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Indigenous Intellectual Tradition: Oral Citation Style among the Luo of Kenya

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Abstract

The growing influence of modernity has resulted in the marginalization of oral traditions in mainstream epistemological discourses. This article is informed by current theoretical politics on the perceptions of indigenous epistemologies especially in African societies. The contemporary scholarship is dominated by Eurocentric conceptions of knowledge which impose rigid criteria of judgment on local ways of knowing. Nevertheless, this article demonstrates that there exist a myriad of knowledge structures within the subaltern cultures of Africa. Using the Luo community of Kenya as a case study, the article addresses the issues of authorship and ownership of knowledge which bear on the scholarly admissibility of oral tradition. It emerges that the Luo community is endowed with an interesting indigenous intellectual tradition complete with a citation style for acknowledgment of knowledge sources. By unveiling the uniqueness of the Luo citation style, the article counters claims that quotation culture operate strictly within a literate context.

Introduction

The Luo (*Joluo*), are an ethnic group indigenous to Kenya as well as northern Tanzania, East Africa. They speak *Dholuo* language and are a Nilotic people mainly settled along the shores of Lake Victoria in western Kenya predominantly occupying Kisumu, Siaya, Homabay and Migori counties. The Luo are believed to have migrated from the Bahr al Ghazal region, South Nile in South Sudan, around the sixteenth century (Appiah and Gates, 1999). They are linguistically related to several other ethnic groups in the East African region such as the Acholi and Jopadhola of Uganda as well as the Dinka, Nuer and Shilluk of present day Southern Sudan. Despite the fact that literacy has permeated the contemporary Luo society, oral traditions

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continue to thrive in the everyday lives of the members of the community. This article acknowledges the existence of an intellectual system of citing sources in Luo traditional epistemology. By so doing, the article adds its voice to the on-going debates regarding the effects of modernity on oral traditions in Africa. Arguments have been advanced citing writing as the 'proper' domain or context for quoting (Finnegan, 2011). Such notions have been pegged on the feeling that oral performances are characteristically devoid of texts in the strict sense of the word. For instance, Ong (1982) argues that in the total absence of writing, there is nothing outside the thinker; no text to enable the reproduction of a similar line of thought. In so arguing, the scholar seems to underscore the impermanence of orality as hindering its achievement of the objectivity necessary for its consideration as part of mainstream epistemology.

However, several scholars have dismissed this line of thought as misguided. Barber (2005) associates this thinking with the legacy of an impoverishing scriptocentric approach to orality. To such scholars therefore, a text is equal to a script and its absence amounts to lack of any serious knowledge discourse. This assumption inappropriately views all knowledge structures as being informed by the same logic thereby reducing oral tradition to mere conversation. Finnegan (2011) observes that over many centuries, epistemologies associated with writing and print have been privileged as the superior channel of human communication. She however adds that such views are imbued with ethnocentric myth of the West and its modernity which uses Enlightenment rhetoric as sanction for its mission at the expense of the denigrated non-Western others. The obvious consequence of subjecting oral traditions to such alien Eurocentric points of view is the failure to recognize them since they are markedly different.

As Barber (1999) correctly observes, textuality is culturally specific and as such there are different ways of being "text". However, this fact is largely assumed by the mainstream scholarship that often champions a single notion of text which tends to exclude oral traditions. In written cultures, the text is considered a permanent and fixed artefact as opposed to the situation in oral traditions which lack a visible and tangible document of that nature (Barber, 2005). Unfortunately, these obvious differences have been viewed largely politically in epistemological scholarship to mean power differentials with the written text being perceived as superior. The present study focuses on an oral tradition in an attempt to understand the uniqueness of its text with regard to the practice of citation as a means of acknowledging authorship.

Non-Western cultures have been assumed to be non-quoting cultures (Finnegan, 2011). This is not entirely true going by the findings of previous researchers such as Yankah (2012) and Monye (1996) who have demonstrated how the Akan of Ghana and the Igbo of Nigeria respectively use proverbs in everyday conversations and speeches. However, Barber takes the argument to a level beyond proverbs in her contention that most oral performances are not characterized by pure instantaneity:

> Something identifiable is understood to have pre-existed the moment of utterance. Or alternatively, something is understood to be constituted in utterance that can be abstracted or detached from the immediate context and re-embodied in a future performance. Even if the only place this "something" can be held to exist is in people's minds or memories, still it is surely distinguishable from the immediate, and immediately-disappearing, actual utterance (Barber, 2005: 265-6).

In this case, the scholar appears to dispel the myth that orality is permanently tied to its immediate context of use and cannot be displaced from the same. It also emerges that orality does indeed achieve some measure of objectivity contrary to widely held positions to the contrary. The issue of textuality is also addressed here with an argument in favour of an oral text engraved in the people's memory being advanced. Thus, oral traditions too are endowed with some sorts of texts on which their performances are based only that such texts are oral as opposed to scriptural and hence neither visible nor tangible. This is the scenario in Luo oral tradition where orality remains very much alive and parallel to modern literacy.

Other than the question of textuality, the issues of authorship and knowledge ownership are equally central to a proper understanding of the Luo intellectual knowledge system under investigation. Finnegan (2012) debunks the myth of the group mind in oral tradition and argues that the interplay between composer and audience should not be misconstrued to imply that individual originality and imagination plays no part in the construction of an oral text. This article concurs with this assertion and goes further to address how the concept of individual knowledge ownership operates within the Luo oral tradition context as evident in the use of citation and oral footnotes to credit the intellectual knowledge of individual authors.

In most oral traditions, knowledge construction often involves corporate participation and experience. As Milius (2009) explains, the general body of knowledge pertaining to a whole tradition cannot be attributed to an individual creator over decades, centuries or millennia through the interaction of individuals and their groups. Interestingly, it is precisely this communal tendency of oral knowledge that has led to its discrimination in academia which is characteristically dominated by individual voices. In scholarship, the primacy of the individual voice is the norm due to emphasis on scientific standards demanding individual responsibility regarding knowledge. Accordingly, the group construction of knowledge associated with oral traditions worldwide is often disregarded for its perceived ambiguity thereby contributing to the silencing of many people and cultures.

A recognition of individual authorship in traditional African epistemologies amounts to equally admitting the existence of individual ownership in the oral cultures. The concept of knowledge ownership varies markedly between the African and Western societies with the latter favouring, as Milius (2009) argues, a more individualistic form of ownership and protection of knowledge. This owes to the fact that in the Euro-American view, both tangibles and intangibles are turned into exploitable materials (Simpson, 1997). This creates room for the perception of knowledge as property to be dominated for purposes of individual personal gain. Knowledge thus becomes just another means of production (Jones and Hunter, 2004) akin to other such entities subject to convenient manipulation in pursuit of selfish ends.

Eurocentric intellectual traditions are driven by such individualistic understandings of the concept of knowledge thus explaining the prevalence of copyright regimes and patent laws which enforce epistemic ownership claims in such societies. According to Karjala (2012), intellectual property rights such as patent and copyright exclude others from using publicly available information. Knowledge, in other words, becomes constrained by such laws that reduce it to private property. Modern referencing systems operate on the basis of the same principle. Footnotes, for example, serve ethical functions of providing credibility for our work (Verderber *et al.* 2012) and initiating scholarly conversations (Grafton, 1997). However, they simultaneously restrict knowledge sharing and use through fears of plagiarism. Furthermore, written footnotes are often disruptive as humorously described by Noel Coward that "having to read a footnote resembles having to go downstairs to answer the door while in the midst of

making love" (cited in Grafton, 1997: 70). The citation systems in oral tradition, on the contrary, tend towards inclusivity and the enhancement of cohesion in the oral text and the society at large.

Oral traditions are not totally devoid of concepts of individual knowledge ownership. Despite the existence of a strong sharing ethos among traditional communities, concepts of property ownership and rights exist in all societies (Dutfield, 2000; Ingold *et al.* 1997). However, the Western concept of property ownership differs from the African one in that it emphasizes the right of alienation than that of access (Vermeylen, 2005). In the traditional African setup, ownership does not have exactly such connotations. Having conducted research among the San of southern Africa, Katz *et al.* (1997) concluded that ownership in the society is a form of stewardship rather than exclusive rights. In fact, individual ownership rights carry with them certain collective responsibilities which have to be equally discharged by the concerned person (Vermeylen, 2005). This applies to ownership of intangible property like knowledge in the Luo oral tradition under study.

Epistemological Theories and Indigenous Knowledge

Discourse on what actually constitutes knowledge, its production and dissemination is often characterized by power politics in the global arena. In his postulation of Border Thinking Theory, Mignolo (2002) decries the fact that epistemology remains firmly in the grips of Europe. The West's influential position owes to the immense resources that equip it with the wherewithal to call the shots in epistemology. As Mignolo (2003), observes, 'knowledge' flows in the same direction as money: from the West to the rest of the world. This unequal power relation between the powerful Eurocentric establishments that dominate mainstream knowledge discourse has far reaching implications for the oral traditions that end up being excluded from current scholarship debates. The consequence is that the dominant knowledge cultures eventually become packaged and spread as universal epistemologies to the detriment of the other alternative ways of knowing.

Eurocentric fundamentalism operates from the premise that there is only one sole epistemic tradition from which to achieve truth and universality (Grosfoguel, 2007). This promotes the perception of other knowledge structures from a single biased point of view. This mono perspective of knowledge is described by Castro-Gomez (2007) as zero point epistemology which eliminates the co-existence of diverse ways of knowing and orders all human knowledge on an epistemological scale from traditional to modern

making Europe acquire epistemic hegemony over other cultures of the world. This tendency to be blind to alternatives remains alive in contemporary discourse where oral traditions are viewed with suspicion regarding their perceived inability to conform to established academic standards and practices. Their association with primitive societies is especially perpetuated by the notion that writing has since replaced orality in postcolonial African nations, for instance. This is a misinformed perspective given the reality on the ground where writing and orality continue to operate side by side in the modern context as is the case in the Luo society.

The universality claim of Eurocentric knowledge has been condemned by several scholars who view it as perpetuating homogeneity which has a smothering effect on oral traditions. Mignolo (2000) distinguishes between two types of epistemologies: local histories and global designs. Local histories refer to the particular epistemic structures found in the various cultures in existence in various geographical localities worldwide. Global designs, on the other hand, are those which are produced in the local histories of the metropolitan countries and implemented, exported and enacted differently in particular places. As such, the Luo oral citation style constitutes a local history founded and operating uniquely within a particular cultural context. It therefore operates in contrast to the standard citation systems in modern academic practice that form part and parcel of Eurocentric global designs.

However, the global designs are equally local histories since they have their particular points of origin before their dissemination globally. Shiva (1993) posits that the Western systems of knowledge are not universal in an epistemological sense but are merely the globalized version of a very local and parochial tradition. Mignolo (2011) follows a similar line of thought in his assertion that the so called global designs are neither universal nor global but are regional. This pretence to universality by dominant epistemology is thus a strategy towards achieving international acceptance by camouflaging its locality and portraying the image of the norm. In so doing, the dominant epistemology achieves the status of the ideal while simultaneously constructing other cultures as different. In order to maintain homogeneity which is the objective of such an epistemology, the diversities of the other knowledge cultures are therefore dissolved by means of enforcing rigid standards of international acceptance. This estrangement of other local knowledge cultures amounts to colonization of knowledge.

Currently, modernity serves as the antecedent of colonization and relies on powerful global networks to further the former's imperialistic intentions. In epistemology, the Eurocentric concept of knowledge as property, which regards the relationship as between one individual and something else (Quijano, 2007), has gained global currency. Along with it, the knowledge economy characterized by intellectual property (Liang, 2009) has become commonplace in scholarly discourse. However, the imposition of such alien notions of knowledge ownership has had negative consequences for the non-Eurocentric knowledge structures that are not designed with such ideas in mind. Local knowledge structures have consequently been essentialized and debased courtesy of foreign conceptual frameworks of interpretation.

As scholars have noted, intellectual property is not a universal way of relating to knowledge but rather associated with the specific history of Western enlightenment discourse carrying with it such presumptions as originality and authorship (Liang, 2009). In most oral traditions, the manner in which people interact with knowledge is more democratic and devoid of inhibitions imposed by Western style epistemologies. It is apparent that oral cultures tend to operate on the principle of knowledge as a public good, a non-exclusive holding which is dependent on the multiple gains of others (Jones & Hunter, 2004). In most African oral traditions, knowledge is understood within the parameters of Karjala's (2012) "nonrival" notion since it is never exhausted by use. This allows members of oral societies to freely interact with knowledge in a mutual process of cooperative construction and consumption.

The existence of standardized citation and referencing systems in modern scholarship is an illustration of the rigid rules imposed by global structures in academic discourse thereby constraining creativity in other world knowledge cultures. Such systems dictate how scholarly discourse is supposed to be fashioned and anything short of this is regarded as inadmissible. Considering that the leading journals and publishers are based in Europe and North America (Nyamjoh, 2012), oral traditions that do not conform to such standards are often subalternized. Even in the area of African studies where one would expect more flexibility, Mama (2007) states that Africanists scholars based outside the continent often appear as gatekeepers and Africans as gate crashers in scholarship. There is therefore need to advocate for the development of scholarly practices that recognize the variety in the myriad world knowledge cultures so as to engender

dialogue within epistemic debates. By turning the spotlight on the oral citation system in Luo oral tradition, this article is one such initiative.

The Mechanics of Individual Citation

Despite the communal nature of Luo oral tradition, the existence of individual authorship is evident in the community's knowledge systems. The sum total of the community's knowledge seems to be made up of the contributions of particular individuals whose efforts are acknowledged even long after their demise. The thoughts of such individuals are often memorized by members of the community and cited verbally in everyday conversations or in formal speeches during occasions. Just like in contemporary reference styles, citing authorities in speech adds value to one's argument and enhances authenticity. Popular statements attributed to certain individuals are often appropriately cited in Luo oral tradition. Such statements often contain knowledge regarding the community's long cherished philosophies, world views and wisdom. They could also be catchphrases or personal maxims making certain summative observations or reflections that members of the society find meaningful. In citing an author in Luo oral tradition, two names are often used: the middle name and the surname. This is contrary to the practice in most modern citation systems where the surname is preferred for in-line citations in written texts. The following examples illustrate this tendency:

(a) ***Piny mar jopiny,*** *Gombe Makodondi.*
"The nation belongs to its citizens," Gombe son of Odondi.

(b) ***Yesu e ruoth,*** *matiek Obara nyar Thadayo*
"Jesus is Lord," says Obara daughter of Thaddeus.

As evident above, both the middle and last names of the authors are mentioned in the citation. Despite the prevalence of first names which are usually Christian or English in origin, such names are rarely used in the Luo oral citation style. This is perhaps a pointer to the indigenous roots of the referencing style. It is also observable that the use of the middle and surnames applies for both the male and female genders as evident in (a) and (b) above. The surnames are often identified by the use of the particle "*maka*" or "*ka*" meaning "son of" for males and "*nyar*" meaning "daughter of" for females as illustrated in the above examples. The family lineage thus seems to form an integral part of the author's identity in Luo oral tradition hence worthy of mention in the process of acknowledging an individual's contribution to societal knowledge.

Both verbatim and paraphrased quotations are used in Luo oral citation style. In the case of a verbatim citation, the author's words usually appear first followed by the name while in a paraphrase as evident in examples (a) and (b) above. Luo oral tradition creatively uses special lexical items to signal a verbatim quotation. This is necessary due to the oral mode of expression bereft of orthographic mechanisms such as quotation marks. The word "*matiek*" used in (b) above often serves as a signal for a word-for-word quotation. It literally implies "to finish" but is commonly used in the sense of "to summarize". Speakers in Luo oral tradition sometimes uniquely mark out the author's words from the text by means of a special tone of voice. This may be achieved through use of stress or mimicking the voice of the original author of the statement. Through such tonal strategies, the quoted words acquire a sense of inalienable association with the original author being acknowledged.

In a paraphrase, the author's name usually precedes his/her words. The words "*luwo*" (state) or "*wacho*" (says) usually function as the signals for a paraphrase in a sentence. For example:

> *Gombe Makodondi wacho/luwo ni piny mar jopiny.*
> Gombe son of Odondi says/states that the nation belongs to its citizens.

It is important to note that the verbs "states" or "says" are usually used in the simple present tense. This is informed by the fact that dates are often omitted in Luo oral citation style. Since indigenous knowledge is orally transmitted, it is preserved in the common memories of the members of the society. The date therefore is immaterial and what really matters is the relevance of and value attached to the knowledge being communicated. Using the simple present tense therefore has the effect of making the cited statements achieve timelessness over generations of transmission.

Other than the official names, individual identity is often conveyed by praise names known as *Pakruok* among the Luo people. As Amuka (2000) asserts, *Pakruok* is closely associated with naming and in many respects synonymous with it. Praise names thus often transcend the meaning of ordinary nicknames in their usage. It is the practice in Luo oral tradition to cite a source using the author's middle name and praise name in place of surname. For example: ***Ang'iyo gi rundo***, Abuto Ng'injo ("I am used to surviving hand-to-mouth," Abuto Ng'injo).

In this case, the person being quoted is referred to by his praise name "Ng'injo" which means "fragments". In the *Pakruok* genre, an individual adopts a name of something whose characteristics he/she closely identifies with. By christening himself "fragments", the author being quoted thus effectively constructs an identity of a lowly yet resilient individual who somehow manages to eke out a living amidst a myriad challenges in life. The author's ingenuity is insinuated by the many possibilities and identities invoked by the multiplicity of the "fragments" imagery. In an interesting turn of events, a famous quotation by an individual might evolve into becoming his nick name thereby giving him a new identity altogether. For instance: ***Piny yom,*** Deya Kamoth ("The world is smooth," Deya son of Moth).

The statement above is popularly used with a sense of irony originally invested in it by the author. The meaning is actually the exact opposite: an admission that life on this earth is indeed quite strenuous. It is not uncommon to hear a speaker say ***Deya piny yom*** (Deya the world is smooth) is simultaneous reference to the author of the statement as well as in acknowledgement of his work. In this way, the individual and his contribution to knowledge in the society become intertwined and inseparable; one and the same entity. The all-important surname therefore interestingly gives way to the nick name in the process of acknowledging an author in Luo oral tradition.

Citation in Luo oral tradition also features anonymous quotations. This happens when the speaker acknowledges some piece of information yet he cannot remember the original author. As opposed to the case in short statements of wisdom, the popularity of songs often tends to surpass that of the artists among the members of the society. As such, the lyrics of a song would make almost a permanent imprint in the people's mind even when they cannot remember the artist. The words of such a song would nevertheless be quoted by individual speakers. For example: *Jathum moro nowero ni* ***imaya imiyi; ilora iidhi*** (A musician once sang that "I am robbed and you are given; I am lowered and you are elevated").

In this extract, the name of the author is not given but he is described as "a musician". The speaker therefore manages to demonstrate intellectual honesty by attributing the ideas he has borrowed albeit to an anonymous author. In some cases in Luo indigenous source citation style, the author of a work is made anonymous by design rather than default. The speaker's

intention may be to focus only on the content and therefore the author becomes of secondary importance. For instance, a preacher citing a secular musician might say:

> *Awinjo ni jathum moro miloungo ni kia ng'awa, wero ni* ***Cham mwandi kapod ingima tho luro.***
> I hear that a musician called I-don't-know-who, sings that "Enjoy your wealth when you are still alive, death creeps up on people.

Here, the speaker feigns ignorance of the identity of the author of the oral text for the obvious reason that he does not want to sound so well versed in secular matters as this would send the wrong signals given his religious standing. However, he manages to quote the content of the text accurately and focus on it to develop his particular argument. The name of the author is thus intentionally left out despite the fact that it might be well known to the speaker.

Citing Communal Sources

Luo oral tradition is endowed by immense quantities of indigenous knowledge whose authorship cannot be easily attributed to any particular individual member of the society. This owes to the fact that such materials have developed cumulatively over time with their construction involving the contribution of many individuals. Such knowledge orally transmitted from one generation to the next then becomes owned by all the members of the community. Communal sources of this nature are often cited by individual speakers in Luo oral tradition for the desired effect. Having been designed for use in formal and conversational speech, the short forms such as proverbs/sayings and allusions are the most frequently cited by speakers. However, this article ventures into examining the unique manner in which the long forms, specifically the narrative, equally lends itself to citation in Luo oral tradition.

The Luo oral narrative is characterized by the frequent use of animal characters and the style of pathetic fallacy in an attempt to indirectly portray the human world. The animals featured often exhibit traits that enable the narrator to address a variety of themes prevalent within the society. The narrator characteristically exhibits commitment to the posterity of his society and accordingly uses the narrative texts to encourage virtue and discourage vice. This makes the oral narrative a viable resource material for quotation by speakers in Luo oral tradition who use it to drive home key points in their

arguments. It is common, for instance, for speakers to make a citation alluding to an entire oral narrative. When encouraging someone to not to give up in his/her pursuits, a speaker may say: ***En mana kinda, sigand Opuk gi Apwoyo*** ["It is just perseverance, (akin to) the story of Tortoise and Hare."]

In this case, the speaker makes reference to the plot of an entire oral narrative as opposed to specific sections of it. In the story, an overconfident Hare is beaten by a resilient Tortoise in an epic race. Being sure of winning the race, Hare frequently takes off time during the race to do irrelevant things including taking a nap! On the contrary, Tortoise keeps his concentration and surprisingly manages to beat Hare to the finishing line. The members of the audience are of course familiar with the plot of this story and easily understand the reference and its context. The above citation by the speaker therefore triggers a replay in the minds of the members of the audience enabling the construction of relevant meaning.

Another way of citing an oral narrative in Luo oral tradition involves making reference to the particular words or actions of a given character within a particular text. In such a case, a speaker demonstrates a proper understanding of the entire plot of a narrative but opts to restrict himself purposefully to a portion of it as opposed to citing the whole text. The speaker thus isolates only those utterances or deeds of the character in question which he finds relevant for application to the situation at hand. A good illustration is the following statement: ***Opuk dwaro gima nochike*** ("Tortoise demands what was pledged to him.")

These words are extracted from a Luo oral narrative where a damsel in distress is assisted by Tortoise. The story goes that the girl, who had gone to fetch firewood in the forest, requests Tortoise to help her heave the heavy load onto her head. Tortoise comes to her aid on condition that the girl promises to grant him whatever wish he would make at a later time. Without giving it proper thought, the girl assents to this thereby literally giving the malicious Tortoise a blank cheque! Tortoise of course takes advantage of the girl's naivety to drive a hard bargain. Later that night, he sneaks into the girl's bedroom and demands payment in kind for his services earlier in the day! By citing this single line, a speaker would effectively caution the audience on the dangers of hurriedly entering into agreements whose letter and spirit they do not fully comprehend. The citation would do more than

any explanation would in this context as the audience would get the picture of the situation quite clearly.

Audience as Interpretive Community

Speech, whether formal or in the form of conversation, often involve the participation of an audience in oral tradition. This is the case in Luo oral tradition where the audience usually forms part and parcel of the performance and hence constituting the interpretive community. According to Fish (1980), interpretive communities are made up of people who share interpretive strategies that often exist prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read. Although the author seems to have been addressing the written text, the observations made are equally applicable to oral texts. The audience in Luo oral tradition is therefore crucial in the process of "reading" or unravelling the meaning in the cited texts. This is because the audience have a repository of the virtual text with them. As the speaker makes an oral presentation, the audience occasionally consult their memory bank in the same manner a reader turns to a page to confirm the accuracy of the speaker's words. The only difference between this practice and the case in written traditions is that there are no serious fears regarding plagiarism. What is at stake is the accuracy of the information given by the speaker. In oral traditions, it is a mark of pride for an author for his ideas to be adopted by others in their speeches as this is the only way they get "published" and etched in people's memories for ages.

The speech performance in Luo oral tradition is characterized by the cooperative participation of the speaker and the audience both who, according to Barber (1999) and Finnegan (2011), share certain collective knowledge. The performer is cognizant of this fact and therefore considers the audience as part of the interpretive community that helps him in the construction of meaning. He cannot take the knowledge of the audience for granted and thus accordingly engages them creatively during the performance. In the case of anonymous citation, the speaker may rely on the knowledge of the audience to fill in the missing information regarding the author's identity. Even if he cannot remember the authority he is quoting, he knows that the audience has an idea to that effect and thus can authenticate his information. The speaker at times goes ahead to loudly consult the audience on certain information regarding his quotation. In such instances, the audience is often very enthusiastic to be of assistance. For example:

Speaker: *Jathum mane owero ni* ***Ng'ama teri ejela en jajuok*** *cha ne en ng'a?*
Who was the musician who sang "Whoever takes you to prison is a witch?"
Audience: Ochieng Kabaselle!

The mutual cooperation evident in the above exchange demonstrates that knowledge in Luo oral tradition is not meant to be monopolized by certain individuals. Instead, it is shared freely as long as the individual effort of the original author has been acknowledged.

The speaker may also intentionally leave out certain details in a citation simply because he is aware that they are obvious to the members of the audience. As part of the interpretive community, the audience silently shifts through the information availed by the speaker and makes sense of it against the backdrop of the advance local knowledge blueprint they are equipped. For example, in reference to a noisy crowd, a speaker might simply say ***Ani joka onywak nyundo****!* In this quotation, the author uses the apt imagery of a busy gang of workmen using hammers, to create a vivid picture in the mind of the audience. The speaker uses ellipsis in regard to the author being quoted here (Ouko Kaduk) who the audience within the particular context are indeed familiar with. This kind of understanding between the speaker and the audience in partial quotations is pegged on a shared resonance with the implications of the quote (Finnegan, 2011).

Alternatively, the speaker might even resort to simply mentioning the author's name in a well-defined context to enable the audience predict the oral text being cited. For instance, a speaker could say ***Ka koro tek kamano to Deya Kamoth!*** (If things are that difficult, then Deya son of Moth!). Although the actual words of the author (***Piny yom****!*/"The world is smooth!") have been deleted in this case by the speaker, the audience's copy of the virtual text remains intact. The speaker and the audience therefore become both intricately involved in a cooperative process of knowledge construction and sharing in Luo oral tradition.

Oral Footnotes as Textual Asides
The use of footnotes as textual asides is quite common in Luo oral tradition. In a close approximation to the modern footnote, the footnote in Luo oral tradition is often used by the speaker to provide certain additional information about the cited source. However, the oral footnote among the

Luo seems to go beyond merely citing sources. It seems to function as an artistic genre in its own right; often veering off the text to introduce new information and generate further debate. In such cases, the speaker appears to deviate from the issue at hand but for the good reason of providing some contextual or background information that could be useful for the interpretation and proper understanding of author and his/her work. The oral footnote among the Luo performs this function effortlessly since, as opposed to the written footnote that is disruptively set apart from the text at the bottom of the page, it is infused into the text and accordingly forms part of its narrative. As such, the audience easily connects to the additional ideas introduced within the text and makes sense of the contextual arguments immediately. This is illustrated below:

> *Jal moro wacho ga ni* ***Tich ochwere ka miluma, ni ng'ama otho ema oweye****. Ochwere ka miluma miwinjo awacho wachne ni en jamakaa mong'ere ahinya. En wuod Seme kargi Migele kanyo. Ing'eni Migele ne en injinia malich ahinya mar chomo tunge dhok e ndalo machon.*
> A certain fellow often says that "Work persists like desire, that it is only the dead who escape it." This work-persists-like-desire fellow I am quoting is a famous charcoal vendor. He hails from Seme; the same clan as Migele. You know, Migele was a smart "engineer" in the olden days specialized in grafting cattle horns.

In the above case, the oral footnote functions as a textual aside. The speaker quotes an individual anonymously but creatively makes up for the deficit by sufficiently availing other biographical information about the person that helps the audience to identify the person. The author's profession as a charcoal vendor is quite relevant in this context as it not only helps to identify him, but also makes the audience identify with his philosophical statement that seems to have emerged out of authentic personal experiences.

The aside also addresses the author's ancestry which is equally important in this case. By mentioning the author's association to Migele, the speaker invokes a communal legend. Migele is a mythical character in Luo oral tradition believed to have originated from the Seme clan. Humorous stories are told about the man being a notorious cattle thief endowed with the unique talent of performing overnight transplant surgeries on the horns of the stolen animals. Migele would thus remarkably change the appearance of his loot to an extent that their owners would fail to recognize them the following day. Due to his ingenious exploits, folklore regards him more as a

hero rather than a villain. The association of the charcoal dealer to Migele in the textual aside thus elevates the former's status from an ordinary person to an authority whose knowledge and observations about life are worth serious reflection.

In the process of making additional commentaries, the Luo oral footnote also serves as a source of humour. Speakers often use footnotes as textual asides to crack jokes within the context of their arguments to break the monotony of plain speech. Below is a case in point:

> *Maka jokma* ***Odiango abuk dhano adhana*** *matiek Okwirry Jagem. Gem thurgi Okwirry en kama ne wach mar somo ochakore epiny Luowa kae e bwo tend ruoth mager miluongo ni Odera Akan'go. Iwacho ni en kama ok itho baye abaya kite dipoka igoyo ngire moro lero nikech gitimo pedni kanyo.*
> Those are "Ordinary people lacking book knowledge" as Okwirry from Gem states. Gem where Okwirry comes from, under the strict leadership of Chief Odera Akan'go, was the cradle of education in Luoland. It is said that it is a place where you dare not throw stones anyhow because you may wound a professor as that is their haven.

The speaker, in this instance, cites Okwirry Jagem (Isaac Okwirry), one of the pioneer beneficiaries of colonial education and the first African District Commissioner in Kenya. Okwirry was an elitist well known for his condescending attitude towards the uneducated people who comprised the majority of the population at that time. His phrase "*Odiango abuk*", meant to describe ignorant and illiterate persons, remains widely in use to date among Luo people.

The footnote above makes an aside in reference to the historical development of education among the Luo people. The Gem clan has often been credited with having been trail blazers with regard to education among the Luo people in the colonial era. This achievement was realized through the efforts of the legendary paramount Chief Odera Akang'o who literary coerced his subjects to enrol their children in schools. To date, Gem still stakes claim to the nostalgic reputation of having produced a considerable number of prominent academicians within the Nyanza region of Kenya. Understood in this context, the speaker's humorous commentary on desisting from throwing stones lest one accidentally wounds a professor in Gem effectively captures the scenario. The aside also gives us the background framework within which to interpret Okwirry's intolerance for ignorance.

Humour is also achieved in Luo oral footnotes through the use of anecdotal asides. In such cases, the speaker makes reference to a source in the course of a speech or conversation and this in turn triggers memories of certain events which he/she then proceeds to narrate to the audience. The anecdotes are often laced with humour which sometimes leaves the audience in stitches. They often revolve around the speaker's personal experiences which he shares with the audience to help build the argument he is advancing. This style of speech is quite common among the elderly among the Luo people. The following is an extract from a speech by the late Ogara Taifa, a former popular presenter of a Luo cultural programme on Radio Lake Victoria:

> ***Suba to bor to nyiri beyo, nyiri dhum magalagala*** *Jerry Jalamo nowero. Suba no to piny malich ahinya we apimnue gima ne aneno kuno ndalo moko. Ne adhi limo osiepna moro wuod Chula Mfang'ano miluongo ni Otike. Nyieno wuoyi modongo nyowuoyo ka wuod Suba adieri. To mano doko lweny mane oyuda gi Otike! Joluo nogoyo ngero ni mos mokowni ok romi jowadwa. Otike ne oduogo oywa ng'ato rungu riap ma nyieno okwe thii! Mayoo! Kare watugo kich to wakia omera! Atwo ni kamar anjao kamae to kare tienda gima achamo atwoni! No lawuwa Suba ng'wech ma wiyo ok nowilgo nyaka chieng'. Ani Otike wuod Suba ondiek marach osiepa, ibende ibedie ha...ha...!*
>
> "Suba is far away but the ladies are beautiful and speak a strange language" Jerry Jalamo once sang. Suba is indeed a great land but let me tell you about my experiences there some time ago. I went to visit a friend of mine from Mfang'ano Island called Otike. That man is gigantic like a real Suba man. What a fight Otike and I got involved in there! A Luo proverb states that greetings conveyed to you through a third party do not satisfy you, my people. Otike bludgeoned someone with a club *riap*[1] and the guy became unconscious *thii*[2]*! Mayoo*[3]*!* Unknown to us, we had just provoked bees! I realized that things were getting messy and took to my heels! We were pursued in Suba in a manner that I will never forget. Otike son of Suba the bad hyena, my friend; let you be ha...ha...!

In the above text, the speaker starts off by citing a line from a song by a popular musician which he considers relevant within the context of his speech. He then veers off into giving a humorous account of his exploits in Suba in the company of his friend Otike. Despite its brevity, the anecdote tells a complete story exhibiting the three sections characteristic of an ideal plot: expository, complications and resolutions stages. The story is expertly

told with the narrator creatively making use of oral features of style such as hyperbole, idiophones, irony, imagery and symbolism some of which defy accurate translation into English. The result is a captivating adventure narrative featuring two sojourners in a land effectively constructed as alien. This anecdotal aside is guaranteed to keep the audience on tenterhooks all through making them consider it as a worthy punctuation of the speech rather than a disruption of its flow.

Conclusion

This article concludes that there indeed exists an intellectual tradition among the Luo people that is characteristically handed down orally over the generations. Despite the ever growing influence of literacy and modernity, this indigenous system continues to thrive unadulterated by such global knowledge structures. Perhaps this confirms Finnegan's (2011) contention that oral quotation long antedates as well as parallels quoting in the written form. A quoting culture therefore need not be literacy based. Buttressing this indigenous intellectual tradition is the Luo community's binary concept of knowledge ownership. The perception of knowledge as both individual and communal thus effectively gives room for both unrestricted sharing as well as recognition of the individual contribution of authors within the society. This inclusive understanding of epistemology radically differs from the modern conceptions of knowledge characterized by political and individualistic overtones which tend to alienate certain people from mainstream discourse. Regarding textuality, it emerges that the over-emphasis on the impermanence of performances in oral tradition ignores its ability to re-invent itself in a variety of contexts. This is due to the creative manner in which performers rely both on their individual memories and the collective memories of members of the audience to reproduce verbatim, texts previously performed by others. Several "soft copies" of the oral text are thus always in circulation in the society at any one time thereby making it possible for the smooth operation of a quoting culture. The interplay between the performer and the audience is vital in the construction, retrieval and dissemination of the oral text. This explains the tendency of the Luo indigenous citation style to be more engaging and catering for feedback during epistemological discourse. On the contrary, modern citation systems appear more as one-way communication channels. In modern intellectual practice, knowledge is dominated by a clique of personalities who are considered authorities and frequently quoted as their words add weight to ordinary people's arguments. In Luo oral tradition, however, knowledge is not considered a monopoly of any single individual. Almost anybody can be

quoted as long as their sentiments resonate with the society's philosophies and everyday experiences. Furthermore, one does not have to compose an entire text such as narrative or song in order to be recognised. On the contrary, the little fragments of individual contributions are accordingly acknowledged and used to creatively weave together an organic corpus of communal knowledge.

Notes

1. *Riap* is an idiophone which imitates the sound made as the club hits its target. In this context, it has been used to emphasize the force that accompanied the action.

2. *Thii* in this context means "lay still; in a comma".

3. *Mayoo* is an exclamation of desperation. It is the contracted form of "*mama yoo"* equivalent to "Oh my mother!" In the Luo community, it is common for people to resort to such expression of psychological regression in difficult situations.

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