

# On the Areal Comparability of Folklore

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## ABSTRACT

Finnish and Tanzanian folklore are here compared from the viewpoint of their various forms and functions. In order to facilitate the analysis, a brief historical survey is made of the folkloristic studies in these societies. In Finland the study of folklore had a vital role in the emergence of the Finnish national consciousness in the 19th century. A condensed symbol of this new identity was the Kalevala, an epic poem compiled and adapted from older oral material by Elias Lönnrot. Themes and symbols from this old folklore have been extensively used in music, art, theatre, cinema, trade marks etc. In Tanzania the study of folklore has been casual so far. Some systematic surveying has been initiated in the Islands and the coastal areas, but the folklore of the continent is still largely unknown. Small samples of folklore have been published as booklets and used in school teaching. It is suggested that a plan be made for the comprehensive survey, collection and study of Tanzanian folklore. It is further suggested that although Finland and Tanzania are ethnically and linguistically quite different, they still have much in common in their struggle for national identity and cultural freedom, a struggle in which indigenous cultures and languages have a vital role to play.

## 1.0 THE COMPARABILITY OF FOLKLORE

In the opinion of many researchers, true science always involves comparison. Typically, a defined set of data is compared with data of another set, and the resulting differences and similarities constitute the results of the research. According to this way of thinking, the so-called facts themselves do not constitute knowledge. Only comparison, placing the findings in a wider framework, results in interesting and useful knowledge.

Despite the undeniable truth of the above statement, the question of comparability has always to be given serious consideration. Is it justified to compare two so distant phenomena as Finnish and Tanzanian folklore? Folkloristic data of genetically and culturally closely related ethnic groups, such as Finns and Estonians, have been interestingly compared (Oinas 1985); but Finland and Tanzania are both geographically and culturally so distant from each other that we have to consider the grounds for comparison carefully.

Before discussing the subject matter itself, I want to indicate a couple of approaches and theories of comparison which I consider useless and misleading. First, I shall categorically abstain from the evolutionist view that various cultures

and ethnic groups go through similar stages in their development towards increasingly sophisticated forms of culture. If the theory of cultural monogenesis is false, we should not attempt to compare Finnish and Tanzanian folklore as if trying to locate them on the same continuum. We have to take it as a fact that the development of cultures is largely influenced, although not determined, by environmental and historical factors (Hurskainen 1984: 48-52). There is, of course, a propensity to think that ancient times were times of ignorance and stupidity, while we, the people of today, have progressed and become civilized.

Second, a comparison of the folkloristic data as such would not be very useful. Finland has gone through a long period of intensive collection of all types of folklore, while in Tanzania collecting is only just beginning. Exaggerating somewhat, one could say that Finnish folklore is to be found on cards and tapes, while Tanzanian folklore is being recollected, produced and reproduced in villages, homes, schools etc. Tanzania has living folklore, while Finland has archived it. There are no large collections of Tanzanian folklore available, although there is no doubt about the abundance and large variation of various genres of folklore in all parts of the country. Yet we cannot use it in a comparison, because we do not know it. There are very few, mostly non-scholarly, collections of folklore from a small part of the 120 ethnic groups of Tanzania. Their practical value is also limited because very seldom is there any background information available as to the specific area and the people from whom the information was received. Commonly the pieces of folklore are produced only in a translated form (usually English), accompanied by lamentations of how difficult, if not impossible, it is to express the hidden meanings in English (Mwakasaka 1978; Akello 1981). Often the original text has been changed, 'improved', to some extent. And finally we have no means of knowing how representative the recorded items are.

Therefore, instead of attempting a comparison on the grassroot level, so to say, I shall focus on two particular questions: (1) How has the collection and study of folklore been implemented in these two societies? That is, who have initiated it and for what reasons? (2) What functions does folklore play in Tanzanian and Finnish societies today? I hope that these questions are general enough to allow sensible discussion, and perhaps comparison. Cultural phenomena should be seen first of all within their own contexts, as outcomes of historical and social processes (Mlacha 1990). I shall try some comparison, however, because people compare anyway, including researchers.

## 2.0 HISTORY AND MOTIVES OF FOLKLORE COLLECTION AND RESEARCH IN FINLAND

### 2.1 THE PERIOD BEFORE THE NATIONAL AWAKENING

The significant difference between the Finnish and Tanzanian situations regarding the possibilities of recording folklore is that these nations have very different histories. There have been individual initiatives in recording Finnish folklore since the times of Mikael Agricola<sup>1</sup>, the founder of the Finnish literary language and the translator of the Bible into Finnish. Although this recorded information dates back to 1551, Christian influence and missionary work had by that time already affected the mythology of the people inhabiting Finland for centuries. Agricola himself had acquired the models for mythology from Greek and Latin sources. Hence the pantheon had to consist of twelve gods, the names of whom were found in the oral tradition. It is very doubtful whether many of the figures found in those lists (e.g. *tonttu*, *rahko*, *liekkiö*, *Väinämöinen*, *Ilmarinen*) ever had the status of a divinity (Hautala 1954: 26-30). The information given by Agricola is superficial, and distorted by the need to show that also Finnish ethnic groups had a pantheon. That was also a time when a need was felt to prove that the Finnish language was related to Latin or even Greek. All this reflects the general view, predominant at that time and also much later, that without the enlightenment brought by Christianity people live in total darkness and ignorance, and that people without this new faith have nothing worth preserving in written form. The world view was strongly dichotomous. Phenomena and people were located in either of two opposite categories. Such dominant pairs of opposites were: christianity : paganism :: light : darkness :: civilization : barbarism :: enlightenment : ignorance.<sup>2</sup> The dominant culture, extending its influence from the west and east in different forms, destroyed what there was of people's original cultures. Both the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church represented the 'good', the 'light', as against the 'bad', the 'darkness', of the indigenous people. Of course both of these churches were more tolerant towards local customs and traditions than the Lutheran Church, which was to replace the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th century.

Agricola was scarcely interested in describing Finnish folklore as such, because it served no obvious purpose. The fragments of Finnish folk beliefs were a byproduct of the more important business of promoting the Finnish language as a literary medium. It is possible, although we have no proof of it, that Agricola already had an ambivalent view towards folk traditions, a view that was to reappear and gain strength during the following centuries. According to this view, folk traditions are a necessary basis for national identity and they strengthen people's self-awareness. On the other hand, such traditions are thought to represent the dark side of people's culture, such as magic, superstition and ignorance, which hamper people's development. The ancient Finnish divinities were admired as evidence of an indigenous mythological system, but the existence of such beliefs had no further

consequences. They served merely as a foundation to stand on, affording a better focus on the enlightenment and the future.

This ambivalent view of folklore is found clearly in the 17th century, when a collegium for antiquities was established in Sweden-Finland (1667). Parish priests in Finland also received requests from this collegium to collect and write down stories about the heroic deeds of forefathers, about shrines etc. At the same time the church leaders sent their own letters to the same parish priests with the aim of destroying superstitions and pagan customs. Obviously most of them followed the orders of their bishops, because no significant collections of folklore emerged from the initiatives of the collegium.

The literary history of Sweden-Finland also includes totally unrealistic romantic views of its great past. Olof Rudbeck the Elder tried to prove in his *Atlantica* (1679-1702) that the city occurring in old Greek literature as Atlantis, and which disappeared suddenly, is in fact Sweden. This is the place where all peoples and their languages and religions originate. No less fascinating and no less imaginative was the argumentation of Daniel Juslenius, who in *Aboa vetus et nova* (1700) claimed that Finns had come to their present area after the flood told about in the Old Testament, and that Finland had become the cradle of science and education (Oinas 1985: 10). Although we now smile at such views, they were presented and discussed seriously in those times.

At the end of the 18th century, Henrik Gabriel Porthan had a strong influence in Finland as a representative of the Enlightenment. In *De poesi Fennica I-V* (1766-78) he expressed mixed views towards folklore. He described charms, which he considered the oldest genre, as superstitious songs in which simple people, blinded by the beliefs of old women, thought a wonderful power resided. On the other hand, Porthan described the Finnish folk poetry in admiring words, and he was able to distinguish song variants of different ages by comparing their forms. There were already elements of the historical method and textual criticism, which would play an important role in the study of folklore in the 19th century. Porthan's contemporary was Kristfrid Ganander (1741-90), the first real collector of Finnish folklore. While working as a parish priest in Rantsila he himself and his assistants collected folklore, e.g. folk beliefs and riddles. He published the results in *Mythologia Fennica* (1789) and *Aenigmata Fennica* (1783).

As a consequence of the war between Sweden and Russia in 1808-09, Finland was annexed to Russia as an autonomous Grand Duchy. This new situation, together with the current rise of romanticism, provided fertile ground for the growth of nationalistic feelings. It is characteristic of that time that it was Finnish students studying in Uppsala, Sweden, who formed the first group emphasizing the spiritual treasures of the Finns. They wanted to show the Swedes that Finns too have a treasure in their folklore. Kaarle Aksel Gottlund was one of the group, and he expressed the idea that ancient Finnish folk songs might constitute a Finnish national epos. He published two small booklets called *Pieniä runoja Suomen Poijille ratoxi* (1817 and 1821), the first folkloristic publications in Finnish. They were mainly lyric songs from Savo, and not very suitable for a national epos.

## 2.2 THE KALEVALA AND THE NATIONAL AWAKENING

It was finally Elias Lönnrot who implemented the idea of collecting folk songs which would constitute a large coherent epic. During his student time Lönnrot was greatly influenced by Reinhold von Becker, who introduced him to the writings of Porthan, Lencqvist and Ganander. One should also remember the writings of Zachris Topelius, whose publications of folk poems were a model for Lönnrot's first writings on folklore.

There is no need here to review the phases of the composition of the Kalevala in detail. A few extracts from the sources of that time suffice to illuminate the motivations and sentiments connected with the publication of the work. This is from a letter Lönnrot wrote in February 1834:

"As I was comparing them (the results of his fourth journey) with those known before, a desire to organize and unify them awoke in me, to extract from Finnish mythology something corresponding to the Icelandic *Edda*. I started the work at once and continued it for several weeks, even months, until Christmas, when I had a considerable corpus of poems about Väinämöinen, in the order I wanted. I took special notice of the chronological order of the heroic deeds mentioned in the poems" (Anttila 1931-1935: 217-18).

These words were written a year before he signed the foreword to the first edition of the Proto-Kalevala. Already here he had in mind an epos comparable to those known in other countries. So too did his contemporary Johan Gabriel Linsén, the chairman of the Finnish Literature Society, although he had earlier thought that Finland had no history and therefore no historical material was available in folk poetry. After the publication of the Old Kalevala he changed his mind:

"The treasure of old Finnish poems has so great an importance that not only is the literature of our country infinitely enriched, but it has almost achieved European status. It is not too bold to say that this literature has only now emerged from its cradle. Finland, as the owner of these epic poems, will learn to understand rightly her past with heightened self-esteem, as well as her future spiritual development. She can say to herself: I too have a history" (Hautala 1969: 25-26).

Lönnrot was not theoretically oriented and he had no interest in documenting the collected material by giving all the background information which is now considered necessary for a fieldworker. Rather, he worked for more practical ends, which had much more significant consequences than a critical scientific study could ever have had. It became more and more clear to him that he was going to compose nothing less than an epos, a national treasure, the purpose of which was to show to the world that the Finns were a respectable nation in their own right.

More than a century later, Jouko Hautala described the impact of the Kalevala with great empathy:

"The appearance of the *Kalevala* realized beyond all expectations the romantic dreams which had been directed towards Finnish folklore. Finnish literature, which was at this time embryonic, had been given what the period had as most valuable in literature: an ancient epic, a national epic. The *Kalevala* opened up dazzling vistas to the few but nevertheless ardent guardians of Finnish culture: it lifted up to the general view a heroic, magnificent past, of which there had been no previous knowledge; it showed that the language which was believed to be poor and barren, even incapable of development, had been moulded by cultivation for thousands of years into a rich vehicle for poetry. It offered a faith and a trust more sorely needed than it is possible to imagine today. It was the *Kalevala* that guided the cultivation of the language, national research work, national art, along the lines they have followed ever since. In a decisive way it caused civilization in Finland to become Finnish, to use the Finnish language - it brought about the growth towards spiritual independence that has been the condition for political independence" (Hautala 1969: 25).

Lönnrot and many of his contemporaries thought that the poems in the *Kalevala* describe ancient historical events. Figures such as Väinämöinen, Lemminkäinen, Ilmarinen, Aino, and Louhi were thought to be historical persons. These views contrasted with the explanations of Porthan, who thought them to be mythic figures. In Lönnrot's opinion, Ilmarinen was not a god of air or of fire, but rather a smith, who knew how to forge copper, silver, gold and iron, and who was a serious and honest man. The position of Väinämöinen was more complicated, because for a long time he had been thought to be a divinity. However, Lönnrot finds in him human characteristics, although he was an exceptionally powerful hero and wise man with the skill of exercising power through words and singing rather than the sword. All this fits Lönnrot's view that the world view of the ancient Finns was monotheistic rather than polytheistic. Lönnrot states his position in the following way:

"And, indeed I do not doubt that even before Christianity our forefathers had knowledge of one and only one god, who was sometimes worshipped under the present name, sometimes under that of Ukko or the Creator."

Lönnrot did not find any reason to conceal his working principles in composing the *Kalevala*. In the preface to the Proto-*Kalevala* he clearly states that each of the poems about Väinämöinen has been put together of at least five or six variants recorded from different bards. While trying to fit the poems together he himself wrote new lines on the basis of folk poems, and tried to make the epos sound like a coherent whole. In so doing he attempted to reconstitute the original epos, which he thought had existed from times immemorial but had then become fragmented, so that only disjointed pieces had survived in the oral tradition. The second edition of the *Kalevala* (1849) is a comprehensive illustration of these assumed ancient times. It is truly a creation of Lönnrot, and it expresses in an idealistic way his view of the

ancient history of Finns, a view based principally on faith and vision (Kaukonen 1979).

Before publishing the second edition of the Kalevala, Lönnrot compared his work with the task which Homer probably had when in composing the Iliad and the Odyssey. These are also collections of poems, which not only had several variants but were also sung in different dialects.

After the publication of the Kalevala, very little attention was paid to how it had been composed, which versions of recorded poems were chosen, and how they were arranged. The appearance of the epos itself was felt to be so significant that there was no place for academic disputes about its authenticity. It was received with great enthusiasm, because it seemed to answer vital questions concerning the Finnish identity. It seemed to show that Finns had a respectable history, that the Finnish language had an extremely wide vocabulary to express even the finest nuances. Lönnrot also pointed out that Finnish folk poetry is original, not borrowed from other nations. He recognized the close relations between Finnish and Estonian folk poetry, but these he interpreted in terms of ethnic affiliation. The Kalevala thus rescued national values which were about to disappear even before the concept of nation itself was consciously formulated and comprehended among the people.

The ideals of nationalism at that time, nurtured by the spread of romanticism, favoured the search for national symbols which people themselves would accept. The Kalevala met this requirement exceptionally well. An epic, such as the Kalevala, as a national symbol, had a high esteem in Europe. It could be compared with such epics as the Edda in Iceland, the Niebelungenlied in Germany, the Iliad and the Odyssey in ancient Greece etc. In addition, it was more closely connected with folk poetry than any other national epics. In fact the Kalevala was understood as folk poetry: Lönnrot had only reconstructed it.

It was important for Lönnrot and his contemporaries to emphasize that the Kalevala and its individual poems were not invented by any individual person. Folk poetry just 'makes itself' out of the need to express sentiments common to the whole people. Lönnrot emphasized consciously that "the very moment they are said to be made by one particular man, they lose their value as folk poems" (Hautala 1969: 31). Poems written by individual people were classified into an entirely different category without the status of folk poetry, and they were not suited for a national epos.

In trying to figure out how the poems might have come into existence in so many variants, Lönnrot nevertheless thought that a poem must first have a composer, who creates the original poem, which may be only a short one. Various singers would then add and change lines according to their own needs and motivations. These variants are transmitted as oral tradition from generation to another, while at the same time new additions and omissions take place. These variants cannot be considered to have been composed by any individual; they are folk poems.

We have to see the Kalevala against the background of romanticism, which did not bother much about hard facts in research. Therefore, there was no significant

criticism regarding how the Kalevala had been composed. It was not at all rare at that time to believe that the old times were the golden and perfect times, while today we find only fragments of that great age. The way Lönnrot treated his material by recomposing and rewriting passages was thus quite acceptable. There was no time for useless criticism when the national treasure had been found again. Hautala describes the wave of enthusiasm aroused by the Kalevala:

"Its 'discovery' signified the fulfilment beyond all expectations of dreams characteristic of the time, and it is only natural that the enthusiasm awakened by the Kalevala was directed towards the work itself and not to its materials, which were considered less important" (Hautala 1969: 39).

From the viewpoint of the ideals of romanticism, the Kalevala was not only a national monument. It was also an object of folkloristic studies and the source material of such studies as well. Even such a famous scholar as Mathias Alexander Castrén, although he carried out extensive fieldwork among Altaic and Uralic ethnic groups, relied in his studies of mythology almost exclusively on Lönnrot's Kalevala (Haavio 1952). Castrén too set himself a national task, as Lönnrot had so successfully done. Having studied both folkloristics and linguistics he made long fieldwork trips to the east as far as Siberia to collect comparative data (folkloristic and linguistic) from a wide variety of ethnic groups. His aim was to show that Finnish language was not an isolated and insignificant small language, but a member of the language family comparable in size to the Indo-European languages. He showed that the Finno-Ugric and Samoyed languages were related. When these two language groups were further related to Turkish and Mongolian languages, he had a basis for his theory that the Ural-Altai languages form a large language family, and that the original home of the Finns was somewhere far away to the east of their present living area.

If Lönnrot had sought, and found, a coherent and respectable national epic, which gave the Finns self-respect and national pride, Castrén gave them a family large enough to compete with other nations. All this reflects the ideals of romanticism also predominant in other countries.

With this folkloristic and linguistic research the suppressed people of Finland had also achieved international recognition. This was made possible by the translations of the Kalevala into Swedish (1841) by Castrén, French (1845) by Léouzon Leduc, and German (1852, the *New Kalevala*) by Schiefner, and by several translations of excerpts into a number of other languages. Jacob Grimm treated the mythological elements of the Kalevala in his *Deutsche Mythologie* (1844) amid the overtones of romanticism. He agreed with Lönnrot that the Kalevala was reconstructed from fragments of a poem which in ancient times had formed a coherent whole. He disagreed with Lönnrot in that in his opinion the heroes were originally gods. He saw the fight over the Sampo as a central theme in the poem, the Sampo itself having similarities with the Grotte-mill of the ancient Nordic king Frodi. Grimm's interpretation approached theories of natural



mythology when he connected these themes with the mill told about in German folksongs, a mill which grinds gold and silver in the morning or at night.

Anton Schiefner, the translator of the Kalevala into German, pushed the theory of natural mythology still further by claiming that the heroes of the Kalevala are gods of the powers of nature. The Sampo is the sun and its decorated cover symbolizes the sky at night. Therefore the theft of the Sampo and the deliverance of the sun are parallel themes in poetry (Schiefner 1855). Such symbolistic views soon gained ground, and in fact a number of international scholars interpreted folklore in terms of natural mythology.

### 2.3 SPREAD OF FOLKLORISTIC RESEARCH

The publication of the Kalevala gave rise to an increased enthusiasm for folklore collection for various reasons. The collection work itself was mainly carried out by students, who received modest scholarships for travelling in various parts of Finland and brought their findings to the archives of the Finnish Literature Society. In order to facilitate the use of these collections as research material outside the archive itself, the thought of publishing at least part of the collections was brought up every now and then. The idea of publishing the material had already been presented before the first edition of the Kalevala appeared. Even Lönnrot was aware of the value of such comparative material, and he appended a number of variants at the end of the Old Kalevala. Also the Board of the Finnish Literature Society acknowledged the need for a more complete and critical edition, with all available variants included, while the Kalevala itself could be made more complete by the addition of poems and verses found in other collections. When working on the second edition of 1849, Lönnrot was still thinking of adding variants of verses as a list and appending it to the Kalevala. This list, however, would have been, unpractically long, and also its usefulness without sufficient contextual information would have been limited. So it was published without variants. Castrén too spoke of the need of continuing to collect more poems, which should be published as a series of minor collections of poems in the form they were sung by the singers.

It was important for the Finnish researchers of that time to emphasize and try to prove that the folk poems were genuinely Finnish in origin, if not totally unique. Otto Donner emphasized this aspect and noted with some disappointment that foreign scholars, rather than accepting their originality and uniqueness, saw in them links with Nordic and Germanic folklore. However, whatever the answer to the question of uniqueness might be, the form of the verses and the rhyme scheme are unique, and scarcely translatable into another language.

After the heyday of romanticism, evolutionistic ideas penetrated the study of folklore. This had profound effects on folkloristic research plans, because evolutionism entailed a comprehensive theory, and it therefore also affected the research methods. This theory, applied to the study of folklore, meant tracing the original forms of various folkloristic genres. Applied to the study of the Kalevala

and its background, it meant that more field research was needed in order to record all existing variants of folk poems. Evolutionism also emphasized the use of recorded facts in proving theories. Instead of seeking to detect the original whole underlying the now fragmented and scattered poems, evolutionism emphasized the collecting and study of present folk poems. It was assumed that folk poetry in fact develops towards a more perfect and balanced stage.

The work of collecting more folklore was now motivated primarily by research needs. Contrary to the expectations, this new thrust was not motivated so much by the works of anthropologists, such as Tylor and Bastian, as by the ideas of Darwin, Comte and Spencer, who represented other fields. In the research inspired by evolutionism, the Kalevala was rejected as a source material for folkloristic research. More fieldwork material was needed, and this work was now motivated by scientific interests. The evolutionistic theory required the collection of folklore from all areas of its distribution in order to facilitate comparisons and conclusions.

This evolutionistic approach in Finnish folklore is often linked to the name of Julius Krohn, who developed, together with his son Kaarle Krohn, the historic-geographic method, also known as the Finnish school. This method is based on the proposition that variants of the same folklore item in different areas attest their diffusion from a single point of origin. According to this theory, the more distant the areas are geographically and/or historically, the more the variants differ from each other. On the basis of closely related variants it is also possible to establish cultural subareas. Out of this great mass of variants, the researcher is then able to reconstruct the 'original' form of the item, and also show the place and time of its origin.

In the time of Kaarle Krohn, the collecting work was further expanded; it was organized by means of establishing permanent links to local collectors. Also a new form of collecting was successfully tested by arranging open competitions in folklore collection. This tradition has been successfully continued to the present day. Through such open competitions it has been possible to accumulate much more material than with fieldwork trips by individual researchers.

Among the later theoretical approaches mention should be made of E.N. Setälä, who criticized the historic-geographic method and proposed instead a typological method, where folklore items are classified according to their types.

In the 1930's new theories again found their place in Finnish folklore research. The search for original forms was abandoned, and instead it was assumed that folklore is first of all poetry, created and transformed continuously from time immemorial. Throughout their history, folkloric items had received influences from many sources, both internal and external. Martti Haavio in particular, a central figure in developing this approach, worked to establish the position of the Finnish folkloric tradition within the larger field outside Finland.

So far the description has been confined to Finnish research on folklore alone. None of these scholars cast their eyes in the direction of Africa. Perhaps the only context where reference was made to African people was the concept 'lintukoto', variants of which are found in several areas in Finland. Ganander (1789) had

mentioned in his dictionary of Finnish mythology that 'lintukoto' was a land of dwarfs, where migrating birds had their winter resting place. Ganander further tells that 'lintukotolainen' means 'a kind of dwarf in the land of Turia; they are thought to wage war against cranes'. This land of Turia is explained to mean Ethiopia, a faraway warm country. Some other variants locate 'lintukoto' in a very distant place where heaven and earth meet: they are so close to each other that only dwarfs may move between them.

Uno Harva (1948: 62-63) considers this tradition international on the basis of very similar variants found also in the *Iliad*, which tells about the resting place of birds close to Okeano, and of the fight between cranes and dwarfs the size of a fist, called Pygmaioi. It is possible that this is a reference to the Pygmies of the rain forest in the Congo basin.

Do these fragments of tradition reflect the European image of Africans as small, insignificant people, not needing to be taken into serious consideration? Where are the traditions of frightening African giants fighting with lions barehanded? Yet the tallest people in the world are to be found in Africa.

## 2.4 THE ROLE OF FOLKLORE IN FINLAND

The above outline of the history of Finnish folkloristic studies already includes hints at the various roles of folklore. It should be pointed out that these roles have changed dramatically over the years, and at any time in history they also have multiple functions. Whereas folklore was traditionally a means of memorizing history, entertainment, an integral part of rituals etc., its role has later become more symbolic, but equally effective. In the traditional society, folklore was conceived as being an integral part of local cultures, without conscious implications in a wider context. It was in the context of the national awakening that folklore was put to a more general use, with significations hitherto not attached to it. The Finnish language and folklore became the basis of identity on a national level. It was also characteristic of the situation that the folklore enthusiasts did not themselves work in folklore, and some of them did not even know Finnish language very well. For them, the language and the folklore were tools to achieve something hitherto not experienced in Finland, becoming more a symbol than an active and integral part of people's lives.

The themes of the Kalevala and its characters became a source of inspiration for painters, such as Akseli Gallen-Kallela, and for composers of music. Jean Sibelius used extensively themes from the Finnish mythology and the Kalevala in his compositions, particularly in symphonies and symphonic poems. Inspired by the Kalevala, he wrote a total of seven symphonic poems, of which *The Swan of Tuonela*<sup>3</sup> and *Tapiola*<sup>4</sup> are the best known. It is however the tone poem *Finlandia* of 1899 which more clearly than any of his other works condenses the essence of the nation's characteristics. The themes of the Kalevala, Kanteletar and other elements of folklore continue to have relevance in Finnish music. Recently (February 1992)

in California there was a performance of *Kullervo*, Sibelius' first symphony (1892), by the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by the young Finn Esa-Pekka Salonen. About the same time, in the same place, the new opera *Kullervo* received its first performance, composed by Aulis Sallinen, an internationally known Finnish composer. Another opera, *Elina*, recently composed by Jukka Linkola, is also based on Finnish folklore.

A number of films and theatre performances have been produced on the basis of folklore. The Kalevala has also been a source of labels for trade marks. Finnish insurance companies use almost exclusively names from the Kalevala, such as *Pohjola*, *Pohja*, *Tapiola*, *Sampo*, *Kaleva*, and *Ilmarinen*. The central Finnish forestry board is *Tapio*. Also personal and family names have been taken from the Kalevala, such as *Pohjola*, *Tapio*, *Kaleva*, *Ilmari*, *Kalervo*, *Kullervo*, *Untamo*, *Unto*, *Ahti*, *Aino*, *Kyllikki*, *Sampo*, *Väinämö*, *Väinö*, etc.

The active performance of the Kalevala songs in the way they were performed earlier has virtually died out. School children are made compulsorily acquainted with the Kalevala, with the effect that they develop an antipathy towards it. Many discover the value of the Kalevala only years later. However, there are folk music groups which take themes from the Kalevala and Kanteletar, thus reviving the Kalevala in the realm of folk music.

### 3.0 THE MULTIVALENCE OF TANZANIAN TRADITIONS

In Tanzania the status of folklore collection and research is quite different from that of Finland. In order to understand these different conditions, let us first look more closely at the history and socio-linguistic conditions of East Africa.

Firstly, whereas in Finland there is a single dominant ethnic group of Finns, in Tanzania there are a vast number of ethnic groups. Although discussion on ethnic groups and their identities has been intentionally avoided in Tanzania since its independence, this does not alter the fact that Tanzania is a multi-ethnic country. A large number of these groups speak Bantu languages, some of which are rather closely, others more distantly, related to each other. There are also significant ethnic groups of non-Bantu origin. Furthermore, ethnically the borders of Tanzania are artificial, and the boundaries of cultural areas do not follow the national borders.

If we think for instance of the cultural area defined by the spread of the Swahili language, nations such as Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and a large part of Zaire have to be included. Swahili increasingly exerts its influence, if not domination, on this large area. At the same time the area is covered by another set of identities, that of local ethnic groups, which have their own histories and traditions.

Whereas in Finland the rise of nationalism was bound to the ethnic identity of one people, the Finns, and to its neglected and scorned language, in Tanzania the situation is quite different.

Secondly, as a consequence of these diversified cultures and traditions, it is not likely that an epic such as the Kalevala would emerge in Tanzania. Even if one

could be composed, it would not have the same role as in Finland. While looking for the glorious past and its own history, Finland found it in the Kalevala, and in other forms of folklore. The Kalevala was conceived as a document of one people (historical or mythical, it does not matter here), which spoke one language with a number of mutually intelligible dialects. When it separated from Sweden, it never felt to be part of Russia, although it was annexed to it. The Kalevala and its folklore, all in the Finnish language, were vital elements in the emergence of the national feeling, which was strong enough to lead Finland to national independence in 1917.

Thirdly, both of these countries have a history of domination by other nations, yet there are differences here. The area of Tanzania was ruled by Germany and Great Britain for about 70 years. Finland was dominated by Sweden and Russia for over 750 years, and frequently it was a battle ground in political conflicts between neighbouring powers. Tanzania has been in comparative peace all the years of its existence, in spite of the effects of both world wars. Despite these differences, however, the countries have much in common in terms of the central problem we are discussing here. Both of them have been dominated by foreign powers, and both of them have gained national independence. Both have also been struggling with the internal problem of national identity. Both countries have had to fight for independence in some phases of their history, although for Finland the price has been extremely heavy.

What could the role of folklore be in a multi-ethnic independent country such as Tanzania? Without being in a position to give any definite answer to this question I would assume that there is always much to do in the area of national integrity and in strengthening the national feeling. I have the impression that although Tanzania has systematically built its national identity on the basis of the ujamaa-ideology, much still can be done. It has made a decision in favour of Swahili instead of English as the national language, and practically all people in Tanzania understand this language. Yet we know very little about the history and folklore of the people inhabiting Tanzania. Even the knowledge about the people with Swahili as a mother tongue is still meager, although some systematic efforts have recently been made to remedy the situation.

It seems that instead of giving a description of folklore collection and research in Tanzania we might end up with a list of what should be done. However, before doing this let us make a brief overview of what has been done.

#### 4.0 FOLKLORE COLLECTION AND RESEARCH IN TANZANIA

The first attempts to collect and study folklore in Tanzania were sporadic and isolated endeavours. Typically they were efforts of one individual, and they concerned the oral tradition of one ethnic group only. Generally the motive was the desire to rescue from oblivion something felt to be precious and worth preserving. Only occasionally were the collectors properly trained folklorists.

#### 4.1 THE COLONIAL TIME

It is a bit odd that the first significant collections of East African folklore are to be found in the publications of A.C. Hollis and M. Merker, who both studied Nilotic-speaking ethnic groups. Hollis published *The Masai. Their Language and Folklore* (1905) and *The Nandi. Their Language and Folk-lore* (1909), both with substantial amounts of recorded folklore in the original language, which is a rarity in more recent publications. Merker (1910) worked in the 'field' about the same time as Hollis, but his collections of Maasai folklore contain such peculiar elements that they render his whole work dubious. He wanted to prove that the Maasai are in fact the twelfth lost tribe of Israel. A wealth of folkloric episodes are recorded similar to the myths of Genesis in the Old Testament. The whole theory is, however, without foundations, since such myths have not been recorded by other researchers.

The occasional studies carried out in the whole large Bantu area were made principally from linguistic and anthropological viewpoints, with little interest in folklore. Obviously the research tradition in the colonial countries also directed the research priorities in Africa. If folklore was not in high esteem in Great Britain that time, it was likely that it was not so in its colonies. Rather than study 'people's old stories' somewhere in remote areas, the emphasis was on raising people from the darkness of ignorance to the enlightenment of 'civilization', which was associated with the upper classes. People's old stories, particularly in Africa, were considered to represent backwardness and ignorance, of no use value in the task of 'civilizing' people.

There was more need to know the local languages in order to be able to communicate with people. For that reason linguistic research was needed for the preparation of textbooks and dictionaries. On the other hand, anthropological research was thought to illuminate folk cultures and thus lead to a better knowledge of the indigenous populations. This type of knowledge was useful for the colonial administration. Perhaps the neglect of folklore research in Tanzania and in other African countries should be viewed against this background. It is really a pity that so little had been done in previous years in the area of folklore studies. There is no doubt that when the prejudices towards peoples' old traditions have been overcome, there will be a thriving enthusiasm in folklore collection and research. Why should this be so? It is because people have only one history, and they can trace their origin in only one true way. People have an identity on the basis of where they actually came from, not on the basis of where they hope they came from, or what they are aiming at. And that past that has brought them here and now is their location in the world of today.

Therefore, recording and preserving the past for ourselves, and for our children and grandchildren, and for future generations, is our national task. Its preservation is already a value in itself, and much more so the transfer of this heritage to the active memory of contemporary citizens.

## 4.2 THE TIME OF INDEPENDENCE

The independence of African nations signified a new vision and thrust in studying and preserving the cultural heritage. A number of young nations set as one of their primary tasks the nurture and revival of national cultures, which had been scorned, neglected, and even destroyed for decades. The building up of nationhood and national feeling was felt as a primary task in creating the ideological and conceptual base for a thriving nation.

It is in this context that much of the research of the past three decades has to be viewed in Africa. Folklore research was also a tool for political aims. It was to contribute to the strengthening of nationhood by means of proving that Africans were not without history or without flourishing traditions. In some countries, like Zaire, Ghana, and Senegal, emphasis on traditional cultures and languages was extraordinarily strong. In other countries it was less pervasive, yet significant.

Departments for research and training in cultural subjects were established especially in countries where the regimes were culturally aware and saw the immense potential lying within their own peoples. The research organizations were given a task with defined aims rather than allowed to define the research priorities themselves.<sup>5</sup>

Because oral tradition is an essential part of cultural heritage, its collection and preservation is a national duty. It should not be carried out in conjunction with political interests of any sort, because such a connection would be fatal for the whole enterprise. In a country like Tanzania, whose people have not been oriented towards building physical monuments, the spiritual culture is still more important. I think that in this area Finland and Tanzania have many similarities. Finnish traditional culture did not produce anything comparable to the pyramids of Egypt or the temples, castles and sculpture of the Greco-Roman culture. Instead, the Finnish mind developed highly sophisticated forms of verbal art, which expressed and communicated the accumulated wisdom and sentiments from generation to generation. This was a culture of oral art, and that is what the Finnish collective mind evaluates as something genuinely indigenous. It is not a copy of something from outside. Its contents may have links to themes from a wider geographical area, but its artistic form, a verbal expression relying totally on the characteristics of language, is genuinely Finnish. Oral and expressive art in Tanzania, and obviously all over Africa, is the form of culture which more than anything else forms its nucleus. In both of these countries, the creative mind did not concentrate on constructing visible monuments, because they had no place in those cultures. And why should they have had? Those who admire massive ancient monuments often forget that their construction necessitated the extensive use of slaves and captives. A small privileged class of people ruthlessly sacrificed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people for their own private pursuits. That is what some call a high civilization. What we really need is a revival of those values which have emerged from people's own experience in struggling to meet the needs of their daily lives.

Those in power are tempted to construct their own monuments, but they use the working power of other people for their ends. If we want to find something culturally valuable and worth preserving, it is to be found on the lips of those people who bear the tradition of their community and transmit it to the new generations. It is here that people's strength and self-esteem lie, not in comparing oneself with some other people and their achievements.

I stated above that Tanzania is linguistically and culturally more heterogeneous than Finland. The diversity in Tanzania is not limited only to languages, for religious multivalence is also significant. Traditional cultures and religions no doubt permeate peoples lives all over, but Islam and Christianity have brought a substantial overlay. There is also some competition between groups, although conflicts have been avoided. The significance of these loyalties can be sensed in different views of the Swahili language and the identities attached to it. It is a common view in the Islands and in the Coastal Zone that Swahili has traditionally been the language of Muslims, which is historically true. The problems arise when this language is adopted by the whole nation as a medium of communication and also as a national symbol. What happens to those connotations in this new situation? Where is the highest authority in planning the official use of Swahili? Does it still belong to those who traditionally have been its promoters and 'owners', i.e. the Muslim Swahili of the coast? Or has its position changed so that the vast continental majority also has a say in language planning?

The question of the position of the Swahili language also applies to the position of folklore, because these two are closely related. What is the type of folklore that is most valuable from the viewpoint of national integrity? Is it the folklore of those people who speak Swahili as a mother tongue? Or is the folklore of the continental people equally valuable?

There is also the problem of what should be considered to belong to the national inheritance. Which tradition is more genuine, the tradition prior to the times of Islamic and Christian influence, or the mixture of these traditions? At least the coastal oral tradition has such a strong Islamic impression that it is sometimes difficult to discern within it the old African tradition (Knappert 1970).

The diversity of traditions really poses a problem which should be discussed by all parties together. If oral tradition in Tanzania is to play a vital role in national integration, no group in it should be privileged. Oral traditions of remote and little known ethnic groups are as important as those of the Swahili. The collecting and research of folklore has been carried out unequally so far. For various reasons scholars have tended to study the folklore of their own ethnic groups. As a first step it has been a natural choice with several advantages, such as familiarity with language and culture. As a result some areas have been studied quite extensively, while others have not been even touched upon. It is evident, therefore, that more cooperation and systematic planning is needed in order to facilitate effective and balanced folklore collection and research, which would contribute to national integrity.



The Institute of Kiswahili Research of the University of Dar-es-Salaam has carried out research on folklore within its limits. Although it has extensive collections of folklore, only a small part of the material has been published so far. Among the such works, not yet published, is the voluminous study *The Indian Ocean Complex and Kiswahili Folklore. The Case of Zanzibarian Tale Performance* by T.S.Y. Sengo.

## 5.0 CATEGORIES OF FOLKLORE IN TANZANIA AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

Without going into the controversy about the genres of folklore in general, and in African folklore in particular, we can make the following general observations.

Proverbs, *methali*, are obviously the most frequently used folklore category in various contexts. One finds proverbs being used in daily discussions to give more emphasis to claims or statements. A skilled speaker saturates his speech with pertinent proverbs, thus making it more enjoyable and effective. There are several collections of proverbs from a number of ethnic groups in Eastern Africa. Ernst Dammann (1955) published proverbs from Lamu, and Jan Knappert (1979, 1986) from the same area and from the central Kenya coast. S.S. Farsy (1958) collected and published Swahili sayings from Zanzibar, and Albert Scheven (1981) published a rich collection of Swahili proverbs. Abdulaziz Y. Lodhi and Leonidas Kalugila (1977, 1980) have also published Swahili proverbs. In Uganda, an extensive study of Ganda proverbs (totalling 5 441) was compiled by Ferdinand Walser (1982). Haya proverbs were published by Hellen B. Nestor (1978) and Kikuyu proverbs by Rose Mwangi (1970).

Typical of these collections is that they are lists of proverbs with translations, but without any context showing how they are used. However, their meaning and function can only be understood in context. So far we lack significant corpora of conversational texts which would be needed for contextual research. We are better off with published or recorded speeches, fiction books, plays etc. where the context is provided. Carol Eastman (1972) studied the use of proverbs found in a few published literary works, mostly plays, which provided the context and allowed an elucidation of the meaning of the proverbs.

Literary works in general are a source of folkloric material accessible to literary critics, who do not necessarily master the language of the people concerned. Research here is focused on how the writer uses the cultural oral material of the ethnic group he or she belongs to and whose language is the writer's mother tongue. It is assumed that although the writer uses English or French, the idioms, metaphors and proverbs of the original language will infiltrate into the text, so that a researcher illiterate in the original language can nevertheless study them (Armstrong 1970). Examples of such an approach are Austin Shelton's study (1969a, b) of folklore, particularly proverbs, in Chinua Achebe's novels, and the study by Bernth Lindfors (1973) of the use of folklore in Nigerian literature in general. S. Mlacha (1990)

emphasizes the possibility of studying the oral tradition through literary works and gives examples of the role of proverbs in Swahili literature.

Because proverbs are a genre found in a multitude of contexts, such as daily discussions, argumentation in meetings, speeches, plays, novels, and within fables and stories which are themselves a genre, their comprehensive study in context is difficult. In order to avoid the danger of 'studying' proverbs on the basis of general impressions, which are always subjective, we would need records of data in various oral contexts. The difficulty in recording such contexts is that one cannot go and ask people to tell proverbs in context. Their natural contexts are often so specific that an artificial questioning would not produce desired results. One way of acquiring such data is to do so in conjunction with a multipurpose collection including linguistic and folkloric data. Experience has shown that free form discussions, fables, stories, myths, historical accounts etc. quite frequently contain proverbs. A large corpus of such data would contain a representative sample of proverbs in context. It is obvious, however, that even with such means we would get only a small sample of the total number of proverbs known by the society, as the experience of Eastman (1972: 208-209) suggests.

So far the best known category of folklore in East Africa is the *tenzi* poetry, the history of which dates back several centuries. For a long time some of it has been written down in Arabic script. Therefore this form of tradition does not fit directly into the category 'oral'. Yet because only parts of it are in written form, and because performers modify it according to need and mood, it does have characteristics of oral literature. Knappert (1970, 1983) defends it as a genuinely Swahili literature with unique characteristics, although most of its themes come from Islamic mythology and traditions. In his opinion Swahili literature and culture is not typically African at all. If this is true, it must have consequences in considering the weight the Swahili tradition should have in building the national identity. The case is somehow reminiscent of the situation in Finland, where the Swedish linguistic and cultural influence has always been fairly strong, at times almost overpowering. It required the emergence of strong nationalist movements in the 19th century among the Finnish population, before the Swedish domination was to some extent balanced with the Finnish-speaking part of the population. Curiously enough, although Finland was ruled by Russia for more than one hundred years (1809-1917), it was the Swedish domination that formed the linguistic and cultural threat to the Finnish-speaking population. This is because immigrants had been coming from the west, probably from present-day Sweden, since the beginning of the historical time (1150), occupying land which had been part of the hunting ground of the Finns.

The Indian Ocean trade brought immigrants from the north and the east to the Islands and the coastal trading centres. These foreign elements gradually became part of the coastal culture, and it is not possible to think of the Swahili language and the Swahili people except against this background. These groups, plus well as the Portuguese for part of the time, were dominant forces in the coastal area for several centuries. These cultural elements correspond to some extent to the Swedish

occupation of the southern and western coastal areas of Finland. In a sense the situation in Tanzania is more favourable than in Finland, because Swahili here forms a uniting symbol, which is neither the language of the immigrants nor of the main continental population. It is a neutral lingua franca, which no group can claim sole right to. In Finland there is no lingua franca, and the population is divided linguistically into two categories, both using their mother tongues as official languages.

The category of folklore which obviously plays the most significant role in Tanzania today is that of short prose stories, tales, fables, legends etc.<sup>6</sup> They are part of the Primary School syllabus, and such materials have also been included in the syllabus of the Secondary School. *Mazungumzo ya Babu Zetu I-II* by D. Semkiwa is an example of such materials, but there are many more.<sup>7</sup> Storytelling, asking riddles, singing, dancing, and other kinds of folklore performance and teaching are part of school syllabus. Their aim is to teach the children values which were considered important by the traditional society. Among those values is not only the information contained in oral art, but also the ability to perform this art.<sup>8</sup> Another important function is the building of national identity through teaching the oral tradition, which is not necessarily that of the parents, but of Tanzania anyway.

There is ample evidence of the significance of various categories of folklore in Tanzania today. Nevertheless, one finds signs of an ambivalent attitude towards folklore. It is not rare to find opinions among the educated elite and among villagers as well, that folklore represents something which belongs to the past, to the times of ignorance. Such ambivalence derives from the colonial times, when the African heritage was not seen as something worth preserving, but it continues to be perpetuated even later. As Sengo has shown, there is still a huge task in getting the people to regain their self-respect and dignity (Sengo 1981). Modernity and traditionalism should not be seen as alternatives, since a people without an awareness of their history and culture do not have the necessary background for its future.

There are, however, still problems in defining what constitutes the corpus of folklore which should be taught to all Tanzanians. The country is rich in traditions, but most of them are typically local traditions, those of an ethnic and linguistic group, not shared by all. Some of these traditions are also esoteric, not to be communicated outside the community.

## CONCLUSION

From this rather general discussion on our theme the following main points emerge.

1. During the time of national awakening in Finland, folklore was considered a national treasure, and its collection, archiving, publication and study was undertaken as a national task. It contributed greatly to the emergence of the national identity, which was closely tied up to the Finnish language. Folklore was to prove the immense variation in means of expression, vocabulary, and shades of sentiment.

In the first place it was to prove that the expressive power of the Finnish language was as good as that of any other language, if not better. Folklore thus contributed markedly to the position of Finnish.

Today the significance of folklore is overwhelmingly symbolic. It still constitutes an important cultural background, although the active performers of the old folklore in their traditional setting have disappeared. The revival of folklore is related to tourism, local communal festivals, show business, folk music festivals etc. There are a few active music groups performing folk dances and reciting folklore in musical form. The film business and music composers have taken themes from folk poetry, thus giving new forms to the old themes.

2. Tanzania also emphasizes the role of traditional culture in shaping an integrated society. It has taken decisive measures to mould a Tanzanian citizen with a strong ethnic identity. This has so far taken place at the expense of local identities, which rely on local linguistic and ethnic affinities. Much of the traditional folklore is still operational, although it is rapidly changing and obviously also declining.

It is not possible to say anything decisive about the folklore in Tanzania, because we do not yet have enough data for such conclusions. Our observations are still quite general, based on impressions rather than research. These impressions suggest, however, that real treasures lie ahead for researchers in this field. The usefulness of the already published material is greatly lessened by the inadequate background data needed for the scientific treatment of the material. All of this reflects the need of systematic, well planned and organized collecting of folkloristic data, which would then allow rigorous, comprehensive and well documented research.

3. Although Finland and Tanzania are quite different in terms of their history, the study of folklore, and the present functions of folklore, their situations are quite similar on a deeper level, so to say. Both have been forced to fight for their identity and independence. The language issue and cultural independence have been vital for both. They also share the experience of the lasting significance of the traditional cultural values. Ideological and political winds blow quite arbitrarily, one denying the value of another. Yet in the midst of this insecurity there is an indigenous cultural foundation which is not a copy or imitation of something else. This is the only permanent basis on which we can build our identity, in Tanzania just as in Finland.

4. In the historical respect, folklore can be seen as being composed of two types of elements. There are the collections of folklore, recorded from living people at a certain time and so now fossilized in a given form (Voigt 1981), and then there are the living forms of folklore which still find their own ways of adaptation (Honko 1981; Hoppál 1981). Both types of folklore are functional in Finland and Tanzania. There is, however, an overall decline in active folklore in both countries. My own fieldwork experience gained indicates, however, that in Tanzania folklore is still considerably more active than in Finland. This conclusion is based only on superficial observation without being substantiated by research. But the recorded material stored in archives and publications is also 'active' in the sense that it

contains symbols or icons of nationally significant values. Although folk poetry is not sung in villages and cities as was the case earlier, and although the use of proverbs has drastically decreased e.g. in Finland, collections of them are important symbols on bookshelves. And at the same time new living forms of folklore are emerging and old ones adapting to meet the needs of today. In this respect Finland and Tanzania have much in common.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In 1551 Mikael Agricola published a list of ancient Finnish gods in the foreword to *Psalttari*, a translation of biblical Psalms into Finnish. The list of gods clearly reflects the prevalent ideals of true pantheons. In accordance with the Greek and Roman models, Agricola listed twelve Karelian gods and the same number of gods of Häme, the area inhabited by an ethnic group in central south-western Finland. It is very unlikely that such lists represented anything but the idealized views of the author.

<sup>2</sup> Nothing would be more misguided than to believe that people today are more 'objective', that they would not categorize people on similar principles. In fact all the evidence seems to prove that man is a classifying, if not a dichotomizing, creature.

<sup>3</sup> In Finnish mythology *Tuonela* is the name of the land of the dead. In this symphonic poem the *Swan of Tuonela* glides over the black waters of the land of the dead, singing a melancholic melody, while another variable theme is interwoven with it.

<sup>4</sup> The term *Tapiola* derives from the mythical god of forests *Tapio*, who was thought to rule, together with lesser gods and goddesses, the large dark Nordic forests. His dwelling place, deep in the forests, is called *Tapiola*. This is the name of the last major musical work of Sibelius, commissioned by the New York Symphony Society and first performed in 1925.

<sup>5</sup> This is of course the eternal problem of whether research should be neutral, objective, whatever this entails, or whether it should be seen as a tool of politically oriented regimes. Practice has shown, however, that the only thriving research approach with permanent results is independent research, where research problems are formulated on the basis of the knowledge of the research community itself, and not that of the politicians. We have warning examples of this in the recently ruined block of communist regimes, where research had to serve the ruling party. Much of that work is now obsolete, and countless numbers of talented researchers had to spend their whole lives in tasks they did not want to do.

<sup>6</sup>. C. Velten (1907) published an extensive collection of Swahili oral literature mainly for teaching purposes. It contains stories, discussions, travelogues, historical stories from several locations in the Islands and on the coast, proverbs and riddles.

<sup>7</sup>. Kenya has introduced an O-level oral literature syllabus although the stories are in English (Akivaga and Odaga 1982). *Akamba Stories*, published by Mbiti, contains a selection from the Kamba oral tradition. It also contains an informative introduction to the Kamba society, which is extremely helpful in understanding the cultural background underlying the stories (Mbiti 1966).

<sup>8</sup>. At the University of Ifè, Nigeria, the Institute of Cultural Studies has invited poets from villages to teach the university students the skills of performing poetry. Such skills are part of the studies in oral poetry. This arrangement has the advantage that students learn the skills themselves instead of studying the phenomena as if from outside. A disadvantage was the unidimensionality of the project, since the bards were detached from their villages and brought to the university campus, where the surroundings were alien to them. It was later felt better to send the students to the villages, where the context of performance and also the dynamic creativity is ensured (Yai 1986).

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