

Review

# The relationship between bamasaaba oral narratives and cultural songs

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In this study, the researcher investigated how storytelling and singing of the songs of culture among BaMasaaba of Uganda affect each other, and why oral narratives disappear in that community, while the cultural songs prosper. An additional aim of the study is to find out how the obstacles in promoting oral narratives can be addressed. According to the findings of the study, culture is an important element in people's lives, because it brings social cohesion among the people of a particular society and they look at themselves as one people. This enhances peace and stability in society, which in turn brings about development. Oral narratives and cultural songs are some of the basic elements of culture. These are methods of communication for socio-economic development which are unfortunately not being utilized to the maximum chiefly because they are competing against other means of communication. Yet, if a person does not communicate effectively through the methods which are known to the people, one curtails their development. Unfortunately, the BaMasaaba who in the ancient times promoted oral narratives and cultural songs in the same way, have not taken the initiative in the present times to promote their culture of storytelling as they have done with the cultural songs. Therefore, as their cultural songs prosper, their culture of storytelling is generally disappearing.

**Key words:** Storytelling, BaMasaaba, narration, Oral narratives.

## OVERVIEW

In this article, the researcher explains who the BaMasaaba are, what they are, their attitude towards storytelling and singing of their cultural songs, the reasons why they have got a negative attitude towards storytelling, the reasons why they have got a positive attitude towards cultural songs and the measures which can be taken in order to revive the culture of storytelling in that Community.

### Who are the BaMasaaba?

According to stories narrated by the local population, the word 'BaMasaaba' is a name which means the des-

cendants of Masaba. These people believe that Masaba was their ancestor, so they call themselves BaMasaaba meaning the descendants of Masaba. These people live on the slopes of Mt Elgon, one of the highest Mountains in Africa.

### The BaMasaaba of Bududa and their economic activities

According to a political map of Uganda prepared by the Country's Ministry of Local Governments, Bududa District is found in the Eastern Region. It is also classified as one of the Areas in the Mt. Elgon Sub-region. Bududa District

has got one big river called Manafa and several streams. The streams pour their waters into River Manafa at different points thus increasing its volume. Also, the presence of Mt Elgon with a thick forest cover has put Bududa district at an advantage of getting rainfall almost throughout the year. This has made the residents of Bududa to develop economically because of constant rainfall.

According to the researcher who is a native of the place, the residents of Bududa are peasant farmers. Usually the rain starts during the month of March which makes it the month for planting seeds. The staple food for the people is bananas popularly known as Kamatore. Because of this, the highest percentage of the people in Bududa has got banana gardens. The people also use maize flour as a substitute and grow maize every year. Other crops grown by the people of Bududa include beans, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, cassava, fruits, tomatoes, onions, cabbage and different types of greens. These crops are grown for home consumption and also for sale to earn the money.

In the researcher's view, the streams which are found in Bududa district have made the people to get involved in fishing, sand mining and collecting stones that are used in constructing houses. Some people fetch water from those streams and sell to bar and hotel owners to be used in washing utensils. The people who are involved in fishing usually catch the fish using the hook and bait, or by using a drug made out of leaves of a certain tree. When this drug is poured into the stream, it causes the fish to get 'drunk' and so be caught without difficulty. Some people, both the youth and the elderly climb Mt Elgon to harvest a particular plant called 'Kamalea' and sell to those people who cannot go there.

The plant grows wildly in the forest. It can be sold in its raw form or when it has been roasted on fire. Some other people, especially those who live near the forest are involved in hunting. They usually hunt animals like elephants, wild pigs, wild goats, and smaller animals like the squirrels.

According to the researcher, some of the people rear animals like cows, bulls, pigs, goats, sheep and rabbits. They also rear birds like chicken, turkeys, wild fowl and doves. The people of Bududa prefer rearing bulls to other types of animals because there are days when they compete in the games of bull fights. During the fights, the owner of the bull which emerges victorious feels proud of himself. Sometimes such people win prizes. When those bulls are sold they fetch a lot of money for the owners. Some people prepare local brew which they sell to others to earn a living. The local brew include 'Pusaa', 'Inguli' and 'Indaali ye Kamatore.' Pusaa is made from maize flour, Indaali ye Kamatore is made from sweet bananas, while Inguli is made by mixing sugar and pusaa, keep it for a few days and then distil the contents.

These economic activities have greatly influenced storytelling among the BaMasaaba. This is because, many oral narratives among these people talk about these economic activities.

### **The BaMasaaba of Bududa and their religious beliefs**

According to the researcher who is himself a native of Bududa, the BaMasaaba of Bududa and those living in other parts of Mt. Elgon sub-region believe in life after death. They believe that the spirits of the dead continue to live and keep coming back to the homes of their relatives and can be disastrous if offended. So, as it is the case, when a newly born baby keeps on crying at night, the people believe that the child is being disturbed by the spirits of the dead. In such an event, the people organize a party to appease those spirits.

The BaMasaaba also believe that the people who die and leave their farms usually come back to inspect them. So, usually the parents warn their children not to go in the banana plantations during the hot hours of the day because they believe it is during such hours that the spirits of the dead are expected to roam around the world. Because of such a belief, it is not possible for the elderly people to eat all the food in the house fearing that if the dead come and miss food, they will cause problems.

According to the researcher, BaMasaaba also believe in gods called 'Bawele matsakha.' They strongly believe that those gods control their lives and if offended can become dangerous. When people's daughters fail to bear children, the BaMasaaba usually say that it is because the gods have been angered. If a person is attacked by a strange disease, people say it has been brought by the gods.

These religious beliefs have also influenced storytelling among the BaMasaaba. Many of the narratives talk about these people and their traditional worship.

### **The origin of circumcision among the BaMasaaba**

According to the local population whom the researcher interacted with, there are many stories associated with circumcision. According to them, the origin of circumcision is explained by three myths. The first myth puts it that Masaba who is believed to be the ancestor of the BaMasaaba had four male children. The children were Mugisu, Mubuya, Wanaale and Mungokho. Each of these children was given a separate area where to settle and start a family. It is believed that Wanaale was given Wanaale hill, Mubuya was given Bududa area, Mugisu was given Budadiri area and Mungokho was given Bungokho area. According to this legend, one day

Mungokho was going about with his daily activities when he sighted an animal. He chased it into the forest of Mt Elgon. Eventually he realized that he had reached somebody's home. The owner of the home had very beautiful girls. Mungokho requested to be given one in marriage. The request was granted. He went back home with that girl. Later they produced children, however the children became sickly and when the maternal uncles were consulted, they advised the parents to circumcise them. After circumcising them, the children became well and that marked the beginning of circumcision among the Bamasaaba.

The second legend asserts that one person among the Bamasaaba wanted to marry a girl from 'Iburwa' but the girl told him that it would not be possible unless he got circumcised. The man then got circumcised, marking the beginning of circumcision among the Bamasaaba.

The third legend is it that a girl from Bududa got married at a place called 'Iburwa.' She gave birth to male children. These children were circumcised and became very healthy. Later, when people from Bududa visited her, they admired the children. The girl told them that the only trick was in their circumcision. So, they went back home and started circumcising all the male children.

### **The need to revive storytelling among the BaMasaaba**

According to Kirk (1974), legends are important because they communicate instantly simple knowledge about common living such as issues of marriage, desire, murder, lust, power, truth and the like. Kirk emphasizes that legends communicate fundamental, mysterious truths or perceived truths in a simple and straightforward manner. The ability of a legend to provide a flat state of immediate comprehension is what permits it to act as a capacity for social cohesion.

According to Nangoli (1989), culture is an important element in people's lives because it brings social cohesion among the people of a particular society and they look at themselves as one people. This brings peace and stability in society which in turn brings about development. Oral narratives and cultural songs are some of the basic elements of culture. These are the methods of communication for socio-economic developments which are unfortunately not being utilized to the maximum, because of the competition from other means of communication.

However, if a person does not communicate effectively through the methods which are known to the people, one curtails their development. Because of this, several societies around the world have endeavoured to preserve their cultures including storytelling. It is true that many societies have advanced in science, technology and other

fields but some still value their cultures so much that they have taken steps to uphold them.

### **Key terms**

In this study, the terms below have got the following meanings:

The word 'performance' refers to the actions of a character or characters before the audience.

The word 'oral' means using the mouth.

The word 'narration' refers to the traditional storytelling.

The words 'oral narratives' refer to tales presented in a traditional way by mouth.

The word 'circumcision' means the cutting of the foreskin of the male sex organ.

The words 'Circumcision songs' refer to those verses which are sang during the circumcision events.

### **Research problem**

The BaMasaaba who in the ancient times promoted oral narratives and cultural songs in the same way, have not taken similar initiative in the present times to promote their culture of storytelling as they have done with the cultural songs. Therefore, as their cultural songs industry is prospering, the industry of storytelling is generally declining. No effort is being made to promote this important genre of literature the way other countries are doing and it is not known why. It is this dilemma which provoked the researcher to undertake this study.

### **Purpose of the study**

To establish why the oral narratives and cultural songs among the BaMasaaba are not moving in the same direction and how that situation can be reversed in order to promote BaMasaaba culture in general.

### **Objectives**

- (i). To explain the similarities and differences between the BaMasaaba oral narratives and their songs of culture.
- (ii). To point out the reasons for the prosper of the songs of culture and decline of oral narratives among BaMasaaba.
- (iii) To establish the measures which can be taken in order to revive the culture of storytelling among BaMasaaba?

### **Research questions**

- (i) What are the similarities and differences between the

oral narratives and BaMasaaba songs of culture?

(ii) What are the reasons for the prosper of songs of culture and decline of oral narratives among BaMasaaba?

(iii) Which measures can be taken in order to revive the culture of storytelling among the BaMasaaba?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Kirokimu (2009) has looked at oral literature in contemporary education in Bunyoro schools and has said that the genres of oral literature taught there include: riddles, proverbs, folktales, folk songs and tongue twisters. In his study, Kirokimu discovered that legends are not commonly used in the teaching of lower primary school classes because they contain some rough political information. She discovered that legends are only used in the teaching of upper classes in primary schools especially when the pupils are learning about the Kingdoms and historical events.

According to her, the teachers who teach in schools which are in Bunyoro Kingdom are very much aware that oral literature is useful to their teaching, but they can also tell what is to have at which level of education. In her view, this shows that oral literature can effectively work in the education system since the teachers can easily plan for it and sort out what to have and at which level.

Kirokimu says that instead of the folk songs which prove not to be economical in terms of time, the teachers have resorted to composing additional shorter songs, which help the learners grasp some academic concepts. She says that these songs are composed in a way that makes the learners recall what a teacher has taught them. She says that this implies the teachers are creative enough not to limit the learners to the old songs, but create others with themes about current situations.

Bukenya et al. (2008) have studied oral Literature and they say that there are four main functions of oral literature. The four functions are as follows: entertainment, awareness, socialization and practical language skills. According to them, entertainment is an important function of oral literature. It is important in two main ways. First, all human beings need to relax, to amuse themselves and get their minds off the dull struggles, worries and sorrows of life.

Bukenya and his colleagues say that an exciting well-told story, a sweet melodious and rhythmic song, or even a simple exchange of jokes and riddles soothes our minds and refreshes our brains. Then we can go back to work feeling fresh and relaxed. Secondly, entertainment is a useful means of educating and informing the people. Bukenya and his companions say that we are attracted to stories, proverbs or songs because they are enjoyable. But they also contain useful information and skills which we learn, painlessly, as we enjoy ourselves.

This scholar says that oral poetry consists of the following forms of performance: Recitation, chant and declamation, song and epic. Bukenya says that these poetic forms are also called verse or metred forms. A piece of verse can be identified from the way it looks.

In oral performance verse is distinguished mainly by sound from the spoken forms, like narrative, riddles and proverbs. Poetry or verse sounds distinctly different from ordinary speech. The sound of oral poetry stands out because of its: rhythm, pace, pitch, projection and modulation.

Wamitila (2003) has studied oral literature in general. In his studies, he has looked at both oral prose and songs. He has studied the functions and characteristics of oral literature as a whole. According to him, the following are some of the functions of oral literature:

The first function is that of entertainment. Wamitila has said that oral literature is used for entertainment. According to him, genres of oral literature like oral narratives, poetry, proverbs and riddles can be used to entertain the audience. He says it is a common practice to see young people or children setting Riddles to each other as a way of entertainment. Wamitila continues to say that short stories, legends and myths are also meant for entertainment.

According to Wamitila, the second function of oral literature is that of educating the people. In his view, in societies where the art of writing has not taken root, oral literature becomes the major way of educating the young people and by using oral literature, the people are able to pass on the values of society, their history, cultures and traditions and also their views from one generation to the other.

Wamitila further says that oral literature gives direction to the members of society. He asserts that by educating the people and passing on issues which concern a particular society, the members of society ensure that their society has direction.

Wamitila has also researched on the aesthetics or beauty of oral literature and has pointed out the following as being elements of aesthetics in this branch of Literature.

The first element is the characters. Usually in oral literature, the audience is impressed by the characters and the details of how characters appear, the existing conflict and their differences are all impressive issues. The events where animal characters speak, host each other and marry are quite impressive.

In Wamitila's view, the second element in oral literature is the setting. The setting in oral literature is another element of beauty and storytellers usually develop the setting to show that a certain event occurred many centuries ago. Wamitila says that by developing such a setting, the tales take the audience into a completely different World. Storytellers are able to do that by

beginning their stories with the following words: A long long time ago...and then they continue to narrate their stories.

According to Wamitila, the third element is the language use. The artistic use of language is an impressive issue because as it is always the case, the flow of sound, the tone, the rhythm and the use of proverbs, riddles and idioms are all impressive elements in oral literature.

Finally, the fourth element is the theme. Wamitila says that the themes which are contained in oral literature are something of great importance. In his view, oral narratives usually have particular themes. Therefore, understanding the meaning which is reflected in a theme is something which pleases the audience.

Nakkazi (2000) carried out her study in Mpigi District and established that in most of the primary schools in the District, teachers teach oral literature to their pupils. Her findings show that the types of oral literature taught in those schools include: songs, poems, riddles, stories and tongue twisting. According to Nakkazi, oral literature contributes to the development of the pupils language economy through providing them with fluent language, it trains them to use the appropriate register, relevant body language and other paralinguistics also train them to use beautiful language; flavoured with idiomatic and proverbial expressions.

According to Nakkazi, the teaching of oral traditional literature helps pupils to avoid mixing different languages in their expression as it profanes the Kiganda culture. She adds that oral literature probably equips pupils with a variety of grammatical structures and vocabularies of Luganda which they can use to express themselves instead of resorting to English or any other foreign language when they are in scarcity of the appropriate words and structures.

Okpewho (1992) has looked at the varieties of performance in African oral literature and begins by saying that oral literature is fundamentally literature derived by word of mouth. He says this implies that there must be a certain appeal not only in what the performer is saying but also in the way it is said, whether in the manner of plain speech or of chanting or singing. He says that even in some categories of oral literature where a more or less fixed body of text is recognized and the speaker-performer is expected to recite it as it is the case in devotional poetry, much of the appeal lies in the quality of the voice used and the skill with which the speaker manipulates the tones of the words which are involved. He says that other more elaborate forms of oral performance involve the use of musical instruments and dancing as accompanying devices.

According to him, some of the simpler kinds of performance have to do with games played at times of relaxation. He gives an example of the practice of telling

proverbs and riddles in competition when the evening meal is over and the immediate or extended family is gathered in the compound to relax before going to bed. He says that the group may be small or large, and that the primary objective in such sessions is the fun and excitement derived from the success or failure with which one person responds to the verbal challenge posed by another.

Okpewho says that in these riddling sessions, some people tell a riddle and the challenge is for someone else to reply that riddle with the appropriate statement. The first aim of the response is to demonstrate wisdom by giving the right response, but other objectives include giving a response that matches the challenge exactly in the number of syllables and balancing the tones of the response with those of the challenge to achieve similarity or contrast. According to him, the Tshwa language being highly tonal, makes this sort of tradition possible. He says here there are no musical instruments played and contestants get no help from the audience. The contestants are left to depend entirely on the skill with which they can match the wisdom stored in their memories with the subtleness of their voices.

In his view, some kinds of chants have got a rather fixed text from which the performers are not expected to deviate, and evidence has suggested for example, that the dynastic chants performed by the royal poets of Rwanda were rather rigidly presented and that reactions from the audience were not particularly encouraged. Okpewho says this may be largely because such a reciter saw himself more as a chronicler than as a performer.

Mapanje and Landeg (1984) assert that despite the growing knowledge about our societies, there is a sense, though, in which our appreciation of the literatures of Africa, and especially of African oral literature, has not yet caught up with this expanding knowledge. In their view, we still speak of oral literature 'traditions'; collect proverbs and 'folktales'; we talk of a 'heritage' which is rapidly disappearing with the advent of modernity. They say today as in the colonial period, our emphasis when speaking of African achievements in oral literature is on changelessness and continuity – on stories passed from one generation to the next, on customs and Community sayings preserved by the elders, the whole making up a 'culture' of the kind celebrated so vividly in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

The two authors say that first, just as three-quarters of the people of modern Africa continue to live outside the cities, so an even higher proportion of the literature created in modern Africa continues to be oral. So far from dying under the impact of western ways, oral literature remains a vigorous art, rooted in rural communities but flourishing too in the towns. Mapanje and Landeg claim that it is adapting to modern circumstances just as it adapted to and reflected change in the past.

Secondly, the two authors also assert that without wishing to criticize proverbs, trickster tales and animal stories, it is misleading to give them the prominence they have been accorded in the past because the colonial anthropologists had their own reasons for emphasizing the role of folklore. According to them, these items were easy to collect in the days before tape-recorders were introduced; they were also very easy to fit into the overall picture of an Africa that was assumed to have no history, where life was believed to consist of the repetition of the same patterns and the same simple forms of knowledge over the generations. In their view, what has only recently begun to be appreciated, beginning very slowly in 1950s with the research of African scholars is the dynamic quality of African oral poetry.

Finnegan (1970, 1977) asserts that oral literature is that part of literature which has not been written down. She says that oral literature is not famous and has not been emphasized so much as it is the case with written literature, because it is associated with the ancient communities which did not have any background of formal education.

Finnegan says it is not easy for this type of literature to be written and that on several occasions it is ignored by the writers. She adds that among the educated communities which emphasize the art of writing like those in Europe, oral literature is something which is new to them. To many of those people, it appears like oral literature points to ancient and mythical events or an ancient genre of literature which has not been developed artistically.

This scholar further points out the following as being the aesthetic elements of oral literature. The first element is that of the actual performance which is very useful in oral literature but is usually ignored by people. The second is the use of the mouth which is very instrumental in oral literature. Finnegan reiterates that proverbs, narratives, riddles and idioms are part of oral literature, since they are passed on by word of mouth.

Her third characteristic of oral literature is originality. She says that in oral literature it is easy for people to present something which is very new, and that they can also modify the current works by using new vocabulary, changing the arrangement of words in a sentence or by changing the message itself.

According to Finnegan (1977), in oral literature, artists usually differ in their presentation. It is very common for a story which is said to be one to be presented in different ways by different storytellers. Another characteristic of oral literature is that of the storytellers coming together face to face with their audience. There is no way a person can dodge this in oral literature. Sometimes the storyteller even makes use of his/her audience by making them clap hands and sing choruses.

Finally, Finnegan emphasizes the significance of the actual occasion. She says that something which is of

great importance in oral literature and which can affect the performance right away is the actual event and that the narrative works are not compost, using specialized education and then passed on by using particular technologies but are associated with actual events like funerals, marriages, celebrating victory, doing work and calming down a crying child.

According to her, oral literature comprises of fictional narratives like ballads, legends and myths, songs like lullabies, children songs, funeral songs, political songs and occasional songs, riddles, proverbs and idioms.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design describes the nature of pattern the research intends to follow. It describes the plan or strategy for conducting the research. In this study, the researcher used field research design and a case study design. He used the field research design because this would bring him in contact with the old people who have a lot of information about storytelling and would therefore give words of wisdom which are required in the study. He also used a case study design for convenience because covering the whole District would be expensive.

By using the field research design, the researcher went into the field and collected data concerning storytelling and the singing of cultural songs among the BaMasaaba. And by using a case study design, the researcher did not study all the oral narratives and cultural songs among the BaMasaaba, but limited himself to the circumcision songs of BaMasaaba in Bududa and their oral narratives. The collected data then gave a reflection of the whole Mbale region. While in the field, the researcher sampled the respondents whom he interviewed and issued questionnaires to. The respondents included: middle aged men and women, the elders, and artists.

## Population and sampling

### Target population

According to Yuko and Onen (2005), a target population refers to the total number of subjects of interest to the researcher. According to Enon (1998), target population are the people whom the researcher expects to meet and they give him the information concerning his topic of study. So, in this case, the subjects of interest to the researcher were members of the general public. In selecting these subjects, the researcher considered the age and gender issues.

The respondents were those people between the ages of 18-70. The researcher involved people of 18 years and above as his respondents, because these could respond to questions with ease. The researcher involved elderly people in his study because they have witnessed different events like tribal wars, famine, traditional marriages and ritual ceremonies as they occurred in society.

### Sample size

Sample size refers to the total number of subjects involved in the study (Enon 1999). The researcher, therefore, had a population of 120 subjects. These were drawn from the four parishes which are found in Bukigai sub-county. The researcher selected 30 subjects

from each parish, because according to the data at the Sub-county, almost all the four parishes had an equal number of the population.

### Sampling techniques

With population sampling, the researcher used the random sampling technique. Before carrying out the sampling process, he identified particular groups of people required in the study. The respondents were then selected randomly according to those groups. The researcher did not meet all his respondents in one place. He usually visited them in their homes and on other occasions, he met some in public places. During the sampling process, the researcher ensured that the respondents were properly represented taking into account the age and gender issues. Because of that, the respondents included the youth, middle aged men and women, and elderly people.

### Research tools

#### Interviews

By using verbal interviews, the researcher met the respondents face to face and asked them questions. The researcher used guiding questions to ask questions during the interview with his respondents. This enabled him to ask the questions systematically. The list of questions was not exposed to the respondents because they would probably become nervous and fail to express themselves. The researcher used this method so that he could get some explanations which the questionnaires could not give as the respondents simply say agree or disagree.

#### Questionnaires

By using the questionnaires, the researcher prepared questions on paper and sent them to his respondents whom he was not able to reach. The respondents answered the questions and sent them back to the researcher. The questionnaires had questions concerning the functions, themes, performance, similarities and differences between the oral narratives and cultural songs of BaMasaaba. The respondents answered those questions by ticking the answers of their choice. The researcher used this method because it was very easy and convenient to administer.

### Validity and reliability of the instruments of data

The validity and reliability of the instruments of data collection was taken care of by carefully developing the questionnaires and interview questions to ensure that they measure what they are supposed to measure. Secondly, each research tool was pre-tested on a selected population to confirm whether it would give the required results.

### Data collection

Data collection took place in the field. While in field, the researcher conducted interviews with his respondents. The interviews enabled the researcher to get original information from the respondents. The researcher also learnt more from the expressions made by the respondents as they answered the questions. The respondents were asked two types of questions, both structured and unstructured.

With the structured questions, precise and factual responses were given by the respondents. The researcher used structured questions because the respondents would find them easy to answer. He also used the unstructured questions because they would enable the respondents to give their personal views according to the way they feel. With the unstructured questions, different views concerning the same question were given by different respondents. All the responses given by the respondents were recorded in the researcher's note book.

While in the field, the researcher also sent questionnaires to his respondents whom he could not easily reach. The researcher used questionnaires because it was the easiest means for him to get information from his distant respondents. This method was also very easy and convenient to administer.

### Validity and reliability of the collected data

The following measures were taken to ensure that the collected data was valid and reliable:

1. The researcher ensured that all the parts in the area where the research was carried out were represented.
2. The researcher selected the respondents from the different age groups so as to get different views.
3. The researcher also involved in his study the people of different sexes.

## PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

With the data analysis, the researcher began by modeling the collected data. Data modeling is very important in research because it is critical for a researcher to have a grasp of the fundamentals of data which has been collected. The researcher began the process of data modeling by integrating data obtained by the three instruments of data collection which were used in the study.

He then grouped the different types of data basing on the research questions. After grouping the different types of data, the researcher then sorted out the unwanted information. He identified relationships of the data, carried out normalization to reduce data redundancy, and also denormalized to improve performance.

The researcher then developed a simple physical data model of tables which he used to analyze the data. The researcher also used bar graphs during the process of data analysis. The researcher used both tabular and bar graph forms on the assumption that some readers find it easy to interpret information which is presented using tables whereas others find it easy to interpret information which is presented using bar graphs. The researcher therefore used both methods so as to meet the needs of both categories of the readers.

### The similarities between BaMasaaba oral narratives and songs of culture

Table 1 shows the similarities between the BaMasaaba

**Table 1.** Similarities between the BaMasaaba oral narratives and songs of culture.

Similarities	Agree	%	Disagree	%	Do not know	%	Not sure	%	Total no. of responses
Both have got the setting	91	75.8	20	16.7	09	7.5	00	00	120
They have got the characters	92	76.7	13	10.8	15	12.5	00	00	120
They have got the plot	77	64.2	27	22.5	14	11.7	02	1.7	120
They have got underlying themes	82	68.3	26	21.7	12	10	00	00	120
They follow particular styles	82	68.3	26	21.7	11	9.2	01	0.8	120
The performances are done by mouth	88	73.3	15	12.5	15	12.5	02	1.7	120

oral narratives and cultural songs. According to Table 1, both the two genres of literature have got a setting, plot, characters, themes, styles and are both performed by mouth.

According to Table 1, a total number of 91 (75.8%) respondents indicated that these two genres of oral literature have got the element of setting. One elder by the name Mayeku told the researcher that both oral narratives and cultural songs have got the element of setting. He said that the setting is usually in form of time and place. A reasonable number of 20 (16.7%) respondents disagreed whereas 09 (7.5%) respondents did not know the correct answer.

A majority number of 92 (76.7%) respondents showed that both of the two genres of oral literature have got characters. One teacher by the name Kibeti told the researcher that the two genres of literature have got the characters. He said that in the oral narratives, the characters are usually people and animals. He further said that in oral narratives animals are given the characteristics of human beings. They can speak, dance, marry and do all sorts of things which are performed by human beings. A small number of 13 (10.8%) respondents disagreed with the view and 15 (12.5%) respondents did not know the correct answer.

A significant number of 77 (64.2%) respondents also indicated that these two genres of oral literature have got the plot. One primary school teacher by the name Namono told the researcher that the two usually have the plot. She said that in both cases the events appear to flow in a systematic manner. A reasonable number of 27 (22.5%) respondents did not accept the view. A small number of 14 (11.7%) respondents did not know the correct answer and only 02 (1.7%) respondents were not sure.

A big number of 82 (68.3%) respondents showed that both BaMasaaba cultural songs and BaMasaaba oral narratives have got particular themes. One primary school teacher by the name Kibone told the researcher that the two genres of literature have got themes. She said that usually they have marriage themes, hospitality, love, enemy and power struggle. A reasonable number of 26 (21.7%) respondents had different views and only 12

(10%) respondents did not know the answer.

A total number of 82 (68.3%) respondents also showed that both oral narratives and cultural songs are similar because their performances reflect particular styles. One elder by the name Wantsusi told the researcher that the two genres of literature have got particular styles. He said that during the performance of the two genres the participants follow specific styles of dancing. A reasonable number of 26 (21.7%) respondents had other opinions. A small number of 11 (9.2%) respondents did not know the correct answer and an insignificant number of 01 (0.8%) respondent was not sure.

A majority number of 88 (73.3%) respondents also showed that these two genres of oral literature are similar because they are both performed by word of mouth. One elder by the name Kuloba told the researcher that the two genres of literature are similar because they are both performed by mouth. A small number of 15 (12.5%) respondents disagreed with the idea. And another small number of 15 (12.5%) respondents did not know the correct answer and only 02 (1.7%) respondents were not sure.

Taking this information on the similarities between the BaMasaaba oral narratives and cultural songs, it becomes clear that there is a lot in common between them.

### **The differences between the BaMasaaba oral narratives and songs of culture**

Table 2 shows the differences between the BaMasaaba oral narratives and cultural songs. According to Table 2, a total number of 95 (79.2%) respondents indicated that with the BaMasaaba cultural songs, the setting is current whereas in oral narratives it is many centuries into the past. One respondent by name Wakube told the researcher that with cultural songs like those of circumcision, the setting is current because the characters talk about the events taking place right away. He said that with the oral narratives, the setting is in the past as the narrator starts with the words 'A long long time ago.' He said that the use of these words show that the event being narrated happened several centuries ago. A reasonable



**Table 2.** Differences between BaMasaaba oral narratives and songs of culture.

Statement	Agree	%	Disagree	%	Do not know	%	Not sure	%	Total no. of responses
The setting in songs is current whereas in oral narratives it is in the past	95	79.2	15	12.5	07	5.8	03	2.5	120
The events in the songs are performed whereas in oral narratives they are just narrated	93	77.5	24	20	03	2.5	00	00	120
All characters in songs are seen whereas in oral narratives not all are seen	85	70.8	27	22.5	07	5.8	01	0.8	120
In songs there is free eating and drinking whereas in oral narratives there is no eating and drinking	84	70	26	21.7	09	7.5	01	0.8	120
The performance of cultural songs involves a lot of drumming and dancing whereas in oral narratives they are limited	97	80.8	20	16.7	02	1.7	01	0.8	120
The performances in cultural songs are highly planned whereas in oral narratives there is no serious planning and organization	83	69.2	29	24.2	04	3.3	04	3.3	120

number of 15 (12.5%) respondents did not accept the view. A small number of 07 (5.8%) respondents did not know the correct answer and only 03 (2.5%) respondents were not sure.

A majority number of 93 (77.5%) respondents indicated that in cultural songs, performance is vigorous whereas in oral narratives it is moderate. One woman by the name Mukimba told the researcher that with the cultural songs like those of circumcision, the participants dance vigorously following the rhythm of the musical instruments. She said that with the oral narratives, performance is usually moderate as people rarely dance during the performance. A reasonable number of 24 (20%) respondents had different views and only 03 (2.5%) respondents did not know the correct answer.

A big number of 85 (70.8%) respondents indicated that with the BaMasaaba cultural songs, the characters are seen performing whereas in oral narratives, in most cases they can not perform as they are only talked about. One man by the name Mushiso told the researcher that with the cultural songs, participants are seen performing but with the oral narratives, the characters are only talked about. A reasonable number of 27 (22.5%) respondents did not accept the views. A small number of 07 (5.8%) respondents did not know the correct answer and an insignificant number of 01 (0.8%) respondent was not sure.

A total number of 84 (70%) respondent showed that the BaMasaaba cultural songs involve a lot of drinking and

eating whereas with the oral narratives there is no eating and drinking. One old man by the name Kimanai told the researcher that with the cultural songs there is a lot of eating and drinking because the events are planned in advance. He said that the family concerned must slaughter a bull and prepare alcohol by the name Busela. He said that with oral narratives such preparations are not there. A reasonable number of 26 (21.7%) respondents disagreed with the view. A small number of 09 (7.5%) respondents did not know the correct answer and only 01 (0.8%) respondent was not sure.

A majority number of 97 (80.8%) respondents indicated that the performance of BaMasaaba cultural songs involves a lot drumming and dancing whereas with the oral narratives, drumming and dancing is very much limited. One old man by the name Musosi told the researcher that with cultural songs there is usually a lot of drumming and dancing. He said that with the oral narratives usually there is no drumming and dancing. A reasonable number of 20 (16.7%) respondents had different views. A small number of 02 (1.7%) respondents did not know the correct answer and only 01 (0.8%) respondent was not sure.

A significant number of 83 (69.2%) respondents showed that with the BaMasaaba cultural songs, the performances are highly planned whereas with oral narratives, there is usually no serious planning. One man by the name Weteya told the researcher that with cultural songs the performances are highly planned and that with the

**Table 3.** Reasons for the decline in storytelling among the BaMasaaba.

Statement	Agree	%	Disagree	%	Do not know	%	Not sure	%	Total no. of responses
The performance is at family level and usually done indoors.	88	73.3	25	20.8	07	5.8	00	00	120
The performance does not usually involve the use of musical instruments.	92	76.7	22	18.3	05	4.2	01	0.8	120
The performance does not involve the use of costumes to a large extent.	86	71.7	30	25	04	3.3	00	00	120
The messages are about past events.	92	76.7	25	20.8	03	2.5	00	00	120
Generally, there is no serious planning.	93	77.5	26	21.7	01	0.8	00	00	120
The target audience is the children.	90	75	17	14.2	13	10.8	00	00	120
The performance is not associated with eating and drinking.	94	78.3	21	17.5	05	4.2	00	00	120

oral narratives there is little planning or not at all. A reasonable number of 29 (24.2%) respondents disagreed with the view. A small number of 04 (3.3%) respondents did not know the correct answer and another small number of 04 (3.3%) respondents were not sure.

Taking this information on the differences between the BaMasaaba oral narratives and cultural songs, it becomes clear that the two differ in several ways although there are some things which are common to both.

### Reasons for the decline in storytelling among the BaMasaaba

Table 3 shows the reasons why storytelling has declined among the BaMasaaba. According to Table 3, the following are the reasons which have made the culture of storytelling among the BaMasaaba to disappear: the performance is done at house hold level and usually indoors, the performance does not involve the use of musical instruments and to a large extent, there is no use of costumes, the messages usually talk about past events which sometimes seem not to be true. Another reason is that generally there is no serious planning. The target audience is the children. The performance is not associated with free eating of food and drinking of alcohol.

According to Table 3, 88 (73.3%) respondents indicated that the performance of oral narratives is at family level and they are usually performed indoors. One old woman by the name of Nasaka told the researcher that oral narratives are a family issue and it does not attract many other people's attention. 25 (20.8%) respondents had different views and only 07 (5.8%) respondents did not know the answer.

A significant number of 92 (76.7%) respondents indicated that the performance of oral narratives among the BaMasaaba does not usually involve the use of musical instruments. One man by the name Khawanga told the researcher that oral narratives do not attract

people's attention because they are not accompanied by musical instruments. A reasonable number 22 (18.3%) respondents had different views. A small number of 05 (4.2%) respondents did not know the correct answer whereas only a minority of 01 (0.8) respondent was not sure.

A big number of 86 (71.7%) respondent indicated that the performance of the oral narratives among the BaMasaaba does not usually involve the use of costumes to a large scale. One elder by the name Shibuta told the researcher that oral narratives have lost weight and meaning because costumes are not used during the performance. A considerable number of 30 (25%) respondents did not accept the views and only 04 (3.3%) respondents indicated that the subjects did not know the correct answer.

A total number of 92 (76.7%) respondents indicated that the messages in the BaMasaaba oral narratives concern the past events. An elder called Kuloba told the researcher that oral narratives have lost meaning because they talk about ancient events which are not relevant to the modern world. A reasonable number of 25 (20.8%) respondents did not agree with the idea and only a minority number of 03 (2.5%) respondents did not know the correct answer.

A big number of 93 (77.5%) respondents indicated that the performance of oral narratives among the BaMasaaba do not have any serious planning. One young man called Kibeti told the researcher that oral narratives are dying away because there is usually no serious planning. A small number of 26 (21.7) respondents disagreed with the assertion and yet only a minority number of 01 (0.8%) respondents did not know the correct answer.

A high number of 90 (75%) respondents indicated that with BaMasaaba oral narratives, the target audience are the children. One respondent called Wakwale told the researcher that oral narratives are an issue of the children and therefore the audience consist of the young people. A small number of 17 (14.2%) respondents had different opinions whereas only 13 (10.8%) respondents

**Table 4.** Measures to revive storytelling among BaMasaaba.

Statement	Agree	%	Disagree	%	Do not know	%	Not sure	%
Setting up social centres.	103	85.8	12	10	05	4.2	00	00
Establishing special committees to organize sessions for storytelling.	93	77.5	21	17.5	06	05	00	00
Give awards to best storytellers.	100	83.3	17	14.2	03	2.5	00	00
Include storytelling on the schools' curriculum.	95	79.2	20	16.7	04	3.3	01	0.8
Introduce storytelling in Universities as a career.	91	75.8	18	15	11	9.2	00	00
Provide employment to the best storytellers.	89	74.2	19	15.8	11	9.2	01	0.8
Carry out massive sensitization using media houses.	85	70.8	29	24.2	04	3.3	02	1.7
Storytelling should be made a condition for people who want to join politics.	77	64.2	21	17.5	22	18.3	00	00
Publish the best storytellers and their works.	87	72.5	16	13.3	16	13.3	01	0.8
Storytelling should not be confined at family level.	94	78.3	10	8.3	15	12.5	01	0.8
Storytellers should be facilitated.	92	76.7	23	19.2	03	2.5	02	1.7
Tax non-storytellers	73	60.8	25	20.8	18	15	04	3.3

did not know the correct answer.

A significant number of 94 (78.3%) respondents indicated that the performance of BaMasaaba oral narratives is not associated with free eating and drinking. One elder by the name Watsyeli said that they usually get involved in other events like circumcision because there is free eating of food and drinking of alcohol. A small number of 21 (17.5%) respondents had different views and only 05 (4.2%) respondents did not know the correct answer.

### The measures which can be taken in order to revive storytelling among the BaMasaaba Community

Table 4 shows the measures which can be taken in order to revive the culture of storytelling among the BaMasaaba. According to Table 4, the measures include among others setting up social centres, establishing committees responsible for organizing sessions for storytelling, giving awards to the best storytellers, include storytelling on the schools' curriculum, introducing storytelling in Universities as a career, providing employment to the best storytellers, carrying out massive sensitization using media houses, making storytelling a condition for people who want to join politics and finally publishing the best storytellers and their works.

According to Table 4, 103 (85.8%) respondents showed that storytelling among the BaMasaaba can be revived by establishing community or social centres for storytelling. One elder in particular by the name Walimbwa told the researcher that oral narratives can only be revived if community halls are constructed where storytelling can take place. Only 12 (10%) respondents had other opinions and only 05 (4.2%) respondents did not know the correct answer.

A big number of 93 (77.5%) respondents indicated that special committees should be set up and given the responsibility of organizing storytelling weekly. He also said that after constructing the community halls, there is need to set up special committees to organise storytelling every week. A small number of 21 (17.5%) respondents disagreed with the view and only 06 (05%) respondents did not know the correct answer.

A majority number of 100 (83.3%) respondents indicated that people should be encouraged to compete in storytelling and that the winners should be given awards. Mulokwa told the researcher that there is need to encourage people to compete in storytelling in order to revive and strengthen the culture. He said the best storytellers should be rewarded. He said that once this is done, people will start competing for the activity. A small number of 17 (14.2%) respondents had different views and only 03 (2.5%) respondents did not know the correct answer.

A total number of 95 (79.2%) respondents showed that storytelling should be included on the school curriculum so that young people can treat storytelling like any other subject. One retired teacher by the name of Kusolo told the researcher that if oral narratives are to be revived among the BaMasaaba, they should be put on the schools' curriculum so that children can be taught and examined in the same. A reasonable number of 20 (16.7%) respondents did not accept the views. A small number of 04 (3.3%) respondents did not know the correct answer and only 01 (0.8%) respondent was not sure.

A big number of 91 (75.8%) respondents indicated that storytelling should also be introduced in universities as a career so that people can be awarded Degrees in storytelling. Kusolo further said that storytelling can even be introduced at Universities so that people can be

**Table 5.** Reasons why BaMasaaba songs of culture have prospered.

Statement	Agree	%	Disagree	%	Do not know	%	Not sure	%
The performance is done in the open thereby attracting a big audience.	88	73.3	25	20.8	07	5.8	00	00
The performance involves drumming.	92	76.7	18	15	09	7.5	01	0.8
The performance is associated with the practical event.	86	71.7	30	25	04	3.3	00	00
There is use of costumes to a large extent.	92	76.7	16	13.3	12	10	00	00
There is serious planning and organization.	93	77.5	26	21.7	01	0.8	00	00
The planning involves mature people	90	75	27	22.5	03	2.5	00	00
The performance is associated with eating and drinking.	94	78.3	14	11.7	12	10	00	00

awarded Degrees in storytelling. He said that after all there are Universities in the World which offer Degrees in the same. He said that in Europe there are people holding Bachelors Degrees, Masters Degrees and PhD Degrees in performing arts which studies of course include storytelling. A small number of 18 (15%) respondents did not accept the view and only 11 (9.2%) respondents did not know the correct answer.

A total number of 89 (74.2%) respondents indicated that excellent storytellers should be employed and be paid by the Government. One young man by the name Wambette told the researcher that there is need for the government to employ excellent storytellers and pay them. He said that this can help to solve the problem of unemployment in the country. A small number of 19 (15.8%) respondents disagreed with the assertion. A considerable number of 11 (9.2%) respondents did not know the correct answer and only 01 (0.8%) respondent was not sure.

### **The reasons why the BaMasaaba songs of culture have prospered more than storytelling**

Table 5 shows the reasons why the BaMasaaba cultural songs have prospered compared to the oral narratives. According to Table 5, the reasons are that the performance is done in the open thereby attracting a big audience, there is drumming which makes people to dance, the performance is associated with the practical event, there is use of the costumes to a large extent, there is usually serious planning and organization, the planning itself involves mature people and finally the performance is associated with free eating and drinking of alcohol.

According to Table 5, a total number of 88 (73.3%) respondents also indicated that BaMasaaba cultural songs are performed in the open thereby attracting many people. One respondent by the name Busiku told the researcher that cultural songs have prospered because they are performed in the open, and therefore, attract many people. He said people usually gather in one place

and participate in the singing and dancing. He further said that in the case of circumcision songs, the participants can sing and dance as they move on. A small number of 25 (20.8%) respondents disagreed with the view and only 07 (5.8%) respondents did not know the correct answer.

A big number of 92 (76.7%) respondents showed that the performance of BaMasaaba cultural songs involves drumming. One woman called Bisikwa said that cultural songs are accompanied by drumming which usually make women abandon their activities and join in the singing and dancing. She further said that some marriages have broken because of that. She said when a husband returns home and finds out that the wife has ran after the dancing group, he may abandon that woman. A reasonable number of 18 (15%) respondents did not accept the view. A small number of 09 (7.5%) respondents did not know the correct answer and only 01 (0.8%) respondent was not sure.

A significant number of 86 (71.7%) respondents indicated that cultural songs are associated with practical events which affect all the people in the community. Wanyela told the researcher that cultural songs are usually associated with practical events like funerals, circumcision and initiation. A reasonable number of 30 (25%) respondents disagreed with the above assertion and only 04 (3.3%) respondents did not know the correct answer.

A majority number of 92 (76.7%) respondents showed that during the performance of cultural songs, the participants use varieties of costumes. While in the field, the researcher saw participants in circumcision dances wonderfully decorated using various costumes. A small number of 16 (13.3%) respondents did not accept the view and only 12 (10%) respondents did not know the answer.

A total number of 93 (77.5%) respondents indicated that with cultural songs, there is detailed planning and organization. One elder by the name Wakube told the researcher that with cultural songs there is serious planning and organization. He said that with the circumcision songs, boys have to undergo training and those

who mess up are usually cained by the trainer. A small number of 26 (21.7%) respondents had different views and only 01 (0.8%) respondent did not know the correct answer.

A big number of 90 (75%) respondents indicated that the BaMasaaba cultural songs are meant mainly for mature people whereas oral narratives are meant for young people. Wakube told the researcher that cultural songs are meant for mature people. He said that preparations are carried out by a special group of elders and are highly organized. A small number of 27 (22.5%) respondents were of different opinions and only 03 (2.5%) respondents did not know the correct answer.

Finally, a total number of 94 (78.3%) respondents indicated that cultural songs are associated with eating and drinking. One elder by the name Waninga told the researcher that with cultural songs, there is a lot of free drinking of alcohol and eating of food. He further said that this is done so because the related events are supposed to bring relatives together for the cerebation. A small number of 14 (11.7%) respondents did not accept the view. Only 12 (10%) respondents did not know the correct answer.

## DISCUSSION

According to the findings of the study, the following are the similarities between the oral narratives and cultural songs: Both of them have got the setting, they have got the plot, they have got the characters, they have got underlying themes, they follow a particular style and the performance is done by mouth. This can be proved by a very big number of the respondents who agreed with these ideas as opposed to a very small number which disagreed or did not know the answers.

On the other hand, the findings of the study have pointed to the following as being the differences between the BaMasaaba oral narratives and cultural songs: With the oral narratives, the setting is in the past whereas in the cultural songs, the setting is current. In storytelling, the events are narrated but in cultural songs, the events are performed. In storytelling, apart from the Narrator, the other characters can not be seen performing whereas in the cultural songs, all the characters are seen performing.

With storytelling, there is no free eating and drinking of alcohol whereas with cultural songs, there is a lot of free eating and drinking of alcohol. With storytelling, drumming and dancing are usually limited but with cultural songs, there is a lot of drumming and dancing. With storytelling, usually there is no serious planning and organization whereas with Cultural Songs, the performances are highly planed and organized. This can also be proved by the highest number of the respondents who agreed as compared to the small number of the

respondents who either disagreed or did not know the answers or were not sure.

Finally, the findings of the study have shown that oral narratives among the BaMasaaba can be revived and promoted by: setting up social centres, establishing special committees to organize sessions for storytelling, give awards to best storytellers, include storytelling on the schools' curriculum, introduce storytelling in Universities as a career, provide employment to the best storytellers, carry out massive sensitization using media houses, storytelling should be made a condition for people who want to join politics, publish the best storytellers and their works, storytelling should not be confined at family level, storytellers should be facilitated and non-storytellers should be taxed. These findings address the reseacher's concern about which measures can be taken in order to revive and promote oral narratives among the BaMasaaba. Again these ideas were agreed by the highest number of the respondents compared to the small number of those respondents who either disagreed or did not know the answers or were not sure.

## Conclusion

The findings of the study also show that, the following are the similarities between the oral narratives and cultural songs: Both of them have got the setting, they have got the plot, they have got the characters, they have got underlying themes, they follow a particular style and the performance is done by mouth. The differences are: with the oral narratives, the setting is in the past whereas in the cultural songs, the setting is current. In storytelling, the events are narrated but in cultural songs, the events are performed. In storytelling, apart from the Narrator, the other characters can not be seen performing whereas in the cultural songs, all the characters are seen performing.

With storytelling, there is no free eating and drinking of alcohol whereas with cultural songs, there is a lot of free eating and drinking of alcohol. With storytelling, drumming and dancing are usually limited but with cultural songs, there is a lot of drumming and dancing. With storytelling, usually there is no serious planning and organization whereas with Cultural Songs, the performances are highly planed and organized. This can also be proved by the highest number of the respondents who agreed as compared to the number of those respondents who either disagreed or did not know the answers or were not sure.

Finally, the findings of the study have shown that oral narratives among the BaMasaaba can be revived and promoted by: setting up social centres, establishing special committees to organize sessions for storytelling, give awards to best storytellers, include storytelling on

the schools' curriculum, introduce storytelling in Universities as a career, provide employment to the best storytellers, carry out massive sensitization using media houses, storytelling should be made a condition for people who want to join politics, publish the best storytellers and their works, storytelling should not be confined at family level, storytellers should be facilitated and non-storytellers should be taxed. These findings address the researcher's concern about which measures can be taken in order to revive and promote oral narratives among the BaMasaaba. Again these ideas were agreed by the highest number of the respondents compared to the small number of those respondents who either disagreed or did not know the answers or were not sure.

In the researcher's view, the above conclusions show that the objectives of the study which sought to establish the functions, themes and performances of both oral narratives and cultural songs, the similarities and differences between the oral narratives and cultural songs, have been realized. The research problem has also been resolved by the researcher establishing the reasons why the oral narratives and cultural songs are not moving in the same direction. Finally, the purpose of the study which is to establish why the oral narratives and cultural songs among BaMasaaba are not moving in the same direction and to find out the measures which can be taken in order to reverse the situation has also been realized by the researcher establishing causes for the decline of oral narratives and the measures which can be taken in order to reverse the situation.

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