is, how did Omusikhale come to that land, isn't that what you wanted to know?
I: Can you say it please?
M: Omusikhale, when Sangolo left office, he was given office. Then Otiato came to build where Ndeke Omwan'no's home is now. Upto now the debris of his house is still there. (Mbalukha's order of events seems to contradict the popular narrative in which Sangolo took over from the Omusikhale (Otiato) he refers to).
I: It is never ploughed.
N: So he went on with his leadership, then he started to arrest people from Ebusilatsi and tie them. These Abasilatsi people were Okolo and… this brother of Okolo…
M: Amaswache?
N: Amaswache! He tied them together with…what is the name of the father of Olukokha?
M: Omuroka?
N: Omuroka! They were tied by that ruler called Otiato.

M: What he did to them we cannot talk about it here. He tied them in a way we cannot mention.
N: He tied them in a very terrible manner, a much-undignified manner. If we talk about it these ladies will ask, "Why are you saying such shameful things, such mature men?
M: These crocked things!
N: If you imagine the bull held and tied with a rope and pulled, do you see this? Could people be happy? So the person who left here was Omwola
M: Omwola went to Es'sumo to inform the white man.
N: And Etisi (DC) being at what place? This place near Enyang'oli…. Enyahela. So Omwola went and said, "The people have been killed, the people have been finished, they have been fastened tightly, tightly. They're weeping pitifully but he is pulling them with a cord as they follow on, howling in pain. So an *askari* was sent. He found that Amaswache and company had been fastened tightly, in a manner that is not acceptable: not on the hands! (Giggling from the crowd). Then they were untied. Just as they were released a foamy substance leapt out with the urine. So, when Omwola went there the DC said, "That it a very bad leader (claps his hands to demonstrate the extent of the sacrilege), that is a very bad ruler!"
M: He must be relieved of his duties.
N: So the DC scrapped [sacked] him from the job (Emphasizes with the sweep of his hand). He removed Otiato from office and told him, "I did not know you were a bad ruler!" He (Otiato) shivered in shock. That is when the pen was crossed through his name and the office given to Sakayo.
K: Sakayo?
N&I: (Pointing in the direction of his home) Sakayo Ojuoku.
N: Then Ojuoku pushed it upto the time he handed over to Kulali. Ojuoku ruled for very many days. In 26 or 23 (1926 or 1923), that is when he started to rule, upto 52.
M: Otiato… didn't he leave office without anything, again when he gave to Sang'olo… leeches bit people…
N: We said we wanted to talk about land…!
M: Am I not telling you he left with nothing? He was not given any sort of benefits (*hembwo*). The way Otiato left is the same way Sangolo left; he had bad blood. Isn't that so, Kweya what do you say? (A grin then silence).
**N**: So that matter was like that; when Sakayo took his turn and left for Kulali; Kulali went up to Elijah; and Elijah gave to Olwan'no; Olwan'no gave to … Ambuyo! Ambuyo ruled, ruled then he gave to, is it Ochiemo? Then Ochiemo left for these children. (Mbalukha has been looking disinterested for a while, but now he is clearly restraining himself).
Mrs. Ndege: (Starts hesitantly until she is encouraged to speak on) When Abalonga had won, then this song was sung during beer revelry: *Balonga basambila Otumba mwipoma, sibaliebula, banina khumukhuyu ikulu.* (Abalonga roasted Otumba in his home, but they will never own up, they have scaled to the top of the fig tree). Have you ever heard that song? They would sing and dance as they drank!
N: That is it; that is it! The fire that burned Otiato: after he left office he did not budge. He just stayed on. So Abalonga designed well and took a burning splint and passed by Amoni's house and went to set his home on fire. Then Otiato thought, "Ha, this is not a place to stay; these Abasilatsi people are treacherous. Some Abasilatsi people were arrested: people like Amoni the father of Otieno were arrested.
I: Amoni said "I was all eyes/ I just watched/stared (*Ise ndalitsa Amoni*).
N: I just watched.
M: "How did the house of the ruler burn down?" Then Amoni says, I don't know. Then he is beaten and asked, "How did the house burn down? Then he says, I just watched.
N: Little did they know that an Omuusundi man was the one who had burnt it down!

K: Did you look for an Omusuundi man to come and help you?
N: Yeah, we got an Omusuundi man to come and help!
K: But why did you do that?
M: To burn those houses!
N: Are we shot of thugs? If I want to kill you won't I go through someone else?
K: I see you wanted to disguise your act. But the song the old lady has just sung…
N: Yes, it was sung, it was sung.
Mrs. Ndege: (Repeats the song) *Balonga basambila Otumba mwipoma, sibaliebula, banina khumukhuyu ikulu.*
N: Yeah, he was called Otumba! And that time the drums would go *tu tu tu tu tu tu tu*.
K: Tell us, what does it mean?
N: It means they have burned the ruler and evicted him.
M: They burned the ruler from Ebusikhale in his house.
K: Otumba is…?
Mrs. Ndege: Otumba is Otiato. That is when they sung the song (she repeats it again). Then they would dance vigorously because they had disowned, "We have not the slightest idea."
N: Abasikhale continued to farm the lands, when Abalonga decided that Abasikhale should go back to their ridge, they went to court. Some are still there up to now.
K: Abasikhale?
M: Abasikhale are on that ridge near the home of the late Omuola. Don't you see the son of…there?
O: They evicted Semu, now he is on the other ridge.
K: Another question, why did chief Otiato come to build this side?
N: Government might! …. Just because he was a big man he simply came and carved out land.
K: So he despised Abasilatsi?
N: He despised Abasilatsi, the government despised Abasilatsi. It is the government that identified it as a suitable spot for the ruler to stay.
K: Now we understand. But how did you relate with Abasembe?
N: Abasembe? I am not sure about that boundary (turning to Mbalukha), even you might not know that?
M: The issue of relationships is what cost Abasilatsi their lands. Ebukhaya was the land of Abasilatsi. But this question of, "My brother-in-law please build your home here…." Even the land in Ekamanji belonged to Abasilatsi. The idea of, "The son of my aunt, build here." The land would have rolled on through all those places, rather than bend in places.
N: This Anduuru should never have been closer to Abasikhale. They had come to Ebulonga Church. There was a man there…what was his name? He used to come to church at Ebulonga; but because they delayed in giving a church to Esiamayayi …. These people…. Are they called Abakamanji? They would never have had to get their church from Ebusiralo. They should have got it from Ebulonga. But because of our hesitation they went to get the church from Ebusiralo.
K: Did Anduuru live at the Ebulonga Christian village?
N: He lived at Ebulonga, all those people. All these people from Ekamanji lived at Ebulonga Christian village. But when they wanted their own church there might have been some blunder. That made then request for their church from Ebusiralo.
K: Now you have not talked about all the neighbors: Abatongoi, Abasiralo…
M: They were all good people. Had they been bad, your people could not have crossed through their land going to take up land in Etwenya. Even Abasakami had no problem with Abasilatsi
…….

K: Let me ask the last question. Here in Ebunyole the farms have become very small in size. Look at the one next to us. Is that the way it was in the past?
Many voices: There are many people; we have outstripped it; we are too many now.
N: Here Okoba had only two sons. I am not sure if he had a brother. But those lands, you see now, Kweya has brought you forth, won't he sub-divide? In our home Tela was born alone. But he had six of us; but now we have 55 sons, wont they fight over land?
K: How has this problem of land affected us here in Ebunyole?
N: It brings poverty and suffering. It means that whoever can get some money he must buy some small piece elsewhere and build there. The people have outstripped available land.
Old man: Imagine this, you have educated your son, he is married and he is at home without a job. They have started to get children. You sell your cow to pay fees for your other child. Your son and his wife are in their house in the compound. They have no soap, they have no kerosene, and your daughter-in-law walks half naked. Won't you take some of that money and say, "Ah, ah, daughter of someone, here take this and buy *mutumba* (second hand wear) at Luanda." How can she walk near where old men are seated like here? The lands are now squeezed, and even when you plant, the maize grows up to half your size, how useful can it be?
K: Do you think there is any way the church has contributed to this problem?
I: The church just worsens
N: It intensifies the poverty that is already there.
Esikhunyi: You see where there is a funeral they want to eat there as well as be paid.
K: If you are not happy with what is happening in what way can it be changed?
Old man: Abanyole are now used to it. You cannot manage to change them.
N: Child as for us, at our age there is nothing we can do. We have reached the dead end. Children like you ought to look for that method. As for us it is over.
M: There is a lot of pressure on the land, food has become scarce...

**Excerpt 5. Interview with Erasto Nyong'a Amatinye (B. 1933); Jeremiah Afubwa (B. 1932); Roy Alukonya (B. 1927); Raphael Anjimbi (B. 1952); Erastus Asinuli (B. 1954); James Keng'o Amatinye (B. 1936).**
**At Ebusiratsi A/C School (Ekwanda)**
**3 January 2007**

……
K: (After introduction and other formalities) there are somethings I would l like you to tell me… If you know anything. Where did these Abanyole come from; how did they start; if they walked up to this place how did they walk, which paths did they use; what did they experience as they walked; how did they enter here in Ebunyole and where did they begin? Is there anyone who can tell me? (After a lengthy silence – it is as if each person is waiting, looking around to see who will start).
Nyong'a (NY): (Clears his throat then, hesitantly at first) I heard it said that all the people came from Emisiri (Egypt). And they were in a boat, it came with them and reached Es'sumo. That is when they left the boat and started to walk looking for land (literally the world). Every one walked around looking for his own favorite spot to establish his home. So Anyole remained at Maseno, then Anyole left Maseno and came to Wekhomo. That is where Anyole was, and he sired his sons from there (tense moment of silence).
K: Let me ask, you said they came with a boat and disembarked at Es'sumo, and then they left the place and came to Maseno…
NY: They came to Maseno, Omujaluo (the Luo) remained behind.
K: Were they together?
NY: They were together! It appears they were six people in the boat; that is what I heard. In there were Anyole, Maragoli, Jaluo, Amukisii, and, these Abachukuyu (Kikuyu), they have another name…; again I was in Nandi recently where they were saying all of us came from there.
K: Are we are Nandi then? So who are the sixth? ….
NY: The sixth are Abachukuyu. They have a name they are called. I do not know…
……
K: So all of them disembarked in Kisumu?
NY: They disembarked in Kisumu, so each person looked for a spot which he thought appropriate.
K: In that case can you explain how they spread out?
NY: Didn't I say when they alighted each man looked for a place that he liked and started his life there?
K: That is how Abalokooli went where they are now?
NY: Abalokooli started there (pointing towards Kima) and then they went in that direction…
Alukonya (AL): Omujaluo followed the water. Omukisii proceeded and went to Ebukisii, and Anyole built at Wekhomo, and that is where he died; that is where he gave birth to his children. He gave birth[91] to five children.
K: Let us say, Anyole has left Maseno and arrived at Wekhomo, then…
AL: He built there and married his wives there.
K: How many?
AL: (Inaudible)…then he gave birth to the first son Omusuubi, followed by Omusiloli, followed by Om'muli, followed by Omusilatsi, then followed by the last born Om'mutete. (It

[91] In Olunyole, it is acceptable to talk about men giving birth. Hence it is not a surprise that many of the performers talk about birth in relation to men. (Hence, in Abanyole/Luhya culture children belong to the man not to the woman. I have tried as much as possible to retain their understanding in this respect.

is clear from Nyong'a's face that he has a problem with what Alukonya's version but he does not carry his objection through).
K: They are now five people – Abanyole. But… there are other people… Abatongoi, how are they found here?
AL: They just came.
K: Am'mang'ali?
AL: They just came.
K: Abasakaami?
AL: They just came.
NY: Abatongoi, history says they are Ab'bo (Luo); Am'mang'ali are said to be Abasaamia (laughs). So they are people who just came here and added to the population of this area.
AL: They just came in when this world was rolling on.
K: And let us say…Abakhaya?
NY: Abakhaya are Abakhaayo. He followed his sister, (he was) a baby sitter.
K: Who is the sister?
NY: Amukhoye married from Ebukhayo.
K: And who is Amukhoye?
NY: Amukhoye is Omusilatsi!
K: It seems we may have to go on then we will get to that.
…….
Anjimbi (AN): Let me make some correction. These five sons of Anyole they are talking about, because when he was naming, they are about…those who came from the other side in the boat. That means that Omunyole was in the boat, Omujaluo was in the boat; he is not the son of Anyole; Omukisii is not the son of Anyole; those who came in the boat are those who sought free space to stay in. Each of them went to look for their own space. Now this point we have reached, let us say Abanyole came form the other side; then we remained here as Abanyole.
NY: That is the way it is.
AN: So what you should say is the five sons Anyole gave birth to… That is what I would like to correct.
AL: Omusiloli, Omusuubi, Om'muli, Omusilatsi, Om'mutete.
K: … the reason why we went back is he had talked of Abasilatsi, so we wanted to know how these Abasilatsi branch off from Omusilatsi. He had come to Amukhoye, and then I started wondering where this Amukhoye comes in. That is what he had started to explain.
AL: Abasilatsi, is that not so? Omusilatsi gave birth to Muhindila; Muhindila gave birth to Amukhoye; Amukhoye had three sons…
NY: The sons of Amukhoye are three: Nakuti, Matakho, and Namilemba. Those are he ancestors of Abasilatsi.
K: So the first is Nakuti?
NY: The first is Nakuti.
K: The second?
NY: Matakho.
AL: The second is Milemba Matakho is the last-born!
K: Matakho is the last-born?
NY: Milemba is the third!
AL: That is the lineage of whom? Amukhoye. (The rest of the recording is inaudible).
AN: I would like to say, you may have heard something different; If you heard something different, do not die with it. It would be good for you to say…. Then we shall get to a point where we will all agree. You should not allow it to weigh you down.
AL: Add Atsukha; Then Matakho is the eighth.

K: This is the way they followed one another.
AL: That is the birth lineage of Abasilatsi.
K: Is there anyone who can add to this?
Afubwa (AF): The sons of Amukhoye.
K: Where we are now, the lineage of the children of Matakho the son of Amukhoye: we had got to number 8.
NY: Angofu is there.
AL: Angofu is there! He is the one who comes after Ananda, Ananda is he first born.
NY: It is ok now. They are over. Those ones hatch [the rest].
K: That is right. Can you continue from there? You may even go to your immediate lineage…
AF: Ah, ah, we shall not get to the families so soon.We want to bring Abasilatsi and Abamutete, this issue of the families, we must start from the other side (pointing to the South of Ebusilatsi). We will start from the hills (Ebulonga) and Ematsuuli must be here, then we will be able to line up the families. We cannot start from the middle. We can easily miss one and corrupt our history.
K: There is no problem, just say what you know. Someone else will add on that. Whatever you know just say.
AF: Please continue Mr Alukonya.
AL: Mine or yours?
K: Even mine if you know it.
AF: I wanted to say… let us go back a bit. The way I heard… Yes, they came from Misiri, and they came by River Nile. That is the river that brought them in by boat. Having come by River Nile, they followed the river then they came to a place we call…Kisumu, there is a place they call Seme. That is whether that boat anchored. Then they left the place on foot and came up to Maseno. So we are the people of the Nile.
K: The boat stopped at Eseme.
AL: Eseme, a place they call Eseme. When they left there, (Maseno) they came to Wekhomo, that place – Hekhomo.
AF: Yes. That is where they started to strategize (*okhwechaan'naho*). About that, he has already talked. I just wanted to remind how they left Misiri following River Nile, came to Uganda, and then they left Uganda and came to Maseno. In addition, about these Luos, I sat with one Luo and asked him about their history. He told me they came from Sudan; they were two brothers, two sons of one father. When they reached Uganda, they disembarked. One of them came out of the boat. Then it was decided that they were going to come to Kenya on foot. One son remained in Uganda whom they call Omucholi, Acholi (Alukonya who has been following keenly nods in agreement and repeats "Acholi" silently to himself). Two brothers, but that Acholi, the reason why he remained was that he had a big wound on his leg. He could not manage to walk the distance to Kenya. The one who had the good leg is the one who managed to walk to Kenya. Where he disembarked, I would not know. When I sat with another Luo, he told me… I sneaked on them when they were writing that history at the home of Prof. Thomas Odhiambo. We had a meeting with them to discuss this matter. That one who went to South Nyanza, there were two brothers. Then there were somethings we call *tsinyuma* [diamonds]. While they were staying in one home, one of the children swallowed the bead belonging to another. Then the father of one came and asked, "Where is my bead?" Then he was told, "A child swallowed it." Then he told the other one, "My bead, you must give me!" Then that one said, "The child has swallowed it, I will buy you another one" That one said, "There is nothing like that, what I want is my bead!" The the other one said " Since I am weak, and you wont hear my plea…, then let me kill the child and remove the bead from her stomach to give to you." He did that. When he killed his child, cut the stomach, removed

the bead, and gave him; that is when the other one became happy. Then he told his household, "From today, let us board the boat and go to South Nyanza.
K: Where did they come from?
AF: They came from where we call Siaya… Siaya. "He is my brother alright, but what he has done…we cannot work together with him; we can not stay together with him." Those are the Luo in South Nyanza. They came from the Luo in Siaya. That is what I know about that history. As for our own, Abasilatsi (history), we are here. You will try to bring it together, and then we will see how we can straighten where it becomes difficult.
K: Ok. *Mzee* (the elder) has added what he knows. You were talking about the houses, even if it is your own or any of us, it is still all right.
NY: (Laughs) houses or what, had we not finished?
K: We mean birth lineage. How you …
NY: The sons of Amukhoye?
AF: Yes, Right from Amukhoye.
NY: Now, I know my own, and it goes like this: I am Nyong'a Khamati, Khamati Amatinye, Amatinye Wesa, Wesa wa Sori, (I have been writing as he enumerates. He notices that I am unable to keep pace and pauses automatically as if to wait for me).
K: (Noticing the silence, and apparently conscious that Nyong'a is waiting for me, I say, at once to fill in the sudden tense silence, as well as to take advantage to get what I missed) Khamati, Amatinye. Amatinye…?
NY: Amatinye wa Wesa (some silence as I write which is interrupted only by my repetition of his words: "Amatinya wa Wesa." As soon as I look up), Wesa wa Sori, Sori we Likondi. (Silence as I write, then) Likondi is (the son) of Nakuti. (Silence as I write then) Nakuti wa Amukhoye. (Silence, then) That is my birth lineage. That is why you used to hear William say the farm in Ebuslilatsi belonged to Likondi. He is the nephew of…. Say the father of William[92] was the nephew of Likondi.
K: So he is 9th generation from Anyole?
AN: Yeah.
Ku: He has reached eight?
Keng'o (KE): Just as Nyong'a finished. Yes, he will finish just as Nyong'a finished.
AL: (Struggling to understand why all the responsibility). He did not list all the clans!
KE: He listed!
AN: Ah, ah Nyong'a never counted all the clans. He counted from himself up to Amukhoye. (General approval).
AN: He counted from himself upto Amukhoye … Now when you and him (pointing to Keng'o) know where you meet. Don't you?
NY: Yes, we are the people of Amatinye
KE: We are the people of Amatinye.
AN: Now when this one counts (pointing to Alukonya) he will get to a point where they (the lineages) will meet with this one (Afubwa).
……..
K: (Counting the names given) so you are in the ninth generation?
AL: Yeah.

[92] He seems to be referring to William Esiroyo whose home and farm was not far away from where we are. That time farm seems to have some issue because William Esiroyo died in the 1970s. It is difficult to understand how such a person would be so close to (his father was a nephew of) Likondi who appears to have been a second generation Omunyole.

NY: (Laughing), he is my son, the brother of Kweya.[93]
AL: This one (Afubwa) and that one (Nyong'a) are my fathers (general laughter. They are both younger than him).
NY: (Laughing) Have we not met?
……..
AL: From Amukhoye, am I not number nine, Kweya number nine? This one is ten (pointing to me), that one is ten (pointing to Anjimbi).
K: This one (Anjimbi) ten too?
AN: I always get into some confusion at that point. You know everyone must defend himself. He must defend himself according to how he read (General laughter.). Because… Let me list my ancestors, these are my ancestors: I am Raphael – Okwoku; Anjimbi; Chibwai
K: Chibwai is the father of…
NY: and AF: His grandfather.
AN: I call him my great grandfather.
AN: Okwoku; Anjimbi.
K: Anjimbi is the father of Okwoku?
AN: Yes, Chibwai; Nangatso; Amukhobu; Mbandu; Angofu; Matakho. Now if you count you will get…
AL: (Pointing to Anjimbi) My child, your brother!
K: (laughing) Lets us go on, we will see where we will get. Old man (Keng'o) where are you?
KE: Ah, ah, that one (Nyong'a) has finished! (General laughter).
AF: He has finished!
……
AL: Because we said, Nanda and Angofu are children of the same mother, the elder sons of Omusilatsi.
K: Does it mean I am Omunanda?
AL: You are Omunanda[94]
K: Ok, I will start from there (general laughter). If that is the case he (pointing to Anjimbi) usually calls me his son, does it mean I am of the eleventh generation?
AL: Listen, you are tenth, he is tenth.
K: Ok, (pointing to Anjimbi) have you heard?
AN: We are ok! Could I be older than these people? I found them saying these things (general laughter).
AL: So he (pointing to Anjimbi) and you are my children, and this one (Afubwa) and aand that one (Nyong'a) are my fathers.
K: So they are my grandfathers?
AL: Yes.
AN: Nyong'a you will no longer call me your son. I am very far, grandfather! (General laughter).
NY: But you now…I always call you my brother but now you have gone too far aside. You are too far; I always think you are ninth!

[93] Actually, Alukonya is not my father's brother. Abanyole and Abaluhya in general call anyone of their generation brother. The indication here is that Alukonya is in my father's generation. It is in that way that he is my father's brother and both are the sons of Nyong'a whose generation is that of my grandfather.
[94] Mr Alukonya does not seem to be privy to the story of my ancestral past. The story goes that my ancestor simply settled in Ebunanda after what they call *esiluchi* (murder of a kinman). That means that the ancestors were expelled, as is the usual practice in such an event. They were just welcomed in Ebunanda and they took on the identity.

AL: Ah, ah you always do that out of ignorance. Many people don't know. Nine is me; he is tenth!
AN: You see: they are these people who are saying this, it is not me!
…….
K: We are ok…. Now I think when we started… we glossed over this. What I wanted to know…Anyole has given birth to Asilatsi, asilatsi has given birth to Amukhoye, but how did we get to where we are, what happened? You said he came from Maseno and came to start his family at…
AL: Wekhomo: that is where all the people hatched, all of them.
K: But how did we get here?
AL: To come here they migrated…
NY: (Who has been consulting a paper in his hands for a while now, even appearing to be whispering to the paper, suddenly looks up, bright, serious face) Now wait a moment, wait a moment. (Prolonged silence) we have talked about Nakuti, we have talked about Matakho; (talking more to the paper he is holding than to his audience) now listen, there is something else here. Moreover, if you don't know it, may be you hear it. This son we talked about – Namilemba, that name comes in but I think people do not know it. Namilemba has his own sons they are here. Now Namilemba gave birth to Abetsa
AN: Namilemba?
NY: (All along eyes fixed to the paper so he is lost to the world around him).Yes Namilemba, he gave birth to Abetsa; he gave birth to Namakanda; he gave birth to Chilundu…
AN: (Who is writing as Nyong'a reads) Slowly, go slowly. He gave birth to Abetsa and gave birth to Namilemba?
NY: Uuh? Yee, Namilemba gave birth to Abetsa, he gave birth to…and Abetsa gave birth to Namakanda, understand? He gave birth to Chilundu.
K: Namakanda gave birth to Chilundu?
NY: Ah, ah, I am listing the sons of Abetsa! Abetsa gave birth to Namakanda, he gave birth to Chilundu, he gave birth to Asimuna, he gave birth to Nambweka, he gave birth to ... this other man called… Kaalo!
NY: Kaalo. Aya…
AL: (Who has been looking restless and agitated whispering "Ah, ah!" to himself and shaking his head): Ah, ah! don't count someone who who got lost!
NY: Ah, ah, just listen first! Atonji, I put him last because he is the son who came with his mother (Tension eases on Alukonya's face as he now smiles and nods his head in approval). That is the lineage of Ochondo, the lineage of Onyino. He (Atonji) is Omulokooli but his mother came with his pregnancy (Alukonya nods his head in agreement, even affords a relaxed grin).
AF: So he was blessed (*yarebwakhwo omukhono*)…
NY: They would wait for you to give birth to your own son. After you have given birth to your own son, they would bless *(babiite*) yours (son) before they come to the one who came with his mother…
AF: Then they would follow that with the one who 'was come with'.
NY: Now he is called, don't you hear Abatonji? He is Omusilatsi but he is Omulokooli.
AN: So in other words, Atonji is the brother of Namilemba?
AL: Atonji is the brother of Nakuti.
NY: (Who has been consulting his record on a piece of paper) Didn't I list Namilemba… They are the children of Namilemba (laughs, no one seems to notice the discrepancy).
AN: Ah, ah, I am right. I am not wrong because we must get it right. Now they are three sons: Nakuti, Milemba, Atonji.
NY: Ah, ah, Atonji…

K: (After consulting list enumerated by Nyong'a a little while earlier) He is the son of Abetsa.
NY: **(**Consulting his record) Atonji is the son of Abetsa. Namilemba gave birth to Abetsa so those I have been counting are the sons of Abetsa.
AN: (After a tense silence all round) Atonji gave birth to Abetsa…
NY: Hmmm.
AN: No! (As he says this Alukonya also shakes his head vigorously)
NY: Listen, listen Namilemba gave birth to Abetsa.
AL: (Who has been shaking his head) Listen, when Amukhoye married Omulokooli woman, her name was Kaita, she came with a child in her stomach. She gave birth at Amukhoye's home. He was called Atonji.
NY: (Who has been agitated tries to interject) Ah, ah!
AL: Let me tell you…
AN: Let him say, that is why we came here.
AL: Kaita gave birth to another child who was called Nakuti, then she followed that with Namilemba. How many sons (signals three with his fingers). From one wife, the Omulokooli girl. Then he married an Omukhayo girl. She was called Mwechenye from whom he begot only Matakho.
AN: Don't you hear them sing their praise in Mwechenye's name?
AF: Hmm. Now you have said it well.
AL: We must put it correctly.
AN: The way Alukonya has said, I have heard Rufus (Teka) try to say the same. And you know Rufus had taken well the history of this area.
AL: He got it from Angofu.
AN: Yes, because Namilemba was the son of Amukhoye. Matakho was the son of Amukhoye, and he was the last. Then, eeeeh...Milemba, Nakuti, and Matakho. Milemba is the one who gives birth to Abetsa, Namakanda, Chilundu, Asimuna, Nambweka, Kaalo.
AL: Now you are going well. (It is clear that there are two camps on this issue: Nyong'a is on his own while Anjimbi is on one side with Alukonya. In the meantime Nyong'a is watching the development quite restlessly).
AN: Then Atonji is there with his own (sons). I do not see the point at which we come to meet because if it were so, we would have called these Ab'betsa Abatonji – if we were to go by what Nyong'a says, yet they are not Abatonji…
NY: Uh, uh! Atonji is the son of Abetsa.
AL: And the one she came with in her stomach and delivered here, who was it?
NY: Have I not told you he is the one who 'was come with' into the home of Abetsa?
AN: Who 'was come with'?
NY: Atonji, who is Omulokooli.
AL: Ah, ah!
AN: Then whom did he give birth to?
NY: Have I not told you he is among these people I have written (he is reading from his list) …?
AF: (Who has been watching silently) Amukhoye…
AN: Let us listen to this old man.
AF: When he married that woman that is when he sired his son whom we call Atonji. He is the one who came after the child that one came with in her womb. Is it not so? (No response. Restlessness on Nyong'a's face). Then to that, he added whom? He added Nakuti, and then he added Milemba.
AL: Then he married another woman and gave birth to Matakho.
AF: Then he married the second wife and gave birth to Matakho.

AL: Abakhayo are his uncles; and these others Abalokooli are their uncles: Kaita; Mwechenye.
AF: The one whom these Abakhaya came to look after her children.
AL: We are Mwechenye.
K: So, among Abasilatsi we have those who praise themselves using Mwechenye…
AL: Mwechenye and Kaita. The reason why Kaita is better known is that they were three sons while Matakho was alone. *Alia Kaita, alia Mwechenye*….
K: So I am Mwechenye?
AL: You are Mwechenye, I am Mwechenye
AN: I am Mwechenye
AL: This one (Nyong'a) is Kaita, this one (Keng'o) is Kaita, this one (Afubwa) is Mwechenye.
NY: These people I am telling you about, they are the sons of Milemba. They are Abanakuti, Ab'betsa… They are the group of this man with a hat… this Moslem
AN: Aijah?
NY: Yes, Aijah.One day go there and ask. They are called Abanakuti Ab'betsa. They come from Namilemba, Namilemba the brother of Nakuti.
AL: Yes the brother of Nakuti.
AN: And what about Onyino?
KE: Which Onyino?
AN: The son of Olukhalo.
NY: Did I not tell you Onyino are Abatonji who come from Ebulokooli?
AN: You see, now we no longer call them Abalokooli.
NY: Yeah, it is an ancient matter (general laughter).
AN: I want to say this: I have heard good talk. You know what we are saying is a matter that will last long. And a matter to last long must be done carefully. You said clearly that Amukhoye married a waman who was expecting a girl child. That is what this old man (Afubwa) said. She had a girl child in her womb, and then she gave birth.
AF: The child she gave birth to first…
…….
AN: So I was saying….
K: The old man (pointing to Nyong'a) was saying…
NY: I wanted to say Ab'betsa and Atonji, you must ask someone to explain. You will hear them say Ab'betsa are the descendants of Abetsa, then Atonji is the son of Abetsa from Ebulokooli
AL: (Shaking his head in disagreement) No, no!
AN: This elder (pointing to Afubwa) had said something, what were you saying, the child (whom the mother) came with, was it a boy….
AF: It was a boy
AN: Who is it?
AL& AF: That is Atonji.
AN: This Atonji, after he was born, then he was followed with Nakuti
AL: Then he was followed by Nakuti.
AN: After Nakuti, he was followed by…?
AL: Milemba!
AN: Milemba, those [have their uncles in] Ebulokooli, right?
AN: Then he married from Ebukhayo…
AL: Ebukhayo!

AN: Then he sired Matakho. That is the history I heard! (Alukonya nods his head and gestures with his hands in approval, all the while looking at a spot in front of him, apparently avoiding to look at Nyong'a).
K: That is ok. This matter… It is not for today only; we need to research further. A day will come when it will be required again (Laughter and easing of tension.). Now these people… To come from Wekhomo…, what was the reason?
AL: The country was open….
NY: When children are born, each person would look for where to go (settle).
AL: There was no problem…
NY: Ah, ah! I heard Amuli… Amuli was bigheaded, bad tempered…
K: Who is Amuli?
NY& AF: (Pointing to the direction where Abamuli clan have settled) Am'muli! (General laughter).
NY: He was bad tempered, so brawls made him leave this place to go to the border that side.
K: Quarreled with his brother?
NY: Yes with his brothers!
K: Which one did he quarrel with?
NY: Who he quarreled with I may not know, but I just heard that he quarreled with his siblings…. Actually they are these sons we have been writing…
AF: The sons of Anyole.
NY: Of Anyole; he quarreled with them then he ran away to the border that side.
K: Did they swear … or did he just take off?
NY: He seems to have just taken off.
K: That is why he is that far?
NY: Eeeh! (Some laughter).
K: And these others… they left…?
AL: Land… And for Abasuubi they went…. They fragmented: some Ebutongoi, others (up) here … they have split completely.
K: We will come back to the issue of Abasuubi. Now let us say… I am pursuing the issue of Abasilatsi because you have been talking about them. These Abasilatsi… who came from Wekhomo…
AL: Abasilatsi or who?
K: Yes; the one who came from Wekhomo, who was it?
NY: That is Amukhoye!
AN: That is Amukhoye!
NY: Asilatsi is the name…; Amukhoye is the one who left that Wekhomo and came to this hill (pointing to Amukhoye's Hill).
AN: There at Anana's Hill (Alukonya shows his approval by pointing towards the hill as Nyong'a speaks).
K: Does that mean the person called Asilatsi is Amukhoye?
NY: Eeeeh! He is the one who sired Abasilatsi!
KE: He is the one who sired Abasilatsi, Amukhoye is the one who sired Abasilatsi!
AF: This same Asilatsi is Amukhoye. Amukhoye started that lineage.
K: That means Asilatsi was the son of Muhindila. So he Muhindila sired Amukhoye. That means that those who settled up here were the third generation? And when he reached at the hill at Ebulonga…
AL: That is where he was killed.
K: Was he killed?
ALL: Hmmmmm!
AF: He was killed; with a spear, a Nandi spear.

K: Now You will talk about that too; but first let me ask, when they arrived up there at the hill… someone has built something up the hill…
KE: Otanga? Otanga is the one who built...
K: They say that is where he lived?
AN: In fact a banana is there…
KE: Even pot pieces… You have never stepped there?
K: Uh uh.
KE: There still is a broken pot there I think, unless they have removed it recently.
AF: There is water there. If you bathe in it, [your skin] peels off.
KE: We even have a pipe there.
AL: Amukhoye's!
AN: Which he used to smoke.
AN: People cannot dare touch it?
KE: Only Mandu has been touching it. Now I do not know who touches it.
K: Mandu… this old man who used to…
KE: The old man who died….
AF: The father of Keng'o
KE: He used to go to sacrifice up the hill.
AL: The son of Omungu?
KE: The son of Omungu.
KE: What was he sacrifing for?
AL& KE: The rituals of the past.
KE: *Okhwesalisa* (to pray). If you wanted leadership you would be taken there.
AN: I think you had to make obeisance at that spot.
NY: The (form of) prayer of the ancestors.
AF: Like now that we are starting the (new) year, he would go there and talk (pray) at the place and say: "This year, we have started it well, may we end it well"
NY: Then he would kill a white chicken there.
AF: It (the year) should not bring any bad omen. Then the year would end without any quarrel, without people fighting; without any killing as was common in the past.
K: So should we say he used to pray from…
KE: He used to perform very special traditional prayer.
AN: Is Mandu not the grandfather of Joash?
NY: Amwayi Mandu, Imbaya Mandu, do you know him?
K: Imbaya, I know…
KE: He is still there even now.
K: He also lived on this ridge?
NY: When there was war, people fighting while houses were being burned, they ran away and came this side. And went up to that hill. Now, even… do you know Paulo Ombeyi? …. Ombeyi has been living here at our place. The mother of Apwola has been living here at our place. It is war that brought them here. They would run away as houses were set on fire.
K: War against who?
AL: Against Am'mutete! They were pushing each other, brothers; and they would push, and they are brothers!
NY: Boundary (General laughter).
K: So, that Mandu used to live here?
KE: His father was buried here where I am.
NY: (Pointing to the direction of his home) His father was buried this side.
…….

NY: In fact, those people, those Abalonga… Many of them… Some were ruled from Em'mutete…
AL: They ran away from there and came here…
NY: I think the Lukongo (Headman) was Robert Libale?
NY: So, it was court cases before they shifted from there.
KE: Am'mutete (boundary) used to come up to your father's [farm].
K: At my home?
KE: Only Kweya was this side, but all the others…. Em'mutete!
AL: Anjimbi and… all died here in our place.
K: The father of …?
AN: The whole of Esiamarwi
KE, AF& NY: Esiamarwi!
AF: And their grandfather was buried just here… where Jairo… where Apondo is.
AL: The likes of Andebe went (back) just the other day
K: Andebe?
AL: But he used to be here, Anjimbi here.
K: But how come we did not run away?
AL: It is you, you are abananda. some are at Ematsuli, others are at Elukongo.
K: They ran away because of the war against abamutete?
AL: They used to kill each other a lot.
K: I see. So this Amukhoye arrived in the hills, is that where he sired all his children?
AL: All of them.
NY: And then he was killed there, he was killed in the hill.
K: How was he killed?
AL: Raiders came and invaded him. They speared him and then they unfastened the cattle and left with them.
AF: Abarwa, Abarwa (Nandis)
AL: Abarwa. When they left with the cattle, they went, went, went, then they reached Esikomoli
AF: Ekima
AL: Then Matakho was told: your father, people have killed! Then Matakho left this side (direction of the hill) went through Es'song'olo then he reached… there was a very big reed swamp (*esitundu esikali sana*)
KE: A very big one.
AL: They were driving the cattle.
K: Which place?
AL: Em'mutete
KE: Em'mutete Ebusundi.
K: Matope?
KE: Matope! After Matope, if you go just ahead.
K: In that valley on the way to Ebwali?
KE: There was a huge papyrus swamp.
AL: He was with Akhaya, his uncle Akhaya. They killed Abarwa and ran back with the cattle. While they were returning the cattle, they came, came, came, then they crossed the river. His bull was called Asibiko. Then *nekuumula* (it bellowed)
NY: He was not yet dead.
AL: Not yet dead. Then his wives Kaita and Mwechenye went to meet them.
AF: *Bakhupa esikalakala* (As they ululated).
AL: They said (in a whisper), "He is still breathing, he is not dead!" Then they entered the house. When they entered the house, he said, "My bull which was bellowing (*ekumuyenge*),

have you brought it back?" Akhaya and Matakho said, "We have brought it back and we have worked on them. Then he gave them their blessings and died.
NY: Say *nabalamila olubango* (He blessed them with a spear – warriorhood). If Matakho spears you, you can't survive! If Nakuti spears you, you will go.
KE: Ah, ah, you can't survive! He was blessed with a spear!
AL: Then he said, "The people who were here were the big children. If you were here, I would not have been killed. Those who were here ran away and left me to be killed". Who had run away: Milemba, Atonji had run away, Nakuti had run away. So who returned Amukhoye's cattle? It was Matakho!
K: So he was blessed with…
KE: He was blessed with a spear.
AN: Say exactly what he said!
AL: He was given *olubango*, that is war and reproduction.
NY: He was told to be sharp with that *olubango*.
K: what is *olubango*?
ALL: *lifumo* (spear)! (General laughter).
AN: (Belatedly) *olubango* is a shield
KE: If you speak old Olunyole this one cannot understand!
AN: *Olubango* is a spear.
AF: The reason why that happened, when that cow bellowed (*yakumula*)…
AF: He said: "What is that that sounds like the cow that was snatched from me? It was taken away, how could it be coming back? Then he came quickly, they received him then he said: Papa even if you die, I have worked, do not worry.
AL: I have brought back all the cattle.
AF: I have brought back the cattle. Then he said, "Is that right?" Then the other one said, "That is what I have done". Then the father looked and said, "Those others ran away from me. Now this one has come and brought back the cattle". Then he gave him a spear and told him, "Be sharp when it comes to killing the enemy".
AL: Then he gave him descendants.
AF: Then he gave him what? Descendants.
AL: Matakho is numerous!
AF: That is why they have spread, because of that incident. If he gets hold of a stick to hit you, it can never miss. But perhaps new things have come which it cannot grasp. All these others are our siblings. But we always have some children whom we call *abakwa silache* (incorrigible ones). He usually fronts that matter when he is talking to his peers. He talks and angers them: I am the big house which was blessed with leadership, I can do as I wish." That is not the way it is supposed to be…. That is part of what we have heard, take it from there. If there is anyone who heard more than where I have got…
AL: That is the way it was.
NY: That is the way it was because you can see the change. Nakuti was the eldest; he is the one who should have been blessed with the spear. But he ran away and the spear was given to the younger child. So, when you see a younger child given blessings while eldest is bypassed, things change.
K: That means Abarwa used to invade this place frequently?
KE: They used to come for cattle!
K: Let us go back a bit. When Anyole came, which people did he find here?
KE: The country was just rolling and empty (*esibala siali sialala butswa*).
K: The Nandi were not there?
NY: It was *esitsimi* (wilderness).
AL: Abarwa were far. The grass was growing wild.

AF: Am'mutete were men, they chased Abalokooli and pushed them aside (pushes with his hand). And abalokooli pushed Abarwa. Abarwa were close here near the Abalokooli even up to Em'mutete.
KE: Es'song'olo here, Abarwa, Es'song'olo was all Abarwa.
K: Ok, now I heard you say Abamatakho have spread out, how did people spread from the hill up to this side, I have heard that they stretch from this side up to Musikholobe, I am not sure where Musikholobe is.
AL: Ematsuli.
AF& NY: The border with Abaakwe.
K: What happened?
AL: An individual would identify a good place and build there, and then he would invite another person. For example, our ancestor called Ekhubi; he was called by Sikhome, Nakuti. He told him, "My brother this country is bare come and build here".
NY: Haven't you heard us say each one would identify the spot to build his home; each would identify where to put his home (*litaala*); that is why they spread towards this side.
KE: Say this: Sori, since he had a lot of energy, he is the one who pioneered that side and started wars with Abas'sa. This Sori is the one who invited Matakho…
AL: Ah, ah Ekhubi.
KE: Ekhubi…: "My brother come this side, there is a lot of space this side." Then he went there.
K: This Sori… he is a man of the other, he (did not live) long ago? (General laughter)
NY: Is he not of the fourth generation? Or is it the third?
K: He is almost the same generation with Ekhubi. He is slightly older than him. He is the one who brought [Ekhubi] here?
KE: He is the one who took him…
AF, AL & KE: (All at once) Over to Ematsuli.
KE: Something I want to ask: How did you coexist with the neighbors? Am'mutete here, Abasikhale there, Abasiralo the other side, Am'mang'ali this side, and so on. How did you coexist, can anyone tell us?
NY: That matter… people lived by their masculinity (*oluyaye*). It was not a simple matter. It is said one would put up his boundary, Then another comes and uproots it. Then the other would come and say, "Someone has uprooted?" Then he would come and conceal himself. Then you come to plough. When you come to plough, he will take cover. So you would dig and push your spear, dig and push your spear. When you forget and leave your spear behind, he would sneak out with *esikong'o* (weapon). As soon as he gets to you *esikong'o twa*! *twa*! *twa*! until you take off! (General laughter). It is said… the father of Amalachi…
KE: Omuhuulu
NY: Omuhuulu! Omusembe man… don't you see, the farm that extends below there? Omusembe man used to come and dig at night. Then Omuhuulu would check: Who has ploughed this land? Then Omuhuulu went and hid. Then he ambushed with his *elabusi* (stick) it (stick) was called *butsiika*…. A good-sized *esikong'o.*
KE: Quite heavy!
NY: He went and hid in the rubbish. Then Omusembe man came. Then Omusembe man dug, dug, after some time he thought: "Uh, there is no one here", and left the spear behind. As soon as the spear remained behind, he had hardly gone further, Omuhuulu has sprung out! (In a whipping motion) *Esikong'o*! And they used to be men like you and heavily built; tall and heavy.
AF: They were fat!
NY: *Esikong'o* on the body (lands the blow), another (lands the blow). Then he took off! He never came back to that land (laughter).

AN: Is that why…this farm that Anjimbi bought…, that one of Abukuse, which extends below. Don't you see it has penetrated into Abasembe.
K: Even my grandfather extended into that side. It looks like Abasembe were pushed the other side.
KE: They were pushed yes, they were pushed.
NY: The were pushed by force. Those days, if you see anyone (living) at the border, he was a tough man, not anyone; a strong man who had made his *esikong'o*. And once they see you they will stalk and ambush you at night.
AF: At night if you get out…
NY: If you get out, what they do is they kill you. Our person was in this valley. It is said his name was Sirooko. He had kept sheep. They came and said, "Sirooko, Sirooko, you sheep have broken the leash!" When he opened, a spear in his body, he is dead! So, that is how those people used to push one another. Even within here, among the same people. One had to be tough to assert claim to a piece of land. He would push his boundary into another's (piece) and extend, and extend. Then the other person would say: "Leave him alone, let him just plough it. We will not kill each other. We are the same people." Those things used to happen. You even heard there at Mupang'a, didn't you hear about Abalonga and Abasikhale? Abasikhale wanted to come up to… Do you know Lwayi's (home)?
KE: Esiamayayi. They had built….
NY: They had built up to the ridge this side. They wanted to reach the ridge this side. People were slashed, people were beaten. The likes of Lwayi….
KE: Let us say, even the land in which that Sub-chief is; it is Abasikhale land. They used to cultivate that.
K: So you took over?
KE: Eeeh!
AL: *Elabusi* (Battle)!
KE: There was war, very serious here.
K: The land belonged to Abasikhale?
NY: Ah, ah, the land belonged to Abasilatsi…
AL: When Otiato was ruler, he carved it off.
NY: When Otiato was ruler, he came and built his camp there at the center, among Abalonga…
NY: Khusiamayayi. Then they thought, "We will cross the river up to where Otiato rules from". And when Josua was ruler, again the white agriculture man got very cross. He stood on the other ridge (Ebusikhale). And this side, water had carried away the soil. Then he asked Josua, "Whose soil is that"? Josua said, "It belongs to Abalonga". When he said it belonged to Abalonga, Ochango heard him. Then Ochango collected people all the way from Ematsuli to go and dig terraces.
AL: It was spectacular!
NY: …. After they had dug terraces and the farms had been restored, then Abasikhale said, "They are ours." Then war broke out….
AN: In other words Ochango had *olutswoni* (heroism)…. Because the other fellow was scared about being sacked.
KE: Ochango was a man. Ochango was not a joke.
AL: Matakho!
KE: Matakho, was he not blessed with leadership?
K: Let us say Abamutete extended up to this place. Why did they come all the way?
AL: Pushing one another, fighting. When the white man came, he cooled it. Everything ended.
K: You never used to coexist peacefully with Abamutete?

AL: They were just alright because when they were fighting with Abalokooli, they would all come together – Abasilatsi and Am'mutete – to go and beat Omulokooli. Omulokooli would beat them and push them this side, then they would beat him and push him the other side. Once they come here, they would start to fight again to push each other (Laughter).
AF: There is something else: Am'mutete, if you married from there and you sired children…. When those Abamutete come, they check the homes carefully. One that belongs to their daughter, they can never burn it. They would say, "No. If I burn this house of my sister she will come back home to bother me." So they would move around skirting, skirting. Then something else came up. Once they put you under pressure they want to force you to shift then you see some people moving around, people who had performed abominable acts elsewhere. When you ask him: "Where are you going?" Then he says, "I am going over to Ebutongoi at my sister's place. I do not have a place to live." …. Then you will tell him, "Come and live here. You will be helping me *oburende* (neighborliness), that is war. When war breaks out, they should be three or four. That is how some people got land here, those who do not belong here, through that kind of friendship. Because on his own, he has fought continuously but he has not managed because the world (land) is massive. Then he builds. After he has build, when the war is over, then the other person stays.
NY: Like, you see what Jeremiah (Afubwa) is saying? These Am'musila are Ab'bo. They were just welcomed. There are other people here in our place. Ekhubi welcomed them.
K: Which ones are these?
NY: (He has been looking uneasy mentioning the name, but finally) Ab'bakhi.
K: Which people are Ab'bakhi?
KE: This child does not know Ab'bakhi?
K: …. Where did they come from?
AN: Now we will know.
AL: They came through Nakuti, Nakuti is the one who brought them. Where did they come from?
NY: Ah, ah! It is you who gave them land at this…place. Lipoi's land, which is at the hill.
AL: I know. They came to Nakuti's home to heal. Once they had healed, he expelled them. Then Mbandu and Abakhubi welcomed them. Mbandu, this one (points to Anjimbi) and Ekhubi, myself, they welcomed them.
AF: They told them, "Stay there."
K: But where did they come from?
AL: I do not know which way…
AF: They came from Ebulokooli! They were coming from Ebulokooli going to Ebuus'sama, to their kin.
K: Abas'sama are Abalokooli?
AL& AF: They are Abalokooli.
K: They were Abalokooli and they were medicine men.
AL: They were medicine men.
K: Do they still heal these days?
AL: Ah, it is over! It is over.
NY: Isn't the medicine depleted?
AN: Was it good medicine or is it what I used to hear people saying…
AL: Long ago, whenever anyone got ill…
AN: Nyong'a, or is it what used to be said that Ab'bakhi are people of witchcraft? It was there until late.
KE: That is what is said. Some of it is even still there.
AN: There were some places we told, "If you go to Eb'bakhi don't go there".
……

NY: Don't you know whenever war broke out, Abamutete never used to step there. The witchcraft of Angofu. If you go there and even break a stick…
AL: Not Angofu's, Ngoti's.
NY: Ngoti's; if you go there and as much as break even a stick, you will die. It was tough there. It was a dangerous place, they had witchcraft.
AF: These people you called Abasamia, Am'mang'ali, someone used to come from Ebusamia with *tsijeso* (scythes), and knives had curved tips. So he used to move around selling them. Then they told him: "If you stay and do this work from here so we can obtain *tsinjeso* from you, which we can use to clear our land…. Why would you want to go back to your home in Ebusamia? When you go there you disappear there and then we suffer. That is when that Omusamia built his house there and sired children from there. They became known as Am'mang'ali Abasamia.
AL: The house of Kulali.
K: So Omusamia was *omuruli* (black smith)?
AF: He was the black smith's distributor.
KE: He had a forge let us say that.
K: Where was the forge?
AF: He had a forge, just like Kabala used to have.
KE: Like Kabala has been [running one] at Em'mutete.
AL: He used to forge *tsinjeso*…
NY: When he was welcomed, he made a forge at Em'mang'ali. We even have one over there at Emusutswi they call it…. Is it still there, Ha Apwochi? Forgers of these *tsinjeso* we are talking about, knives, spears… they are still there.
……..
Ku: We have some people ther at Elukongo, Abasaatsi. How do they come to be found among Abasilatsi?
NY: Abasaatsi are Abasiralo.
AL&NY: They are Abasiralo.
NY: Again it is a man who ran away from Ebusiralo and came that side.
K: You have not told us, how did you engage during warfare? How did you engage and possibly drive away Abamutete? What would you do to beat them, or what would they do to outwit you?
AL: Those people…. That was war, people would die, they would kill each other. Just like he (Nyong'a) said making the boundary, one wants a lion's share, once you say, I want to eat some too, then he says no. Then you fight. That is the way it was.
K: Then who would gain nthe upper hand.
NY: You know that would mean you are so and so's people (descendants) and they are so and so's people (descendants). You know if you kill one of their men, they will start stalking you to kill one of you. Then you start to push them. Once you kill one of them you start to push them. Because you have already killed one of them. You are hunting for the second one. Then time will come then they will give up and say, "Ah let us go and bury this one they have killed. They might add another one." It is said that there was a war at M'musenjeli. It did not involve only these people. Even Anyole. Abanyole versus Abalokooli. Abalokooli want their boundary to come up to M'musenjeli. You understand? So Abalokooli have brought their show of force there at M'musenjeli, they want to cross and come this side. Now a man from Elukongo went through… trickery…
AL, AF, NY: Mung'au!
K: Which Mung'au?
AL: Om'matakho!

NY: Mung'au the son of, who is that? Now he went through Itabalia and came from behind (the enemy lines) ….They did not know him. His *imbili* (weapon) he had given to another man who was dancing with it. They did not know him. Then they thought, "Mung'au wa Khwamuleli is there!" He was so fierce you could not joke with him. (Unknown to them) Mung'au had gone through Itabalia…
AF: He had come in from behind them.
NY: And then came from behind and came through their midst. They did not know him. When he came in he tip toed, tip toed, stealthly. Then there came another young man, his name was Imbwana. He was very ferocious. Abanyole are there, and he is here in the middle. He (Mung'au) stubbed him with the spear *untik*! Then he fell down and he vanished into the midst of Abanyole….
AF: The Abalokooli ran away.
NY: They said oh! (All along) we have been with Mung'au wa Khwamuleli! As his brother tried to bend and mourn over him, Om'mutete man gave him an arrow (demonstrates the shooting process with his hands)! How many people have died? (Gestures with his fingers).
AL: Two.
NY: Can you continue? (Laughter).
NY: That is how the war was. Now it is pushing each other that way. That is how they were pushed uphill and driven all the way through Mwitabalia. So that war used to be two ten.[95] It had ferocious young men (*abayaye balula*) who insisted: "If I won't kill someone…" (Laughs)
AF: Courageous young men, courageous young men!
AN: In other words they used to stalk the fierce man, that is the one they wanted to kill.
AN: After the fierce one is killed, then they would move on.
NY: The way I have heard, the strong one was not positioned anyhow. He was placed in the middle.
AF: The fierce one was pushed behind…
AN: Because when he aims, it does not miss the target.
AF: You would put him behind…
NY: To meander slowly, stealthly.
AF: You would advance as he follows…. When they see him, he will already have closed in on them; then he will kill. Those ones will then run away.
K: That means Abanyole used to outmaneuver Abalokooli?
NY: If they had not outweighed them would they not be M'musenjeli
AF: Wouldn't Abalokooli have got here!
NY: Abanyole wanted to get up to [River] M'matsi Mamwamu. After you pass Emahanga as you descend, that is where Abanyole wanted to reach, but Abalokooli defended it…. But they [Abalokooli] had intended to come up to Emusenjeli; up to Ebukhobo, Abalokooli. But they were overwhelmed.
Ku: Someone told me, in those days whenever Abamutete went to war with Abalokooli Abasilatsi would come to help them.
AL& NY: Heee, it is that way.
Ku: Once they come to Em'mutete to help in the war, Abatongoi would then start to loot the wealth of Abasilatsi.
AF: That is the way it was…
AF: They would go behind them thinking, "These ones have gone…"
NY: Then they would come here to drive away (*okhupeya*) cattle.

[95] Two ten refers to a two hundred and ten yard race, which must have been popular at the time Nyong'a was a young man. It was very fast paced. It is common todate to hear something like, "So and so was pursued/made to run two ten", especially about an offending youth chased by either a parent or a teacher.

AF: Then they would come here and take the possessions of Abasilatsi. When Abasilatsi come from that side then they find, "Oooh, behind us there is another war," then they turn back. Then Abamutete…
NY: So Abamutete heard that story and made secret plans with Abasilatsi. Then they went to invaded Abatongoi. Then they drove then up the hill up to Musihonga…. That is when that war cooled down. But they had got used to that kind of deceit.
AL: When the white man came, then the war ended.
AF: It is the white man who finished that war. The white man came and persuaded them…
NY: And took them to church.
AF: Then he brought churches very fast. Then the government looked into it and pacified it. Now the wars have diminished; *liokhuliebana* [ambush type].
NY: Abasilatsi even killed Omuarabu (an Arab), *nomurundo* (with a gun)! Do you want to take this country lightly?
K: Where was that?
AF: It was a real white man
AL: Esibuye
NY: With a gun! They can see the gun but say, "That is trash!" Then they followed him until they killed him. After they killed him, and a man was shot they they got cautious, "Ihii, so it was fire!" (General laughter).
AF: We used to call him a child. The white man, we used to call him a newborn child (*omwana osili omwakhanyu*). They did not see him as an adult.
K: Did they kill an Arab or a white man?
NY: I heard it was an Arab
AL: All of them were just called *abasungu* (white men).
Ku: They are the ones who killed *abaana bomukhweso*[96] [the children of omukhweso)?
K: Now it appears like Abasilatsi and Abamutete used to fight. Yet I have heard that Abamutete used to live in M'bulonga Esiamarwi?
AL: That is why we told you Anjimbi and others ran to Ekwanda. Anjimbi, the likes of…who? Andebe ….
…….
AF: Am'mutete, we are not denying them, they are our brothers. What makes them unacceptable is *indama nyomu* [cheekiness]… Bulimo (Alukonya) like I said someone may *okhusunga ol'lache* [become arrogant] and say, "I am Matakho, I was given leadership!" Which is wrong. Because another person might be there in Em'mutete and he says, "We are…who?"
Ku: Abangelesa (The English)
AF: Abangelesa (Nyong'a laughs).
Ku: The children of Andeka!
AF: When he talks that way, he will have stirred the other one's heart.
Ku: He has thrown a piece of wood into a beehive.
AF: What is the matter with this one? I do not want him. That is the way it is.
……..
K: You have told us how you used to fight against Abalokooli, and *omukoloni* (colonial administration) made you stop…

[96] Etymologically *omukhweso* comes from okhukhwesa – to pull. However, it is not clear here whether *omukhweso* refers to the whites who presumably Kutai gives this appellation or it refers to a man called *omukhweso* whose children were killed by the white man. The appellation may be connected to a specific experience of the Whiteman, which has not entered the popular lore. Perhaps it has its origins in the trade union movement in which Kutai participated vigorously in various capacities during the time of the struggle for independence.

AL: We would push them as they push Abalokooli. That man they killed was a very bad man, the one you (Nyong'a) talked about, Imbwana, he was very fierce. He used to kill even Abarwa. He used to kill other people. But the man who killed him was Omusilatsi.
AF: It is Mung'au who killed.
NY: He killed Imbwana, an Omulookoli man. He was in Ebulokooli wars, a very fierce man.
AF: A very fierce man, even almost more fierce than Abanyole.
NY: Whenever there is war, he must kill a man, you know that is the way things were.
K: You hav talked about Abalokooli, but how were you living [as neighbors] with Abeetakho?
AL: Abeetakho were not this side. They used to meet Abamang'ali then they go to Abas'sa.
K: So Abetakho used to fight Abamang'ali?
NY: Ah, ah! Omunyole also came out. Omunyole together with Om'mang'ali. They had come up to Mwituha. Then they went to war and ejected them from Mwituha and pushed them up the hill. It is said a man from Ebukhaya came from that side… Obutioli, came from that side running back frightened. The someone came [from the opposite direction] running, he came down from a house he was building then he told him, "I will spear you"! Then he told him, "*Eishi*, when you kill (a frail) old man what will you get from that? People are taking away cattle in that valley. There in Mutsaaba, there are plenty of cattle, and yet you want to kill (a frail) old man. Then he left him and went laughing towards where the cows were. The war was… Abanyole had gone that side. People would come together then go and push…
AF: Even these Abas'sa used to fight. Abanyole used to go and push them.
NY: They too were pushed! All Abanyole…
K: Did they also push?
AL: Eeeh!
NY: When they planned to push us, word would go round. Then they go to push them.
K: Were you stronger than they were?
AL: Abatongoi and Abas'sa…. They used to fight and push Abatongoi this side. Then once all Abanyole came together they would push Abakisa. You know even Ochiemo lives in the lands of Abakisa.
AN: Kaska Ochiemo.
K: Where does he live?
AN: He lives in Ebuchika. Let me ask: These Abas'sa , I notice up there, you know we are neighbors. I notice that they have crossed the small river there and come up this side. What happened? Did they beat us?
NY: Ah, ah! Sometimes it was like… don't you see Ab'biba have crossed to the other ridge? Relatives… sometimes some relatives would be told, "Come and build here" after the war was over. If a daughter is that side she is told… she will be given land.
AN: Because when you leave Ochiemo's home, you will pass one, two houses. Then you will be among the Kisa.
AF: That rivulet was this way: When this man… this man was in…what do we call him…?
NY&AF: (Together) Abukuse.
AF: When Abukuse was planting the boundary, when he was pointing out, "This is where my people reach"
AN: Where did he plant it?
AL: In Ochiemo's area, Mulukose, so Olukose River would be put this side.
AF: He planted it on the other ridge, across the river! (Laughter). Then Sakaria said "This man has irritated us for a long time we will remove him from his job. When Abukuse goes ahead with the white man, then they would go and uproot the boundary and put where they wished. Then they would tell the white man, "See? What you are doing Abukuse is not happy

with it. You see, what you made, he has gone and uprooted" The white man came and discovered it was not Abukuse who uprooted it…. Then the white man saw, "This Abukuse, so he is a bad man?" Then he used his authority and sacked him. That is how those Abas'sa eventually came up to this side. They would have been far, they would have been far.
NY: Again there is land there M'buchika, Abukuse demarcated and told people, "Go and build." People were scared. When they looked scared, then Am'mukunzi went to build there. From Ochiemo's land towards the valley, it was land which Abukuse demarcated and said, "The land of Ebunyole, people go and build." They got scared.
K: Where did Am'mukunzi come from to go and build there?
AL: They were Abetakho.
K: Am'mukunzi, how did they come here?
NY: Friendship, and when someone has disagreed with his brother. Then he looks for another place to settle.
K: So Am'mukunzi built on the lands from which Abakisa were expelled?
NY: Those Abukuse demarcated and said, "These lands, Abasilatsi go and build there." But Abasilatsi got scared because, you know to go to the wilderness (*musitsimi*)… one would be apprehensive, he might be killed there.
K: And Abakanga?
AL: These Abakanga, I don't know…they are Am'marama.
K: And what brought them here?
AL: You decide to go to a place where there is your sister and build there, or you uncle and build there…. When someone breaches the norms, then people would say, "This person is not good." Then he would go to his sister's place. Then they take him because he will help them in war.
……
AN: Abakhobo have tried to rule themselves but they have failed because they are in the midst of these people (Am'mutete).
K: Something else: these Abakhobo, how did they come?
AF: The person who will rectify that matter, this Adam…
NY: They are asking you how did Abakhobo come?
AF: Because we have among them Abakube… you know well how they came in among Abamutete. We have…
AL: Abatiang'a
AF: Those Tiang'a the woman who came from Imbo [Luoland]. We have Kesia, the group of William…, Abakesia. That is the real Esianda.
…….
K: But you have not talked about how you co-existed with Abasiekwe and Abasiloli.
AF: These Abasiloli we have talked about them. However, I wanted to add something, Mr Alukonya as you said, he is the son of Anyole, right? They were *amalute*, two children who were twins: Omusubi and Omusiloli. They were born when they were joint. That is why up to now they cannot intermarry…
AF: They call each other *abakulo* (people who do not intermarry). Is that correct?
……
K: And how did you co-exist with Ababo?
AF: You should have asked me something we have forgotten: those Abasilatsi who went to Etwenya. Do you know anything about them?
K: Ah, ah.
AF: We have Abasilatsi who left the other ridge and went to Etwenya.
K: Which ridge? Here at my home in Ebulonga?
AF: Yes, they are our brothers.

AL: The family of Bishop.
NY: Oketchi
AL: Aren't they Abasilatsi? They went that side.The lineage we talked about, that of Abetsa, it went that side.
KE: Even. Even your house (mine) is there. Even this one, ours, isn't it there?
NY: A man from Itaale, he is called Nabule, he is there.Mbandu is there. He went there to take up land. But those ones, those Abalonga, I was told a man killed his brother. That is why he shifted and left his family behind and went there. I was told in a funeral that side.
AL: That is the way it is.
AF: Then another one told me; I had another one Om'bayi, he is called Edward Okutiima. He said people used to leave here and go there to hunt. That side was all *oluboonga* (veld). They would go and chase gazelles and kill. Then they would tie them on wood and bring meat this side. Then they were told, "You come here to help us chase these antelopes. If you want to build in this veld, you can build there so you come come out and chase the antelopes properly. Then some started to go there and get land to settle closer there. They were hunters. Well, I heard something of the sort.
NY: Yeee, some of them, that is the way it is. Even a relative of Ofusi here is that side, the father of Omuindi L'laana was buried there. They used to go there to hunt, or one would check, "Which spot is suitable?" And then move there. When you go there through someone, he will tell you, "Here is land. Go and build thaaat side." The forest was begging.
K: Did we have some coming from the other ridge: Elukongo…?
NY: Going where?
K: In the same place?
NY: Elukongo[97], no. We went there recently and found Abasembe, Am'muli, Am'mabwi, Ab'bayi…; there are all categories of people there who go there because of what we are saying.
AL: Those from Ebusilatsi…. Aaah, Ananda is there; Abetsa is there, from Ebusilatsi. But from Ebukhubi, no one went there.
K: But someone told me, the reason why they left here and went there...; you talked about the Arab gun. When it burst, they said, "Ah, ah!" They ran away to the other side. Someone told me that. Did you hear anything like that?
NY: Some of them. But these ones went because of quarrels/war.
AF: During the rule of Abukuse, the reason why people ran from here, he used to beat people. Then some people were terrified. They said, "Everyday to be beaten? This we can't stand."
AL: Abukuse used to beat people…!
NY: Again, others fled to that place because in this place they had banned cannabis…
AL: This road used to be smeared with cow dung all the way up to Emuhaya!
NY: So people used to go there in Luoland[98] to smoke cannabis (freely)

[97] In an interview with George Kweya on 26 December 2006 he had said that many of the people who settled in the "new lands" were those who ran away from Elukongo/Esibuye after the incident referred to above whereby they killed an Arab/white man and snatched his gun. They fled when one of them was shot in retaliation. In an interview with Ot'tiali and Mabalukha on 18 December, they suggested that those who went there either simply went to take up land, or they went during the peak of Abasilatsi/Am'mutete wars over land in Ebulonga. Hence, the majority of the new settlers in Etwenya were those from Ebulonga/ Esiamayayi which was at the center of the wars. Hence, the new place is called Ebulonga Etwenya. Mbalukha also suggested that the majority of the settlers there are Abatonji, the offspring of the stepson of Amukhoye. They soon outstripped the land they were allocated at Esiamayayi Hill and sought more land to expand.

[98] Although the area he is referring to is part of the land of Abanyole, at the time they are referring to during colonial period, it was administered as part of Central Nyanza which is Luoland. It reverted back to Western Province at independence after acrimonious agitation. Again the image of Luoland as the land of excesses emerges here. In Luhya land, the Luo are perceived as people who can not discipline their urges because they

AN: Abukuse came from which house?
AL: Namakanda. Haven't you written that?
K: Yes.
AN: Abukuse was Namakanda.
AL: The son of Abetsa
AN: The son of Abetsa. Ochango is Matakho.
K: Ok. Now, the elder brought in something we had forgotten. Now, how did you co-exist with the Luos?
AL: It was all war. They got up to this Luanda here!
KE: They got to the whole of Elwanda!
AL: They pushed Abanyole very far. They had gone to fight Abalookoli, then the Luo came. They pushed them up to Elwanda!
K: The Luo planned their maneuver at the time you were busy with the Abalokooli?
AL: Then we came back and started to expel them. Many people have died here.
AF: Their real name is Abakami [Gem Luo]. If you are among the Abanyole you must call Abakami.
NY: There was another man, his name was…. All Abanyole gathered and went to Musitundu [papyrus swamp] Woniang'o when Oniang'o was chief…
AF: Em'muli.
NY: Em'muli. Then Abukuse told Abanyole, "We want to go to the border. When you see us ahead…" You see how Abukuse played games? When you see….
When he was a ruler. "When you see us go ahead, Chief Oniang'o should not leave the papyrus swamp. We will go through the swamp and go ahead.You will see…. He must be killed." When they were in the swamp with the white man, war broke out behind suddenly, *tuk*! When Chief Oniang'o heard the war, it is said he folded his kanzu, crossed the river to the other ridge, and took off. The Luos were beaten, people died, then later some people were arrested and taken to Es'sumo…. Abukuse went there and said, "Now you have arrested six of my people, you are saying they are the killers… let each one go and write down the person he killed. Do not just arrest people because they killed others? The Luos started the war, not Abanyole! Those who have died have died, but let each one come and write down who killed his person." They were agape until those people were released.
AN: But Abukuse took control, did he rule up to that area?
NY: Ah, ah, the border between Abanyole and Ab'bo (laughs)
AN: In other words, he used to outwit those people?
AL: He used to outsmart them, Sangolo.
NY: Sangolo was chief. He used to appear like a very big man. Don't you hear he used to come from this side drumming? Like the chief, when he entered Emuhaya…
AL: This road would be smeared with cow dung.
NY: With the drums, people drumming (Laughs heartily). Did you see Dishon?
KE: Dishon Opulu!
NY: With the drum! They used to bring Abukuse from this side with a drum *Ntupu! Ntupu! Ntupu! Ntupu!*
AN: Imagine a road smeared with cow dung!
AL: Cow dung all the way!
KE: That is the tarmack!
K: He used to smear with cow dung from where?

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are not circumcised. Hence, those who were not ready to discipline their urge among Abanyole had to go to the place where excesses were not frowned upon. Ironically, canabbis smoking (*inzaka/ omusaala*) has been the identity of Abanyole for a long time. So did they go there because there was cannabis in abundance or did they go there to take advantage of the supposed freedom to smoke their cannabis freely?

AN: Each one used to smear near his home! Each people would smear at their place.
AL: They would smear that side, they come here at our place and smear they get up there and smear … up to Emuhaya!
AF: That is what hounded some Abanyole out of here.
NY: Abukuse hounded some Abanyole from here.
AF: If anyone is found in the farm, he would be thrashed thoroughly!
K: But why!
AF: The chief is passing!
AL: The chief is passing by and you are busy digging?
KE: The chief is passing, you will be beaten till you become wiser!
K: Which years were these!
AL: Back there.
NY: In the [19]20[s] that side.
K: You all were not yet born?
AF: Yes before we were born!
AL: Because Abukuse died when I was a small child.
AN: He would arrive at M'mwaya when Sangolo was there but Sangolo would never look like he was the chief. The DC would stand for Abukuse, yet he was just a headman.
NY: Isn't it said Sangolo used to say let…
AF: *Otwala atwale*
NY: *Otwala atwale* (whoever wants to tramp may tramp).
AF: Am I not the ruler?
NY: I am the chief! He used to enter with pomp like the big man, yet Sangolo was there. Can you play with him?
AL: He used to come with horns (*Amakhaanga*) and drums: *Po! Po! Po! Po! Po! Po! Po!* When he arrives M'mwaya ah, things have got tight!
AF: Mr. Adam do you know how Sangolo got that job from Otiato?
Ku: Yes, it is in the records, it is in the records.
…….
Ku: Ok. Back then, I think the year 1950. Abalonga were administered from Em'mutete, I think their *Lugongo* [headman] was Robert Libale. Would you know which year they left Em'mutete; and why did they leave, did they go to court or how did they leave? Or did Ochango and George [Palia] reach an agreement?
AF: (After hesitation) That point…
NY: That point…. How they left there, I know. When they were being ruled from Em'mutete, then a football match…. If it is not [19] 40, 43. Ah, ah, it ought to be about 43. There was a football match, Kima Cup. Mission Cup. Then Abasilatsi won one side; Am'mutete won another side. That cup was taken to seat at Ibubi. When it was taken to Ibubi Am'mutete said, "If they defeat…" *Abakooko* [Abasilatsi daughters who are married among Abamutete] tipped us off, "If they defeat us we will beat them." Then the cup was placed at Ibubi. The likes of this Apunda, Petelo Okolo; And aren't Petero Okolo and others ruled from Em'mutete? Now, the match started. As it was playing Omusilatsi scored against Om'mutete. As soon as they scored the ball against Om'mutete a fight broke out. Were people not beaten! Amunaabi… the eye puffed-up; he was beaten! This Esipila, was in there, you know he used to play number 11. His brother-in-law, the husband of Mary went and held Espila and said, "Anyone who dares beat him I will kill him!" A knife in his hand. The fight went on; they were beaten, beaten, then it cooled down. I was there with Okwiya, we were still children…
KE: I was there!

NY: Were you there? (Laughter). You know we went down slope where a church was built recently, and then we came upto Emuhaya. People had been beaten thoroughly. Lilahu left with a stick to go and kill Enos.
K: Which Enos?
NY: The father of Kilalensi, but he did not find the father of Kilalensi at home. He would have killed him! He was a man who…
K: Did he go to that home?
NY: Up to the home! He found when Enos was still at Kima. It is from that time that they declared: "Those of you who go to Em'mutete, Do you see now, Am'mutete have killed us? You will never go there again!" Then they took them to court at Khwiselo. When they took them to court, the case went on, went on. Am'mutete have rejected, "These people will not leave here!" Then Abalonga went and stocked it with more ghosts. Esau Khamati was there. Monkeys would suddenly drop on the table while people were seated.
AF& NY: Eeeh, Abalonga!
NY: A monkey standing on the table! The case was heard…. I think it was William, he told them, "Am'mutete I am telling you, this goat is white, but you are saying it is black, you are following these people but you will not manage them. Then the case stretched on… then it was resolved: Abalonga are Abasilatsi, they must remain in Ebusilatsi.
K: Are you telling me it is because of Enos that Abalonga were ruled from Em'mutete?
NY: Uh, uh, that war is the one that made them come back…
K: I asked…
NY: Enos took them there…
AL: There was war with Abasilatsi…
K: Who made possible for Abalonga to be ruled from Em'mutete, was it Enos or who was it?
NY: Ah, ah, the terror from the war…, some remained in Ebusilatsi, and the cowards transferred to Em'mutete. They fought for Am'mutete, and they were ruled from Em'mutete. So, that fight is what made them say, "Uhu? Am'mutete were beating everyone, even those who are ruled from Em'mutete?" From then, all Abalonga started to change their identity cards. They removed Em'mutete and changed to Ebusilatsi.
AF: Again, the witchcraft that was put to work at that point, my brothers, it was very smart.
KE: Absolutely.
AF: It has ended, it is an ancient matter.
KE: That is what we want!
Ku: That is what we want.
NY: Didn't I tell you; at times one would just encounter a ghost on the table. You are eating *obusuma* (maize meal) …
AF: The day they wanted to finish everything, a goat came completely skinned, without any skin on its body. It was walking and bleating, bleating, bleating. When it got at the border between Am'mutete and Abasilatsi, then it ruptured. That was the last straw. The goat had no skin on its body! It was walking and bleating….
AL: They have skinned it, the skin has been removed! (General laughter).
AN: And the eyes were seeing all that?
KE: It is true; it is not a lie!
NY: People have reached far!
Ku: It used to happen.
K: That means Am'mutete got frightened by Abasilatsi?
AF: They decided: "Ah, ah, let them go to their place. Let them be in their place."
Ku: Let them go and administer themselves.
NY: Let them go back to their Ebusilatsi land.
AN: They are Israelites.

AL: The whole of Esiamarwi was Em'mutete.
People ran away from there! Am'mutete had become ferocious…
AF: We call it Khwombeyi. That is where they used to start going that side. Okhwombeyi is where the remaining Abasilatsi started coming this side. They have been going into raptures over that, I do not know whether they have stopped now.
AN: They still do. Even the sub-location was carved out by force, the present one. Kweya was not meant to remain in Ebulonga.
K: He was meant to…
AN: He was coming this side!
KE: It was clear Kweya was this side.
AN: It was the old boundary. Even when they were writing the…. Were you not there?
AF: Yaaa!
AN: When I wrote the letter asking for a new sub-location, it was for Abamatioli, Ekwanda, Ebukhubi, Em'musila. That is one sub-location. Not for Om'matioli to remain there.
K: Those who were to remain that side were Abalonga and …
AN: Anyone called Omulonga! He was the one to remain there.
K: Omulonga, Esiamayayi, and Esiamarwi, those who were ruled by Am'mutete earlier?
AN: Eeeh, then we would get to a point and the people of Esiamarwi would reject that. They would say, "We cannot be put together with Abalonga. Because the person who would remain in Ebulonga (as assistant chief), they assumed, was Omutonji. So, the issue was, "We cannot be squashed among Abatonji when we know the position of Abatonji among Abasilatsi. And the person who was ruling was Omuto?
ALL: Omutonji.
AN: Then he, he brought the border to [River Litaale]. Kweya is not happy to date.
KE: Ah, ah, he didn't like it.
K: He wanted to be this side?
AN: Up to tomorrow and the day after, I don't think he is happy.
AL: He wanted to be this side.
……..
K: Now we have talked a lot. I wanted to ask some more if you allow me.
NY: Just ask, we are here.
K: You had told me about Abakami. Something else, Abanyole are known as rain people. How does that that start?
AF: Abasiekwe.
K: Abasiekwe?
AF: The people we know for rain are Abasiekwe.
K: How did they get it?
AF: This elder (Alukonya) will start that history of Abasiekwe, how it goes.
AL: Abasiekwe, there was an old woman who came from Eburwa, they just say Eburwa…
AF: She came from Ebutirichi
AL: Ebutirichi. She came, and then she went to my grandfather's house. Then she told him: "I have something very wonderful." Then my grandfather asked her, "What is it?" Then she prepared soil and mixed with ash. Then snakes, what not! Then the world started tu! Tut! Tu! Tu! Tut! Tu! Tut tut u tu! Tut!
AF: Lightening!
AL: Then my grandfather (with a sweep of the hand) expelled her!
K: Your grandfather, where?
AF: Ebukhubi here!
NY: Just across here on the other ridge.

AL: He (with a sweep of the hand) ejected her! “Ah, not this one!” When she went to Ebusiekwe, then Abasiekwe took her.
AF: She was welcomed.
AL: Now the rain is for Abasiekwe
NY: It is said when she went to Ebusiekwe in the valley here at Muchula, Omusiekwe man was there, Nam’monywa. When she went there and he welcomed her, when morning came one day, she opened those things he is talking about. He wanted to drive her out but he decided to go and consult his brothers. When he asked his brothers, they told him, “No, you persevere with that thing; it could turn out to be something good.” That made him tolerate that old woman…. Nam’monywa is the one who sired the … likes of Nganyi…. That is when it germinated in Ebusiekwe. People have been going there, but now we do not know, is it still there?
AF: You understand? This is (pointing to Alukonya) is the one who threw away that rain.
AL: It would be for Abasilatsi; but was it the kind to be tolerated? (General laughter).
NY: You see, they say, lightening, snakes, what not, you just see those things dancing as they enter the house.
K: Now if we go back alittle, are these Abasiekwe Abanyole?
AL: They are Abanyolo.
NY: Abasiekwe are Ab’bo!

**Except 6. Interview with Kuya, S. Tenga, Kasuku, Anyanda, Masinde, Kutai, Anyanda Senior at the home of Anyanda, Maseno. 1 and 11 February 2007**

……
K: Are you saying that the majority of Abalukhoba…
Kuya (KU): They are in Tiriki.
K: The majority are in Tiriki.
SilvanoTenga (ST): Tiriki are Abalukhoba.
Kasuku (KA): One sub-location and something above. That is where many of them are. The big house of M'maitsi the former MP. Even his father came here with other people because we wanted to know one another.
K: Let us say here here in Ebunyole, where are the majority of them found?
KA: Ebunyole, the majority would have been here (Esibembe). But because of war, the wars of our grandfathers, three people died in war… on the same day. They were the most fierce. They were killed in war on the other ridge (pointing towards Luoland).
K: Which people were they fighting?
ST: They were fighting those Abas'sumba
KA: Abanyolo.
K: Ok
KA: In Central Nyanza. So if they were here, the population would have been very big. But that is how they stagnated. So let us say here in Ebunyole, this is where we have the bigger population of Abalukhoba. Here in Esibembe.
K: Here do you have a chief…. Let us say sub-chief?
KA: Ah, ah, we do not have a sub-chief.
K: Well, you told me earlier on you are mixed with many other clans.
……..
K: When I was at the home of Masinde, they are Abakhobo. And you are Abalukhoba. Is there any meeting point?
KA: Ahmmm…. Do you know the elder Johana Ataala?
K: Johana Ataala?
KA: Eeeh, Ataala. This Johana Ataala. We have been asking him about Abalukhoba and Abakhobo. Johana Ataala told us Abakhobo are Abakhoba. But in that war of the trickery of Abakoba, those who remained changed their name.
KU: To disguise…
KA: To disguise themselves so they are not targetted by other *tsimbia* (clans). So, they changed their name to Abakhobo not Abakhoba anymore. So that they would not be followed.
ST: Like that Byrum's people….
KU: The likes of this elder Masinde with us here (laughter).
K: That was in order to disguise their trails.
KA: Yes.
Masinde (MA): So Abakhobo is a name that was changed from Abalukhoba.
KU: Changed because they had caused trouble (*induli*) and finished people. They were afraid they might be killed. So they said, "If we dont disguise ourselves and take another name, we will be told, 'They are still the same people'! So when the brought the word *khobo* now those

who come from behind will not know, "Which people are these, are they those who were maltreating us or they are different?" They have disguised themselves!
K: But they are one people?
ST: One thing!
K: Let us say this: The place where Abakhobo came from … you are saying…
ST: They came from Bukoba!
K: Bukoba?
ST: They praise themselves (*belahilanga*) saying they crossed the lake (Victoria) on foot. That is how they praise themselves.
K: I understand that. To show that…
KU: The name Bukoba are Abakhoba.
ST: They are Abakhoba.
KU: Bukoba is the town of Abakhoba.
ST: That is where we came from.
KA: Eeeh. They are Abakhoba.
KU: Some Abakhoba remained in Ebuaanga (Wanga). That is another of our kin. We can not intermarry.
ST: They leave here to Ebuaanga…to disperse (KU says Abakhoba remained in Ebuaanga apparently, as the others came to Ebunyole while ST suggests that Ebunyole was the dispersal point of Abakhoba).
KU: At this point… Those people… after they have dispersed and gone that side… Aaah, someone Alulitsi in Ebutirichi…
K: Who?
KA: Alulitsi. Alulitsi and his children… He sired children: Muwanga and Ameyo. This Muwanga, while in Tiriki they quarreled over *lisili* (armulet). The the son of Muwanga migrated to Ebuhaanga. That is where the name Ebuhaanga comes from. Muwanga, an Omulukhoba. The name Wanga comes from Muwaanga an Omulukhoba.
ST: *Lisili*… that is what is causing trouble.
KU: *Lisili* was the sign of royalty.
K: What is that?
ST, KU, KA: *Lisili* which is put on the arm.
MA: A kind of bangle.
ST: It was a sign of leadership from long ago.
Anyanda (AN) What was it made of?
KU: *Lisili* was made…. It used to twinkle, then it would be pressed together and placed on (pointing) the upper arm.
K: So it signaled leadership?
KU: It was a sign of royalty.
All: *Lisili*.
KA: Muwaanga settled that side. Then it became Ebuhaanga. Now they called it Ebuhaanga. He stayed there. Now that is the Omumia lineage. This Omumia who used to rule is Omulukhoba.
K: Mmmh?
KA: Eeeh! He is Omulukhoba. Those people, their lineage which is called Abasitsetse, we do not inter-marry. They even wanted to marry the sister of this one (pointing to one of the elders). They even brought a cow. But they came and untied it when they discovered, before the girl went, that we are Abalukhoba. The in-lawship ended that moment. We do not inter-marry with them. One son called Ameyo migrated taking the Kericho Kipsigis route. That lineage vanished among the Kipsigis.
K: That one you might not know where he is?

KU: It (lineage) has been swallowed there and disappeared.
KA: It went into the lineage of the former minister Towett
K: He might be Omulukhoba?
ST: Towett? Towett is our person!
MA: Taita Towett is the son of Ameyo; he is the descendant of the Ameyo lineage?
KU: The brother of Muwaanga. They were Abaluhya.
K: Ok? But you have said something which I have not quite understood. This name Abawaanga…. Does that mean it is you who gave Abawanga their name?
KA: Muwaanga is the owner of the name, the son of Alulitsi.
K: Does that mean all Wanga are Abakhobo?
KA: Abawaanga… We have Muwanga's lineage. There are many others who came in. But the royal lineage is that of Muwaanga.
AN: Those Abasitsetse.
KA: The Abasitsetse, those of Omumia.
K: So the royal family is Abakhobo?
KA: Eeeh
KU: The one that was given that amulet.
KA: If you go there and say you are Omulukhoba, they will welcome you. You will be told, "Sit, these are your people."
KU: *Lisili*. Don't you see Byrum is leader? It is because of those things!
K: If you say so… let me cross over from Kenya and go to Uganda. In Uganda there was a Kabaka called Muwaanga….
KU and KA: Muwaanga.
K: Are you related to them in any way?
ST: (Some silence. ST takes up the issue as if it falls directly on him as "the man of the books", having gone to school and having made clear to the others earlier about their lack of the same) Ah, ah, no. It is just a name, just a name. There is no relationship.
K: These Abakhobo and Abakhobole...
KA: Abakhobole are near Gem. The boundary between Kisa and Luo.
KU: Aaah, at Musikulu wa Misango there are Abalukhoba. When you come to Khumusalaba, Abalukhoba are there. When a young man came from among these ones (Masinde) to go and wed a woman from Khumusalaba, he was asked: "Where do you come from?" Then he said, "I come from Em'mutete." "Which clan?" He said, "Abakhobo." Then he was told, "Ah ah, you can not marry. You are an Omulukhoba man." That is why Abakhoba and Abalukhoba, marriage is prohibited. So, the way Abalukhoba are dispersed in small groups (*ebituma*). So, when you come from that side and come to Emuranga, Abalukhoba are there. If you go to Imbo, you will find what…. There are others who have renounced and smacked their fingers (demonstrates swearing by hitting the thumb against the index and the long finger) they do not want to be called what? (Silence) Luhya at all. But in Were's book, Abalukhoba are not anywhere in the history of the Luo. All the clans of the Luo, there is no Abalukhoba. So some went to Ekitume. Others are in Kondele what we told you… the term *ndele*.
K: The term…?
KU: Kondele… Ondele, Kisumu?
Ku: Yeee. All of them are Abalukhoba people.
AN: Even at Obunga, they are there.
KA: They call them Kamakowa Kisumu.
AN: Do you remember that point at which you cross the railway? Where you cross the railway as you enter Kisumu town? There is a big signboard: Kamakowa Academy. Where you cross the railway as you enter Kisumu town.
K: When you use the other road?

AN: Ah, ah. When you cross the railway, just here….
K: After you cross the river?
AN: Eeeh. That is the Obunga area. All the way to the other end. Near Kisumu Cotton Mills
K: Now, let me start from there…
ST: Let us go to the Byrum group first. You have skipped.
K: I would like to finish here first before we go to Byrum. You said Kondele… the name what does it mean?
KU: Ondele was Omulukhoba man.
All: (Stressing) Onde-e-le.
KU: Don't you hear them say "We are going to Kondele?"
K: Eeeh.
KU: He is Omulukhoba man.
ST: When he got sick, he left that place and came here. We buried him here.
AN: He stayed just down here.
KU: That is where (his children?) were taken from and transported by train to (inaudible)
Old man: Even Obunga was an Omulukhoba man.
K: Do those people speak…. we speak Olunyole. Do they still speak Olunyole?
Old man: If you go there they will speak to you in Olunyole.
AN: If he knows you, then he will speak. But if he does not know you… (waves hand) only Luo.
K: Does it mean they try to disguise themselves?
ST: They have disguised themselves!
KA: You see, those days, there was our grandfather we call Buchichi. He was a ruler in Kisumu. .
KA: Buchichi the son of Were. He was a royal, a ruler. (Referring to a piece of paper, apparently his record of the story). Those days, whenever Omumia came from this side…people would line up…. Those who would carry Omumia on a bed and hand over to Abasikhale, Abasikhale would hand over to Abasakami, Abasakami would hand over to Abas'sumo[99]. They were taking Omumia to the ruler who was in Kisumu called Buchichi. He would stay there. When he wants to leave the place, people would again line up. Whenever this Buchichi wanted to go to see Omumia, people would again carry him. So, in this area there are people who have a lot of respect for us; they say: "Do not joke with these people, they are royal. We have carried their grandfather on our heads till we have got tired taking him to see Mumia and bringing him back. So the town of Kisumu, the man who had authority in there was Buchichi. The people you see there called Kamakowa, that is the name of their grandfather, Amukowa. We do not have any name in our clan, Kamakowa. The Luos changed Aba Amukowa (descendants of Amukowa to Kamakowa.
K: So Kondele means Ondele's place?
ST: Eeeh!
KA: Kondele, that one is Omulukhoba.
ST: Again the term Kisumu. That is not Luo. They used to go to there *okhusuma* (to buy at the market).
Old man: Mus'sumo.
K: Mus'sumo?

[99] In this line up of the carriers of Omumia, he seems to have avoided mention of his own clan Abalukhoba as carriers of Omumia yet they occupy the space between Abasakami and Abas'sumo. This might be a deliberate gesture at their special status as royal clan therefore they would not be expected to carry another royal. Besides, Omumia's clan in Wanga cleaved off from them, therefore they occupy a position of superiority. At the same time Buchichi was an Omukhobo man thus enhancing their royal status.

ST: That is a Luhya… (corrects himself) the Olunyole term from Abakhobo. Just like Maseno is not Luo.
KU: Even though Om'mbo sticks on the name Ekisumo.
ST: Ekisumo.
KU: When you ask him the meaning of the word he cannot say.
ST: He cannot say the meaning.
KU**:** Omumia used to rule up to that place. If you want to know that is actually a Luhya, (corrects himself) Abanyole word, when the whites asked, "This water, lake, what do you call it?" Then they said, "We call it *inyanza*." And the word *inyanza* is not in Luo language. They keep calling North Nyanza, North Nyanza. When you ask them: "What is the meaning of Nyanza? So, Omumia is the one who told the whites that we Abaluhya call it *inyanza* (lake). Then they wrote *inyanza*. So we use Central Nyanza, North Nyanza, South Nyanza. When you ask Omujaluo (Luo) what is the meaning of Nyanza? They do not have it. They call it *nam*. Don't you see it is different?
K: When I was still young I remember my teacher telling me that Es'sumo was called Esikhoni. I do not know whether you have heard that…
ST: Esikhoni? No!
K: Well, the teacher was from Kisa. If that is the name they used in her place, I might not tell.
KA: The place that was called Musikhoni is this side where the airport is.
K: Where they have built the Molasses Plant?
KA: Eeeh. There is a man who causes trouble, who makes the Luo say Maseno is theirs. This Ogola… This *udi Ogola* (Luo – son of Ogola) used to live at Musikhoni… that side. The reason why he came here was Mumia…. That Ogola used to make shields. So Omumia used to come from that side… he would send people to this Omunyolo (Luo man) to buy shields. Then one day robbers waylaid the people of Omumia, beat them, killed some, and snatched the shields. So, Omumia told Sakayo, "Identify a place so that man leaves that place to come and live here. Ogola… let him make the shields closer to us. So that Luo man, the father of Job Omino who has been MP, came from that side and was given a place by Sakayo who was our chief….
ST: Sakayo Ojuok. An Omukuya man.
KA: To live there and make shields from there to make it easy for the people of Omumia to come and collect them. That is how that Om'mbo (Luo) came here.… Where he came from… he came from Musikhoni near Molasses.
KU: So the term Esikhoni, she was right.
KA: Abanyolo call the place Ojuok…. They call *esikhoni* (euphobia) *ojuok*
K: They call the place Ojuok?
KA: Yes. The place had a lot of euphobia.
KU and KA: Eeeh.
AN: And where is this place Tieng'le, is it the same as Esikhoni?
ST: Crooks!
KA: Tieng'ele is the same nearby Esikhoni. It is not far.
Old Man: Where they call Kolando. Kisum Kolando.
K: Ok. While still on Abakhobo, I wanted to ask, in East Africa… because as you said Abakhobo are (spread) in East Africa….
ST: The name Abakhobo came when Abalukhoba scattered. When Abanyole caused the cataclysm against them, then they dispersed. Those who remained there called themselves Abakhobo. So that they are not killed. You see? They called themselves Abakhobo. The clan of Byrum. And there are very prominent people in that place.
K: Ok. To enter here in Ebunyole, should we say they entered through here where we are or…

KA: They came from the lower part (pointing towards the Lake and Uganda direction).
K: Eeh?
KA: They came from down there, didn't I tell you they first settled at Asembo?
KU: They followed Lake Victoria…
KA: Yes, they went through Gem and came to settle at (pointing Emuhaya direction)…
ST: I think they settled from Ebusakami up to Kima. So, the reason why they dispersed is they had their ritual. They had a feast. When the people had had a lot of drink during the feast, then an upheaval started. That is when they dispersed some going to Tiriki and wherever.[100]
K: I understand. Now, let me ask. As you said Abakhobo are rulers…
ST: That is Abalukhoba, Abalukhoba.
ST: Abalukhoba. They are rulers. Those ones called themselves Abakhobo so Abanyole do not kill them. They were disguising themselves because as Abalukhoba, they could get killed. And There are very sound people there (pointing to Ebukhobo).
K: Now… when I look at Em'mutete… You know Abamutete call themselves Abasungu (Europeans/whites) because… I think the Mission? Something like that. But when you scrutinize, then you find that…. You see, Abakhobo have settled in a column from Emuhaya to…
MA: Khubalokooli.
K: All the way up to the Abalokooli (border), There at Ebwali. Then it seems they have split Abamutete in the middle and pushed them on both sides. Idon't know….
KU: Always remember that, as an outsider, when you come to me, God usually lifts you. Then you get good luck. That is why if a woman with a child got married, especially a boy child, they must kill him. The reason was, if they did not kill him, he would get all the luck. Then the others born behind him would be held down and…
ST: They get ruined.
KU: They get ruined. That is why Abakhobo being Abalukhoba, when they settled among Am'mutete, they became more prosperous than the owners of what….? That is why when they say: The intruder displaced the owner of the cave. The (animal) that lives in the cave… when another one came from the outside, it ejected it. The owner of the cave wanders around looking for a place to settle with little success. So always when a stranger settles among a people, he inherits their destiny. Even if I were to bring up another example: Abas'sebu are down here in Ebwiranyi.
…. There are (signaling small number with his fingers) people. Yet they were the owners of the what? The Soil. So, Aberanyi came among Abas'sebu, then they have multiplied until they have done what? (Demonstrates trample underfoot by stepping firmly on the ground with his right leg). Now Omus'sebu has disappeared …. That is how these things work (laughs).
K: Abas'sebu… Where are they from?
Old Man and ST: There are people called Abas'sebu.
KU: That is why you are saying these Abakhobo have spread out. Then something else came up when KA said they ran away with *lisili* (royal amulet), leadership. So *lisili* and leadership… even Buchichi was a ruler, Muwanga was a ruler. So that *lisili* is what caused what? Even when Byrum becomes a leader it comes from what….? It is the heritage (*inono*)!

[100] This version differs from that of KA. Whereas KA says they migrated because Abanyole wanted to kill them, ST suggests that it was because of a drunken brawl after having too much drink during a clan ritual. However, ST (see below) also refers to the bad blood between them and Abanyole which according to KA was the cause of the dispersal. So Abalukhoba were as much victims of Abanyole revenge as they were of their own bad temper and internal brawl.

They have leadership in their blood. And it is still there. That is why it is possible that they can trample other clans in Em'mutete.
ST: I said The name Abakhobo: When Abalukhoba were there, then they got into a brawl. And went away. Those who remained there called themselves Abakhobo so that they are not killed. But they are Abalukhoba.
KU: Ok. Let me go back to my old question. You know… when you go to Em'mutete… from the outside you might see these are Am'mutete. But when you come from Emuhaya *inono* of Abakhoba… they used to call themselves… what was it? They used to call themselves (their totem)… *esituyu*… *esikala* (hare). That was their praise.
KA: *Esipwoyo* (rabbit). That was their totem.
……
KA: Here we have Ombwolo. They praise themselves as Ombwolo[101] or Tunyi (Lutunyi).
MA: So Ombwolo was Omukhobo too?
KA: Ombwolo was a woman from…. From the people of Amukowa.
MA: These ones say Ombwolo. But women from our place, wherever they are, it is T'tiko.
Kutai (Ku): When they say, "How are you the daughter of T'tiko?" Then you will know this is the daughter of Abakhobo.
K: Let me now ask about the birth lineage of Abakhobo.
KA: Abalukhoba.
K: …I had thought it would be better to ask each person because the lineages start to differ. But as each person says, you might discover where the lineages meet. So, I want to ask and you tell me what you can. I know it is not possible to know everything. If I can start with you, can you manage?
Anyanda Senior (AS): Ah, ah. You should start with the elders who are ahead of me. I am young. Start with those ahead. They can give us better direction.
KA: Let me say this: It is all here (looking at the paper in his hands). I will give you everything. All those who are here aree the grandchildren of one man…. So I am Kasuku; my father was called Samuel… Samuel Okumbo. Samuel is the son of Abwao. Abwao is our grandfather on whom we all meet. Abwao is the son of Anakanji. Anakanji is the son of Obulungu. Obulungu, the son of Maboha. Maboha the son of Amukowa. Amukowa the son of Buchichi. Buchichi the son of Were. Were the son of Siongo. Siongo the son of Omwali. Omwali the son of Omumu.With that I have reached the end.
K: Before I ask another person, let me ask a question on what the old man has just told us. But we are all free to share. It is not for him alone. This name Were… it is not common here in Ebunyole. Is it a Nyole name?
KA: Were… aaaah, among us we have Were.
Ku: This (name) Wele is also in Ebutongoi. Not "r" Wele.
AN: Wele.
All: Eeeh.
KU: And if you go to Ebuaanga you will find Wele, a lot.
K: That is what I am pursuing; now you have found me. Again, there are some Luos who also use the name Wele.
KA: Eeeh, they are at Gem, Elamula. There are many of them. That is our blood!
AN: They are at Epuche.
KA: Epuche and Muranda. In that place, they call themselves Kamakowa. They are Abakhoba, the grandchildren of Amukowa. They just lose it because of the name. They cannot follow it.

[101] Apparently this name is closer *obwolo* meaning mushroom in Luo. It is not clear whether the name comes from Luo (in which case Abalukhoba might have appropriated it) or it is Nyole (in which case the Luo might have appropriated it but Abalukhoba have reclaimed it albeit complete with Luo inflections).

K: This same Amukowa in your lineage?
All: Eeeh!
K: Now of all these people you have given us, would you say there is any one of them who was the first Omukhobo to enter here?
KA: Aaaah, those who first entered here are those I gave last.
K: But the real first one to enter you might not tell?
KA: Ah, ah.
K: Ok. There is no problem. Now old man (KU) can you also give us your lineage like he has done?
KU: Like he (KA) has said, we missed one thing. Because we had found some people from Tiriki. We met the elders from there. We wanted to see which ancestor we meet on, so that we would confirm that we are one people. When we called them… it is a long time… Tenga is here. We called them and slaughtered for them. But that is as far as we went. Recently we wanted to go to Tiriki… to sit with the Tiriki… the Abalukhoba people who are there… to find out how far they go and how far we go so that we can bring together the story. So always, when you want any information you must go to look for it (*otsitsaa okhusuma*). There is something they know which we do not. And there is something we know which they don't. It would have been better for us to meet. One day if you will come back, we have the desire to go to Etirichi. Because those words of Kasuku, time will come when… the Abalukhoba who are in Tiriki, we might meet on one name. Therefore, I think the best thing is for us to meet.
K: So for you, you come into the line up that Kasuku has given us?
KU: Eeeh…
Old Man: That place (Tiriki) is where we have more old men than we have here. They have lived more years (*Bali ne miika eminji*).
K: So how do you divert from Kasuku's lineage?
KA: His father comes after my father.
KU: Something cropped up… This Anyanda is first. Then you go to the other one from the second wife….
K: Old man can you tell us your own?
Old man: My grandfather and the grandfather of all these others are brothers. My eldest grandfather was called Kulaba followed by Abwao. The one who comes after Abwao is Katiye. One who follows Katiye is Amolo. Those are our grandfathers who were born to the same father, nephews of Em'mutsa.
K: So you diverge at your grandfathers. But below that it is the same lineage.
Old Man: All of us meet on Anakanji[102].
AN: If I can…. Let me add something else there. These our elder, there are some words you might hear and you might think they are just passing on; they are Luo words. Then you start to ask, but are these people Abanyole, or are they Abaluhya? Where did the Luo words come in? I will give you one explanation. The father of these two old men (KA and KU) was called Joel Bonyo. This Joel Bonyo, his name in Olunyole is supposed to be Tsisiche. But...
ST: That name Bonyo…. He was called Tsisiche. But…
(To AN) Wait first.[103] He thought it did not sound well then he called himself Bonyo. Bonyo is *tsisiche* (locusts).

[102] According to KA they all meet on Abwao. Now the old man says it is Anakanji, a generation earlier.
[103] The struggle here is underwritten by both ST's age and the fact that he paid for AN's education. And he made it very clear as soon as he arrived. So AN seems to cede space for him in deference and as well to avoid trouble with his uncle. He staged a very big row earlier in the day so AN knew better than rouse him into another quarrel.

AN: And patly it came from the influence of the Luo in the neighborhood because we used to trade with them… The elders used to trade with them in cows, as well as look for girls this way and that way. You know how Luos like to praise themselves. So Omunyole, you will find he has followed on fast. Or one might be friendly to one or two families say here in Eseme. Then his wife might say, "If ever you get a child I would like you to name him after my husband." Obviously through that friendship, you find a Munyole man has given his child a Luo name.
KU: This issue of name… A name can cause trouble. Even if we look in the Bible, Zakaria and Elizabeth have given birth to a child. It brought trouble. Gabriel told Elizabeth: You will become pregnant and give birth to a child. And you will call him the name Johana. In their lineage, they never used to name children Johana. When the child was born, they went to their family and said: In our family, we never name Johana. We refuse…. They went to Zachariah, the father of the child. He had become dump. He asked for a slate and chalk. He still went on to write the name who? Johana. Then they said: In our lineage we do not have the name Johana. So the issue of a name can cause trouble. Secondly, a name unites…. So when you look… many people of this area camouflaged themselves through naming so they would be called Luo. Even to use the name Esibembe. Esibembe would never be heard in those days. They used to call it Obuya to make Luos think we were one with them.
ST: If you looked for an Omusibembe man, you would never get.
KU: So when we pulled away from them and went to Western, we went and took that name Obuya and did what… (gesticulates forceful pluck-and-hurl-away).
AN: We cast it away!
KU: That is when we gave the name… we started calling ourselves what…? (He expects the audience to complete sentence by adding Esibembe). Because even if you ask a Luo to call the name Esibembe, he cannot pronounce the name well. But (contemptuous) Obuya they are fast to….?
AN: Obuya is *ebembe* (thatch grass). It is Luo for *ebembe.*…
KU: So the issue of name…
AN: Sorry... sorry… It is *ebembe*. So Esibembe came from the word *ebembe*.
ST: There was a lot of it here. That is why they named the place Esibembe.
AS: Grass was here in abundance. That is why they called it Esibembe.
KU: That is why a name is controversial. One cannot just go and take a name from other people. Particularly, the Luo and the Wanga and the Bukusu, they attach importance to the meaning of names: Nafula, Nanjila… The Luo call Anyango, Onyango….. Afubwa, that is what we used to call ourselves. Even among the children of Yacobo of Israel. Every child has a name with reason. This name is… it has its origin. So, a name… we might go and take a name from other people, or we might borrow. We must have a reason. If I am suffering [I might say] let me give certain name so that it might bring peace.
K: You have got to what I wanted to ask.… What I wanted to ask is this: There seems to be something between ourselves, between you who live at the border and the Luos. When you observe closely, you realize there is… mistrust.
…….
K: …. Again, you find that you get to a point and you appear like you want to take their ways… Let us say names. The names appear as if they want to look similar like he has just explained. What do you think is the origin of this thing where you find Abanyole disapprove of the Luos yet they appear to go back and take their names?
ST: The reason is this: When the Luos came into this world, they found Abaluhya already there. They came with their names and stuck with their names. Do you understand me well?
K: Eeeh, I understand.

ST: Then they married our daughters. But we refused to marry theirs. Then it happened that marrying our daughters was bringing their names, to name children our daughters gave birth to. That is how the names came.
K: Ok. So it means you never wanted their ways?
ST: No, we were never happy with it.
KA: Our daughters whom they married are the ones who bring these names. We never married Luos, very few. But if you go down here, many Abanyole: from Eb'bayi, Em'mang'ali…
ST: Oooh many… many!
KA: They are very many among Luos.
ST: We never liked to marry Luo women.
KU: You know, if I want to be your friend, I must give you my sister. A woman usually is the *kipatanisho* (bond) between enemies. She is an enemy but she also brings together. Once we marry or once I give you my sister, any enmity that might have been there has come to an end. Secondly, she will pick the habits of her new home and bring this side. It even caused, in Christianity, Anglicans and Church of God would never intermarry because Anglicans were worldly, people of the pipe (*abandu betsingata*). So one would not come from Anglican to marry from Church of God because Church of God thought their faith was superior (*nabasubilwa*). So, they made dormitories (*etsitamutoli*), many of them. True they stood out. They used to fear, "If these ones mix with us they will bring the culture of where…?
K: Anglican.
KU: Then they would muddy what…? (No response). So People used to control themselves. But once one marries a woman from a particular place, like it or not you will bow before her god. The same way God tells the people of Israel and even Solomon: You should never go out and… bring home women from other communities. They will take their gods whom they worship and bring to what? (No response). Then they will muddy your God of justice and truth. But they never listened. That is why when Rael was taken by Jakobo, she took her father's god and migrated with him and brought him with her to the Israelis. Then she went and (demonstrates sitting and reclining) sat on him. That is what brings the problems among the people. It brings peace and it muddles up (*inzoka*). So once it comes you must find out how you will deal with it.
Old Man: That question is agood question. This moment…. A Luo…. We understand what they say… as they speak. But when we are together with them, this one understands Ol'luhya. But he will pretend and say: I do not understand Luhya.
ST: *Okawinj* (I don't understand).
Old Man: *Mwache*[104] *gi an akia wachu* (you people I don't understand your words). Yet he understands everything.
ST: Very well again!
Old Man: Even at their funerals. When we go there, they want us to understand what they are saying. But here in our place they do not like us to speak in Olunyole alone. They want someone to translate for them, yet they understand.
AN: Recently, if I can speak through the old man, we had a funeral down here recently. A niece of the Luos was being buried…. The mother of the girl comes from Bondo. The woman who gave birth to this girl…. She is employed. And she is a learned woman. And she is still in government employment out there. Her brother is also a learned man. When she was given time to speak, she said: I…. And she said in Luo: I will speak in Luo. And that was it. Then she spoke… she gave her entire speech in Luo till she finished. When her brother stood up, in what looked like arrogance and spite he said: I am a Luo. I will speak Luo because I am a

[104] *Mwache* is plural of *Jamwa* which is a Luo derogatory term for the the Luhya.

Luo. You see! Then he said what he wanted to say and finished. And all along the people were quiet. What they usually do… I have been in many places in similar meetings. You will hear him tell his friend: *Wacha wacha Dholuo jogi te winjo*…. That is: Just speak, speak Luo. All these people understand Luo. That is so long as you are Omunyole, even if you are from the interior, they assume that automatically you must understand Luo. So in there is arrogance and spite.
ST: Conceit! That is why we refuse to marry their daughters. But they come for our daughters.
Old Man: Mutual spite. That is why we still despise each other.
AN: Until recently, when we were still children, all the cow names, we used Luo words. *Dichor, Dibuoro, Abaala*…whatever.
KU: The color of a cow was difficult for us.
AN: But now, praise be to God. Those things have now started to disappear. We usually make where people are: the names for cows… you do not have that in Luhya? I have made some noise. Now that has started to change. That habit is disappearing.
K: Now I understand. I do not know who said. I think it is the old man who said that some time back these Abanyole were administered from this side… in Nyanza. Do you think…
AN: It was called North Nyanza. When it was still North Nyanza…
KU: Central Nyanza.
AN: Sorry Central Nyanza.
K: You used to be this other side. You were not with the other Abanyole.
ALL: Eeeh. No.
K: Do you think, this tendency to use Luo words like those you talked about, might it have started at that time or it started much earlier?
ST: The problem started… A Luo never wanted even to speak our Olunyole. The Luo wanted to marry our daughters and he would marry them. But when we wanted to marry their daughters they … would tell their daughters: *Idhi tedo ni jamwa? Otsia Okhutekhela om'mwa* (Are you going to marry non-Luo)? Then the girl would slip away.
AN: Or if she accepted to marry amongst you she will have been instructed: You should never speak Ol'luhyia. She will age while speaking Luo and she will make everyone in the house start to speak Luo. Those are their ways.
KA: The Luo knew that…. The reason why the Luo like Luhya girls…. When you look at the Luhya girls who are well educated or those who have big offices they have gone to Luoland. They are married to Luos. The Luo knew if they want to get a good and intelligent offspring or people with good luck then you must marry a Luhya girl. So that they might get a child with good luck.
ST: Even Odinga told off the Luo (inaudible) said he is a Luhya. He is not a Luo.
KA: So if you go among these people, all the prominent people, the distinguished leaders, if you go into the detail they are not Luo. They are Luhya! This Anyang Nyong'o, when his father died… Anyang Nyong'o, his father died the other day. His (real) name is Simeyi. They are Abatsotso. There are many of them there!
K: Abatsotso?
KA: Heei!
K: They are here?
KA: Heeei! Anyang Nyong'o…
AN: Ndolo Ayah are Abasiloli.
KA: They are Abaluhya all right.
K: They have disguised themselves?
KA: They have disguised themselves! All the big people. The Luo were never people endowed with luck. The leadership in Luoland belongs to Luhya.

K: Did you say Odinga was a Luhya too?
KA: Odinga ….
Old Man: His mother came with him!
K: Where did she come with him from?
KA: I cannot remember…. I do not know is it Eb'bayi… If it is not Eb'bayi I do not know.
Old Man: Eb'bayi!
K: Now they are Luo
Old Man: They have become Luo.
K: Do they have any role in the problems you talk about?
AN: Very much!
K: So those oppressing you are fellow Luhyas?
ST: Even chief Onindo here, our chief. Din't he say he is not a Luhya.
KA: The Luo are a minority here in Kenya. Three quarters of their population who push their numbers up are Luhya. We do not even talk about Luo. Luos are a quarter.
ST: Very few.
KA: A sprinkling! Even that side is all Luhya, There at Asembo, if you go where they call Aram Market, if you go to this side (right), there is nearly one sub-location of Abamarama.
Old Man: In Kisumu we have Aberanyi, Am'mutsa, Abasiralo…. There are many of them in Kisumu.
K: And Abalukhoba?
AN: Also Abasakami,
ST: Did I not tell you Es'sumo, we used to go there to the market? Then they called it Kisumu.
Anyanda Senior (AS): The problem is all the Luhya people among the Luo have made themselves Luo. They speak Luo.
K: This is what I would like to know. That is what I thought we might look through again in this sitting. Slowly. Why is it that, you are from this community. But when you go to another place you try to disguise your identity. It looks to me that you are saying we are that kind of people. When you get to a place, you suppress your own. Do you think when you were placed administratively among the Luos you decided: If we speak Luhya they will oppress us. Let us speak Luo so that we look like them.
ST: We never used to marry them. I repeat that statement. It is they who liked to marry our daughters. Understand? Once our daughter goes there, she is told: *Kik dhum*. Never speak Luhya. Speak Luo. That is how it was.
AN: Within one month, she has started to speak luo.
KA: You know a Munyole person…. We have a word in Olunyole *injinia* (Arrogance). This person (Luo) leaps over us because he is an arrogant person. A Nyole, a man of peace and calculated slow pace.
ST: A man of peace.
KA: But the Luo…. His arrogance is what makes him…
ST: And a Luo is not a wise person. He can get education but he has no wisdom.
KU: We used to have two languages in Maseno. Then the Luo went and undermined Luhya. He pushed Luo ahead and gave it to the white man. Then the white man understood Luo, but Olunyole (sweeps away with his hands). It made the Luo dominant in Maseno. Any white man who came, it was Luo. So it appeared like Luo was easier to speak but Luhya was difficult.
ST: But all are easy to speak. It is about arrogance.
MA: Elders, you are saying that Luo language has dominated. That means a Munyole person…we say he is a calculating person, a peaceful person. But there must be something else deeper than that because you find that where a Munyole person is, or where a Luhya is,

he does not want to identify himself as a Luhya. Even when he is among Kikuyus he wants to speak Kikuyu. And if you start to speak Olunyole you realize he has become inhibited. So are we inferior or we are people who are not proud of our language or what? Why do we fear to promote our language?
KU: What causes envy among the Luhya is jealousy. We do not play as a team. When something happens, even if there is little…. I said all Luos right from Kisumu to Mombasa. When there is a problem, they all come together. It is like thread *trrrrrrrrrr* (signals unwinding thread). But when it comes to Abaluhya, they stay separately, separately, separately. And it has become easy for us to take our secrets and give to whom….? (He points towards Luoland).
MA: Other people.
KU: And that has made it easy for Luos to infiltrate us. The reason is, as you said: If it is a Kikuyu (Omusebe), Kikuyu looks out for fellow Kikuyu, they team up; if it is Luo, when he is in an office, he will speak Luo, in the office! But if you try to speak Luhya to a Luhya man he will tell you: (Kisawhili) *Sema Lugha ya kazi* [Use business language]. He has done what…?
ST: He has cast you aside.
MA: That issue bothers me a lot. Why do we Luhya people do that?
KU: So we Luhya are weak. That is why other communities scale over us. It is we who back up other communities in politics. Then again you find Abaluhya have split. They have gone this side; they have gone that side. The riddle is we are not what?
MA: United
KU: You discussed other matters here (pointing to KA)… it is there. It is part of the problem that brings the pain. So we Luhya easily divulge our secrets. Our endurance is momentary. We carry a secret for a short while, but once I get over there, I lose the will. The reason why the Luo beat us is they have impetus. He aligns his effort onto what he wants.
KA: The Luo… When he entered this world, he came later. And he came when he was very cohesive. Many of the lands he acquired through war. So, the Luo faced other people as one. That is the kind of unity the Luo still have to this moment. He entered other people and knew: If we do not work together, we will never manage these people. And that thing has stayed permanently among the Luo. When you read some books: whenever they desired a certain place, it was war. Then they also used witchcraft to cause anxiety and uncertainty to make people emigrate. Then they would remain there. They would start war with their magic and cause people to abandon their land and they would take it up. So they were people who knew they had to seize land to live in… we must push other people. That is the kind of unity the Luo still has todate.
K: (To an old man who entered late. He is from a different clan (Ebwiranyi). He looks like he wants to say something but he appears inhibited all the time) Old man if you have something just chip in. They said you are from Ebwiranyi but do not worry. Just come in.
Old Man (2): Thanks a lot. I just want to comment on what my brother has just said. The Luo would come and request you: I would like to plant something here, say potatoes. That is when he would be planning what he is saying. What he is saying is true.
AN: They are like the camel. When it enters, it lets in the head first. Then comes in slowly by slowly then it throws you out.
Old Man2: He pushes you, pushes you. Then he calls his people.
KU: He creates a relationship with you but little do you know he is undermining you.
Old Man2: Can't you see Okuku. Isn't that what Okuku did at that place. Now he has finished the whole place. What you have been saying is true. The issues you are tackling are very…. The Luo… when they have a meeting like this committee you have here he will call a fellow Luo from Alego, he calls from Ugenya, he calls from Sakwa, he calls from Es'sumo.

Then they meet. They will come two people, two people, two people. Then their word is just as you have said. As you said, Abaluhya, you do not have any common forum. You do not unite like other people. What we have discussed, you will go and reveal the other side. A big mistake….

Anyanda Senior (AS): I was saying Abaluhya are not honest after they have appointed their leader. But Luos… once they have chosen their leader, that is it. Again, Abaluhya lack deference for their leaders because the time the boundary was demarcated at Maseno, I was at Lela in Metho's hotel. Here was the headman and Osoka from up here. The Luo took them to that hotel and bought them plenty of food while telling them: When we go to Maseno, do not back any other boundary line. You must back our boundary." And I was just in there listening to what they were telling those people. Those two old men. The truth is I left that hotel dejected. These were our fellow Abanyole. And now they were under the control of the Luo. They were telling them: "Do not back any other boundary." Then Osoka told Wilson: You… as…

ST: That is the father of Job, Job… who died. Don't you know him?

AS: As a man of the government, do not tolerate the representations of Om'mwa at all. Little was it known at the time that Oginga had spent a night at Osoka's home. He slept there on the eve of the day of boundary demarcation. Eeeeh! So, those old men came to the site of the boundary between Kakamega and Nyanza. We thought they would go and bring in the Abanyole who were down there towards the lake. But the Luo had told them to support the agreed boundary. Don't do anything to the contrary. When they came up here to draw a new boundary, that is when war burst out. We were…many of us were arrested around here. We suffered a lot. The Luo beat us, the Luo government beat us. They took us to Lela. The police would come from one side and beat us, and then others would come from the other side and beat us. Both the front and back. So, the Luhya person does not have a stand. So, we do not know what happened to the Luhya person back in the past.

ST: Let me add to that. You have done well to bring that up. Din't I come and quarrel over there? Did I or did I not? Din't I quarrel? And who caused that? Was it a Luo? He is married to a Luo! Mine ends there. That is all (the place has become tense after this).

K: Ok. Why did the Luo prefer to marry our girls?

ST: Let me answer that. The reason why the Luo wanted to marry our daughters is that our bride price is little. We did not demand as much bride price as the Luo. Again, they wanted to know the secrets of Abanyole…Abaluhya. Those two things. Because, once she is married and gone, she is told: *Kik dhum*, Do not speak Olunyole. And never tell those people our secrets. A Luo is not a wise man. He can be educated but not wise. That, I know. A Luo might learn but he lacks that deeper wisdom. Mine ends there.

KU: Again The Luo would investigate and discover: Those people have wisdom. I want to marry their daughter.

ST: Yeah! They are clever people.

KU: He knows what he is looking for. He will come and…. The daughter will have to give birth to a Luo. That is what they pursue, even the old man. Even this old man we have been talking about – Osoka – he looked for the home where there were clever people. He must ensure his son has married from there or his daughter is married there.

ST: You wanted the Osoka story, you wanted Osoka's story? Give them Osoka's story. Osoka is not a Luo! When Osoka married a Luo woman, he made himself a Luo. He said *an ok kawinj* (I don't understand Olunyole). The late Ex-chief Zakayo is the one who educated him. Osoka's father died when Osoka was still small. He grew up at Zakayo's home and Zakayo educated him. When he married a Luo woman then he said that (with sweep of hands) he does not know Luhya at all. If you go to him, he says *ok kawinj* (I don't' understand).

AS: Then he distanced himself from Abanyole.
ST: He distanced himself completely.
AN: Yet he is a true Omulako man…
AS: And he is an Omunyole man.
ST: Only I used to tell him off. I used to tell off Osoka.
AS: And you see, his gate used to face down there towards Luoland, not straight like those of other Luhya.
KU: Even when he died. He had said when he be placed in the grave; his head must face downwards (towards the lake/Luoland). If it faced upwards (Luhyaland) he would ruin the entire home. Abaluhya rejected that and it faced where? (He points the northern direction, which is deep into Luhyaland. Laughter from the group). Later on many people died up here (*bakhakhuyikha yaha*). The reason is he said he was a Luo. When the Luo bury, the head faces towards the lake. The reason is on the day of resurrection he will resurrect like this (raises both his hands backwards as the head follows in the same direction).
K: Are those who are dying Luos?
KA: Really many of them have died… About 47 of them.
ST: They died until there is no one left.
…….
K: Let me ask another question…. Why do these Luos… it looks like they marry many Abanyole but we do not marry them? Archdeacon Owen of Maseno in the 1930s. He says Abanyole are doomed because they do not have wives to marry because the Luo are marrying all their girls. Secondly,… I was told. The Luo want Luhya women because the Luos themselves are dark and they want *lando* (brown). One old man told me that Luos marry Nyole women because of *lando*.
KA: Women… you know Luos used to be rather plain. But a Luhya woman, when she grows up she comes with great shape with very nice *indumbu* (leg). So the Luo were mesmerized by the beauty and good luck of the Luhya women.
AS: It is good luck they were looking for because they never had that.
……..
AS: The Luos from around here despise those from South Nyanza. Because they are not learned. They are not bright.
K: But you have just said that those who are learned, their mothers are Luhya…
KU: The light was up here. Ebukami (Gem) got light from here… Maseno.
ST: Abakami are not Luos, they are Abaluhya.
KU: (Inaudible) Once you leave these ones, Abaseme and go back there, you will find incredible darkness. You will find one house here; the next one will be up there at the Kima junction. In the middle, there is no one.
ST: A house like this one, like this young man has built: *Idhi tho*, You will die!
KU: And all of them have run away and done what…? And when they went into [bad] things, they have blocked reproduction and now it is diminished. When you walk on the road from morning until evening, no one has crossed your path. Only mongooses and other wild animals keep crossing the road this way and that. They are not like Abanyole, like if you look in this our area, it is full, it is busy from morning until evening. So, the light in their place was just close by here.
KA: The Luo family grows away from the home. But the Luhya family grows at home.
……..
KA: We need to finish something else. What messed the boundary at Maseno were missionaries… the boundary. They messed the boundary, Abanyole have remained in Luoland. Missionaries pushed them there. The missionaries who were here are the ones who advised the District Commissioners (DCs) who served here. The border was done in 1910. It

is the one that cut off these Abanyole and put them the other side. They pushed it from the lake upto to here. So, these missionaries liked Maseno because it was close to Kisumu town where the administration was located where they would report frequently. When we were about to get *majimbo* (federal government) the missionaries… the whites fought us very viciously and annexed Maseno to the Luo. They did not want it to go to western. They were worried: Our headquartes, we had proposed Kitale. Then the whites said: "Kitale is too far, we can not go to Kitale. We want Maseno to remain… to go to Nyanza so we can report in Kisumu." So, it is these missionaries who wounded us on the border issue. The controversy is still there upto now. The future generations will rectify it.
ST: Wait first. I am adding to his remarks. Where there is a gap I want to fill. Those people were three: Those of CMS, Church of God and…..
MA: Oooh, Friends (Quackers)?
ST: Friends! They allocated themselves: You will come up to here, They will come up to here and we will come up to here. They are the ones who brought this suffering. They brought suffering. And our misfortune was we were being administered from Central Nyanza. Then we disapeared there.
K: I would like to say there is a point at which we will focus on the Maseno matters as well as boundaries. I forgot to mention that. Even Ebwiranyi, Em'muli…
Let me ask, we were talking about lineages. I would like this old man (MA from Ebukhobo) to talk about his. I know his limitations but we are together.
MA: I… I am one of those who desire to know where we come from. Like we said when we came in, when we tried to discuss among ourselves… the other side we are called Abakhobo. How do we link with Abanyole, where did we come from, and so on? But we found that, the old man Samson Mulela is the one who said that the major part of this issue, if we came this side where we are now we might get a lot of information….
MA: … The name of this old man (ST) was mentioned several times… this Silfano.
KA: Mulela used to walk with Ataala. They would never be without the other's company.
MA: So, we found some records that were written by the elders of the earlier days. Those elders say… if you check the Abakhobo family tree… they say in the records, there was a man called Amukhoba Nandila.This man… I have been listening and it seems we are concurring, they are found… they came from Congo and went to Bukoba. Then the people who were there knew that this place belongs to these Abalukhoba people. Now I have heard that we were cantankerous people, fighting all the time. So, Nandila had his sons. Nandila sired a man by the name Omuchilo, Omuchilo sired Akhobo. This Akhobo, Nandila named after his earlier grandfather, Akhoba or something like that. Then Akhoba sired Sumbuku. It is Sumbuku who sired many people. The others there were diseases, wars, and so on, which would kill their children. So, Sumbuku sired Lubaso L'lala; he also sired Mbutsa,
AN: He also sired Mbutsa?
MA: Eeeh. Those are the sons of Sumbuku. He sired Nasiti, then he sired Asilasi. These sons are the ones who are said to have walked … I don't know… They walked through the lake, or something like that, then they entered Uganda. That family is the one that came this side…. Because I have heard from here that… it would appear they had a boat when they came and reached Asembo Bay? Because these are things I am trying to connect.
K: This old man (ST) said they praise themselves as people who walked on water.
ST: We praise ourselves! We walked on the water surface when we were coming here.
AN: Like Jesus!
MA: So, these people… I have concurred, the fact that they were killed at…
Em'mutsa first. Here at Em'mutsa. That is where they left and moved to Wekhomo.
AN: Ok. They were first killed at Em'mutsa?
AM: Yes, at Em'mutsa.

ST: Abalukhoba came from Luanda and went up to that side (pointing towards Kima).
MA: But I think they came from this side (pointing to Luanda direction) moving…
ST: What dispersed them was a feast.
MA: So, it would appear the people who settled this side, those who remained, it would appear it was you…. Abakhobo[105] who remained this side when they dispersed. Now I have found that Abalukhoba are there, that is you. The others, when they ran away… those who left Wekhomo, some went to Tiriki, Abalukhoba went to Tiriki. Then went and called themselves Abalukhoba.
Old Man: Others went to Khumusalaba.
MA: Eeeh, those who remained here at the center, Emuhaya, were the sons of Lubaso L'lala…those who descended from Lubaso L'lala and Mbutsa. Those are the ones who remained; Byrum's family.
KA: These Abakhobo.
MA: Yes these Abakhobo
ST: They called themselves Abakhobo because if they had called themselves Abalukhoba they would have been killed. So, they gave themselves the name … To cover them up.
KA: Can't you see, that name in front discloses it perfectly[106].
MA: It reveals well. Ok so, these people have also scattered to Eb'bayi and Em'mang'ali.
Ku: Even in Ebuus'sama they are there.
MA: Eeeh. They are in those places.
K: They are also at Em'mutsa.
MA: Yes, there are others here at Em'mutsa. The little we managed to gather which the elders wrote, the family tree… is that. But the meaning of many other things … that, we have not yet got, but we have heard it is there. But when the elder the Samson died, those things were misplaced. So, I was very happy to follow Opati to come and hear more about Abalukhoba from this side. But it seems to me…. What we are talking about seems to to be in agreement. So, God willing we can put all these things in record. Then we can find a way to advance on that as we write our story…. I only have that bit.
ST: I will answer you…. Your story. What ails Abalukhoba is jealousy. So and so might be recognized but not me. I repeat: that is why you avoided my house and came to hide here. I repeat that several times. You came to my place. That is what brings suffering. I talked (quarreled) quite a lot outside there. I wanted anyone to dare stand up and touch me. I do not fight…. But I will tell you the truth. So, let us leave alone the underground disposition. Let us put everything in the open so we can talk and resolve it. There is neither a total fool nor a smart person, but when we come together, we will identify the foolish and the wise. When one is alone, he is neither a foolish nor clever. He is just a human being. You become conceited because you think you are clever.
……
KA: We have a term… on your way from Busia going to Etiira…
Tiira. I have my brother Dario, he used to stay at Tiira, in Busia on the Kenyan side. When we are there at Tiila when I have gone to visit him… he used to cultivate in the river valley. When we had gone to see his farm, there was a huge forest across in Uganda. All Ugandans were scared of venturing into the forest or even sub-divide it. It was said to belong to Abalukhoba. The forest of the Abalukhoba. Finally, when they wanted to enter, they called my brother, Dario, to allocate him a plot from it. So in Uganda there were Abalukhoba who

[105] Curiously each prefers to call the other by the name of his group: either Abakhobo or Abalukhoba.
[106] Presumably, KA is talking about the similarity in the root of the names: *khobo/khoba*. Whereas the names were meant to be different for strategic purposes, they also retained some semblance of similarity to make recognition possible. So it disguised even as it revealed.

remained there, many of them, but we do not know where they might have gone in the end. Because it was a large assemblage. This scattering is what lets us down.
K: If we can go on, there is something I would like to ask about Abakhobo. What we have been talking about…. We will look at that again. But I would like to ask: These Abakhobo… you have mentioned this, Abalukhoba. But you may go through it again. When you came here… Because you have said you are not mainstream Abanyole… you are not Abanyole. Do you think…
ST: We are not Abanyole. We are not Abanyole.
KA: The first people, our ancestors preceded these Abanyole here
ST: We came here quite early.
K: Abanyole found you here?
ST: They found us here. And where Abanyole came from (with sweep of hands) we don't know. And if you go out to look for (authentic) Omunyole man, you will never find him. Have you ever seen an Abanyole lineage? Indeed, the word Abanyole… but have you ever seen anyone…: "I am Omunyole" have you seen that?
K: I have always thought we are all Abanyole? Or I did not get you?
ST: We are all Abanyole yes, but what I am telling you is we came from Uganda, then we crossed the water and came this side. We lived in Luoland, then we left the place and came this side. We occupied from Ebusakami up to Kima. That is where we dispersed and went to Tiriki, you see, we went to Tiriki. That is where these Abakhobo people thought they might be killed. Then they called themselves Abakhobo. Not Abalukhoba, they called themselves Abakhobo, the group of Byrum. I have said this several times.
……
KU: You see, where the problem is, someone will say I am Omunyole. Once you say you are Omunyole, and then they will ask: which clan? So to get to the core of Obunyole, that Anyole himself, who is it…from whom all the clans descended?
K: I have heard he was called Mwenje.
ALL: Mwenje?
K: That is why Abalokooli call us Abakamwenje.
MA: While they call themselves Andimi.
KA: The name Abanyole,[107] they are these Abalokooli who gave it to us. Because of war. We used to approach them stealthly: people who approach others surreptitiously. You must watch Abanyole carefully. They will sneak on you (*nabamwenyol'le*)…
KU: Sly people, they will finish you at night….
AN: Now, let me ask, those who are in Uganda, is the language the same?
ST: A few words…
K: …. Abaluhya. Actually, I wanted to ask: How do the Luhya come about? Because their cultures are similar to Ugandan cultures. And Uganda was named by colonialists…. These Abaluhya. How did we start?
Old Man: That is Bantu.
KU: Aaah, Abaluhya… this name Abaluhya was brought recently. We came together Omulokooli stayed away. He said he is not Omuluhya. The languages, there are those which are related. There are some words in Olulokooli, Olubukusu, Olunyole, Olukabalasi which

[107] This understanding of the name Abanyole suggests etymological origin from *okhwenyola* – to walk stealthily or to tiptoe so as to ambush someone, especially the enemy. Hence by saying that the name was given by Abalokooli it appears that accepting the name would suggest taking pride in the acknowledgement by the enemy of their lethal military strategy. At the same time it implies that the perennial enemy acknowledged their own helplessness in the face of superior military strategy of their opponents –Abanyole. Since this matter is contentious, it is a question of achieving through discourse what may not necessarily be done as definitively and as neatly on the actual battlefield.

are similar. So, when they realized these words are related, they decided that what would unite these people… they should be called Abaluhya. So, it brings together all the communities which are in the whole of Luhyaland. Omulokooli is the only one who who has been trying to step out of it. But now we have put him in. Now he is called Omuluhya. Secondly, Omuluhya used to live next to you. Then you would call him *omuluhya wanje*. That is neighbor.
ST: One who lives next to you, he is *omuluhya wuwo*.[108] That is how that name came about.
KU: That is why they call you Omuluhya,
ST: *Om'menyani wanje* (One we share life with)
K: So this name Obuluhya unites people
KU: It brings together people.
K: But we may not say we are descendants of the same ancestor?
KU: No.
KA: You know it is a term that unites people with mutually intelligible languages. Like we said, we have the term *om'menyani* (one who lives next to you) one with whom you share a common boundary or *omurende* (neighbor).[109] You know many do not know the meaning of the term *omurende*….
ST: They have turned it into enemy
KA: They have given it the meaning of enemy.
ST: Yet it is not so.
KA: *Omurende* is one who lives close to you. So when those people saw that people stay together and support each other, one supports the other, and there is peace. That is how the term *omuluhya* came about…. Abaluhya.
K: Ok. But when did this we start calling ourselves Abaluhya and how did it begin?
Old Man2: The person who brought this name was Muliro. Muliro is the one who said: All these people, if we can unite and be called one thing…
Masinde Muliro. He said: Let us just call Abaluhya then unite and become one. Muliro stood firm but the Abaluhya whom he struggled for to take the name Abaluhya and become one are the ones who mess it up…. Because Omuluhya, when you make one thing he will turn and tell another person: We are planning to do this, do that. Then they start to undermine it. That is what I have heard you speak about here. Muliro was behind that plan, he united people.
K: Would you know the year when he did that?
Old Man2: Ah, ah. This one (KA) was councilor, he might know.
KA: What brought unity and started getting known…
ST: A councilor cannot know anything.
KA: Is when the mission started to print books. When they printed Luhya songs and Luhya Bible and so on. I do not know what year it was…
ST: Just the other day, just the other day.
KA: That is when they started to make Luhya then it took root, and Muliro used that.
K: Someone told me Muliro went into politics… It looks like it was more like politics?
ST: I worked with Muliro…

[108] Whereas *omuluhya wuwo* might mean neighbor, its meaning goes beyond mere neighborliness. It echoes the meaning of *oluhya* (the root of Omuluhya) as family. This suggests that Abaluhya attach more meaning to neighborliness beyond the meaning of proximity/contiguity. A neighbor is like family because he is expected to come to your rescue in the event of danger the same way close relatives would.
[109] The term *omurende* has several meanings which depend on context. *Omurende* means: neighbor, one who shares a boundary with you; as that kind of neighbor, it carries nuances of kin because such a person is the first to respond in the event of danger. It also means outsider in the sense of not kin, therefore one can marry form them. But at another level that outsiderness also carries the connotation of enemy, someone/people to be wary of because they might harbor bad designs against one.

AS: This matter of Abaluhya… you know in the past the Luhya teams used to be Maragooli, Tiriki, Bunyore…like that. But they later came together because the Luos had united and formed one team, Luo Union. They examined it and observed that the Luos had united in one team and were beating them. So, they decided to dissolve the location teams and support one team, Abaluhya United. They started to beat the Luos from then. Whenever they played against the Luos they would beat them by far.
K: Do you think there is a time in the past when Abaluhya were one until it might start to appear they came from the same source?
KU: No!
ST: It is only Muliro who started to bring them together. I worked with Muliro and I gave him a house here at Siriba.
K: That means he came here in 1957 when he started to work there?
ST: Muliro I worked with him here long ago. I am old, my memory is not good.
AS: Was he not a teacher here?
ST: He was a teacher here at Musiriba. And we are the ones who told Muliro: You go and campaign, go and campaign. Then we campaigned for him here in Ebunyole. The vote was for North Nyanza.
MA: This term *obuluhya*, I do not kow how it comes but I think a person you agree with, one who does things similar to you,
ST: *Ebituko*
MA: … even if he is not of your lineage, so long as your actions agree,
MA: Say like circumcision. You see circumcision…all Luhya circumcise their sons.
K: Not all circumcise… the people of Busia…
ST: Even Abanyole have not been circumcising.
KU: Not all of them have been circumcising.
MA: What I am trying to get at is the term *omuluhya*. Omuluhya means one you agree with…
ST: One you agree with, that is enough!
KU: *Omuluhya wanje* (My neighbor)
Old Man: People like Baganda, are they not called Bantu? Baganda are called Bantu because they are Abaluhya.
ST: Bantu means *omundu*, the term *omundu* (person). That is how the word comes.
KA: Bantu are the majority in Africa.
KU: When you come to names: *omundu*, Kiswahili *mutu*, Kikuyu whatever. But when you come to Luo, we part ways: *ng'ato*. Then you find you are far away from them.
K: Now, I want to ask. Let me start this way. These Abakhobo… Abalukhoba and… how did they live with… we had touched on that briefly: These Abalukhoba, Abasiekwe are this side, Abasakaami Abamuutsa… and other people who call themselves Abanyole.
ST: We are Anyole. Even here, we are Anyole[110].
K: Even here, you are Anyole? But in the past…. How did you co-exist with the other people, say with the other clans?
AN: Aaah, can you say how we co-existed?
ST: Are you asking Abanyole people?
K: Yes, yourselves and other Abanyole.
ST: Other Abanyole?
K: Yes. If you disagreed what might have been the reason?

[110] This position seems again to contradict that which ST defended very vehemently earlier, that not only are Abalukhoba and not Abanyole; Abanyole are a threat to Abalukhoba and Abanyole have displaced them from their land, which they had already occupied when Abanyole arrived. He even had expressed doubt in the integrity and authenticity of the concept of Nyoleness asserting that in reality no such thing exists.

MA: From what I heard the old men saying, it appears there was harmony in the past. People used to organize games. You might find that people have come all the way here from Em'mutete for games. But they will play peacefully; they will be looked after well till they go back…. This matter of quarreling and yet we are brothers, it seems it came with the youth. May be with our generation or more recently. But long ago they were brothers and they maintained peace. These disagreements were not common. If anyone was querulous, that one was only one of his kind. It was easy to pick him out put him aside and tell him: We do not want squabbles. So the life of that time was better compared to today. I sometimes think what brought differences among people, I can say was school, education which was brought by the by the white man. So, when a child gets to… like Mr Opati said the other day after three years you are taken… to school. You do not even know, who is the child next to your home. You are always in school. So Education is good yes, it brings light. But it also enhanced a situation where people would not know one another, then people looked like enemies.… It seems like elders talked about such things in my hearing. I may not have seen but I heard some talk about how life was good in in the past. In the evening, in the night people used to walk freely. There was no reason for apprehension.
KU: Let me say, what you have said is right. What has messed people these days is education and money. Once one finishes school then one gets money, one feels he is independent. He does not look for anything else to add to that. So, modern life has brought many things. A lot of prostitution, whether one is your relative or not, you do not mind. The way people used to support one another… our grandfathers used to support one another. The way you see people settled, this clan, that clan in the same place, someone would go and call another…. I cannot live alone like someone who does not have… Whom will I be asking for fire from? Or when I make beer, who will I drink with? So, when you appear he will tell you: Come and build here. I will not ask what your ethnicity is, so long as you are a human being. So long as you are ready to build next to me so we can get fire from each other and come to the assistance of one another. But now we have made it possible for people to know: This one is from this clan, this one is from that clan. Our ancestors were not like that. That is one problem. The second one, our ancestors used to light a bonfire, people would be advised. That was a school… the fire would be lit in the yard then it becomes a school. The child would then be taught character (*imelo*)…. It is true one might have education[111] but lack *imelo* (character).
…….
AS: Now, let me say something. I would say, at my age, I have seen a lot in our Anakanji family. You know, the Anakanji family goes well up to the other ridge. Now all my fathers, there is not even a single one left. All are already dead. Now they have left us the sons. And as I used to see our fathers, whenever they disagreed, they would come together again and address the issue. But that is not what I see now. That is, once you differ with your brother, even greetings…. Eeh? These my brothers, even greetings, they do not want to give one another. But that I have started to see it lately, lately. It is very complicated, but as for me…
ST: (Inaudible) this here is Albert. You brought me shillings did I ask you?
KU: Let us say things that are related to today's topic, what can be written. That you can not record….

[111] In this context the distinction KU seeks to make between education as a cranial phenomenon as opposed to character acquires added significance because of a difference that arose between himself and KA on one side and ST on the other. Unlike these two who might have done the intial classes. ST seems to have gone much further in formal schooling. As a result, he tries to make clear this fact. During the quarrel, he repeatedly referred to his superiority to the others because of schooling and age. The others could not answer back because it is true (except for AN who was in fact educated by ST but could not speak because of that and age) the others were silenced. So this observation was as much for the event as an indirect reference to and disapproval of ST's bid to humiliate them on account of schooling

ST: (Kiswahili) *wacha*! (Stop it)
KU: What you asked, you wanted…
ST: (Harsh, pointing to KU) I am still talking, Kuya, Don't stop me, you are wrong!
KU: Eeeish, should that be written there (pointing to the video recorder)?
AN: Wait, let us see, what did you ask?
Old Man: The child asked: these Luos from long ago…
ST: (Pointing to KU) only the bad person likes to talk even as he restricts the others. Why is he cutting in? We don't want that!
AN: I thought we had calmed and we were talking well…
ST: No…. (Pointing to KU) Do not bring your drivel here!
AN: Can't we be patient and finish? We are about to complete. Be patient, be patient so we can complete the story…
ST: (Stressing, pointing to KU, Kiswahili) I do not want stupidity! Stupidity, I do not want!
AN: Be patient, so we can finish.
ST: Look, this man (touching AN) gave me 1300 shilings…
KU: So you want that to be written (Pointing to the Video recorder).
ST: Ah, ah! (Pointing to KU, grave tone) Don't do that!
KU: It is going into this wind (getting recorded).
……..
ST: (Gesticulating towards KU) You are a awful person! (At this point, as the quarrel deteriorated the tape was switched off. But the quarrel continued to the point of confrontation where KU threatened to crush ST. Then they started quarreling in Luo. ST kept repeating the word *thoch* or something like that. The interview had to be stopped and rescheduled to 11 February 2007).
…….
K: Before we do other things, I would like to know… I am not sure, but we tried to talk about it. This Maseno has a lot of controversy; I think we had not exhausted that.
KU: We had not.
K: It has been the source of a lot of wrangling…. Can you tell us what issues are about Maseno?
KA: (Opening a file he has been holding) If we don't have to go into many stories about the history of Maseno, (from now he will be reading very closely. As a result he will be speaking to his file more than to the audience). The first whites came to Maseno 1906. It was Mr Willis and Mr Saville and Fred. This Willis was a padre while Saville was a farmer, and Fred was a trader. These people were welcomed… the ruler who was there was Chief Njeli; he is the one who welcomed these whites. Njeli took them.…
K: Where was Njeli from?
KA: Ebusakami. Njeli took them to build (long pause)… three tents the way they were three, each person his own little house…in the home of *mzee* (elder) Ekumo. They built the tents in the home of Ekumo like they might build in this compound. Later Chief Njeli … moved them to Maseno. Then one white man asked: How does the name Maseno come about? Njeli told them: The name Maseno came from a huge tree that was there …
AS: *Omuseno* tree.
KA: *Omuseno*… Willis had asked. Then they put in short Maseno. Willis started that name Maseno. It comes that the owners of the Maseno land: Abasakami number one, Abamutsa number two, a people called Abataywa, number three, Number four Abalonga, number five Abalako, number six Abamachika… Abamaatsi, number seven, (All along KU is looking at the file and helping KA by talking to him in whispers while AN keeps an eye on what I am writing to ensure that I am getting it right). I had exchanged. Abamachika come at number seven. Number eight Abamuana, and others who have vanished among all these. Then we

come to the issue: Why are the Luo fighting for Maseno? We found there wasn't any Luo who had land at Maseno; even one who was buried at Maseno. A man by the name Ogola the one they say is the owner of Maseno, the way Ogola was found here, (reads from the file) Ogola used to stay in Kisumu where the airport is, it was called Musikhoni. That is his home where he came from. Then he was moved this side. Ogola left Musikhoni from among the (inaudible). The missionaries found that getting milk from that place was difficult. So they decided that Ogola be brought closer. And the person who brought Ogola was an Omunyole man. He was called *mzee* Amboye. Because this Ogola used to make shields. He used to make battle shields. And chief Mumia knew him. Chief Mumia used to get shields from him, he used to send his people to go and get them. So, Mr Amboye, a man from Em'machika, has some knowledge of how to make shields. So when Omumia wanted Ogola to be moved from there and brought closer to at Khumuseno,[112] because some people had snatched from Omumia's people the shields they had bought and were taking to him. Then he thought: That man, how can he be brought closer, to make shields from closer here? Then they found a man called Amboye who was also making some shields, and then they sent Amboye: You are better known there. How can you bring that man here? It was Amboye who went and dragged Ogola for Omumia; and Zakayo who was chief; and brought him here.
AN: Zakayo Ojuok.
KA: So, this Amboye, they worked together to make the shields. The missionaries found Ogola useful because he came with his cows so they had milk supply closeby. The Luhya people who had settled the missionaries now disagreed[113] with the missionaries. The friendship of the missionaries shifted to Ogola.Then Ogola got the favor of missionaries. The white man who was in Kisumu as DC is the one who promoted Ogola because these whites (missionaries) used to give him reports. Then they gave him leadership. They gave the Omunyolo (Luo) leadership.
KA: (Explaining for my advantage rather than the rest of the audience) Following their disagreement with Abanyole. Because our person (searching through his papers for the name, then)…. The son of Olimba had set cows loose on Saville's farm and destroyed his crop. When Saville came to ask he became hostile. Then they grabbed each other (*batilana*). They wrestled (*balwana*)! He brought down the white man. The white man persisted, then he seized him again. They wrestled, then the white man brought Olimba down. From there they shook hands and became friends. Then they stayed that way. Ogola told them… he made Olimba his headman, the white men had designated him, and Olimba became headman. Then they started to administer. So it became apparent that the issue of these boundaries, the people who influenced the government were missioanaries. They are the ones the government uses to consult.Wherever they told the government to put the boundary, that is what the government would do. It was 1910 when these boundaries tossed Maseno into Luoland. It

[112] KA does not seem to realize the contradiction in his story about how Ogola came to Maseno. Was Ogola brought by missionaries to supply milk or was he brought earlier by Mumia to locate himself strategically at Maseno to supply him with shields? From observing KA on video it appears like the shifting from one media (reading) to the other (oral) is not something he is used to. He appears to have been mixed up reading the story of the missionary arrival. The story of the shields, he appears to focus on it properly when he shifts from the written text. I was told the story of Ogola and milk for the missionaries by Ong'ndo from Ebusakami. He says the missionaries asked Ogola to supply milk when they differed with Njeli over land following which difference Njeli beat up and floored two white brothers – the Saville's who also feature in KA's story.

[113] Hezekiah from Ebusakami talked about a similar shift in the relationship between missionaries and Abanyole. The shift was caused by a quarrel between the missionary farmers, the Saville brothers, and Chief Njeli who beat and floored one of the Saville's. Njeli had been supplying them with milk but after the quarrel, they shifted to Ogola. After this the relationship between the missionaries and Abanyole turned for the worse with Luos finding favor with the missionaries as Abanyole were systematically edged out.

was through the advocacy of the whites. Maseno was sliced off and put in Luoland in the days of the missionaries. The map is still causing problems to this moment.
K: I have understood. Long ago, you might have talked about this… Did you say Abaluhya used to reach Kisumu… let us say Abanyole?
KA: Aaah, before the boundaries were established…. You know Abaluhya came first from down, the Luo followed them. Abaluhya wanted where there was rich soil. The Luo wanted grazing fields. So Abaluhya were moving as the Luos followed. So, the boundary which cut across here was put by these missionaries. Dividing western and Nyanza. These missionaries are the ones who made it.
AS: Omumia used to rule up to Naivasha.
KU: In those days, the Luo did not have leadership acumen; leadership was for the Abaluhya. We had Omumia (inaudible). So that is where they used to go upto, they used to reach Naivasha ruling. Even when we were in the mission, Anglican, we used to reach there, up to that place, up to Nakuru, up to Kericho, up to Lumbwa, up to Londiani. That is where we used to go up to with the mission. That is where Nyanza used to reach.
KA: Ok. Let us go back a bit. If we want to know the owners of the land Maseno, the people who got compensation on the land of Maseno are here. The first group: Mzee Ochieng from Ebusakami, Nasibi, from Ebusakami, this Ayub they say he is from Em'mutsa, Kweya from Ebusakami, Reuben was from Em'mutete, Njeli who was chief, and Nam'monywa. This Nam'monywa…
AN: Namunyanyi
KA: This Namunyanyi… they were one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, who were paid the compensation for the land that was taken away, 1930. They were paid in Kisumu. The second lot who were paid for Maseno land was paid in 1932 in Kakamega. These ones were paid for the land down this side, from Mwiyekhe up to the Veterinary farm and towards GTI (Government Training Institute) side. The Kakamega group was paid for the land from the school towards the hospital. These ones were Chief Zakayo. He used to be here at Maseno Junior School: Sidori, Tsindakha, Agalo, Amunabi, Oywaya, Kibira, Kasuku, Ameka, and Olimba. These ones were paid in 1932 in Kakamega. If you check below here (in his file), there is absolutely no Luo who had any land at Maseno when missionaries arrived, or any Luo who was buried in Maseno who would claim Maseno land. So, the mission is the one causing conflict between these people. Because our Abanyole were limited. They would not see ahead. They never thought they would multiply. But the Luo wanted vast land for grazing. But Omunyole would think: My land goes all that far, what would I need the other one for? Then he would imagine: I have enough. But the Luo wants to get up to the (Maseno) Depot, so that the cows roam freely…. That is where Omuluhya failed.
……..
K: Let me ask something: Some were paid in Kisumu…
KA: Eeeh, the first lot, 1930.
K: These others were paid in 1932, Kakamega. Why did they separate them and why did they pay them from here and from there?
KA: These ones, that map of 1910 had taken Maseno and placed in Nyanza. But the hospital was still in Western. They have just been picking[114] these places (slowly) and pushing them to Nyanza…that is why these ones went to get their payment in Kakamega.

[114] The matter of the hospital and the boundary between western and Nyanza has beeen the subject of a heated controversy. The original disputed boundary put the hospital in Western while Maseno School was split into two, part of it in western and the other in Nyanza. But systematically the two have been carved off into Nyanza as the boundary has receded. The Maseno South Diocese of the Anglican Church in a sense can be seen as heir to what is perceived here as a CMS and British colonial mission plot to annex Nyole territory to Luo Nyanza. That is what KA implies here.

K: Why did the whites want to take… if this side of the lake is the land of Abanyole…, would you know why the whites decided to do that?
KA: The whites on that issue were not wrong. Because I remember when I was councilor, when we were working in… before the government took up local government, when it was still with ADC the money that built the maternity (wing) of Maseno Hospital – that money came from Western, Kakamega…. That section is Western. Following up anything has become our weakness. Because if you go and examine Maseno, there have been very many alterations on the map, all fraudulent. The old ones, they twist them in a convoluted way and put a rubber stamp (inaudible). There are many different maps for Maseno.
KU: Maseno was between two people even when we were in primary, Maseno Junior School. We had classes for Luos and classes for Luhyas. Classes for Luos this side, Luhyas that side. Headmaster was what….? (Signals one). So tax was paid twice to Native Councils: those from Kakamega bring money, those from Kisumu bring money. Then they meet in the same place. So when the hostel took over the place, it removed Maseno Junior School…. That is when Junior School left and went down there to Siriba when they still had Kakamega and this side. So when we got there, that is when the Luhya watched as Maseno Junior School went to what…? (No response). Now the funds that used to come from Kakamega and where…? (No response) to build these people, our own Abaluhya, one of them, Philip Ingutia, blocked it and said: We will not follow it. Now they gave room; that school was now on who….? Kisumu. Omuluhya has done what….? (Violent push) North Nyanza… he has been ejected from it. So, when we are there, when Siriba comes in the white man is there… then they called…, the white man did not discriminate. He wanted to know: This place what did you call it; what did you use it for? They said: We used to make *ebisiliba* (pots) they called it Sili…? Siliba. So this college is the one which made Maseno Junior School do what…? (Shoves away with his hand) migrate. To leave Siriba what…? Room. That is when Maseno Junior School was (heaves with his hands) carried. Now it is leaving there when it is in the hands of….? (Signals one) the Luo. He brought it here (points with his hand). It comes here with the Luo having done what…? (Hugs himself to signals grab and hold tight). That who was the owner… those who were sharing have done what… (Thrusts his hand away from himself to indicate pushed off). So, in other words we Abaluhya are the ones who gave way for Omuseno. Even when we came to the mission, when we left we abandoned Omuseno. Then we were told by leaders: Go and build churches in the villages. When we were given authority to build in the villages, then we abandoned the shrine of Mase….? We turned our backs to it. Then we lost our power. Now we go to Maseno Junior School now it is in the hands of Omujaluo, Omujaluo ... grabbed it!
KA: One good thing about the missionary… where we defeat the Luo…. Even in their own books which they wrote, their views come to support us. For we have the right to claim our soil in Nyanza. We have churches there fro Abaluhya; they could be six…
In the Luhya Diocese but they are in Nyanza. So, when the Luo says Maseno is his, there is no house belonging to the Luo which is on the other side of the fence which he might claim: There is my fellow Luo there I want to take the boundary to bring him back this side. It is we who claim our people who also have property in their side. A whole world of people. A whole world of people. We have schools there; we have churches there, very vital things. So the organization from which to establish leadership… how to assert our claim is what has made us lag behind. The missionaries, when we became independent and Olang' was the advisor of the president; he would have rectified those things quite easily. But he became *maziwa lala* (sour milk)[115] He never took any step. So, Omunyole person… even you as

[115] *Maziwa lala* is a Kiswahili for sour milk. The expression means one who sleeps on the job, not sharp, lackluster, jaded. Many narratives on Maseno paint a similar opinion on Bishop Olang.

children, when you are given a task, make use of it; serve your people that time when it is given to you. Do not go to sleep, make use of it. But Abanyole people do not know that. He will just doze off; whether his fellow Omunyole or his fellow Omuluhya, who has he assisted? But other communities will bring their own and cuddle them. That is the weakness that is in Abanyole people.
K: Now, this Maseno and …. Let us say supposing it was in your power, what would you wish for?
KA: If it was in our power, we would have wished that the government repeats the boundaries, they were not correct, those that were made by the missionaries. They be rectified.
AN: In fact… I have here a letter that was sent to the DC when we were suffering here, when omuluhya wanted to fight with Omujaluo. And that question you have asked, I think the answer to it can be found there. (Starts to read the letter): "Due to demarcation of boundaries, there is a serious boundary dispute….." (Stops, starts to talk about the letter) This dispute started along time ago, as far back as [19] 63. So, when they tried to follow up later, they are saying, if possible, the Luhya people would like the government to do the following… all that is written here. It is not possible to read everything but since we have given you a copy, you can go through it. Then you will see, that question is partly answered there.
K: What is the future of Maseno, the way you see it?
KU: The future of Maseno, it must come back to Ebunyole. That is it must come back to Western. If it was…. The person who did all this was Odinga. You know when you put someone in authority you have empowered him. Because if you check all the villages which have surrounded Maseno, none of them is Luo. Then we have gone across the border. That is where the school is, and that is where the Mission has built the church. Even the Luos who are new here usually ask... they get surprised when they ask and get that Western goes up to near to Obasi, at that edge. When he stands here and looks up there, then he finds Maseno is still in Nyanza, and then he asks himself: Whoever demarcated this boundary how did he do it? So, the problem was with those sub-chiefs of that time. The disadvantage with our Luhya brothers, they were under Luo sub-chiefs. It is the Luos were ruling them. That is why Maseno did what…? (Signals gone with a sweep of the hand). Because there was no one… then they were suppressed. We were better off, even if we were in Kisumu, we were in Eseme, we had our own sub-chiefs. When one migrated, he would migrate with his people. But this side it was difficult because our Luhya people were under Luo sub-chiefs[116]
K: And who selected those sub-chiefs?
KU: Who selected? (Laughing scornfully) They were selected in Kisumu!
K: People were not allowed to electe themselves, he was imposed on them?
KA: They were in the District of Kisumu, so they must be selected…. by the ADC of the area.
K: The DC was a white man?
KA: Those days he was not a white man. Even the other day when we were on the boundary (issue) it was not a white man, it was an African[117]

[116] KU is talking about areas that were carved off into Central Nyanza during the colonial administration. There are the Abanyole areas, which now form the last Luhya/Nyole loacations in the present borderland between Abanyole and the Luo, the areas in which KU home falls. Then he talks about other Nyole locations that were deeper in Luoland, such as Holo. These are the areas that were made up of the Nyole but they were (as he says) put under Luo sub-chiefs. KU suggests that this was part of a scheme to suppress the Abaluhya, presumably as a part of the larger scheme to annex their lands and the people.
[117] The Kenya National archives is full of very harsh letters exchanged between the DC and the Abaluhya leaders over the way they were handling the Maseno question and other issues. The DC was a Luo. He served at Kisumu when the issue on Maseno was cropping up. Then the same DC was transferred to Kakamega where his

AN: Something surprising is that when a Luo sits in the center and he has sat on you… he looks at you stone-faced and says: A Luo has never ruled Kenya even one day. Why are you asking us about Omuseno, go and ask the government. You see? That is what they usually tell people. That arrogance: We have never ruled this country. Why are you asking us to give you Omuseno? Go and inquire from the government!
KA: They know they have stolen.
KU: So what we wonder is, if it is true they have never ruled…. Ok it happened when Oginga was vice-president. But… those are Kenyatta's days, we were demanding Omuseno, Moi has come, we are demanding Omuseno, Kibaki has come, we are still demanding. What we are wondering is what became impossible, until we have asked but there is nothing happening? We are wondering: where does the complication emerge from? But they deny it: We have never ruled even a single day. Do not ask us, go and ask the government…
KU: The other day you touched the issue, where the problem starts: the fault was with the boundaries. Some land was supposed to come back this side. When they arrived at Maseno, then they saw the truth: our claim was legitimate. But they thought: If we allow this land to go back it will make other people to seek (similar settlement).
So, instead of people…: We will cause trouble! What they do … (moves both hands as if to thrust something on the ground and steps on it) they cover it. But it was very straight forward. The truth is if they had turned the land to us, the others might say: Forget it; if that land has reverted to those people, we are also demanding what…? Because these things are full of inaccuracies. So when we begin to rectify… You know Omunyole says, when it (cow) bellows it bellows on behalf of all the others (*niyana yaan'nanga tsiosi*). When a cow bellows, you will not unleash it alone. You will unleash even with those that did not do what…?
KA: It is not that people… it is not that people…. The Luo never disputed. The person who worked for the Luo was the white missionary. He did not want to leave here… because the time of *majimbo* [federalism] the headquarter was supposed to be in Kitale. The white man did not want to be leaving here going to Kitale, it is far. They want it to be here at Kisumu. So, it was the white man who was haggling with a fellow white man when he was still in authority. He is the one who made the white men stick at Maseno. Any Luo who laid claim, or any white man who might have wanted to fight over it? There is none! There is nothing for the Luo to claim at Mwiyekhe. Will you fight over what is not yours?
K: Now, this white man, do you think… when you speak, it appears whenever anything happened he would support the Luo?
KA: He supported the Luo!
K: And why does the white man come from that far and come to….
KA: The white man… new whites…. when we had boundaries…. After the 1963 boundaries were drawn, some white men came from that side… then you found, the map they had did not start at Mwiyekhe. It started at Lela, the boundary. Then they are told: This is Nyanza. Then they say: No, this is not Nyanza, this is Western! So, this matter… these whites … you know it was a mission, it was for profit. So, they desired to be here. But the Luo, you know them. They used to walk from Uyoma. They used to walk through the night coming to the mission. Then they would even beat the owners of the home to it. You know the owner of the home is usually sluggish. They used to come from distant places, Alego, walking naked as they come in here. And those from around here (would say): Look at these awkward creatures, where are they going? But that was when they were building their name!

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translator was (curiously) a Luo. There are a lot of harsh letters exchanged between him and the Luhya leaders (such as Mr Otiende) during the period of agitation for independence.

KU: That was when they were establishing themselves at Maseno. And for us whenever a child passed (exams) we would take him to Kakamega.
KA: Majority Kakamega.
KU: Kakamega and we left Maseno.
KA: We just left it for the Luos!
KU: Now we left, now all the Luo…
KA: From far deep there…
KU: Came and positioned themselves at Maseno. And all we, Abaluhya, went to Kakamega. So, if anyone came from here having passed exam, he was met by the people of Kakamega, lest they kill him, or they might bewitch him (inaudible). So, you were watched closely (inaudible). So, that is part of the reason we are saying we have sneaked away from (*khwanyokhil'la*) Omuseno.
K: And this Maseno, we have another name, Karateng. They are called… I am not sure, the people of Karateng… clan. Which people are these?
KA: Let this one (AN) check there (AN starts to shuffle through the files he has been holding all along[118]). Behind this hill, this Nganyi's Hill…
AS: (Inaudible) Do you know Siriba… behind the Siriba boundary?
K: Eeeh
AS: Towards the hill, that is Karateng, where *Bwana* (Mr) Job Omino comes from.
KA: Where his father was given a place to make shields.
K: But isn't Karateng a Luo name?
KA: Eeeh
AS: It is Luo.
KA: The idea is that Ogola was brought from Pap Ndege (The airfield) and positioned at what they named Karateng.
…….
AN: Now there is something here, in this memorandum. (Starts reading/consulting the papers) This man they call Ogola, when he came first he was taken at a place they call Mwitoyi. When you are where they (Ogola family) are presently, it is a bit away in the valley. He left the place later and moved slightly uphill. That place they call Nyawita.[119] Abanyole call it Enyaita. The Luo called it Nyawita because this Ogola was lonely at that point and started crying out to the others saying: Oh, you have abandoned me. Why have you abandoned me here alone, I am forlorn here. Come and share life here with me. He worked out his tricks and went to bring people where he had come from, where they call Tieng'ele where you heard…, he used to live near the airport. He went to look for his own people, as I would leave here and go, and then come back here and take young people to come and live

[118] It is apparent that the group came very prepared for what they wanted to say. It is possible to say that they even were clear about what they wanted to be discussed regardless of what I might have had in mind. I recall during the first interview, KA reminded me that I had not asked about Maseno. It was then that I realized how passionate the topic is. After reminding him with little success that the issue of Maseno was part of what I wanted to discuss later, I allowed him to proceed. However he was diverted by ST and, later, the quarrel that broke out among them. On this second day (11 February), it is apparent that he was interetsted in pursuing the topic to its conclusion hence the clear preparedness, complete with documents and distribution of roles. It is clear then that this occasion is not completely under the command of the ethnographer as Richie (2001) would want us to believe.

[119] From Luo *iwita*, which means, why have you abandoned me? KA is suggesting that the name Nyawita has etymological origin from *iwita*. However, there is the irony in Abanyole changing the name to Enyaita. At once, the name loses its original meaning even as it ceases to take on another meaning. At the same time the paradox of using the name that seems symbolize what they assert to be the origin of the present Maseno controversy is not lost. In the context of Maseno, the name as used by border Abanyole may well be metaphor of their feeling towards the other Abanyole as well as their appeal to them: "why have you abandoned us with unresolved issue of Maseno?"

with me. The people he took, the names are here: The first person was called Dwasi, that one died long ago, but his offspring are still there; the other one was Osir, Osir himself died long ago but his offspring are still there; the other one was called Nyambega, his home is still there; the other one is called Olang'o; the other one is Muga. When they came there, they also became his *askari* (security), to guard him because he had been made the headman. As they stayed there, other Luos, other clans came through them. Those clans are Kajuok, the other one is Kojwaya…
KA: Now down in Chulaimbo.
AN: The other one is called Kodundo. These people… these three clans formed what is called Jokarateng. Their father I think was… was…
Old Man 3: Ateng he was Ateng.
AN: Ateng. They were…They must have been grandchildren of this man… this Ateng. So the way the Luos call their names: Jokarateng – the children of Rateng. So, that is how the name Karateng comes about: I am goin to Ebulatenyi (in Luo) *adhi Karateng*.
K: How are the names Karateng and Ebulatenyi related?
AN: … Abanyole have localized it. Because when they call Nyawita, we call Enyaita. Just like Abanyolo…. Our names, any time we meet on anything, they must localize it; that is, they must put in a language they understand easily. We also do the same.
KU: You say that; take the name Otanga. We call it Otanga; those ones call it Odanga. It is like that. We can call a name Otundo, and they will call Odundo. Understand?
AN: Like if our sister marries there and gives birth to a child and calls him Ambetsa, the Luos will change it and start calling him Wambedha. The must change it.
KU: So that it sounds Luo.
AN: They change, that is their habit…
KU: So that he can pronounce it well because the sound 'tsa' is not in Luo.
K: So, those people I have heard called Wambedha…?
AN: They have Luhya blood! If you investigate, they have Luhya blood in them: Wang'aya….
KA: Eeeh, Mung'aya
AN: If you investigate thoroughly... you will find… there is Nyole blood.
KA: And if you check properly, if you check from right here at Maseno towards the lake, these people who are down here that are called Abaseme they are not Luo. They are all Luhya! When you check the person who was MP, Ndolo Ayah, he is Omusiloli, there are many of them here. If you look at… this Anyang Nyong'o, he is Omutsotso. He is not Luo. When you go to… the people we call… Abakuya, there are many of them over there, numerous! Shockingly many. The big people within there, when you sit with him for some time you will hear him tell you: I am not a Luo…
AS: They are Aberanyi!
I am a Luhya. Butwe came here a long time ago. So, this land is all Abaluhya who add to the number of Abanyolo. There is no Omunyolo in there!
AN: What he is saying is covered under that memorandum, article three. It says (reading): The Luhya communities beyond Maseno environs towards the lake… that is…
KA: They stretch to the lake!
AN: They say here, that the majority of them were Abaluhya people. A family called Kasagam Osiri live on the Kisumu Bondo route in the deeper South of Maseno towards the lake on the way to Bondo.These people … are from the clan of Abasuubi. The other place they call Kadawa, these ones are Abawanga. They are Abawanga of the clan which was called Newa. They are in a sub-location that was called Newa but they are Abawanga….and so on; we even have there Abamachika, Abasionza are there, but all of them, Olunyole has become a problem.

……
K: Ok we have heard. It looks like this issue has made people unhappy?
AN: A lot, a lot.
KA: It will never end….
AS: There is no peace here.
AN: It is like you have an illness but you go on taking panadol (pain killer).
AS: Abanyolo (Luos) know there is no peace here because they were given a district but they shied away from making Maseno their District headquarters because they know there is no peace here. They were given a District and took it to Holo. That is Maseno District. But they are scared because they know Maseno is not their soil, it is the soil of Abanyole. So, our past political leaders are the ones who take responsibility for the loss of the soil to Abanyolo. But when they went to Lancaster House, those boundaries… if we had found a strong person… because when they came from Lancaster House, it was decided that the boundaries would be done. Then Abanyolo made themselves the know-it-all… to thwart Maseno's return to Western.
KA: They were in government: Odinga was there, Mboya was there.
KU: When you are in power, you have authority.
AS: They were very powerful; those two were very powerful. But we had Muliro but that time Muliro was all alone. So he was struggling over Kitale, then he left Khasakhala to handle this side, but Khasakhala…
AN: He has a point. He has a very valid point…. What he is saying. It is true, these two people… But Khasakhala let us down. He gave us away.
AS: Eeeh! It is Khasakhala who gave us away. Having sold us, he sent his youth to come and burn houses here at Osoka's and at Wilson's so that the people of Seme would get angry. And we who were at the boundary are the ones who suffered. We were really tortured by the Luo government. We were beaten, trodden, beaten, crushed!
KU: You understand me? On any issue, unless you shed blood… (long pause) nothing happens. All these people you see sacrificed life.The way Omuchukuyu (Kikuyu) sacrificed life in Mau Mau and shed blood. Even when we come to Christianity, Jesus shed blood. That is when there will be life. So…. One day you (KA) said: These Abanyole… If Abanyole had offered to shed blood, Omuseno would have done what...? But they were reluctant…
KA: We… this boundary you are talking about, from… we went to start with the boundary at Yala. We were like scouts, signalling with cloth to people: (showing with his hand) Move this side, this is the boundary! Or: They are coming into our side! People had come out in groups, groups on top of the hills. I was one of the four scouts. We would go through valleys and rivers, almost being swept away by water trying to cross to the other side to show the people: Move that side! This weakness that is being talked about…. Talking about some of these issues is a waste of time. These people knew what was coming. And like this one (KU) said the leaders were Luo. The reason why we lost (pointing in the direction of Maseno), a Luo was the ruler. The boundary would never have been demarcated. The boundary here at Agab's home stalled for a long time. They were unable to begin. A fierce battle broke out there! They had taken the headman of this area, called Atetwe, and a man called Nelson Indulwe to walk (along the boundary). I went and grabbed that old man by the coat and tossed him the other side! I told him: This boundary can never be walked by Luhya against Luhya. All the way, up to the other ridge! So you Nelson are aligning yourself with the Luo? How can you walk the boundary and split Abanyole, some this side others the other side? Then the policeman came from the other side and savaged me (*niyahumula*) in the ribs with his gun. The house Agabo were building, I took half a brick and rested (thrusts his hand ahead violently) on the chest of the policeman with a gun! That is when teargas was hurled at me…

AS: And you ran away at full speed! People were beaten at that place and…
Many Voices: I saw it! I saw it…! I saw it…!
AN: The commotion found me just at the same Agabo's place. We ran down this side. We were still quite small kids.
K: Which year was that?
AN: [19] 63. When we had just got independence…
KA: It was rough. The presence of a big crowd saved me. I would have been shot. I jumped into the house; there are many old women (signals negotiating his way around the group of old women in the house as he speaks), I pass through the house, I have emerged in the side! (Waving hands away from him to signal vanish). People were beaten; the boundary issue was suspended. When it was planned that they would come back, we thought they would come back here (pointing the same direction where the earlier trouble had broken out) so they would walk along the fence to take Maseno and put that side. And this Khasakhala you hear them talking about, Khasakhala came and… if he was bought, he was bought at that time. The people we had prepared, the plan was that if they decided to enter Maseno to walk (the boundary), the white man would not leave. The white man (cartographer) was designated for murder. Howard was to be killed. Young men had been prepared, they had gone to the place of Oyungu who was sub-chief; he had a car. They had been hidden that side in Musilongo. They had been given intoxicants and they were high. The plan was that when the white man walks along the fence and reaches Mwiyekhe, they would ambush him in that valley and kill him. But God told these people: There was a fight here, do not follow the fence. Go to the hospital and start from there towards the …
KU: Abalokooli!
KA: Khubalokooli! Then they easily entered it in the map. That is where we were…. (Laughing) Then our plans collapsed.
K: So, it looks like it is a matter that is still on-going?
KA: That one is still on. That one we must get it one day.
AS: Tha one is still going on. It can never stop. Abanyole even this time are on them. On the veterinary side, the people of Ebusakami are determined. That is….
AN: Even though they have fenced it all round now.
KA: Fencing has no meaning. You may build a skyscraper with 100 floors up there, but if the ground is contested, you will have to abandon that storey building.
AS: Those who are fencing… isn't it the university fencing?
KU: There is no other town that the Luo is so proud of; there is no school the Luo is so proud of; there is no university the Luo is so proud of if not Maseno. That is the one they foregrounded, it is the one that is most famous in Nyanza. That is why they won't let it go. They have held firmly on it because they know they (inaudible). When Siriba (Teachers College) was moved from here, they took it to Bondo. Bondo will be made a Universtiy. They know Maseno University is where…? It is among the Luhya!
K: Is Bondo a University now?
AN: They have been thinking recently of making it a constituent college of Maseno.
KA: That thinking… they want to promote it to become a branch of this one.
AN: They had that thought but I do not know whethere they… but there is something there. As time goes, as the pressure mounts from this side, (indicates pressure from below with motion of his hands) they will make that one a university.
KA: Understand? Look the Luos knows this soil has its owners. The Luos have lost many millions in Kisumu. A shocking number of millions. They have bought so many campuses in Kisumu, it is shocking…
AN: In fact, we had forgotten to tell you that.

KA: Shocking…. They have bought… instead of building here, they are running away. Big ones... Weh!...
AN: Now the important campuses are in Kisumu now.
KA: If you saw them, you would be surprised.
AN: The building they have bought which used to be Kenya National Assurance Company. Most of the key figures are there, first to tenth floor.
KU: They are panicking. They know that tomorrow they will not be here.
AS: If Mr. Ouko…Ouko knew very well…
KU: And went to contest in town.
AS: That the land of Maseno belongs to Abanyole. When he wanted to make progress, he transferred the administration and took it to the Luo area. Kombewa, now…he went and primed Kombewa now you hear it is nice. It is deep among the Luo. He told the Luo: You… If you become content with Maseno, Maseno is not yours at all. Maseno has its owners. Bring progress to your own home. If you become complacent at that place, you will be expelled and you will suffer. So, if you check closely, the important installations that used to be here have been moved to their area. The government installations, they are no longer here. They have already gone to their area. We have very few things here. I don't know… the office of the DO, and a few other things.
K: And how come the white man appears to have been against Abaluhya? Do the Luo have anything special…?
KU: …. I might be with you in a place. Then you become a know-it-all (*kimbele mbele*) while I try to be gentle. Your *kimbele mbele* will make you be known while I am what…? The Luo was *kimbele mbele*. Anything it is him…. And the Luo language was easier for the white man. Luhya and Olunyole were a bit complex. So they hurriedly did what…? You see the name Maseno….
And we call (the tree) *liseno*. So the Luo are saying they are the ones who named Maseno because of the tree.
AN: They have stuck to that.
KU: And we are saying *liseno* is Olunyole…
Omuseno. So this tree, we clash on it. The Luo says it is he; we Abaluhya, it is ours. When it went this way, (Signals split) …. It came apart at the bottom. One piece went this side, the other went that side (pointing North/South) then they said: Now it has separated Maseno North and Maseno South.[120]
K: That tree?
KU: Heei! We were there, we were at the church!
K: Is it still there?
KU: It is still there…?
AN: They have not cut it?
KU: I don't know whether…
AN: They must have cut it.
KU: They said it has split.
AS: The Luos call it *obel*…
KU: Ah, ah. What would we call *obel* in Olunyole?
AS: *Obel*. *Omuseno* is called *obel*. The Luos call it *obel*.
KU: *Obel* in Oluhya, what do we call it? Is it not *omusenjeli*?
KU: *Omuseno* what the Luo call *ober* is *omusenjeli*, which we use to do what?
KU: Which they put in water and sprinkle on pots.

[120] He is referring to the sub-division of the Maseno Diocese of the Anglican Church into Maseno South (mainly Luo) and Maseno North (mainly Luhya) dioceses.

KU: Eeeh, or what we use to ripen bananas.
Old Man2: What is *omuseno* called in Luo?
KU: (To KA who has been away during the argument) He is saying *omusenjeli* is *omuseno*.
KA: *Omusenjeli*… (inaudible).
KU: Eeeh! How can it be *omusenjeli* again?
KA: Go to Ugenya Dar Ober. That is where there is a lot of *omusenjeli*. Where Muluka was married… see how there are plenty of *emisenjeli*.
Old Man: We call *omuseno*: This is *omuseno* tree, which you can't carry.
KA: They never had that name so they call *oseno*. The Luo call it *liseno*
K: What is the Nyole name?
KA: You asked a good question. Abajaluo and Abaluhya, when the white man came, the Luo made themselves the know-it-all and isolated the white man and marked him closely. Therefore, the Luhya now turned out to be the enemy of the white man. Now, the whites favored the Luo on many issues and ignored Abanyole.
K: This bad blood: does it come from the land they took or what is the cause?
AS: It is caused by the land.
AN: That memorandum that was sent to the DC, a copy of which we gave you; number 6, they say that when the missionaries arrived, when they were going on…. Ok KA had mentioned this. Let me go through it again because these ones had not come. It says as the missionaries continued to expand their residence and business plans, they cut the sorghum of Olimba while trying to clear space to build. Yet this Olimba is the one who welcomed them…
If you go through the memorandum…. So, after he welcomed them, they continued to be friends. The milk supplier was Njeli. That Olimba, haven't they come through him? Njeli continued to supply milk. They say, when they cut down Olimba's sorghum, a fight broke out. Olimba fighting the missionaries…
KA: It was Saville…
AN: He was assisted by his brother called Hoka.…
KA: Saville was a farmer. He is the one who used to plant coffee here, sisal; Willis was padre…
And Fred was a businessman. So, that one was asserting himself on his line as a farmer.
AN: So he (Saville) fought him. In the fight, his brother helped him; his name is Fred. After the disagreement, the missionaries became uncomfortable.with him. They thought: This person is our enemy. (At this juncture KA hands to me the picture of Saville which attracts attention and disrupts the narration for a while).
K: (Returning the picture to him). Ok, keep. We will look at it later.
AN: Ok. So after he differed with Olimba that way; weren't they differing when Ogola had come and was already here, he was in the valley, the place I talked about. The white man decided: Now that I have disagreed with these people, let me look for Ogola to be helping me, to protect me from these enemies, because we were enemies now. That is how Ogola started expanding, expanding, expanding. Until now he has messed up Omuseno. You will go with this memorandum that they prepared. So, in addition to their know-it-all, the quarrel Olimba had with Saville also caused the muddle at Maseno.
The person who prepared that thing made a mistake.
AN: Made a mistake?
KA: Eeeh Olimba came to know these people… (inaudible).
Njeli is the one who was given Mukomolo, the old man was called…..ah…. they called him…. (Consults the paper in his hands)… Nam'monywa! They used to call Mukomolo Nam'monywa. Nam'monywa is the one whom the ruler Mumia gave these whites to come with here. Then he took them to Njeli's place. Njeli took them to Ekume's place where they

pitched three tents. They lived in Ekumo's compound before they left it to go to Olimba's home. When they left that place, then Njeli took them to the church where Omuseno tree was. That is where he brought them to settle. At that time, Olimba had just arrived. He started to work together with those whites. When he was given headmanship he was with Ogola… he is the one whose brother released cattle in Saville's land. When Saville got angry, they started to fight.
AN: Not Saville cutting down his maize?
KA: Ah, ah, no! He set cows on the crop.
AN: In fact, eeeh, that part is very important.
……

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