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### IMAGES OF WOMEN IN *PAKRUOK* (LUO PRAISE NAMES)

**Abstract:** This paper is based on a study of *pakruok* (Luo praise names). The study investigated the images of women in *pakruok*. Among other related issues, the study examined the prevalent images of women in *pakruok* by both men and women. The location of the study was Rabare village of Karungu Division, in Migori District of Western region of Kenya. The informants were Luo descendants and the research methodology included a feminist literary framework, participant observation and unstructured interviews. The main finding of this study was that there is clear revelation of the portrait of women in *pakruok*, especially perceptions of themselves, their gender identity and roles, and their own lives. The male identity, socio-economic and political relationship between men and women in Luo society are also revealed. The social relationship controlled by the *Luo kitgi gi timbegi*-Luo traditions and customs, allow women to perform *pakruok* which empowers them in exerting control over their lives and that of their society at large. Similarly, the tradition allows men to praise themselves in reference to women using particular metaphors. It is this metaphorical reference that the study called images. In this respect, images refer to the senses - impression revealed by literal or figurative references to women, scenes involving women or states of women in society as distinct from the language of abstract argument or exposition. Hence images need not be mental 'pictures', but may appeal to other senses as well.

**Key words:** Women, Luo, Pakruok, Images

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Studies on orature of various societies and the status of women have rapidly increased in the past years. With regard to Luo society, studies seem to reveal an explicit recognition that women in Luo society occupy a secondary and inferior position to that of men (Obura 1991, Achola 1976). Different orature material, collected from various communities has shown that they share two things; they predominantly male and sexist in so far as these texts down play the important role that woman play in these societies. In more extreme cases women are not even mentioned at all, or if they are discussed in stereotypical reproductive roles as wives and mothers. (Imam et al 1997)

Despite the proliferation of studies on Africa orature, women remain largely invisible in mainstream Africa orature. They are either not present at all, or they are depicted as naturally inferior and subordinate. The above scenario forms the springboard for this study. An investigation on the portrait of women in *pakruok* still remains un-researched. Most studies on *pakruok* have concentrated on the form of this subgenre of Luo oral poetry. This study complements other studies that have been done on women and on *pakruok* in particular by presenting an analysis of the images of women in this subgenre of oral poetry of the Luo. This is a stand point not yet taken in any studies done before.

*Pakruok* is a subgenre of oral poetry of the Luo. Oral poetry is the verbal expression of feeling, ideas and thought using versified language (Miruka 1994:88). Thus, an oral poem could be said, declaimed or recited. Oral poetry is distinct in terms of its performance: it is orally rendered and the rendition is often public. It is also marked by elasticity of the item and is very spontaneous. Oral poetry can also be dramatized and dramatization is usually accompanied by accoutrements and instruments.

Oral poetry of the Luo is a subgenre of Luo orature. Luo orature is principally expressed in oral prose (tales/ narratives), poetry and songs, proverbs and word games such as riddles and puns (Miruka 2001). However, according to Miruka (2001) the four genres of Luo orature are: riddles, proverbs, and narratives. The four genres are felt to be all-inclusive and the realization of such verbal arts such as tongue twisters and puns depends on stretching up the main genres.

Oral poetry of the Luo varies from pieces which are sung, to those that that are rendered in speech, recited, declaimed or dramatized (Miruka 200:82). These variations help to attest to the various modes the Luo use to express their oral poetry. However, the performance of any Luo oral poem usually involves a fusion of the various modes. For example a Luo artist may start off a performance with spoken praise

name, and then he slides into song and then goes back into a declamation before reverting to a song. *Pakruok*, whether recited declaimed or sung has certain functions: socialization, aesthetics, social commentary and culture and historical records.

The Luo are called *Joluo* and their language is called *Dholuo*, the tongue of the Luo (Ogot 1967). Notably, the Luo are settled in Western part of Kenya in the present districts: Migori, Kisumu, Rachuonyo, Nyando, Bondo, Siaya and Homabay. In terms of language communities across Africa, the Luo are a member of the larger Nilotic group whose other cousin communities are the Shiluk, The Nuer, the Beri and Bosr of Sudan, the Dinka of Central Africa republic and Sudan the Anyuak of Sudan and Ethiopia, the Paluo, the Acholi and the Padhola of Uganda and Mesorit and the Dajui of Chad. The word luo is closely associated with the Luo word Luwo which means "to follow", Thus the Luo are believed to have historically descended along River Nile valley in search of pasture around the Lake region before settling in the areas they now occupy (Ochola-Ayayo 1976:13-14)

According to Ogot (1967) the dispersal of the Luo into the Luo country took three sub-divisions, that is, *Joka Jok*, *Joka-Owiny* and *Joka Omolo* and the history of the Joka Jok represents not only the initial Luo migration into central Nyanza in Kenya, but also marks the first move of the Luo into South Nyanza, where they later spread further southward into Tanzania. The largest of the four divisions of the Joka - Jok was led by Chwanya. In South Nyanza, he is regarded as the ancestor of the major clans in certain "tribal - states" (such as Karungu, Kadem, Kanyamwa and Kabwuoch.). Another group from Joka-Jok, and related to these is Karachuonyo.

The Luo are a ceremonious people whose culture is rich with poetic performance both in public and private realm. (Miruka 2001: 82). The Luo, however, do not have uniform poetic text, though there are similarities from one place with another. The vastness of oral poetry of the Luo springs from the fact that the Luo have a strong traditional culture of entertainment encompassing many indoor and outdoor activities. While it is undeniable that there have been a lot of changes in the oral poetry, in the past, the community had its sources and traditions of using it. Some of this persists to date, particularly in the rural areas.

Through oral poetry, the Luo expresses different thoughts and ideas and often focus on social life. In such oral compositions several comments could be cited whether direct or indirect on a particular social reality. One such by which Luo oral poetry has been a social commentator is grasped by an examination of how Luo oral poetry juggles with gender issues within the Luo patriarchal society. Gender is

about women and men. As a gender profile, Luo oral poetry depicts how women and men relate within a societal context. A common element in Luo culture is a traditional division of rights and responsibilities which usually place women in an inferior position be it socially, economically or politically. The keystones of such a profile is the objective analysis of the situation of both gender, recognizing that a side from childrearing, the roles played by men and women are not inherent in biological fact, but are defined by the culture itself.

The study set out to find out the portraiture of women in both men and women *pakruok* and vice versa. The study involved library research and literary analysis of orally collected data on *pakruok*.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This work made an attempt at a feminist qualitative study. This section begins with a brief review of feminist theory before presetting the models of qualitative research used in the study and concluded with a justification for the reliance on feminism about this qualitative research in the study.

Feminism is seen to embrace all endeavors, made towards highlighting the recognition of the systematic discrimination against women on grounds of gender and a commitment to work towards change (Tsikata, 1991). According to the foregoing definition, scholars as well as other actives who involve themselves in women's issues are invariably feminists (with capital "F" or small "f") since they are committed to changing the prevailing gender disparities that have often proved oppressive towards women.

In literature, feminist literary scholarship basically performs two major roles. In the first place, feminist literary artist have to write about being a woman and describe reality from a woman's point of view. Secondly, a feminist reader is one who reads and considers how women characters are portrayed and what is said about them in a literary text.

Feminist literary criticism on the other hand could be defined as the interpretation of literary works from a woman - centered point of view of texts (about women and by women).

Issues to do with women cut across literary studies in a range of ways; and feminist analysis can be seen as an interconnecting range of types of work across these issues. First, feminist criticism deals with who is free to write or compose, in what idioms, and who is able to be studied. It points to an omission of women in the constructed literary canon such as lack of critical attention to work by women. Based on this principle, feminist analysis concerns with the restrictions on women as producers and composers or literature. This study borrows this principle in attempting to analyze women as *pakruok artists*.

Secondly, it also looks at how women are portrayed in many literary texts; women have been portrayed in ways restricted by conventional stereotypes. Women are widely represented as objects to be discussed, exchanged and evaluated by men in such representations women are regularly attributed particular sorts of character (silly, trivial, domestic). Feminist criticism contests such representation. In doing so, it challenges men on the ways in which they choose to see and think of women; investigates recurrent images or symbols through which women are represented, and promotes new kinds of alternative images. In such works, feminist criticism is concerned with women as content of literature. This aspect forms the crux of this study. The way women are portrayed forms the subject of our concern in this research.

In societies where images of women are largely voyeuristic stereotypes, the implied address of images of women in a male construct. Normally women are perceived as passive audience and have to adopt such ways of appreciating these "male stream" literary works which accept these dominant construct of ideal and norms. As a radical correction, feminist criticism analyses the different system of address available in literary works addressed to women and investigates new forms of address to be directed more appropriately at mixed gender readership/audience ship. In doing so, feminist analysis is concerned with women as implied audience.

In the analysis of the *pakruok* data the study borrowed this principle to determine how women have come up with new forms of address to reassure their images in *pakruok*.

The way men and women use language is itself an issue of feminist criticism. Whether men and women speak in the same way, and if not, why not? Feminist critical activity examines the difference between the language usage if men and if women (as well as myths about such usage).

In imploring issues, feminist criticism is concerned with investigating the possibility of specify women's discourse style. The study investigates the specific women's discourse style in *pakruok*.

The most current concern of feminist criticism is *gynocriticism* which seeks to show how women feel in and about women's bodies and to celebrate aspects of these bodies which have been excluded by convention from public discourse (such as child birth, menstruation, and menopause). This is sometimes seen as an affirmation of women's experience and a subversion of "male" values. In such criticism the concern is with representing experience, which can be represented in a form of discourse outside and beyond male discourse. This study seeks to establish whether women express themselves through *pakruok* on subjects which cannot be represented "male" discourse.

The study borrowed from these arguments. The study was interested in finding out how *pakruok* portrays the images of women as creators and performers of *pakruok* and how such women project the images of women in general. The study also strived to find out how men portray women in the *pakruok* they created and performed.

### 3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the study was to find out the images in *pakruok*, Luo praise poetry. The specific objectives were to:

- Analyze the kind of language used in *pakruok* especially in relation to women.
- Find out what prevalent images of women are in *pakruok* by women artists.
- Find out what prevalent images of women are in *pakruok* by men artists.
- Find out the dominant metaphor for women in *pakruok*.
- Find who are the major performers of *pakruok* especially in terms of gender.
- Compare the images of women in the women *pakruok* and those in men's *pakruok*.

### 4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Performance of praise poetry is an issue that has attracted a lot of scholarly attention. In an attempt to define what 'praise names' are, Sunkuli and Miruka (1990) say that, "it is a reference or a string of laudations by which a person metaphorically describes himself, other people, pets or commendations, arrogance and flattery." Quoting from Mapanje (1985), they reveal an analysis of a Zulu woman's self-praise in which the images of the woman appear as courageous, determined, proud and independent. They draw to our attention the fact that the composition and performance of self-prizes by the Zulu women are done in the absence of men, and that these compositions are often an expression of complaint. Mapanje's analysis of praise names is based on non-Luo literary work. The current paper differs from Mapanje's in that it examines praise names of the Luo and particularly the images of women in this praise.

Conceptualizing on the use of praise names by the Luo, Malo, S (1999) says that the use of praises is a fact quite evident among the Luo and maintains that this is due to the fact that the Luo are proud, *Jonyadhi*. According to Malo, a Luo young man normally begins to praise himself when his father gives him a ceremonial shield, *okumba* and a headdress, *awinyo*, for his *kuot*, a shield of Buffalo hide. Malo

contends that the use of praise does not confine itself to young men and women only but also to the elderly and women especially when they drink beer, *Kong'o*. During funerals, either an orutu, one stringed instrument or a *nyatiti*, middle harp string player sings praise of the girls and that at such moments people are free to take stand and praise themselves. All those are meant to keep the bereaved company. Malo's analysis is basically based on the content for the use of praise among the Luo. This paper however, focuses on how women are portrayed in these praise names.

Acknowledging the presence of praise poetry in African communities, Finnegan (1990) reveals the manifold social significance of praise poetry. Thus, they express pride values of a people among whom it is recited. Finnegan's study, however, basically concerns with the nature, composition, recitation, and occasions for the performance of praise poetry. She particularly does an analysis of its form and style, occasions and rendition. Her study differs from this study in that her study has been very general and has been based on non-Kenyan societies. This paper also takes a feminist approach in the study of the images of women in praise names among the Luo.

Mbughuni (1979) presents two contradicting images in the male authored Swahili prose and fiction. In this text women are depicted as evil, are uncontrollable prostitutes who deserve to be punished. The submissive, humble and dependent women are depicted as having ideal attributes of African women. Though Mbughuni's study assumed of a feminist approach to determine the portrait of women in this text, her study differs from this paper in that it is based on orature while hers was based on written literature. Furthermore, the paper focuses on Luo Society.

Mlama (1990) in her study of women and their roles in performing arts, argues that women have always been portrayed very negatively in many performances. She however, believes that women are perceived as perpetuators of their negative images about them. That in the performing arts, women have perpetuated their subordinate status by accepting these images as well as providing an applauding audience to such performances. Mlama's analysis also assumes a feminist in performing arts. However, her study differs from this paper in that this study is only interested in finding out the portrait in women *pakruok*.

TAMWA (1988) shows that the media plays a major role in undermining women's images of themselves as well as society's image of women. The paper also reveals that this negative image extends to the use of language. The sexist nature of most languages across Africa serves to perpetuate the notion that women are just sexual objects, and also that they are objects of ridicule, who don't merit societal respect.

TAMWA'S analysis of the portrait of Tanzania women in mass media differs from the current paper in that we are interested in the oral media and particularly the use of *pakruok* prevalent among the Luo.

Meena (1992) suggests that the strong rural woman who aggressively fights the harsh prevailing environment has never been portrayed as ideal in literary works. That majority of African women goes out in search of subsistence, sits on streets of cities to sell food or a variety of crafts and is often victims of harassment. That the African woman who carries heavy loads, tills the land, walks kilometers in search of firewood and water is indeed far from being docile, humble and dependent. Meena's analysis springs from the feminist approach and views the portrait of women in African literature as negative. In this paper however, we tailor down our concern to specific subgenre of Luo posture *pakruok*.

Amuka (1992) contends that one is praised or praises oneself in order to provoke response, to imitate verbal drama. That *pakruok* involves deliberate manipulation of language hence artistic (My own emphasis) by reducing stories to a brief expression of few words. The elements of *pakruok* are attributable to the whole society rather than individual artist. Therefore, the images in *pakruok* in reference to men, and women provide an insight into the society's attitude to men and women. Amuka contends that *pakruok* uses a lot of metaphors which have a lot to convey. That these metaphors range from animals to inanimate objects. Amuka's analysis is classificatory in the sense that it attempts to find out what class of orature would *pakruok* fall in. Though he gives examples of metaphors that *pakruok* artists use, he does not reveal which ones are used in reference to men and women respectively.

The review of the above literature reveals a lack of analysis on the portrait of women in *pakruok*. The study seeks to fill the gap by undertaking an analysis of the images of women in *pakruok* based on the theoretical framework of feminism.

## 5. METHODOLOGY

### 5.1 Introduction

An analysis of the image of women is central in feminist research. Feminist research to a large extent relies on qualitative method. The essence of a qualitative research is to discover the meaning and assumption underlying human behavior (Mayan, M 1996)

This study used a qualitative paradigm that enabled it to fully understand *pakruok* subgenre of oral poetry of the Luo from women's point of view.

## **5.2 Population, location and sample**

The study area was confined within Rabare village of Karungu Division, in Migori District, located in the western region of Kenya. Karungu Division is situated along the shores of Lake Victoria. The main occupation of the inhabitants is subsistence farming; this is combined with other income generating activities such as fishing and trading in fish products on the beaches of Lake Victoria. Though the area is also inhabited by some Luo Abasuba, the study focused only on Luo descendant women and men of the area as informants (purposively sampled).

## **5.3 Data collection**

The data on "*pakruok*" was collected through primary and secondary sources. Through in depth interviews, those selected provide relevant information about "*pakruok*" prevalent in this village. "*Pakruok*" was also collected through informal interviews and dialogue, with the audience. Secondary data however have been got through library research within Maseno University. Expert information on the literariness and especially on imagery and metaphorical references was gathered through in-depth interviews with lecturers within Maseno University.

## **5.4 Research instruments**

The study used interviews and observations schedules in order to source relevant information. Through these, sampled men and women were informally interviewed. We observed how *pakruok* is rendered by men and women, and records the performance in terms of language use and metaphorical reference used by *pakruok* artists.

## **5.5 Data analysis**

The data collected has been clustered and analyzed under feminist analysis. These are then used to determine whether there is any dominant image of women in *pakruok*, that is, dominant image of women in men and women's *pakruok*.

## **6. STUDY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Image is one most recurrent pervasive and dominant of literary devices. In general, an image is a mental impression on such abstract notions as colors, size, shape, and among others (Sunkuli and Miruka. 1990:111)

In literature however, the body of images that comprise a literary piece of work is referred to as imagery. Imagery is therefore an overall pictorial effect of images in literary pieces of work such as songs, poems, narratives, and dance among others. The main purpose of imagery in language is that it gives vividness and immediacy to an idea that would otherwise be difficult to see.

**There are four types of images:**

- Tactile images
- Olfactory images
- Auditory images
- Visual images

Tactile image has to do with sense of touch: Olfactory image is related to smell: Auditory image appeal's to the ear: while Visual image has to do with colour, size, shape, dimension, among others.

The significant of an image depends on the physical and cultural environment of those who use it. An analysis of collection data on *pakruok* sub-genre of Luo oral reveals the following as the portrait of women in the sub-genre.

**Women as wives**

According to Luo customs, women are viewed as wives and because of this they are expected to be sub-ordinate to their husbands in all issues regarding to decision-making, productive resources, (livestock and land), duty allocation in the home such as *tweyo chiaye*, tethering livestock, their physical bodies, mobility (they have to seek permission to travel) and even over their children. Wifehood is an institution whose purpose is to ensure that a woman serves their husbands and to remain sexually available to their husbands (Ochola-Ayayo, 1976.) The society perceives the "best" woman as those who are dependant, submissive, and loyal to their husbands. This portative is clarified by the following analyzed *pakruok* data collected during the study.

(a) *Ougo Polo Owadgi Akeyo Ja dhako ruoth*

Ougo the sky, a brother to Akeyo he who is married is like a king.

From the *pakruok* sample it is evident that a married man is viewed as a king to whom everything is done by the wife. The informant, Japheth Ngwala, confirmed that Ougo who was the owner of this *pakruok* was a drunkard and could go back home late in the night in mud, but his wife could clean him and prepare him bed however dirty he was. This, the

informant contended was part of the woman's role which if she failed to do them everyday in society would "talk bad about her".

(b) *Mano Sabayuka Nyakwar mon Yukni gi midhiambo gi omena ewigi ...ni nyar nga'ne we gala omena biro kuokna. We adhi pacho adhi atedne wuon parwa ewang' saa kaka pile*

That's Sabayuka a grandchild to the daughter of Ombugo woman rush with omena on their heads in the evening. That the daughter of so and so don't waste my time, my "omena" will go bad. Let me go home so that I may cook for my husband in time as I have always done.

From the *pakruok*, we see a woman who always rushes to go and cook for husband in the as she has always done because this is part of her roles. Failure to do so might earn her beatings from her husband and she will also seem as a failure in her responsibility.

(c) *Owadgi Masese wuodgi Oseso Kombeo miend jo-ohangla chieng ohangla ohangla mon orumo emiel, chwo odok erunge eka ji nochiem edala.*

The brother to names and the son to the likes of Oseso Kombeko the dance of Ohangla group, the day Ohangla is staged all women join in the dance, thus men resort to *rungus* so that people may eat in the home.

When a dance such as ohangla is staged women get attracted to an extent that it is argued that they forget their roles of cooking as wives. It is such instances that may annoy their husbands and they may pick *rungus* to whip them out of such cultural troupes to have meals prepared.

Women are known to slander at such occasions and it is only through *wang makwar* "the red eye" of the husband that their slander traits are got rid of. According to the Luo, a wife can also be tamed by a *rung*: clubs and *gocho*, beatings.

(d) *Odero Asande okewgi Musa miel ka ono, obugi thum obugo nyiri ma kata manyadundo to ni nyar nga'ne in waneno opong:*

Odero Asande the nephew to Musa who dances without style, Obugi the breasts have promoted the girls such that even the short ones are said to ready for marriage.

In the above sample, the information, Mama Norah ODONGO (76), claimed that according to the Luo customs, *timbe Jo-Luo*, every girl should assume and that one sign for such readiness was the growth of breast. Therefore if a girl was seen to have breasts however short she

could be that was a sign of her readiness for marriage to assume the roles as a wife, *tedo ne ngato*.

(e) *An Eva margi Odhis matur gi ting mapek mohinge makata otho to ok owachi.*

I am Eva the sister of Odhis a woman who is burdened by heavy load but cannot complain even when she is dying.

In the above *pakruok* sample Eva as a wife raise to our attention the heavy work with which wives are assigned, but to which they should not complain as this will be interrelated as a wife' revolt towards her submission to her husband. The wife must learn to uncalculated in herself the virtues of perseverance and endurance above the amount of work she is assigned.

She must learn to accept and obey her husband as he is good or bad, industrious or lazy, polite or rude, throughout their lives as husband and wife. This calls for infinite perseverance and endurance, love and patience, sometimes apparently unrewarded. This is cultivated by the Luo saying "dhako yadh riwa," translated as "a woman is a cure to a man's stupidity"

From the above five analyzed *pakruok* sample it is evident that the image of women's wives is perpetuated by marriage which is one of the most important institutions in Luo society.

Today however marriage institution still survives, though it posits some changes.

### **Women as mothers**

Motherhood as an institution includes certain duties and responsibilities of women. In Luo society however, Motherhood implies concern of mothers in over their children. Under what circumstances it is always true that a Luo woman adjusts her life to absorb the brand burden by working difficult to keep the family and to ensure that children are fed. This image is exemplified by the following analyzed data on *pakruok*.

(a) *Mano Owino Sikueya Mon dhi duogo*

That's Owino "square" women go and come back.

The above *Pakruok* sample underscores the fact that a woman is difficult to leave her husband especially when she has had a child. The information, Owino Owino confirmed there is no need of pestering a woman when she threatens her husband to leave him since she will definitely come back to him. A woman's mobility is however, under the control of her husband to be granted permission to do so.

(b) *An Anyika owadgi Ben okew Kano Kobura kama Mon matindo puonjore rego.*

I am Anyika brother to Ben the nephew to Kano Kobura where young women learn how to grind flour.

From the above *pakruok*, it is evident that young women learn how to grind. Traditionally, the Luo used to grind *bel*, millet and *muhogo*, cassava using *Pong*, grinding stone and girls, were taught how to grind so that when they were married they would not be a disappointment to the parents when they were “returned” to the parents that they never knew how to grind. This was done to prepare a girl for her responsibility so that she was able to take care of her children after marriage.

(c) *Mano willy Nyargi karende nyambura wange'e tek oyadho ringo makata idagi rabolo idho tek nyargi Asuli a lot okelo wiye ninyaka therie chak eka nyithindo nochame.*

That's Willy the sister to secretaries a daring cat that eats your piece of meat whether you deny it, it is difficult to climb a banana trunk, the sister to Asuli vegetable remains bitter until some milk is put in it so that children can enjoy it.

In the above *pakruok*, Wilfrida popularly known as Willy recounts her concern for her children to an extent that she cannot give them bitter vegetables. To kill the bitterness she has to add some milk in to, so that it can *tero kuon* take ugali. She also laments about daring cats which can sneak and eat your piece of meat. Her lamentation also reveals her concern for the family and efforts to ensure that family is fed.

(d) *Adwa chogo Yuora, nya ya kageta Sind winy motamo jakwath pogo. An Nyargi Sami kod Owuor, nya Matakakere. Oganda chiek ne tek ma omiyo abudho mama ka yuora nya ya katieno*

*Wenge dede neno e nge'de dede, chiro onge kor ka Mae, tho onge luor, nyar kamegeta sukuma jarire ma kata kama ok dware.*

I want to salute my in-law the daughter of Kogeta a small bird that defeats herd boys to divide. I am the sister to Sami and Owuor, the daughter of Matakakere. It is hard for beans to get cooked which made me to sit with my mother as my in-law, the daughter of Katieno. The eyes of a grasshopper are seen on its ribs, a market place has no side to be respected. Death has no fear, the daughter of Kamageta “sukuma wiki” kales that force itself into it may not even be wanted.

The above rather longer *Pakruok* reveals that a woman who recounts her pride in her social brother. However, our attention is drawn at the

mention of *oganda*, beans, and *sukuma wiki*, kale which are important food stuffs among the Luo. The artist claims that beans take too long to cook while *sukuma wiki* normally accompanies every meal. This is to underscore the value with which vegetables are threatened in this society. These are very essential for the good health of the children and the entire family members.

(e) *Mano nya uyoma nyathi gi Achieng thuth ngute chiek jorumi mon orumo ekendo, ombugu leche lowo.*

That's *nya uyoma* a sister to *Achieng* a maize bug that has a short neck around the fireplace, couch roots are the vein of the soil.

In the above *pakruok*, the artist underscores the fact that cooking is a responsibility of the woman and that's why all the women should be associated with the fireplace because this is their defined area of operation. Our attention is further drawn to the fact that women are compared to *ombugu*, couch grass roots, that hold soil together. Just as the soil, the family needs a woman who is strong so that it remains intact.

During the study it was also realized that educated *Pakruok* women artist mixed *dholuo* with few elements of English they must have learnt during their schooling. An example of such *pakruok* includes the one here below.

(f) *An Jane Nya kapiyo nyako ma ja klass aboro onego Gweno okone chwore ni ombich will be for nyithindo tielo will be for nyithindo "except" chuny kende emari – all things will be mine.*

I am *Jane Nya Kapiyo* a standard eight girl has killed a hen and tell her husband that "I kill a hen' but the intestine will be for children, the legs will be for children except the liver that will be yours "all things will be mine."

In the above *pakruok* the standard eight dropout woman does not live as a responsible mother. She gives her children the parts of a chicken they ought not to be given: intestines and the legs, while her husband is given liver which is tender and soft. This is contrary to the ethics of mother hood of the Luo. A woman should not love herself so much to an extent that she does not care for her children. In fact, a woman's success is counted on how well she has managed to bring up her children.

### **Women as lovers**

Women have also been portrayed as lovers in pakruok. This image is exemplified by the following pakruok data.

(i) *Wuodgi Alili guom peko Jasapul nyako wiye ok wil kod ngama otiare.*

A brother to Alili “guom peko” the owner of a crucifix a girl will never forget whoever breaks her virginity.

In the above *pakruok* the artist (a man) contends that a girl can never forget the man who breaks her virginity even after marriage. This is a result of the pain women experience when their virginity is broken and as a result of much love they attach to their lovers. A woman’s lover especially the first in her life is so important that she cannot forget, though she can forget other things in life.

(ii) *Mano wuodgi Akinyi Bolingo Dhako kidhi wuoth maok osere.*

That a brother to Akinyi Bolingo a woman does not go for a journey without being seduced. This *pakruok* sample attempts to underscore the fact that women are known to make or engage in love affair that might not be planned. For example, on a journey a woman rarely comes back without being seduced and is likely to sleep with men she meets during the journey. This *pakruok* is meant to warn men however much they have control of their wives; sexually there are opportunities in life upon which the wife “can give out”

(iii) *Mano Odero oba bure ma janyamanga lake kwar ohero thum otieno ma nyiri nitie.*

That’s Odero he who misses his hole, a man from Nyamanga he whose teeth are colored (red) likes dances where girls are.

It is often said that girls as well as women fall in love with *Chuo ma lekegi tar*, men whose teeth are white. A man who has white and spacious teeth, *Ja Singa’re* is likely to attract women and girls from all corners of the village. Similarly, a woman with white teeth and *Mbanya*, spacious teeth is also likely to attract many men. However, in the above *pakruok*, a man with red teeth is satirized for liking a dancer at night where his teeth cannot be seen by the girls because such a man feel being run from when girls spot that his teeth are red.

(iv) *Odero tung tutelu jodongo oluoro chodo to Nyombo to ginyombo*

Odero “tung tutelu” the elderly men fear prostitution though they get married.

The above *pakruok* I meant to satirize women who marry Jodongo just because of the wealth they may have. It is women who avail themselves before such Jodongo for marriage.

(v) *Dhako oyudo lifodonjoe dayo*

A woman has got to leave and has to become a grandmother.

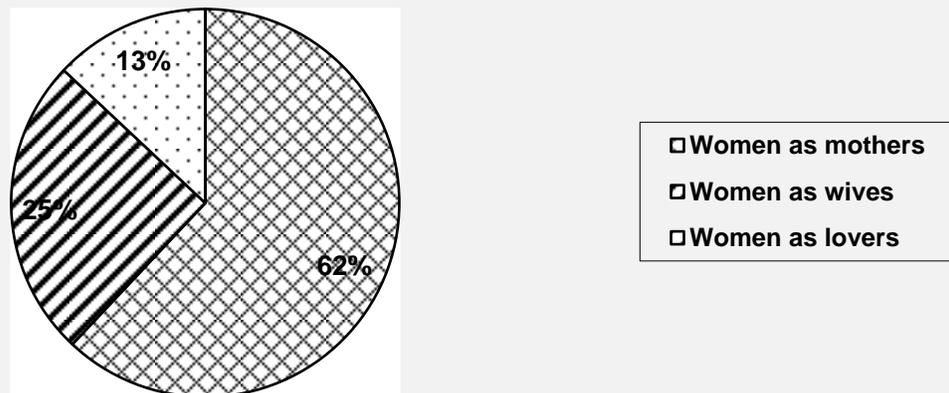
In the Luo community a woman who has become old enough and has got grandchildren should not be in love with other men apart from her husband. Therefore getting a grandchild is like obtaining a leaf or graduating from being a mother to a grand mother, and an elderly woman is always said to have *Wuok edala*, retire from sex activities, though she might do it occasionally with her husband just for customary purposes like *Golo kodhi*, during planting and *chieng ma wuode omeko*, the day her son has got a wife.

Judging from a feminist point of view, there is an agreement that portrait of women as lovers in Luo society is as a result of men's power over women socially, and it is this power that affects women's sexual relationships with men. From the above analyzed *pakruok* it is evident that due to social constraints put to women they have less control in sexual encounters than their male partners. It can be argued that women in this society, are subjected to having sexual conducts which are meant to favor men. In this society, sexuality is at the heart of male domination and by assigning women this kind of image, the society has planted a lasting key mechanism of patriarchal control.

### Specific images by artists.

From the above analyzed *pakruok*, the study comes out the pie charts below showing the percentage distribution of use of specific images by men and women *pakruok* artists in reference to women.

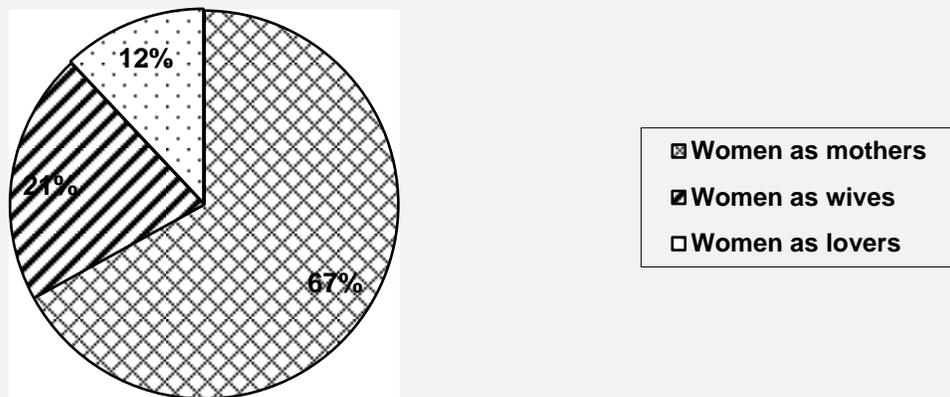
#### MEN ARTISTS



**Figure 1: Shows the percentage distribution of the image by men *pakruok* artists in reference to women in the *pakruok* they composed and formed.**

From the pie chart, 62% of men *pakruok* artists who were interviewed composed and performed *pakruok* in which they used image of women as wives in reference to women: 25% composed and performed *pakruok* using the image of women as lovers in reference to women. Only 13% of the men interviewed referred to women as mother in their *pakruok*. It is evident that the specific image used in reference to women by *pakruok* artists is women as wives.

### **WOMEN ARTISTS**



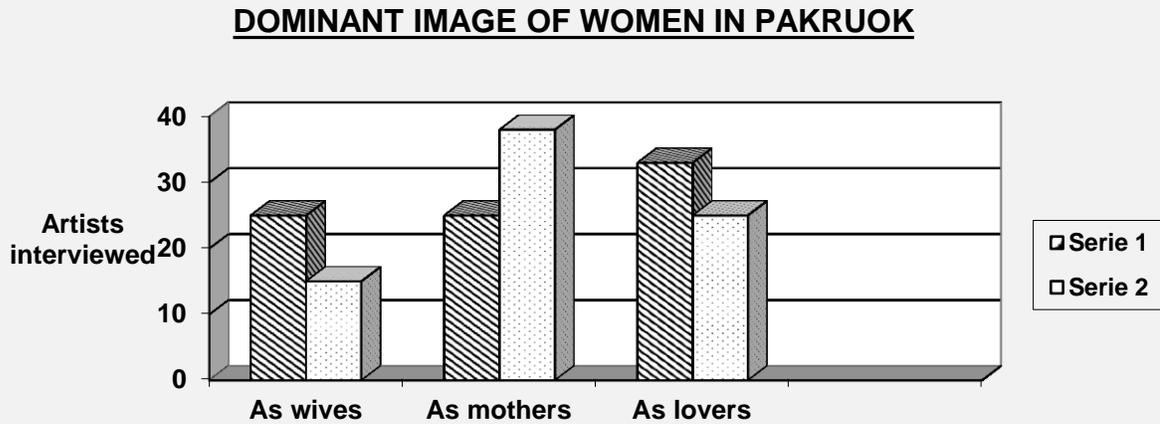
**Figure 2. Shows percentage distribution of use of images by women *pakruok* artists in reference to women in the *pakruok* they composed and performed.**

As shown in the pie chart, 67% of the women Pakruok artists who were interviewed composed and performed *pakruok* in which they used the images of women as Mothers in reference to women: 21% gave reference to women in terms of women as wives. Only 12% of the women artists composed Pakruok that portrayed women as lover. The greater percentage reference to women as mother is due to the fact that the prominence of motherhood is a central aspect of most Luo women's lives. There is therefore the prominence of motherhood and every girl, especially in their teen ages expect to become mothers. One attraction of motherhood is its normative quality. Motherhood is an expected and normal role for all women and many women believe that they can only achieve adult, feminine status through being mothers.

### **Dominant image of women in *pakruok***

To determine the dominant images of women in *pakruok* the study uses the bar graph below showing the number of men and women *pakruok*

interviewed during the study and the images they used in reference to women.



**Figure 3. Shows the distribution of the three images of women as used in *pakruok* by both men and women *pakruok* artists.**

To determine which image is dominantly used in reference to women, we calculate by adding the number of artists, men and women in each case to determine which is the highest among the three. That is:

Women as wives	$25+15= 40$
Women as mothers	$25+37=62$
Women as lover	$32+25=57$

From the calculation it is evident that the dominant image of women in Pakruok is women as mother.

### **Language, women, Pakruok**

In examining what kind of language is used in *Pakruok* in reference to women, the above analyzed data on *Pakruok* reveals the sexist nature of the Luo language.

In *Pakruok* composed and performed by both men and women, gender a difference is marked in pronounces is market in pronouns and personal nouns. For example:

(i) *Anyika owadgi Ben Okew Kano Kobura kama mon matindo puonjore rego.*

I am the brother to Ben the nephew to Kano Kobura where young women learn how to grand.

In the above “an” I stands in the place of personal pronoun, I while *Owadgi* which can be translated as brother denotes the male sex.

Similarly in the *Pakruok* sample:

(ii) *Atoti nyan ma duonde yom ka duond nyathi matin*

Atoti, she, whose voice is soft as a baby.

In the above *pakruok* sample “*Nyan*” connotes female sex and can simply be translated as “she”.

In animate objects need not be gender-specific in the realm of inanimate noun, words such as *chieng*, sun do not have to be prefaced by gendered article, nor do they carry an automatic gender specification. However, in any but mundane *Pakruok*, there is a high likelihood of intimate noun either being pre-modified. For example:

(i) *Wuod Onyango chieng jamondo*



Marker of masculinity

The son of Onyango, the sun is an early riser.

(ii) *Nyar imbo chieng Jamondo*



Marker of feminity

Equally, a quality like “*thuon*”-bravery is personified by a gender marker to make feminine. A man can praise himself as be praised as *thou*, brave: but a woman who has demonstrated maximum bravery and courage may be called *Nyathuon*, the daughter of the brave-whereby

Nya + *Thuon*



Marker of feminine gender.

Size also determine gender, feminine being used to suggest a smaller, the masculine a larger object. Men therefore praise themselves comparing themselves with large animals such as *Liech*, elephant, *Omuga*, rhino; while women are compared to as smaller thing such as that, maize bag.

To conclude this section, just as pale Spender in *Man-Made Language* (1980) argued that women constitute a “muted group” in a society because meaning has been controlled by men, so it is in *Pakruok*. The language reflects male experiences and perpetuates male power.

Feminine words are negatively marked. Think of different connotations carried by:

Dhako/Dichuo	Woman/Man
Lur (Migumba)/Bwoch	Barrenness/Impotence
Miyo/Wuoro	Mother/Father
Min ot/Wuon ot	The mother of the house/the owner of the home.

## 7. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

### 7.1 Summary

This study was carried out among the Luo in Rabare village in Karungu division, Migori district. A number of men and women *pakruok* artists were interviewed to come up with the diverse data on *pakruok*. It is important to note that the *pakruok* used for our analysis of the way women are portrayed are only representative of several others.

In addition to other objectives, the main objective was an analysis of the images of women in *pakruok* sub-genre of oral poetry of the Luo. The principal research question was, "How are women portrayed in *pakruok*?"

We also had a general overview of *pakruok* as a sub-genre of oral poetry of Luo orature: its definition, characteristics, its composers and performers and functions.

Finally, the study has looked into depth the portrait of women in *pakruok*. There are *pakruok* composed by men and women artists using different images in reference to women as lover. Further, se discovered that the dominant image of women in the sub-genre is **Women as Mothers**. We finally analyzed what kind of language is used in reference to women in *pakruok*.

### 7.2 Conclusion

This study has taken as a research priority, the portrait of women in *pakruok* sample, collected among the Luo women and men descendants from Rabare village, Karungu division in Migori district.

With the portrait of women in *pakruok* as our central focus, we have looked for answers to a number of questions, some of which are:

- What kind of language is used in *pakruok*?
- Who performs *pakruok* in terms of gender?
- What specific images are used by men *pakruok* artists in reference to women?
- What specific images are used by women *pakruok* artists in reference to women?
- What dominant images are used in *pakruok* in reference to women?

The study exemplifies the existing interrelatedness between the image of women in the sub-genre and society. The images show what attitude the society has about women in general.

In conclusion, therefore the principal of understanding the images of women in Pakruok necessarily achieves a lot without an effective analysis of women portraiture: we lack the means to analyze these societies effectively and in their totality.

### **7.3 Recommendations**

This study can be used as a yardstick for research into other sub-genres of orature from other communities. For example, this study can be used as a model for analysis of the portrait of women in other sub-genres as well as genres of orature from other communities such as songs and proverbs.

Also, this kind of investigation can be used to carry a comparative study on the portrait of women in different genres of orature from different societies/communities.

It is also hoped that this study would be able to sensitize as well as audience of orature in appreciating other sub-genres of orature from the same perspective: feminist perspective. This is in recognition of the fact that a large orature of various communities remain un-researched and unappreciated using feminist approach.

Lastly, in Africa in general and Kenya in particular, the gender debate remains a developmental issue. As a gender profile, this work reveals how women and men relate within the Luo context: women are kept under men's control by fear of what their husbands or other men will do to them. Scholars interested in gender studies could therefore use this study as a springboard into investigating the roots of existing gender relations in other communities.

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