



## REVIEW ARTICLE

# THE POWER OF TECHNIQUE AND DEVICE IN AFRICAN NARRATIVES: A CASE STUDY OF KIKUYU COMMUNITY IN KENYA, NARRATIVE PERFORMANCES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO WANJIRA WA RUKENYA: A RENOWN ARTIST

**\*Mugambi Allan and Prof. Njogu Waita**

Chuka University, Kenya

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History:

Received 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2016  
Received in revised form  
05<sup>th</sup> May, 2016  
Accepted 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2016  
Published online 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2016

#### Key words:

Fantasy, Characterization, Idiophones,  
Dramatization.

### ABSTRACT

This paper interrogates the stylistic devices of oral narrative in an African set up with a case study of Wanjira WA Rukenya who is a renowned narrator from Kirinyaga County in the republic of Kenya. The thrust of the work will focus on two levels. Firstly the study introduces the influence that created Wanjira, the artist. Secondly the investigation will narrow down on the devices and techniques of performance employed by this artist which makes her work outstanding as well as outlining its relevance to the oral literature. Among the stylistic devices discussed in this paper are; dramatization, fantasy, idiophones, songs and repetition as well as narrator's intrusions. These devices are discussed with special reference to narrative performance of Wanjira Rukenya the artist.

Copyright©2016, Mugambi Allan and Prof. Njogu Waita. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

**Citation: Mugambi Allan and Prof. Njogu Waita, 2016.** "The power of technique and device in african narratives: a case study of kikuyu community in Kenya, narrative performances with special reference to Wanjira Wa Rukenya: A renown artist", *International Journal of Current Research*, 8, (06), 33962-33973.

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter interrogates the creative personality and literary products of Wanjira wa Rukenya. The thrust of the work will focus on three levels. Firstly the study introduces the artist the influence that created Wanjira „the artist“. Secondly the investigation will narrow down on the devices and techniques of performance employed by this artist and lastly the common theme and artistic vision in her narratives. Wanjira is one of the most accomplished folk performers in Kenya today. She was born about 65 years ago in Baricho village, Kirinyaga District of Central Kenya. She is an artist whose command of the oral literary world manifests itself in the fluency and freedom with which she creates and performs oral literary material. Wanjira has been a performer throughout her life. Her greatest influence was her mother and grandmother. According to Wanjira, her grandmother was an exceptional storyteller. She used to draw huge crowds who came to listen to her stories. Wanjira was always part of this audience. These two artists moulded her art and from an early age that she could tell stories very well. Wanjira never went

to any formal school. Few attended school then. Formal education for girls was especially frowned on because of the misconception that, once educated girls would migrate to urban areas and end up as prostitutes. The society was still to a large extent governed by traditional moral values and patterns. Wanjira grew up in a culture that was extensively oral giving her the opportunity of aesthetically mastering the culture. Presently, Wanjira and her husband, Jason Rukenya, are peasants growing bananas, maize, sweet potatoes, cassava, and beans among other crops in their three –acre farm. Since 1984, Wanjira has staged numerous performances to students and researchers from universities, colleges and schools from all over Kenya. Her work has appeared in publications locally and internationally. Wanjira still performs to her grandchildren in the evenings as they wait for meals. She also teaches the children traditional songs, the history and the culture of the Kirinyaga people to children in schools around her home. She continues to actively use her cultural heritage as a resource to educate and entertain her audiences.

### Wanjira- The Oral Artist: Technique and Device

Wanjira is an accomplished oral performer. She is an artist whose command of the oral literary world manifests itself in

\*Corresponding author: Mugambi Allan,  
Chuka University, Kenya

the fluency and freedom with which she delivers oral literary material. The creative talent in her is reflected in the ease and captivating manner with which she performs. Wanjira is not just a storyteller highlighting incidents from conflict to resolution in the narrative. Her narratives are first and foremost parts of herself. In them is unveiled the competent artist, the informed historian and a willing teacher. Narrative performance for her is an opportunity to spice the tale with social and individual experience. It is a chance to expand its meaning into past and contemporary relevance, a chance to mould character into memorable entities for the audience. Her narratives are not singular entities but form a corpus. Her performances conform to Inge Brinkman's assertion that narrators are coherent within themselves with their stories forming a network connected by internal references and inter-textual relationships. (Brinkman 1996: 115) Reference occurs across her narratives hence interrelating them and giving them the element of a singular entity. She creates her own type-characters who she alludes or refers to across narratives.

Any analysis of narrative technique and device in the narratives of Wanjira has to take into account the element of textual alienation. Once her stories and songs have been transcribed on paper, they are no longer part of her. They are just lifeless versions of her original performance. They are like a name whose owner we do not know. To fully capture the essence of her narrative technique, one has to experience her live performances.

#### **Authorial Intrusions**

Wanjira's stories do not run smoothly from beginning to the end. Authorial intrusion by way of commentary, explanations, descriptions and dialogue with the audience is a perpetual trademark of her narrative performance. Her intrusion into the narrative flow is nevertheless an integral part of the story. However, they provide a momentary diversion from the story (fictional world) into the world of reality. These techniques are used to juxtapose the real and fictional plane in the narrative. But more important, perhaps, the techniques give the narrator the chance to educate her audience and project her social concerns of the day. The intrusions then serve to give the narrative its context in time and space. In using these devices Wanjira presents a dynamic discourse about society, exploring the relationship between individuals and groups and generally creating knowledge about her society. (Furnis: 1995: 48) One of Wanjira's favourite narratives is the story of, Kabindura" (appendage no.1) Kabindura is the seemingly a useless young man in the community. Jigger ridden when young, he now has crooked feet. He is the type no young girl would appreciate. But he bets with other young men that he will marry the beautiful girl who they have been unable to win. This girl has vowed never to speak to any young man. She has sworn that, the man she ever speaks to will become her husband. Kabindura visits her in her mother's farm and starts singing to her while uprooting the millet. He manages to make her talk to him in spite of his crooked feet. The girl is left with no option but to marry him as per her vows.

As Wanjira unfolds the story of Kabindura, she constantly intrudes into the story through commentary and explanations.

Keeping herself within the context of the narrative, she diverts to explain various traditional norms, attitudes and practices surrounding marriage. As she does this, she also projects her own interpretation and vision of the culture of her people. Kabindura for instance has remained unmarried because the girls who are his age-mates refused to be married by him. At this point in the story, Wanjira then explains:

"Unless one marries an age mate, that person would not be viewed as married. One should marry a girl of the same age group so that that they grow old together. And since they are of the same age group, they can respect each other...one goes for a girl they were circumcised during the same season". Further commentaries and explanations in this story mostly revolve around the process of marriage in the community. They explain nuances and behavior and practices on whom to marry where to marry from and the legitimacy of bride wealth. The narrator takes every chance in the narrative process to expand on her discourse on marriage. Towards the end of the story of *Manga and His Father* (appendage no.2), the voice of the artist is easily detected in the character of mother of the twins. After the twins have killed her ogre-husband and ogre-son, urges them to marry, she tells them:

"You know an unmarried person is useless. Young men don't respect him and girls do not respect him because he is useless. He can even be killed by anybody. Anybody can provoke him because he has nobody to stand by his side".

Then immediately, the narrator (Wanjira) takes over from the character and through dialogue with the audience expands the significance of a partner in marriage:

"One cannot try to protect a grown up. It is only one's wife who can say, „I don't want anyone to play around with my husband. Even if he is a fool, let him be!"

The device of commentary is important because it contextualizes characterization and provides the narrator with the opportunity to expand on her thematic concerns. It is also aimed at the members of the audience who consist mainly of a younger generation. The story then becomes a bridge in time. The narrative world, the traditional world and the present concerns are all fused together in the narrative performance.

Wanjira's intrusions in the narrative are well utilized. They aptly and exhaustively communicate what she views as the cardinal thematic and aesthetic principles of her narratives. However her ability to communicate these principles relies on the hold she has on the audience. The commentaries do not diminish the artistic essence of her work. Rather they complement the artistic output by making her narratives functional and relevant to the social and individual circumstances of her audience.

#### **Interaction with the audience**

Wanjira interacts with her audience intensively during her narrative performances. She also sustains this interaction from the beginning to the end. As she performs, she is acutely aware of her audience. She strives to immerse them

into the narrative world, making them part of the narrative process. She does not want the audience to miss anything and she achieves this by assuming total command of the occasion, the audience and the narrative. In the narrative process, Wanjira strives to sustain a continuous dialogue with the audience. This way she ensures that hers is a participating audience. She achieves this through the use of allusions, prodding and direct questions to the audience. There is an apparent effort by the performer to make herself as clear as possible and to familiarize the audience with her narrative world. She creates a reciprocal atmosphere whereby the audience can even intervene truly becoming part of the performance process. Through the use of these devices and techniques the narrator ensures that the audience is following her story and this way the audience and the narrator become partners in the creative process. The dialogue with the audience is usually intensified when the artist is about to conclude her narratives. The narrator creates a discussion between herself and her audience. She exploits this rapport to summarize narratives for them by highlighting the main motifs in the narrative. The dialogue at this level serves interpretative purposes. In the dialogue, the narrator and her audience abstract on the meaning and the moral value of the stories. Both the storyteller and the audience create the thematic thrust of story. By keeping her audience close to the narrative, the artist ensures that it is a participatory audience that is not alienated from the message in her stories.

### Dramatization

Dialogue between characters is another aspect, which Wanjira exploits fruitfully. Her narratives are at times characterized by extensive dialogue between the characters, which serves various purposes. One thing that strikes the listener in Wanjira's oral performances is the forcefulness and authenticity of her dialogue. The conversation at once reflects authentic speech. The dramatic element giving the story contextual meaning and assisting in characterization. In the dialogue, her characters become alive. Their folly, deceit and wisdom are exposed. As they talk, each in his/her/its own peculiar manner, they expose themselves to the audience implanting memorable mental images. In the process, the narrator allows her characters to tell their own stories. She removes herself from narrative, leaving the characters to express themselves and interact with one another. The story of „Kabindura” referred to earlier is a good example of this aspect of dialogue. An extensive dialogue between Kabindura and the girl begins as soon as he stops singing and uprooting the millet. The narrator at times does not even tell us who is speaking. We can only differentiate Kabindura from the girl through the narrator's tone and in what the characters are each saying to each other. Dialogue in the narratives enhances the fictional plane of the narrative. In a way, this extensive dialogue acts as a counter-balance to the frequent commentary by the narrator helping give her narratives credibility. In other words, while Wanjira, as noted earlier uses commentaries, explaining what is going on and relating this to daily life, she also allows the characters to present their story through dialogue and facilitate development of the themes at hand. These characters at times seem to be independent of the narrator. She gives them the freedom to interact, to grow, to create humour and reflect.

Dialogue between the characters also induces a poetic element in narrative performance. As the characters talk to one another in a variety of tones and at times, dialects, a rhythm is established. This rhythm derives from the oral element in narrative performance that helps in developing plot and is in itself aesthetically pleasing. One cannot conclude discussion of dialogue without noting the fact that Wanjira presents lively and dramatic dialogues. Her ability to exploit various aspects of oral communication in the context of her environment helps in enhancing contemporariness of her stories. The dramatic expressions and images derived from present experiences removes the story from long ago, giving it a present tense, a current setting and hence a contemporary relevance.

### Fantasy

Fantasy is an understandable reality in the narratives of Wanjira. What we may think as an incredible and difficult to perceive is easily translated and compared meaningfully with our own experiences. Fantasy and reality are merged but still stand apart. This is prevalent when she tells the story of *Wagaciiri*. In this story, the blacksmith goes to the forges leaving behind a pregnant wife. When she delivers, the co-wife turns into an ogre, who mocks and denies her food. The only person she can send to inform her husband of her predicament is a dove that occasionally eats her castor seeds. The flight of the dove to take the message to the husband is likened to a telephone call. After the bird is sent and told what to tell the husband, the narrator comments:

Now it is like using a telephone. It is like when one is speaking through what? A telephone. It's when you call and say, hello, hello, how are things... Here, the narrator helps provide the audience with the understanding of a fantastic concept. The fictional reality of the bird being sent to the smith becomes easily conceived while the fantasy of the same is maintained. Related to this technique of juxtaposing fantasy and reality, is the narrator's ability to present fantasy as a reality in itself. Once she has transported her audience into the world of fantasy, it becomes the real world in the narrative context. The impossible occurs naturally and she does not attempt any rationalization or justification of the fantastic. The fantastic is presented as true, as exactly what happened.

### Use of Idiophones

Wanjira's ability to perform beyond the ordinary narrators is further manifested in the way she manipulates ordinary oral literary devices into composite roles. Through her attention for detail, devices are stretched to their ultimate aesthetic potential. The idiophone, for instance, is not simply a descriptive tool. It is also used to create suspense, to bring out humour and project the moral in the narrative. In the narrative, *Fathers Guard*, Wanjira's use of the idiophone *kokokokokokoko* extensively to bring out the various shades of meaning in the story. In the story, Wachuka and Kamwagirwa are twin sisters. Kamwagirwa is an obedient child while Wachuka is disobedient. One day Kamwagirwa goes to fetch water from the river in her father's gourd. Unfortunately it is swept

downstream by the tide. She follows the gourd downstream hoping to retrieve it. Along the way she encounters many delicacies, which are feeding on themselves. They request her to eat them but she refuses. When finally dusk sets in she seeks abode with a family of an old woman who lives near the river. She very well behaved and full of and etiquette. She is rewarded with beautiful ornaments and her father's gourd. Her sister, Wachuka is her opposite. She is jealous of her sisters the ornaments. When she learns that it is through retrieving her father's gourd that her sister acquired them, she throws the gourd into the river and follows it downstream. On her way downstream, she eats everything she finds eating itself. When she arrives at the old woman's house, she even finishes off the food of the grandchild. In the morning she is rewarded with the ugly backcloth that produces the sound *kokokokoko* as she walks. The idiophone is used to play on the sensibilities of the audience evoking repugnance for greed and jealousy. The idiophone hence emphasizes the narrator's moral message but also provides the audience with a chance to laugh at Wacuka's folly and greed. As the narrator tells us in the story, "Instead of people calling her Wacuka, they started calling her *kokokokoko*". "How are you *kokokokoko*?" they would greet her. She had been baptized *kokokokoko* because as she walked, the barks always made the noise *kokokokoko*.

### Song and Repetition

Wanjira is also an accomplished singer. From her performances, we see a well-versed oral poet conversant with various traditional and modern songs in her community. Consciously or otherwise, song is one component that Wanjira avidly exploits to make her narratives captivating and complete. In a way, her songs within the narrative achieve an existence of their own and at the same time synchronize with the content, fulfilling various artistic demands of the genre. Song in the first place, plays important structural purposes in the narratives of Wanjira. As the song is repeated over and over again it assists in the movement of the narrative as well as plot development. Besides the structural purposes, song is also used by the narrator to flesh up the narrative and expand on its meaning. Wanjira's songs within the narratives then are consciously conceived to serve thematic and aesthetic purposes. They afford the narrator the chance to explain their textual and contextual meaning. The songs help also in characterization, in heightening tension and creating suspense.

In the narrative of „*The ogre and Cheg'e*, Wanjira tells a story of the girl who falls in love with a young man she meets near the river while drawing water. The girl invites the man to her home to meet her parents. He is reluctant but she insists. The young man warns her that if he visits the home he might ruin it. She insists. He agrees to go but turns up as an ogre and true to his word he ruins the homestead. He swallows all the livestock and everybody except for a younger brother who was away visiting his maternal grandmother. Chege grows up in his maternal grandmother's home and she procures weapons for him. He goes back home, confronts the ogre, kills him and retrieves his lost family. Song in this narrative is aptly used to characterize the grandmother, the ogre and the grand daughter. In this narrative the granddaughter agrees to be

married to a young man who turns out to be and ogre. When he pays a visit to his prospective in-laws, he sings as he drags the path along with him. The grandmother realizes that the man is an ogre and through chants she tries to dissuade him from coming into the homestead informing him that the ceremony had been postponed. As the three sing and chant, their different tones and words characterize them. The girl's voice is appealing, the tone of appeasement from a threatened humanity. The grandmother's chants are in the pitched tone of a desperate old woman who can do only as much to protect her lot.

From these songs emerges the narrator's excellent mimicry and impersonation. But beyond this, the repeated songs and chants in the narrative serve to propel the story to a climax. In the process, the narrator creates such a high degree of tension and suspense that the audience is driven literary to screaming levels. From these songs emerges the narrator's excellent mimicry and impersonation. But beyond this, the repeated songs and chants in the narrative serve to propel the story to a climax. In the process, the narrator creates such a high degree of tension and suspense that the audience is driven literary to screaming levels. The situation at this point is so tense that the audience wants to intervene and stop the ogre form swallowing her grandmother. But she is swallowed all the same and the ogre proceeds to swallow the girl. Song for Wanjira becomes a device that brings the audience, the story and the storyteller together. For Wanjira, song in the narrative is a moment of enjoyment. She sings like her characters and sings for her audience. As noted earlier, her songs are not the cliché songs. They are embedded with new phrases, new rhythms and new meanings. Every repetition presents in it a fresh meaning. This coupled with her dramatic use of tone and gestures compel the audience into participation. The audience cannot resist singing with her. She cajoles them into the song and when she feels it has served its purpose, she delivers the audience back to the story.

Repetition is another technique, which Wanjira exploits fruitfully. As we have noticed the effect of song is fully realized through repetition. Repetition has also been traditionally associated with poetic rhythm and emphasis in oral narrative literature. However, Wanjira offers more than this. She uses the device creatively to advance her thematic concerns and to create aesthetically pleasing narratives and to fulfill certain literary demands in the oral narrative. In the narrative of *Mungena and the Worm*, repetition is used to propel the plot and to create suspense that leaves the audience glued to the story. In this story, a farmer has struggled to plant a maize crop through irrigation. As he keeps watch over the plantation, a mysterious voice repeatedly frightens him. He cannot see who is talking but only hears:

"*Induu induu*, hold this bag for me," "*Induu induu* hold this stuff for me" "*Induu induu*, hold this head for me." These phrases are repeated throughout the body of the narrative. Mungena cannot see who is talking. The audience becomes like the character in the story anxious to discover who this maize thief is. Wanjira lets the story unfold to the very end when neighbours are called in to assist in the search for the monster.

It turns out that the monster is just a small worm eating Mungena's maize. The interpretation of the tales is given wider dimensions by the repetition. The audience is provoked into seeking to understand what the worm really stands for in the context of the narrative.

### Characterization

Wanjira's narrative world is thoroughly entertaining. Humour, dance detail and fancy, are integrated in narrative performance naturally and with ease. She lives the world of her characters. The characters cease to be the type characters we are so familiar with in oral narrative literature. They become tools at the hand of the narrator. They are used to tell her story and express reality as the narrator conceives it. She manipulates her characters, giving even the bizarre, unprecedented roles. Her Hyena, Lion and Hare play individualized rather than typical roles. Hyena and Fly, in the stories are given overturned roles. The Hyena is usually the greedy, foolish stereotype while the fly is a detestable character that eats the dirty things. But in Wanjira's narratives, they end up with noble roles. Animal characters such as Squirrel, Hare, and Lion are manipulated to project her social and political concerns in the community. Her attention for detail in the moulding of these characters, make them memorable, thus emphasizing her thematic concerns. One can justifiably say that characters for Wanjira are her prime vehicles of meaning in narrative performance.

### Theme and Vision in Wanjira's Narratives

Some of the foremost themes in the narratives of Wanjira include courtship and marriage. As she expounds on these themes in the story telling Wanjira also projects her feminine vision of her society. The folktales of Wanjira extricate the relationships between male and female youth's courtship contexts in different but interacting symbolic perspectives. Courtship is an exciting stage in the lives of young women and men in the Kikuyu community. This is the only stage in life when individuals traditionally enjoyed the highest degree of freedom. It comes after circumcision and acts as a period of incubation into maturity and responsibility expected after one gets married. One of the cardinal functional roles of oral literature is to subvert this excessive freedom. At both the conscious and the unconscious plane it foregrounds the essence of this freedom articulating the limits and possibilities in the choice of a marriage partner. The narratives of Wanjira present what we refer to as the stereotypical gender characterisation contrastive. In the first set we have narratives that focalise on the female character while the second set focalises on the male character in courtship situations.

Male or symbolic male characters are depicted as substantially different from their female counterparts in human terms. The girls participating in the courtship game are fairly normal human beings. But there is always something abnormal about the male character. He is either an ogre (*Irimu*) or an animal character. When he is a real human being, he is an „incomplete male“. He could be poor, crippled or uncircumcised.

These narratives present what Bal refers to as „the vision of the fabula, (Bal:

1985:100,105), an overwhelmingly feminine vision. The arrangement of the symbolic images tends to favour the female in the courtship as the positive, dynamic and central character. The image of the male suitor is of someone in need of redemption. In the narratives we have an artist who recreates material to suit herself and to create her feminine space (Townsend: 2000) The fictional sets consist of what Jay Edwards refers to as binary oppositions (Edwards: 1991) in the traditional structure of the tale. The structure tends to be definitive, making the story memorable and content communication easy to transmit and retain (Lesser: 1962:169 -170). Secondly, this contrast articulates the psychoanalytic and the social significance of the narratives. Wanjira has a corpus of tales where ogres court girls. The most common arena of the first encounter between the girls and the ogres is usually at the dances. The ogre comes to the dance disguised as a handsome young man. He is a very attractive and a very good dancer. In most stories he is new in the particular locality. He also speaks „well“ and at the end of the dance he wins the hearts of many of the girls. He is elegant, eligible and attractive and as he leaves, a group of girls insist on accompanying him „so that they can go and see his home.“

On the way, the girls following from behind notice something odd about the handsome young man. When he jumps over trenches, a second mouth is visible at the back of his head through which he occasionally swallows flies. One after the other, the girls excuses themselves and flees. They go back home feigning excuses that there are some tasks they had been assigned by their mothers and they are yet to complete performing. One adamant girl remains. She follows the ogre despite the warning from the others. It is only when she is locked in the ogre's house that she realizes her predicament. Once she is left alone in the ogre's house she attempts to escape. She digs a hole, gets out but on her way home it starts raining heavily. She seeks shelter on top of a tree from where she is unfortunately recaptured by the ogre and his son and taken back into captivity. She is given two options. She either agrees to be their „mother“ so that she can be cooking for them or she is eaten. She opts for the former and remains in the ogre's homestead cooking for them whatever they hunt, including human beings.

One day they bring back infant twins after killing and eating the twin's mother. While cooking, the woman secretly substitutes the boys with a pair of rats. The gullible ogres eat the rats despite protestations from the ogre-son that that meat was bitter. The woman brings up the boys secretly and acquires weapons for them. When they are of age, the boys, assisted by their „mother“ kill the ogres. They then take over the home and convert it into a normal human abode. In the story of *Wanja*, Wanjira narrates the tale of the female character that tempts or transgresses upon the ogre. The ogre is initially presented as a tree stump on the path. This stump constantly injures the girls as they go to collect firewood. One girl decides to uproot it with a machete. On their way back home, the uprooted stump has already turned into an

ogre. He seeks revenge on the girl who uprooted him and has to be pacified with one breast. The ogre also warns the girl never to reveal who ate her breast. Unfortunately, she is too traumatised and one day she reveals the truth. The ogre immediately appears in their home where he swallows everybody and all the animals as he seeks the girl, who, meanwhile, is hiding in her grandmother's house. The grandmother fights the ogre, overcomes the beast and retrieves all he had consumed by cutting the „little“ finger. The other related version referred to earlier, tells a story of the girl who falls in love with a young man she meets near the river while drawing water discussed earlier in the chapter. In all the versions summarised above, the ogre symbolically represents the young male in the courtship game. He is not only the image of a deceitful man but also a signification of male sexuality and, as Brinkman observes, a threat of sexual violation on the unmarried female (Brinkman: 1996:138). This possibility is articulated in the stories when the group of the girls is following the ogre and notices the mouth at the back of his head. The signal, warning of the possible threat of being eaten, is communicated through pinching one another. Once the communication is perceived, the girls excuse themselves one by one and go back home except the lone girl who refuses to heed the warning. The artist in the story advances the significance of the consolidation of a common feminine consciousness in confronting the male world and the possibilities of sexual violation. It points to the necessity of female co-operation in matters of courtship (Brinkman: 1996:139). Female solidarity becomes a protective measure. The girl who refuses to co-operate or who wishes to act independently does so at her own risk. The threat of the girl being „eaten“ by the ogre then can be interpreted as a threat of possible sexual violation. And it can happen as in the story of Wanjira. She provokes the ogre by cutting the stump, which the other girls avoid. She pays dearly with her breast and her family is almost annihilated by the ogre.

These narratives then are dealing with the question of individual choice in courtship. The focus is on the female character. They tend to subvert the freedom the girls enjoy during courtship by proposing the possible negative consequences of that freedom. The story reinforces the idea of patience in the choice of spouses and particularly warns against strangers. Essentially, the narratives are abstracting on the choice of an ideal husband, a husband who will not turn into an ogre who in real life would be „greedy, irresponsible and stupid“ (Brinkman: 139). At the same time the stories do not discount the possibility of one being courted and eventually being married by a man who is an „ogre“. The story of *Nyanjiru*, Wanjira projects a more contemporary perspective of the contradictions of courtship in a changing social environment. Nyanjiru is courted by all sorts of men. First, comes along Hyena, whom she accepts. He brings beer to her family as a sign that he is ready to open marriage negotiations. Members of the clan drink the beer signifying that the negotiations can begin. Beetle then comes along to woo Nyanjiru. She accepts him and he also brings the beer to the people. They accept it in spite of having taken the offer from Hyena. Hawk finally enters the scene. He appears richer than the other two. He offers to pay dowry in the form of chicks. Nyanjiru decides this is her man and she marries

him. They go off to live in Hawk's nest up the tree. But Hawk is an ogre. He mistreats her as he bides his time waiting for the day he will invite the other hawks so that they can feast on her. Fortunately her brother saves her. She vows that she will never again marry animal suitors. Nyanjiru's story portrays a rather anti-ethical proposition. She has multiple suitors and she lets her relatives accept beer from all of them. Under normal circumstances, a girl cannot give her parents and relatives the green light to accept beer from a suitor unless she is sure she would marry him. Before the beer is drunk, it is poured into a horn and given to the girl who passes it to her father. He regards the horn of beer, then asks her clearly so that everybody gathered for the ceremony can hear,

“Mother,“ if I drink this beer, will I ever vomit it?”

If the girl answers “no”, then, the father can proceed and drink from the horn. It means she has accepted to be married by the suitor. The horn is refilled. The girl is asked to take a sip and then pass it on to her suitor so that everybody at the ceremony can „know who he is.“ Nyanjiru's story defies this ethic. She not only brings in one lover after another but her relatives willingly drink from all of them. The characters in the story do not directly condemn Nyanjiru for her unbecoming behaviour. But the story does. She ends up suffering because her choice of the husband is motivated by greed. She accepts all but takes the richest. Eventually, she suffers but learns her lesson. This story captures the setting of opportunistic materialism in courtship in contemporary society. The girl is said to be „roaming all over“, alluding to prostitution that is common in towns. By implication this story is also critical of the complacent community, which is as corrupted as Nyanjiru and seems to accept creeping moral decay. The male character who is the subject of courtship in the folktales is usually conceived with negative connotations. In the stories we have referred to, he is presented in the image of an ogre. In other stories he is a disadvantage suitor.

The disadvantaged suitor in our sample is sometimes the poor, ugly and jigger-ridden young man like Kabindura referred to earlier. The young man intends to marry the most beautiful woman in the village. This girl has refused to talk to all the handsome and rich young men, vowing that if she ever talks to any man, even if it is an overgrown uncircumcised boy, she would marry him. Kabindura is poor and Wanjira in the story refers to him as „useless“. In the words of the artist he has crooked jigger-ridden feet „because he has nobody to take care of him“. His age mates completely disregard him, but he alone knows what he is capable of. He bets with them that he can win the girl who has refused to talk with them. If he wins her, they promise to give him the goats and cattle with which he can pay for her bride price. Technically, the narrator uses song as the instrument through which the young man wins the bride. He goes to woo her in the fields where she is scaring away birds from her mother's millet farm. He tricks the girl into speaking to him by singing to her and uprooting millet at the same time. The girl is puzzled about this „madman“ who is singing and uprooting her mother's millet. She asks him what he thinks he is doing. This becomes her undoing. She has talked to the man and has to marry him. Kabindura wins a bride and the bet.

On the surface the story is commenting on obvious moral messages. They invert popular perceptions of individual ability and worth. They project the folk psychology, which tends to sympathise with the weak and the poor projecting an alternative to the status of the underprivileged (Zipes: 1992:17, George and Jones: 1995:163). Everybody in the community is expected to marry or get married whether they are poor or ugly. Kabindura can only acquire the necessary „wealth“ to go through the rite of passage through their wit and courage. One of the messages in the story then is that poverty should not be an impediment to self-actualisation. On the other hand, the stories provide social criticism of the girl who refuses to take up the challenges of girlhood. By being closed and refusing to participate in the social activities she puts herself in a volatile situation. By fearing the „ogre“ she risks marrying a man who is not necessarily the best. The artist in the stories then becomes not only the articulate commentator but also an interpreter of tradition. In this chapter we have attempted to highlight the oral artistry products of Wanjira wa Rukenya. As she claims herself, her stories are many and can never end. This chapter does not exhaust the various dimensions of her productions. However it has attempted to introduce a foremost African oral artist who creates and recreates new ideas and new characters projecting a contemporary and the traditional in her texts. Wanjira is the active carrier of tradition who through her memory, vivid imagination and narrative powers transmits and perpetuates the oral literary tradition of her people. Through the discussion of Wanjira Wa Rukenya and her artistic productions, this chapter also attempts to demonstrate that oral literature is durable and adaptable. It is innovative within traditional production parameters and continues to serve the society in a period of changing social circumstance (Opkewho: 1992:106, Vuuren: 1992).

## REFERENCES

BAL, M. 1985. *Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Toronto: Toronto University Press

### Press

Brinkman, Inge. 1996. *Kikuyu Gender norms and narratives*. Leiden: CWNS

Bukenya, Austin. 2000. „Oracy and Female Empowerment“ in Kaschulla, R. *African Oral Literature: Functions in Contemporary Contexts*. Claremont: New African

### Books

Edwards, Jay. 1984. „Structural Analysis in the Afro-American Trickster Tale.“ In Henry L. Gates. 1991. *Black Literature and Literary Theory*. New York: Methuen

Furnis, G. 2000. „Language, Truth and Rhetoric.“ In Kaschulla, R. *Op.cit.* 191-205

Furnis, Graham and Gunner, Liz (Eds.). 1995. *Power, Marginality and African Oral Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Georges, A.R. and Jones M. 1995. *Folkloristics: an Introduction*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press

Kabira Wanjiku M. 1994. *Images of Women in Kikuyu Oral Literature*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. University of Nairobi

Opkewho Isidore. 1992. *African Oral Literature: Backgrounds, Character and*

Vuuren C.J. 1991. „Historical Land and Contemporary Ritual: Innovation of Tradition in Understanding Ndzundza-Ndebele Ethnicity.“ In Sienaert, E. et al (Eds.) University, Campbell collection

Zipes, Jack. 1986. *Breaking the Magic Spell*. New York: Routledge

## Sample Narratives KABINDURA

Narrator: Say *itho*

Audience: *Itho*

Narrator: Long, Long ago, there was a girl who had refused to talk to men of her age.

Now, it was during the season when birds had to be scared from eating millet. It was also a time when the elderly used to drink very much. They would be invited to marriage celebrations. Her mother would go. The girl would remain behind to scare the birds from the millet farm. Kabindura was timing this girl. He was planning how he would get who?

Audience: The girl.

Narrator: Now, Kabindura decided and said to himself, 'I will approach you when your mother is not at home.'

Kabindura prepared himself. He talked with the other young men. They told him,

"Kabindura, now that you have told us you want to marry that daughter of Njaamumo, how can you marry her when you have crooked feet? How can you marry her, while even girls of your age, the ones who got circumcised together with you have refused to marry you?"

Unless one married from among his age group, he was not regarded as properly married. One was expected to marry a girl from among one's age group, so that the two could grow old together. Since they are of the same age group, they would respect one another. A man was not supposed to marry a person who was older than him. A man would approach the girl; he was circumcised with at the same time. The man preferred a girl from far away to avoid meeting in-laws all the time. If you married a girl older than you, she would travel to your home screaming because she was going to be married to a person who was not her age mate.

Now Kabindura decided to lay his strategy. He argued with the other young men,

"You said you are going to marry that girl. You? How can you marry her when she is not of your age?"

"I shall marry her, I shall marry her since you have been unable to win her and yet she is your age mate."

After that, the young men went to dance. You know those

with crooked feet would not get partners during the dances. They would only dance with children like this one (she points at a young girl in the audience). Men with crooked legs could not follow the dance steps, the steps that accompanied the song's rhythm; therefore they could not get dancing partners. Kabindura decided, "Since girls do not dance with me, I am going to marry the one who has snubbed these other men".

After the young men had gone to the dance, Kabindura told himself, 'Tomorrow they will come to visit the bride.'

Kabindura went to look for the girl. When he got at the edge of the millet farm he sang,

*Young girl-rere*  
*You have been greeted-rere*  
*By Kabindura-rere*  
*Come, climb into the bed, The bed is made-rere*  
*And the house is thatched-rere*  
*Young girl-rere.*

The girl sitting on the platform wondered 'Who is that calling me?' She stood up. The platform stood like a house, which was not thatched. It was not thatched so that one could see the birds descending on the millet.

The girl stood up and saw the man uprooting millet. He was calling her and uprooting the millet so that the girl could speak to him.

'Young girl,'

He was moving and uprooting the millet. You know his legs were at an angle because of his crooked feet. That time, jiggers were a real menace because some of the pesticides used nowadays were not there. If one was infected with jiggers, the *Ndongu* fruit would be used.

Audience: How?

Narrator: The juice of the plant would be applied on the jiggers.

The juice would kill the parasite. Now, if one had someone to take care of him or her, then one's feet would remain normal. If you saw someone infected with jiggers, it meant that they had no one to take care of them. Kabidura sang,

*Young girl-rere*  
*You have been greeted-rere*  
*By Kabindura-rere*  
*Come, climb into the bed, The bed is made-rere*  
*And the house is thatched-rere*  
*Young girl-rere.*

The girl asked herself, 'What will mother tell me when she comes back from her drinking spree and finds the millet uprooted?' She descended from the platform. Kabindura sang even more intensely,

*Young girl-rere*  
*You have been greeted-rere*  
*By Kabindura-rere*  
*Come, climb into the bed, The bed is made-rere*  
*And the house is thatched-rere*  
*Young girl-rere.*

The girl went to meet Kabindura. She asked him, "Who told you to uproot the millet?"

*Young girl-rere*  
*You have been greeted-rere*  
*By Kabindura-rere*

Now his arms are outstretched,

*Come, climb into the bed, The bed is made-rere*  
*And the house is thatched-rere*  
*Young girl-rere.*

"Who told you to uproot the millet?"

*Young girl-rere*  
*You have been greeted-rere*  
*By Kabindura-rere*  
*Come, climb into the bed, The bed is made-rere*  
*And the house is thatched-rere*  
*Young girl-rere*

"Don't you speak? Can't you speak? And you call yourself Kabindura? Kabindura son of who? Why don't you tell me you are called Kabindura

son of so and so instead of uprooting the millet. What will happen to me?"

"Oh! I thought that this is how you scare birds." By uprooting the millet? Does one protect one's food and destroying it at the same time? Now, what have you done?"

"I thought that that is how you scare the birds. I thought I would come along and see whether the food you cook when scaring the birds is ready." "I have not cooked. But you have really messed things up. You should have come straight to where I do my cooking. How do you expect me to give you food now after you have destroyed all that millet? Now that I have talked to you, you who call himself Kabindura, after I had decided that the man I ever talk to will be my husband whether he has crooked feet, are infected with jigger, or not, you have no choice but to take me as your wife. And now that you have uprooted my mother's millet, what shall we eat? What type of work have you done?"

"I thought that that was how you scare the birds. Since I did not know how you scare the birds, you ought to have come and told me when you heard me sing."

"Did I know what you were doing?"

Kabindura and the girl went to the platform. The girl told Kabindura,



"You know I vowed that the man I ever talk to will marry me. Now what have you done? If I go with you straight away, my mother will complain about the millet."

"No, when she comes, we shall tell her the truth. We shall tell her that I did not know how the birds are scared. But when I came, you did not tell me how it is done."

The girl told him, "This is how the birds are scared away,"

Aiyayaiyaiyaiyaiyaiyaiyai

Birds of this farm,

Fly away.

You never differentiate

Between the rich and the poor.

"You should have told me that. Why did you let me uproot the millet? You are the one your mother will hold responsible. When she comes, I will tell her you did not teach me how the birds are scared away."

She told him, "Let me demonstrate to you again how birds are scared away. Let me teach you so that incase you go and find someone scaring birds you do not repeat the same mistake. This is what you say,

Cuaiiiii!

Birds of this farm, Fly away.

You never differentiate

Between the rich and the poor.

Now, if one hears you say that, one knows someone has come to help scare the birds away.

Cuaiiiii!

Birds of this farm, Fly away.

You never differentiate

Between the rich and the poor.

When birds feed on the millet, can they differentiate between the farm that belongs to a rich person and that which belongs to the poor?

Audience: No.

"That is what you should do in case you go visit another girl like me. But for now, I shall become your bride, you will not leave me. I shall go to your home despite your feet being crooked. I shall be taking care of you. If jiggers infect you. I shall be plucking them out. I am now your bride"

Kabindura told her,

"Yes, let it be so. When I first came, you should have told me that you were willing to be my bride."

Audience: Yes.

Narrator: We would have avoided this loss. You should have Approached me and told me.

"I want to be your bride, so that when jiggers infect you, I pluck them out and also wash your clothes."

Then Kabindura asked her, "Have you cooked? Have you cooked so that we can eat in order to get enough strength to go home? And where is your mother? I would not like her to find us here after uprooting the millet."

"She went on a drinking spree with her age mates", the daughter said.

During that period, age mates, or people who were circumcised at the same time would invite one another for beer drinking. A man would decide to invite his age mates so that they meet the woman he married. The woman would do likewise. One would cook for them *marwa* and beer. They would drink. Then one would show them one's children so that they would avoid one another when they met on a walking path. During those days people avoided meeting one another directly as a sign of respect. You did not do that unless the child's mother invited you - the way we attend birthday parties these days. During those days, we did not take money to homes. We took maize, millet and beans.

Now Kabindura and the girl ate food as they scared the birds away.

Audience: Yes.

Narrator: They decided to stay on the farm until dusk.

"We shall stay here until the birds go to sleep in the evening." They stayed on the farm and discussed about their first encounter.

"But you did something very bad. You will marry me but you did something bad"

"Oh no, you should have approached me when I came and told me you wanted to be my bride but because you were too shy to do that, I had no option but to uproot the millet since I did not know how the birds are scared away."

"Didn't I teach you how it is done?" Now Kabindura married.....

Audience: That girl.

Narrator: They would take two gourds of beer. They would take the beer to the home of which girl.

Audience: That girl.

Narrator: They would take the beer and report they had stolen someone's

"goat." Kabindura's mother prepared the beer and sent the clan the beer. The beer was delivered by members of the man's clan.

Audience: Yes

Narrator: Because it was bridal beer, it would be drunk according to Customs so that no ill would befall the bride.

Audience: Yes.

Narrator: Now, Kabindura's mother did that, isn't the bride now Kabidura's

Audience: Yes.

Narrator: She is their bride. Audience: Yes.

Narrator: Now, Kabindura went back to his age mates to claim what they had promised him if he won the girl's heart.

"I have come," he told them, "come and see the bride. She is in my home. I had not even taken beer. I searched for you but could not get you since you had gone to dance. As I had said, you went to dance and I got a bride. When we go out, girls compete for you while I watch. Things are different now. I have a bride."

The young men went to see the bride. They saw her.

"Oh! It is that girl. It is that girl who never spoke to anyone, she is so beautiful".

Beautiful as you are, did you wait to be married by Kabindura? And the way we tried to win you? We tried everything. We tried to sing for you so that you may speak to us in vain. What did wa Kabindura do to you to accept him?"  
Did the girl speak to them? Audience: No.

Narrator: Now, the young men, who were three, gave Kabindura what they had promised. One gave five goats, the other cows, the other goats. Audience: Yes.

Narrator: Now Kabindura got his bridal wealth that way. He sought

Advise from his father on what to take to his in-laws first. You know, one starts with the cows. If you are poor, you take three cows.

Audience: Three. The one who was not rich? Narrator: Two heifers and a bull. That is how many? Audience: Five.

Narrator: That time, if you beat your wife she would yell at you.

"Hii, how dare you hit me like that? Have you paid camels to my parents?"

Now, that would be the woman to whose home only three cows had been taken. But if it was the one whose bride wealth consisted of five cows, she would say,

"Son of so and so, hit again....."

She would be hit with a stick and would even ululate,

"aariririririririri, son of so and so, hit me once again; it is your cows you are beating!"

Now, that is the one whose bride wealth consisted of five cows, she would be hit again and would then say,

"Son of Njathigi, hit me once more, hit me once more, it is

your cattle that you are beating."

But the one, to whose home nothing had been taken, would scream. "Auuuuuuuuuu! How dare you hit me? Is it a camel or a live elephant that you took to my parents?"

Now, that is the woman whose bride wealth consisted of only three cows. She would scream any time the husband attempted to beat her and ask: "Is it a camel or an elephant from the forest that you paid for my bride wealth?"

Narrator: Now Kabindura got married. Wakabindura and his people got a bride. He stayed with his wife. They were blessed by his uncles, and even the aunts. Now that is the end of my story. May the person who does not narrate eat *gatutu* while I eat my father's fat lamb whose fat drips ca ca ca ca ca ca ca ca ca

## 1. Manga and His Father

**Narrator:** Alice Wanjira Rukenya (57years)

**Narrator:** Say *itho*.

**Audience:** *Itho*.

**Narrator:** Long. Long ago, there were girls who decided to go for a dance. They were a big group that went to the dance. At the dance there was a very handsome young man. He was so handsome that every girl hovered around him. They had refused to dance with the other young men. That young man was also dancing well. Now any time these other young men tried to dance with the girls, the girls would decline. That time people used to change partners as they danced. Men would dance with a girl; let her go, move on the next one and so on. Now this time all the girls wanted to dance with this young man. He is really handsome, extremely handsome. When you looked at him, you could see yourself as you do in a mirror. And it is because of eating human flesh. That is why he is shining that way. His face was very smooth because of eating people. And remember he was an ogre. When the dance ended, the girls started saying they would not go home."Thurutia, Mahua, Wacai we won't go home," they told one another. During that time, girls were not calling each other their real names unless they were age mates. If for instance you called me my real name, we would fight because that is spiting me. Those are the names they had baptized one another. Now, one would not even know the real name because when the girls met they would greet each other using nicknames.

**Audience:** Yes.

**Narrator:** If you were given a five-cent piece you would be called, „Wagacendi“ when you met your friends. Those who called one another Wandago were cases where one supported the other during circumcision. Now, these girls called each other that way, and decided to follow the young man. He was definitely pleased. You know they surrounded him and he was in the middle as they walked. That is what used to happen to attractive men. The girls almost hoisted him shoulder high. He was hoisted up, the girls were very happy with him.

He was in the middle and they started their journey.

As they were walking, one girl noticed that the young man had another mouth at the back of the head. She saw him swallow a fly. "Wagacendi," she called one of the girls and told her that she had been asked to draw water from the river and she could not go with them. She went back. Another noticed the mouth and said, "Wacai, I had been told to collect firewood and mother will not like it if I do not do that."

That one would go back. "Mahua, I too had been told to draw water and have not done so". The ogre did not realize that they were going away in his happiness now that he had plenty of meat.

Another girl would say, "Kabuteni, I had also been assigned the duty of grinding the millet into flour. Let me also go back." Haya. "Hee, *Kiumbi*, I also have to go back. Our child was expected to come back by now and I have not gone to see whether he is back." Now only one girl was left.

**Audience:** Only one.

**Narrator:** The one whose name was Wandago has been left with the young man. Wandago has been left behind. Haya. Wandago was left following her lover. She was left by the others holding his hand and going with him. When they were near the home of the ogre, the ogre told the girl, "Let me first go and tidy up the house. You follow me later."

The ogre has gone to remove the bones and remains of the people he had eaten. He went and swept. He cleared the place, took out the meat and the bones. The girl had not so far seen the second mouth. They went into the house. The house was clean. The ogre now told himself, "I have got some meat. I will go and call the others."

He went out to call the others. Now, a skull that was on the *itara* told the girl, "run away, escape, the ogre has gone to call the others so that they may come and eat you. He came to clean up the place when you were left behind." The skull told Wandago, "Run girl, he has gone to call the others so that they can eat you. Even some bodies have just been removed."

The girl went out. She did not doubt. She started running. She ran, she ran. She went, she went. That skull had told her, "If it rains and there is a tree nearby do not climb it for shelter."

She ran, she ran. Now when she got near a big tree, it started raining. She forgot that she had been warned not to climb what?

**Audience:** The tree.

**Narrator:** That tree. She went and climbed that tree. She sat there as it rained. When the rain subsided, the ogre came. His son accompanied him. They had followed the girl. As they were passing under the tree, the son told the father, "There is someone up the tree."

"Manga you are very troublesome, you are very greedy. Let us go."

"Father, there is something up there. Let me climb and

check. He climbed and found the girl. She was brought down. Then she was asked, "Do you prefer we eat you or would you rather become our mother so that you can be cooking for us after we have come from hunting?"

"Let me become your mother." She said.

She was taken home. Now anytime they went hunting she would cook for them. If they caught squirrels, she would cook for them, but she was not eating them. If they hunted human beings, she would prepare for them to do what?

**Audience:** To eat.

**Narrator:** They would eat. Now they were not bothering her. One day while they were hunting, they found a pregnant woman. They killed her. They cut her and retrieved two babies. Two baby boys. They wrapped them with banana leaves. They carried one each, holding them like meat. Like they had each brought home a kilogram of meat home. The boys were alive. They took them to the woman. She was told, "Take this meat and prepare it as it is. Do not unwrap it, just cook it as it is."

Hi, the woman unwrapped the meat and found the babies. Two baby boys who were crying. She put them into a pot and covered it. She then trapped two rats and cooked them. She served them on a plate.

"Your food is ready," she told them.

After every bite Manga would say, "These things are not the same size as the ones we brought. And these ones are bitter, they are bitter."

His father told him, "Since they were not big, that is why they are bitter. They get bitter when they are cooked. Let us eat them as they are."

The following day they went hunting. After they had gone, the woman fed the babies. She fed them then oiled them and put them back in the pot. Manga and his father brought their meat as usual. She prepared the meat for them and they ate. Now the woman had started being alert. She would always check on what they had brought home before cooking. The boys grew up. Now, during the day, when the ogre and the son were away, the woman would bring them out of the pot and they would play outside. After playing they would be hidden again. She would tell them, "Get back to your hiding place lest you are found out. If you are found out, we will all be eaten."

The woman looked after them. She looked after them, providing them with all necessities, until they grew up into young men. Now, these ogres would bring weapons home. If they killed a person who was armed, they would bring those weapons and tell the woman, "Keep these weapons for us". She would keep them, knowing well that one day, they shall be used by who?

**Audience:** Those boys.

**Narrator:** One of the boys would be given a spear to practice

throwing. And the other would practice with a sword. Now they are big. She had dug a hole in which boys hid and slept. But the ogre's son was clever. When these children spent the day playing outside, he would come in the evening and ask, "Father whose foot print is this and this and this other one?"

His father would tell him. "Manga, I think you are foolish. My foot prints as I go and come back, your mother's foot prints as she goes and as she comes back, aren't those enough foot prints to fill this compound? And yours too, all these foot prints, are they not many?"

But Manga always felt the presence of other people in that home. Manga and his father continued hunting. If they brought a human being, the woman would cook for them. But she was not eating their food. Anytime they came home before it was dark, Manga would say, "There are so many foot prints on this compound father."

His father would tell him. "Manga, didn't I tell you the other day these are my foot prints, your footprints and your mother's."

*Haya*, they stayed. Now one day Manga was told by his mother, "Manga, we are going to do a test, we shall have a test, the three of us." Now, they looked for a cowhide, a big hide that could cover a person while lying down and still allow for pegs to be fixed on the sides.

"We shall have a competition and I shall be the first one in," the mother said. "You peg me down under the hide and we shall see whether I can release myself." Manga said, "Yes we shall start with you mother." *Haya*. She was tied, pegged under the hide and then told, "Release yourself now."

She tried and tried but couldn't make it. Then she said, "If I can't release myself, untie me since I am still older and weaker than you." "Now it is your turn Manga." Manga was put under the hide. He was tied tightly and then was told, "Release yourself." He released himself. "You have released yourself because you are strong." She was still planning how she could get both of them pegged under the hide. Manga then said, "Now it is your turn father." The father was tied. He tried to get out but could not. He said, "If I cannot release myself, you untie me since, since I am also old." He was untied.

"Now we shall try tying two people at a time." The mother said. "Manga and I will be the first ones."

They went under the hide. They called on the old man. "Now, father you tie us and we see whether we can release ourselves or not." The old man tied them. He tied them then said, "Release yourselves now. "They tried and tried and managed to free themselves. "You see we have managed because we were two," the mother said.

Now it was the turn of Manga and his father. They got under the hide. The mother tied them. She tied them tightly. Manga said, "*ai*, you have tied us too tightly mother."

"Oh no, it is just like we had been tying each other before." The mother tied and tied and tied until they were well secured. They were told, "Release yourselves now."

The boys were each prepared with a club and a sword. They are big men now. Now Manga and his father tried to release themselves. "Mother, we cannot." They tried, they tried, and then the woman called the boys, "Come now." And they started clubbing Manga and his father. Manga shouted at his father. "Didn't I tell you father?"

"Manga you used to tell me," his father replied. "Didn't I tell you father?"

"Manga you used to tell me."

They were killed. The young men were now free. The home became theirs. All the rubbish that was in the place, even the skulls on the *itara* were thrown away. They cleaned the place, built more houses and got married. They got wives and the woman became their mother. Did they have any other mother?

**Audience:** No.

**Narrator:** They lived like that. Their home expanded into a village. Now they had a home, were grown up and independent. That is my story of Manga and his father. May the one who does not tell stories eat *gatutu* while I feast on my father's fat lamb whose fat drips *cacacacacacacaca!*

\*\*\*\*\*