

SOME CULTURAL ASPECTS
OF THE ABALUYIA SONG

JOHN O. MACHAYO

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
EAST AFRICANA COLLECTION

A Thesis submitted in part fulfilment
for the Degree of Master of Arts in
the University of Nairobi.

1986

A B S T R A C T

The title of this thesis is Some Cultural Aspects of the Abaluyia Song. This song is an oral literary genre of the Abaluyia, known as Olwimbu in Luyia. The analysis given is based on collected and documented song texts taped during field research we conducted between August and October 1984 among the Maragoli, Idakho, Isukha and Babukusu communities in Western Province .

This thesis is divided into two parts. In the first part we undertake a literary analysis of the song texts. The second part is the appendices of these song texts in their original Luyia dialects and free English translation. Also included in this part are tapes provided for anyone interested in listening to the performance of the song text.

The first part consists of an introduction, followed by four main chapters and a conclusion. In the introduction we have described the geography of the area occupied by the Abaluyia, stated their population figure and given historical background. We have also briefly examined their language, socio-cultural structure, economic and political organization. These factors are important because they enable us to understand the emergence and existence of this song. In the introduction we have also dealt with how oral literature exists among the Abaluyia; a statement of the problem, the methodology employed, the theoretical framework used and a literature review are also discussed here.

Chapter one is on "Classification and some Instruments of the Abaluyia Song". We have demonstrated that since this song is the property of the Abaluyia, its classification and some of the instruments used in the performance of the songs are an intergral part of society's cultural life.

In the second chapter, "An analysis of oral artist, audience and performance in the Abaluyia Song", we have examined the triangular relationship of these three aspects, because they play an important role in composition, performance and transmission of the song texts. These aspects must be fully discussed because they are also a pointer to the actual existence of this genre.

Our third chapter is "some aspects of Style in the Abaluyia Song". The discussion is focused on the following stylistic aspects: repetition, parallelism, metaphorical expression, simile and hyperbole. Our contention is that these stylistic aspects are relevant because they relate to semantic content as well as aesthetic content.

The fourth chapter is "some major themes". We have dealt with the theme of religion, death, morality, love and history as the most outstanding ones. The themes are discussed within the context of the socio-cultural, historical and economic life of the Abaluyia.

Another significant aspect about the themes is that some of the attitudes, beliefs and values the Abaluyia attach to their cultural institutions are clearly revealed through this discussion.

In the conclusion, we have demonstrated that the Abaluyia song is an integral part of the Abaluyia society. We have further indicated that its significance continues to grow even today, and that given its artistic richness, social significance and effectiveness, more research should be conducted into this area, as a contribution to the study of oral literature.