

**A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE LITERARINESS OF BAMASABA  
CIRCUMCISION RITUALS**

**BY**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF  
ARTS IN LITERATURE OF KYAMBOGO UNIVERSITY**

**JUNE 2022**

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**DECLARATION**

I MUYAMA JANET MUGISHA do hereby declare that, this dissertation is my original work and has never been published and submitted for award of a degree in any university or institution of higher learning.

Signed.....

Date.....

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ENDORSED.....

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my mother Mrs Mugusha Catherine, my father Mr Mugusha Stephen and My children for all their prayers, love and care which has made it possible for me to make it up to this level.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I am grateful to the Almighty God for the blessing, inspirations, gift of wisdom, life and strength given to me during the struggle for my studies.

My sincere appreciation goes to my parents Mr. Mugusha Stephen and Mrs Mugusha Catherine for the unending love and support they have always accorded to me. I acknowledge my children for being the the energy behind this struggle. I will touch the sky for you. I would like to thank my friends who also unconditionally labored themselves to read through my work and provide comments that made me to come up with this dissertation.

Appreciation goes also to my supervisor Dr. Tugume Benon for his tireless effort and patience given to me while technically guiding me in the field of research that I so much needed to complete this work. This dissertation would not have become that easier without his involvement.



## **ABSTRACT**

This study explored the literariness of Bamasaaba circumcision rituals and songs. It analysed the performance symbols of the rituals and the literary language of the circumcision songs. The study was field based and used qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. It employed formalism literary theory to analyse the performance symbols of circumcision rituals and literary language of the songs. The findings depict Bamasaaba circumcision rituals as an exhibition of the society's innermost values and norms such as society's expectations of a man. It was also found out that the literary language employed in the songs contributes to the understanding of the people's experiences, values and norms. The circumcision rituals are performed for cultural reasons. They are performed to ensure continuity of the Bamasaaba traditional norms and values. The study therefore concludes that Bamasaaba circumcision rituals plays not only the easthetic but also a didactic role of transferring the society's values and norms to the young generation. These rituals should not therefore be perceived as evil and scary because if one critically analyses their symbolic meaning, one realizes that they are worth it. The actual circumcision without the rituals is meaningless and for that reason one can not be considered a complete man among the Bamasaaba.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction and Background of the Study

Bamasaaba are a Bantu group of people residing in Eastern Districts of Uganda: Mbale, Manafwa, Bulambuli, Sironko, Namisindwa and Bududa. They speak lugisu also known as lumasaaba. Lugisu has multiple dialects such as; lubuuya, luwalasi, luyobo, luteza and lufumbo. Ludadiri is the main northern dialect and lubuuya is the main central and southern dialect. Bamasaaba are well known for their traditional culture of male circumcision held every even year. The year in which circumcision takes place is called a male year and the odd year is a female year. If one is circumcised during the male year then he becomes a true man and if circumcised during the female year, one is regarded a woman. Therefore, like the women, such a person's ideas do not count in cultural gatherings. It is normally a three days' ceremony of dancing and feasting after preparations for a couple of months. The initiates are then admitted into adulthood or manhood. The Imbalu year is officially opened in August in Mutoto. Before this month many people get ready for the long-awaited day. The business men get ready to sell their merchandise to the initiates, cultural leaders, bamasaba members of parliament, tourist and others participants. His royal highness the Umukuka, the cultural leader whom everybody adores officiates at the ceremony. Circumcision is a very paramount issue among the Bamasaaba. In *The Land and Culture of Bamasaaba*, Professor Timothy Wangusa states:

Ask a mumasaaba where he or she came from and he or she points the mountain. Ask him to name the most precious thing on earth, and he names the earth or the land itself. Ask him to swear, and he is more sure to swear by his circumcision- 'NINGILA LUNDI' which metaphorically means 'NEVER SHALL I EVER BE CIRCUMCISED AGAIN' but which literally means that he will never again face the bitterness of the the circumcision knife in the same manner throughout his life. (3)

Among the Bamasaaba, circumcision is a gradual process and symbolic of the gradual process of growth. It follows different stages of dancing and singing. The norm among the Bamasaaba is that the boy ready for circumcision first informs the father. The purpose for this is for the father to take the son through various tests to determine whether the son is mature enough to face the ordeal of the knife. Initially the circumcision candidate would be asked to kill a fierce animal like

a leopard or a snake. However, the two main dialects of Bamasaba: (the southern and northern dialects) now have differences when carrying out the circumcision rituals. The southern Bamasaba begin with isonja dance. This is to make the boy become strong enough as a man. The boys do a lot of vigorous singing and dancing. Isonja is a war dance which makes the candidates strong enough to face tough situations to protect the family as a man. It also prepares boys to fight for their clans in case of any attack from foreigners. Besides that, the dance also prepares the candidates to be strong enough to brave the knife. 'Isonja' dance takes place between 3.00pm and 6.00pm between March and June in an even year. The boys dress in thigh bells while dancing. They hire a singer locally called kyilaali or namwenya to sing and direct them as they dance around him with rhythm and heavy foot stamps on the ground.

The second stage starts after the weeding of crops. The initiates visit their relatives and friends still accompanied by songs and dances to inform them that they are soon becoming real men. They are usually given gifts such as; money, chicken, goats and cattle to demonstrate the strong friendship, relationship and support to encourage them to avoid shame of wincing at the knife.

The third stage commences a few days to the actual circumcision day. The merry making intensifies; local beer from millet or maize and bananas is brewed, hundreds and thousands of livestock are slaughtered. The candidates are smeared with fermented yeast powder as a gesture of no surrender, no retreat and People dance day and night. The candidates practice various songs and dances to entertain their guests and morale boosters. The candidates are also prepared to face the circumcision knife through instructions about the pain they will shortly experience. Meanwhile the famous kadodi dance takes the centre stage.

The last stage of preparation is performed with utmost care. The elders or 'basakhulu' clean the sacred graves and rebuild the shrines. Inside the shrine each clan elder offers a sacrifice of a fowl or a goat and millet brew on behalf of the entire clan. This can also be performed at the compounds of grandfathers and clan elders of respective initiates.

At this stage each initiate is taken to his mother's place of birth or 'ibwiwaana' to announce to his uncles that he is going to get circumcised soon. The maternal uncles give their nephews gifts as a sign of their support and blessings. The uncles blow bear or 'khumubiita busela' on the initiates body as words of blessing are uttered urging him to stand firm during the actual physical operation.

On this day dancing becomes extremely tense and continues most of the night. The tempo of singing and drumming becomes extremely intensified.

On the final day a he-goat or a bull is slaughtered in the court-yard where the initiate is to be circumcised from. The heart of the animal, stuck on a stick is stuck in the court-yard as a sacrifice to the ancestral spirits called `basambwa'. The contents of the stomach are smeared on the boy's face, belly and legs by the elder who is in charge of the sacrifice.

In the court-yard where the initiate is to face the ordeal of the knife, he stands erect on the sack holding a stick across the shoulders. The candidate is expected to stand still looking in one direction in front of him. Immediately after the foreskin of the penis is cut off, the people applaud. On that same day or the next day the new man is then cleansed by the circumcisers. This ritual is called 'khusabisa umusinde.' Once the boy successful stands the pain of the knife without exposing his fear, the women and men continue singing and dancing while they drink and eat and nobody seems to think of illness or death. However if the candidate shows fear, there is no more celebration.

After prolonged isolation, the initiates are cured and the elders officially welcome them back into the community with rituals so that they begin a new life as men. This is known as 'Ineemba'. These rituals are so important among Bamasaaba that men usually counted the years of their lives after initiation because to them childhood and boyhood is insignificant. No Mumasaaba man regardless of age or riches is considered a full man without being circumcised. These re-entry ceremonies are celebrated with beer parties, dancing and singing. The newly circumcised men are gathered together and given spears. They wear animal skins and garments called 'tsisumbati'. They are told that they are now full men or 'basaani' who must behave and act like other men. Always circumcision occurs in even years but 'Ineemba dance' takes place during the following year which Bamasaaba call 'kumukhaana' meaning the female year.

The Ineemba dance is commonly performed in Buwagogo, Buwabwala and Bupoto sub – counties of Bubulo County and in Bududa, Bukigai, Bulucheke, Bubiita and Bushika sub-counties of Manjiya County. They are also performed in Busano, Bufumbo and Wanaale sub-counties of Bungokho County.

At the opening of the 'Ineemba' dance, the related clans dance while following the same paths that were followed on the circumcision day. These clans meet in the same places as previously done and then all make for the place of 'Ineemba'. This dance continues for three days and the drums used are specially made. They are normally two of them; one long one, and one small one called 'indonyi'. The players of these drums must be circumcised men. The main purpose of this ceremony is for re-admission of fresh men into the society of adults or 'basaani' and also to give them an opportunity to meet young women who can later become their future wives. Beers are brewed in large quantities to mark the end of circumcision ceremonies. The dancers of 'ineemba' hold specially prepared long staves which at the end of every rhythm point to the north-east to indicate that circumcision custom came from that direction.

On the other hand, the northern bamasaba start their rituals by worshiping their ancestral spirits. Clan leaders lead their clans to a place called luwanda. This place is always at the top of the hill. It takes a long and tiring journey to get there. At the hill emerge people from different directions with chants such as "Ahuuuuuuu.....,Eza eza eza eza.....,Huwohuwo....." The top of the hill is flat and wide with trees and stones that are forbidden to be sat on or under by any other person apart from the clan leaders. On the first day the clan leaders lead the rest in worshiping to evoke blessings from their ancestors. They then move to another hill to feast. They feed on roasted meat and matooke in quantity and local brew. This is to officially open clan circumcision and also for purposes of unity. After one day or two of luwanda, the initiates move around collecting gifts from well wishers to encourage him face the knife. After that they move to the courtyards where they are to be circumcised. The circumcision grounds are organized by the clan leaders. The ground is filled with crowds of people to feast and drink.

When the boys have finished eating, they go around dancing amidst chants and singing to give them courage. After some time, the leaders then take the boys and blow local brew on them as blessings are evoked upon them. The boys are then led back to the hill where men and women dance vigorously. The boys are led down the hill to the "lulwanyi" :( a place where the boy is to be circumcised). Here the boy is brought to "lulwanyi" through the back door to the front door and finally to the courtyard where he is circumcised.

With the aid of the songs, these circumcision rituals do not only aim at defining man's roles but also transferring traits that define manhood. Among the bamasaba, sex is meant for procreation and therefore for only men and women ready to reproduce. Since after circumcision the boys become men, they were expected to marry and enhance society continuity. Therefore, themes of sex and family are common in the songs sung.

However, the influence of the western culture has led to numerous changes in the performance of circumcision rituals. Many Bamasaba have resorted to hospital circumcision claiming tradition circumcision is backward and unhygienic leading to health complications. As for the Christians, they shun away from it because they believe it is sinful and therefore involves worshiping other gods other than the Almighty. Despite all that, some Bamasaba have insisted on practicing the traditional circumcision and therefore cannot part from the songs or music that accompanies these rituals. Stopping these songs is equivalent to stopping the whole process of forming men in this society.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Despite the aesthetic and didactic role played by imbalu circumcision songs, there is limited documented literature regarding the literary language used. Researchers who have focused on these imbalu circumcision songs have directed their research towards their performance of gender roles, identities and relations among Bamasaba. Other researchers and anthropologists who have concentrated their studies on Bamasaba circumcision rituals have focused on how they are performed and yet less attention has been given to the literariness of the performance symbols of these rituals. The few who have tried to investigate symbolism as part of the ritual process, have just sampled a few symbols. For example, Victor Turner, in a journal article, "*symbolism and patterning in the circumcision rites of two Bantu-speaking societies*" investigates the symbolism in animal chyme and yeast. However, Turner leaves out a number of instrumental symbolisms such as dramatization of the rituals, costumes and props.

This study, therefore focuses on the performance symbols of Bamasaba circumcision rituals and literary language of the songs. It analyses the symbolism in performance of the reminding ritual, isonja dance, searching for manhood ritual, actual circumcision, cleansing ritual, ritual of knowing paths, the ritual of coming out of seclusion and the ineemba dance. It also examines the

literary language of the songs such as loan word, satire, call and response, personification and euphemism.

### **1.3 The purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to critically analyse the literariness of Bamasaba circumcision rituals

### **1.4 The Objective of Study**

The objectives of the study are:

1. To analyse performance symbols in Bamasaba circumcision rituals.
2. To examine the literary language of Bamasaba circumcision songs.
3. To examine the themes portrayed by Bamasaba circumcision rituals.

### **1.5 Research Hypothesis**

It is hypothesised that Bamasaba circumcision rituals are a literary piece of work with aesthetic and didactic role.

### **1.6 Scope of the study**

#### **1.6.1 Content scope**

The study is concerned with examining Bamasaba circumcision performance symbols and literary language of bamasaba circumcision songs. Therefore, it investigates the relationship between the performance symbols, literary language of Bamasaba circumcision songs and the thematic concerns of the rituals.

#### **1.6.2 Geographical scope**

The study was conducted in Bududa and Mbale districts of eastern Uganda. Bududa and mbale are part of the six districts of Bamasaba. Since the southern bamasaba still hold imbalu rituals in their original state with very little external influence, I analysed unaltered rituals. Similarly Bududa has a number of ritual sites that were very resourceful to this research. There are sites such as Nalufutu, Namasho and lyerekha. The rituals performed in these sites are characterized with singing and dancing which aided this research in analyzing the performance symbols and language of bamasaba circumcision songs.

Bududa district also holds some rituals that are not practiced in other parts of Bamasaba land. For example isonja (pre-circumcision dance) and ineemba (after circumcision dance) are only practiced in bududa.

## 1.7 Literature review

There is inadequate research on the Bamasaaba circumcision performance symbols and language of the circumcision songs. Available scholarly writings on circumcision rituals have been presented by researchers who have preoccupied themselves with the origin of circumcision rituals, change and continuity in the rituals as well as the description of imbalu process. For instance the Masaaba Historical Research Association, in the book, *For the Land and Culture of Bamasaaba*, focus on the performance of circumcision rituals and merely mention that these rituals involve songs but do not take the initiative to elaborate on these songs in particular. No attention is given to the language used in these songs. When writing about the isonga dance, they say, “Dances are arranged from clan to clan and a solicitor sings and directs the dancers and the initiates as they dance around the singer”. (15)

They don't elaborate more on the kind of songs sung and the language style used. This study analyzes the performance symbols and literary language of the Bamasaaba circumcision songs in the rituals.

Some Scholars have been preoccupied by research on change and continuity of circumcision rituals. These scholars have argued that people's attitudes towards African cultures such as circumcision among Bamasaaba have been influenced by western civilization. One of these scholars Musamali Nangoli, in an article, *No More lies About Africa : Here is the truth from an African*, illustrates how African traditions such as Bamasaaba circumcision have lost their beauty in favor of western civilization. However, since Nangoli's research is extensively conducted in various parts of Africa, he does not give much attention to the bamasaaba circumcision performance symbols and language of songs in particular.

Where there is a discussion on the Bamasaaba circumcision performance symbols, emphasis has been placed on a few symbols. For example, in a journal article, *symbolism and patterning in the circumcision rites of two bantu-speaking societies*, Victor Turner investigates the symbolism embedded in yeast and animal chime. By emphasizing these two items as embodying meaning in rituals, Turner limits himself to a few symbols and therefore the research is not exhaustive.



Mellitus Nyongesa wanyama, in his dissertation, *Form and Content of African Music*, while examining the significance of symbols during Bukusu circumcision ceremonies, focuses on the symbolism embedded in the trees used in constructing ‘ Namwima’ the shrine for ancestors and the animals slaughtered. He notes,

Therefore, the Bukusu circumcision ceremony entails a myriad of symbolism. It is not just a mere cut of the foreskin of the initiate’s penis; rather it entails seeking for divine wisdom and blessing from spirits and ancestors.

(25)

Since Mellitus focuses his study on bukusu circumcision songs, he does not investigate the symbolism and language of Bamasaaba circumcision songs. Although Babukusu and Bamasaaba both practice circumcision, they have differences in the way they perform their rituals.

Mellitus Wanyama and Omar Egesha in a research paper, *Ethnography and Ethno- music of Babukusu Traditional Male Circumcision; messaging, Symbolism and Rationale*, analyse the symbolic messaging in the Bukusu circumcision rituals. They analyse symbols such as the food prepared in large amounts, the star grass decorated on small pots of local brew and the new name given to the newly circumcised boy. They depict that the excess food that is played with, marks the end of childhood characterized by playfulness, the star grass symbolizes prosperity, perpetuation and tenacity and the new name symbolizes the rebirth and incarnation of the initiate into a man. Mellitus and Omar’s research too is based on bukusu tribe and yet this study will be based on Bamasaaba tribe. Though the Bukusu share the same origin with Bamasaaba, they perform their circumcision rituals differently. For instance, the star grass and renaming of newly circumcised that mellitus talks about is only evident among the Bukusu and not Bamasaaba.

Rose Brandel in a presentation on the circumcision rituals among the Babira and Bapere people of the North Ituri forest in Belgian Congo, examines how music is part and parcel of gandja, the circumcision ritual of the Babira and Bapere people. Brandel dedicates a significant part of her work to the transcription of the songs. By emphasizing transcription in analysis of the structure of circumcision songs, Brandel downplays language of these circumcision songs and since her study is on the Babira and Bapere people it does not cover the Bamasaaba circumcision songs.

Other researchers like Willy Wanyenya have concentrated on the investigation of cultural songs in relation to oral narratives. In an academic journal, *the general views of Bamasaaba of Eastern Uganda about their oral narratives and cultural songs*, Willy Wanyenya investigates the functions, themes, and performance of the Bamasaaba oral narratives and cultural songs among the Bamasaaba. He notes,

Oral songs are disappearing because with storytelling, there is no free eating and drinking of alcohol whereas with cultural songs, there is a lot of free eating and drinking.  
(413)

Although circumcision songs are part of cultural songs Wanyenya generalizes his research giving less attention to the circumcision songs in particular and therefore does not investigate the performance symbols and language of the circumcision songs.

Some researchers who have directed their studies towards circumcision songs have discussed these songs as part of the process that circumcision rituals under go. Some of them are Johnson Thomas and John kaemmer. Johnson Thomas, in a journal article, *Secret Circumcision songs of the Shangana-tsonga Circumcision Rite: A textual and musical analysis*, illustrates the role of songs in the circumcision rituals and their learning process. Correspondingly, John Kaemmer also in his book, *Music in Human life: Anthropological Perspective on Music*, illustrates how the circumcision rituals are intergrated with songs. These two studies depict songs as part of the circumcision ritual process but do not appreciate the language of these songs.

Similarly, Beatrice Ochoki, in a thesis, *pragmatic interpretation Constraints in Kenya Hip Hop lyrics*, focuses on the interpretation of Kenyan hip hop songs. Her study illustrates the use of language choice in identifying gender. She says that the lexical items used portray women as sex objects whose beauty only serve to attract men sexually. On the same note, Margret Keter, in her thesis, *style and the Portrayal of Women in four Contemporary Kipsigis Songs*, studies the relationship between the portrayal of women and linguistic style such as euphemism, rhetorical questions dialogue and foreign words used in contemporary kipsigi songs. Beatrice Ochoki and Margret Keter's studies are very instrumental in informing this study since it also intends to focus on language of songs. However, these studies do not examine the performance symbols

and language of Bamasaaba circumcision songs since their studies are directed towards other tribes other than Bamasaaba.

Joyce Wambura in an academic journal, *Gendered Constructions in Kuria Female circumcision songs*, discusses how the language used in female circumcision songs constructs gender roles. She illustrates that the language used in these songs portrays women as home-care-takers, child-bearers and cooks who pay attention to their physical beauty while men are protectors, rulers and providers. She states,

Women are represented as being active only around home while men go out to face enemies, bring back stolen property, provide for material needs and rule/lead. Gender discourse in the songs therefore, sustain kuria beliefs on gender relations, role, behaviors and expectation. (9)

Wambura's study is based on female circumcision and not male circumcision as carried out by Bamasaaba. Thus, creating a gap that this study has bridged

Other researchers who have investigated the language, have concentrated on language of other songs other than circumcision songs. For instance, Onesmus G, in a journal article, *language use and context in the campaign songs of the chukka community in Kenya* investigates the language use in campaign songs of chukka people of Kenya. He illustrates how the composers of these songs use language as a weapon of political influence. He demonstrates how the parts of speech such as nouns, verbs and adjectives are used stylistically to achieve this. He notes,

a successful appreciation of a discourse should put into consideration the issue of context since these campaign songs appeal a lot to the emotion of people, it is the humble submission of this study that to a greater degree these kichuka campaign songs have influenced the voting patterns in this community with disastrous effects getting wrong political leaders who only serve their selfish ends... (12)

Therefore, since Onesmus centers his study on campaign songs of chukka people, his study does not investigate the performance symbols and language of Bamasaaba circumcision songs.

Maurice Bloch, in a journal, *Ritual, History and Power: Selected paper in Anthropology*, argues that music and dance are part of ritual performances. Bloch's argument will inform this study. However, by using a linguistic approach to investigate how music and dance are a communication agent, he does not go beyond the dichotomies of form. He investigates the arrangement of phrases and sentences yet this study will aim at the performance symbols and literary language of Bamasaaba circumcision songs.

### **1.8 Significance of study**

This study of performance symbols and literary language of Bamasaaba circumcision songs is beneficial to literary scholars and critics of traditional circumcision rituals. By analysing the literariness of the performance symbols and the songs in Bamasaaba circumcision rituals and literary language, this study aims at enabling the critics of traditional circumcision rituals to appreciate bamasaaba circumcision rituals and songs as a literary work with a didactic role. The study will also change people's negative perception towards Bamasaaba circumcision rituals.

### **1.9 Theoretical framework**

The study applies formalism as a theory of literary criticism to analyse the performance symbols and literary language of Bamasaaba circumcision rituals and songs.

Formalism emerged from the works of the society for the study of poetic language (OPOYAZ) founded in 1916 in St. Petersburg by Boris Eichenbaum, Victor Sheklovsky and Yury Tynyanov and the Moscow linguistic circle founded in 1914 by Roman Jakobson. The proponents of formalism theory emphasize the study of literary devices within the piece of literary work. Formalists argue that a literary text should be studied without considering the outside influence such as authorship, culture or society influence. Their main focus is on the features of the literary text itself and not the author's life or social class. In simple terms, they focus on the literariness of a text: what makes it a piece of literature. It is what Boris Eichenbaum in "Russian Formalist Criticism, Four Essays," refers to as a science of literature. He asserts,

The so called formal method grew out of a struggle for a science of literature. That would be both independent

and factual. It is not the outgrowth of a particular methodology.(102)

According to Boris, formalism emerged as a result of a search for a formal method of literature. A method that can set apart literature from other works.

Cain, Mary Ann, in an essay, “problematizing formalism: A double cross of Genre boundaries,” writes that “ formalism asserts that the text stands on its own as a complete entity, apart from the writer who produced it.”

In connection with the above, Bamasaba circumcision rituals and songs are analysed as literary works because they possess features that differentiate them from other works. Like other literary works, these circumcision rituals employ literary language such as the performance symbols that make them more meaningful. For example, the boys yet to be circumcised are dressed in heavy, tight and discomforting costumes to dramatise strength tolerance and patience as some of the society’s expectations of a man. As such failure to analyse these performance symbols leaves one with very little to understand about the Bamasaba circumcision rituals.

Formalists also believe that the main purpose of art is making familiar objects unfamiliar and increasing difficulty in understanding them. Shklovsky, in his essay “Art as a Technique,” asserts that art helps in recovering the sensation of life. This is what he refers to as defamiliarisation. He defines defamiliarisation as a technique to “distinguish poetic from practical language on the basis of former’s perceptibility.”

According to Shklovsky, usually when we get familiar to horrible things, we stop feeling them and when we get used to beautiful things, we stop enjoying them. He therefore sees art also as a way of making its horrors felt.

In relation to the above, the Bamasaba use defamiliarisation to create a new perception of life through the circumcision rituals. The Bamasaba men are always taught to be strong, patient and hardworking as some of the society’s values. This kind of teaching is defamiliarised during the performance of circumcision rituals and songs. The society values are communicated or transferred to the young generation through dramatization. As such, these circumcision rituals deviate from the ordinary language of communication and use a stylistic way of communication that gives more emphasis to these themes that may have always been taken lightly. A case in

point is the dramatization during the ineemba and isonja dance. The boys dance while stamping hard on the ground to symbolize strength. The one who raises more dust proves to be the strongest. The songs also use defamiliarised language that creates a new sensation of life. For example in the song, “kumubono kunandya”, defamiliarised language is employed through personification. The knife is given the ability to eat to emphasise the cutting process of circumcision

To formalists, images serve the purpose of defamiliarisation. As such the images also create a new sensation of the object by attaching a meaning different from the primary meaning. Viktor notes,

The goal of the image is not to bring the meaning near our understanding but to create special way of experiencing an object, to make one not “recognize” but “see” it(16)

Viktor’s view is relevant in analysis of the Bamasaba circumcision rituals and songs because the objects used such as the costumes have connotative meaning different from their primary meaning as perceived in the daily life. Through these costumes one is able to lengthen the understanding of certain ideas or themes by being able to see them. For example costumes such as the thigh bells and arm rings reflect strength, patience and stoicism. These objects are tight, heavy and uncomfortable. As such they require the boy to be stoic enough to endure the pain caused by the tightness. He also needs to be strong and patient enough to bear their weight and discomfort.

Formalism approach regards literature as a very specific unit of human knowledge that has to be examined on its own and for its sake. Since it ignores certain aspects about the author such as the authors name, the time he lived, the cultural impact on the authors life and the authors political beliefs, it is used because the Bamasaba circumcision songs do not have specific composers and therefore no clear origin. As such they can be examined on their own without knowledge about their composers. Therefore the research will focus on performance symbols and literary language as some of the inherent features of Bamasaba circumcision songs.

Formalists also assert that literary work is an archive of literary devices. They believe that the literary devices serve the purpose of defamiliarising. It is these devices that give literary work their literariness. Eagleton states:

Formalists started out by seeing literary work as more or less arbitrary assemblage of ‘ devices’, and later came to see these devices as interrelate elements or functions within a total textual system...and what all these elements had in common was their ‘estranging ‘ or ‘defamiliarising’ effect (3)

According to formalists, the literary devices aim at making the familiar things unfamiliar so as to deviate from the obvious.

Relatedly, Bamasaba circumcision songs are an archive of literary devices. Bamasaba employ devices such as symbolism, metaphors, repetition, satire, call and response, euphemism and personification to defamiliarise themes such as collectivism, superstition and patriarchy.

## **1.10 Research Methodology**

### **1.10.1 Research Design**

This research is field based. It is informed by qualitative research methodology which enabled the researcher to acquire descriptive facts. Through qualitative research, the researcher was able to analyse, describe and interpret data with solid field examples. The researcher had a close interaction with the informants as to get their views and experiences on bamasaaba circumcision rituals. As such the researcher had to build rapport with the informants and interact with them so as to get their views and experiences on circumcision. Key informants were identified depending on the knowledge and experience they have regarding circumcision culture.

### **1.10.2 Primary Sources**

This research’s primary sources are Bamasaaba circumcision rituals and songs. The performance symbols with in circumcision rituals, the literary language of the songs and themes are analysed.

### **1.10.3 Secondary Sources**

Secondary sources include unpublished dissertations, text books and journal articles. Some of these were downloaded from websites such as, [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) and

[www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu). Others were accessed from friends through emails and social media platforms such as watsup. Other sources were the circumcision ritual performers.

#### **1.10.4 Data Collection Method**

I reviewed different scholars' works written about circumcision rituals. Data from the field was also collected through use of audio recording, visual recording and photographs. I took still photographs and video recordings of some performances. Pre-recorded videos and audios of the circumcision performances were also analysed. The recorded data was then analysed and stored in notebooks and Microsoft word documents. Transcription data collection method was used to change the oral data into text form for easy analysis.

#### **1.11 Research Tools**

This research used qualitative research tools such as, interviews, photography, audio and visual recording.

##### **1.11.1. Interviews.**

The method involved face to face conversation with the respondents which helped to probe a deeper understanding of the topic in question. The study used an interview guide that possessed open-ended questions that generated qualitative responses from respondents. The researcher interviewed various informants such as, local circumcision surgeons, circumcised men, elders, song leaders, students and teachers. The oral face to face interviews were preferred because it allowed full expression of respondents' opinion and in depth information was obtained.

Interviews were used to obtain detailed information about personal feelings, perceptions and opinion. Through open ended questions, it was possible to have free interaction with my informants. From the informants' answers, I was guided to ask further questions to interrogate the new ideas brought up by the informants. I also engaged ritual performers in informal interviews during the performances. I interacted with informants whenever I had chance to. At times as I went to the market and at school with the students and teachers. Respondents' own words were easily recorded, ambiguities were clarified and incomplete answers followed up. This instrument was used with a purpose of collecting more in depth information concerning the study of performance symbols and literary language of bamasaaba circumcision songs.



### **1.11.2 Observation**

By using the observation method, I attended some of the circumcision functions and observed how they are performed. This enabled me to gather the songs which are sung at the events. I then noted all the collected songs in a note book. This tool also enabled me gather data on the performance symbols because I was able to see some of the performances of the rituals in a real life situation. I participated in the ‘searching for manhood’ and actual circumcision rituals in Manjiya county of Bududa district.

### **1.11.3 Photography, Audio and Video Recording**

Both video and still pictures were captured during different ritual performances. I noted down the findings and later analysed them. I also recorded interviews and back played during the time of transcription and data analysis.

### **1.12 Data Analysis**

The data was collected and analysed using the formalism literary theory. It was recorded and analysed in chapters. Chapter one is the introductory chapter. It examines the background of the Bamasaaba circumcision rituals, related works, and theoretic frame work and research methodology. Chapter two examines the performance symbols of Bamasaaba circumcision rituals. This chapter involves analysis of dramatisation of the circumcision rituals, costumes and props. Chapter three analyses the literary language of the Bamasaaba circumcision songs. The literary language analysed are, Rhythm repetition, loanwords, satire, call and response, personification and euphemism, symbolism, metaphors and synecdoche. Chapter four examines the themes in the circumcision rituals and chapter five concludes the research. It summarises the research findings and gives recommendations.

## **CHAPTER TWO: PERFORMANCE SYMBOLS**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Performance is an exhibition created through actions executed by the artist or other participant. These actions may be exhibited live, documented or in fine art. Symbols are often settings, characters, images or other motifs that stand in for bigger ideas. Therefore performance symbols of bamasaaba circumcision rituals are those exhibitions that make the rituals meaningful. During the performance of these rituals, dances are an accompaniment to the songs but they also serve as a form of nonverbal communication. Through these body movements the innermost values and norms of Bamasaaba are communicated. This chapter therefore analyses the different performance symbols of Bamasaaba circumcision rituals such as dramatization, costumes, props and paralinguistic. Without a critical analysis of these rituals, one may wrongly interpret them as meaningless performances. Many people including some of the Bamasaba themselves more so the young generation think these rituals are performed for the sake. They don't attach any meaning to them. One of the informants, woniala Christopher, senior five student and a circumcised mumasaaba when asked about the meaning attached to some of these rituals, said, "We just perform them because we have to. It is our obligation because we found them being performed that way".

This chapter explains that the actual cutting of the foreskin, though a pivotal moment in the bamasaaba circumcision ceremony, is a small component of the whole process. There is therefore need to understand the symbolic meaning of performance of other Bamasaaba circumcision rituals as well.

### **2.2 Dramatisation**

Dramatisation is a representation of an activity that stands as an equivalent of something or results in an equivalent. Circumcision rituals among Bamasaaba are a dramatisation of the society's values and norms. They therefore serve to transfer these values and norms that every Mumasaaba man should observe to the boys aspiring to become men. Even if one is circumcised but does not behave like a man as per society's constraints, his manhood is questioned and he is regarded half a man.

### **2.2.1 The Circumcision Reminding Ritual**

Bamasaaba society is a society that highly respects seniority. Senior members at all levels in this society are to be accorded maximum respect. This is depicted by the reminding circumcision ritual. This ritual is performed on first of January during the circumcision year. It is to remind Bamasaaba that the circumcision year has come so they need to prepare. A medium size drum is used. The sounding of this drum follows an order which symbolize seniority. The most senior clan drums first, the next clan follows till the least senior. Among Bamasaaba, hierarchy is observed. As such elders and leaders in society are highly respected and served first. The elder brothers are meant to lead the young ones. That is why in most cases they become the family heirs.

The value of decision making is dramatized when the boy himself announces his desire to become a man. The whole process of circumcision commences with the boy himself informing his father that he is ready to face the ordeal of the knife. It is the boy to decide when to be circumcised. The implication of this is that a real man is meant to make his own decisions. Dan wamasolo, one of the elders said,

A Mumasaaba man at one point should take tough decisions on his own. So one who decides to spill his blood on his own is truly a man and can take tougher decisions.

Initially Bamasaaba men are society and family decision makers. Since the women are regarded as a weaker sex, tough decisions are left to men. For example, decisions in war and other family decisions.

Team work, socialization or togetherness is symbolized when the boy goes around informing various people about his intention and soliciting for their support. Even if it is one boy to be circumcised, the entire society is meant to be around to witness as the boy is transformed into a man. This is because it takes the entire community to form a man. It is the responsibility of the father, mother, uncles, aunties, grand parents, other relatives and friends to form a single man. These people play different important roles in a boy's life.

Another symbolic ritual is that of brewing the local beer (khamalwa). The boy himself brews the beer that he is to serve his visitors who come to support him when he is to face the ordeal of the knife. A real man should be able to sustain and provide for others. It is on that note that the boy

is tested at this time whether he is able to provide and feed others. Bamasaaba people are required to have the moral attitude of contributing to community for their well being. It is on that note that the boy to be circumcised should be man enough to feed other members of the society. The water used for brewing is fetched by the initiate on his bear head in a pot from a stream or river. The water from a stream river is preferred because since it flows, it symbolizes continuity, prosperity and progress. Just as the water from a stream or a river flows and not stagnant, so should be a man's life. It should be prosperous and progressive. Gidudu Francis one of the informants informed me that,

A real Mumasaaba man should reproduce and work hard to accumulate wealth. For a man, it is not only wealth that counts but also the children he leave behind to ensure continuity.

If the boy produces good beer, he is believed to be able to stand the knife.

### **2.2.2 Isonja Dance**

Isonja is one of the initial stages of Bamasaaba circumcision. It is also referred to as a war dance because it emphasizes prowess as some of the traits of an ideal Mumasaaba man. Isonja is therefore symbolic of what the Bamasaaba expects its men to possess. This dance tests whether the candidate is strong enough to become a man or not. Isonja is performed every even year during January to March. The performance takes place in the evening when the participants are done with their daily chores. It is a preparatory dance for the intended initiates. During this dance, the boys aquait their thighs with bells. These bells are quite tight and heavy. The boys also get aquaited with other dancing items such as head gears, beads and animal skin. It is at this time that boys especially those of age are sorted out by the elders. The age at which one is to be circumcised is not fixed but rages from twelve to twenty five years.

During the Isonja dance, the boys hire singers who are experts in singing Isonja songs. These singers must also have stood firm during circumcision. They are locally called 'Namwenya', 'kyilaali' or simply 'Umwimbi'. While going to the arena for the Isonja, the candidates lead themselves while singing the songs they learnt during the preparatory stage (kushebusa Imbalu) At this point they are not led by the instructor. This is symbolic of the independence trait that the men should posses. They show that they can stand on their own as men. However when they

reach the Arena, the instructor then takes the lead. This is because during their journey to the arena they were simply being tested whether they are ready to be men. However when at the arena, they are reminded that they are not yet men and still need guidance from the instructors. Dances are arranged from clan to clan and a soloist sings and directs the dancers and the initiates dance round the singer in rhythm while heavy stamping the ground. What proves one to be a man among bamasaaba is having tough muscles as well as being strong. As such the initiates, during the Isonja dance and struggle to prove that they are tough through the way they dance. The soloist is charged with the responsibility of training the boys how to dance while emphasising prowess.

Before one is initiated into manhood, one must prove that he is strong and tough through this dance. As such the performance symbol in this ritual is the dramatisation of prowess skills the men should have. This is dramatised when the initiates dance while bending their backs, spreading their hands and stamping their feet hard on the ground while dancing in different directions. Woneloba an instructor of Isonja informed me that this dance indeed emphasises the traits of a mumasaaba man such as aggressiveness, strength and perseverance. That every man should possess these prowess skills to be able to protect and provide for his family and clan. He said, “a real man should not portray fear but aggressiveness. Neither should he be emotional or weak as a woman or a child.” (Interview, 4th January, 2020).

The trait of toughness and strength is also dramatised when the initiates struggle to maintain their positions during the dance even when other initiates try to knock them out. They are meant to persevere in the struggle because they are really knocked hard. Those who give up are considered too immature to become men. This is because in case of any heavy task like participation in war, building, providing for the family, it is the men to face it. Men are always called upon to defend their societies. Like in war the initiate are trained to gain victory over fear and emerge as a strong man after facing the ordeal of the knife. The positioning of initiates' elbows during the dance performs the men's role to protect. The elbows must stretch out. This is called 'khureka tsingumbo,' (positioning the elbows). This is a posture of protection. Failure to stretch out the elbows one may be knocked out by the other initiates and that signifies failure for one to protect his perimeters. Such an initiate is regarded not mature enough to protect his family and clan property and therefore not mature enough to be initiated into manhood. A weak initiate

may be asked by clansmen to wait for the next year of circumcision as he matures. The boys also wear costumes that are quite heavy. For instance, the thigh bells

### **2.2.3 'khuwenza Busani' (searching for manhood)**

This is a ritual performed immediately after the Isonja. During this ritual another ideal trait for men that is dramatised is boldness. A real Mumasaaba man is meant to be bold and courageous. As such shyness is believed to be a trait for women. It is on that note that after being tested in isonja and qualified as a legible candidate for circumcision, the initiate is meant to be bold enough to go around informing relatives and friends that he aspires to become a man. It is for that reason that he announces his intention himself.

Among the relatives that the boy visits are his mother's clansmen to announce to his uncles that it is time for him to be circumcised. Usually the maternal uncles give their nephews gifts. However their biggest role is to evoke blessings upon their nephews. The blessings are dramatised by blowing beer on the initiate's belly as words of blessings are uttered urging him to stand firm and not ashame them.

### **2.2.4 Actual circumcision ritual**

This now involves the actual cutting of the boy's foreskin. It involves other rituals as well. There are many ways of how these rituals are performed but this is the popular way of doing it.

A healthy bull or he-goat is first slautered in the court-yard where the boy is going to face the ordeal of the knife. The animal's heart is stuck on the stick in the court-yard where the boy is going to stand. This is a sacrifice to the ancestral spirits called 'basaambwa'. The inside parts of the animal are closely examined by the elders. The contents of the stomach are smeared on the boy's face, belly and legs by elder in charge of the sacrifice. The elder keeps instructing the boy to always follow the customes and norms of his people.

After the instructions, members from different clans organise to meet before they all head to the sacred swamp traditionally organised for that purpose. Each major clan has sub clans. The clans follow traditional paths called 'luwanda' where they meet other clans and proceed to the sacred swamps. The boys are then smeared with the mud from these swamps before they head back to the court-yard where they are to be circumcised. After this the boy is fully charged to face the pain of the knife.

In the father's courtyard, the boy is made to stand still on the sack. He holds a stick across his shoulders and immediately the traditional surgeon performs the first operation on the boy. Despite the pain, the boy is not meant to do anything that will reveal that he is in pain. He is not meant to shake his body, frown or wince. He is to stand absolutely still looking in one position.

After the first operation the boy may be taken around again while dancing and as the wound is being massaged before brought back for the second operation. The second operation involves cutting of the inner lining of the tissue. The circumciser takes less than a minute and the boy is completely circumcised. The new man is then covered with a cloth and taken inside the house where he is fed and treated.

If the circumcision process has been successful, people continue dancing and feasting to congratulate the new man upon such courage. However if the boy shows any sign of fear, the merry making comes to a halt immediately.

During this stage, the trait of strength and courage is further dramatised. Besides evoking blessings from the ancestral spirits, the animal's heart stuck in the court-yard depicts a strong heart that the boy is meant to have. Immediately after the heart is got out of the animal, it is examined to see if it is still beating. If it still has the heart beat, it is interpreted that boy is still scared and not ready. However if the heart is still then the boy's heart is believed to be calm as well. Men are trained through circumcision to withstand all sorts of pain and remain calm even if hurt. It is that reason that even when they lose their dear ones, they are expected to remain calm and not to cry like children or women.

When the boys are taken to the sacred swamps and smeared with the mud, they are dramatically trained to control anger. The process of smearing one with mud is quite annoying but they are told to control their anger and remain calm as they are provoked. Wokhatala George, one of the elders informed this research that,

It is very important for boys to learn how men behave before they become men. Unlike boys, men should not allow anger take control over them. It is a childish thing to be emotional. Not every small thing calls for a fight.

The ritual of following the traditional paths dramatise imbalu as a life journey. As a boy gets born, so should he get circumcised before he dies.

The boys are also smeared with mud and yeast as a sign of no retreat, no surrender. It also dramatises the cleasing off of boyhood. It is boys who play in mud. Therefore smearing the boys with mud is farewell to playfulness. After circumcision the new men are not expected to play with mud any more. Kuloba John also informed me that smearing of mud is also done to provoke the boys to become men. No one can do such a thing to a man but to children. For a man is highly respected. (Interview, March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2021)

Before the smearing of yeast, the boy is taken to his paternal aunt who shaves all the hairy parts of his body. This shaving ritual also symbolises cleasing off boyhood in preparation of manhood. The paternal aunts are equated to men since they are sisters to the fathers. It is on that note that they are given such a sensitive role. They are locally referred to as female fathers. The aunts chosen to perform this ritual are meant to be exemplary and with moral authority to guide the boys. While shaving the boy's hair, the paternal aunt evokes blessings upon him and encourages him to be firm during circumcision and there after work hard and marry to expand the clan. Among the Bamasaaba, paternal aunt is meant to be a very close friend to the children in that they are free to share anything that seems confidential with them without shying away. They are free to even share sex matters. After this the boy then heads back to his father's home where he is to be circumcised.

Immediately after the boy's foreskin is completely cut, all his costumes that he was using during preparation for circumcision are taken away from him and given another boy. They become a taboo to him. He is not allowed to wear them again. He is immediately given another cloth to cover his nakedness. This is symbolic of the genesis of a new life. Just like the everlasting mark created on the new man, so is the boy forever supposed to behave like a man because he cannot become a boy again.

Similarly, during the preparation stages of circumcision, the boy's penis is seen hovering about outside his shorts or the boy can even go around naked. This is very normal to the on-lookers because at that time he still considered a child or a boy. It is children who still have the innocence to go around naked. However, immediately after circumcision, the new man is not



allowed to be seen naked in public. Sharif wamono, one of the circumcisors said, “Kyila khu khalanga kha solo, khuba kha yika mushilo.”

That is why we call it a wild animal, because it hunts at night. (Interview, March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2021) He added that a man is supposed to protect his nakedness and not show it any publicly.

The actual cutting of the boy’s foreskin is a dramatization of perseverance since it involves a lot of pain. All the circumcised respondents said the act is so painful. Wanda Paul explained that the pain one feels is deafening.

I heard the excruciating noise of the knife as it started eating my foreskin. The pain was agonizing. Though I had to stand strong at that time, I could not endure when time for treatment came. It was extraordinary.

Withstanding this profound pain portrays the need of endurance in the society of men. It is believed that since one can endure this excruciating pain, then he can endure other pains in life with calmness. Among Bamasaaba it is a weakness for a man to cry despite the pain.

### **2.2.5 Cleansing ritual (khusabisa)**

After circumcision, the boy is still considered unclean until he is cleansed by his circumciser. This ritual also serves to transfer the norms and values of the Bamasaaba society to the new men. The circumciser does not only end with cutting off the boy’s foreskin. He also plays the role of teaching the boy on how to behave as aman. This dramatises the fact that it is not only the cutting off of the foreskin that transforms one into a man but also how one behaves. This ritual is khusabisa by the Bamasaaba literary meaning washing hands. This implies cleansing one of the filth of boyhood. This ritual is performed by pouring local brew on the new man’s hands to signify the cleansing off of the boyhood filth by the circumciser. The circumciser comes along with a panga, a hoe, fire and the circumciser’s knife. Sharif wamono informed me that these items are symbolic. There symbolism is farther discussed in chapter three. In this ritual, the new man is told that the new society of men he is joining demands him to be hardworking, enduring, and social and above all marry and produce children. Therefore circumcision is just a symbol of manhood but real manhood is defined by several values and norms. Real manhood is when one is able to marry and beget children. Infact a man who fails to beget children is always proscribed

from performing most of the cultural ceremonies. Such a man is banished from getting closer to where the boy is being circumcised from. It is believed that such a man may bring bad omen to the boy. Among bamasaaba, children are really valued and a man without children is not man enough. He is even scorned at his death. His body is not supposed to be brought out through the front door like it is normally done. The body is brought out through the back door because he is believed to be of bad omen.

Manhood is also measured by hardwork. A mumasaaba man is expected by society to work hard to sustain his household and his society. It is symbolised by the different items that handed over to the new man by the circumcisers.

#### **2.2.6 Ritual of knowing paths. (Khukyenda tsinzila)**

It is believed that the newly circumcised men have entered a new society of men so they are oriented into this new society. One of the orientations is in the ritual of knowing paths. The newly circumcised men are shown all short cuts within and around their compounds. This is because boys are not allowed to use short cuts since they may not be able to fight incase of an attack yet they are always lonely places which are not used by many. They are therefore told to use main routes. However when they become men, they are believed to have acquired the strength to fight that is why they are shown these paths. This happens three days after the boy has been circumcised. Together with other initiates from the same clan, the new man is taken around the compound led by the clan head. The newly circumcised men carry peeled long sticks as they walk along the paths.

Tsebi sam, in an interview stated that the circumcised men carry peeled sticks to dramatise their peeled off foreskins. (Interview, March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021). The clan head who leads them carries local brew which he blows on the paths to evoke blessings and send away evil spirits. Walking along these paths is also symbolic of the new journey of life that the new men are yet to under take. This new journey calls for blessings for one to go through it smoothly that is why the clan head evoke the gods for them.

#### **2.2.7 Ritual of coming out of seclusion. (Khukhwalula or hatching from boyhood)**

After circumcision, the boy is put in seclusion where he is nursed until he is healed. On the day before the ineemba dance, the boy comes out of seclusion. This is literally interpreted as hatching out of boyhood into manhood. The boy is meant to dispose off his beddings made of

dry banana leaves that he used during seclusion. These dry banana leaves are burnt to symbolise getting rid of the filth of boyhood.

Similarly, every hairy part of the boy's body is shaved. This is also to cleanse off the filth of boyhood. The new men later meet and go along the paths that they were shown by the clan heads. This time round they go along these paths without being directed by the clan heads because they are now men. The implication of this is that as men they are meant to make their own decisions. This ritual also involves singing but unlike the rituals before the actual circumcision, the new men lead themselves in the songs. This still dramatises the quality of independence that the men are expected to have. Several informants told me that Bamasaaba men are expected to be independent in certain decision makings.

### **2.2.8 Ineemba Dance (Commissioning the New Men)**

Ineemba is the ritual that marks the end of the circumcision ceremony. It is performed to fully welcome the new men into the society of men. After circumcision the boys become men but not full men until they are admitted into the society of men through ineemba. Circumcision takes place in the even year but ineemba takes place in the odd year which is referred to as the year for the girls. This ritual involves a lot of singing, dancing and feasting just like other circumcision rituals. It is usually performed in Buwabwala, Bupoto and Buwagogo sub-counties of Bubulo County. In Bududa, it takes place in Bukigai, Bulucheke, Bubiita and Bukiga sub-counties of Manjiya County. It also takes place in Busano, Bufumbo and Wanaale of Bungokho County.

This ritual starts from the initiate's parents' home with a lot of feasting. An elder with an agreeable character is assigned the duty of dressing the initiate with the animal skin. (Tsisumbati) while repeating to them the same words that were said to them by the circumciser during the cleansing ritual. Dressing them in the new robe dramatises their entry in the new society of men. The animal skin is a traditional wear of the Bamasaaba men. The initiates are also appreciated by giving them gifts by elders and other participants. Whoever gives the initiate a gift, puts a certain creeping plant locally called 'libombwebombwe' around the initiate's neck. The more of the "libomwebombwe" around one's neck the more gifts.

Immediately the initiate hears the drum at around 4:00pm, he rushes to meet the other initiates so that they head to the prepared arena for the ineemba dance. However before reaching the arena,

they are instructed by the elders to kneel down while facing each other and remove their animal skins, fold them and give the other initiates. This dramatised unity and sharing as one of the values expected of Bamasaaba men. As they exchange their robes, they are reminded by the elders that it is important for men to learn to share and not to be mean. Wanzala George, one of the elders said that a man who detests sharing does not deserve to be called a man even if his foreskin is peeled off. (Interview, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021) . After this, the initiates then head to the arena where they meet other initiates from other clans. The initiates enter the ineemba arena from the eastern direction. Many informants told me that Bamasaaba associate the eastern direction with what is right just like the right hand. (Interview, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021). This therefore dramatises that things should always be done in the right accepted way.

The initiates dance while spreading their legs apart, bending their backs and swaying their hands. The girls spread their hands as they bend to the left and to the right. They also spread out their chests to expose their breasts as they dance. Unlike the prior rituals which aim at training the boy to acquire the values expected of the men, ineemba aims at confirming one as a man. That is why the initiates dance flamboyantly and proud of their victory. The dancers of ineemba hold specially prepared long staves which at the end of each rhythm point to the North-East to indicate that circumcision came from that direction

### **2.3 Costumes and props used during circumcision rituals**

Costume means the set of clothes appropriate for a particular occasion or season. Costumes are such a fabulous part of the Bamasaaba circumcision rituals. They help to tell the circumcision story of Bamasaaba. These costumes bring to life the performance of the circumcision rituals because they have symbolic meaning which is analysed below. The costumes symbolically demonstrate some of the values and norms that the Bamasaaba hold and wish to transfer to the next generation. Below are the main costumes for the bamasaaba circumcision initiates.

#### **2.3.1 Thigh bells. (bitsenze)**

These are six to eight bells worn by the boy around his thighs. They are tight and quite heavy. They are used in performance of various circumcision rituals. Thigh bells are a symbol of strength and perseverance. Since these bells are heavy it takes a strong boy to wear them. The more bells the boy wears the stronger he is considered. Since they are tight, it takes a patient boy to endure their discomfort. They are therefore worn to perform some of the values that the

bamasaaba society aims to transfer to the younger generation. That is strength and perseverance. As earlier discussed, imbalu rituals aim at producing strong men. That is why every now and then the candidate is tested to prove whether he is strong enough and patient to fit in the society of men. Mushikona Emma, one of the informants clarified that among Bamasaba, strength does not mean the physical ability alone but to be brave and courageous. That what matters is the how an individual manages and finds a way for every problem and struggle in his life. (Interview, July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021)

As a patriarchal society, Bamasaaba expect a man to be indomitable as one of the qualities of a strong man. He rules his family and does not share power with a woman unless, she possesses and displays the intellect and virtues that make her worthy of a share of power. Mushikona also added that a strong Mumasaaba man is good when it benefits him and his family but he is capable of evil or violence when it benefits him and his family.

### **2.3.2 Shorts**

Circumcision candidates among Bamasaaba wear shorts. This is to symbolise the fact that they are still boys and not yet men. For trousers are meant for men. Usually the boys only graduate to wearing full length trousers after circumcision. Woniala Francis, in an interview noted that the reason men are forbidden from putting on shorts more so when attending certain cultural ceremonies, is because shorts are simply not manly, they are for children. Grown men should not show off their legs for any reasons unless they are doing work that necessitates them to do so such as digging. As such once a man puts on shorts then should be very careful not to meet his in-laws. Because it is an abomination and therefore shameful. (Interview, July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2021). Showing off one's legs is something children do out of their innocence.

### **2.3.3 Cowrie shells (tsimbi).**

Cowrie shells have a smooth, shiny and glossy surface. They are shaped and structured like an egg. Because of their beauty, they are used for decorating the candidate. These are beautifully lined up on a belt. These cowrie shells also symbolise wealth and prosperity. The society of Bamasaaba highly respects a wealthy and prosperous man. As such the boy aspiring to become a man wears the cowrie shells as a reminder to work hard and accumulate wealth so as to be respected in society. Like in other parts of Africa, Bamasaaba, in the past used cowrie shells a

form of currency in their trade networks. Due to their light nature they would easily be transported. They were also easy to handle, protect and count.

Wetaka Richard in an interview also noted that the cowrie shells are also a symbol of fertility and birth. The split in the cowrie shell is seen as a symbol of a woman's private part. The giver of life. (Interview, July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2021) Fertility is one of the blessings evoked upon the initiate. As a man he is expected to reproduce children. Among Bamasaaba, children are highly valued because they offer social security, assist with labour, confer social status, secure rights of property and inheritance and provide continuity while maintaining the family lineage.

#### **2.3.4 Head gear**

This circumcision head gear is made out of the Columbus monkey skin. It is also beautifully lined up with cowrie shells. This head gear is part of the dance attire worn by the circumcision candidate. It is not only to beautify the candidate but also meant to make the initiate look wild. The long, black- and -white fur of the Columbus monkey is what makes the boy look fierce as he tosses his head back and forth. The Bamasaaba men are expected to be fearless and aggressive. George wakhatala noted that among Bamasaaba "being a man is about being fearless". (Interview 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2021). As such shy men are detested in this society because shyness is for women. He added that a man's life is like going to hunt with only a spear when everything is armed with horns, antlers, claws and fangs. Such a man needs to be fearless in order to hunt.

#### **2.3.5 Constant running stream water.**

As discussed earlier the boy takes part in the brewing of the beer that will be taken during his circumcision rituals. It is the boy himself to collect some of the water to be used. However not any water available can be used. He is escorted by the rest to a stream or a flowing river to collect the water. Immediately after collecting this water, he is not meant to look behind as he heads back home and pours it in the roasted millet dough. This water has to be collected from a flowing source not stagnant. As such it implies that a man's life should be progressive and not stagnant. Welihke Rodgers one of the respondents noted that after circumcision,

Every year that goes by, a man's life should not remain the same. It should improve both socially and economically. He should accumulate wealth, wives and beget children to ensure the clan's continuity.

### **2.3. 6 Millet local brew**

Millet is an important crop during circumcision rituals. The cereal crop is favored due to its productivity. Therefore millet local brew is commonly used because it is a symbol of productivity. The boy to be circumcised is sprinkled with this local millet beer to evoke spiritual blessings of productivity upon him. An exemplary elder is chosen to carry out this job of sprinkling. Woniala phinicus said

The millet beer is used to bless the boy with productivity. Just like millet produces very many grains, so should the man produce many children after circumcision?

Among Bamasaaba failure to beget children is not only unacceptable but also a disgrace and an abnormal state. Every child begot is an ancestor returned. This is emphasized when it comes to naming of the new born children. They are named after the dead ancestors.

### **2.3.7 Yeast and Mud**

Yeast is a symbol of maturity. Yeast is used to boost the maturity of the local brew. It is responsible for the fermentation process in brewing local beer. A paste of yeast is smeared on the circumcision candidate every evening until the day of circumcision. During the smearing of yeast, the boy is reminded to adhere to the society's expectation of a man. He is told to act maturely like the members of the new society of men he is yet to join.

Before the boy heads for the circumcision ground to face the ordeal of the knife, he is taken to a sacred swamp where he is smeared with mud. He is smeared from head to toe to evoke spiritual blessings upon the boy. This is quite irritating for the boy. When the mud dries up on the boy's skin, it pull it and causes some pain. This is also kind of mockery to the boy and provokes him to do away with boyhood and yarn to become a man. The mud is a symbol of childhood. It is the young boys or children who are expected to play in mud, make themselves dirty and have such irresponsible behaviors. It is such behaviors that the smearing of mud mocks. Therefore a man is not expected to act like a child. Namoma peter stated that,

There are some childish behaviours that our society does not expect of a circumcised man such

as poor communication skills, poor personal hygiene and lack of self sufficiency. As such it is shameful for a 30 year old man to stay at his parent's home. I can't imagine a circumcised man saying, women are supposed to love me because I am a handsome man.

The mud therefore symbolizes the filth of boyhood that a boy aspiring to be initiated into manhood should strive to overcome.

### **2.3.8 Piece of wood with fire**

After finally being circumcised, the boy is cleansed by the circumciser as discussed before. During the cleansing ritual, the newly circumcised is reminded of responsibilities required of a man. One of the props used in this ritual is the piece of wood with fire. This piece of wood is handed to the boy. It is a symbol of a wife. With this piece of wood the boy is told that he has to marry a wife to cook and produce children for the clan. He is also cautioned against misusing the fire to destroy. Wamimbi Tobias said,

Fire symbolizes a wife because the greatest duty of a wife is to be a good house keeper. As part of that, she is supposed to cook for her husband, children and visitors. As such no one in the family should complain of hunger. The kitchen is her office.

### **2.3.9 The axe**

The axe is prop used in the cleansing ritual. The axe is a symbol of hard work. As the boy is given the axe by the circumciser, he is cautioned against misusing his strength. He is told not to use the axe to cut others but to split firewood and cut trees to build his home. A man among Bamasaaba is defined by his brawn and the exertion he puts in his work. Wamimbi added that,

Masaba's son should love his axe to sustain his family. Even if the wife is there to cook, he should help with the hard part of splitting fire wood and any other work that calls for strength like cutting trees, constructing a house. A man has to be strong.



### **2.3.10 The spear**

The spear is a symbol of protection and authority. The boy is told that as a man he should have the ability to protect himself and others. When given the spear he reminded that the spear is not to be used to rob others but to protect.

### **2.3.11 Panga**

The panga is also a symbol of hardwork. The initiate is advised to work hard to sustain his family and the clan. He is reminded that he should not use the panga to attack others but to clear bushes, cut trees and construct a home for his family.

### **2.3.12 The hoe**

Another symbol of hard work in the cleansing ritual is the hoe. The newly circumcised boy is given a hoe and told to work hard to be able to feed his family and others. He is told to cultivate the land and plant food to fight famine. He is told that a man does not work only for his stomach but also to feed others.

### **2.3.13 The circumciser's knife.**

The circumciser's knife is a symbol of manhood. The boy is reminded that he is not the first to be circumcised by that knife. That it has cut many before him and is still cutting. So he should marry a wife and produce children so that the knife continues with its job. Kuloba Dan said,

A Man is not complete without a wife and children. Especially thw male children because the clan's existence is based on them. The girls never stay in the clan after getting married.

### **2.3.14 Makhamia Lutea (lutsola)**

This is a tree species of Bignoniaceace family which produces bright yellow flowers. It is an attractive ever green tree. This tree plant is cherished during circumcision rituals because of the symbolism attached to it. For instance, its stem or branch is planted at the boy's circumcision ground as a sacred symbol of life, longevity and strength. Bamasaaba hold this tree a symbol of life due to its ability to support life since it is medicinal. Its leaves, roots and bark are used as traditional medicine. The leaves and the bark treat toothaches, coughs and malaria. Its roots are used to treat convulsions. The ground leaves and the bark also treat skin complications and wounds. As such the presence of this tree symbolizes good health for the boy to be circumcised.

It represents growth. This tree grows slowly from a small fragile tree into a very strong tree over time. This symbolizes how a man should grow stronger after circumcision.

It is a symbol of longevity and strength since it withstands the strongest of storm and dry conditions. Its wood is also resistant to termites and that is why it commonly used for construction. Therefore the boy being circumcised is reminded that as a man he needs to always be as strong as this tree despite hard times.

The presence of *makhamia lutea* (lotsola) at the circumcision ground is a reminder to the boy that he is part of the society. Wamono Henry one of the elders stated that this is because its roots go deep. There by connecting to mother earth and its branches so high to get energy from the sun and the moon. (Interview, 21 August, 2021). As such the boy is reminded to be involved in every activity in his society because he is part of it. Just like the tree cannot stand on its own, so is man.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

Circumcision rituals among Bamasaaba are an exhibition of some of their society's values and norms such as society's expectations of a man. The performance of these rituals dramatise traits of manhood such as strength, boldness, hard work, progress, productivity and aggressiveness. Through the props, costumes and the performance of the Bamasaaba circumcision rituals, the elders are able to transfer obligations of a man to the upcoming men to ensure continuity of their values and norms. The costumes the boys wear exhibit their strength and perseverance since some are heavy with a lot of discomfort. This chapter therefore reveals that the role of circumcision rituals among Bamasaaba is to mould a complete independent man.

Therefore the actual circumcision alone without these rituals may be meaningless as per the culture of Bamasaaba. It is just a small component of the whole process but the real manhood is achieved with the help of the rituals surrounding it. It is just like having a driving permit without being trained to drive. It does not qualify one to be a good driver. As such a man who undergoes hospital circumcision is considered half a man because he misses the training that would make him a man according to the culture. Therefore the society detests him from raising his voice in cultural meetings and holding cultural positions.

## **CHAPTER THREE: THE LITERARINESS OF BAMASAABA CIRCUMCISION SONGS**

### **3.1 Introduction.**

Bamasaba circumcision songs delight and instruct. Delight and instruction are the most important goals of literature. Oftentimes the two goals go hand in hand as literature is meant to give both education and gratification to the reader or listener. In classical literary theory, Horace states,

The man who has managed to blend profit with delight wins every one's approbation, for he gives his reader pleasure at the same time as he instructs him. This is the book that not only makes money for the booksellers, but is carried to distant lands and ensures a lasting fame for its author. (91)

Horace puts emphasis on the importance of propriety in poetry and on the necessity of combining the instructive and agreeable. The purpose of delight is allied with the notion of aesthetic pleasure or the enjoyment of beauty. Literature should provide pleasure, provoke phantasy and provide a means of eschewal from stress and the prosaic realities of life.

According to Horace, the purpose of pleasure is allied with the conception of didactic or moral literature. The notion is that literature intends to teach or instruct the reader or listener. Literature teaches people some virtues, values and beliefs. A good work of literature should therefore have clear moral messages or lessons that its readers or listeners can learn from it. Although some believe that literature's major role is to entertain, others believe that it is to delight, today the notion of the end of literature has progressed to include both instruction and delight.

Like Horace, Aristotle acknowledges that delight and instruction are purposes of literature. However unlike Horace who considers pleasure and instruction as complementary goals of literature, Aristotle regards pleasure as more important. He regards instruction only enchanting if it is a product of the pleasure.

According to Wordsworth, the preeminent end of literature is to instruct the audience about the cosmos with colorful literary emphasis blending with human and physical nature. In one of his poems, *The Tables Turned*, Wordsworth notes,

And hark! How blithe the  
Throstle sings! He, too, is no  
Mean preacher: come forth  
Into the light of things, let  
Nature be your teacher. One  
Impulse from a vernal  
Wood, May teach you more  
Of man, of moral evil and of  
Good, Than all the sages  
Can.

In the poem above, Wordsworth puts emphasis on instruction from nature. According to Wordsworth, nature can teach man the difference between good and bad.

Longinus emphasizes that good literature should be able to please and inspire the audience. This is what he refers to as sublimity. According to Longinus, the sublime is a level of perfection and loftiness in language that elevates the style of everyday language. Sublimity is the "one echo of a great soul" that arises from a great and lofty soul. It should not only be different and well-written, but also compel the readers with persuasive and pleasurable effects. This definition of sublime refers to lofty, outstanding poetry that has the ability to move, persuade, and please readers by uplifting their spirits. Thus, sublimity is the aesthetic elevation of the soul achieved by the fusion of the writers' lyrical inspiration and rhetorical skill. According to Longinus, sublimity is attained by the skillful use of Nature and Art.

Longinus, therefore emphasises a form of exalted language that causes the listener or reader to experience intense feelings like awe and amazement. He contends that the sublime is an important element of excellent literature and a potent tool for authors and presenters since it may uplift and inspire the audience.

He addresses the different methods that authors can employ to evoke the sublime, including language, striking imagery, and intense feelings. He also underlines the value of having strong moral principles and the fact that, in addition to epic poetry and tragedies, the sublime may be found in all genres

Therefore Horace, Aristotle, Wordsworth and Longinus acknowledge the purpose of delight and instruction in literature in one way or another. The value of their insistence on the rule of delight and instruction cannot go unnoticed when analyzing the literariness of Bamasaba circumcision songs. Like they stated, as a work of literature, Bamasaba circumcision songs entertain and instruct as well.

### **3.2 The Role of Delight of Bamasaba Circumcision Songs**

Bamasaba circumcision songs provide pleasure in various ways. First of all they offer a form of eschewal from boredom of daily life as they allow the participants to engage with different members of the community through singing and dance. Circumcision period comes once in two years. Therefore most of the time is for serious activities such as cultivation, schooling, office work and others. During circumcision, when these songs are sung, people get relieved from the serious side of life as they sing and dance. The songs therefore entertain and connect the masses for a beautiful moment in life. When these songs are heard, many are provoked to leave whatever they are doing to join the procession due to the pleasure they provide.

Bamasaba derive pleasure from singing, swaying or dancing to the tunes of these songs with friends and strangers alike. The songs provide pleasure by pushing the boundaries of expression and free speech as analysed in the song lyrics below. People are able to swear and talk about sexuality and political issues freely. These songs therefore give people an outlet to express feelings that they wouldnot feel comfortable expressing otherwise.

To achieve the aesthetic beauty of the songs, a wide range of sounds are employed by the singers. The soloist may switch from an open, loose tone to one that is tighter and more restricted during a single performance. Sometimes singers hum, yodel, grunt, shout and even simulate animal sounds. These circumcision songs frequently involve collaboration and calls for coordinated teamwork. Most of them employ call and response style of singing. The song performance involves men and women. Most songs have the chorus section performed in unison.

Women sing in higher pitch tones than men. These Circumcision songs are mainly vocal with instrumental accompaniment provided by the thigh bells. They are also adorned by whistle blowing and patternless ululation. Ululation is a wailing or high cry made with the mouth and tongue that alternates between two or three notes. It is used to convey excitement by women. The women keep ululating whenever something exciting is mentioned in the song.

The songs are sung through call and response. The soloists intone songs while the rest respond. These soloists may be the initiates or any other person specialized in singing these songs. Rhythm and percussion are heavily emphasized. A number of different patterns are played simultaneously and again.

Aspects of dancing and playing instruments are combined in the songs. The human body parts are frequently employed as tapping devices through hand claps and foot stamps. The most important instruments are the 'kadodi' drums which express the feelings and moods of the participants and unite dancers through rhythm. Sometimes wind instruments such as whistles and animal horns are used to improve the aesthetic beauty

In addition, Bamasaba circumcision songs are aesthetically pleasing with the literary language used that creates a sense of beauty and harmony that is enjoyable. Most of these songs are characterized with rhythm created by repetition, assonance and alliteration. They also employ evocative language which makes them emotionally satisfying and intellectually stimulating. This provides a sense of fulfillment and pleasure.

### **3.3 The role of Instruction of Bamasaba circumcision songs.**

There are two kinds of circumcision songs among Bamasaba: the contemporary and traditional songs. The contemporary circumcision songs are songs of the present times addressing contemporary issues such as witchcraft, prostitution, polygamy and politics. Traditional circumcision songs address matters such as tradition, belief and customs. They bridge the gap between the traditional and contemporary Bamasaba. These songs reveal the history and origin of Bamasaba circumcision.

Both contemporary and traditional circumcision songs instill courage and resilience in the young boys. Bamasaba believe that if one braves the excruciating pain of the knife, then one is capable

of withstanding any hard situation. Therefore, a circumcised man is not expected to drop tears however painful a situation may be. Even if a beloved one dies a Mumasaba man is forbidden from crying. Tears are meant for women and children. These songs therefore instill stoicism in the young men.

This chapter analyses the literariness of Bamasaaba circumcision songs by exploring their aesthetic and didactic role through the use of literary language. These circumcision songs have for long been interpreted as merely obscene and their beauty and message at times ignored. The study of literary language of bamasaaba circumcision songs helps the listener and other scholars understand the underlying symbolism of certain scenes surrounding circumcision rituals.

Literary language refers to a stylistic way of expression which a composer uses with the aim of delivering an idea in a more colorful, clear or complicated way to capture the audience's attention. Literary language can be used in various works of literature such as prose, verse, verbal works and even daily communication.

Therefore, literary language is when one uses a word or phrase that has a different meaning from the usual meaning. It helps composers to appeal to the reader's senses and imaginations. In the book *Prose and poetry, literature in English*, Ronnie Walingo states;

Literary language is exploited by the writers to win readers/ listener to be to their side. These devices therefore sway and convince readers into common agreement (4)

Literary language such as rhythm created by: repetition, alliteration and assonance, loan words, satire, call and response, personification, euphemism, satire, synecdoche, symbolism and metaphors are employed in the songs.

### 3.2 Repetition

Repetition as a literary device is when the author of a literary work repeats certain words or phrases. Repetition is often used in bamasaaba circumcision songs to create rhythm and draw attention to certain important ideas. Walingo states that,

Poets may repeat any unit of sound from the smallest to the largest. The repetition may occur in individual vowels and consonant sounds. While a composer of music repeats them in certain combinations and chords to create certain patterns or melodies (17)

Repetition is a favoured device in Bamasaaba circumcision songs. It is used due to its power of persuasion and emphasis. The commonest type of repetition in these songs is refrain. The song *utsa uri* (Appendix 3) illustrates how Bamasaaba employ repetition in their circumcision songs. In this song, refrain has been employed to place emphasis on the words “utsa uri” and “utsa imbalu”. These words mean that the boy is to get circumcised immediately he reaches the circumcision ground.

#### **Lumasaba version**

#### **English translation**

Soloist: Utsa uri

you go like this

Chorus: Utsa imbalu

you go for circumcision

Soloist: Utsa uri

you go like this

Chorus: Utsa imbalu

you go for circumcision

Soloist: khwanina

we are climbing

Chorus: utsa imbalu

you go for circumcision

Soloist: Utsa uri

you go like this

Chorus: utsa imbalu

you go for circumcision

Soloist: luchingi

the mountain

Chorus: utsa imbalu

you go for circumcision



This song is sung when the hour for the boy to get circumcised has come. The song is sung with a lot of vehemence while creating a tense atmosphere. As the song is sung, the boy is led to the circumcision ground at a terrible speed. The phrases ‘utsa uri’ and ‘utsa imbalu’ are repeated several times to emphasise the urgency of circumcision to the boy. The singers strongly remind the boy that immediately he reaches the circumcision ground, he is to be circumcised. Therefore no time left. Repetition in this song is to keep the boy focused on circumcision and not think of any other thing.

Words, phrases and lines are repeated to create rhythm. This contributes to their aesthetics. This study found out that significant topics are uttered repeatedly in these songs for emphasis. For example in the song text “khupa kumwenya”, repetition is employed.

### **Lumasaba Version**

### **English Translation**

Soloist: Oba umutambi oba umagaga

poor or rich.

Khupa kumwenya

beat the music.

Chorus: shina shina kho

dance dance a bit.

Soloist: khufa khwabawo

death is always there.

Musale bukhashe buri

friend it will dawn like this.

Chorus: khutsa khusikha

we shall go to burry.

Soloist: oba mukhana oba musinde,

A boy or a girl,

Khupa kumwenya.

Beat the music.

Chorus: shina shina kho

dance dance a bit

Soloist: khufa khwabawo

death is always there

musale bukhashe buri

it will dawn like this,

chorus: khutsa khusikha

we shall go to burry.

Words and phrases are repeated for emphasis. The words such as “ oba” and “shina” have been repeated. “ oba” means either and “ shina” means dance. These words have been repeated to emphasise that it does not matter whether rich or poor, a boy or a girl, old or young one should dance a bit because death is there to stay and any time one can die and will be buried. The song

therefore implores people to enjoy life, have fun and be happy when still alive. These circumcision rituals emphasise life as the main source of happiness. It is believed among bamasaba that it is at the root of every man's craving to be happy and therefore every man's action should be motivated by the desire to be happy. This study found out that bamaasaba maintain happiness during these rituals despite some odd. To them being alive is enough to make some one happy. Happiness seems to be positively associated with cultural values. There is a significant correlation between the circumcision culture and happiness and life satisfaction highly relates to communal activities such as circumcision rituals with close relationship among community members.

Similarly, the song text, 'Alinisikila', repetition, assonance and alliteration are used to create rhythm. Phrases such as 'mundu naalila', 'loma elomo', vowel sounds such as /a/ and consonantal sounds like /l/ are used. The song text is made musical by the combination of repetition of phrases, assonance and consonance.

#### **Lumasaba Version**

#### **English Translation**

Soloist: Mundu nallila tsengali

a person cries for real.

Mundu nallilaa

a person cries.

Mundu naloma elomo

a person will say a word.

Alinisikilaa

he has a reason.

Nange naloma elomo

I will also say a word.

Indinisikilaa

I have reason.

Newe noloma elomo

you will say a word.

Ulinisikilaa

you have reason.

Khukhebe khukheba  
circumcise

circumcising, we

Chorus: Aaa! Yayaa khukheba khukheba

Aaa! Brother circumcising, we circumcise

khulinisikila

we have a reason.

Soloist: Khuloba uloba

refusing, you may refuse

Chorus: Aaah! Yayaa khuloba uloba

Ulinisikilaa

Soloist: mukhasi nakhuloba tsengali

Chorus: alibanisikilaa

Aaah! Brother refusing, you refuse.

you have a reason

a woman will reject you for real.

she will have reason.

Repetition in this song is to emphasise the fact that there is a reason for every occurrence. The song is introduced by a soloist who notes that every one has a reason for whatever he says and the chorus backs him up with repetition. “alimisikila”, “indilimisikila”, “ulimisikila”, meaning they have a reason, I have a reason and you have a reason. The soloist also notes that the initiate may decide to reject circumcision due to his reasons but also notes that as bamasaba, they have their reason as to why they circumcise. The chorus still emphasizes by repeating that they have a reason. The initiate is also warned that if he refuses to be circumcised, then women will also have a reason to reject him. Besides making the song text musical, repetition in this song encourages the boy to respect the society’s cultural obligation despite his own other interests.

The song text is made doubly pleasing by alliteration. Alliteration is popular in Bamasaba circumcision songs, using the same consonant sounds at the start of several words gives the song texts more of an aesthetic impact. Foreexample the consonant sound /n/ as in “newe noloma” and /h/ in “khukheba khukheba” simply makes the song sound more rhythmic and interesting to the listener. Alliteration in this song adds to the flow of the song and helps the participants easily sing in unison.

Comparably, the song *yabula pajama* (Appendix 4) also employs repetition. The chorus keeps repeating the same phrase as illustrated. The chorus, “yabula, yabula pajama is a refrain used to emphasise to the boy that he has no other alternative but to surrender to the circumcision knife.

### **Lumasaba version**

### **English translation**

Soloist: budde bubi

the time is bad

Chorus: yabula, yabula pajama

pull off, pull off your pants

Soloist: ssawa tsimbi

the hours are bad

Chorus: yabula, yabula pajama

pull off, pull off your pants

Soloist: yaaya wa nge	my brother
Chorus: yabula, yabula pajama	pull off, pull off your pants
Soloist: ingole ndena	what should I do?
Chorus: yabula, yabula pajama	pull off, pull off your pants
Soloist: basale bange	my friends
Chorus: yabula, yabula pajama	pull off, pull off your pants

The soloist expresses his worry that the last hour which he calls a bad hour or time has come. However the chorus insists through repetition that he should surrender and pull off his pants. This repetition reminds the boy that there is no other alternative but to surrender to the circumcision knife.

Repetition is a fundamental technique in bamasaaba circumcision songs. They involve recurrence of words, phrases, lines and stanzas. Employing repetition in Bamasasba circumcision songs rouses allurements and inspires felicity.

### 3.3 Loan words

Loan words are words borrowed from one language to another. According to Suzanne Kemmer states;

Loan words are word adopted by a speaker of one language from a different language (the source language). A loan word can also be called a borrowing. The abstract noun borrowing refers to the process of speaker adopting words from a source language into their native language.

Bamasaaba use loanwords in some of their circumcision songs as a result of cultural contact with the whites since colonial time. With the English education system, the English language has greatly influenced the language used in the modern circumcision songs. Bamasaaba like other Ugandans were colonized by the British who brought with them new notions of a higher social system. So English became the language of upper classes and school instruction. The youths having attained some education tend to associate with the upper class of intellectuals by

borrowing from English language. The use of loan words provokes young people to acquire education so as to associate with the elites.

In the bamasaaba circumcision song: “*shili mu order*” (apendex I), the words “order” and “youth” are borrowed from the English language into lumasaaba.

### **Lumasaba version**

### **English Translation**

Soloist: shili mu order bayouth?

Is it in order the youths?

Chorus: shili mu order.

It is in order.

Soloist: shili mu order basister?

Is it in order sisters?

Chorus: shili mu order.

It is in order

Soloist: shili mu order bauncle?

Is it order uncles?

Chorus: shili muorder.

It is in order

Soloist: Shelelo!

Today!

Chorus: Aahaa!

Aahaa!

Soloist: Bashebe?

They circumcise me!

Chorus: Shili muorder.

It is in order.

The words order, ba youth, ba sister and ba uncle are borrowed from English. The circumcision candidate asks those accompanying him whether it is in order for him to be circumcised. He asks the fellow youths, sisters and uncles. They affirm that it is in order. He then wonders whether it should be today and they insist that it should be. The use of loan words in this song serves the purpose of emphasizing the urgency of circumcision. The song encourages the boy surrender to circumcision by telling him that it is in order for him to be circumcised. The song also instructs the boy to always stand firm when making tough decisions like that of circumcision.

Similarly, in the song *yisaaka sitamina* (Appendix 2), words such as ba youth, sitamina and spirit are loanwords from English.

**Lumasaba version**

**English Translation**

Soloist: Bayouth buude bwawakho

the youth time is up

Chorus: Aawoo!

aawoo!

Soloist: Bayouth nze woyena?

The youths where should I go?

Chorus: Yisaaka sitamina.

Pour sitamina.

Soloist: Bakoko sawa tsawakho

sisters time is up.

Chorus: Aawooo

aawoo!

Soloist: Bakoko ngole ndyena

sisters what should I do?

Chorus: Yisaaka sitamina

pour sitamina.

Soloist: Spirit wange musutila

my spirit should be carried.

Chorus: Aawoo

aawoo!

Soloist: Spirit wange musutila

my spirit should be carried

Chorus: Yisaaka sitamina

pour sitamina.

The words bayouths, sitamina and spirit have been borrowed from English. The candidate expresses his fear that time has come for him to be circumcised. He asks the fellow youths and sisters where he should run too and what he should do but they encourage him to be firm. The word stamina is used to mean resilience to the circumcision pain. Despite the powerful pain that the boy faces, he is expected to be firm and not show any sign that he is in pain. It is this kind of fortitude or bravery that bamasaba expect of their men.

In relation to the above in the proceeding song, bamasaba also borrow the word sweet darling from English. Forinstance in the song *Ba sweet darling*, (Appendix 13) below.

**Lumasaba Version****English Translation**

Soloist: Ba sweet darling

sweet darlings

Chorus: Aaaahhh

aaaahhh

Soloist: Lera khubone

bring we see

Chorus: Lera khubone

bring we see

Soloist: Basweet darling

sweet darlings

Chorus: aaahhh

aaahhh

Soloist: ngana wamanya

all along you know

Chorus: ngana wamanya

all along you know

Soloist: basweet darling

sweet darlings

Chorus: aaahhh

aaahhh

Soloist: yusa khubone

turn we see

Chorus: yusa khubone

turn we see

Soloist: ngana wamanya

all along you know

Chorus: ngana wamanya

all along you know

The initiate uses the word sweet darling to refer to the female dancers. As such circumcision rituals level grounds for courtship. It is a habit for boys to praise girls during courtship. So the initiate requests the female dancers to show them different dancing styles as they dance provocatively.

Word borrowing in bamahbsaaba circumcision songs involves modification of the morphological structure to come up with harmony with the pattern of the lumasaaba language. As such the loan words in the songs above have adopted the affixation of lumasaba morphology. The prefix ba acts as both plural and noun class maker in lumasaba.

### 3.4 Satire

Satire is a literary device which serves to ridicule human folly with an intention of provoking positive change. It employs humor, irony or hyperbole to critique something or someone. Bamasaaba circumcision songs are not only confined on circumcision but go as far as providing commentary or criticism on social, cultural and political structures under the guise of humour. The song *Nagimensi* (Apendix.5) employs satire to ridicule the foolishness or vices in humans.

#### **Lumasaba Version**

#### **English translation**

Soloist: Nagimensi amba lukanor rekeresa uwaye.

nagimensi gave me a story, listen dear

Chorus: Aaayaa!

Aaayaa!

Soloist: Nagimensi amba lukano rekeresa uwaye.

nagimensi gave me a story, listen dear.

Chorus: Aaayaa!

Aaayaa!

Soloist: Bukhaana bwipaaka ngana bwasaalakho.

girls boast yet they have ever given birth

Chorus: Aaayaa!

Aaayaa!

Soloist: Businde bwipaka ngana yarisa.

Boys boast yet it has scared them

chorus: Aaayaa!

Aaayaa!

Soloist: Nagimensi amba lukano rekeresa uwaye  
dear

nagimensi gave me a story, listen

Chorus: Aaayaa!

Aaayaa!

The song above is satirical towards human follies such as pride, giving birth at an early age, and cowardice of boys towards circumcision. The soloist wonders why girls brag yet they have ever given birth. Through various interviews it was discovered that bamasaaba society detests early pregnancy since such girls are not mature enough to be mothers. In the contemporary bamasaaba society any girl in the brackets of the school going age is considered young. The song also satirizes boys who fear to face the ordeal of the circumcision knife. It therefore instructs girls to be patient and boys to be stoic.



Some of the songs also provide criticism on politics. The song “*Bobi wine*” below was sung in 2020, at a time when presidential campaigns were at the peak. Most of the youths among bamasaaba supported Kyagulanyi Robert a.k.a Bobi wine one of the contestants. As such they criticized the current regime through their circumcison songs.

**Lumasaba Version**

**English Translation**

Soloist: ohh! Bobi, Bobi

ohh! Bobi, Bobi

Chorus: Bobi wine

Bobi wine

Soloist: oh! Bobi, Bobi

oh! Bobi, Bobi

Chorus: Bobi wine

Bobi Wine

Solicit: shelelo

this time

Chorus: aaahaa!

Aaaha!

Soloist: numuuwe

give him

Chorus: Bobi wine

Bobi wine

Soloist: mzee

the old one

Chorus: aaahaa!

Aaahaa!

Soloist: awumule

should rest

Chorus: Bobi wine

Bobi Wine

Soloist: butambi

poverty

Chorus: aaaha!

Aaaha!

Soloist: khubuwoone

we get cured

Chorus: bobi wine

Bobi wine

Soloist: shelelo

this time

Chorus: aaaha!

Aaaha!

Soloist: bangale

they may circumcise me

Chorus: bobi wine.

Bobi wine.

The song supports Bobi wine and criticizes His excellence museveni for failing to fight poverty. The song expresses hope in Bobi Wine that if given the vote, he may provide solutions to the biting poverty among people. The satire employed in this song teaches people in power to be mindful of their subordinates' challenges.

The following example illustrates satire towards co-wives.

**Lumasaba Version**

**English Translation**

Soloist: wangoyo umubbi

your co-wife is bad

Chorus: wangoyo umubbi

your co-wife is bad

Soloist: aloka babaana

she bewitches children

Chorus: wangoyo umubbi

your co-wife is bad

Soloist: aloka umusetsa

she bewitches the husband

Chorus: wangoyo umubbi

your co-wife is bad

Soloist: abonabonesa

she mistreats

Chorus: wangoyo umubbi

your co-wife is bad

Soloist: wangoyo umubbi

your co-wife is bad

Chorus: wangoyo umubbi.

Your co-wife is bad

The song satirizes the evil deeds that some co-wives do out of jealousy. The song brands co-wives as bad as it is stereotyped. It exposes evils such as witchcraft and mistreatment. That a co-wife is bad because she bewitches step children and even the husband. Bamasaba society detests this kind of unhealthy rivalry among co-wives. The song therefore instructs co-wives to be kind to children and loving to the husbands. They are advised not to be driven by jealousy to do evil.

**3.5 call and response**

Call and response is a technique where one sings a phrase and the other responds with direct commentary to the first phrase. It is conversational in nature. Bamasaba circumcision songs largely employ call and response. It is a pervasive pattern of these songs. The solicitor calls out to the other participants who respond enthusiastically. The singers build on each other's

contribution and together move the song along and come up with a creative and collective sound. In the song *kuma bashete* (appendix 8) the singers employ call and response.

**Lumasaba Version**

**English Translation**

Soloist: Bayaaya bange ise ngole ndyena  
do

my brothers what should I

Chorus: Kuma bashete

endure they cut

Soloist: Bakhala mzee ndiyo hulyanyi imbona

they cut the old man I was in the watchin

Chorus: Kuma bashete lelo yaaya, ukuma bashete

endure they cut.

In the song above there are two distinct phrases. The soloist sings the first phrase as the chorus sings the second phrase in response to the first one. The soloist wonders what he should do and the chorus morale boosts him to be brave and endure so that he is circumcised. The call and response used in this song like in other circumcision songs discussed above enables the chorus to morale boost the circumcision candidate.

**3.6 Personification**

Personification is a figure of speech in which human attributes are given to non human things. Use of personification in bamasaaba circumcision songs creates beautiful images and dramatic effects. Ronnie waligo notes,

In personification, inanimate pbjects and abstract notion are spoken of as having life and intelligence. Non humans talked of as human: are given human attributes, emotions and sensations.(147)

In the song “*Ago anoo*”(appendix 14) a home is personified with a human attribute of getting excited.

**Lumasaba Version**

**English Translation**

Soloist: angu anoo.

This home

Chorus: angu asangale aaaya .

Home be excited

Soloist angu anoo.

This home

Chorus: angu asangale aaaya.

Home be excited

The home is personified with the ability of being excited as though it is human. The personification used stretches the boundaries of reality to make the meaning of the message more vivid. It implies that the entire family should be excited. As such it is always excitement for every family member when a boy in the family is to get circumcised.

Similarly in the song *kumubono kunandya*, the knife is given the ability to eat.

### **Lumasaba Version**

Soloist: kumubono kunadya.

Chorus: aawoo!

Soloist: yaaya kumubono kunandya.

Chorus: kuma kulye.

Soloist: kolya papa.

Chorus: aawoo!

Soloist: yaaya kumubono kunandya.

Chorus: kuma kulye.

### **English Translation**

The knife will eat me

Aawoo!

My brother the knife will eat me

Endure it eats

It ate father

Aawoo!

My brother the knife will eat me.

Endure it eats.

The boy informs his brothers that “the knife will eat him,” implying that he is about to get circumcised. The knife is said to eat because eating and cutting off the fore skin stand to be similar. Just as food that is eaten cannot be put back on the plate, so is the foreskin cut and cannot be put back.

### **3.7 Euphemism**

Euphemism is use of an indirect word in substitution for a harsh, unpleasant or embarrassing one. Euphemism in bamasaaba circumcision songs is characterized by evasive expressions. Like other languages, lumasaaba also has taboo words that are offensive if spoken. As such euphemisms are used as a verbal escape from pronouncing such taboo words. These include

private parts and sex. In the song (appendix 18) the word “animal” is used in place of an unpleasant word “penis”.

### **Lumasaba version**

### **English translation**

Soloist: Leera leera isolo

bring bring the animal

Chorus: Leera isolo iye leera mawo

bring the animal that brought your mother

Soloist: Leera leera isolo

bring bring the animal

Chorus: Leera isolo iye leera mawo

bring the animal that brought your mother

Soloist: Businde bubbi

boyhood is bad

Chorus: Yaaya bakhalekho isolo.  
animal.

My dear let them cut off the

By use of euphemism, bamasaaba are able to shelter children from adult subjects. The song demands the circumcision candidate to give in the ‘penis’ to be circumcised but since the word ‘penis’ is considered vulgar, it is replaced with the word animal. In the bamasaaba society sex is a sacred action and though pleasurable, it is closely guarded and secretive subject. As such sexual parts are not to be talked about openly in public. Respondents asserted that the penis is referred to as a wild animal because as most wild animals hunt at night so is the penis expected to be kept private. In any case it should also hunt at night. Sex is sacred and in most cases done at night when the children are asleep.

### **3.8 Synechdoche**

This is a figurative language where part of a whole is used to represent the whole. Part of something is substituted for the whole of that thing. Bamasaaba employ synechdoche to emphasise certain parts of the ideas whose importance they may wish to highlight by substituting them for the whole. The song such as ‘wakanile imbalu’ (appendix 14) employs synechdoche by emphasizing the part on a man that is circumcised.

### **Lumasaba Version**

### **English Translation**

Soloist: Inangile mayi abone.

Call for me mother she may see.

Chorus: umwana wakanile imbalu.

The child has desired the penis.

Soloist: khutse wo seenge neye abone.

We go to paternal aunt she may also see.

Chorus: umwana wakanile imbalu.

The child has desired the penis.

Soloist: khutse kukhu neye abone.  
 Chorus: umwana wakanile imbalu.  
 Soloist: yakhaba imbusi papa nisiima  
 Chorus: umwana wakanile imbalu.  
 Soloist: yakhaba igokho mayi nisiima.  
 Chorus: umwana wakanile imbalu.  
 Soloist: shombeele papa nasimile.  
 appreciate  
 Chorus: umwana wakanile imbalu.

We go to grand father he may also see  
 The child has desired the penis  
 even if a goat father I will appreciate  
 The child has desired the penis  
 Even if a hen mother I will appreciate  
 The child has desired the penis  
 What you have given me father I

The child has desired the penis.

The chorus of the song above is a synecdoche that uses 'imbalu' meaning 'penis' to refer to the entire circumcision rituals. In the song the boy implores the chorus to call for him his relatives to witness how he has desired circumcision. The word 'imbalu' that denotes circumcision among Bamasaaba emerges from its original 'penis', the sexual organ that is circumcised. By employing synecdoche, bamasaaba are able to lay multiple meanings into a single word. Circumcision is reduced to just a penis yet it entails a lot.

### 3.9 Symbolism

This is the art or practice of using symbols especially by expressing the invisible or intangible by means of visible or sensuous representations. Bamasaaba represent some of their concepts through symbols. Foreexample the song 'sikalakala' (appendex 15) employs symbolism.

#### Lumasaba Version

Soloist: Sikalakala shola  
 Chorus: khaaa!  
 Soloist: Basaani sikalakala shola  
 Chorus: sikalakala shola  
 Soloist: kuuka uliyenaa!  
 Chorus: khaaa!  
 Soloist: sikalakala shola  
 Chorus: sikalakala shola  
 Soloist: bamayi muliyenaa  
 Chorus: Khaaa!  
 Soloist: ikalakala shola

#### English Version

ululation has arrived.  
 Khaaa!  
 Men ululation has arrived.  
 ululation has arrived.  
 Grandfather where are you?  
 Khaaa!  
 ululation has arrived.  
 ululation has arrived.  
 mothers where are you?  
 Khaaa!  
 Ululation has arrived.

Chorus: sikalakala shola  
 Soloist: shisaa!  
 Chorus: shisaa shawelewo  
 Soloist: sikalakala shola  
 Chorus: sikalakala shola.

Ululation has arrived  
 mercy!  
 mercy is over.  
 Ululation has arrived  
 Ululation has arrived.

In the song above, “sikalakala” (ululation) is used to symbolize happiness. Ululation among Bamasaaba is an expression of solidarity and joy. when women ululate for the circumcision candidate to share that joy of the boy being circumcised, they also intend to communicate their affection. As such ululation symbolizes the joy of circumcision. This song is sung when the boy is heading to the courtyard to face the knife. This celebration song is sung to express the joy a boy becoming a man. The solicitor announces that ululation has arrived to signify that there is joy since a boy is to become a man.

### 3.10 Metaphor

A metaphor is an implied comparison of two or more things. Bamasaaba employ metaphors in their circumcision songs to categorise events drawing upon frames that people are familiar with. These metaphors therefore serve as tools of conceptualization to comprehend reality easily. In the song ‘yaaya Ukhamambukho’ (appendix 16), metaphors are employed to conceptualise invisible concepts such as death.

#### Lumasaba Version

Soloist: Eeee darlie yaaya,  
           ise bambalana buma yaaya musale  
           bakhasi babene bari ise noyilaa  
           ate ise yaaya ise imba khumwenyaa.  
           Babene bari ise noyiila.  
           Mukhasi wobeene nushine utse musale  
 Chorus: yaaya ukhamambakho.  
 Soloist: Ukhanzirisa buuma nushine utse  
 Chorus: Yaaya ukhamambakho.  
 Soloist: mukhasi wobeene kumutambo kongene

#### English Translation

Eeee darling sister.  
 they hate me for nothing.  
 people’s wives, that I am the one who takes  
 Yet for me I am always on music.  
 For others that it is me who takes.  
 somebody’s wife, you dance and go.  
 Sister don’t touch me.  
 don’t make me be killed for nothing dance and go  
 Sister don’t touch me.  
 somebody’s wife is trouble only.

Chorus: Yaaya ukhamambakho	sister don't touch me.
Soloist: Mukhasi wobeene bufiile bwo ngenee	somebody's wife is death only.
Chorus: Yaaya ukhamambakho	sister don't touch me.
Soloist: mukhasi wobeene bulwaale bubwenee	somebody's wife is illness itself
Chorus: Yaaya ukhamambakho	sister don't touch me.
Soloist: nga uli umungara numambekho	if you are free, you touch me.
Chorus: Yaaya ukhamambekho.	Sister don't touch me.
Soloist: nga uli umungara nushine bushee	if you are free you dance till morning.
Chorus: Yaaya ukhamambakho.	Sister don't touch me.
Soloist: nga uliwobene nushine utse.	If you are for somebody else dance and
go	
Chorus: Musaale ukhamambakho.	Friend don't touch me.

This song employs metaphors such as illness, trouble and death to refer to married women. According to the song, falling in love with a married woman is one way of looking for trouble, fetching illnesses and moving towards death. The solicit in the song laments that he is always accused of getting involved with married when yet his focus is on music. He then warns married women against getting close to him so that they don't bring him trouble. Bamasaaba men dearly love their wives and can not stand another man getting involved with them.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

Analysis of literary language of Bamasaaba circumcision songs depict them as aesthetically entertaining and instructing. They contribute to an understanding of bamasaaba people's experiences and why they sing the way they do. Therefore, the composition's meaning of these songs is determined by their literary language. The Literary language leads to a new perception of the society by making the familiar unfamiliar. As such the literariness of bamasaaba circumcision songs is experienced.



## CHAPTER FOUR: THEMATIC CONCERNS

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the thematic concerns exposed in Bamasaaba circumcision rituals. A theme is a central message, subject or topic running across a piece of art or literature. The chapter analyses themes portrayed in the circumcision rituals such as collectivism, manhood and superstition.

### 4.2 Collectivism

Circumcision among Bamasaaba is a collective effort. Community involvement is emphasized at all stages such as the preparation, actual circumcision, seclusion and the commissioning stage. Different roles are ascribed to different members of the community during the process of molding a man through circumcision. This is because it is believed that a child is for the entire community. As such circumcision is considered the boy's birth into a new society of men that calls for participation of different members of the society in nurturing him. Through circumcision, the society's needs, wants and goals are emphasized. As such a boy ready for circumcision does not take the decision to get circumcised on his own. He has to present his wish first to his father who has every right to grant it or not. If granted then other members are informed too.

It is on that note that the preparatory stage is opened with the reminding drum which serves to mobilize different members of the community to prepare for the circumcision year. Different stake holders are informed so that they can prepare food, costumes, gifts and animals that are used in the circumcision rituals. After hearing the reminding drum, the prospective candidates plus other people gather at the village arena for this reminding ritual. It is characterized with singing and dancing as the circumcision candidates announce to the elders and other members of the community that their time to become men has come. One of the songs *umwana wakanile imbalu* sang is translated below.

#### Lumasaba Version

Umwana wakanile imbalu

Shelelo khwakanile imbalu

#### English Translation

the child has desired circumcision

today we have desired circumcision

Umwana wakanile imbalu

the child has desired circumcision

Bakuuka khwakanile imbalu

grandfathers we have desired circumcision

The song above informs the elders that the initiates wish to be circumcised and to remind other members of the society to prepare for the circumcision season.

Similarly the sounding of the reminding drum as interpreted below serves to inform different stake holders to gather for the circumcision rituals. Different informants interpreted the sound of the drum as translated below.

### **Lumasaba Version**

### **English Translation**

Inywe, inywe, inywe

you, you, you

Kwola, kwola, kwola

it is coming, it is coming, it is coming

Mutime, mutime, mutime

run, run, run.

The sound of the reminding drum calls upon the uncircumcised boys and the entire Bamasaaba community to prepare because the circumcision year has come. The reminding ritual is also meant to train the boys to sing and dance during their circumcision rituals. However since they are not yet men, the already circumcised men are charged with the role of leading these boys in singing the circumcision songs. Through these songs the men teach the boys about their role in the society.

Collectivism is also witnessed during the reminding ceremony when the circumcision candidates mobilise each other through blowing of horns. The horns known as tsingombe are blown by candidates from neighbouring villages and answered by their equivalents in the other villages.

Bamasaaba portray collectivism during 'isonja' dance as well. During 'isonja' different stakeholders are involved. This ritual is a testing ritual to rule out whether the boys are strong enough to become men. Therefore a number of spectators take part. The circumcision candidates go to the isonja arena while running, singing and dancing. They sing the songs they learnt during the reminding ritual. At the arena, they form the circle and 'namwenya' the singer who is

charged with the role of tutoring the boys leads them in the singing and dancing. As the boys perform traits that defines a man the spectators watch to identify those too weak to become men.

The theme of collectivism is also evident when the boys solicit for support from relatives, friends and other community members. The responsibility of circumcising a boy is not only left to his parent. It calls for support from various community members since it is an expensive exercise. Therefore the boy seeks for financial, spiritual and emotional support from relatives and friends. The boys are given gifts in form of money, animals and birds. From some other relatives the boy seek blessings. Announcing the boy's candidature is proof that he is bold enough to become a man

Bamasaaba circumcision is a social ritual that calls for participation of various relations. All these relations play a part in forming a man. For instance the boy's paternal aunt plays the role of shaving the boy's hairy parts in preparation for circumcision. This ritual strengthens the relationship between the boy and his paternal aunt. As such the boy comes to realize the importance of his aunt in molding his life. This aunt, through shaving, symbolically prepares the boy for manhood. While performing the shaving ritual, the paternal aunt counsels the boy on how to carry himself as a man and to stand strong during circumcision so as not to shame their clan. Kutosi Paul said that while shaving the boy, the aunt utters the following words.

#### **Lumasaba Version**

#### **English Translation**

Inga ssenge,

As your paternal aunt

Ingubeka litsune

I shave your hair

Igana ukume imbalu

I want you to withstand the knife

Inga bapapa boo

like your fathers

Umale uyile umukhasi

afterwards marry a woman

Musale babaana

produce children

Ulinikhumanya ba ssenge boo

you should know your aunties

Ni bakoko boo

and your sisters

Awo kana ube umusani umwene

there you will be a real man

The aunt's words are meant to console the boy to be brave and adhere to the demands of being a man according to the society.

The boy also visits his maternal relatives to seek for blessings and material or financial support. The maternal relatives are charged with the role of comforting the candidate. Bamasaaba believe that whenever one is in trouble or pain he is meant to seek solace from his mother. It is on that note that the boy pays his maternal relatives a visit to comfort him through gifts and blessing. The maternal uncle plays the central role in this ritual. Among the gifts given to the boy by his maternal relatives are cows, goats and chicken. If the boy's father paid dowry then the maternal uncle returns one of the animals given for dowry to his nephew. The animal can be slaughtered or given to the boy when it is alive. Other gifts like chicken are also given to the boy to strengthen the boy's relationship with his maternal relatives. Although Bamasaaba are highly a patriarchal society, ones maternal relatives are valued. As such this ritual also cautions the circumcision candidates to always keep a good relationship with his maternal relatives.

Another circumcision ritual that denotes collectivism among Bamasaaba is the circumcision opening ceremony that is performed every even year in August in Bumutoto. It is believed that the legend fuuya who brought circumcision to Masaaba land came from Bumutoto. As such Bamasaaba from different parts of Masaaba land converge in Bumutoto to witness the opening ceremony. It is agreed among Bamasaaba that no Mumasaaba boy is supposed to be circumcised before those from Bumutoto. This ceremony is crowned with a lot of singing, dancing, merry making and big crowds. People from different parts of the world go to this place to witness the different circumcision rituals and dances performed.

Another element of collectivism is in the way Bamasaaba through circumcision maintain harmony within interpersonal relationships. The boys who undergo circumcision in the same year consider themselves brothers or "bamakhoki". This relationship is strengthened by certain taboos attached it. Like brothers, they are not allowed to marry each other's daughter and even their children are not allowed to marry each other. It is also forbidden for them to wrestle each other. It is also a taboo for one to find his circumcision mate bathing. One who violets such

taboos purifies himself by paying a fine levied on him by his circumcision mate. The fine may be in form of money, chicken, or a goat.

### **4.3 Religious rituals**

Performance of Bamasaaba circumcision rituals are believed to not entirely be based on human reason but also influenced by some supernatural forces. Most of the rituals remain mysterious to even those who perform them. Since these circumcision rituals are considered religious, they are performed without the performers trying to find out why they are performed. Many informants during the interview could not tell why they are performed the way they are.

Bamasaaba circumcision rituals are associated with spirits. One of the informants, Matanda Ronald asserted that the spirit of circumcision originated from the clan of Nabarwa, the kalengin wife of Masaaba who enticed her husband to be circumcised. These spirits are referred to as 'kyimisambwa'. (Interview 26<sup>th</sup> September 2021). It is these spirits that are believed to haunt whoever tries to evade circumcision. These spirits are appeased through rituals such as visiting the sacred swamps and smearing the boys with mud from them. This is a sign of fellowship with the spirits believed to be in those swamps. Animals are sacrificed at these swamps to sanctify them.

An element of African traditional religion is also evident in the way one qualifies to be a traditional circumciser. The one responsible for circumcision is referred to as 'kumusambwa kwe bushebi' meaning the spirit of circumcision. This responsibility is undertaken by particular clans which are considered spiritually anointed to do so. As such one cannot decide on one's own to become a circumciser. This responsibility is hereditary. Wotsosi David, one of the circumcisers informed the study that he got possessed by the spirit of circumcision when he heard bells as sounded by a circumcision initiate. He added that when one hears such bells and circumcision songs, he becomes unstable. The possessed person goes crazy and follows the singers and dancers. He only cures after a circumciser using the circumciser's knife slightly hits him on the head.

Another religious ceremony is the shaving ritual. The shaving ritual is performed by the boy's paternal aunt who is chosen because of her good character such as kindness and having male children. This sensitive ritual is performed by the paternal aunt because she is considered the

boy's female father. Wakholi Fred noted that while shaving the boy's hairy parts the paternal aunt evokes ancestral spirits to come and support the boy during circumcision. (Interview, 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2021). The boy is also advised to stand strong as a man and later marry a woman and beget children.

Bamasaaba are highly religious people. To arouse the boy's desire to get circumcised, a traditional herb called *ilyanyi* is administered to him. This can be done at the boy's back more so if he has come of age and yet still afraid of circumcision. This herb is believed to have the power to arouse the boy's desire to get circumcised. Wakholi Fred also noted that after administering this herb one demands to be circumcised with a lot of anxiety in that when one is delayed may end up circumcising himself. (Interview, 20<sup>th</sup> october, 2021) This herb is administered by tying it on the boy's toe or giving him to chew. The boy then becomes crazy with the uncontrollable desire to get circumcised.

The day for the actual circumcision is filled with a lot of sacrifices made to the dead men's spirits. Animals such as goats, bulls and cows are killed in the morning of this day in honor of the spirits. It is believed among Bamasaaba that the ancestral spirits are meant to take part in the circumcision of a boy just as the living. At the boy's father's courtyard or any other chosen circumcision ground, a goat or a bull is sacrificed. Its heart, lungs and liver are stuck on the ritual pole of *markhamia* species. From mukholi John I learnt that since the heart, liver and lungs are what holds the animal's life, then to the spirits it is like giving them the whole animal. They are put on the ritual pole so that they are easily seen by the ancestral spirits when they come. (Interview, 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2021). It is believed that failure to invite these ancestral spirits through sacrifices may force the spirits to come in anger and hurt the boy. However once the sacrifices are made, the spirits are appeased and come to protect the boy from any evil charms that may be planted to destroy him. After the circumcision exercise is done, this meat stuck in the courtyard is eaten by anyone around since the spirits are believed to have had their share. It is believed that the boy's healing speed depend on the number of animals sacrificed during circumcision. Therefore one heals faster if he appeased the spirits with many sacrifices.

The circumcision ground is closely guarded by the boy's father or grandfather because it is believed that a malicious person can plant there some charms and destroy his manhood. As such a sack with soil on it is placed where the boy is meant to stand and during circumcision the blood

is meant to drop there. This is to avoid the blood from dropping on bare ground. It is believed that an evil person can easily scoop it and bewitch the boy. So after circumcision the sack is taken away by the boy's father and buried without any other person seeing.

Similarly, fellowshiping with ancestors is done through visiting the ancestral burial grounds. Before circumcision, the boy is taken to pay a visit to his father's ancestral ground. At the burial ground, the ancestral spirits are appeased by clearing their graves of bushes around them. Animals or chicken are slaughtered and roasted together with figures of bananas. Songs are also sung in praise of the dead ancestors who were prominent due to their good deeds in society. This ritual is performed so as to introduce the circumcision candidate to his ancestors and evoke their blessings upon them. The ritual also ensures continuity of the dead men's works. As such the boys are advised to emulate the good deeds of their ancestors through the songs sung. For instance, if his ancestors were good farmers and so hardworking, then he is told to be as hard working as his forefathers.

During performance of Bamasaaba circumcision rituals, the living makes covenants with the dead ancestors. Through circumcision a mumasaaba boy does not only seek identity among his living relatives but also the dead ones. It is believed that as the boy's blood mingles with the soil, he makes a blood covenant with his dead ancestors. As such if one fails to get circumcised then he becomes an outcaste among his people and his ancestors if he dies. Mukholi Rodgers noted,

If one dodges circumcision, then he can never live in peace or rest in peace upon his death. When such a person dies, for him to rest in peace, his body is circumcised before burial. Failure to do that, his spirit will be rejected by his ancestral spirit.

According to Bamasaaba, there is life after death. When one dies, he is believed to have gone to his ancestors. However for a man to be considered a member of Bamasaaba community, he should be circumcised. Therefore if a man who is of age dies before circumcision, he is supposed to be circumcised before burial because if not his spirit will not be welcomed by his ancestors. As such it is said that his spirit will come back and haunt his people until the body is exhumed and circumcised. Then he can rest in peace.

To circumcise a dead body is considered a source of bad omen. If there is need to circumcise a dead body, then such an exercise is performed by a retired tradition surgeon. Many respondents informed me that this is because once one circumcises a dead body, he is not allowed to circumcise the living because it is bad omen.

Bamasaaba have a number of deities that they worship during different occasions. One of the deities worshiped during circumcision is called nabulondela. This is a deity responsible for child birth. This deity is symbolized by millet that is usually put at the house's central pole. Nabulondela comes from the word bulo meaning millet. Just as millet reproduces many grains so is nabulondela believed to deal with reproduction of children. As such when a woman is in labour, she seeks aid from this deity by holding on the house's central pole. Likewise when a boy is being circumcised, his mother stays in the house and holds on this pole as though she is going through labour for the second time.

#### **4.5 Patriarchy**

Patriarchy is a system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it. Traditionally there is a significant split in gender roles during performance of circumcision rituals among bamasaaba. Women play subordinate roles such as cooking for the guests and encouraging the initiates while the men are responsible for the customary practices and decision making.

The circumcision rituals require men to exhibit masculinity to achieve the idealized manhood. As such the boys are taught to be men. They learn through these rituals to be aware of their masculinity and to be ashamed of any behavior seen as feminine. The ideal man among Bamasaaba is expected to be strong, resilient, hardworking and bold while women are considered a weak sex that the men don't wish to associate with. For a man to fail to exhibit the ideal traits of a man is considered a woman and at times nicknamed a feminine name. As such during isonja dance, the boys are meant to exhibit toughness as illustrated in chapter two. As they stretch out their elbows and strongly stamp the ground with their bare feet, they demonstrate toughness and aggressiveness that the society expects from them. Whakhatala George, one of the elders informed me that an ideal Mumasaaba man is meant to be tough so as be able to be a family head. He is meant to rule his wife and not to be ruled. (Interview, 12 November, 2021) Wotsombi Sharif informed me that,



A man should not marry a woman stronger and tougher than he is. This is because women are meant to be submissive. When a woman fails to be submissive to her husband, she needs to be disciplined by him. Therefore the man needs to be strong and tough.

Bamasaba circumcision rituals level grounds for male dominance over women. Men are expected to lead as women follow. The women are not expected to take lead in any of the circumcision major rituals. Though women prove to be good singers, they are not allowed to lead songs accompanying circumcision rituals. They only respond to the songs and dance to the tune. As such Bamasaba circumcision rituals require men to exhibit control over women. Wambi Tobias noted,

Why should women lead songs? Have you ever seen women lead us in our families? The educated women may lead in their different spheres but not our cultural customs.

The circumcision ritual lines tracing family ancestry show that children are linked with their ancestors through their fathers more than their mothers. As such it is the boy's father or the boy's paternal uncles with the authority to circumcise him. In the absence of the boy's father, his paternal uncles or grandparents are the ones to conduct the circumcision rituals for him. I was informed by respondents that if a boy gets circumcised from his maternal side or any other place other than his paternal place without the father's permission, then he stands a risk of being disowned by his paternal relatives. Such a person can also be denied his share of land that he is meant to be given by his father as his starting point as a man.

Similarly, during preparation for circumcision, the boy is escorted to his paternal burial grounds to fellowship with his ancestors. When the boy gets to his paternal burial grounds; he participates in clearing bushes around the grave. Meat and bananas are roasted for people to eat with the ancestors at their graves. It is at this point that the ancestors' heroic deeds are recalled through songs. The boys are cautioned not to shame their paternal ancestors. When I inquired why the same is not done for the maternal ancestors, Mukholi Davis noted, "The child belongs to the father not the mother." This is evident that descent is passed through the father and children belong to the father.

Another element of patriarchy is evident in the perception that women are associated with bad omen and yet the men are associated with good luck. During actual circumcision, women are not allowed to get closer to the initiate because it is believed that they may be a source of bad omen to the initiate. As such they are told to keep a distance and only men get closer to witness. Wangusi John one of the elders noted, “Women are emotionally weak, crying invites bad omen to the boy. We need only stoic people around the boy” (interview 9<sup>th</sup> November 2021)

After seclusion when the boys are walking along the village paths, they carry along with them long sticks which they use to hit any girl they come across. I was told by informants that it is done that way because it is bad omen to meet a girl or a woman while performing this ritual. As such the girls have to keep away from the paths once they notice initiates performing this ritual.

During performance of Bamasaba circumcision rituals, girls and women are viewed as sex objects by their male counterparts. The inemba ritual is a case in point. This ritual is meant to be performed by all the new initiates in the place. During performance of inemba the new initiates would pick any girl of their choice to have sex with. The girls were not meant to refuse because they were told that if they did, they would become barren. However now that most girls have attained some education and know the end results of surrendering their bodies in the name of culture, they tend to resist but some are raped. Many girls who I interviewed said often times girls are raped and cannot report because it is almost part of the rituals. Khaiza Susan noted,

A friend of mine was raped by over five men during kadodi but everyone who heard about it said she deserved it because she went there on her own.

Girls and women have continuously been sexually harassed during these circumcision rituals. While dancing the girls are touched provocatively and not allowed to resist. If she resists then she calls for more touches from several men. Many endure just to be part of the dance. However it poses problems to the Christian and Muslim females who have decided to shun participating in these rituals.

Through Bamasaba circumcision rituals, men are acknowledged authority and power while women are subordinates. All the powerful positions during performance of the circumcision rituals are meant for the men. For example, the role of a circumciser is left only for men. For one

to qualify to be a circumciser should have been circumcised and with his first born being a male child. If one has only daughters cannot qualify to circumcise. As such Bamasaaba traditionalists shun hospital circumcision because the hospital surgeons may not have fulfilled these qualifications. One of the traditional circumcisers, Wambatsu Sharif noted,

A boy who chooses to be circumcised from the hospital is less a man . he cannot share space with us the real men when it comes to leadership or cultural issues because we can't be sure of who circumcised him. It could have been a woman. After all there are even female doctors.

According to Sharif, it is an abomination to be circumcised by a woman. As such a person is denied a right to participate in leadership and to make decisions in certain culture issues.

Circumcision rituals among Bamasaaba depict a way of portraying and looking at women that empowers men while sexualizing and diminishing women. Masaba Ronald one of the respondents noted that,

Although biologically, from early adolescence on, we are driven to look at and evaluate each other as potential mates but the male during circumcision rituals twist this natural urge, turning the women into passive items to possess and use for their own selfish gains.

For instance the song “Mayi Seera” (Appendix 17) is a depiction of women as overtly sexualized objects of male desire.

**Lumasaba Version.**

**English Translation**

Soloist: Mayi Seera mboyile byange mu khavera

mother Seera pack mine in kavera

Nenga sinekhwa tsange tsatsa

may be I didn't pay mine that went

Chorus: Imbe mukhasi

give me a woman.

Soloist: Mayi Seera mboyile byange mu khavera.

Mother seera pack mine in kavera

Nenga sinekhwa tsi ngafu tsatsa.

May be if I didn't pay cows that went.

Chorus: Imbe mukhasi.

Give me a woman

Aaaa! Imbe mukhasi  
Soloist: Nenga sinakhwa tsimbusi tsatsa  
Chorus: imbe mukhasi.  
Aaaa! Imbe mukhasi.

Aaaa! Give me a woman  
may be if I didn't pay goats that went  
Give me a woman.  
Aaaa! Give me a woman.

The song portrays women as objects that men possess after paying bride price. The soloist demands Seera to give him what he owns since he paid bride price. In the song, the man connotatively demands the woman for sexual satisfaction and reminds her that she should not reject him because he paid bride price and therefore lost his goats and cows. As such, women are regarded as mere sex objects which are meant to satisfy men's sexual desires.

In a similar way, the song "Leera isolo" (appendix 18) also demines women by depicting them as sex objects.

**Original version.**

**English Translation**

Soloist: leera , leera isolo

bring, bring the animal

Chorus: leera isolo iyeleera mawoo

bring the animal that brought your mother

Soloist: leera, leera isolo

bring, bring the animal

Chorus: leera isolo iyeleera mawoo

bring the animal that brought your mother.

Soloist: Mayi wowo

your mother

Chorus: iyaaha!

Iyaaha!

Soloist: arya khu futula

fears to turn her waist

Chorus: iyaaha!

Iyaaha!

Soloist: bari umwana naafa

that the baby will die

Chorus: iyaaha!

Iyaaha!

Soloist: nafiila munda

will die from the womb

Chorus: iyaaha!

Iyaaha!

In the song , ‘the animal’ refers to the boy’s penis. The boy is therefore demanded to surrender his penis for circumcision. He is also reminded that it is the penis that brought his mother to his father’s home. As such, women are depicted as only good for sex.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter reveals that bamasaaba circumcision themes are in line with the society’s expectations of a man. Themes such as collectivism aim at educating the boys to treasure community relationships. Circumcision among Bamasaaba is depicted as collective effort for the boys to learn that a real man is supposed to act in accordance with collective society norms. Acting contrary to the society’s collective norms and values is assign that a man is lacking components of collectivism and therefore not worthy to be considered a man. Such a man is said to have withstood the pain of the knife for no good reason. As such circumcision rituals are always performed by relatives and the community to fill this moral gap and try to change the social conduct of a man.

The theme of religion is also elaborate. During circumcision rituals the boys are taught to know their gods and dead ancestors. The Bamasaaba are highly religious people. They worship a supreme God whom they refer to as “wele wemungakyi,” God of above. Since wele is invisible and resides above, the Bamasaaba expect him to be everywhere and dwells in every activity including circumcision rituals. Wele is believed to be with other deities that help in excuting his duties. As such while appeasing the spirits of circumcision, the boys are taken to worship the different deities and fellowship with the dead ancestors. Partriacy is demonstrated to construct masculinity in boys such that they get ashamed of any behavior that is seen as feminine such as being emotional, impatient and quarrelsome.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Introduction

The study analyses the performance symbols and literary language of Basamasaaba circumcision rituals. It focuses on the performance of different circumcision rituals, the literary language used in the circumcision songs and the themes portrayed by the rituals. This study is analysed using the formalism theory of defamiliarisation. This chapter presents a summary of research findings and makes recommendations.

### 5.2 Review of Study

I have examined the performance symbols of the Bamassaba circumcision ritual and the literary language of their circumcision songs. In this study I have therefore analysed the meaning of different performance symbols and the literary language of the songs. Due to the limited research carried on the performance symbols and songs of Bamasaaba circumcision rituals, I reviewed some of the scholarly works in relation to this study in chapter one. This research was field based. During field work I employed interviews, observation, photography, audio and video research tools to collect data as discussed in chapter one.

In chapter two, I analysed the meaning of the performance symbols of the bamasaaba circumcision rituals. I examined the symbolic meaning of rituals such as the reminding ritual, isonja dance, searching for manhood, actual circumcision, cleansing ritual, ritual of knowing paths, ritual of coming out of seclusion and the ineemba dance. The costumes and props such as, thigh bells, shorts, cowrie shells, head gear, running water, millet local brew, yeast, piece of wood with fire, the axe, spear, panga, hoe, the circumciser's knife and three pieces of makhamia lutea.

Chapter three is a discussion about the literary language used in the songs. Literary devices such as loan words, repetition, satire call and response, personification and euphemism were analysed. Fourteen songs were analysed.

Chapter four examined the themes portrayed by the circumcision rituals. Themes such as collectivism, patriarchy and religion are discussed.

### **5.3 Summary of Findings and Conclusion.**

The research's findings reveal that circumcision rituals among Bamasaaba are an exhibition of the society's values and norms such as the society's expectations of a man. These rituals educate boys about the responsibilities and duties of men as adult members of society. The rituals often involve demonstrations of the traits of manhood. The performance of the rituals dramatizes traits such as strength, boldness, hardwork, progress, productivity, and aggressiveness. The costumes the circumcision candidates wear exhibit their strength, perserverance and fearceness since some are heavy with a lot of discomforty. This study therefore reveals that the role of circumcision rituals among Bamasaaba is to mould a complete independent man as per the norms and values of the society. Bamasaaba consider the actual circumcision alone without the rituals to be meaningless. The actual circumcision is just a small component of the whole precess but the real manhood is achieved with the rituals surrounding it. As such a man who undergoes hospital circumcision is considered half a man because he misses the training that makes him a man according to the culture.

The literary language employed in the circumcision songs also defamiliarises the society's norms and values that the boy has to adopt if he is to join the class of men. Society's expectations are defamiliarised through use of literary language such as metaphors, repetition, satire, call and response, personification and euphemism. The composition meaning of the circumcision songs is determined by the literary language employed.

The study also reveals that the themes portrayed by the circumcision rituals are in relation to the society's expectations of a man. Themes such as collectivism are portrayed to educate boys to value and treasure their community. As such circumcision among Bamasaaba is a collective effort so that the boys learn that a real man is expected to act in accordance with collective society norms. The antisocial behaviours such as murder, violence, theft and rape are usually seen as an indication that a man is lacking some important components of collectivism. In this case circumcision rituals are always performed by relatives and the community to fill this moral gap and try to change the social conduct of a man.

The theme of religion is also elaborate. During circumcision rituals the boys are taught to know their gods and dead ancestors. The Bamasaaba are highly religious people. They worship a supreme God whom they refer to as "wele wemungakyi," God of above. Since wele is invisible

and resides above, the Bamasaaba expect him to be everywhere and dwells in every activity including circumcision rituals. Wele is believed to be with other deities that help in executing his duties. As such while appeasing the spirits of circumcision, the boys are taken to worship the different deities and fellowship with the dead ancestors. Patriarchy is demonstrated to construct masculinity in boys such that they get ashamed of any behavior that is seen as feminine such as being emotional, impatient and quarrelsome.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Bamasaaba circumcision rituals and the songs have often times been perceived as immoral, ungodly and obscene. Their intention and meaning has always been ignored and the focus has been put on the surface meaning of the performance symbols and the language of the songs. In relation with the research findings, the study makes the following recommendations;

- Christians who perceive Bamasaaba circumcision rituals as entirely obscene and ungodly, should abstain from concentrating only on their surface meaning and also focus on their symbolic meaning. By so doing they will realize that the rituals are not only morally upholding but also godly.
- Bamasaaba cultural leaders should take time to educate their people about the symbolic meaning of the circumcision rituals so that they are not performed just for the sake.



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## APPENDICES

### Research Interview Guide

#### **a. Circumcised Boys.**

1. Were you circumcised traditionally or from the hospital?
2. If traditionally, can you share with me your experience of circumcision?
3. Which costumes did you use during the performance of your circumcision rituals?
4. What is the symbolic meaning of those costumes?
5. Which other items were used during the ritual performances?
6. Why are these items used?
7. Why did you decide to be circumcised traditionally yet it is so painful?
8. can you sing for me some of the songs sung during the ritual performances>
9. Which lessons did you learn from the ritual performances?
10. What was your feeling after circumcision?

#### **b. Elders.**

1. Narrate to me the origin of circumcision among Bamasaaba.
2. Why boys are still circumcised traditionally?
3. What is the symbolic meaning behind the circumcision ritual performances”
4. Why are boys who are circumcised from hospitals not considered real men?
5. Why do boys dress the way they do during circumcision ritual performances?
6. What are the different circumcision rituals performed before one is circumcised?
7. Why are these rituals performed?

#### **c. Circumcisers.**

1. What is your role as a circumciser?
2. How did you become one?
3. How do you perform the work of circumcision?
4. What happens if the boy fails to withstand the pain of the knife?
5. How is the ground where the boy is to be circumcised supposed to be prepared?
6. What happens to the boy's foreskin after circumcision?
7. What is the purpose of traditional circumcision?
8. Do you play any other role towards the already circumcised boy?

9. Which other rituals are performed after circumcision.

**d. Drummers**

1. What is your role as a drummer?
2. What is the interpretation of the drum beat?
3. Why are the drums of different sizes and shapes?

**e. Song leaders**

1. What is your role as a song leader?
2. What is the purpose of the songs during circumcision rituals?
3. When does the circumcision candidate have to lead the songs himself?
4. How are these songs learnt?
5. What are some of the messages in these songs?

Bamasaaba circumcision songs

**1. Shilli mu order**

**1a. Lumasaba version**

**Soloist:** shilli mu order ba youth?

**Chorus:** shilli mu order

**Soloist:** shilli mu order ba sister?

**Chorus:** shilli mu order

**Soloist:** shilli mu order ba uncle?

**Chorus:** shilli mu order

**Soloist:** shelelo?

**Chorus:** aahaa

**Soloist:** bashebe?

**Chorus:** shilli mu order

**1b Translation**

**Soloist:** is it in order the youths?

**Chorus:** it is in order.

**Soloist:** is it in order the sisters?

**Chorus:** it is in order.

**Soloist:** is it in order the uncles?

**Chorus:** it is in order.

**Soloist:** Today!

**Chorus:** aahaa

**Soloist:** They circumcise me!

**Chorus:** It is in order.

## **2. Sitamina**

### **2a. Lumasaba version.**

**Soloist:** Ba youth buude bwa wakho

**Chorus:** Aaawoo!

**Soloist:** Ba youth nze woyeena?

**Chorus:** yisaaka sitamina.

**Soloist:** Bakoko sawa tsa wakho

**Chorus:** Aaawoo!

**Soloist:** Bakoko ngole ndyena?

**Chorus:** yisaaka sitamina.

**Soloist:** Spirit wange musutila.

**Chorus :** Aaawoo

**Soloist:** Spirit wange musutila.

**Chorus:** yisaaka sitamina.

**Soloist:** kutikita munda buraafu

**Chorus:** Aaawoo!

**Soloist:** Ari ise ngole ndyeena

**Chorus:** yisaka sitamina

**Soloist:** khulwanyi mbayo bulayi

**Chorus:** Aaawoo!

**Soloist:** Ari ise ngole ndyeena

**Chorus:** Yisaaka sitamina.

## **2.b. English Version**

**Soloist:** The youth time is up.

**Chorus:** Aaawoo!

**Soloist:** The youths where should I go?

**Chorus:** pour sitamina.

**Soloist:** sisters time is up.

**Chorus:** Aaawoo!

**Soloist:** Sisters what should I do?

**Chorus:** pour sitamina

**Soloist:** My spirit should be carried

**Chorus:** Aaawoo!

**Soloist:** My spirit should be carried.

**Chorus:** Pour stamina.

**Soloist:** It tickles in the stomach painfully.

**Chorus:** Aaawoo!

**Soloist:** Now what should I do?

**Chorus:** Pour stamina.

**Soloist:** At the courtyard there is nothing good.

**Chorus:** Aaawoo!

**Soloist:** Now what should I do?

**Chorus:** Pour stamina.

## **3. Utsa uri**

### **3a Lumasaba version**

**Soloist:** Utsa uri

**Chorus:** Utsa imbalu

**Soloist:** Utsa uri

**Chorus:** Utsa imbalu

**Soloist:** khwanina

**Chorus:** utsa imbalu

**Soloist:** Utsa uri

**Chorus:** utsa imbalu

**Soloist:** luchingi

**Chorus:** utsa imbalu

**Soloist:** khu lwanyi

**Chorus:** utsa imbalu

**Soloist:** kumubono

**Chorus:** utsa imbalu.

### **3b. English Translation**

**Soloist:** you go like this

**Chorus:** you go for circumcision

**Soloist:** you go like this

**Chorus:** you go for circumcision

**Soloist:** we are climbing.

**Chorus:** you go for circumcision

**Soloist:** you go like this

**Chorus:** you go for circumcision

**Soloist:** the mountain

**Chorus:** you go for circumcision

**Soloist:** At the courtyard

**Chorus:** you go for circumcision

**Soloist:** the knife

**Chorus:** you go for circumcision



#### **4.Yabula pajama**

##### **4a.Lumasaba version**

**Soloist:** budde bubi

**Chorus:** yabula, yabula pajama

**Soloist:** ssawa tsimbi

**Chorus:** yabula, yabula pajama

**Soloist:** yaaya wa nge

**Chorus:** yabula, yabula pajama

**Soloist:** ingole ndena

**Chorus:** yabula, yabula pajama

**Soloist:** basale bange

**Chorus:** yabula, yabula pajama

**Soloist:** kutikita buurafu

**Chorus:** yabula, yabula pajama

##### **4b. English Translation**

**Soloist:** The time is bad

**Chorus:** pull off, pull off your pants

**Soloist:** the hours are bad

**Chorus:** pull off, pull off your pants

**Soloist:** my brothers

**Chorus:** pull off, pull off your pants

**Soloist:** what should I do?

**Chorus:** pull off, pull off your pants

**Soloist:** my friends,

**Chorus:** pull off, pull off your pants

**Soloist:** it tickles painfully

**Chorus :** pull off, pull off your pants

## **5 Nagimensi**

### **5a. Lumasaba version**

Soloist: Nagimensi amba lukanor rekeresa uwaye.

Chorus: Aaayaa!

Soloist: Nagimensi amba lukano rekeresa uwaye .

Chorus: Aaayaa!

Soloist: Bukhaana bwipaaka ngana bwasaalakho .

Chorus: Aaayaa!

soloist: Businde bwipaka ngana yarisa.

chorus: Aaayaa!

Soloist:Nagimensi amba lukano rekeresa uwaye

Chorus:Aaayaa!

### **5b. English Translation**

**Soloist:** Nagimensi gave me a story, listen my dear

**Chorus:** Aaayaa!

Soloist: Nagimensi gave me a story, listen my dear

Chorus: Aaayaa!

Soloist: Girls boast yet they have ever given birth

Chorus: Aaayaa!

Soloist: Boys boast yet it has scared them.

Chorus: Aaayaa!

Soloist: Nagimensi gave me a story, listen my dear.

## **6. Bobi wine**

### **6a. Lumasaba version**

**Soloist:** ohh! Bobi, Bobi

**Chorus:** oh! Bobi, Bobi

**Soloist:** Bobi wine

**Chorus:** Bobi wine

**Soloist:** shelelo

**Chorus:** aaahaa!

**Soloist:** numuuwe

**Chorus:** Bobi wine

**Soloist:** mzee

**Chorus:** aaahaa!

**Soloist:** awumule

**Chorus:** Bobi wine

**Soloist:** butambi

**Chorus:** aaaha!

**Soloist:** khubuwoone

**Chorus:** bobi wine

**Soloist:** shelelo

**Chorus:** aaaha!

**Soloist:** bangale

**Chorus:** bobi wine.

**Soloist:** Oh! Bobi, Bobi

**Chorus:** Bobi Wine

**6b.English Translation**

Soloist: Oh Bobi,Bobi

Chorus: Bobi wine

Soloist: This time

Chorus: Aaaha!

Soloist: Give him.

Chorus: Bobi wine

Soloist: The old one

chorus: Aaaha!

Soloist: should rest

Chorus: Bobi wine

Soloist: poverty

Chorus: Aaaha!

Soloist: we get cured

Chorus: Bobi wine

Soloist: Today

Chorus: Aaaha!

Soloist: They circumcise me

Chorus: Bobi Wine.

Soloist: Oh! Bobi, Bobi

Chorus: Bobi wine.

## **7. Wangoyo umubbi**

### **7a.Lumasaba version**

Soloist: wangoyo umubbi

Chorus: wangoyo umubbi

Soloist: aloka babaana

Chorus: wangoyo umubbi

Soloist: aloka umusetsa

Chorus: wangoyo umubbi

Soloist: abonabonesa

Chorus: wangoyo umubbi

Soloist: wangoyo umubbi

Chorus: wangoyo umubbi.

### **7b. English Translation**

Soloist: Your co-wife is bad

Chorus: your co-wife is bad

Soloist: she bewitches the children

Chorus: your co- wife is bad

Soloist: she bewitches the husband

Chorus: wangoyo umubbi

Soloist: She mistreats

Chorus: your co-wife is bad

Soloist: your co-wife is bad

Chorus: your co- wife is bad

## **8. kuma bashete**

### **8a Lumasaba version**

Soloist: Bayaaya bange ise ngole ndyena

Chorus: Kuma bashete

Soloist: Bakhala mzee ndiyo hulyanyi imbona

Chorus: Kuma bashete lelo yaaya, ukuma bashete

### **8b. English Translation**

Soloist: My brothers what should I do?

Chorus: endure they cut

Soloist: they cut the old man I was in the courtyard watching

Chorus: Endure they cut today, brother endure they cut.

### **8b.Lumasaba version**

Soloist: ango anoo

Chorus: ango asangale aaaya

Soloist: ango anoo

Chorus: ango asangale aaaya

Soloist: usima mayi

Chorus: khubanga wamubonekho aaya

Soloist: Usima papa

Chorus: khubanga wamubonekho aaaya

Soloist: Ango anoo

Chorus: Ango asangale Aaaya

Soloist: usima senge,

Chorus: khubanga wamubonekho aaaya

Soloist: usima kuuka

Chorus: khubanga wamubonekhon aaaya

Soloist: Ango anoo

Chorus: Ango asangale aaaya

## **9. Kumubono kunadya**

### **9a. Lumasaba version**

Soloist: kumubono kunandya

Chorus: aawoo!

Soloist: yaaya kumubono kunandya

Chorus: kuma kulye

Soloist: kolya papa

Chorus: aawoo!

Soloist: yaaya kumubono kunandya

Chorus: kuma kulye.

Soloist: kolya kuuka

Chorus: Aaawo

Soloist: yaaya kumubono kunandya

Chorus: kuma kulye

### **9b. English Translation**

Soloist: The knife will eat me

Chorus: Aawoo!

Soloist: my brother the knife will eat me

Chorus: Endure it eats.

Soloist: It ate father

Chorus: Aaawo

Soloist; My brother the knife will eat me.

Chorus: Endure it eats.

Soloist: It ate grandfather

Chorus: Aaawo

Soloist: my brother the knife will eat me

Chorus: Endure it eats

## **10. Isolo**

### **10a.Lumasaba version**

Soloist: Leera leera isolo

Chorus: Leera isolo iye leera mawo

Soloist: Leera leera isolo

Chorus: Leera isolo iye leera mawo

Soloist: Businde bubbi

Chorus: Yaaya bakhalekho isolo.

Soloist: ngole ndyena?

Chorus: yaaya bakhalekho isolo ibeyi

### **10b.English Translation**

Soloist: Bring bring the animal

Chorus: Bring the animal that brought your mother

Soloist: Bring bring the animal

Chorus: Bring the animal that brought your mother

Soloist: Boyhood is bad

Chorus: brother, let them cut off the animal

Soloist: what should I do?

Chorus: brother , let them cut off the animal



## **11. Umwana Wakaniile**

### **11a. Lumasaba version**

Soloist: Umwana wakanile imbalu

Chorus: Umwana wakanile imbalu

Soloist: Shelelo khwakanile imbalu

Chorus:Umwana wakanile imbalu

Soloist:Bakuuka khwakanile imbalu

Chorus: Umwana wakhanile imalu.

### **11b. English Translation**

Soloist: The child has desired circumcision

Chorus: The child has desired circumcision

Soloist: Today we have desired circumcision

Chorus: The child has desired circumcision

Soloist: Grandfathers, we have desired circumcision

Chorus: The child has desires circumcision

## **12. The Sound of the Drum Beat.**

### **12a.Lumasaba version**

Inywe, inywe, inywe

Kwola, kwola, kwola

Mutime, mutime, mutime

### **12b. English Version**

You, you, you

It is coming, it is coming , it is coming

run, run, run.

### **Ssenge's Utterances**

#### **13a.Lumasaba version**

Inga ssenge,

Ingubeka litsune

Igana ukume imbalu

Inga bapapa boo

Umale uyile umukhasi

Musale babaana

Ulinikumanya ba ssenge boo

Ni bakoko boo

Awo kana ube umusani umwene

#### **13b.English Translation**

As your paternal aunt,

I shave your hair.

I want you to withstand the knife

Like your fathers.

Afterwards marry a woman and produce children.

You should kneel your aunts and your sisters.

There you will be a real man.

#### **14. umwana wakanile imbalu**

##### **14a. Lumasaba version**

Soloist: Inangile mayi abone.

Chorus : umwana wakanile imbalu.

Soloist: khutse wo seenge neye abone.

Chorus: umwana wakanile imbalu.

Soloist: khutse kukhu neye abone.

Chorus: umwana wakanile imbalu.

Soloist: yakhaba imbusi papa nisiima

Chorus: umwana wakanile imbalu.

Soloist: yakhaba igokho mayi nisiima.

Chorus : umwana wakanile imbalu.

Soloist: shombeele papa nasimile.

Chorus: umwana wakanile imbalu.

##### **14b.English Translation**

Soloist: Call for me mother she may see.

Chorus: The child has desired the penis.

Soloist: we go to paternal aunt she may see

Chorus: The child has desired the penis.

Soloist: We go to grandfather he may also see

Chorus: The child has desired the penis.

Soloist: Even if a goat father I will appreciate.

Chorus: The child has desired the penis.

Soloist: Even if a hen, mother I will appreciate.

Chorus: The child has desired the penis.

Soloist: what you have given me, father I appreciate

Chorus: the child has desired the penis

## **15. Sikalakala**

### **15a. Lumasaba Version**

Soloist: Sikalakala shola

Chorus: khaaa!

Soloist: Basaani sikalakala shola

Chorus: sikalakala shola

Soloist: kuuka uliyenaa!

Chorus: khaaa!

Soloist: sikalakala shola

Chorus: sikalakala shola

Soloist: bamayi muliyenaa

Chorus: Khaaa!

Soloist: sikalakala shola

Chorus: sikalakala shola

Soloist: shisaa !

Chorus: shisaa shawelewo

Soloist: sikalakala shola

Chorus: sikalakala shola.

### **15b.English Translation**

Soloist: Ululation has arrived

Chorus: Khaaa!

Soloist: Men, ululation has arrived

Chorus: ululation has arrived.

Soloist: Grandfather where are you?

Chorus: khaa!

Soloist: Ululation has arrived.

Chorus: Ululation has arrived.

Soloist: mothers where are you?

Chorus: Khaaa!

Soloist: Ululation has arrived.

Chorus: Ululation has arrived.

Soloist: Mercy!

Chorus: Mercy is over

Soloist: Ululation has arrived

Chorus: Ululation has arrived.

## **16. Yaaya Ukhamambakho.**

### **16a.Lumasaba Version**

Soloist: Eeee darlie yaaya,

ise bambalana buma yaaya musale

bakhasi babene bari ise noyilaa

ate ise yaaya ise imba khumwenyaa.

Babene bari ise noyiila.

Mukhasi wobeene nushine utse musale

Chorus: yaaya ukhamambakho.

Soloist: Ukhanzirisa buuma nushine utse

Chorus: Yaaya ukhamambakho.

Soloist: mukhasi wobeene kumutambo kongene

Chorus: Yaaya ukhamambakho

Soloist: Mukhasi wobeene bufiile bwo ngenee

Chorus: Yaaya ukhamambakho

Soloist: mukhasi wobeene bulwaale bubwenee

Chorus: Yaaya ukhamambakho

Soloist: nga uli umungara numambekho

Chorus: Yaaya ukhamambekho.

Soloist: nga uli umungara nushine bushee

Chorus: Yaaya ukhamambakho.

Soloist: nga uliwobene nushine utse.

Chorus: Musaale ukhamambakho.

### **16b.English Translation.**

Soloist: They hate me for nothing.

People's wives, that I am the one who takes.

Yet for me, I am always on music.

For others that it's me who takes.

Somebody's wife, you dance and go.

Chorus: Sister don't touch me.

Soloist: Don't make me be killed for nothing. Dance and go.

Chorus: Sister don't touch me.

Soloist: somebody's wife is trouble only.

Chorus: Sister don't touch me.

Soloist: somebody's wife is death only.

Chorus: Somebody's wife is illness itself.

Soloist: if you are free you touch me.

Chorus: Sister you touch me

Soloist: if you are free you dance till morning

Chorus: sister you touch me.

Soloist: If you are for somebody else, dance and go.

Chorus: Friend don't touch me.

## **17. Mayi Seera**

### **17a. lumasaba Version.**

Soloist: Mayi Seera mboyile byange mu khavera

Nenga sinekhwa tsange tsatsa

Chorus: Imbe mukhasi

Soloist: Mayi Seera mboyile byange mu khavera.

Nenga sinekhwa tsi ngafu tsatsa.

Chorus: Imbe mukhasi.

Aaaa! Imbe mukhasi

Soloist: imbe mukhasi.

Aaaa! Imbe mukhasi.

### **17b. English Translation**

Soloist: mother Seera, pack mine in kavera

May be if I didn't pay mine that went.

Chorus: Give me a woman.

Soloist: Mother Seera, pack mine in kaver.

May be if I didn't pay cows that went.

Chorus: Give me a woman.

Soloist: Aaaa! Give me a woman.

May be if I didn't pay goats that went.

Chorus: Give me a woman

Soloist: Aaaa! Give me a woman.

## **18. Leera Isolo**

### **18a. Lumasaba version.**

Soloist: leera , leera isolo

Chorus: leera isolo iyeleera mawoo

Soloist: leera, leera isolo

Chorus: leera isolo iyeleera mawoo

Soloist: Mayi wowo

Chorus: iyaaha!

Soloist: arya khu futula

Chorus: iyaaha!

Soloist: bari umwana naafa

Chorus: iyaaha!

Soloist: nafiila munda

Chorus: iyaaha!

### **18b.English Translation.**

Soloist: Bring, bring the animal.

Chorus: Bring the animal that brought your mother

Soloist: Bring, bring the animal.

Chorus: Bring the animal that brought your mother.

Soloist: your mother ,

Chorus: Iyaaha!

Soloist: Fears to twist her waist.

Chorus: Iyaaha!



Soloist: That the baby will die.

Chorus: Iyaaaha!

Soloist: will die from the womb.

Chorus: Iyaaaha!

## **19 khupa kumwenya**

### **19a Lumasaba Version**

Soloist: Oba umutambi oba umagaga

Khupa kumwenya

Chorus: shina shina kho

Soloist: khufa khwabawo

Musale bukhashe buri

Chorus: khutsa khusikha

Soloist: oba mukhana oba musinde,

Khupa kumwenya.

Chorus: shina shina kho

Soloist: khufa khwabawo

musale bukhashe buri

Chorus: khutsa khusikha

### **19b English translation**

Soloist: poor or rich

Beat the music

Chorus: dance dance a bit

Soloist: death is always there.

Friend it will dawn like this.

Chorus: we shall go to burry.

Soloist: A boy or a girl

Chorus: beat the music.

Soloist: death is always there

It will dawn like this

Chorus: we shall go to bury.

## **20 Ulinisikila**

### **20a. Lumasaba Version**

Soloist: Mundu nallila tsengali

Mundu nallilaa

Mundu naloma elomo

Alinisikilaa

Nange naloma elomo

Indinisikilaa

Newe noloma elomo

Ulinisikilaa

Khukhebe khukheba

Chorus: Aaa! Yayaa khukheba khukheba

Khulinisikila

Soloist: Khuloba uloba

Chorus: Aaah! Yayaa khuloba uloba

Ulinisikilaa

Soloist: mukhasi nakhuloba tsengali

Chorus: alibanisikilaa

## 20b. English Translation

Soloist: A person cries for real.

a person cries

A person will say a word

He has a reason.

I will also say a word.

I have reason.

You will say a word.

You have reason.

Circumcising, we circumcise

Chorus: Aaa! Brother circumcising, we circumcise

We have a reason.

Soloist: refusing, you may refuse

Chorus: Aaah! Brother refusing, you refuse.

You have a reason

Soloist: A woman will reject you for real.

Chorus: she will have reason.