



# Performance in propitiatory reconciliation among the Nandi community

**Anthony Kipkoech Biwott, Collins Kenga Mumbo & Robert Oduori**

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Propitiation is part of what it means to be human. Traditionally, propitiation has been studied from a broad sociocultural perspective with little consideration of the performance processes at play. Among the Nandi community in Kenya, propitiatory offering reconciliation forms the core of restoration of inter-communities relationships. It defines and enriches their culture, but what is propitiatory offering reconciliation? How is it performed? Are there any steps followed in its execution? Is there a specific place of performance? In this article we provide a framework to understand the Nandi propitiatory reconciliation through a literary perspective. We expound on the steps followed: investigation, interrogation, and cleansing, and the three features of performance: that is, place of performance, actions and signs, formulaic expression, costumes, and audience. The data collection took place in Kabiyet and Kipkaren Wards in Nandi county and was collected through participatory observation, interviews, and questionnaires. The sample population was 30 adults between the ages of 45–90 years who were selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The data collected on performance in propitiatory reconciliation rites was analysed by use of functionalism theory as expounded by Foley. We found that the stages of propitiatory reconciliation must be religiously adhered to for its effectiveness and that the success of its performance heavily depends on the participation of its performers and audience. This article also brings out performance in form of particular acts, singing, and chanting. **Keywords:** propitiation, reconciliation, performance, Nandi community.

## Introduction

In this article, we are interested in the question of whether oral literature can be useful in reconciliation processes. The Nandi people live primarily in the western part of Kenya in Nandi, Uasin Gishu, and Trans Nzoia County. They speak the Nandi language and are grouped with speakers of seven other related dialects under an umbrella term “Kalenjin” or “Myoot”. According to Creider (13), this term “Kalenjin”, which means “I tell you” in Nandi, was adopted by speakers as a self-designating expression during the late forties and the fifties. The term is now formally used in Kenya to refer to a group of languages and dialects which include Nandi, Kipsigis, Keiyo, Tugen, Marakwet, Pokot, Sabaot, and Terik.

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The Nandi community, just like any other human society, interacts at different levels, during which their intra-communal interaction may at times end in disputes that may result in severe curse to individuals or even a whole clan. In such scenarios, cleansing ceremonies are usually performed to avert the adverse effects of the curse on the members of the community through propitiatory offering reconciliation. It is done in a structured manner and conducted in a specific place and time, led by *kibirāiywō* (a cleanser) assisted by other leaders endowed by the community through a special installation ritual.

Propitiatory offering is one of the important sub-genres of African oral literature. Among the Nandi community, it is an art of performance which involves rituals, offering-giving, or cultural acts. This art (rite) includes, but is not limited to, playing of drums, boasting, chanting, singing and giving sacrifices and offerings. Propitiatory offering is done in a specific place, in a specified manner, and led by specific people ordained by the community through a special ritual. The Nandi community has different types of propitiation such as initiation, marriage, installation of leaders, naming, and reconciliation, among others. The data collection took place in Kabiyeet and Kipkaren Wards in Nandi county and was collected through participatory observation, interviews, and questionnaires. The sample population was 30 adults between the ages of 45–90 years who were selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The data collected on performance in propitiatory reconciliation rites was analysed by use of functionalism theory as expounded by Foley.

In this article, we argue that the Nandi propitiatory reconciliation should be done based on a restricted structured procedure according to the Nandi customs. We set out to answer the following questions: How does performance manifest itself in Nandi propitiatory reconciliation? And what is the place of performance in Nandi propitiatory reconciliation? In order to respond to these questions, we explain the concepts of propitiation and reconciliation, outline the theoretical framework, the steps followed in the implementation of propitiatory reconciliation, the performance of propitiatory offering reconciliation, and provide a conclusion.

#### **Clarification of concepts: *mviga*, reconciliation, and performance**

Kitoko (4) explains that propitiation is a ritual—an ancestral secret. It is a special ceremony which involves traditional practices which culminates into a big celebration with songs, beating of drums, and giving of offerings. Propitiation normally starts with invocation of the ancestral spirits through an offering meant to appease the ancestors and invite them to commune with the participants. Hence, *mviga* is a traditional ceremony which involves carrying out of a special ritual in a specific manner in accordance with customs and traditions of the society. According to Wamitila, during the execution of *mviga*, drama is incorporated depending on the type of ceremony being carried out. Kenyatta (qtd by Wa Thiong'o) explains that amongst the Kikuyu community, there is a ceremony known as *Ituika* which is carried out after every 25 years to allow one generation to pass on power to another generation. This ceremony is completed through the performance of *mviga*. The Nandi community also has various ceremonies in the form of *mviga*. For example, installation of a leader, initiation, purification, wedding, child naming, and reconciliation, among others. These rituals are conducted by different experts who are installed by the community through special ritual. Such leaders are given special names such as *matiryoot* or *kibirāiywō* amongst the Nandi community and are mandated to conduct ceremonies that involve rituals.

In any human society, people interact at different levels: an individual with another individual, an individual with a group of people, or even a group with another group. In any of these interactions, the society is involved in one way or the other. In order to ensure societal harmony, the Nandi culture holds that a reconciliatory ritual has to be performed. Christianity also teaches its adherents about reconciliation. According to its teachings, it is impossible to reconcile a human being with God without first reconciling him with fellow human beings. Based on this teaching, Christians ought to reconcile with their adversaries first before meeting their maker (Matthew 5:23–5; Matthew 18:23–35; 1 John 4:20). The church uses the penitence approach to reconcile people as a gateway to reconciliation with God. The penitence approach employs four key steps which focus on the offender. These steps are: submission, confession, penitence, and absolution (Galtung 1). Therefore, reconciliation is not only the act of seeking forgiveness, but also a structured process that involves confession and penance.

During ritual performance, the performer is either an individual or a collection of people. Thus, Goffman (28) justifies this when he argues that every one of us puts on a performance in our society. Whether through the clothes we wear, the conversations we hold, or the food we eat, all are performances designed as a signal-system to ourselves and others of our place within our social group. This article was guided by Foley's performance theory which was formulated to give guidance on the understanding of oral traditions. It proposes that researchers

who analyse oral literature should take a closer look at the non-literal meaning of spoken words and see the performance as an 'event'. It also brings out several aspects of decoding an oral performance and further brings about the concept of keys to performance and classifies each performance as part of the meaning of the genre of oral literature being analysed. The four main tenets that guided our research study are outlined by Foley in his functionalism theory: (a) Special place of performance: a specific place set aside for carrying out rituals. Words used here carry specific meaning. This place is vital since it allows the participants and the observers to meet during the performance. In Nandi propitiatory reconciliation, this special place could be somewhere in the bush, along the riverbank, or under specific trees. However, these special places vary depending on the environment where the affected participants live. (b) Register: the specific language used to present information during the ritual. It involves specific rules of engagement, choice of special words, and chanting of specific words so as to present the intended meaning in accordance with the ritual being performed. (c) Figurative language: during the performance of any ritual, language is used creatively with regard to the context so as to ensure that the intended meaning is communicated in a special way. (d) Culture in performance and special codes: culture ensures that the ritual is the same despite the changing environment. Special codes involve specific attire for the special occasion/ritual and varies from one culture to another.

According to Foley, if the performer fails to adhere to these tenets which serve as rules of performance, or ignores them, the performance will not count as a viable example of the respective tradition.

### **Steps in the implementation of propitiatory reconciliation**

In the course of our research, we found that the Nandi community adheres to three main stages during their propitiatory reconciliation: investigation, interrogation, and cleansing. Each of the stages has sub-stages which vary depending on the kind of wrong being handled. They are well structured so as to meet the needs of the community at large. This research found that each of these stages contains many performances. We focused on two kinds of wrongs that require propitiatory reconciliation to be resolved, namely killing/murder and promiscuity/fornication with the aim of analysing the performances and their importance in the completion of the ritual as expounded in each stage below.

The Nandi people believe that unresolved wrongs bring harm to the wrong doer, his clan, and to the community at large. If a member of the community errs secretly, he will not go scot-free as the punishment will manifest itself through certain negative effects on the wrong doer, his clan, and/or the community at large. For instance, whenever a heinous act such as killing or theft occurs in the village, the affected person(s) reports the matter to the village elder (*poiyoopkook*), who in turn sends his aides to relay the message to the entire village and its neighbourhoods. This marks the beginning of investigation. Here, the act of ensuring that the information reaches everyone in the neighbourhood sets the stage for anyone with information with regard to the incident to record a statement within a stipulated time frame. This stage is important because it gives everyone, including the wrong doer, an opportunity to present himself/herself and admit his/her mistakes before the *poiyoopkook*. From the findings of this study, it is evident that whenever the wrong doer presents himself before the *poiyoopkook* within the set deadline, then stage two of this process will be skipped. However, if he doesn't present himself, the *poiyoopkook* begins the preparation for the second stage (interrogation). He does this by preparing a list of suspects based on the reports compiled in stage one. He then consults the elders (*baraza*) and rolls out plans for the second stage.

At the interrogation stage, the *poiyoopkook* calls for a meeting to be attended by the village elders, the accused or suspects, witnesses, and the complainant. This meeting is held at a special place identified for performing rituals where the complainant and the accused are required to fully participate from the beginning to the end. The rest of the participants are representatives of families drawn from the respective village(s) where the complainant and the accused hail from. The process is bias-free since all participants are given equal opportunity to present their grievances. The complainant is the first to be ushered on stage to present his grievances while standing before the audience who are seated in a semi-circle. Then the suspect/accused is given an opportunity to either confess or defend himself from the accusations. When testimony is given, interjection is not allowed, to avoid distractions. In case there are any, it is made after the accused has finished his/her submission. Witnesses are then given a chance to give their evidence towards the case and thereafter the audience is allowed to take turns to ask questions or to give comments/further explanations. This section is finally brought to a close through a summary (allegations versus evidence given) submitted by one of the lead elders. The sitting is adjourned shortly to allow

the jury (council of elders led by the *poiyoopkook*) to critically analyse the submissions. This is done by keenly looking into the accusations and the evidence given by the witnesses before the verdict is made. Basically, this stage could result in one of the following conclusions: (a) The accused accepting the accusations and asking for forgiveness; (b) The accused denying the accusations; Failure to identify the wrong doer.

Cleansing is the last stage in the process of propitiatory reconciliation. Cleansing is a special ritual that is performed in order to restore harmonious relations between two or more people and their families. This cleansing process varies depending on the kind of wrong committed. However, sacrificial offering essentially forms an integral part of the cleansing process. The participants go through different cultural acts depending on the kind of wrong committed. For instance, during the cleansing of a person who killed another person, a *kibirāiywō* is identified by the elders. He then starts the ritual by cleansing the place for performing the ritual by slaughtering a white sheep and sprinkling blood on the identified place using a fly whisk while chanting. He then offers the sheep as a burnt offering to the Supreme Being Asis. In this ritual, the offering does not only represent a communicative link with the ancestors to ask for forgiveness, but also shows a symbiotic relationship between the participants and the supernatural world, resulting in cosmic harmony. The cleansing is done after a determination is made in stage two (interrogation). The resolution (covenant) made here is final and binding to all. However, if anyone acts contrary to the covenant, a curse befalls them and/or their lineage in accordance with the ritual performed.

### **Performance and place of performance in *mviga***

Performance is an essential feature of oral literature. There is no genre of oral literature that is worth its name without its practical aspect which manifests itself through performance. Bauman (290) reminds us that meaning is vital in performance. Therefore, in order to interpret meaning in Nandi propitiatory reconciliation, the performance should be analysed in the context of the ritual being performed. In this regard, the Nandi propitiatory reconciliation is carried out to meet family, societal, and clan needs. Our research found that this performance manifests itself through the aspects discussed below.

The place of performance is a specific venue where the entire process of the ritual takes place. Performance in *mviga* is not done anywhere but in a specific cultural context. For example, during the performance of the cleansing ritual for a perpetrator of a murder in Lolkeringet village in Kabiyet Ward, Nandi County, we observed that the event took place at the banks of River Chebisaas. Before the cleansing ritual was performed, the *kibirāiywō* visited this venue and in his wisdom and power chose a specific place along the bank. Later, accompanied by four other village elders, he visited the chosen venue and cleansed it. They did this by slaughtering a white ram while facing the east from where the sun rises where it is believed Asis lives. By so doing, the ram was offered as a sacrifice to him, simultaneously seeking his permission/blessing to carry out the cleansing. They then sprinkled blood around the designated venue using a special fly whisk made from a cow's tail (*kipkalyaang'it*) which serves as a symbol of power and respect. It is believed to provide a connection between the living and the power of the ancestors. *Kibirāiywō* used the fly whisk to 'sweep' away the evil spirits while chanting the following words:

*Po-iisyekchook chēbō keny', acheck choo ...*  
*Ochāmweech keetuiyegecy agobo ng'aleechu ...*  
*Asis, chāmweēch ...*  
*Isuldōōy ng'aleechu ... Isuldōōy ole Isuldōōy!*

Our ancestors, we are here ...  
Kindly join us as we address this issue at hand  
Our supreme being, kindly allow us ...  
This issue will be resolved ... Let's all accept in one accord that it will be resolved!

The audience responded as follows:

*Isuldōōy!*  
*Kibirāiywō: Sērē ole sērē!*  
*Sērē!*

It will be resolved!  
It will be so; let's all affirm that it will be so  
It will be so!

This was done solemnly in turns. After this, they burnt the ram and calmly watched the smoke moving up the sky.

This entire exercise amounts to a performance: the slaughtering of the sheep while facing the east (the dwelling place of Asis), the act of sprinkling blood around the chosen venue along the riverbank using *kipkalyaang'it*, and offering the burnt offering so as to let the smoke blow in the sky. All these activities are accompanied by chants contextually made by *kibirāiywō*. For example, the word *sere* in this context was used to mean “let it be so”.

### **Actions, gestures, singing, and repetition**

According to Kyallo Wadi Wamitila (104), performance is anchored in actions and signs. It is a concept used in theatre arts which involves engagement, audience, and emotion. Oral performance is the presentation of oral literature genres through simulations by the use of gestures, movements, modulation of the voice and tone, and facial expression (Foley 3). In order to interpret performance in oral literature genres, there has to be an action/occurrence within the context of the words being used coupled with creativity across the entire *mviga*.

When performing the cleansing ritual, *kibirāiywō* assumes the ancestral spirit's role where he uses chants accompanied by certain gestures, voice intonation and modulation, facial expressions, and other non-verbal cues. For example, during a cleansing ritual when *kibirāiywō* says “*sāārēēm, sāārēēm, sāārēēm, sāārēēm*” (all is well, all is well, all is well, all is well); he uses a soft tone coupled with a change of facial expression and other gestures in every utterance. The intonation is a performativity marker that creates an interaction structure between him the agent (*kibirāiywō*), the ancestors, the divinities, and the addressee (the Supreme Being Asis). This brings them to the same level and their submission gains acceptance. It also gives solace and hope to the bereaved as evidenced in this case:

[With his face turned downwards.] Here with us is the family of the deceased. They are crying for justice for their blood. I believe all of us have lost. Is there anyone amongst us who has any information concerning the death? [Deep silence engulfs the gathering for like three minutes or so, before *kibirāiywō* interjects]. All of you have witnessed the silence herein.

*Kibirāiywō* then called in one of the elders in his company who asked the same question to which the answer was again silence. Each of the four elders (assistants of *kibirāiywō*) asked the same question which bore the same answer, silence. Finally, the village elder stood up and said, “Here I have a list of four names presented to me”. The words oozed out with a mixture of fury and sorrow. The four elders were then invited onto the stage. This time, in the same mood as that of the village elder, each one of them stood and asked the same question they had asked before. The mood here was a sign of the seriousness of the matter at hand (murder/death). The village elder stretched his right hand towards an elder who was sitting on his right-hand side. This was a sign of asking him to start the meeting. The use of his right hand was deliberate since it is believed to have the power to bless and warn. Therefore, this was an indication that he was passing over the powers to whoever was taking up the role of starting the meeting. [...] *Kibirāiywō* took up the spear and placed it on the killer's mouth as he poured *suguteek* (sacred water) through it, from which he was asked to make four successful gulps.

A spear is a weapon used in war to attack the enemy. The act of placing the spear in the killer's mouth and pouring the sacred water (sourced from sacred springs and rocks) is an act of cleansing him. It is believed to deliver him from curses that would have befallen him. This performance is also evidenced in the cleansing ritual for fornication as follows:

They brought him down at the center stage in the middle of women who out rightly began to torture him. They took off his clothes as they pinched him all over his body. Some went for his genitals and bit him, while others sat on his face and spat on him. At this point the man was crying in anguish, seeking for forgiveness and swearing not to fornicate again.

[...]

*Kibirāiywō* then rose up and began to sprinkle *suguteek* on him by use of a fly whisk (*kipkalyaang'it*) while still naked. All these acts were accompanied by chants from *kibirāiywō*, as a sign of cleansing the offender. The act of undressing the offender in public is to remind all and sundry that fornication is not permissible whether done in secret or not. The spitting and pinching of the offender's genitalia is a punitive measure for having offended the female fraternity. It makes him to be remorseful. [...] by use of *soosyoot* (a special stick made from palm tree) *kibirāiywō* scooped some ghee (*koranect*) from *laalet* (container made from a cow's horn) and placed on each of the participant's palms to smear it on the cheeks, arms and the legs of the offender in a queue. All these acts were accompanied by the words “*sāārēēm*” (all is well).

From the above extract, based on a recorded observation from the performance during the participatory observation, the art of performance is vividly expounded through various acts such as scooping of *koraneet* by use of *soosyoot* and oiling the offender's cheeks, arms, and legs in a queue. Smearing of *koraneet* signifies forgiveness and the promise of restoration of the relationship between the two parties (the offender and the offended). The act of each participant oiling the offender is a symbol of individually forgiving and accepting him back, and by extension the family members that each one of them represents.

As for the case of propitiation for murder, performance is eminent in the entire process across all stages. For instance, in stage one or two, there's the act of taking a black cow to the home of the deceased at night and later taking nine cows across the river or at a crossroads which point towards the deceased's home. The act of taking a black cow to the home of the deceased is an admission of guilt and taking responsibility. The black cow symbolises death and mourning. It is also an acknowledgment of the pain that the bereaved family is going through. The nine cows on the other hand represent the "nine openings" in the human body where the curse manifests itself through. The act of driving the cows across the river is a sign of averting any curse that would befall the offender and his family/clan through any of the 'nine openings'.

Performance is also conspicuous during sanctification of the place of ritual performance. *Kibirāiywō* casts out the evil spirits through sprinkling blood around the place by use of *kipkalyaang*'it. By so doing, he seeks permission from Asis and the ancestors to carry out the ritual. Furthermore, he sanctifies the place in preparation for ritual performance. The participants in the ritual also take an early morning bath together in the river. They cross the river together, they exchange sorghum/millet and honey, oil each other with *koraneet*, they sing, let the cows across the river, and finally disperse in two opposite directions without looking back. The act of the participants taking a bath together from the same river unites them in thought and focuses them to a common goal. This binds them in mind and spirit from which they finally reciprocate through common deeds throughout the ritual and life thereafter. It also acts as an outward sign for inward purification prior to the ritual. As the participants cross the river, *kibirāiywō* sprinkles *busaa* (traditional/local brew), milk, and *suguteek* on each of their heads. This is believed to cleanse the evil spirit and bring forth blessings. The crossing of the river signifies the freedom of cohesion between the two feuding parties. There is also the act of drinking *busaa* from one *kerebeet* (traditional bowl), licking of honey, and hugging one another as a sign of peace and restoration of unity among the parties involved.

Singing forms the core of the ritual performance. Much of the singing is solemn affirmation of the participants led by the soloist. During the performance of the propitiatory reconciliation ritual among the Nandi, the audience observes and actively participates in the singing at different stages. During the course of singing, squatting is a requirement for all participants. It is a penitent posture of submission to the will of Asis. This is shown in the ritual performed for a murder-related ritual as cited below:

Soloist: [As he squats] *Woo ... i woi ... ee eeee ...*

Participants: [As they squat] *Woo-i ... woo ... oi ee ... eee ... iya, aha aiya woi!*

Soloist: *Woo... i woi ... ee eee ...*

Participants: *woo-I ... woi ee ... eee ... iya, aha aiya woi!*

Soloist: *Woo ... i woi ... ee eeee ...*

Participants: *woo-i ... woi ee ... eee ... iya, aha aiya woi!*

Soloist: *Woo ... i woi ... ee eee ...*

Participants: *woo-I ... woi ee ... eee ... iya, aha aiya woi!*

From the above-cited example, based on a recorded observation from the performance during the participatory observation, words in the song are contextually used to convey a special message. It is a solemn submission by the entire community represented by the participants in the ritual. It is sung at the beginning and the end of a ritual. Here, the song is illustrative since the soloist actually performs it together with the participants. By so doing, it postulates solemn affirmation and communal agreement to what is set to begin and to what has been done at the end. The art of intonation at the climax wraps it all up at a point where the pitch of the song rises and finally falls. At this moment, the incantation by *kibirāiywō* ascends as he rebukes and scatters the evil spirits. In the end, he calms down in deep contrition and seeks blessings from Asis. The oral performance is enhanced and enlivened through his body language coupled with the dramatic elements such as gestures, facial expressions, and mimicry to convey messages which, if in print, could hardly convey the same impact.

Repetition as a literary device is very important in any oral performance. Given this natural tendency to say and repeat matters of deep personal concern many times over, it helps the participants to express themselves expansively on matters which deeply affect them. Okpewho (163–4) posits that the repeated hammering of the same issue in the same manner and using the same words, sounds, etc. is a veritable way of releasing inner feelings of sadness or joy (this serves certain practical purposes in the overall organisation of oral performance). It also sets the atmosphere for the performance by aiding the performer in introspecting himself and getting actively involved. It brings out realism in the performance by enabling the performer to bring out his innermost feelings. It must be noted from our research that there is a deliberate use of refrain as a form of repetition in various stages of the propitiatory reconciliation ritual. Apart from the body language and gestures such as squatting to show deep contrition, the participants repeat key phrases and certain words after the lead singer. This comes at the beginning and climax of the reconciliation ritual emanating from the death offense as cited in the example below which formed part of the data we collected as part of our fieldwork:

Elder: *Woo... i woi ... ee ee ...*

Audience: *Woo... i woi ee ... ee ... ei, iya ... ahaiya woi!*

Elder: *Woo ... i woi ee ... ee ... ei, iya ... ahaiya woi! (x 4)*

From the above examples, there's deliberate repetition of the words "woi ... ee ... woi" (yes ... yes indeed!). This is not only meant for dramatic license purposes, but also to bring out the solemn affirmation aspect. Furthermore, it emphasises the importance of the covenant made by the participants through the ritual and oath(s) taken. It also forms part of catharsis to the offender.

### **Formulaic expressions, costumes, and audience**

Every stage of the *mviga* is preceded by some prefatory statements and/or chants which are made by the lead performer, especially before and after the cleansing ritual is performed. For instance, during a cleansing ritual relating to murder or fornication, after the offender has confessed, *kibirāiywō* makes a prefatory statement which invites spontaneous audience participation as evidenced below:

*Kibirāiywō: Kaa-i nyoo ... anyiny' ole anyiny'!*

Audience: *Anyiny'!*

*Kibirāiywō: Kaa-i nyoo, ne lalang' kobooch keny' ... lalang' ole lalang'!*

Audience: *Lalang'!*

*Kibirāiywō: Makomaasu buunyoo ... makomaasu ole makomaasu!*

Audience: *Makomaasu!*

*Kibirāiywō: Ngomoos koimeniit ...! Imeniitu ole imeniitu!*

Audience: *Imeniitu!*

*Kibirāiywō: Kibageenge ko kiim ...! Kiim ole kiim!*

Audience: *Kiim!*

*Kibirāiywō: KING! OLE KING!*

Audience: *KING!*

*Kibirāiywō: Our community has no curses ...! Let us all affirm that it has no curse!*

Audience: *It has no curse!*

*Kibirāiywō: Our community is peaceful since time immemorial ...! Let's all affirm this!*

Audience: *It is peaceful!*

*Kibirāiywō: The enemy has no place here anymore ...! Let's all affirm to this!*

Audience: *He has no place anymore!*

*Kibirāiywō: May he find no place amongst us ...! May he find no place ...!*

Audience: *No place!*

*Kibirāiywō: Our unity is our strength ...! May we affirm that it is our strength!*

Audience: *It is our strength!*

*Kibirāiywō: AMEN! Let's all affirm this!*

Audience: *AMEN!*

and

*Kibirāiywō*: Ong'utchii lee ... sere ole sere!

Audience: SERE!

*Kibirāiywō*: Let us all forgive him ...! It is well with him now ...! It is well! Let's all accept that it is well!

Audience: IT IS WELL!

In the above example, *kibirāiywō* chants while swinging *kipkalyang'it*, directing it to the audience. In this performance, he laments the loss of the deceased and recounts his great deeds, rich ancestry, and the vacuum created by his death. The chants of grief and emotions of *kibirāiywō* affects the members of the audience, enjoining them to spontaneously reciprocate to the chants while facing him. The language used in the chant brings about certainty of the performance: for example, the use of the phrases “King! ole king!” (it is well) and “sere ole sere!” (all is well) by *kibirāiywō* enjoined by the audience. The message conveyed here is full of certainty and truth, an affirmation of reparation of the offender by the entire community. The offender and offended at this point feel some sense of restoration. This forms part of healing, thus, cleansing begins.

Costume is special attire for clothing the performers which plays an important role in character description because what the audience sees gives a more immediate impression of who the character is (Matti 51). It naturally gives a form of expression about an individual's social status, culture, religion, and so on. During propitiatory reconciliation among the Nandi, *kibirāiywō* is the only participant who puts on traditional regalia. At stage three of propitiatory reconciliation for murder and fornication cases as earlier cited in examples one and two during the performance of cleansing ritual, *kibirāiywō* puts on the special attire during the ceremony which comprises of *sambuut* (a gown made of the skin from rock hyrax) and *kuutweet* (a fluffy head gear made of lion's skin), worn in the body and the head respectively.

These special costumes are dramatically symbolic. They give the audience a sense of structured perception of the reality about the happenings and contain divine powers bestowed to *kibirāiywō* by the community. It is through this that whatever he executes during propitiation is accepted by the entire community. What he says becomes.

The audience is primary to any oral performance and forms a basic component to any verbal art without which there is no performance. The crucial role of the audience is to provoke and galvanise performers to better dramatization and rendition (Kipury 12). In African communities, the audience and participants are inseparable (Matti 55). As has been discussed earlier, it is a normal and natural practice for the audience and/or participants to actively participate in propitiatory reconciliation through various means. The participation of the audience can be observed during stages two and three of propitiation, and more conspicuously during ritual performance. It may start with prefatory statements and/or chants, followed shortly after by musical interludes, then continues concurrently or interpolates and/or ends with a musical interlude (*kayandaayta*) such as the one reproduced above. The examples also illustrate active and voluntary audience participation during a cleansing ritual performance.

Much of the various audience participation forms in various stages of the Nandi propitiatory reconciliation are natural and flow spontaneously during the course of performance. When a performer takes to the stage, the rest of the participants serve or function as audience, and they beautifully interject, exclaim, and sing. This role of the audience evokes real participation and active involvement which is the core of performance.

## Conclusion

In this article, we have managed to expound the three main stages adhered to during propitiation among the Nandi community: investigation, interrogation, and cleansing. These stages are structured in such a manner that they must be religiously adhered to; failure to do so means the ultimate reconciliation outcome won't be met. Furthermore, we have established that performance in Nandi propitiatory reconciliation heavily depends on active participation of its performers and the audience. This presupposes that performance is the core of propitiation and that, without it, *mviga* as a sub-genre of Nandi oral literature is elusive. We also revealed that performance in *mviga* is not a mere fiction or imaginative reasoning, but a true description of a socio-cultural event. It also establishes the fact that performance as a phenomenon is pragmatic. This is evidenced in various stages of *mviga* through actions and gestures, singing, repetition, formulaic expressions, and audience participation.

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