

UNIVERSITÄT
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RS KNOWLEDGES WORKSHOP II, MOI UNIVERSITY

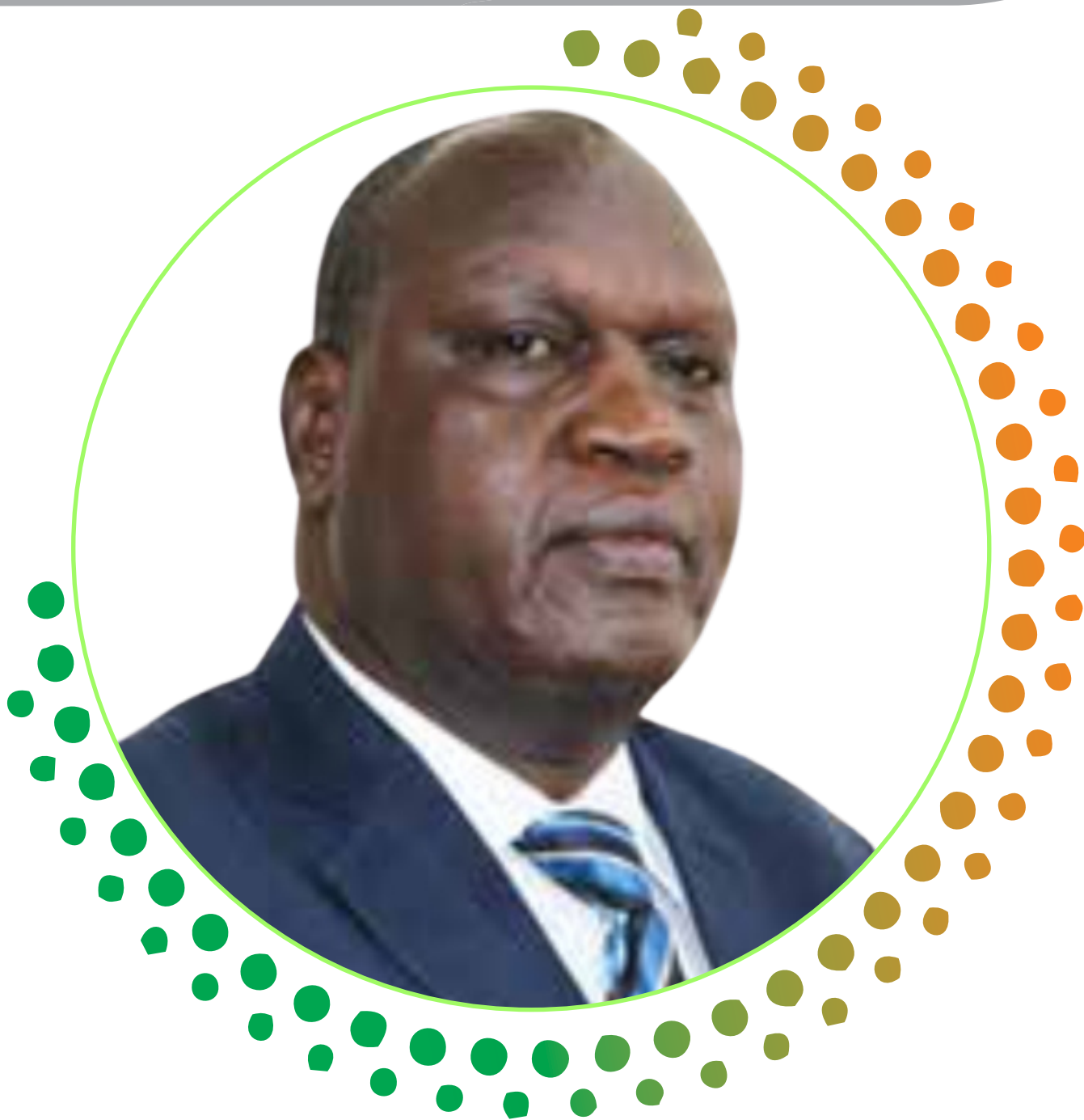
Thursday 20th Jan - Friday 21th Jan 2022

Sirikwa Hotel, Eldoret - Kenya
&
Zoom Online

THEME

**Reawakening African Ways of Knowing and
Knowledge Production: Challenges, Hybridity
and Utility of Indigenous Knowledges**

**Programme &
Book of Abstracts**



Prof Isaac Kosgey
Vice-Chancellor, Moi University



Prof. Dr. Peter Simatei
Director,
African Cluster Centre Moi University



Prof. T. Michael Mboya
Academic Coordinator,
African Cluster Centre Moi University.



Prof. Mary Wahome
Dean,
SASS, Moi University



Dr. Justine Sikuku
Spokesperson,
RS Knowledges,
African Cluster Centre Moi University.

Moi University African Cluster Centre - Profile

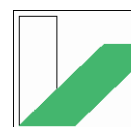
This workshop is just one of the many planned research activities of the Moi African Cluster Centre of Excellence in African studies for the year 2022. The Moi University African Cluster Centre (Moi-ACC) is housed in the School of Arts and Social Sciences (SASS) of Moi University. The overriding objectives of the Moi University School of Arts and Social Sciences are to offer interdisciplinary teaching and research in the broad field of African studies and to act as the center where all other Africa-focused scholarship in Moi University coalesce. Within the context of these objectives, and building on the very strong tradition of exploring and interrogating diverse ways of knowing Africa that has developed in the School in the three and a half decades of its existence, the Moi-ACC is envisioned as a hub of outstanding inter-, multi- and transdisciplinary research and conversations that contribute to the greater understanding of Africa in ways that enable the addressing of significant issues affecting the continent. At Moi-ACC research is carried out under the following sections: Affiliations, Arts and Aesthetics, Mobilities, Moralities, Knowledges and Learning. The research projects that are currently on-going in these sections are: Regional integration in Eastern and Southern Africa: An appraisal of the frameworks for interactive markets, effective governance and human rights protection; East African Asian Writing and the Emergence of a Diasporic Subjectivity; Framing Identities from Human Agency Mobility on the Kenya-Uganda Highway; Changing Life Projects: African Identities, Moralities and Wellbeing; Pots, Fire and Gourds: A (Re)presentation of African Knowledge Systems; and Mediated and Mediatization of Islamic Knowledge in Kenya: Educational Institutions, Media Technologies and Performative Aesthetics.

Prof. Dr. Peter Simatei
Director,
Moi African Cluster Centre.

Remarks from RS Knowledges Spokesperson

African ways of knowing and knowledge production existed prior to their encounter with Western systems. For centuries, they were utilized by the populations to address societal problems. Despite that, the indigenous systems have been ridiculed as inferior, retrogressive, unverifiable and therefore backward. Conversely, Western systems are not only portrayed as superior and progressive but are also glorified as conveyors of solutions to human challenges. Nevertheless, societal problems in Africa persist and Western centred solutions seem inadequate or are faced with great challenges. Perhaps, this scenario may not be entirely surprising given the complex interactions between Africa and the West. There exists cultural confusion and hybridity that impacts on the ways of problem solving hence the need for a reorientation of the stakeholders' mindsets. This workshop interrogates how African ways of knowing and knowledge production can catalyze the attempt to address societal problems in agriculture, natural resource management, conflict resolution, health, communication, socialization systems and any area concerned with the general human wellbeing. The workshop; i) Probes African paradigms of knowing as manifested in indigenous knowledge systems; ii) Examines the influence of westernization on different ways of knowledge production; iii) Evaluates the utility and effectiveness of African knowledge systems in dealing with various societal problems in the face of dominant Western systems; and iv) Assesses how emerging realities in the utilization of indigenous knowledge systems are conceptualized in a hybrid environment dominated by Western systems of knowledge in an attempt to reawaken African ways of knowing and knowledge production.

Justine Sikuku
Spokesperson,
RS Knowledges.



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PROGRAMME

DAY 1 - 20/01/2022		
Time	Activity	Responsibility
08:00-08:30	Registration	
	Session 1 Chair: Dr. Nganga	
08:30-09:00	Opening Remarks: Introduction & Framing the Workshop Theme	Dr. Justine Sikuku, Research Spokesperson
09:00-09:30	Remarks:	Prof. Tom Mboya, Academic Co-ordinator-ACC
09:30-10:00	Remarks:	Prof. Peter Simatei, Director -ACC
10:00-10:45	Official Opening	Prof Isaac Kosgey, Vice Chancellor, Moi university
10:45-11:00	Health Break	
	Session 2 Chair: Mr. Furaha	
11:00-11:50	Keynote Address: <i>The Agikuyu Paradigm of Knowing: The Dialectical Process in Meeting with Pluralistic Mindsets</i>	Prof. Fr. Kahiga, Moi University
11:50-12:40	Keynote Address: <i>Language Preservation as a Vehicle for Indigenous Knowledge Production and Utilization: Learning from the Ogiek Experience</i>	Prof. Ngala, University of Nairobi
12:40-13:00	Q & A	Conveners & Participants
13:00-14:00	Health Break	
	Session 3 Chair: Dr. Kipkorir	
14:00-14:20	Paper 1: Social Media in the Re-production and Re-interpretation of Kalenjin Indigenous Knowledge.	Dr. Sambai, Moi University
14:20-14:40	Paper 2: Towards Decolonial Cosmopolitanism?	Dr. Obura, Zetech University
14:40-15:00	Paper 3: Exclaiming Unexpectedness and Norms among Lubukusu Speakers	Dr. Nganga, Moi University
15:00-15:20	Q & A	Conveners & Participants
	Session 4 Chair: Dr. Sambai	
15:20-15:40	Paper 4: Techniques of Iron Scrape Melting among the Marakwet of Kenya	Dr. Kipkorir, Moi University
15:40-16:00	Paper 5: Performing Gender Identities through Different Dramatic Elements of the Ritual of <i>Siselelo</i>	Mr. Maelo, Moi University
16:00-16:20	Q&A	Conveners & Participants
16:20-16:40	Health Break	
DAY 2 - 21/01/2022		
08:30-09:00	Registration	
	Session 5: Chair: Dr. Opondo	
09:30-10:20	Key Note Address: <i>African Orature as a Platform of Identity Formation and Indigenous Knowledge Production; Examples of Utility and Hybridity in Contemporary Bukusu Circumcision and Funerary texts</i>	Dr. Wasike, Masinde Muliro University
10:20-10:40	Q&A	Conveners & Participants
10:40-11:00	Health Break	
	Session 6 Chair: Dr. Tanui	
11:00-11:20	Paper 1: Ways of Knowing: African Literature and Shifting Imaginaries	Prof. Simatei, Moi University
11:40-12:00	Paper 2: Linguistic Determinism and Lubukusu	Furaha, Moi University
12:00-12:20	Paper 3: Re-Imagination of the Luo Mythology in Grace Ogot's Fiction	Dr. Musumba, Bomet University College
12:20-12:40	Paper 4: The Collapsing Institution of <i>Chira</i> and Contemporary Social Decay	Dr. Opondo, Moi University
12:40-13:00	Q & A	Conveners & Participants
13:00-14:00	Health Break	
	Session 7 Chair: Dr. Kipkorir	
14:00-14:20	Paper 5: Reflections on the Status of African Epistemological traditions	Dr. Kosgei, University of Witswatersrand
14:20-14:40	Paper 6: Gender and Knowledge Production: Towards a Transformative Policy in Africa	Prof. Kiprop, Moi University
14:40-15:00	Q&A	Conveners & Participants
	Session 8 Chair: Dr. Sikuku	
15:00-16:00	Plenary- Way forward Closing Remarks	Prof Peter Simatei, Moi University
16:00-16:20	Health Break	



Prof. Fr. Joseph Kahiga

Moi University - Kenya

The Agikuyu Paradigm of Knowing: The Dialectical Process in Meeting with Pluralistic Mindsets

African World-view is a summary of the African knowledge system that informs all actions, attitudes or simply the personality of the African person in terms of identity. The over 2000 ethnic groups in Africa represent diverse mindsets that are unique in themselves and form the basis of diversity and plurality. Diversity can be an asset or liability depending on how it is handled by the pluralistic world views. This paper uses the rational critical and analytic approach in focusing on the unfolding of the Agikuyu ways of knowing through their specific metaphysics, epistemology, logic and ethics. The Agikuyu mindset is key to the unfolding of their identity. A people's identity is the foundation of their bonding as a specific community. The unfolding of the Agikuyu mindset is a window towards the search for collaboration with other diverse mindsets within the country and in the global village.



Jane Akinyi Ngala Oduor

University of Nairobi - Kenya

Language Preservation as a Vehicle for Indigenous Knowledges Production and Utilization: Learning from the Ogiek Experience

Language is indispensable as a resource in the preservation and use of indigenous knowledges. Language itself must therefore be preserved in order to use it to preserve, produce and utilize indigenous knowledges. This paper attempts to show that language preservation is a means of preserving, producing and eventually using indigenous languages. In the past preservation was done through passing information by word of mouth from one generation to another and in the present time, through written sources (both hard and soft (digital) copies). Most of the examples in this paper will be drawn from the Ogiek speech community. The data for this paper were partly collected during a language documentation project among the speakers of Ogiek and also through interactions with other speech communities in Kenya. This paper attempts to provide an understanding of indigenous knowledges. It highlights the central role that languages play in the preservation and utilization of indigenous knowledges. It points out some of the indigenous knowledges among the Ogiek and how they have been utilized especially in problem solving in the past and currently. The paper finally discusses the challenges brought about by cultural hybridity. It concludes that indigenous knowledges cannot be used satisfactorily in the modern world without addressing many critical issues related to language.



Dr. Caroline Sambai

Moi University - Kenya

Social Media in the Re-production and Re-interpretation of Kalenjin Indigenous Knowledge

The preservation of indigenous knowledge is critical for the continuity of a community's culture. As knowledge that refers to traditional norms and social values, that guide, organize, and regulate the people's way of living and making sense of their world, this paper hopes to interrogate how such knowledge is produced and validated in a digital context. Notably, in an increasingly technologizing environment, the uptake and access to mobile devices and the internet has afforded its users a unique opportunity to participate in the process of knowledge creation, preservation and dissemination. Focusing on the availability of content sharing and user generated content platforms such as Facebook as a space and process for the re-production and circulation of knowledge, this article is not only interested in the central role of the social media platform in the creation, re-interpretation and preservation of indigenous knowledge but also questions the possibilities that this space presents in-terms of knowledge recovery and validation. Two Facebook pages that focus on Kalenjin culture are the objects of this study.



Oduor Obura

Zetech University - Kenya

Towards Decolonial Cosmopolitanism?

Is the global south a net consumer of knowledge? How can theory from the south exist with knowledge from the global north? Is the epistemological relationship between the two regions antagonistic or even colonial? The aforementioned questions constitute part of what I grapple with in this article. That is, theory is often an academic act that is hinged on practices that reveal uncomfortable globalizing hierarchies. At the same time, it drowns local ways of making meanings in the world. The articulation, circulation and employment of a hierarchical theory has a long history, however, there are local epistemological orientations which are not necessarily competitive in nature and function. Therefore, I propose a conceptual framework, within the cosmos of a relational theory, that I term decolonial cosmopolitanism. This is a framework to tease the entanglement of theory in a world that is increasingly connected yet essentialized. Since the connection has not always been a convivial one, I argue that it might be. I theorise decolonial cosmopolitanism as a concept that captures both the need to discard imperial gestures in the formation, conduction and application of theory in a globalized academia. I use a close reading of Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor's literary text "The Dragonfly Sea" to tease out how theory can develop as a means of resistance to epistemological domination while at the same time acting as a guide to a present and a future that is convivial.



Dr. Simon Nganga

Moi University - Kenya

Exclaiming Unexpectedness and Norms among the Lubukusu Speakers

Besides indicating unexpectedness with respect to a person, an idea, an object or an event, exclamatives, as we argue in this project, communicate the expected ways of behaving in the face of competing/ complementing norms. For instance, *Wele Papa!*, said when one experiences death, not only indicates a sudden encounter between life and death and the visible and the invisible worlds, but it also reveals the speaker's prayerful attitude and his/her submission to the divine will. How speakers of Lubukusu use exclamatives to express various ways of behaving as they react to the unexpected states of affairs is the main question in this project. We also seek to find out whether, as a result of colonialism, there are hybrid indigenised communicative patterns related to the use of exclamatives. This project falls within recent discussions on communicative acts that have emphasized the need for a shift in approach from a Euro-centric perspective (Searle, 1969; Rett, 2011; d'Avis, 2017 among others) to a more context-sensitive one (Anchimbe and Janney, 2017). We therefore propose to use the postcolonial pragmatics framework to analyse the use of exclamatives collected via discourse completion tasks administered in homes, churches and informal chama meetings in Bungoma region where Lubukusu is predominantly spoken. In addition, we will interview respondents individually and in groups selected according to gender, age, religion and education to establish reasons behind their discursive choices and ways of behaving associated with the exclamatives they recreated. By taking a linguistic perspective to study the use of exclamatives among the Bukusu people, we contribute to

the recent studies that urge re-engagement with African studies and a closer investigation of the Bukusu and the wider African continent as a space characterised by multiple interaction of diverse and related languages and knowledges.

Keywords: *Exclamatives, Norms, Unexpectedness*



Dr. Daniel Kipkorir

Moi University - Kenya

Techniques on Iron Scrap Melting among the Marakwet of Kenya

Iron is one of the oldest metals used in the making of objects. For thousands of years, people collected and smelted iron ore into flexible stuff that was then used in making of various items. Aspects of ancient iron-work technology massively collapsed following establishment of modern iron industries and colossal importation of foreign wares. In few rural places, however, some features of indigenous iron-work techniques continue to be practised. Smelters collect iron scrap and melt it to make unique objects that are largely used in farm work and ritualistic activities. The paper will investigate indigenous knowledge techniques used in melting of iron scrap among the Endo, a sub-group of the Marakwet people who inhabit northern Kerio Valley region in Kenya. The specific objectives of the study are to; explore distribution of iron scrap melting workshops in the region; examine hands-on skills employed in melting of iron scrap and crafting of objects; analyse oral information transmitted during the iron-work activity.



Michael Maelo

Moi University - Kenya

Performing Gender Identities through Different Dramatic Elements of the Ritual of *Siselelo*

The paper explores the Bukusu indigenous cultural perspectives on gender identity as encoded in the dramatic elements of the marriage process referred to as *siselelo*. This is based on the assumption that the marriage process and the symbols that play out of the ritual are not limited to the pairing of a man and a woman in a social institution of marriage, but also provides a platform for the community to dramatize and express its cultural worldview in its wide frame that includes the political, the economic, the philosophical and the social. This perspective echoes Clifford Geertz' view of cultural performances as a deep play of a community's anxieties and contradictions in relation to its values around identity. Connected to this, we take into account Victor Turner's view of the ritual process as creating the liminal space where the community engages with itself through symbolic dialogue in which various elements of ritual are invested with meanings that are made to play off each other in the dramatic mode. In the context of this study, the *siselelo* process is seen as collection of dramas and dramatic elements that manifest at different points along the plot of the marriage process, which when read through the lenses of symbolic interactionism reveal a systematic set of values and taboos in this community in relation to how it fits and works together as a social unit. This will be an ethnographic study involving observation of the ritual and interviews with key informants in the field. This will be corroborated by an intertextual analysis of relevant texts including songs, narratives, proverbs and riddles. The main focus will be on the representation of the Bukusu worldview of gender as it intersects with other elements of the social world.

Keywords: *Indigenous Knowledge, Dramatic Elements, Ritual, Marriage Process, Siselelo*



Dr. Chris Wasike

*Masinde Muliro University of Science and
Technology - Kenya*

African Orature as a Platform of Identity Formation and Indigenous Knowledge Production; Examples of Utility and Hybridity in Contemporary Bukusu Circumcision and Funerary Texts

Since time immemorial verbal arts and traditions have always served as a repertoire of African indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing. By dint of indigenous knowledge production being true and tried knowledge based on life experiences of multiple generations, the oral art forms remain the most instrumental tools through which such knowledge is discovered, assessed and re-engineered from one generation to another. This article examines how the contemporary Bukusu circumcision and funerary performances, not only, serve as platforms of extolling Bukusu history and indigenous knowledge, but also offers a sneak preview in how the societal knowledge systems have attained new utilities through a hybrid engagement with Western cultures. Indeed because circumcision rites and funerary traditions have continued to play a big role in defining the communal identity of Bukusu, it is interesting to interrogate how the community makes use of modern funerary and circumcision rites to entrench their identity while at the same time hearkening to an arguably dominant Western cultural and colonial influence. In this paper I argue that though the carnival nature of circumcision ceremonies and the sombre mood of funeral performances is deeply rooted in the traditional past, it is important to examine to what extent these traditional rites continue to construct new knowledge and yet remain to be invaluable archives of knowing and knowledge production in the ever-changing contemporary Bukusu and non-Bukusu cultural contexts.



Prof Peter Simatei

Moi University - Kenya

Ways of Knowing Africa: African Literature and Shifting Imaginaries

Starting from the position posited by the Africa Multiple, that Africa is, and always has been, constituted through its ever-changing relations, globally entangled and in flux, this paper broaches the subject of the role that African literature has played and continues to play in the reconstitution of ways of knowing Africa and in the production of new conceptions of African subjectivities, African ways of life and modes of relations. The paper proceeds from the understanding that literature's engagement in world-making involves the construction of fictional spaces that either contest the existing ones or are relational to them. It also explores how African literature contests and transforms current relations of power—whether these relations are subsumed under such categories as gender, religion, ethnicity, nation, class, or race—to call alternative temporalities into being. It concludes by focusing on African diasporic writings and their production of political and cultural realities that contest and transform relations based on national rootedness and territorial logic as it visualizes diasporic imaginaries and new poetics of relation.



Emmanuel Furaha

Moi University - Kenya

Linguistic Determinism and Lubukusu

This paper aims at describing the world view of Babukusu by examining the lexical items of their language, Lubukusu. In turn, this will expose and explain the knowledge that Lubukusu speakers possess about their world, including their values, belief system, material culture and traditions; how these aspects of their world view are represented through Lubukusu lexical items; and, how these differ from the world view of native speakers of English. Using the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, this paper assumes that the presence of certain terms in Lubukusu and their lack of appropriate semantic equivalents in English is a demonstration that the speakers of the two languages have different perceptions of the world. Such Lubukusu words include: *omusani*, *bakoki*, *khuminya*, *khwilung'unya*, *bukelema*, *khumokha*, *kumwanjo*, *ekokwe*, *kumusambwa* and *khwikosasia*.

Keywords: *Lubukusu, Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, world view*



Dr. Obala Musumba

Bomet University College - Kenya

Re-Imagination of the Luo Mythology in Grace Ogot's Fiction

This paper is an investigation of Grace Ogot's pragmatic approach in excavation of the Luo oral knowledge. I am interested in probing the use of Luo mythology in Ogot's novels, *Miaha* (1983) and *Simbi Nyaima* (1983), which were both published in Dholuo and later translated into English. Ogot is one of the pioneer and modern authors to straddle the East African literary space. She belongs to the school of African scholars that cherish the return to African indigenism in a bid to assert and reclaim the African identity. This inevitably impels me to employ African orature in the theoretical interpretation of these selected texts. Orature, founded by Pio Zirimu in early 1970s, foregrounds the verbal arts and responds to the claim that arts received orally and aurally are inferior to other forms of art. Ogot's choice to stamp her footprints on the literary landscape through her language, Dholuo, and adaptation of the Luo mythology is a conscious act of illuminating the centrality of the African indigenous knowledge in the modern space. I am particularly interested in critically analysing how she appropriates the Luo mythology in changing the narrative that privileges masculinities in a largely patriarchal cultural ecology in the timelessness of the Luo cosmology in both texts. She thus reverses the old roles and assigns new ones to her female characters without necessarily changing the precolonial setting. Through these balancing acts, she achieves the image of an African woman propagated by the pioneer African feminists like Anthonia Kalu, Helen Chukwuma, Ama Ata Aidoo among others who believe in gender complementarity in an African set up rather than the aggressive approaches embraced by the Western feminists in their agitation for their rights.



Dr. Rose Opondo

Moi University - Kenya

The Collapsing Institution of Chira and Contemporary Social Decay

The Luo of Kenya, like most African cultural communities, have their indigenous explanations for phenomena and solutions to arising problems, which are deeply rooted in a conglomeration of experience, spirituality and desired propriety. The end goal is the establishment and preservation of cultural cohesion through individual and collective compliance with cultural mores and norms. One of the most successful policing institutions in the Luo culture has been that of 'chira'. This is a consequence of transgressions of cultural taboos. It is a physical manifestation of punishment brought upon an individual, their kin or an entire community that is marked by a wasting away to death if no appropriate intervention is done. Like most indigenous sociocultural institutions, belief in and upholding of 'chira' has been punctured by western thought, external religions and cultural alienation. This paper looks at the rising disbelief in as well as ignorance of this institution and the consequent conscious or unconscious transgressions of cultural taboos and its possible link to contemporary problems that would amount to social decay in the Luo community.



Dr. Jauquelyne Kosgei

University of the Witwatersrand - South Africa

Reflections on the Status of African Epistemological Traditions

Borrowing from extensive oral literature fieldwork that I have conducted in Mombasa and Kwale counties over the last four years, I reflect on my engagements with indigenous epistemologies, paying attention to the role they play in countering the narrow perspectives carried in dominant written sources. I expound on the value of local oral sources in expanding the archive of available knowledge resources using the Kenyan coast as a case in point. In so doing, I interrogate the shortcomings of the exclusionary viewpoints of Eurocentric knowledge systems and identify some of the gaps created by the continued suppression and omission of African epistemic traditions. Basing on findings from my previous and ongoing research, I demonstrate the need for rigorous research in this area.



Prof. Catherine Kiprop

Moi University - Kenya

Gender and Knowledge Production: Towards a Transformative Policy in Africa

The gendered nature of knowledge-Indigenous knowledge- is often overlooked, marginalized or neglected. While the differences may tend to be more subtle in developed countries, the same cannot be said of developing countries. Indigenous knowledge-related information tends to be viewed, perceived and acted upon differently by the different genders. As a result of this gender differentiation and specialization, the IK and skills held by women, often differ from those held by men, affecting patterns of access, use and control, thus resulting in different perceptions and priorities for the innovation and use of IK. It also impacts the way in which IK is disseminated, documented and passed on to future generations. Women's roles in knowledge production in Africa appears to suffer cultural repression due to the disproportionate gendered dominance men enjoy fuelled by a colonial mentality, similar to many other places in the world. In contemporary African nation-states, women's inadequate participation in knowledge production is reproduced through their limited participation in formal education and policymaking which can be traced to the historical context of colonial contingencies. Their limited voice in policy stems from their negligible and marginalized presence in the mainstream higher learning while, at the same time, the knowledge they produce as non-formally educated women is pushed at the margins of what constitutes legitimate knowledge even if, paradoxically, the knowledge they acquire and produce is used for their active participation in agricultural production and trade. Contemporary formal African education has been deficient since its inception as it was designed to negate, suppress, and eliminate African culture, promoting inadvertent and deliberate “epistemicide”. In its philosophy, this received system was also gendered and unequal, with limited access and a less valued curriculum designed for the

female population. African countries acquired their independence through the second half of the 20th century. Although significant progress for general enrolment and increased female participation have been made since then, the education system still carries the above attributes. Hence, African girls and women constitute the majority of the non-formally educated/functionally “illiterate” population and are underrepresented in higher education, particularly in the STEAM fields. The main contribution in this paper is to critically examine entrenched policies and practices that reproduce gender gap and propose a mechanism that will disrupt the vicious cycle of marginality and harness a new system with a fusion of the system inherited from colonial experience and the indigenous African knowledge systems in order to foster equal participation of all, toward holistic social progress. going research, I demonstrate the need for rigorous research in this area.

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