

**CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN RIDDLES AND RIDDLE PERFORMANCE
AMONG THE KIPSIGIS OF KERICHO COUNTY, KENYA**

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**A Thesis Submitted to Graduate School in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for
the Master of Arts Degree in Literature of Egerton University**

EGERTON UNIVERSITY

JULY, 2020

DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION

Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented to this or any other university for the award of a degree.

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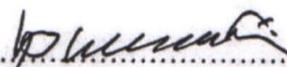
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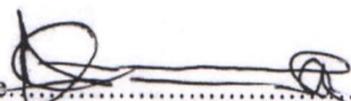
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my beloved mother, Pauline C. Misik, my supportive uncle, Amos A. Misik, and my late father, Joel A. Misik who was and still is a source of inspiration in my life. Special dedication goes to my beloved husband, Joseph Namunyu and my children; Jael, Josphine, Jeiel and Jeriel for their continued motivation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Almighty God whose grace has seen me through this work. Special gratitude goes to my supervisors: Prof. Fugich Wako and Dr. Dishon Kweya who guided me through the thesis to completion. I am also indebted to Prof. Ilieva, Dr. Bartoo, Dr. Walunywa, and all the lecturers in the department for their support and encouragement. Further, my gratitude goes to Prof. Moses Rotich and his family for providing me with accommodation while I was working from the university. I also sincerely appreciate the informants including the resource persons, teachers, pupils, and the research guides Mathew Rutto and Beatrice Chepng'eno who greatly assisted me during my field work, without whom this work would not have been completed. May your knowledge grow and flourish.

Moreover, the prayers and moral support of my spouse Pr. Joseph Namunyu and family, friends and relatives who greatly helped me in one way or another, are truly appreciated. I also acknowledge the support and understanding of my beautiful brilliant daughters: Chebet and Chepkosgey and my lovely twin boys; Jeiel and Jeriel. You gave me ample time, may your paths always open for great success.

To all the people who contributed to the completion of this work in one way or another, thank you and God bless you.

ABSTRACT

This study focused on contemporary Kipsigis riddles, their performances and ways in which they have adjusted to the socio-cultural circumstances brought to bear on the Kipsigis cultural lives. The objective of this study was to interrogate the ways in which the postcolonial experiences has influenced Kipsigis riddle formation and riddling, and the implication on the processes which produce the meaning. Although the structure and form of riddles has been extensively studied, the question of change and continuity in riddles and riddle performance has not received much attention. This thesis was informed by the concept of cultural circulation and appropriation of fragments from other cultures and genres in the process of cultural production. The study highlighted ways in which modernity has impacted on aspects of the Kipsigis culture and the implications that they have had on the process of riddle production and practice. Using ethnographic methods for data collection, the study sought for ways in which culture, on the one hand, and the performers of cultural genres, on the other hand, adjust to cultural modification as a result of cultural interaction. Thus, the study sought to understand ways of arriving at meaning in contemporary Kipsigis riddling in a context where shifts in value influenced by colonial modernity is apparent. The analytical procedure was informed by insights from the concept of composition by fragments by Barber (1989) and Hofmeyr (1994). This study espouses that riddle formation and practice is dependent on historical circumstances and experience of the community. The study established that the mode of construction of new metaphors in contemporary Kipsigis riddles reflects the changing postcolonial Kipsigis worldview. The Kipsigis riddle therefore can be regarded as a versatile genre capable of encapsulating the history as well as accommodating other experiences brought to bear on the community. It also provided an illustrative insight on how the Kipsigis people interacted with their neighbouring cultures and more importantly, how the British colonial authority impacted on the Kipsigis culture and traditions. The study concludes that riddles and the riddling process is not just about aesthetic appeal but it is able to both adapt to changes in a dynamic social context and act as a storehouse of African histories and experiences. Hence the study has expanded the frontiers of knowledge on the riddle by proposing a shift of focus to the impact of its context and its social history. The study opened more gaps on looking at riddles as a genre which can be used to interrogate the history of a community, its cultural transformations and and the making of new knowledge. The study recommends further investigation on how the riddle as a genre functions in Kenyan communities as well as in other African communities.

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

On 21st of January, 2012, while teaching an oral literature lesson to a form two class at Kabokyek Secondary School in Soin area of Kericho County, my students raised a number of questions on the broad issue of riddles and riddling as a genre of oral literature. Whereas most students regarded riddles and riddling as an activity that was solely for entertainment, a few raised concerns on the ways in which riddles could embody the lifestyle of a community. In order to obtain more insight into the controversial issues which arose during the lesson, I assigned every student the task of collecting riddles, and in the process, taking note on how riddling was performed in their villages. Whereas a majority of the students in the school came from the Kipsigis community, the diversity in the mode of the construction of the riddles, the responses to the challenges, and the mode of arriving at those responses, varied so significantly that they called attention to themselves. The disparity in a community that claimed to have a shared culture and ancestry and relentlessly laid claim to cultural uniformity caught my attention. The question that came to mind was how to explain this experience. What might have caused this diversity in riddle and riddle performance among a people living in generally the same area and seemed culturally homogeneous, living in a continuous geographical space that was Kipsigis land, and specifically in Soin in Kericho County.

My preliminary discussion on this matter with a few community elders who live near the school suggested that Kipsigis riddles and riddling had changed significantly in recent years in tandem with recent socio-cultural dynamics such as the change in economic activities, formal education, religious activities as well as political activities. These annotations triggered the desire to investigate the changes that Kipsigis riddles have undergone and by implication, the modes of discerning riddle meaning that speaks to contemporary Kipsigis contexts. It called into attention the desire to define the nature of the kipsigis riddle and the riddling process in order to discern its relevance in the construction of the kipsigis world view.

A riddle has been defined by various scholars as a word puzzle in which familiar objects or situations are referred to figuratively for one to decipher meaning (George & Dundes 1963; Scheub, 1977; Williams, 1963). Furthermore, a riddle has been defined as a question intentionally phrased to require ingenuity in ascertaining its answer. Linguists and folklorists have defined a riddle as a traditional verbal expression which contains one or more descriptive

elements, a pair of it may be in opposition, the referent of the element is to be guessed (George & Dundes 1963:113). Harold Scheub (1977) argues that a riddle has multiple meanings that retell history. Williams (1963: 96) argues that riddling is a fundamental part of the structure and functioning of the society. He puts forward important social functions of riddling as follows: it converts social conflict into harmless channels, teaches rules of social conduct, interprets and explains natural phenomena and permits some discussions of some feared and imminent crisis, it serves as a conceptualising mechanism thus, a directly educative process of considerable indigenous importance (Williams 1963:105–6). All these definitive issues concerning the riddle and its performance help in determining the place of riddles in the Kipsigis community.

In the Kipsigis community, riddling was usually done by the children, supervised by the elderly people. As Chesaina (1991) cogently describes with respect to the Kalenjin community, with which the Kipsigis belongs to, the riddling activity was usually done under the patronage of the elderly such as the mother, grandmother and grandfather. The elderly were considered as the custodians of the customs from which the listener hailed, as they had a rich and varied experience of the lifestyle of the community. The Kipsigis community recognises the important roles riddle play in the social and intellectual development and uses them not only for their aesthetic value but also as a means of inculcating knowledge to children and the youth in the society. Adults are encouraged to participate in the process so as to exercise their wit and pass on acceptable moral values to the younger people through the riddling process.

1.1.1 Background to the Study of Riddles

The comprehensive study on riddles started in earnest in early 19th century when other genres of oral literature were taken into consideration in the study of literature¹. The study of riddles began as a form of human entertainment and informal education. The riddles were used to foster socialisation and learning in communities. Studies on this genre have overly concentrated

¹ Riddles have been found in writings in Anglo-Saxon literature composed between c.650 and c.1100. English poems include various riddles, charm (magic cures, pagan in origin) saints' lives poetry and other Christian and heroic verse. The prominent writers during this period include William J. Thomas (1803-85, Metcalf J. (1828 and Babcock 1828). Several classical riddles are contained in the writings as in the riddle book (1828, 8kb) printed and sold by Metcalf in Wendell, Massachusetts. These lists of works on riddles clearly indicate that riddles are ancient and probably a universal genre of oral literature.

on the aesthetic value of riddles, leaving out the significance of performance and the process of arriving at the meaning of the riddle.

Riddles have been studied by various scholars worldwide and a number of arguments have been raised concerning the genre and the genre practice. Scholars such as; Nekene (1943), Blackings (1961), Cole-Beuchat (1957) and Ishengoma (1977) have argued that riddles and stories told in the evening around the fire-place in traditional African cultures are rich sources of social education. The social value of riddles and the site of their performances are emphasized, whereas composition and meaning are left out. Nekene (1943:123–125) argues that riddles are used as a means of critical education for African children, whereby riddles train them to think critically. A similar argument is made by Cole-Beuchat (1972:133–135), who argues that riddles combine recreational and educational needs to an “unusual” degree thereby providing an exercise in intellectual skills and quickness of wit. Similarly, Blackings (1961) maintains that among the Venda riddles have educational value for children because they help develop values of logic and stimulate children’s imaginations. Ishumi (1980: 98) further argued that traditional quizzes (among them riddles) could be equated in function to present-day psychological tests that assess knowledge and creativity in associating, differentiating, establishing cause and effect, among other functions. These authors inclined so much on the function of riddles in the society, the major function being exercising intellectual skills. These scholars have not accounted for the dynamics that govern cultures as a result of changes in their values brought about by modernity and cultural contacts.

These works on riddles seemingly show how the genre functioned in their respective societies during a particular era in the past. There is lack of clarity on how the riddles they studied could be used to impart knowledge to learners in the present generation. Phillip Noss (2006) illustrates how riddles in Gbaya tradition can be recreated or renewed to reflect the dynamics of change in the contemporary society. Whereas his findings formed a basis for the current study, consideration of time is hardly addressed. The culture change with time and all cultural forms also change. Moreover, there are unique attributes in every society as regards to their cultural transformations.

Most of these works show how the riddle genre operated in a particular society during a particular period in the past. The problem, which this study addresses, is the way the genre accommodates changes in a dynamic society considering the fact that riddles mirror the culture of a society. The studies therefore reveal that trends in the study of riddles have focused mainly

on the aesthetic value of riddles. Specifically, these studies have tended to dwell on structure and taxonomy, whereby issues of classification, content and function have been, to a large extent, their main focus. Not surprisingly, therefore, issues about the changes the riddles and the riddling process have undergone in response to the influences and demands of the postcolonial societies have not been highlighted. Yet the question of how these changes may have influenced the process of creation and recreation of riddles, and meaning-making and dissemination processes seem to call attention to themselves, especially when, on closer examination, the shifts in the riddling process become apparent.

Therefore, the task of this study is to investigate the changes that the Kipsigis riddling process has had to undergo in order to remain relevant in the face of the prevailing postcolonial transformations. In other words, the study set out to ascertain how the processes of the construction of new riddles, the reconstruction of old ones, and the actual practice of riddling has had to undergo in order for riddles to claim their space in circumstances where the postcolonial context has often demanded radical adjustment on African cultural practices if they have to remain relevant.

From the foregoing, it is apparent that my central argument is informed by the claim that the Kipsigis, like other postcolonial African communities, had a specific wealth of traditional/cultural practices which informed what can be referred to as the Kipsigis civilization, i.e the practices that informed the Kipsigis worldview. As observed by Rutto (2016:102), the colonial encounter with white farmers in the so-called White Highlands, and specifically the influences that were brought to bear through annexation of Kipsigis lands, influenced the Kipsigis lifestyle. These lands were converted to commercial tea farming in certain regions which used new techniques of mechanised agriculture. The embrace of the use of modern farming implements, as well as the arrival of African labourers from other Kenyan communities, among other socio-political and cultural factors, may have exerted significant influences on Kipsigis traditions, which includes riddling.

To contextualise this problem, I explore briefly the historical background of the Kipsigis; specifically their concept of origin, their beliefs systems, and socio-cultural practices and how these have been influenced by migration and interaction with other cultures. In addition, I also explore the Kipsigis encounter with colonialism in order to shed some light on the adjustments that the Kipsigis have had to make in order to accommodate the new socio-cultural, economic and political environment.

1.1.2 Historical Background of the Kipsigis culture

The Kipsigis are one of the nine sub-ethnic groups that comprise the larger Kalenjin community. The Kalenjin of Kenya includes Kipsigis, the Nandi, the Tugen, the Keiyo, the Marakwet, the Pokot, the Sabaot, the Ogiek and the Terik (Ochieng, 1975). Other sub-ethnic groups are found in Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Sudan. However they are linguistically distant from the Kalenjin of Kenya (Sambu, 2011).

The name Kalenjin is derived from the word '*Kole*', which means 'I say.' The sub-ethnic groups share such traditions as initiation rites: birth, naming and circumcision rites. Each of the Kalenjin groups practised initiation, though the actual rites differed slightly from one group to the other. Studies suggest that the Kalenjin must have learnt and adopted the initiation rites long before they split and formed the separate groups that now exist (Orchardson 1961, Toweett 1979).

Age-set system is a binding element of the Kalenjin people; every Kalenjin man belongs to an age-set. Membership of an age-set was fixed at the time of initiation and after this, it is unchangeable for the rest of a man's life. Every circumcised man in each sub – ethnic group belongs to a certain age-set system determined by the initiation elders who instills the stipulated norms and customs of the society inculcated in the initiation songs and ritual carried out at every stage of the initiation. The various Kalenjin sub-groups had seven to eight age-set names. The Kipsigis sub-group has only seven age-sets namely: Maina, Chumo, Sawe, Korongoro, Kaplelach, Kipnyige and Nyongi. The age-set is referred to as *ipinda* in the Kalenjin local language.

Possibly in the past, as Barton (1923) had earlier suggested, the various *ipinda* formed companies of *puriet* or warrior band. The warrior divisions according to his study included: *Kongetuinon*, the lions. They are so called because members of this group are said to have eaten a lion when they were confronted with hunger after a raid. *Kipkaige* or *koilonget*, the long shield, members of this division are mainly Dorobo and are predominant in Sotik. *Kasanet*, rough shelters of branches or *Koterik*, meaning it was characteristic of this band to lie up in the shelters in the forest and to dispossess the returning raiders of their booty. Another warrior division was *Kibeni* – ox with white colour in one side.

Each *puriet* was headed by a *Kiptaiyat* or a war leader and under him were various captains of fifty bands. A man joined the *puriet* of his father but depending on his competence, he might

be invited by the admirers of a different *puriet* to join them. A wise father would advise his sons to join other warrior bands to avoid the possibility of all the sons being killed in one raid in case their *puriet* lost the war (Barton, 1923, 47– 50).

Historically the Kipsigis depended more on their livestock for their living than on any other wealth. Thus men could struggle to acquire more livestock by all means. Raiding was one way of acquiring livestock, especially cattle and was organized occasionally by a war leader of each *puriet*. In his study of the Kipsigis people, Orchardson (1931) claims that the Kipsigis are a war- like people accustomed to depend upon war for their prosperity. However, this claim is not entirely true as the Kipsigis had other means of surviving other than the livestock such as, hunting and gathering, cultivation and planting of *eleusine* millet.

Livestock played a very important role in the culture of the Kipsigis and the Kalenjin as a whole. The number of livestock one had, in the pre-colonial times, served as a measure of one's wealth and elevated one's social status; the larger the herd, the greater the respect a man earned from the society. Thus, the acquisition and increase of one's stock to be passed on to one's posterity was the chief object of life for Kipsigis males. Consequently a man owned personally such stock as he has acquired by his own effort, which the Kipsigis refer to as *tuga che kiboru* (cattle earned through successful raid which would be taken over by his family upon his death). Even after colonialism the Kipsigis devised various ways of acquiring, increasing their stock and improving the quality of their indigenous ones. This great value put to cattle is captured in riddling both in the past and at the present.

The Kipsigis people today live in the Kericho and Bomet Counties of the Rift Valley region of Kenya. Ian Orchardson (1961) established that in the latter half of the 18th Century, the Kipsigis, Nandi, Tugen, Keiyo and Marakwet were one people and lived together in a land called Tot situated probably north of the present Baringo and Keiyo areas. According to him, the rivers in those areas began to dry up and the country experienced severe drought. Longer periods of famine caused the societies to migrate in search for greener pastures for their livestock. *Segeik* (spies) and warriors were chosen by the elders of the five ethnic groups mentioned above. They were sent ahead to look for fertile lands; they were three parties consisting of eight warriors chosen as representatives of the then three war divisions. They were asked to leave their present land and look for greener pastures. Each of the five ethnic groups above represented by the warrior parties left Tot and followed the route they deemed safe for the people and their livestock. The trek began when the famine was at its peak. Thus

many people were weak; the stronger ones were sent on ahead with livestock while the weaker ones led by the warrior escort followed. When the stragglers were ready to leave the country of Tot, the warrior escort set fire to the grass with the aim of obliterating their trails. The burning of grass accidentally caused the death of some old men and frail people because they were unable to run or walk fast. The elders were grieved at this action and ordered for a sacrifice of a ram with an offering of beer but this was not carried out. The burning incident is also remembered through the riddle; *Kikulungyon boiyon kong'eten Terik agoi oli-chebutyet* (An old man crawled from Terik up this place- a hairy caterpillar). However, Orchardson (1961) asserts that the riddle has a deeper meaning; it unfolds the migration history of the Kipsigis. The riddle recalls the burning incident at the time of migration from Tot.

According to Orchardson (1961), the Terik sub-group of the Kalenjin seems to have been left behind when the rest of the Kalenjin people migrated. Mwanzi (1977) has also asserted that part of the Kipoiis clan of the Kipsigis ethnic group remained in Terrik hill near Kisumu, but others were assimilated into the neighbouring Luo and Luhya communities while another group moved to occupy virgin land further to the north and east of the present Nandi County. Kipsigis oral tradition suggests that the Terik were a minor group who got assimilated into other tribes as mentioned, therefore efforts are made through the riddle genre to bring these people (the Terik people) into awareness to the community especially the growing generation. In such a case, riddles and riddling can be said to be a means of recollecting the past, tracing shared identities and redirecting the emerging generations to a broader understanding of the roots of their community.

After the migration, the Kipsigis first settled at a place called Tuluap Sigis, eight Kilometres to the west of Lumbwa (the present Kipkelion) railway station. They pushed south and west from the Tuluap Sigis into the bush and forest country near Belgut in Kericho where they found the Maasai occupying the more desirable grazing lands. They fought the Maasai and occupied the land after their defeat. Later, they spread to Bureti ousting the Kisii (*Kosobek*). The Kipsigis and the Kisii fought several battles, which went on for many years. Finally, the Kipsigis were defeated and driven away beyond Kaisugu to Tegat in Kericho County. Once more, their animals were looted by the victorious Kisii who took over the land and lived in such areas as Roret in Burreti and Kabianga in Belgut in then, Kericho district. The Kipsigis continued to live in such areas as Tegat. Even as the Kipsigis lived in those areas, they never forgot the humiliating defeat at the hands of the Kisii. Thus they repeatedly narrated the incident to the new generations, and eventually when these generations became of age, they decided to get

revenge. They laid a formidable battle strategy which led to the killings of many Kisii people at Chemoiben, while those that survived fled, leaving to the victorious Kipsigis the expansive lands in Jamji, Chemosit, Chemosot, Litein and Chemoiben in Bureti area to the Kipsigis (Toweett, 1979, 14–15). The favorable climate, vegetation and other geographical conditions in those areas satisfied their need for grass for their livestock and for farming (Daniels, 1975).

However, as the population increased, the Kipsigis spread further to the lowland areas (Soin), which borders the Luos to the west and the Kisii to the south, in search for more grazing lands. At first, men used to take their herds to graze in these areas then returned them at dusk. However, as time went by the practice became burdensome. Therefore men then decided to build temporary huts which they used to sleep in while guarding their herds. Since the area was densely populated, the individual Kipsigis occupied large tracts of land which they used to graze their livestock and cultivate *eleusine* millet. These farming activities in this community are reflected in riddles. As explored in the later chapters, riddles involve all the spheres of life of a Kipsigis; war activities, for example, are implied by the use of vocabularies related to war weapons. New crops introduced into the community by neighbouring cultures are also included in riddles. Old and new items in the community are also reflected in riddles. Contemporary riddle performance follows the same pattern as in the pre-colonial past, for instance the opening formulae ‘Tangoch’ and the response ‘Chong’ are still in use even after new features in riddling have been adopted

1.1.3 The Kipsigis Riddles

Kipsigis oral genres include narratives, folktales, folksongs, proverbs, sayings and riddles. Oral narratives were usually done in the evening after the day’s work. Riddles formed part of the evening leisure activity. Usually it was performed as a prelude to narrative or folktale. It was practised as part of entertainment as well as a form of imparting knowledge to children. The practice was normally presided over by knowledgeable persons, specifically elderly women who were gifted in oral traditions. The themes of this oral practice revolved around the Kipsigis environment, social activities, war and any other cultural theme which called for attention such as unique social relationships and supernatural happenings.

Human nature was also taught through riddles, such as riddles on parts of the body. Knowledge on the cultural environment and the society’s history also formed part of the context of riddles. The past was relived through riddles. Memorable events formed part of the history of the community. Thus they were remembered through riddles. The customs and taboos of the

community were also instilled through riddles while economic activities could also be traced through riddles.

Riddles are the most versatile genre of the Kipsigis. Thus it is easy to accommodate any alteration or change and still retain its original shape. The valuable information is preserved and transmitted for centuries. According to Toweett (1979), riddles are taught to children when they are young. As they pass through other stages like initiation and marriage, they understand more about the teachings or lessons contained in the riddle. This was also confirmed the resource persons. Composition of the riddles may have been based on past experiences with different contexts, varied experiences, at different times, and with references to different incidences or situations, but there is always something to extract and learn from them. As Barber (1989: 14-15) asserts;

Relationship with the past and present are established and valuable lessons are preserved and passed on to the next generation for centuries or even decades. Even if the meaning seems to fade away, renewal is made through the use of relevant similar features, and incidences carrying the same weight as the original ones. Efforts are made by the knowledge ‘bearers’ of the community to preserve almost every aspect of the community which deemed essential for the smooth running of the community.

Similarly, as depicted in this study, the Kipsigis riddles encapsulate past experiences and practices in the community. The performance of riddles in the current time serves as a reminder of deep community concerns which need to be continually enhanced. Some riddles contain messages of reproof and these are still felt essential for correcting behavior even at the present. Like proverbs, they also contain words of wisdom. The only difference is that the riddle can be restructured to fit into the current situation.

Scholars have extensively studied riddles in terms of their content and function in the society. However, less has been done on their structure and the impact of their context. Particularly, the Kipsigis riddle has hardly been regarded as an independent genre, but rather, it has always been mentioned as part of Kipsigis oral genres. Chesaina’s work (1991) for instance illustrates the Kalenjin oral literature in general and cites riddles as part of the oral genres. Daniels (1980) explores the riddle genre in terms of its performance, audience and how the riddles can be used to uncover certain aspects of the community. He illustrated this through a Pokot riddle ‘*Mit –*

o kwan mu', 'there are entrails in the stomach'². The riddle reflects the pastoralist's life of the Kalenjin in the pre-colonial time. Chesaina's (1991) and Daniels' (1980) studies laid a foundation for the current study in the evaluation of the impact of foreign cultures on the contemporary Kipsigis riddle production and consumption.

1.1.4 Kipsigis Riddle Performance

Riddle performance normally acted as a way-opener for an oral narrative. The circumstances surrounding this practice depended on the day-to-day activities. Some times, it also played a role in language acquisition.

The performance of riddles has recently decreased perhaps because of the time factor. So many activities have taken up time both for the young and the old people. Young children go to school at their early stage while parents and the elderly members engage in various daily activities that they hardly have time for leisure. Riddling, regarded as a leisure activity suffers as a result of the busy schedules created by the emergent post colonial situations. The performance sites have shifted from the grandmother's hut to the classroom; from the relaxed 'moonlight' to busy and fixed 'daylight' lesson setting. The performers have shifted from the community's custodians of knowledge to a different set largely mediated by knowledge of technology and technological advances. There is also a lot of re-adjustment of the old riddles to fit into the current worldview as remarked by Kiptalam, one of the resource persons³.

The current study revealed that riddles and their performances have undergone transformations as a result of the dynamic changes experienced during the colonial and post colonial period.

² This is one of the riddles collected by Marvyn Beech, a District Commissioner in 1910. It was framed as a question, ' what is like a belly full of entrails?'- a house full of men (Beech 1911:45).

³ Kiptalam, one of the resource persons interviewed in April, 2014 illustrated how the riddles have changed as a result interaction of the Kipsigis with other cultures as well as the colonial encounter.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Studies on riddles tend to focus on the structure and functions of the genre, leaving out the critical process of performance and meaning making. Specific works on the Kipsigis riddles focus on the culture of the Kipsigis and the entire body of Kalenjin oral genres in general without interrogating contemporary nuances that emerged over time. This study therefore explores the riddle performance and the changes the riddles have undergone in order to remain relevant in a post-colonial context, which has fundamentally impacted on the modes of production of Kipsigis culture and traditions.

1.3 Broad Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study was to understand the ways in which postcolonial social change has influenced Kipsigis riddles and the riddling process and the implications for the ways of arriving at meaning.

1.3.1 Specific Objectives

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

- i.** To explore the influence of post-colonial socio-cultural events on Kipsigis culture and traditions.
- ii.** To investigate the changes brought by modernity as reflected in the contemporary riddling process among the Kipsigis.
- iii.** To understand the process of composition and modes of arriving at the meaning of contemporary Kipsigis riddles.

1.4 Research Questions

- i.** How have postcolonial socio-cultural events influenced the process of Kipsigis cultural production?
- ii.** What are the possible changes brought about by modernity as reflected in the contemporary riddle process among the Kipsigis?
- iii.** How has modernity impacted on the modes of production of riddles and riddle meaning among the Kipsigis?

1.5 Justification of the Study

This study investigated the changes in contemporary Kipsigis riddling as well as the changes the riddles themselves have had to undergo in order to remain relevant to the modern Kipsigis context. With fast-paced technological changes and the effects of the modern post-colonial environment on the Kipsigis riddle, the study interrogates influences brought about by the neighbouring cultures as well as by the colonial culture which immensely impacted on the Kipsigis culture. The relationship between culture and oral genres helped in realising the objectives of the study. The study used the cultural based methodology to explore the change and continuity of riddles by exploring the process of production of metaphors and other figures of speech in riddles to investigate the ways in which they echo modern social life among the Kipsigis. The study proposed a shift to the impact of context on riddles and riddling process and the implications on rules of genre. The outcome revealed that the riddle genre reflects the cultural practices of a society and contain the historical circumstances in a condensed manner. Through riddle performance therefore, younger generations are able to learn, borrow valuable lessons from the past and use the same strategy to transcend information from the past and present to the future generations. Additional sites of riddle performance favour the riddle survival and transmission to the next generation.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted in Kericho County, specifically Kapsorok, Chepyegon, Barn'goror and Kaplelartet locations in Soin Division. These are the areas where key respondents with vast cultural knowledge of the society as well as the information on colonial experiences were found. While the influence of modernity was apparent in these areas, like in the rest of the Kipsigis land, their location away from the urban centers made them ideal for this study. This is because they are still appreciably rich in oral traditions.

This study has focused on performance of riddles in the present context as well as investigations of the riddle practice in pre-colonial times. This helped to ascertain the changes that have been brought to the fore in the modern context.

The study focused on the relationship between modernity and change in riddle performance. Classification, content and form were only considered as far as they helped highlight the need to contextualise the contemporary change in the riddle. Although a substantial amount of

riddles were collected, a lot of time was taken to make arrangements for the genre to be performed both in the classroom and outside the school context. This was majorly because the genre is not performed on a daily basis, since there is hardly any time for this. Culture and tradition also impacted on the genre practice. For instance, I had to wait till evening to conduct a riddling session with a few respondents. Thus, extra time was created for those sessions. Further inquiry from these resource persons revealed that some people in this community still cling to the traditional customs and perceptions of the genre: they maintain that ‘Kipsigis customs are good for the Kipsigis, those of the Europeans are good for the Europeans’⁴. These findings formed a rationale for further exploration on change and continuity in riddles and their performances.

⁴ Julai Arap Too, interviewed on 28th April, 2014, explained that Kipsigis people, especially the elderly ones like him are still faithfully following their tradition whereas majority of the young people have conformed to the European ways.

1.7 Definition of Terms

Change: The term is used in the study to refer to different world views of events as well as new trends in the contemporary society.

Continuity: The term is used to denote the cultural practices that have not been stopped regardless of changes that have been wrought into the community.

Fragments: Refers to some aspects of culture that have been continued since pre-colonial past and those that has been brought to bear in the present community.

Hybridity: The ability of the riddle to draw its content from the cultural practices in the past as well as those in the present, and even from other communities, and merge together to create a new meaning.

Modernity: The term is used in this study to refer to the current state of affairs in the community.

Performance: Refers to the act of presenting riddles to the audience by a challenger and getting responses from them.

Pre- colonial: Period before colonialism.

Post-colonial: Period after colonialism.

Riddling / Riddle process: Denotes performance of the the riddle.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter is organised into two parts: the Literature Review and the Theoretical Framework. The review explores the existing works of literature in the riddle genre. The section explores the trends of life of the Kipsigis during and after colonialism in an attempt to show ways in which Kipsigis riddles and riddling process has been changed. Review involved critical examination, interpretation and evaluation of existing literature in the study of riddles in the pre-colonial time, during the colonial period and after the colonial encounter to determine, in part, whether the context of their formation have influenced the construction of meaning. In order to achieve this, three main sets of studies on the structure and form, classification, content and function of riddles were reviewed because they were deemed relevant to the current research. Studies on Kipsigis tradition and culture in the past are also explored in this section in order to establish whether the influence of colonialism, westernization, and cross-cultural interaction has impacted on the riddle genre. Examination of similar studies helped in investigating the changes the riddles have undergone in their constructions and whether these changes had influenced the creation of riddles, the meaning and process of disseminating them to the audience. Review of these works shed some light on whether the investigation on change and continuity in riddles and their performances have been done. The study uses Barber's (1989) theory on composition by fragments.

2.1 Literature Review

The advent of colonialism seems to have changed the Kipsigis perception of life generally, influencing their cultural beliefs and practices. These changes are manifested in contemporary Kipsigis riddling as is apparent in this study. The study thus explores the trends of the Kipsigis culture from the past to the present and how riddles and riddling in this community have been refashioned to accommodate the modern context.

The British colonial administrators' officials arrived in Kipsigis country from about 1903 and they found the Kipsigis loosely organized around the *Orkoik* as their rulers. The legitimacy of these rulers was based on their mysterious powers and magical practices. Thus, the Kipsigis obeyed them because they were too frightened to do otherwise (Toweett 1979, 42–45). Hence, by the end of the 19th Century, the time the British were tightening their grip on the Kenya

colony, the Kipsigis were politically unified by their allegiance to the *orkoiyot*. Emboldened by the *orkoik*, the Kipsigis and their neighbouring Nandi community resisted the colonial rule (Mwanzi, 1993; Toweett, 1979, 49– 50). The *orkoik* incited against the British authority claiming that they were in to disband their communities and take over their lands and other resources.

The coming of the White people and the experience of colonialism marked the beginning of significant change in the Kipsigis cultural outlook. Interaction of the two diverse groups of people led to steady rise of the modernity-tradition divide, but over time, modernity gradually influenced the people's perception of life. Consequently, elements of modernity such as monetary economy, agricultural innovation consisting of new farming implements and commercial farming, new innovations, introduction of formal education, dress mode, among others, initiated a new perspective of life in the Kipsigis community. The colonial administration also influenced change in the Kipsigis economic and cultural activities. However, the Kipsigis resistance to colonial administration continued in some form until after 1940, when the *Orkoik* clans (*Talaek*) were deported to Gwasssi Island in Lake Victoria (Mwanzi, 1977). Some of the community elders who eventually accepted political power of the new colonial authority and who turned their energies to economic gain in an increasingly agricultural (rather than cattle keeping) economy supported the British Government in driving out the *Orkoik*. Specifically, the Kipsigis Local Native Council Members participated in the removal of the *Orkoik* from the Kipsigis land to Gwasssi in Nyanza by the British Government. The justification was that the Kipsigis could not make any progress while the influence of the *Orkoik* and their magical powers were still predominant. That then opened the way for the Kipsigis to yield to the British rule, a development that impacted immensely on the Kipsigis social lives; the rhythms of life started to change as colonial rule created the possibility of new ways of life (Toweett, 1979; Mwanzi, 1977).

However, the Kipsigis relationship with the settler community was characterized by hostility; the Kipsigis people alongside the Nandi had long been stigmatized in European perception as habitual cattle thieves. Theft of livestock, money and firearms, which had initially been concentrated in the European hands in the immediate vicinity of the Kipsigis reserve, gradually increased and spread over the widening area of the settler farms. Some Kipsigis elders who were alleged to have been inciting people to steal were arrested and jailed for such offence (Peristiany, 1939).

Gradually though, the Kipsigis progressively adapted the new lifestyle; the signifiers of colonial modernity were adapted and used by Kipsigis as they eventually got access to the various forms of colonial, political and moral authority. The colonial experience and the desire of the Kipsigis people to acquire their possessions and live up to their standards are captured in the contemporary riddles and riddle performance for instance, '*Muraran Kap Masiah – tugab labot*' (As admirable as Masiah's home – Sodom apples). Among the Kipsigis, Sodom apples signify grade cattle; the great number, the smooth texture and the varied colours of Sodom apples favored this simile. In the pre-colonial past, it symbolised cattle generally. The shift in riddle meaning implies the desire of the Kipsigis to own grade cows. *Masiah* is a nickname that was given to a white missionary who preached about Messiah, he later settled in Chepsir in Kericho County. Chepsir is a highland area suitable for farming and rearing of livestock. The area is presently known as *Kapmasian* meaning *Masiah's* homestead, situated in Kipkelion West. Some of the Kipsigis people worked as herdsmen in those farms under the white settlers and eventually devised ways of secretly possessing the settler cattle. One strategy they adopted was to discreetly take their indigenous cows to breed with the grade cattle of the white settlers and eventually produced hybrid stock that became a source of pride for the owners.⁵

The symbolic use of cattle in Kipsigis riddle performance reflects the value they put on cattle. Riddling, as argued in chapter one, was a social activity that the children engaged in the evening after the day's activities. Children mainly learnt riddles from their peers, but they were also taught riddles by elderly women who were good at riddling. The riddles were drawn from the day to day activities in the community as well as the vocabularies related to the environment where they lived in and where they came from. All the aspects of the community were reflected in riddles, the answer to a riddle revolved around the common features of the society thus it was not unusual to find a similar riddle in all sub-ethnic groups. A riddle like '*Abuich maba! – kinaikab teta*', translated 'turn it upside down but it cannot spilt of which the answer is cow's teats / udder is a common riddle in almost all the ethnic groups. Literally, the cow's udder dangle downwards thus the riddle answer implies this. The riddle reflects the precious heritage of a Kalenjin in the pre-colonial past. Cattle, specifically cows were highly valued for their milk production. Milk is greatly treasured by the Kipsigis and all the other Kalenjin sub-ethnicities; it is usually a main component of the main meal and is also used in various

⁵ Julai Arap Too, one of the resource persons interviewed on 28th April 2014, narrated his experience of working as a herdsman for the white settler.

occasions for different purposes as explained in a later chapter. The riddle, though describing cows' teats or udder also contains a hidden meaning. Besides implication for the value put to cows in these sub-ethnic groups, the riddle also implies a unified culture that may not be easily assimilated to other cultures no matter how they intermingle with them or be influenced by them. It also alludes to the foreign culture introduced by the British. Traditional culture and practice was turned upside down by the missionary teachings and the impact of colonialism but the Kipsigis and the Kalenjin as a whole are reminded through this riddle that they should not 'spill the milk' meaning that they should not abandon their custom neither should they publicly display their ritual practices to other cultures. During a riddling session, a challenger would be required to give out cattle or cows symbolically when he or she fails to get an answer to the riddle after several attempts.

This study proceeds to explore ways in which the riddles mirror the culture of a society and how the society itself had used riddles to expose the cultural practices in the past and how these practices have been adjusted to suit the current demands of the society. The study is informed by the consciousness that as the society changes, riddles also change. The way a riddle may have been composed and expressed in the past would have to be different from the way it is expressed in the contemporary time because as all forms of culture, riddles have to respond to the socio-political developments. In the process, the riddles and the process of their consumption have to adjust, often radically to fit under the changed circumstance. Thus, the meaning of a riddle may radically shift from the meaning that may have been associated with it in the past. Such shifts would reflect changing understanding of life and show changing worldview. In other words it demonstrates that culture is like a living organism, which adjusts, sometimes radically, in order to suit in changed contexts.

Kipury (1983) classifies Maasai riddles into two categories and explains how they function. Chesaina (1991) describes riddles as the first genre of oral literature to which children are introduced as oral artist. Ruth Finnegan (1970) observes that riddles, like proverbs, are used as an indirect means of saying something without the risk involved in stating it explicitly. A similar claim was made by Ishengoma's (1977), whose chief objective was to analyze the educational value of "endangered" African oral traditions with specific reference to the riddles of Haya of North western Tanzania. He argued that riddles represent an important asset for children's further participation in the social, cultural, political and economic life of African communities. He concludes that African riddles have an important educational value because

they help in the development of critical thinking and memory. Ishengoma does not further explore how these values are achieved.

This study proceeds to explore the ways in which riddles mirror the culture of a society and how the society itself uses riddles to depict the cultural practices and how these practices are adjusted to suit the changing demands. The study is informed by the consciousness that as society changes, riddles also change in response. The way a riddle may have been composed and expressed in the past would have to be different from the way it is expressed in the contemporary time because, like all forms of culture, riddles have to respond to the socio-political developments. As a result, the riddles and the process of their production and consumption have to adjust, often radically, to fit under the changed circumstance. Thus, the meaning of a riddle may radically shift from the meaning that may have been associated with it in the past. Such shifts would reflect changing understanding of life as well as reflect a changing worldview. In other words, the riddle practice demonstrates that culture is like a living organism, which adjusts, sometimes radically, in order to suit changed contexts.

The form and structure of riddles has been a subject of discussion by most researchers. In “Riddle and the Yoruba Child,” Ajayi (1990) explains that riddles are used among the Yoruba not only for amusement but also as a test of imaginative power. Young people love riddles for the amusement they provide, while adults encourage their use to instruct young people in the acceptable behavior. He goes on to explore the content, structure and form of riddles through various sub-types of riddles. The arguments espoused in this study revealed that educational value is achieved through the cultural context. Though the importance of the foregoing was for the child’s cultural and language acquisition and the general knowledge of the cultural norms and tradition, Ajayi seems to gloss over the possibility that culture changes with time and that therefore riddles are also subject to change. This study aimed at investigating the changes in structure, form and content of riddles as well as to underscore the manifestation of new metaphors in riddles in the contemporary Kipsigis community in order to fill this gap.

Thomas and Pepicello (1978) interrogate the question of how riddles operate in a culture. In their essay “The Riddle Process,” the authors draw upon the operation of riddles in order to examine the cultural categories underlying such riddles and to relate underlying cognitive process to surface acts in riddling. They dwelled specifically on the notion of “block element” in riddling, the element which impedes the solution of the riddle puzzle. Ajayi reviewed the works on structural analysis of the riddle form and put forth five basic elements, namely an

introductory element, a denominative kernel, a descriptive kernel, the block or distracter element and, a concluding frame. Bascom (1949) expanded upon this model in his attempt to define the synthetic pattern in Yoruba riddles and to explain variation in riddles both grammatically and culturally. Georges and Dundes (1963) sought to define the internal morphological characteristics of riddles in terms of a topic-content analysis, which was later refined and extended by Charles Scott (1969). These works are useful in this study specifically in terms of looking at the riddle performance and the process of arriving at the answer, or solution, to the riddle. Contemporary riddling follows a trend whereby the cultural elements of the past and those of the present are integrated together such that one has to assess a riddle in a different perspective from the past in order to arrive at a solution to the riddle.

Thomas and Pepicello (1978) focused on a number of poetic devices in riddling, including metaphor, personification, hyperbole and irony in trying to explain how riddles operate in a culture. According to these authors, riddling, just like story telling, functioned as a means by which it is used to shape experiences, assign meaning, and in the process, keep alive collective memories, myths and heroic adventures of a community. While this is true, these authors did not consider the new experiences in a dynamic society which, in essence, changes the perception of things thus influencing the genre production. This study proceeds to illustrate the way riddles have changed to accommodate new ideas and experiences in the community, while at the same time maintaining records of the past. In this study, I have used similar stylistic features to investigate the changes that have taken place in the riddle formation for the purpose of accommodating the current innovations, events and modern ideology in the Kipsigis riddle and riddle performance. The outcome indicated that new images in riddling have been used to reflect the new perspective of Kipsigis cultural outlook.

The studies on the structure, form and function of riddles are valuable in so far as they lay the foundation of research on the riddle. However, the studies seem to share one shortcoming: the lack of clarity on how the riddles they studied, which seem to belong to a particular era in the past, could be used to impart knowledge to learners in the present generation. Whereas these studies resulted in more nuanced and socio-culturally sensitive understanding of the riddle genres, they yielded little on how the riddles themselves were composed and how current events and recent African histories and experiences may have been brought to bear on the riddles themselves, and the process of their production and consumption. That is what the current study adds to the existing studies.

Some researchers, including Chesaina (1991:70), have focused on classification and content of the riddle and noted that the majority of studies on traditional riddles have focused on content. The scholars argue that riddles have been simply collections with only the barest details of context and function. Chesaina observes:

Often the reader is given only the ethnic group or the place from which the riddles were collected and the approximate date of collection. In some cases the collector has tried to arrange the riddles according to some logical organization taking them further out of the context in which they were encountered” (1991:70).

Chesaina further argues that riddles are the first genre of oral literature to which young children are introduced to and to which they feel most confident. This may be partly true but critical inquiry revealed that riddles, like any other genres of oral literature fall in the domain of both young and old. The elders used it to encourage the youths and adults to take part in the social work and also to educate them on various moral issues. Riddles therefore mediate these lessons in a more playful manner but the intended meaning is constituted in the confluence of wit and knowledge of the environment; people, animals, insects and small creatures, natural phenomena and modern technology. The interpretation therefore depended on the capacity to relate the images presented in the puzzle to the familiarity with the environment on the part of the participant.

While this is true for the Kipsigis riddles, Chesaina seemed to have assumed that riddles were just important at the time of their formation and were just relevant for the children to acquire basic cultural knowledge. Contrary to this assumption, in the contemporary African communities, children have learnt to formulate riddles from the vocabularies they learn from the modern technology and they pass it over to the elders in a similarly relaxed manner. In the past, children functioned more or less as receivers and were not expected to challenge adults in any way, including even riddling. Thus riddling has emerged as a boundless activity; it is no longer bound to any age-group and no specific time is set for riddling as Chesaina’s work revealed.

Riddles encompass creative and playful manipulation of words. However, modern vocabularies have rarely been used as a category to label the riddles. Basically, they are just classified based on their importance stated relating to the community to which the riddles are drawn. Kipury (1983) classified Maasai riddles into two main categories labeled as simple and complex riddles. One of the differentiating reason is that complex riddles function to sharpen one’s wit

and reasoning ability whereas simple riddles serve as means of educating the children on the cultural background and aid in language acquisition. The element of classification and the emphasis on the content of the riddle as revealed in these works is prevalent among African scholars and researchers (Chesaina, 1991; Kipury, 1983). According to them, classes are there in African riddles thus riddles presenting related messages can be categorized into particular groups. Most riddles are presented in form of questions, but some are presented as true statement of something the listener has to catch, interpret and locate in its proper context. The current study revealed that these characteristics of the riddle, though advanced through integration of current ideas, events and vocabularies in riddles.

Phillip Noss's (2006) article entitled "Gbaya Riddles in Changing Times," argues that contemporary riddles and riddling reflect changes in the society's worldview. His findings relate more closely to this study. In the study, he analyses the Gbaya riddles of Cameroon and the Central African Republic in historical context. He attempts a new approach to riddles whereby he illustrates how riddles in the Gbaya tradition can be recreated or renewed to reflect the dynamics of change in the contemporary society. His analysis reveals that riddles embody the past but also incorporate the present and the future anticipation of the society. The historical context of the riddle is maintained, while present events and activities, as well as new inventions, are included. The following Gbaya riddle illustrates this argument: *I have an animal whom when I tie a cord on its rear it walks well but if I tie a cord around its neck it does not walk well* (Noss 2006:23). The answer to this riddle is a sewing needle and synonymous to it is the Kipsigis riddle '*Atinye tetanyun ne ngomakirat komaaketi-sindanut*' (I have a cow whom when it is not tied, it cannot graze). The historical backgrounds of each society and its social activities are reflected in the riddle whereas the inventions of new artifacts are embraced in the same riddle.

Noss's further exploration of some Gbaya riddles shows how riddles exemplify the incorporation of vocabulary borrowed from the cultures that have influenced Gbaya in different historical context. For instance, during the colonial era, the arrival of the motor vehicle created an awareness and possibility of creating new riddles using the new vocabularies related to motor vehicles. Similarly, Kipsigis riddles contain the vocabulary borrowed from the cultures of people they have interacted with, such as the Maasai, the Luo and the Kisii. Borrowed words, such as '*bwolo*' (mushroom) and '*twolek*' (jingle bells) frequently reflect their historical backgrounds. Cultures that have influenced the Kipsigis through history are reflected in the

riddles that are still remembered and recited today. The creation of new riddles is also demonstrated in his study;

A Gbaya pastor, Paul Tenmbar formulated four riddles about motor vehicle: Wanto has an animal; it drinks through its nose- car radiator; An animal of mine; it open its eyes at night to travel- headlights; Wanto's nanny goat, if Wanto doesn't squeeze its ears, she doesn't bleat- car horn. A certain animal of mine it doesn't go slowly- vehicle. These riddles, Noss argued, challenged and entertained a group of young people who were watching a motor vehicle being loaded and prepared for a journey. The two sets of riddles would probably be the result of what Kenneth Goldstein (1963) called "incidental" riddling. The new riddles echo what the pupils cited in a riddling session; the Kipsigis riddles; *keron amatweku- kamera*, he sees me but cannot talk- camera. Another riddle; *Akwong'ge ne kiyoe kii asomani-mashinit*, I wonder who made this thing I am reading- a machine *Chematweek ako chang ng'alek- bukut*. Dumb but has many words- book. These were spontaneous riddles created at the spur of the moment during a riddling session in Barng'oror primary school. The riddles were coined by the pupils, one after the other. Each riddle was a spontaneous observation called to test the acuity of their fellow pupils.

Current events are also reflected in this creation of riddles both in Gbaya and Kipsigis riddles, for instance the riddle on current innovations like train, aeroplane, and motor vehicle. To introduce these new items, Gbaya uses some stylized formulae for bring in the ancient into the contemporary, for instance the evocation of the trickster such as 'Wanto' in Gbaya, the old grandmother, the dragon, and the mythical bird. The Kipsigis similarly uses traditional names such as *Chelang'at* (a female born at night), *Bot Chelang'at* (Chelang'at's mother), *Chemunai* (represents something hidden deep inside), *Chelogoi* (a talkative person), *boiyon* (grandfather), *kirgit* (bull), *Birir met* (brown-head), and *Arwap ilat* (son of thunder). Names in Kipsigis culture were used as nuances. Thus the riddle is renewed in the Kipsigis story from one generation to the other as the Kipsigis, just like the Gbaya, create new images in the face of new challenges to their life and their culture.

References to people and places, also observed in Noss' article, indicate historical contacts and political pressures. Other series of riddles exemplify the incorporation of content that reflects successive historical change. These findings also prove the fact that riddle variants associated with different historical epochs may exist side by side over relatively long periods of time.

Access to these works opened an avenue for further investigation of riddles and their adaptation to new inventions, incorporation of new events, and inclusion of new ideas in riddle formation. This study therefore aimed at investigating some of the Kipsigis riddles, which have considered these changes in order to fill the remaining gap.

The Kipsigis word “*tangoch*” is a noun which is used as an opening formula during a riddling session. It is derived from the verb “*tangoi*” which means “to do something without object, that is, thoughtlessly, futilely” (Orchardson 1961). This elucidates the reason why riddles have been perceived for a long time by both researchers and many other African communities as a children’s game and as one that is without any lesson, especially to the adults. A survey by Daniels (1980a) suggests that when one leaves childhood, and is transformed by elaborate and painful initiation processes into adulthood, one leaves behind the behavioral patterns associated with childhood, including those things characterized as play. However, this claim is diminishing, as nowadays, adults are using riddles to communicate ideas, just like sayings and proverbs. The meaning of such riddles can be contested based on the context within which the riddle is formulated. An example is the Kipsigis riddle: *Tiong’ik che echen kwome tióng’ik che mengech* (Big animals feed on small animals). This is a political riddle used by wise men when addressing the citizens, warning them on dangers of exploitation by those in state authority. It may be uttered in an open gathering, but outsiders might not guess its meaning unless they have taken a keen interest in the contemporary role of riddles in the Kipsigis community. The role is to use a riddle as an indirect way of communicating a hidden message to the persons concerned. Normally, if one is deemed to have spoken against those in authority, the person will disguise the statement as just a riddle “*tangoi*”, meaning it was just a play. All genres of Kipsigis oral tradition have a concealed meaning; riddles included. This is in line with Finnegan’s (1992) observation that riddles, like proverbs, are used as an indirect means of saying something without the risk involved in stating it explicitly. An in-depth study of riddles revealed that these concealed meaning and specific use of riddles change as culture also changes.

The opening formulae *tangoch* is an invitation to attract the attention of the audience. The response *chong* confirms that the respondent is ready to offer a solution to the riddle being posed. In this set of activities the challenger and the audience follow a systematic procedure in deciding who poses and who responds to the riddle. In the Kipsigis community, arriving at an answer to the riddle requires thorough knowledge of the society and its social pattern. The youth learn this through the way they relate with each other both as challengers and

respondents. As challengers, they are the initiators of action to test the others' wits. But as respondents, their wits are also on test. Both the challenger and the respondent require a strong imaginative power and must exercise a keener observation of the universe and of the environment in which they live. Knowledge on cultural objects, natural phenomena, plants and animals and modern technology also offers clues to the referent of the riddles posed. When the riddle proves too difficult for the respondent, the challenger will ask for a *prize*, which could be a town, a number of cows, a beautiful bride, or a hardworking bridegroom. The choice of the *prize* will depend on the challenger's taste and preference. Thus he or she will refuse the *prize* offered until a desirable one is named. In pre-colonial past, boys or men will opt for a higher number of cows, while girls would prefer hardworking suitors, who are characterized by the physical appearance described by the respondent. This reflects the cherished values of the society during the pre-colonial time. Wealth was then achieved through hard work and was usually measured through the number of cattle one had. The choice of a 'town' or 'grade cows' in the riddling process, for example, suggests the shift from a traditional lifestyle to a modern one. Formal education and the experience of urban life has led to interactions between the Kipsigis and new cultures and influenced the perception of riddles in the present time.

Within the context of riddles new and alien ideas are incorporated, as exemplified in the Kipsigis riddle *Atinye eitanyun ne ngout koletokse banyek – tinga* (I have a bull, who when he bellows, his flesh gets taut- (Solution: grinding mill). The element of modernity is realised only in the answer to the riddle. The riddle formation plainly reflects the historical background of the Kipsigis social life, their economic activities and their social values. Bulls are domestic animals adored by the Kipsigis and usually used for ploughing- a practice that was introduced by Europeans. The strength and fierceness of the bull is implied in the manner of its bellowing. The owner takes pride in a bull, whose bellowing reverberates in the entire village. Here, the power of a grinding mill which is implied in the noise produced by its engine, figures the bellowing of a well-fed and energetic bull. This and similar riddles show the continuing creative presence of riddling in the Kipsigis aesthetic expression, as well as an acknowledgement of the reality of the tight embrace of modernity and its cultural manifestations in the practice of everyday life among the Kipsigis. Inventions like airplanes, cars, and engineering innovations are embraced and appreciated in the society, but they have to be made to adjust to the Kipsigis worldview in which, in this case, cattle, and especially so bulls, are central to Kipsigis identity. Hence, the riddle above seems to embrace the convenience of modern inventions but it is apparent that its value becomes apparent when the

invention is made relevant to Kipsigis through figurative proximity to familiar Kipsigis values. This argument is well illustrated in Chapter Four.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

For a long time research on riddles was informed by functionalist theories. These theories have an anthropological basis, which was advocated by such theorists as Emile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss, Bronislaw Malinowski and Radcliffe Brown. These classical theories worked on the assumption that society is stable, and that, therefore, its constituent elements must have a specific function geared to maintaining its stability (Glazer, 2011).

However, whereas Malinowski concludes, after his research on the life and culture of the Trobriand Islanders, that the cultural genres are a true record of the customs and traditions of the past, and that they function to knit the society together, two of his followers (Leach and Firth) made a few significant departures. They argued that though functional unity invariably worked in the interests of, and towards the preservation of the society, they did not believe that society remained unchanged in every case; there are, they argued, frequent conflicts such as disputes over kingship and contingencies like missionary and colonial influence (Okpewho, 1992). These caused the society to undergo very fundamental changes. Barber (1989), on the other hand, argued that ‘cultural expressions as studied by the anthropologists are not evidence for how a culture ‘works’ (or ‘functions, or determines action’) but, rather, they only show how perceptions, experiences and problems are being ‘worked out’ in an open never-ending process’. She further explores the ephemeral, transient nature of culture as well as the need to focus on the contextual factors and the process of cultural composition.

The point of departure for this study is Barber’s (1989) concept of composition by fragments with regard to the processes of composition of cultural genres. Barber argues that cultural composition is dependent on context, which includes the idiosyncrasies and anxieties of the performer, and shared by Hofmeyr (1994). The concept enlightens the understanding of cultural circulation and appropriation of fragments of modernity, such as through formal education, religion, adoption of modern farming methods and farm implements, and change in the belief systems which, in the case of this study, inevitably influenced riddles and the riddling process through adoption and appropriation of new symbols, figures and signifiers of new social formations among the contemporary Kipsigis community. My argument is based on Barber’s (1989) postulation that; ‘Texts are transmitted through time, bringing with them elements of the past but also undergoing a process of erasure and layering as they are refashioned in

accordance with new concerns' (Barber 1989). The principle of hybridity has been used in this study as a means of constituting new meaning of Kipsigis riddles.

The principle of hybridity as used by Barber (1999) in her exploration of *oriki* oral text and the idea of 'erasure and layering' relates closely to the current study. The nature of *oriki* and its performance in her context resembles the riddle and its performance in the Kipsigis community. The process of composition of riddles for instance, borrowing ideas from the community's past and making them relevant to the present is prevalent in this study. The continuity of riddles and their performance bring into fore ancient memories in the present times. This theory therefore works well in establishing the change and the continuity of the riddle genre in the contemporary Kipsigis society.

Riddles, in this study are regarded as texts, which can be read like any other texts and thus, are anchored in Kipsigis history and at the same time are fluid therefore accommodate changes that have been brought to bear in the Kipsigis community. Culture is composed through appropriation of fragments of modernity incorporated with contextual factors of the past. These fragments of the modern and infusion into the contemporary cultural manifestation of the community. This process of composition of culture through incorporation of the new into the old is central to the main argument in this study. Hofmeyr (1994) used the concept of composition by fragments to investigate three related areas; oral story telling, literacy, and the historical narrative. In these texts, she explores the question of oral literature and transformations. She asserts that oral literature is always changing and that any serious study of oral tradition is obliged to take cognizance of such changes (1994:2). This study borrowed and expanded Hofmeyr's (1994) perspective to reflect on the changes in the Kipsigis riddle.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Research Design

The study aimed at exploring Kipsigis riddles in relation to the culture both in the past and at the present. The study focused on understanding the processes of composition of culture and took cognizance of Karin Barber's (1989) concept of 'composition by fragments'. This concept is illustrated in the foregoing section. The approach takes into consideration the elements of culture in the past as well as the elements of culture in the present. In other words, the cultural practices from the pre-colonial past and those which have continued to be practiced in the present are illustrated through riddles and riddle performance to show the shift in the contemporary riddle genre. This idea is supported by the argument that as part of culture, riddles, as (Geertz 1973: 5) observes, belong to the broad body of "webs of significance" which are spun by man. Geertz's calls for interpretation of 'patterns of signification' indexed by the networks of culture. This helped to show the social reconstruction which has fundamentally modified conception of rules of genre and ways of understanding the signification of the modes of appropriation of modernity and post-colonial production of riddles and the riddling process among the contemporary Kipsigis.

3.1.1 The Study Area

The study was undertaken in Soin division in Kericho County. The area borders the Kisii, Nandi and the Luo communities. The study was done among primary school pupils from the primary schools selected within the area for data collection. In the pre-colonial period, the neighbouring communities (Kisii and Luo) interacted with Kipsigis usually through trade and intermarriage. To date, the Kipsigis, Luo and Kisii interact in market places especially in such common markets as Sondu, which is situated across the border of Kericho and Kisumu Counties. The study was conducted at Barng'oror, Chepyegon, Kapsorok and Kaplelartet zones within the Soin Division of Kericho County. The area was chosen because the land in this area was not alienated by the white settlers. Soin, a Kalenjin term for a lowland area, is the opposite of Mosop, a highland area. It is derived from the Kalenjin word *soi/soito* meaning grassland (Huntingford 1935: 133, Ochardson 1961:2-3). In the pre-colonial era, the present Soin Division was mainly reserved as grazing land for the Kipsigis. This was confirmed by the

elderly resource person⁶ who has been living in the area for quite a long time. A vast part of Kipsigis land in Mosop area was alienated for settler farming in the early 1900s because of their agricultural potential. This was the fate of such areas as Mosop or emkwen (the highlands), where Kericho, for instance is located, but the Soin region was left out of the scheme because the lands are largely marginal and not conducive for agriculture. However, as became evident during my fieldwork, Soin produced a good chunk of the labor force for the settler farms in the Mosop areas. Thus, the people of Soin directly experienced colonial/Western culture even though their lands were not under direct settler occupation. Hence, whereas the signifiers of colonial modernity (such as farm implements, modern administrative practices, among others) first appeared in the Mosop region they spread in all parts of Kipsigisland through the influence of migrant labourers who took up jobs in settler farms as well as in Kericho or were absorbed in other sectors of the colonial economy in other urban areas of Kenya.

Consequently, Soin residents have adopted farming of non-traditional crops. However, maize, in particular, has become the main subsistence crop in this area. The maize grows well in this area only when there is enough rain. *Eleusine* millet, the main pre-colonial Kipsigis crop, is still cultivated and it does well, especially on newly cleared lands. Farm implements such as the ox-plough and tractors now augment the use of hoes and *pangas* for cultivation. However, the latter are still used for weeding; *pangas* in particular, are used for weeding finger millet. The use of fertilizers has not fully been adapted since people in this area still fear that the chemical in it will negatively affect the fertility of their treasured lands. The research finding also revealed that the non-Kipsigis cultural penetration through migrant labour and other forms of contact found its way into Kipsigis cultural expression to the extent that it has merged seamlessly with Kipsigis cultural expression. Such elements produced by recent history are evident in Kipsigis riddles and riddling.

3.1.2 Target Population

The study targeted two sets of participants: children aged between seven and ten years in selected primary schools in Soin Division and adults aged 50 years and above selected through snowballing process. The usual practice is that children in this age bracket tend to engage in riddling as part of their learning activities in schools. However, it turned out that even children below and above the age-bracket within and outside the school setting participated well during

⁶ Julai Arap Too, 87year old, interviewed on 28th April, 2014 explained that Soin was an open grazing area with cattle camps and a few huts for the herdsmen and the calves (*Kaptich*). He owned a lot of cattle sheep and goats.

the riddle sessions when I conducted my fieldwork. At least forty pupils (both boys and girls) were targeted for participation in each of the three selected schools totaling up to one hundred and twenty pupils drawn from Barng'oror, Kapsorok and Chepyegon. However, I accessed a slightly higher number of participants than originally planned because the research attracted considerable interest among the pupils in upper classes (class six and seven) and a few children whom I met during the interviews, a good number of whom were eager to participate. In the end, forty-two pupils participated in arranged riddling session at Chepyegon primary school while forty-three pupils participated at Kapsorok primary school. Fifty-four pupils participated in another arranged riddling session at Barng'oror primary school. In addition, eleven pupils also participated at Simbi Primary School, a few kilometers from Soin Division headquarters. I ended up with a total of one hundred and fifty pupils who participated in riddling. More than one hundred riddles were collected from these pupils, some of which were repetitive. Thus, I took some time to find out whether the contexts and the solutions to the riddles were different or similar to those collected during other sessions. Pupils within seven to ten years of age were usually in classes' three to five, and they seemed much interested in riddle competition.

The second group of participants consisted of nine purposely selected persons aged 50 years and above drawn from Soin Division. The elderly people were expected to be more knowledgeable on the background history of the community as well as on the older riddles from earlier generations. The assumption was that people in this age bracket understood riddles and the riddling process differently from the way they were understood by the youth. As such, the snowballing method was used to identify respondents⁷. Specifically the assumption was that the riddles they knew as well as their solutions were informed more by the pre-colonial cultural experience, which would be different from the understanding of the youth. During the fieldwork, one such resource person, John Arap Too, identified other competent resource persons known to him; in this way a chain of informants were created. These men and women, who, by virtue of their socialisation, good memories personal experiences, particular roles and responsibilities in the society were considered specialists in oral tradition and matters of culture. They were interviewed at different times and dates as arranged, and quite a number of them gave their views on the historical background of the community and cited as many riddles as they could. They also explained the methods used by the community to arrive at meanings of Kipsigis riddles. The main purpose of the interview was to talk about the recent postcolonial

⁷ A process where an identified competent resource person points out another one known to him and in this way a chain of informants is created (Coffey and Atkison 1999).

history, especially from the time of contact with European modernity, and to investigate the cultural influences brought in by modernity. Riddle performance and their relevance in the community were also elaborated by these respondents.

3.1.3 Methods of data collection

Interview and participant observation methods were used for data collection. The interview as a tool was useful in to provide the option of elaborating or clarifying items due to the physical presence of the researcher on the scene and also enabled for the collection of more information in great depth. The participant observation method was useful for the collection of riddles. Data on riddles was collected from the first set of participants: school children who engaged in riddle performance at an arranged and mutually agreed time in their respective schools. This was made possible through request for permission from the head teachers of these schools. Once permission was granted by the head teacher, I requested a teacher, introduced to me by him / her in each school to make arrangements for pupils aged between seven and ten years for engagement in riddling competition. Thus, prior to the scheduled date, I briefed these teachers on the purpose of the study. The aim was to observe the changes in riddle processes as well as to note the aspects of riddling that have remained unchanged. The participant observation method was used during the pre-arranged riddle sessions. I personally attended each session organised, listened and recorded as many riddles as were presented and occasionally asked questions for clarification from the participants and got direct feedback from these respondents. I also posed riddles that I knew, as well as asked for the opinions of the participants about their local meaning.

3.1.4 Data collection Tools

The tools used for data recording included a video camera, a still camera and a field notebook. The still camera was used to take photographs, particularly the background scenes; the video camera was used to record performances, interviews, and background information during each session. And the field notebook was used to record other important information which arose after the end of the session.

An interview guide was used to gather data from the resource persons selected in this study. The questions used in the schedule were open-ended. Preliminary questions to ascertain the biographical data were asked to all interviewees, as this is a basic requirement for the research

(Crabtree & Miller 1999). The data generated was important because the life history of each interviewer also had a link to the history of the community. For instance, each resource person belonged to a certain age-set, and every age-set system has its own cultural history. After the preliminary questions, more questions, as per the interview guide, were asked. They ranged from the origins of the individual concerned to the origin of the Kipsigis as a community; whether the individual was born in the area he or she lives or migrated from another area, cultural traditions and practices, historical events of the Kipsigis community, Kipsigis colonial experience, civilization and post-colonial political events, how riddles are composed and how meaning is arrived at. Other questions emerged out of the response from the interviewees. The interview process was thus less formal and was directed by the context. The interview method was flexible and responsive, and it gave interviewees freedom to decide on the detail and length of the answers to give. The outcome was that each interviewee provided a huge data on the historical experience of the Kipsigis in which the riddles are produced and exchanged. The interview sessions lasted for two- to- three hours depending on the individual response to the interview. All the resource persons responded freely and gave data as much as they could. Their opinions, views and experiences were coherent and apt. Background information on riddles and riddling was also obtained from these resource persons. I asked for elaboration of meaning of some riddles collected from the school children, and I got additional information.

3.2 Data Analysis

Two sets of data were generated through the interview responses and the riddle sessions. They were used in the analysis. The first set of data was the contextual information, which illustrated the background against which the riddles were realised. I selected the data which I deemed appropriate for realising the objectives of the study. Video records were replayed and the data retrieved were transcribed and translated from the Kipsigis language to the English language. Translation into English was done to the nearest equivalent meaning and sense. The data were categorized according to the objectives and research questions of the study.

The second set of data was from the riddles collected from the school children and those cited by the interviewees. The riddles collected were analyzed and interpreted based on the context of their formation. Thus the riddle structure and contents helped in understanding the extent of the conlonial influence as well as influence of the neighbouring cultures in the Kipsigis community as reflected in the riddles. To contextualize this, I looked at the figures, in riddles,

which have been adopted from the neighbouring cultures as well as those from the British culture. The explanation and interpretation of these riddles reflected the features that were introduced into the Kipsigis life or the influences that offered new perspectives on old Kipsigis knowledge and practice. Nonetheless, the riddles which contained purely the old features were also considered to ascertain the continuity of certain aspects of the community. Thus I arrived at fifty riddles out of the one hundred and fifty collected during the fieldwork.

Through analysis, the study has traced the many changes that the riddle genres have undergone within the context of the pre – colonial and post-colonial eras. This was achieved through a process named by Barber (1989) as ‘hybridization,’ which brings together the fragments of the past culture and those of the present culture to emerge with a new outlook of the Kipsigis culture. The historical background of the Kipsigis culture and tradition in the pre-colonial time, the emergence of White settlers and the Missionaries in the Kipsigis land, and the colonial encounter also helped in realizing the objectives of the study. This is demonstrated in chapter four of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Post-Colonial influence on Kipsigis Culture, History and Oral Traditions

4.1.0 Introduction

This section deals with exploring ways in which the Kipsigis culture and oral traditions has had to change to accommodate the new features that have emerged in the community as a result of expanded interaction with other communities. These interactions were made easy through the influence of the former colonial administration. The arguments reflect the responses to the research questions on how modernity has impacted on the modes of production of riddles and riddle meaning among the Kipsigis.

To begin with, pre-colonial cultural practices will be highlighted to show the cultural expression of the Kipsigis in the the pre-colonial past. The section proceeds to investigate the extent of the influence of modernity on Kipsigis cultural identity through, for instance, Christianity, modern education, modern farming methods, mode of dress and the rise of migrant labour, the consequence of which has been the rise of a hybrid culture in settler farms and urban areas where the labor is sold by people from diverse Kenyan communities. The Kipsigis customs, rites of passage and other related ceremonies will also be discussed to find out whether the social practices in the past still exist or they have been surpassed by the modern culture. By looking at these events, it will be easier to understand the process of cultural circulation and appropriation of fragments of modernity which has influenced riddles and riddling process in the Kipsigis culture.

Brief history of the Kipsigis economic and socio-political activities in pre-colonial time will also be investigated to ascertain postcolonial influences brought to bear on present Kipsigis worldview. Basically, it is necessary to provide a brief background of the Kipsigis community and its past in order to appreciate the postcolonial shift in the socio-political organization of the Kipsigis community and the implications for riddles formation and the entire riddling process. Therefore, part of the objective of this chapter is to explore ways in which the Kipsigis practice of everyday life has had to adjust to accommodate the demands brought to bear by the proximity of western culture in the neighborhood in such areas as the settler/ multinational tea plantations and factories in Kericho where the Kipsigis migrant **labourers** interacted with

white settlers and co-workers from other Kenyan ethnic communities. This section locates the germ of the hybridization of the Kipsigis worldview in that context.

The section is sub-divided into three salient points, each illustrating issues of concern in the Kipsigis community. These points are discussed in three sub-sections. The first section addresses cultural practices in the pre-colonial past. This includes the Kipsigis social interaction with the neighbouring communities and how their cultures have influenced the Kipsigis culture through such interaction. The second section highlights pastoralism as the main economic activity in the community and how it has been influenced by colonialism. Specifically, the section explores the extent to which pastoralism and farming have been impacted by postcolonial events. The third section explores the post-colonial events that have impacted on the Kipsigis customs. In this section, the initiation rites including birth / naming ceremonies, circumcision rites, marriage and divorce, death rituals are briefly discussed in order to highlight the changes that have emerged.

The Kipsigis people lived together in harmony; socially they were guided by the norms and customs of their society. There were taboos which cautioned them against illegal acts. The Kipsigis believed in one god, whom they referred to as Asis. They worshipped him in a shrine commonly known as *mabwaita*, which was constructed outside each family's homestead. There were other places of worship, such as certain hilltops, under sacred trees, and in some crossroads. In addition, the cultural practices already discussed in the preceding chapter played a role in binding the Kipsigis people together. However, there was also influence from the neighbouring cultures.

The Kipsigis interacted with neighbouring communities long before the arrival of the British. The neighbouring communities, especially the Luo and the Kisii, interacted with the Kipsigis people through trade, usually barter trade (Toweett, 1979). Through this interaction some aspects of a community were copied by other communities for instance farming in Kipsigis was improved through the weapons acquired from the Kisii people through barter trade. Some crops, like bananas and sorghum, were also adopted from the Kisii and Luo respectively⁸. Thus it is important to dispel the notion made by the earlier studies on Kipsigis tradition where some of the authors argued that the British found a static society that had not interacted with any other community. Some earlier studies on Kipsigis culture had also established that the Kipsigis

⁸ The information was given by one of the resource persons interviewed during the fieldwork. This confirms what other researchers found out during their past research on the Kipsigis community.

had a dynamic relationship with their neighbours and that at the time of the arrival of Pax Britannica their social systems was in a fluid state because of already existing contact and interactions with neighbours who had immense implications on Kipsigis cultural manifestations. Thus, by the time of the entry of Pax Britannica, it was apparent to the Kipsigis that their culture and traditions could only get strengthened through assimilation of some aspects of their neighbors' cultural innovation. Therefore, on one hand the arrival of British colonialism was always going to be resisted by the Kipsigis in one way or the other. On the other hand, the Kipsigis soon realised that there might be some aspects of the intruders' cultural experience that might be harnessed for the good of the community. Consequently, they set down a path whereby they felt they stood to benefit from the intruder (Manners, 1967:272, Mbilinyi, 1979). This argument disputes earlier anthropological assumptions that society remained stable even after the interaction with their neighbouring communities. Significantly, however, the arrival of the British signaled the beginning of a remarkable shift in Kipsigis worldview. Specifically, modern education, Christianity, and commercial agriculture, among other new practices, caused very fundamental changes in Kipsigis everyday life and ways of knowing.

The Kipsigis, for instance believed a great deal in the *Orkoik* (diviners), whom they always consulted during times of uncertainty. It was believed that the *Orkoik* had a hand in any strange happening and that they had powers to help the community to evade a certain problem. Hence the Kipsigis felt obliged to gift them with a generous part of their harvest and wealth in the hope that they would intercede in lean times such as during droughts.

Generally, the interaction between the Kipsigis and other cultures, as well as the influence of the British settler culture, gradually impacted on the community's traditions and culture, the consequence of which was the gradual abandonment of anachronistic traditions and blind appropriations of the cultural values of others in order to speak to the shifting worldview of the community. The field experience, derived from the current research suggests that the Kipsigis adapted the modern lifestyle, reflected in transformations in such obvious aspects as dress, farming, education, and new concepts of property ownership, which introduced the idea of private property, the most visible metaphor of which is fencing of land (Plate 1). Such fencing indicated division of land, an aspect which was not there before colonialism. Land belonged to a community. The Kipsigis community, including members of the same family could not claim possession of a certain land; they were free to cultivate the land in their proximity and even beyond as one may wish. The situation has changed as observed during the fieldwork study.

Even the immediate members of the family claim individual ownership of land inherited from their forefathers. Others acquire land through buying from their immediate neighbours. The land also depicts the forested areas which initially were grazing lands for the community and contained natural vegetation endowed with fruit trees full of natural fruits as earlier suggested. Individual ownership of these lands has led to the degradation of proper land use; others have cleared the vegetation to suit their own desire while a few have preserved it. These differences are visible as represented in the picture (plate 1). One part of the land is cleared while the other part still has some natural vegetation. The kind of fencing depicted here is a traditional one, where people used the naturally available materials like stones to construct.



Plate 1: Adjoining pieces of land, belonging to two brothers, separated by a stone fence. (The picture was taken during the fieldwork study at Barng'oror village in Soin area).

Other visible signifiers of this transformation were construction of rectangular iron-sheet roofed houses as, until now, more familiar signifier of a typical Kipsigis homestead. The grass-thatched, dung-smearred roundavels were steadily phased out. Admittedly, these characteristics of the traditional Kipsigis concept of house and home are still prevalent in some Kipsigis regions, particularly in Soin area as illustrated in plate two⁹. But this largely represents an idea in transition, the evidence of which is fencing around the homestead with barbed wire as observed in the picture (Plate 2). Such roundavels quite often stand side by side with iron-roofed houses, or quite often the house trappings of modernity, such as cuttler, which more than ever signifies the transition suggested above. These transitions are reflected in riddles and riddling. For instance, a riddle like, '*Atinye konyun ne matinye kurgat-mayayat*' - 'I have a house which doesn't have a door- an egg'. The riddle was common in the past when the huts (usually

⁹A picture taken at one of the resource person's homestead at Barng'oror village.

round with one door as in plate 2) dominated the Kipsigis homesteads. Nowadays such riddles are fading away and are being replaced with new riddle which reflect new things introduced into the community for instance ‘*Atinye lakwenyun netinye itit agenge-kikombet*’, I have a child with one ear- a cup.

A typical Kipsigis house in the past consisted of a main area, a sleeping area, and a cooking area, referred to as *kot neo*, *injom* and *koima* respectively (Daniels, 1980b). These spatial patterns are a common feature in Kipsigis traditional homes. Where they exist, they figure the Kipsigis social order that signifies an identity that connects with the familiar in a context of radically changing social circumstances. In the past the granary for storing grain, such as elousine and millet, was located inside a house: it was called *tabot*. The *tabot* was also used on occasions for keeping beer, or, sometimes as a sleeping place for the owner of the house. When food production increased, as a result of the large scale farming introduced by the colonial economy, a granary detach from the house was built. A separate kitchen was also constructed (see plate 2).



Plate 2: Kipsigis traditional homestead consisting of separate kitchen (Left), the main house (Middle) and a granary (Right). (The homestead belongs to one of the resource persons in Soin area. The picture was taken during the field work).

These separate huts indicate the gradual shift from formerly spatial pattern (one hut consisting of separate rooms) as started in the preceding argument. Further the barbed wire fence around the compound and the modern utensils indicate changing circumstances of the Kipsigis community.

The Kipsigis mode of dress has also increasingly changed. In the pre-colonial era, the Kipsigis concept of clothing consisted of skins of wild game. The cow, sheep and goatskins gradually took over. Subsequently, goatskins were reserved for boys and morans, although the morans also wore calf-hides. Morans who distinguished themselves on the battlefield were allowed to wear a leopard or colobus monkey skin. Gazelle, ox or goatskins were the preserve of the elders. For girls, the typical dress consisted of *chepkautit* (an apron) ornamented with seeds called *osiek*, while married women were distinguished by two garment-types of dressed leather-*menekubet* and *koliyet*, (equivalent to the modern skirt and blouse), the lower one (*menekubet*) was held by a belt called *leketyo*. Ornaments (*narriok*), including chain necklaces, earrings, anklets, bracelets and leg ornaments, were worn as part of decoration and for ceremonial purposes. However, all these have gradually been replaced by modern-style concepts of clothing. These clothes are rarely mentioned in riddles and seem to have been forgotten by the modern generations. However, the hides-wear is still kept, especially by older people who are still nostalgic about that aspect of the past (Fish & Fish, 1995). Most riddles, pertaining clothing, in the modern Kipsigis reflect the new mode of dress such as in the riddle, '*Bun yon abun yu ketuiyechin Nairobi- masibit*- 'Pass there let me pass here we meet at Nairobi- belt'. The belt here denotes the modern belt- *masibit* (from the Kiswahili word *mshipi*) which has replaced the traditional belt- *leketyo*.

The Kipsigis adorned ornaments that were worn on specific occasions. *Seemwet* is a long strip leather garment decorated with cowrie shells and beads of different colours (see the first picture in plate 3). It was worn by elderly women on ceremonial occasions. It was also used to decorate a goat being presented to *Asis* (God) at *Kapkoros* (sacred altar). A similar garment-*Narriet* (the second picture in plate 3) is a leather garment decorated with cowry shells. It was worn as a headdress by girls and boys at a passing out circumcision ceremony. Goat- hair was also used to decorate the head dress.



Plate 3: *Seemwet* and *narriet*-some of the Kipsigis traditional ornaments worn during special occasions

These traditional ornaments are rarely found in the current Kipsigis community. However the elderly person seems to store them for remembrance of the past tradition.

Ketab iit and *muiweekab iit*, illustrated in plate 4 were worn on a woman's pierced and outstretched ear loop shown (Plate5) during special ceremonies as a status symbol.

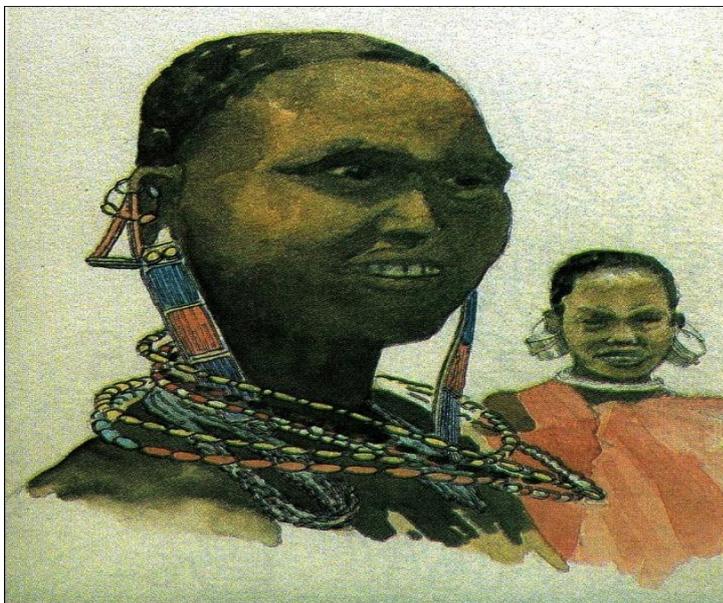


Plate 4: A picture of *Chepkelelik* (newly circumcised girls) adorned with *kolikoik* (hides' clothes) *miuywekab iit* (traditional earrings) and necklaces (pictures taken from Fish& Fish, 1995 text on 'The Kipsigis Heritage').



Plate 5: Martha Tonui (Obot Kiptalam) displays how the ears were pierced to create room for decoration with *muiweek ab iit* (ear-ornaments).

The Kipsigis custom of piercing ears and creating ear loops for decoration purposes are gradually fading away. In fact some of the elderly women who had done it before have gone to hospitals for their ears to be restored to resemble their initial condition. This indicates the changing worldview of individual members of this community. The use of modern earrings seems to have taken over the traditional practice.

Interactions among the Kipsigis, the Nandi, the Luo and the Kisii respectively also contributed to change in Kipsigis mode of dress. Some dressing styles have been borrowed from these neighbouring cultures. Obot Kiptalam (Plate5) a resource person, affirmed this sentiment. According to other interviewees¹⁰ most of the Kipsigis people have adapted the western culture in terms of dressing.

Apart from the dressing mode, there are some aspects of the traditional culture which has been preserved. Some of these practices remained as norms and taboos of the Kipsigis society. Fish & Fish (1995) had recognized some of these norms. For instance, he shows how morans should be addressed using their acquired names after their circumcision. Their childhood names were to remain silent and *Arap* (‘meaning son of’) was used alongside the Christian name. Similarly, men of the same age group could not call one another by their childhood names, usually with

¹⁰ Joel A. Lang’at, Pauline Misik and Obot Borness, interviewed at different dates, talked in length about the change in Kipsigis mode of dress, piercing of ears and the use of ornaments.

the prefix *Kip*, as in Kiptoo, Kiprop, Kiplang'at. The women were also given new names other than their former names prelude by prefix *Chep* or *Che* as in Chelimo, Chepkorir, Chelangat. Fish & Fish (1995, 212) also observed this pattern of name usage which signifies continuity of some Kipsigis cultural practices. A name given at one's birth may not necessarily be used throughout one's lifetime except surnames. However, the surname was allowed to be used after circumcision for men, whereas women used the names of their husbands once they got married. At the advent of Christianity, a Kalenjin who became a Christian chose a new name from the Bible or some other name at the time of baptism. The usage of those names did not rigidly follow the Kalenjin rule of usage of names. The cultural change was also influenced by intermarriages between the Kipsigis and the neighbouring communities. Perhaps the most encounters between the Kipsigis and other cultures came with the colonial introduction of large-scale farming in Kipsigis land, especially in Mosop areas around Kericho, where they introduced tea farming and other kinds of settler agriculture, which required an endless supply of labour.

Tea plantations in Kericho and Kipkelion areas, in particular attracted migrant laborers from different ethnic communities in Kenya. The proximity between the Kipsigis and such migrant labourers meant that they interacted with the Kipsigis and influenced their lifestyles. Intermarriages began to be more common and acceptable than before. Initiations like circumcision and marriage among other events were also modified and reflected a modernized culture. However, some aspects of the cultures resisted fossilization, particularly such practices as payment of dowry in form of cattle, goats and sheep, even though it was gradually augmented with cash. The number of cattle paid is dependent on the type of cattle, whether indigenous or grade cattle. The latter is deemed to be more expensive than the indigenous ones. Hence, in terms numbers, one pays more of the indigenous type. A few number of grade cattle is paid because of their quality.

The practice of polygamy and a customary marriage referred to as *Kitunji toloch*¹¹ has gradually diminished. The latter practice revealed that the Kipsigis are a patriarchal society whereby sons in the family are more valued than daughters. Thus, in certain respects, arrangements were made to allow widows to have sons who would bear the name of the family. A woman who married a younger woman to bear children on her behalf became the symbolic father of the children born in such arrangement (Hollis 1909:135).

¹¹A custom where an old widow who did not beget sons betrothed a young bride, negotiated with her parents, paid dowry, took her as her 'wife' and assigned a man to sire children on her behalf.

4.1.1 Impact of Post Colonial Modernity on Kipsigis Cultural Transformations

Christianity and formal education have greatly impacted on the Kipsigis customs and rites of passage. After the colonial interaction and the introduction of Christian teachings and modern education system, attention gradually shifted away from pre-colonial cultural practices to modern practices. As a result, some practices were abandoned altogether while others had to be inflected to accommodate the radically changed cultural circumstances of the postcolonial moment.

Before the advent of Christianity, The Kipsigis people worshipped their own god whom they referred to as *Cheptalel* or *Asis*, meaning the shinny one/ the sun. They worshipped facing the east-the direction of the sunrise. There were also sacred places, such as the mountains, certain hills, and specific trees, where people could gather for worship. The advent of Christianity greatly influenced the way of life of a typical Kipsigis. Rites of passage from birth to marriage and their underlying practices were greatly influenced by Christian practices. The consequence is that some of the Kipsigis practices were either discarded or modified to reflect the Christian influence. Traditional practices associated with birth, marriage and death for instance changed radically to reflect the Christian concept of life and death, especially among those who embraced Christianity (Rutto, 2016). The Christian lifestyle further affected the riddling process and the riddles themselves. Some riddles were prohibited with the reason that they used vulgar language which is against the Christian belief. For instance, a riddle like '*Akwai let batiem- nderemiat*' - my grandmother's buttock is fatty is rarely used.

Birth and naming ceremonies were very important functions done immediately after the child was born. The morning after its birth, the baby would be exposed to the sun as it arose. This was done at the *mabwaita* (worship site) to thank *Asis* for the gift of life and to share the joy with him, *Asis* was asked to protect the newborn child. The mother of a newborn was referred to as *chepkeriat*¹². She stayed in the house for four days if the baby was a boy and three days if the baby was a girl. She was considered 'unclean' and was not supposed to touch any household items especially those belonging to the husband. As Fish & Fish (1995) records, the woman was not allowed to cook, use her hands for eating, or touch anything in the cooking area before a cleansing ceremony was done. For eating, she used a wooden spoon called *segetyeet*, and a plate made of animal hide. After the isolation, *labetab eun* (cleansing- of-hands ceremony) was performed. This was done through washing the hands and arms up to the

¹² A ritually unclean woman; woman who had just given birth.

elbows with water using *kipsilwet*¹³. After cleansing, the woman could use *kipsamut* (a similar container meant to serve men) to serve water for elderly men to clean their hands. Nowadays basins and jugs have replaced these cultural items, and the practice is no longer carried on. Thus these names are rarely used even in riddles. Instead, most of the riddles contain new names of items introduced into the community during the colonial time as would be illustrated in the later section of this chapter.⁷

The use of these traditional containers was demonstrated by resource persons¹⁴ captured in the picture (plate 6). As the picture depicts, such traditional items and the practice of their use are still remembered though the bearers of the history have consciously or unconsciously adapted the western lifestyle. The attire of the two resource persons in the picture contradicts the practice they are demonstrating. The headgear and the type of clothes they put on, one with the slogan ‘CHEVROLET’ implies the cultural transition from the practices of the past to the present. Memories of the past are mainly realised through oral traditions like songs, proverbs, and riddles.



Plate 6: Pauline Misik (right)& Esther Bunei (left) demonstrating how cleansing of hands was done using water poured through *kipsilwet*.

There were also norms and taboos associated with childbirth. Only married and ‘circumcised’ women were expected to give birth. Girls who were not yet circumcised were taught how to behave and were prohibited from engaging in sex before circumcision and marriage. If one

¹³ A container made of acalabash specifically used for t cleansing –hands-ceremony).

¹⁴Mrs. Pauline Misik and Esther Bunei during an interview conducted on 28th April, 2014, at Tabaita village, Kaplelartet location.

defied this rule and became pregnant, the midwives would wait for the child to be born then suddenly throw fresh cow dung on the baby's mouth, suffocating it to death. Pregnancy before marriage was a taboo, the girl who became pregnant before marriage was termed as *chesarbuchot*- a derogatory term. The parents of the culprit were obliged to offer a goat to be slaughtered to cleanse the girl-*kianyinyen* or *kiulyen chesarbuchot* because she was considered abominable-*ng'wan*. The girl later underwent circumcision and could get married. However the length of the seclusion period was shortened to three months; normally the girls were secluded for a period of six to twelve months after their circumcision. The period of seclusion was shortened because they were presumed to have defied the proper principles of the rite of passage¹⁵.

Later this practice was reconsidered; the child was allowed to survive and the mother underwent circumcision afterwards. After coming out, the man who was responsible for the pregnancy was asked to marry the girl or take the baby. The child who was not taken by his father was given to a barren woman. The mother ceremoniously oiled the baby with a cream from *masachek* stored in *lalet* and ritually dried her hands on the ground indicating that she had completely given away the child. The woman was free to be married to another man and was expected to give birth to other children.

These practices have been overshadowed by Christian beliefs. Birth and naming ceremonies nowadays are rarely done as children are often born in hospitals and are given Christian names by their parents. Earlier, when the white missionaries first arrived and built dispensaries and hospitals, the women who gave birth in these facilities named their children as *Kipchumba* for a boy and *Kipchumba* for a girl. The prefix *Kip* denotes a baby boy whereas *Che* or *Chep* denotes a baby girl. After the ancestral name (*kurenet*), the child was given the second name that relate to a place of birth, time of the day when the child was born, outstanding events that are occurring or the activity going on during birth time. The term *chumba* means White people/Europeans. Thus the name *Kipchumba* or *Chepchumba* means the one born in White people's place. The first hospitals were built by the early White missionaries and were perceived as White's places (*Kapchumba*). These new sites of giving birth lessened the traditional naming practice. The names marked the shifts from the traditional ways relating to the birth rituals, naming and related ceremonies. After delivery, the mother resumes normal

¹⁵ The resource person, Pauline Misik, interviewed on Kipsigis traditions, customs and taboos, explained that those girls were treated differently because they were deemed to have lacked respect.

activities without any restrictions as in the past. The baby is also taken care of by both parents and at times even by the house helpers.

In the past the child's growth was monitored by some chosen women referred to as *chepkerke*. They monitored the growth of the new born baby by checking *mukuryot*, a kind of string tied on the wrist of a baby. If it loosened, the mother was beaten for being careless in feeding and caring of the child. The reason was because it was believed that if the mother had sex during this time; the child's health would negatively be affected. The nursing mothers were not supposed to join their spouses until after three months.

Upon the birth of a baby the mother is fed exclusively for two to three months inside the house at *koima* - a section in the house where men are not supposed to enter in. The men stayed at *Injor*. The children were not allowed to step there or hold anything that belonged to the father. *Koima* and *injor*, as stated earlier, stands for the spatial patterns of a typical Kipsigis house. They also infer to the space of women and space for men respectively and were also associated with gender roles. Elderly women, for instance, were responsible for teaching riddles to children, and therefore, the children gathered in *koima* to learn riddles and to listen to stories after the day's activities. These spatial patterns are still present today, but the riddle performances have been shifted to the classroom set up.

The naming of a newborn child was done immediately the child was born; names of departed ancestors were called by the midwife, and if a child sneezed at the mention of a particular ancestor's name, that particular name was given to the child. It was believed that the spirit of a deceased ancestor entered the infant at the time of birth. The name was referred to as *kurenat* which meant "an ancestor's name". The second name was given according to the time, season, or important event taking place at the time of birth. Other names were added as life went on; often these were based on the characteristic or physical feature of the person. Examples of such names were, *Chelogoi* (Noise maker), *Kiptui* (Black person), *Kimalel* (Brown person), and *Kimaiywa* (Beer lover/taker). These names were reflected in riddles as in ' *Kona kona chelogoi-redio* ' - 'Corner, corner, noise-maker-radio'

After circumcision, boys could take the names of their fathers, proceeding with the phrase *Arap* which denotes 'the son of', while the girls, upon their marriage, and were given special names such as *Tapletgoi*, *Tapsagaa*, *Taptuei*, and *Taputany*, alongside the names of their husbands.

Later, when they gave birth, they were referred to by the name of the first born child, preceded by the word *Obot*, which signified 'the mother of' (Ruto, 2016: 47-48).

These names are symbolically used in riddles to denote these cultural practices. Example are in the riddles '*Obot Chelang'atak arekyik*' (Chelang'at's mother and her kids), *Tindo Cherono kuinoik ang'wan* (Cherono has four horns), *Arereni Chelang'at en kapolis*, (Chelang'at is hysterically dancing in the police station). Each of the riddle has a specific message to pass to the audience. The names are used in the riddles to represent some events anticipated to take place at a particular time. For instance, Cherono refers to a female born in the afternoon, a time when the goats are expected to return from the grazing grounds to their various home. According to an interviewee, this is a good time because it is a time to expect good things to happen. In contrast, the name Chelang'at (a female born in the early night), represents unforeseen events, because hardly any good thing is expected to happen at night. Thus the riddles which used this name are often those denoting the unforeseen events.

The rites of passage relating circumcision ceremonies were strictly followed in the Kipsigis community. The people who officiated included the *motiriot*, *boiyotab tumdo* and *boiyotab tumin*, each of them played an important role. Other participants included the initiates, their parents, the relatives and the elderly who had already undergone circumcision. The *motiriot* implemented the ceremonies in all the circumcision stages. They were mostly two and were elected by elders in the community. The *boiyotab tumdo* was the one who performed the physical operation, while the *boiyotab tumin* was responsible for blessing the initiates by spewing wine on them. This was done when the initiates were entering the seclusion stage as well as when they were leaving seclusion. The initiation process included the following functions: *Yatitaet* (the actual surgery during the circumcision ritual) in most cases nowadays is done by an experienced doctor in place of *Motiriot*- an experienced circumciser in the Kipsigis past, *Lapetap eun* (cleansing of hands ritual) *Tienjinet* (singing to and giving them do's and don'ts of the society), *Kayaet* (immersion in water ritual), *tiletab kirokto* and *yatetab oret* [cutting of stick and opening of the path] ceremonies. These processes have been shortened in most places of the Kipsigis and some of the stages replaced by Christian teaching. Fish & Fish (1995, 89-107) earlier explained how these practices have been replaced by Christian beliefs and practices. Modern education system has also influenced the period of seclusion; usually the boys undergo circumcision at the age of twelve to fifteen years implying that those initiated are school- age children thus seclusion is shortened so as not to disrupt their learning.

Historically, the Kipsigis marriage involved several steps, which started with engagement or betrothal that consisted of several parts. These included *Kayaaet/ yatetab koito* (initial visit by the father of the groom), *kibeendi koito* (presentation of cattle), *chuteetab injor* (ceremonial visit of the suitor to the home of his future father-in-law). It was the occasion for the suitor to be allowed to enter the *injor*, the part of the house reserved for the males. *Suetab tuga* (the time when the animals for the dowry were brought to the salt troughs to be viewed by the bride's family), *rateet* (ceremonial tying of *segutyet* to each other; bride and groom tie *segutyet* to each other's wrist), *keseet* (marriage) the marriage was officiated by *motiryot* (priest) after the marriage two more ceremonies followed; *keteitei korosek* and *tyeketab seguut* (burning of *koroseek*-sacred plants used during ceremonies and treading-on- ceremonial plant) ceremony was performed. Songs, dances and sometimes chanting of wise sayings and proverbs accompanied each ritual (Peristiany, 1937, Toweett, 1979).

Divorce was extremely rare among the Kipsigis. It was commonly known as *Kiilge* (anointing each other). The divorce entailed the return of the dowry. Death rituals are rare in this community. People regard death as a spell which is unexplainable and is feared so much that in the past a corpse was thrown in the far forest (Ruto, 2016: 62-63).

4.1.2 Pastoralism and Farming in the Pre-colonial Kipsigis Community

This sub-section deals with the economic activities of the Kipsigis people in the past. Pastoralism and farming were investigated to determine the relevance of those practices to the current study. In the same process, farm implements which were used in the past were also explored to find out whether they are still in use or they have been replaced by the modern implements. Preceding studies in this area as well as the research findings in the current study are explored to highlight the arguments in this section.

Farming and Livestock rearing were widely practiced by the Kipsigis people and the Kalenjin as a whole. Digging appears to have been carried out with the aid of sticks and forest clearance by means of fires, as explained by one of the elderly resource person. According to the source, the digging of the field was women's work, and it was done with the help of relatives or neighbours working together. Farming was exclusively for purposes of subsistence, the main crop being finger millet. New lands were acquired freely by anyone who was ready to clear bushy areas or forests; there was no individual land ownership, and neither was there fencing of lands. However, the European colonial culture greatly impacted on the economic activities and changed the course of land trends in this community.

During the colonial era, according to the source, Mr. Too, the British government took a large portion of land and established large plantations of maize, tea, and coffee. Thus greater manpower was required for the achievement of greater output. The Kipsigis people were therefore forced to go and work in those farms (Manners, 1967). Some people worked on the settler farms as ‘trustees’- they were entrusted to supervise on the settler farms and thus other laborers worked under them. These people could exercise excessive power on other workers, as explained by one of the interviewers, who worked in the settler farm as a herdsman for many years.

Apart from the Kipsigis, there were many people from various parts of the country who were brought in often by force so they could work and get money to pay taxes. Such people from diverse communities of Kenya (for instance, the Luo, the Kisii, the Luhiya and the Kikuyu) mixed with Kipsigis workers, and the Kipsigis adopted some of their cultural mannerisms, which they brought home with them when they left the settler farms. Omwoyo, (2000) had also observed this. Such mannerisms found their way into Kipsigis culture and are manifested in oral traditions including riddling. The settler farming culture (such as the use of oxen for ploughing) was also adapted. The first plough to be owned by the Kipsigis was used in the reserve in 1921(Manners, 1967:310). The Kipsigis gradually started using new innovations, including the use of the ox-plough, which they first resisted with claim that its use subjected their oxen to hard work. However, their resistance could not take long as the practice was soon copied by these workers, who later acquired the innovation and used it in their own farms. Later, the use of plough spread to various places and more lands were cultivated. The riddle was also formulated to capture the new implement: ‘*Arwap ilat kerer ng’wony- mogombet ab eik*’- ‘Son of thunder splits the ground-ox-plough’.

According to Manners (1967), the Kipsigis social interaction was interrupted by early British colonial policies which aimed at disbanding their social and economic activities. These early settlers converted people into supportive roles in their economic activity. Starting 1906, British settlers obtained large tracts of land along the Kipkelion railway and around Kericho. These were the most fertile lands, which suited the European settler need for cash crop farming. Large farms were alienated for the activity; coffee and tea were grown in plenty and became the major cash crops in the areas owned by the British settlers. A major tea plantation was established near Kericho in 1912 after the first processing factory in the same year was constructed. Many people were displaced in these areas, and as a result, they were forced to look for casual work

in these large scale farms. Most lands in the Kericho- Mossop area are now full of tea plantations, one of the cash crops introduced during the colonial era.

The large scale farming and the idea of cash crops gradually changed the Kipsigis economic activities which took place in the pre-colonial era. The concept of communal work gradually diminished and people started working for their own benefit. The adaptation of new farm implements and change in the Kipsigis belief system influenced riddles and riddling process through the adoption and appropriation of new symbols and signifiers of new social being.

The lower part of Kericho, commonly referred to as Soin, is usually a semi-arid area. It is not as fertile as the highland/Mossop area. Thus it was not alienated for the purpose of settler farming. But people from these areas were persuaded to go and work in the settlers' farms. According to Joel Langat¹⁶, the people who herded the white settler cattle stole some of them and drove them to Soin, where there was plenty of grass and which was devoid of interferences from Europeans. Langat asserts that, the rearing of grade cows among the Kipsigis began in Rongai and Kipkelion areas.

One of the cash crops which were adapted by these people was maize. Lang'at further explained that the White settlers took a lot of acres and installed *keriosiek* in all corners of the maize plantation for people to stay and guard the maize. All labour was done mostly by the Kipsigis people, permanent labourers were paid six shillings and lived with their families, together with their livestock. The livestock were not mixed with the White men's livestock rather the Kipsigis people who tendered the White men's livestock were given a small portion of land to graze their livestock. The assumption here is that those who looked after the white men's livestock were allowed to keep their own not just because of their benefit but also so that they could use their oxen to cultivate the whitemen's farms (Omwoyo, 2000).

During the colonial period, the settler farms became even more productive in terms of milk, beef, maize and other cash crops. The reason was as because of cheap labour from the Kipsigis people, who are said to have received meager wages for the hard labour to sustain production on settler farms. Resident workers were granted the use of grazing land, from which they had previously been evicted in exchange of training and using their oxen to plow the settlers' fields. Many Kipsigis learnt cultivation through these experiences (Peristiany, 1939). To further induce a great proportion of local labour away from their village, taxes and depressed wages

¹⁶ Resource person, interviewed on 7th May, 2013.

became a solution. People were forced to work on settler farms in order to get money to pay taxes. However, the Kipsigis system had incorporated processes which had dynamic implications beyond those intended by the European settlers. Examples include the spread of land and the fencing of lands indicating individual ownership (which was not there before). Individual ownership of land or even its partitioning was a practice which was not there before because the land originally belonged to the community and was therefore available to every individual for cultivation. Large scale-farming involving a variety of cash crops, the acquisition of grade cattle and the use of farm implements like ox-plough and later, the use of the tractor for cultivating lands was a practice which was adopted from the European settlers.

In the pre-colonial era, cultivation of land was done by women, whereas the herding of cattle and other livestock was a man's responsibility. However, with the advent of the ox-plough, men took up the responsibility of tilling the land using oxen though women occasionally carry out the responsibility, especially in the absence of their husbands. Large tracts of lands were cultivated using ox-plough thus it required much manpower than the one woman could exert. The following picture illustrates the activity of land cultivation using ox-plough.



Plate 7: A Research guide tries out to plough the land using ox-plough.(The picture was taken by the researcher during the field work. The activity reflects the colonial and modern way of cultivation).

Cattle herding and rearing of other flocks also shifted as the number of herds decreased; indigenous cattle were sold and replaced with hybrid cattle, other flocks were also sold as grazing lands began to be partitioned by individuals restricting space of keeping many herds. A few people also acquired grade cattle and opted for zero grazing. Pastoralism therefore

became a passive practice. Changes in the roles and activities in the community were intensified due to the change in economic activities. As argued earlier, subsistence farming was practiced; women communally worked together in groups' referred to as *morik*. They used hoes and sticks to cultivate and plant finger millet. After the the end of the colonial era, more crops were introduced into the community, large scale farming became more popular than before. Mixed cropping was also adapted from the neighbouring communities. All these trends led to the exchange of responsibilities between men and women. For instance, the milking of cattle, which in the pre-colonial Kipsigis cultural order was a man's activity, gradually shifted to the women, in addition to their nurturing roles as well as other typically domestic roles such as cooking for the family. In the pre-colonial past, cattle were kept away from the homestead- at a place called *kaptich* where all young men of the community stayed to guard over them. They would milk the cattle and send the milk to their respective families. This concept echoing the communal responsibility has gradually faded since most families have become self- centered in almost all their responsibilities (Rono, 2000).

Mixed crop farming as stated earlier was adapted from neighbouring Kenyan farming communities and has proved to be doing well in these areas as illustrated in the following picture (plate 8).



Plate 8: Mixed-crop farming, a practice which has been adopted by the Kipsigis in Soin area as a result of interaction with other cultures. The picture was taken during the fieldwork study (2014).

4.1.3 Kipsigis Oral Tradition

In pre-colonial past, the Kipsigis imparted knowledge to their children through songs, proverbs, oral narratives and riddles (Rono 2000). This started in their early ages before they could learn culturally prescribed gender roles from their parents. Boys learnt the manly duties, such as animal keeping, hunting and fighting tactics, through their fathers, whereas girls learnt home making through their mothers. The learning took place mostly through observation and participation in the work. More learning took place during initiation into adulthood. This was done by *motirenik* ('teachers') during the seclusion period, which normally took around three to six months. They learnt about the history, culture and community values. After their initiation, men learnt specialized in traditional skills from the elderly, who were known experts in various fields, such as herbal medicine, iron work, bee keeping, and building and construction among others. Some of these skills were hereditary, such as the practice of herbal medicine. The oral traditional genres still continued throughout the stages.

Riddles were taught to children by their grandmother in the evening after work. Most of the times the neighbouring children gathered together in one of the grandmother's hut to learn riddles. Often the riddles were performed as a competitive activity. The aim was to exercise one's intelligence and wit. Responses to these riddles depended on the Kipsigis cultural disposition. Through the riddle, children's observation skills about what was happening in their surroundings were challenged. Thus one of the main functions of riddles was to instruct the young and teach them about their environment. Some of the riddles in this community include the following:

Kutkuten ilat koitin tui (Lightning blew you to darkness) -*chebibiyet*-whirlwind

Itoroktoi nebelbelyonu anan itoroktoi nerobu keter? (Do you welcome the one who comes straight to you or the one who comes through the backyard?) - *Nebelbelyonu amun teta nesoru moita, nerobu keter ko kimagetiet.* – (The one who courageously comes straight to you because it is a cow who comes for the calf, the one that comes through the backyard is a hyena).

Kirginyun kipkeleny tulwa (My bull who overturns the hill) -*bobat*- mushroom

Oinin okwoinii- chebiswet (It is there it is here) - a weaver bird (known for its swift movement).

Alogun yon aolok yu asiketuiyechin yun kemelge eun (Pass there I pass here we meet there so that we lick our hands) - *kumik*-honey.

Siraasir tembwo (writes on a bare land) -*Kiplekwet*- hare.

These riddles also cited by Rutto (2016: 159-160) give an overview of the Kipsigis traditions and culture. The construction of the riddles as well as the process of arriving at the meaning of each riddle, take into consideration the day – to – day activities in the community. Honey, for instance, was harvested from the forest trees in the Soin area; beehives were constructed later. Hares were some of the wild animals that are common in the area. Young boys were tested for hunting bigger game by training them to hunt for birds and small animals like hare.

Kipsigis folksongs also served a great role in disseminating moral lessons to the children and youths as well as teaching them the history of the community. The songs comprise praise songs, circumcision songs and marriage songs, among others. The praise songs were composed in favour of successful individuals or heroes and heroines in different fields. The following song, for instance, was composed in celebration of a brave lady named Tabutany, who aided in a successful raid from the neighbouring Luo community. The story is told that Tabutany was a good singer and that whenever she sang people gathered around her to listen to her songs. One day she decided to extend her talent to entertain Luo herdsmen, who were herding near the common Kipsigis-Luos border. To her surprise they all gathered around her to listen to her songs, even though they could not understand the language. She then climbed up a tall tree and sung even more, and in the process, she alerted Kipsigis young men, who come and drove off the cattle owned by the Luo herdsmen, who were too much engaged by Tabutany's songs to see what was going on, despite the fact that they did not know the message which was being passed on to the Kipsigis raiders through the song.

Oosach osach osach olombo roruechon, Gather, gather, gather, those heifers,

Oosach olombo eichon, Gather those oxen,

Oosach olombo kirugik, Gather those bulls,

Oosach oosach oosach. Gather, gather, gather.

The chanting words that constitute Tabutany's song instructed the raiders to drive off the oxen, heifers, and bulls which are represented by the Kipsigis names *eik*, *roruek*, and *kirugik*.

After the raiders had successfully driven away all the herds, Tabutany excused herself, explaining to the Luo herders that she was tired. She descended from the tree and ran back home before the herders realised her tricks.

When the Kipsigis heard of this, they all gathered at Tabutany's home to thank her for the feat. The praise song was composed to celebrate her victory. The refrain of the song was as follows:

Achome Tabutany nekibor teta kot kiwal ooh,

Kot kowal biik chechang kowal bororiet ak oret ooh,

The song congratulates Tabutany on her tactful and successful raid. As the praise singer puts it in the first stanza, 'I love Tabutany who tactfully acquired cattle to be proud of'. In the second stanza he echoes, 'Many people are proud of that, the region and clans appraise her'. This performance is synonymous with Barber's analytical illustration of the *Oriki* oral text, which is performed to enhance the reputation of the subject and amplify the reputation, self esteem and public recognition of the groups who own them (Barber, 1991).

The song is meant to encourage children and youths to be brave and courageous. At the same time it creates an awareness of the activities which used to take place before the advent of colonialism.

Oral narratives were also part of knowledge- making in the Kipsigis society. Stories were told especially by elderly people to younger generations. The behavior of the characters in the story taught moral lessons to the audience. The preceding story, for instance, not only encourages bravery but also disbands the gender roles prescribed by the community, thereby upsetting the society's power relations to the advantage of women. However, women, as well as young girls, were expected to grow up and uphold the moral standards expected of them. The choosing of a marriage partner, for instance, was solely done by the parents of both parties. Nonetheless, both parties had to consent before the marriage proceedings were done. On rare occasions, a girl could refuse the choice of her suitor and this was considered a disgrace to her parents. To discourage such cases, appropriate stories were composed and disseminated to the audience, especially those of a marriageable age. The following story of '*Tabutany ak Cheplanget*'- ('Tabutany and a leopard')¹⁷ was told to achieve that purpose. *Tabutany* could have been a favourite name in Kipsigis or it might refer to the previous Tabutany in the praise song.

Tabutany was a very beautiful girl. Many suitors came to propose to her, but every time a suitor came, she would ask her father how the suitor was dressed. Then she would refuse the choice,

¹⁷ The story was reviewed by Edwin Makiche: Passion to preserve Oral Tradition. Sept.21, 2012. www.standardmedia.co.ke.

and the father would turn them back. The leopard heard about her behavior and decided to make a try. He dressed himself in a smart suit, put on a tie and well polished shoes (characteristic of modern attire), and walked to the bride's home. Tabutany was so overwhelmed by his smartness that she could not realise that it was a leopard. The choosy bride accepted to marry him because of his smart outfit unaware of the fact that he was a beast.

The story was meant to teach youths about character judgement. The story concludes with the proverb '*Kibire mat koloo*' synonymous with the English proverbs 'pride goes before a fall' and 'look before you leap'.

Proverbs and wise sayings were also used across all ages in the community. They taught different lessons in different spheres of life. Proverbs were also a domain used to edify the Kipsigis language. They are still used in addressing various situations across time without being changed. Proverbs are transferable in nature and can be used in talking about issues taking place in contemporary society and still help us in looking into the future.

Among the traditional oral forms discussed above, the riddle is the most versatile. The riddle's versatility can be attributed to the nature of its formation and the process of arriving at meaning. As argued earlier, the riddle construction and meaning depends on the environment and the day-to-day activities of the society. Thus, as the society changes and develops, the riddle's flexible nature aids in incorporating the said changes. That way, even when it retains some traces of its traditional matrix, it is able to borrow from the present and recreate itself anew in the midst of constant change (Noss, 2006: 34).

Oral traditional genres as observed in another context are able to operate from a space that is already hybrid and multiculturally shaped. This was discussed and illustrated by Simatei, (2001) in his analysis of Kalenjin popular music. According to him, 'the production of Kalenjiness responded to the challenges of this transnational moment by reworking and repackaging cultural symbols, historical pasts and folkloric themes to enable conception of homogenous Kalenjin community with a common past but also with an assumed threat in the present' (2001:8). The analysis of riddles in this study follows this trend as they are reworked on basing on the ephemeral nature of the Kipsigis culture.

In the postcolonial period, Christianity and modernity have influenced both the informal and non-formal education systems in the Kipsigis community. Modern education and Christianity in the Kipsigis community have greatly altered the cultural activities in this society. Many

people have adopted modern education. Thus they place less emphasis on the traditional ways of imparting knowledge. A lot of time has also been taken up by formal education which was introduced into the region by the British in the 19th Century. Therefore, there is hardly any time for school-age children to learn their pre-colonial cultural ways, or even to undergo the traditional rites of passage as explored before.

Christianity, introduced by the early missionaries, has also affected most trends of the Kipsigis life, leading to dramatic changes in the way contemporary Kipsigis perceive things. These consist of new formulation of riddles, which reflect the new perception of things. Riddle process also changed as new ideas were inculcated with the old ones.

According to the interviewees, early missionaries aimed at teaching people to know how to read and write, in order to understand the Bible. Thus learning was primarily a means to converting people into Christianity. As people accepted Christianity, they gradually abandoned some cultural practices which, according to their new perception, were against their new faith. The practices of throwing corpses away, and of killing of twins and babies born by unmarried mothers, were done away with. The contemporary Kipsigis bury their dead bodies, as opposed to their pre-colonial counterparts, who threw corpses into the forest. Today children born outside marriage are adopted by the family where the mother is married, and the husband regards them as his own children. Twins are accepted in the community; they are referred to as *Kap Asis*, which means ‘the ones belonging to God’. This is clearly as a result of new understanding of the Christian faith (Fish & Fish 1995).

The colonial administration has had a great impact on the Kipsigis lifestyle for it not only introduced formal education but also persuaded people to build schools and send their children to school. As a result, learners acquired a new language (English), which could make it easier for them to be instructed in their supportive role in the colonial economy and thus fit into the new system of governance. Furthermore, in the process, the Kipsigis people developed a positive attitude towards education. Some of the earliest people who benefited from the British education became professionals in different fields. Dr. Taaita Toweett, for instance, became a scholar and an academic giant, with a PhD in Linguistics. He also became the Minister for Education under President Jomo Kenyatta. As a scholar he wrote several books, including story books in his native language. Toweett was educated at Kabianga, one of the first schools established by the British government in Kericho County (Rutto, 2016:140).

During the research, it was observed that at present children willingly go to school as opposed to the past when children were forced to go to school by the chiefs and their assistants. This implies that internal motivation to learn is present and that the parents positively support their children, contrary to the past when people were forced to build schools using their resources, as one of the interviewers remarked that the materials for building, (for instance grass for thatching) were demanded from every household. Livestock were also forcefully taken away for sale from stubborn households and the money got were used to build schools. All these were initiated by the British government and was implemented through the chiefs and assistant chiefs appointed by the administration. The first tertiary schools to be constructed in the Kipsigis land was Kabianga, and later, Litein and Chagaik. Missionaries assisted in building more schools and churches. Through these processes, more people were converted to Christianity and some were trained to become clergy as one of the resource person who had been trained as a clergy explained.

What emerges from this section is that the aspects that inform the production of riddles and riddling in the Kipsigis community included interaction with the neighbouring communities, Kipsigis pre-colonial cultural traditions, and colonial and post- colonial influences on the community. Some of these factors continue to influence the community's socio-cultural set up today.

4.2 Changes in Kipsigis Riddle Performance

4.2.0 Introduction

This section focuses on the ways in which the traditional Kipsigis riddling process has had to adjust in response to cultural flows catalyzed by the confluence of a diversity of cultures, especially due to the demands of colonial modernity. Current trends in the Kipsigis community have denied people the opportunity to carry out their socio-cultural activities, unlike the way it was in pre-colonial era. Moreover, these cultural practices have changed their course as a result of a wider interaction with other cultures. The colonial authority, as argued in the previous chapters, altered the society's communal labour. Colonisers attracted labourers from diverse communities to work on their large scale farms and market their products. People from diverse cultural backgrounds came together. As a result of the intermingling of cultures, some aspects of the incoming cultures were copied by the Kipsigis people. The intermingling impacted on the Kipsigis way of life, which found expression through folksongs, oral narratives and riddles.

4.2.1 Riddle Performance and the Influence of Modernity

As already observed, the riddle is the most versatile genre. The exposure of the Kipsigis riddle to other cultures has had the potential to change the cultural disposition of the genre. The changes in riddle performance, in particular, show the extent to which the Kipsigis have not only adopted the Western culture but also accommodated other cultures that they interacted with during the colonial era.

As Karin Barber (1989: 36) puts it, riddle performance is a means by which certain utterances are made possible. It enables aspects of a people's experiences and thoughts to be given expression, the means of bringing certain thoughts into being. Contemporary riddle performance in the Kipsigis community conveys the cultural message drawn from the pre-colonial past while at the same time appropriating modernity in the sense of its linguistic, structural and imaginative properties. The riddle genre, like any other oral text recognized as literary or poetic, is often manifested as a privileged discourse which can say things that other discourses cannot be permitted to. The freedom of expression in riddles thus enables the performer to discuss his or her personal, social and aesthetic patterns the riddle reveals. The riddle foregrounds linguistic codes as well as aesthetic convention in its performance.

Riddling employs particular organising principle that originate from the pre-colonial past, as explained earlier the genre practice was carried out in the evening by children after the day's work. They were performed alongside story-telling in moonlight outside a grandmother's house, or in the house of an elderly person who was believed to be an expert in riddles and story-telling. The advent of formal education changed these regulations. Generally, children nowadays have little of such privileges. They are pre-occupied with loads of homework, and, for the most part, they live in urban areas, whereas their grandmothers live upcountry, far away from them. Their evening schedules have also shifted to include watching television programmes or browsing the internet for entertainment. Thus, the restriction to time and space previously associated with the genre has been overtaken by the new system of education. The prevailing system constitutes an alternative site of the genre performance as it takes into consideration all the oral traditional genres as well as includes them into the literary genres that are taught and learnt in the classroom setting. In the light of the demands placed upon education in post-colonial era, riddling is not restricted to any particular moment of time in the course of the day but can be undertaken anytime depending on the prevailing circumstances. For instance, during my research, I conducted the riddling sessions during the day, particularly, the

teachers organised such sessions between 10.00am to 12 noon. No restrictions were placed. It was also done inside the classroom as depicted in the picture (plate 9).



Plate 9: Class three pupils of Barng’oror Primary school performing riddles in their classroom. The picture was taken during the fieldwork (2014).

The performance of riddles have largely been shifted from the pre-disposition sites and time to modern sites. Thus riddling can now be performed in broad day light in any place and at a particular period set aside for the genre practice. Formal education has created new sites of genre performance as well as accorded the performers time to participate in the riddle process during day time as part of classroom learning. As observed during the riddling session undertaken in the field study, the performance follows the same procedure as it was in the past; the opening formulae *tangoch* and the response *chong* is still used to denote the call by the challenger and the readiness for response by the audience. This signals the aspect of continuity of the genre practice despite the change in space and time in agreement with what Bauman (1975:295) observes: “In the case of verbal interaction there are elements that serve as framing devices that are culturally recognized transformers”. He cites several examples, one of which is the special formula that signal performance, such as conventional openings and closings or explicit statements announcing or asserting performance. The process depicts an aspect of continuity in riddle performance. However, time and space have been changed due to the new demands of formal education. Thus the concept of the past and the anticipation of the modern

education are put into consideration and merged together to come up with a newer way of the genre practice.

During the riddling session, the performers follow the rules of genre practice. For instance, if a respondent fails to get an answer to the riddle after several attempts he or she is indebted to request the challenger to give an answer or solution to the riddle in question. The challenger, in turn, will ask for a prize. In the past, the challenger would ask to be offered a certain number of cattle before he or she solves the puzzle in his or her riddle. Today, on the other hand, it is not enough for the respondent to offer cattle in return for the challenger offering a solution to the riddle he poses. In many cases, the respondent offers the challenger two options to choose from: grade or indigenous cattle - either of which options seems to be available any time the challenger makes her/his wish known. The challenger will most probably opt for the grade cows because of the increasing preference for grade cattle in the post-colonial era. Such options would not have been available during riddling in the past, as cattle could never have been imagined in terms other than their indigenous attributes.

The arrival of European settler farmers in the 19th century and their introduction of grade cattle into the community changed the Kipsigis concept of cattle. However, in the initial stages of the encounter between the two cultures, the natives were not allowed by the European settler farmers to **possess** the grade cows. As a result, the Kipsigis, usually those who had been taken to cattle herders and those who were living in proximity to settler farms secretly took their indigenous cows to mate with settler bulls. In that way, the Kipsigis people slowly started to own a version of the grade cows they could not have accessed otherwise. Ownership of such cross breeds bestowed on the Kalenjin owner enormous sense of prestige and achievement in the opinion of the community. The achievement was captured in riddles and riddle performance, hence often whenever the challenger fails to solve a riddle puzzle, the challenger may ask for any number of grade cattle as a prize before the challenger offers the solution to his/her own puzzle. The use of such cattle in the riddling process captures the desire of the Kipsigis to be associated with these modern breeds of cows, which produce higher quantities of milk. This desire is best captured in such riddles as '*Muraran kap Massiah*'-*tugab labot* (As lucid as Massia's home- Sodom apples). In many cases, the Kipsigis used Sodom apples as a referent to cattle. This was partly because Sodom apples commonly grew in places there had previously been 'cattle boma' (referred to as *kaptich*) and had been used in pre-colonial time to symbolize cattle. In pre-colonial time Sodom apples were used by initiates at seclusion camps after circumcision to illustrate the significance of cattle in the community. The colour and

texture of the Sodom apples also appealed to them that they appropriated them to the grade cattle they desired to possess. Thus when they eventually acquired them, the meaning or response to riddle was extended to include grade cattle. Massiah, as earlier explained, is a name of one of the first White settlers who settled in Chepsir in Kericho County. The place was named after him and up to date it is referred to as *Kapmassia* (Massiah's homestead). The residents of this place have retained the tradition and keep a substantial number of grade cattle and grow maize on the highly productive land.

The use of Sodom apples in the riddle further denotes certain value attached to grade cows with high milk production. As indicated earlier, the size of the herd one had determined his position and honor in the society but now, the value of the herd is determined by the quality and productivity of the cattle. Hence, it is no longer important just to possess a huge herd without commensurate milk production to show for it. The following pictures illustrate the use of Sodom apples by children during play and the significance of grade/ hybrid cows in the Kipsigis community.



Plate 10: Children displaying Sodom apples in Barng'oror village at interviewer's home(left), children playing with sodom apples at the same homestead (right).

Children of the same ages in the village were encouraged to do things together. Thus they would look after their parents' cattle, sheep and goats in open lands and often played games together. The aim was to instill communal and social awareness in the minds of the children.

Looking after the cattle is still an activity that is ongoing in the Kipsigis community especially in Soin where land, though divided, is still large enough to provide pasture for individuals' herds. Indigenous cattle are commonly found in this area though cross breeds are becoming more prevalent, as indicated in plate 11. The picture depicts the process of transition in the

Kipsigis society. Though the hybrid cattle have extensively been acquired, few individuals, particularly the elderly ones still own a large number of indigenous cattle. Arap Lang'at (plate 11) had almost one hundred indigenous cattle. Several of them were oxen; he explained that they are still valuable because they are used for ploughing individuals' lands and occasionally to plough the neighbours' lands in exchange for money. The indigenous cows are still significant for their milk production which, though little, as he explained, is of high quality compared with those produced by the hybrid cows. However, these sentiments seemed to be surpassed by the quest for hybrid cattle as evidenced by the presence of these breed in almost all the households visited during the research. Plate 12, for instance, illustrates how the new system of cattle keeping is gradually pacing out the traditional systems of cattle rearing. The social and cultural activities manifested here finds expression in oral performances, particularly riddle genre which has become more popular due to its versatile nature and more use by children within and outside the school context.



Plate 11: Arap Lang'at (one of the interviewees) displays indigenous cattle which, according to him, are still valuable especially the oxen used for cultivating land.



Plate 12: A hybrid cow being milked by a woman in a milking-shed- a structure copied from the white settlers.

An interview to determine the extent to which social interaction with other cultures had influenced Kipsigis culture was carried out during the field work. The purpose of the interview was to examine whether the influence of other cultures, as explained earlier, has influenced the riddle performance. The influence of modernity on the nature of riddles and on the riddling process was also investigated to find out whether the impact of modernity on Kipsigis culture has found an expression in the riddling process.

After the detailed information about the background of the Kipsigis community and the influence of European culture on the community, the two resource persons (Pauline M. and Obot Bornes) had a session with me during which they explained to me the riddles they used to tell each other in the past. Both asserted that, when they were young, they would gather in the evening around the fire in their grandmother's hut and engage in riddle performances. After the riddle process, their grandmother would tell them stories coupled with songs which either appraised or ridiculed the characters in the story. According to them, riddling was not done during the day but in the evening. As children, they were warned that anyone telling riddles during the day would become blind. But that did not literally happen, because the sentiment was meant primarily to prevent children from engaging in riddling during the day when they were supposed to be doing other chores. Pauline asserted that riddling was done in the evening alongside evening stories after the children had completed the chores.

The process, described by the two respondents, is started with an opening formula; '*Tangoch*' [a phrase which was passed on from one generation to the other- literary it means play] and the audience would respond '*chong*'. (This is a way of accepting to participate in the riddle process).

The opening formula *tangoch* and the response *chong*, confirmed by the respondents, remain unchanged. They were used in the past as they are used to date. Articulation of the word may be sounded differently in the modern performance but the wording does not change. After the response, the challenger poses a riddle and one of the audiences responds, if he or she fails to give a right answer after several attempts, then he or she was asked to give out (symbolically) a number of cattle as the challenger would request.

The following were some of the riddles cited by the two respondents as they demonstrated riddling. The presentation of a riddle requires the performer to assume a pose towards his audience that differs from his everyday- hour-in the day relationship to that same audience (Bauman, 1957:112). Every time a challenger poses a riddle he /she must start with the opening formula as illustrated as follows;

Cherono: Can you give me an example of a riddle?

Pauline : *Tangoch*?

Obot Borness &Cherono: *Chong*!

Pauline: *Kiawe koi ko keringon awe koi ko keringon*, (I went to this house, it was holes I house, it was holes).

Cherono: *Kenut* (a wooden vessel used to remove chaff from the finger millet.)

Pauline: No. You fail, that's not the answer.

Cherono: Then give me the answer.

Pauline: Give me some cattle first.

Cherono: '*Onchon tuga taman chebo kiret* - here I give you ten grade cattle.

Pauline: *Menai nee menai ksigisik i?* What don't you know? Don't you know *kiskisik*¹⁸?

Further exploration on the traditional item *kisyet* was expounded by Obot Borness. The traditional bowl was made from tree barks "*sosiot*" and a specific type of crawling tree called "*tabarariet*". Pauline added that the tree is rarely found at present because of the deforestation which has been done in the Kipsigis land. However she pointed at a certain thorn tree which they said resembled the kind of tree in question. Asked what they used to sew with, both recounted a type of 'needle tree' which one could pick its needle and use it to sew some cultural artefacts. They also talked about the uses of Kipsigis cultural artefacts including *Kisyet* which, according to them was specifically used to serve ugali to elderly people. Children ate from a curved hide called *Kirebeita*. Both are traditional utensils used specifically to serve ugali. At that point another set of riddles were presented perhaps to introduce a different concept;

Obot Borness: 'Tangoch'?

Pauline&Cherono: Chong!

Obot Borness: '*Kirkinyun kipkeleny tulwo*' (My bull which turns up the mountain/hill).

Pauline: *Bobator 'bwolo'*—A mushroom.

Obot Borness: You got it right. But the answer could also be *toiyot*—A termite.

The mention of the word '*bwolo*' sounded new in the Kipsigis dialect. The two confirmed that the name was borrowed from the Luo community. 'The Luo people called it '*abuolo*'. They added that the name was extracted from the word *abuolo* which refers to 'a big mushroom'. Further interrogation revealed that they sometimes shared the names as they intermingled regularly through trade. Later, after the introduction of farming, their associations heighten as food products attracted more interaction through barter trade. According to them, the Kipsigis started growing maize in addition to finger millet which had long been their only staple grain for food. The Luos on the other hand grew sorghum and sweet potatoes. They were also good in pottery thus they could either exchange their food with the Kipsigis people or exchanged them with pots.

¹⁸ Plural of the word *kisyet* which is a woven kind of traditional bowl used to serve ugali in the past.

From the extract it is evident that riddling largely depended on cultural exposition. The kind of activities carried out in everyday life are reflected in the genre performance, for instance, cattle herding is still prevalent in this community as depicted in the way the performers in the genre refer to them. Moreover the practice has taken new dimension though it seems it started from the cultural source as reflected in the opening formulae. This confirms that there is some continuation of the aspects of genre in the pre-colonial past and at the same time some aspects of other cultures including the modern culture have been adopted in the genre. Economic activities such as farming and barter trade are also exhibited in this extract. Cultural artefacts as mentioned in the riddles remain a reminder of social practices in the past which included informal learning. Art and craft was an everyday practice where people used locally available materials to make items like utensils, implements, attire and even housing. Some of these items and the materials used to make them are mentioned in the above excerpt.

The two resource persons affirmed that riddling was practiced by young children and were exclusively done in the evening alongside other stories at a grandmother's house. The process was started with a call '*Tangoch*' the audience would respond '*chong!*'. The response to the expression '*Tangoch*' was always '*chong!*' - A call for attention and readiness to participate. The two phrases have been in use since time immemorial as confirmed by the two resource persons interviewed. The challenger would pose a riddle and one of the audiences responds, if he or she fails to give the right answer then he or she was asked to give out a number of cattle. If satisfied with the number of cattle offered, the challenger would give the right answer.

Interaction with other communities also influenced the way riddles were formed and disseminated to the audience. The use of similar terms signifying one object as seen above shows the assimilation of culture of the neighboring communities. The Kipsigis meals for instance consisted mainly of milk, meat, blood, ugali and indigenous vegetables. Other foods like mushrooms, sweet potatoes and cassava were copied from the neighbouring communities such as the Luo and the Kisii. These communities also copied some cultural practices like cattle herding and some farming activities therefore some aspects of cultural circulation is prevalent in this excerpt.

Significantly, the encounter with colonialism has changed the perception of riddle practices among the Kipsigis. Riddling in the pre-colonial past was done as a leisure activity among the children. Adults had little interest in the activity, except some experts in the genre who encouraged the children to participate in the genre performance. After colonization however,

more adults developed some interest in riddling and involved themselves in the activity in an attempt to ensure that orality was not totally diminished by the European culture. Seemingly, the interaction with other cultures and the impact of colonialism had a permanent influence on the Kipsigis, and these influences find expression mainly in riddles. A riddle like *Kinyo chumbindet en Ulaya ak konyokonam suet en Kenya- Kikombet*, ('a white man came from Europe and held his hand on the waist) i.e a cup, is one of the riddles cited by the above respondents, with explanations which evidenced the way adults taught children about the colonization process through riddles. The expression of the riddle explains how the Europeans came to Kenya and asserted power over the indigenous people. Holding hands on the waist, in this community, signifies power and authority and no child is expected to do that in front of an adult, because it would be seen as lack of respect for the elderly. The riddle implies the ways in which the British governance was imposed on the Kenyan people and on Kipsigis in particular. Considerably, the riddle introduces a new item- the cup in the Kipsigis culture. The cup is one of the new items which gradually replaced the gourd (for taking milk) and the cow (horn which served as containers for storing cream and other milk products).

The riddle composition here takes recognition of elements of material culture in the past and those of the present. Karin Barber's composition by fragments is employed in this riddle. Whereas the riddle seems new in its composition and the answer to the riddle' at the back of the mind of the composer lies the conception of resistance to the colonial regime. The expression symbolizes the European holding his/her waist in Kenya – 'a foreign country' implies the negative attitude towards the imposed authority upon the native people. However, the riddle also introduces the new items wrought by the white people and how they have gradually replaced the use of the cultural items.

The genre practice has also undergone some changes in order to fit into the modern culture. The element of time for riddling to start with has been affected by the modern education system. Children spend most of their time in school. In the evening they are engaged in household chores before embarking on studies again- commonly termed as homework. In essence, school activities are transferred to home, thus the children hardly have time for leisure activities such as riddling. Children also have little freedom to practice riddling in an atmosphere where they can be comfortable to perform in their own forum and exercise their wit and amusement without any control by adults. The genre is mostly carried out in a classroom site with restrictions to time. Thus no much is done to enrich this genre practice. Christianity and technology have also impacted on the way riddling is done. Some riddles have been neglected

and termed in a Christian point of view as using indecent or vulgar language thus there is no continuity of these riddles. Technology such as computer/laptop use has made school age children spend most of their free time such as weekends playing computer games instead of interacting with their peers in active games like riddling competitions. Seemingly the modern culture threatens to supersede the past in the Kipsigis cultural disposition but then, the adults in this community have come up with riddles for teaching and correcting behaviour. The following is an example of such riddles. The riddle is not entirely new but it serves as a reminder to the new generations, of the Kipsigis cultural heritage. '*Iee beek che tililen anan iee che turur?*' (Do you drink clean water or muddy water?) The obvious answer would be '*che tililen*' – clean water. However, the answer that the challenger expected was *che turur*- muddy water made dirty by cattle. The literal implication is that the muddy water belongs to the community, made dirty by their own cattle whereas the clean water belongs to 'hyena' - the unknown. The hyena is an ugly animal with a gluttonous character and a weird behaviour. Hyena is typically used in stories and riddles to denote such character. This riddle has been used as a reminder to Kipsigis people and Kalenjin as a whole to keep up their cherished culture. It also alludes to the purity of the families that is ironically referred to as dirty versus the delight of the alien sarcastically referred to as clean.

Further investigation on the use of riddles in the present time revealed that the involvement of adults in riddling is mainly to instil cultural heritage of the community to the children despite the foreign influences. The children on the other hand also used riddles to learn new ways of the genre such as inclusion of the new vocabularies in old riddles or formulating totally new riddles based on the new technology and modern ways of learning. Such riddles were captured during the riddling session organized in the schools visited during the research period. For instance the riddle '*Keron amatweku – kamera*' (It sees me but cannot talk) – Answer: camera. The riddle whose answer is camera is a very recent formulation by children. The riddle is formulated through creative observation of the process of photography by the children. At the same time, people have also reformulated riddles by modifying the answers to fit the contemporary circumstances. A riddle like '*Bun yon abun yu ng'etuitosi ko biriren eunek*' – *chobinik* translated "Pass here, let me pass there, when we meet our hands will be red; the response in the past was red wild berries, but the response has now changed to money. Kiptalam¹⁹, explained that the riddle has taken a new meaning because nowadays those wild

¹⁹One of the resource persons I interviewed on 29th April, 2014.

fruits have become rare, hence, berries as the response may not make much sense to the children. Significantly, people have shifted from the old means of survival and now engaged mostly in money making activities, hence, money easily becomes the replacement response because of its common status in modern livelihood of the people. Thus, the first riddle – *Keron amatweku- kamera*- It sees me but cannot talk- camera is totally a new creation; even the name *kamera* is an English borrowed word. The second one of approaches allows for interdisciplinary ‘unpacking of performed meaning’. The aim in that context as well as in this context is to unpack a number of the linguistic *Bun yon abun yu ng’etuitosi ko biriren eunek’* – *chobinik* translated “Pass here, let me pass there, when we meet our hands will be red; the response in the past was red wild berries is a modification of the already existing riddle; change is only realised in the meaning of the riddle. The emphasis here seems to be on improvisation to suit the current social realities. Thus, it becomes apparent that riddling adapts to the dynamism of society. This process is also affirmed by Geertz (1973) where he argued, ‘The perspective of performance theorists converge in the assertion that is crucial to discuss verbal folklore as a rule-governed utterance in situation that exploits traditional organizational patterns rather than as texts in isolation. Such convergence layers of riddle performance, thereby defining another set of boundaries within which the witty devices of riddles are employed.

Time, language and space as demonstrated in the foregoing argument have also become factors of consideration in riddle performance. Adults, as stated earlier taught children riddles through performance and elaborated the moral lessons learnt from the riddles. From this observation it is apparent that elderly women were responsible for teaching riddles. They sat with the children at *koima* – women’s space in the house and engaged in riddling. However, in the current circumstance children have no time for this exercise because of the strain of school work. As a result children have little knowledge on riddle meaning though they may learn from the peers how the riddles are expressed. In the school setting though, time is set aside for riddling competition as was confirmed by the language teachers who occasionally organized for riddling sessions in their schools. Whereas some of the riddles that existed before colonialism may still carry the same meaning in many instances the meaning is changed, often significantly, as has been demonstrated in the foregoing. The circumstances of change are influenced by the modern languages and the aspect of borrowing from other cultures. Outside the school setting, children occasionally engage in riddling and quite often involve adults in quest for answers to the current ambiguity in meaning of riddles. In this context, this study conducted an impromptu

session with children and some adults during the weekend. The outcome, through my observance was that the performance can be done at any given place and time and still give substantial results. The meaning of riddles in this case depended on the contextual circumstances of the genre performance as well as the current community's worldview.

Though riddling in the contemporary Kipsigis society can be done at any time of the day, people have no such time because of the daily activities. Moreover, as stated earlier, children have little privileges of engaging in riddling during their leisure time. A few who have no access to computer games, and other technologically – based leisure activities have an advantage of engaging in riddle performance whenever an opportunity arises.

The following picture was taken during riddle performance at a proposed Kipsigis cultural site at Kaplelartet location in Soin area (Plate 13).



Plate 13: Children and some adults performing riddles during the day at Kaplelartet location in Soin.

This is a rare activity in the community as people engage more in other activities. As depicted in this picture, one of the performers is holding a hammer on one hand and a mobile phone on the other hand signifying the busy schedule of work ahead of him.

4.2.2 Conclusion

This section has dwelt on the performance of riddles in the contemporary Kipsigis society. Through the observation of the performance carried out in this study, it is apparent that the genre performance has changed significantly. Interviews conducted in this study also

confirmed that the changes has been as a result of interaction from the neighbouring cultures, the British settler influence and the interactions with other communities who worked with the Kipsigis as labourers in the white men's land. Their encounter with the white settles as well as the encounter with other communities changed their lifestyle. As the lifestyle changed, most of the activities in the community also changed. For instance, farming became more centralized practice than before. These made people busier and little time was left for social / leisure activities. People also engaged themselves in money - making activities away from their homes thus less time was left for them to interact in social activities. Riddling therefore became a passive activity as children started going to school; learning became formal and children spend more time in formal education more than the traditional knowledge making through informal and non formal activities. Growth in riddle process took a new perspective in terms of time, space and the people who imparted knowledge to children. Indigenous language has also been affected by the western and Swahili language brought to bear on the community during the colonial era. Generally, as observed in the foregoing argument, the riddle as a genre has changed significantly.

4.3 The Process of Composition and Meaning – Making in Kipsigis Riddles

This section discusses the process of composition and the modes of arriving at the meaning of contemporary Kipsigis riddles. The session looks at a set of riddles to understand the ways in which modernity has impacted on the modes of production of riddles and riddle meaning among the Kipsigis. The main focus of the session is on the ways in which postcolonial social change has influenced Kipsigis riddles and the implications for the ways of arriving at meaning. The cultural shift from the pre-colonial past to post-colonial present has led to the emergence of change in the Kipsigis worldview. This shift is reflected in the Kipsigis traditional genres such as riddles, songs, proverbs and narratives. I propose to explore modes of arriving at meaning of riddles during riddle performance by focusing on the modes of composition of culture since riddles are drawn from aspects of culture both in the past and at the present.

My argument is informed by Barber's idea that 'what the text says is inseparable from history in the sense of the past' (Barber 1989: 20). In her view, texts are transmitted through time, bringing with them elements of the past even as they themselves undergo a process of erasure and layering as they are refashioned in accordance with the changing spatial and temporal contexts. More importantly, the issue of erasure and layering (Barber 1989; Hofmeyr, 1994) plays an important role in exploring the changes that the riddles have had to undergo in order to remain relevant in a postcolonial context. According to these scholars, the pre-colonial

context and the post-colonial context are brought together through the process termed as ‘composition by fragments’ (Barber 1989: 20-21). This is best illustrated in Barber’s analysis of the *Oriki* oral text of the Yoruba people of Nigeria. In that context, she asserts, ‘an *Oriki* text is woven out of fragments from a diversity of times and voices, that are pieced together by a sort of hybridization process which in Bakhtin’s interpretation ‘is a device of bringing the past into the understanding of the present of the text’. The notion of hybridity as conceptualized in post-colonial studies and discourse refers to the creation of new trans-cultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization (Ashcroft, 2000:108). Similarly, by looking at the present composition of riddles and their interpretation in the Kipsigis community, the ‘hybridization’ process has been used to bring the past into the understanding of the present of the riddle. The elements of the past as well as those of the present are pieced together or layered in the riddle content or implied in the riddle meaning. The riddle may contain ancient terms but its meaning may be current. Appropriation of traditional forms of knowledge has been couched in songs, proverbs, riddles and oral narratives with an aim of suggesting alternative ways of addressing Africa’s post colonial challenges. Okpewho’s (1992:294) observation is also a way of showing that “traditional African culture is not obsolete but relevant for the articulation of contemporary needs and goals.” The following riddles elucidate the foregoing arguments on change and continuity of riddles in Kipsigis community.

4.3.1 Kipsigis Riddles in Changing Times

This section illustrates some of the Kipsigis riddles which have undergone mutations and replacement of metaphors in the midst of the changing cultural milieu. The riddles were obtained from the elderly research interviewees selected through the snowballing method and interviewed on the historical background of the community and the oral traditions. Other respondents included children of both sexes aged eight years and above, sampled from Kapsorok, Chepyegon, Barn’goror and Kaplelartet locations in Soin Division of Kericho County. The Soin area is believed to be rich in the oral traditions of the community since the area was not directly affected by the British colonial regime. However, people who went to labour in white settler farms and, later, those who worked on large scale farms (such as the tea plantations created by the British colonial government) brought new ideas which gradually changed the people’s point of view. In this context, riddle formation and the implication of riddle meaning are influenced by the socio-cultural and economic activities and beliefs of the society, including its norms and taboos. These riddles embody the social and cultural activities in the pre-colonial past, the political and economic activities and the influence of colonialism

in the Kipsigis community as revealed by this study as well as the works of previous authors who studied the lifestyle of the Kipsigis people.

These riddles closely resemble Noss's (2006) exploration of Gbaya Riddles of Cameroon. In that context, the creation of riddles mainly takes in the current events, innovation and new artefacts. Interaction with other cultures as well as colonial influences, which includes Christianity and modern education, has contributed immensely to the composition of new riddles. As societies change and develop, the riddle's flexible nature aids in incorporating the said changes. That way, even when it retains some traces of its traditional matrix, it is able to borrow from the present and recreate itself anew in the midst of constant change thereby maintaining its life of entertainment and instructions (Noss: 2006, 34).

The hybridization process has been adapted in order to bring together the elements of culture from the past and those of the present and come up with new meaning or solution to the riddle. In the past The Kipsigis culture, as discussed earlier in this study, as well as the influence of neighbouring cultures and the British culture, in particular, has led to fundamental change in the Kipsigis cultural disposition as depicted in the following riddles.

'Bun yon abun yu ng'etuitosi ko biriren eunek' – chobinik ("pass here, let me pass there when we meet our hands will be red"). The response to which was "red wild berries" in the past. However, the response to this riddle has now changed to "money". Kiptalam, one of the resource persons and a farmer, explained that the riddle reflects the pre-colonial past because the Kipsigis people used to depend on hunting and gathering for their food; they lived entirely on wild animal meat and on the berries and roots they collected. According to him, livestock keeping and later, farming came after hunting and gathering. The riddle reflects the past when the Kipsigis land had abundant natural vegetation; wild vegetables, various types of fruits and wild animals such as antelopes, which used to be found in these areas. Today all these are rarely found, as the forested areas that were initially endowed with wild fruits have been cleared for farming. The riddle also unveils the prevailing conditions and changes that the present society has undergone, especially in the area of land ownership. Because of the abundant land in the Kipsigis society in the pre-colonial era, land was not restricted. The onset of colonialism brought the practice of individual land ownership. The division of land and the clearance of these lands for farming practices led to deforestation thus undermining the above traditional practice.

The above riddle is directly adapted from the Kipsigis oral traditions, but the answer has been reconstructed to suit the modern situation. Though the riddle is clearly borrowed from the oral tradition the answer is far from the traditional expectation. As if undergoing some transition, the riddle meaning has moved from the historical configuration of work and traditional occupation and captured a changing occupational landscape in modern times. While occupations such as hunting and blacksmithing were respected in the traditional Africa, their place in today's society has seriously been jeopardized, mostly by new forms of economic pursuit (Mugo, 2014: 63). The traditional riddle is deconstructed and made to bear the weight of present experiences. A new metaphor in the riddle, therefore, unveils the reality of the new life situation in the contemporary Kipsigis community. The metaphor of 'red wild berries' which has been used to represent wild fruits is replaced by the new metaphor 'money', which was first introduced into the community by Indian merchants before the arrival of the Europeans and has since been widely used as a legal tender.

As explained earlier, some riddles have had to lose some content and have been replaced with new content in accordance with the current concerns. Other riddles have retained their content but have acquired new meaning as is the case with respect to the above mentioned riddle. The riddle underscores the changes in the economic and social activities of the Kipsigis after the introduction and usage of money. Whereas the riddle remains largely the same, the new situation brought about by the postcolonial experience guides the audience to another level of reference in play. The dynamics of change in the contemporary Kipsigis community is evidenced by the changing metaphor of the riddle itself. The change in the response reflects the extent of the colonial influence as well as the Kipsigis adoption of colonial economic culture. The continuity of riddles is also apparent as the riddle retains its ancient form despite the change in meaning. This process of layering or, rather, adding new information to the old understanding of the riddle serves to maintain the community's cultural values while at the same time pointing to the influence of modernity. Consequently, as Hamnett (1976: 388) suggests, new and alien ideas appear to be assimilated and accorded space within the old through a process that accords it space in a relation with familiar experiences, without radically defamiliarising the familiar traditional ways of knowing.

The process of erasure and layering, as Hofmeyr (1994) observed in another context, helps explain how riddles in contemporary Kipsigis are reformed. The following riddle illustrates how old ideas have been brought forward to echo the current activities as well as the new technology.

Kiptiltilyet mi itit – simoit ('A woodpecker on the ear- mobile phone').

The riddle was rendered by Pauline Misik, one of the respondents during an interview on the oral traditions of the Kipsigis. *Kiptiltilyet* was one of the birds connected with omen in the Kipsigis community. According to her, the riddle is synonymous to the Kipsigis incantation, '*Teledenin kiptiltilya ketab it si kokur Chemunai ne mi oik*'- (may a woodpecker stand on your wooden ear-ornament and call Chemunai who is in evil spirit world'. The name *Chemunai* in Kipsigis represents something hidden deep inside whereas *oik* generally stands for unseen evil. The saying seems to have prophesized the invention of a mobile phone with its unpredictable dangers. The riddle borrows ideas from the past to talk about the present as implied by the two metaphors, a woodpecker and a mobile phone. Apparently the old and the new metaphors have parallel implication. *Kiptiltilyet* was one of the birds connected with omen in the Kipsigis community. In this community, omen was very important in people's cultural lives and controlled numerous activities. No omen was to be ignored. It was believed that *Asis* (God) and the ancestral spirits send messages to people through omen. A positive or good omen was a sign that a good decision had been made and that *Asis* agreed with what was being done or would be done (Fish & Fish, 1995: 221-222).

Three birds especially were connected with omen. One was *Kiptiltilyet* (a kind of woodpecker); the direction from which it sang was indicative of good or bad omen. It was especially significant when cattle raiders were leaving home to engage in raids. When in conflict, if this bird perched on the right of the raiders it meant victory, but on the left it meant defeat. Vultures were also birds connected with bad omen. It was bad omen when *sanginonik* (vultures) followed an army going to battle. It meant that they will be routed and that they should return home to avoid impending defeat. Barton (1923, 48-49) had also talked about these and other omen earlier and recorded that the cry of this bird and also of a *chepkokosyot* immediately in front or behind the raiders was a bad omen. *Chepkokosyot*, is a brown hawk with a white abdomen. However, this bird sitting on a tree with its white abdomen facing towards a person was good omen (Fish & Fish 1995: 221-222). The Kipsigis believed in the intervention of these birds thus the interpretation of the message deemed to be conveyed by these birds meant that the spirits of the dead or any other supernatural powers had something to complain about therefore these birds acted as agents. Toweett (1979: 34-35) also commented on the intervention of these birds. Looking back at the account of the Mogori War, already alluded to, the Kipsigis' army defeat is said to have been a direct result of their negligence to carrying out the traditional fortune telling before going to war. It is said that at the time of the Mogori War,

the Kipsigis army leaders were so conceited by their successive victories that they neglected the important duty of interpreting good or bad luck for which, the Kipsigis believed that *Asis* (God) had given to omens. Hence their humiliating defeat in the war.

The use of birds in the riddle therefore denotes the unforeseen dangers associated with a mobile phone, though accepted for its usefulness, speculations of its potential bearer of bad news are cautiously taken. The Kipsigis attitude towards the mobile phone use was negative; it was not readily accepted especially by the elderly persons. Perhaps, prompted by the cautious message through the riddle, Borreli (2013) studied negative effects of the mobile phone which has dominated the daily activities of many individuals in recent times. The outcome shows that the mobile phones despite their usefulness has also become an agent of ill-fated threats to individuals and families as unscrupulous people channel their hate speech through text messages and queer calls. Borreli (2013) states some negative attributes of mobile phones as affecting emotions, increased stress levels and mental health and negative effects on immune system and vision problems. The metaphor as Bwonya (2010) observed in another context help in highlighting the community's attitude towards mobile phones.

Seemingly the riddle draws from the Kipsigis old traditions but implication of meaning points to the current situation of the community's worldview. The creation of new riddles recognises the versatility of culture that leads to new meaning making to reflect changed values. More Kipsigis riddles are being created a new in the context of both pre-colonial and post-colonial experiences as in the following riddles;

Arereni Chelangat en kapolis-benderet ('Chelang'at is hysterically dancing in the police station – a flag').

The riddle has significant metaphorical implication of the main aspect of Kipsigis life right from birth to marriage. The name Chelang'at is given to a female child born between 5.00p.m and 11.00 p.m. Some names in the Kipsigis were used as nuances and were indicative of some aspect of the foreign culture which impacted either negatively or positively on the Kipsigis social order. Hence, the use of the name Chelang'at here implies the colonial administration which distracted the community's social order and challenged the cultural life of the Kipsigis. The National flag in this case has replaced the traditional flag worn by girls during their circumcision. The latter was an emblem of honour to the initiates. During the pre-colonial time, both boys and girls underwent circumcision as a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. The night before the circumcision marked the climax of the ceremonial songs and dance for

the initiates. They were dressed for the occasion, and those who maintained their dignity were crowned with a flag decorated with beautiful feathers. The flag signified that the bearer was a virgin. The colonial and the subsequent Kenyan state authorities suppressed this social order. The people mocked the new system of governance hence the new riddle was composed to reflect this new governance system.

The national flag which symbolized the new regime was perceived as a symbol of colonialism that upset traditional social order for which the people coined the phrase ‘hysterically dancing’²⁰. Though the practice of female circumcision has greatly diminished in this community, values that were instilled to initiates during the seclusion period are retained in riddles and traditional songs which appraise the cultural norms and mock the foreign culture which is deemed to have degraded the cherished values of the society. The riddle alludes to the clash between the two cultures and creates a vent through which the nostalgia of the ‘lost culture’ is expressed. Thus, riddles have been refashioned through the use of images alluding to the pre-colonial past but at the same time taking the contemporary realities into consideration. The fluid nature and the eclectic character of the riddle, as Barber (1989) in a similar context, make them easy to modify in accordance with the present – day interest.

Police station was seen as a place of torture, as similarly expressed in the following riddle.

Katyechyu kabun yu karkang- asikarindet, (‘he stepped here, he passed here with a thud!’ – Policeman’).

This is a sound riddle reflective of the coercive rule introduced by the British in Kenya during colonialism. The police worked for the new administration and were brutal in their actions such that they were presumed to be an anathema to everyday social life. As observed in another context, they were cursed personally and collectively and often their houses burnt down because of their cruelty to the people. This perception is captured in these two riddles to imply some suspicion and open distaste for colonialism and its signifiers.

Other riddles metaphorically introduce new items and innovations adapted by the Kipsigis in the course of their interaction with the colonialist during the colonial period. These riddles take up symbols or signs that are prevalent in the community to introduce the new items. The use of these symbols reflects the cherished values and activities in the society which has been retained in the midst of the changing cultural system. Kipsigis people were mainly cattle

²⁰ These views were raised by the interviewee- John Arap Too in an interview conducted in April, 2014.

herders as discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis. Wealth here was valued in terms of cattle and other livestock possession of an individual. Honours and privileges were always for the 'wealthy'. The herds served several functions including provision of food- milk and meat. Milk is much valued by this community to date. It is taken as fresh or as *mursik*.²¹ In the past it was also mixed with animal blood and served as a nutritious meal especially for nursing mothers. A cow was expected to produce plenty of milk if taken care of well by the herdsmen. The following riddles uses images of livestock preferably cattle; cows, bulls and oxen to express their new concern in the new items and innovation brought to bear in the Kipsigis society.

Karkang karkang – mogombetab eik, Kargang kargang (sound) – an ox – plough.

Arwap ilat kerer ng'wony – mogombetab eik; ('Son of lightning splits the ground – an ox – plough').

These are riddles which gained much recognition at the advent of the ox–plough in the Kipsigis community. Ox–ploughing was introduced by the colonialists in the 19th Century. The first one is a sound riddle expressing the sound of an ox – plough when being tied or being united from the oxen. The second riddle expresses the suspicions which the Kipsigis people associated with the ox – plough which by design demanded the use of their oxen. The Kipsigis people adored their cattle. Earlier studies on the Kipsigis had recorded that the oxen were held in high esteem-almost considered sacred-and for this reason it was felt that they should not be subjected to torture through yoking for reasons of ploughing (Hotchkiss 1937: 121– 122, Fish & Fish 1995:148).The use of plough which involved the use of the oxen was viewed as kind of mistreatment of the oxen. It was considered as a cruel activity thus the Kipsigis reacted negatively to its use when ploughing by oxen was first introduced. The practice could even lead to the death of these animals through exhaustion and fatigue or excessive beating. Thus the association of the ox – plough with lightning on one hand shows how dangerous the use of the plough was. On the other hand, the comparison reflects the Kipsigis awe at the new form of land tillage that replaces old forms of traditional hoeing.

Lightning by its own powerful nature is a force that is both reverend and feared by the Kipsigis. Thus, to some extent ox-ploughing was perceived to be an ill-fated phenomenon hence the practice took long time before it was cautiously accepted by the Kipsigis. They used horror

²¹Soured or clabbered milk.

words such as *ilet* to denote their resistance. *Ilet*²² in Kipsigis is a supernatural phenomenon which might cause sudden death of individuals or animals. If a man or domestic stock is killed by lightning, a day is set apart on which no work may be done over a wide area of the neighbourhood. If it strikes a house or land, consultations from the diviners on the cause and implication of the catastrophe are sought and necessary precautions prescribed by the diviners. The association of *ilet* with ox-plough is an indication of Kipsigis' resistance of the new farm implement which subjected their oxen to torture. This was confirmed by one of the resource persons, Arap Lang'at who further gave his experience with white men interaction with African workers in the white settler farms. He narrated how they were forced to use their oxen to plough the white settlers' lands. Gradually though, this practice proved easier than the old methods of cultivation therefore they copied and continued the practice after leaving the white settler farms. That is how ploughing by oxen was gradually accepted and is still carried out even today. This reflects the continuity of some aspects of the community for instance the farming activity as expressed in the riddle. Economic activities were improved by the use of modern farming implements and adaptation of new farming methods but the old ways of farming were not totally abandoned. The use of ox-plough as extensively been adapted by the community, few middle – class people hires tractors for cultivating their large tracts of lands. Tractors were also acquired after the colonial regime and minimized the use of oxen. A number of riddles were then formulated in relation to the tractor as in the following.

Iuti birirmet en imbar – terekta. (A red – head ox is bellowing in the farm- a tractor.)

Iutote birirmet katar Nandi – Terekta- (A red – head ox is bellowing as he goes upto Nandi).

The two riddles introduce the use of tractors which gradually replaced the use of ox- ploughs. The Kipsigis loved oxen and they marvelled at the new forms of powerful tractors that was steadily replacing the old forms of ploughing. The Kipsigis related its power with those of oxen, particularly reddish or rather, brown oxen; they were considered more powerful than other oxen. The Kipsigis do not have a different name for 'red' and brown colours. Thus the red-head ox was a favorite to many Kipsigis people and Kalenjin as a whole. This was also because 'red' colour was a symbol of power.²³ The use of Nandi in the riddle meant that the tractors could move far across distances and space hence to Nandi. The riddles expose the two divergent cultures with their different preferences. However, taking the valuable elements of each culture and merging them together, a process termed as hybridization as explained earlier,

²²Lightning- the term is also used to refer to a very fierce person, hence *arwap ilat* denote the young one of the fierce person.

²³ Arap Too (Julai), a resource person interviewed on April, 2014 talked at length about the preference and significance of red/brown cattle.

creates a new outlook of the society in question. New perception of things made the people adapt new items and put them into use. But their most valuable possession-cattle remained to be adored. The reference to cattle in most riddles as illustrated in the following riddles depicts this notion.

Atinye tetanyun ne ngomakirat ko maakete- Sindanut. ('I have my cow if not tied, cannot graze – needle'). There are also sound riddles with the same meaning;

Chipit chipit akobet –sindanut, 'drop' 'drop'and it gets lost – needle

Kwilis kwilis ak kobet sindanut, 'kwilis kwilis'(sound) and it gets lost – needle.

The latter two riddles denote the sound of a needle when it falls on a hard ground. The participants could form riddles according to the sound of an item when it falls on the ground or hits a rock. The answer is suggested through the sound made which gives a direct onomatopoeic impression. The sound suggests that riddles in this community have the potential to introduce new onomatopoeic words into the language. The first riddle introduces a needle as a modern artefact in the Kipsigis community brought into use during the colonial period. Before then people used a certain type of thorn to sew items like baskets, traditional clothes, gourds and *kiskisik*²⁴. Indeed their comparison to the cattle in the first riddle signifies their admiration. Cattle keeping was, and is still is, a common activity in the community thus most riddles revolved around the activity. In this riddle, historical background of the social and economic activities in the community is reflected while the invention of new artefacts is also embraced in the same riddle. From far back in the past, flocks and herds have been seen to be a part of Kalenjin life. Cattle, sheep and goats were valued and served several purposes. Grazing and taking care of them was a man's activity (Fish & Fish 1995, 148 – 149). Gender roles were clearly marked in Kipsigis community. While the riddle reminds people of these roles and cattle rearing in particular, the element of ambiguity is also implied. It is unusual for a cow not to graze when not tied, in the contrary it grazes freely when not tied. The riddle then leads us to think of a phenomenon which fits the description. Elements of the past as well as those of the present are considered in the mind of the respondent in order to arrive at the answer which in this case is a needle; if the thread is not tied to it, possibly it will not work, when its tied it will work for one is able to sew the items well.

¹⁰. The plural of the term *kisyet* which refers to a weaved pot-like bowl used to keep ugali hot in the Kipsigis community; it is one of the traditional artifacts made by women.

Irony has been employed here as the expression of the riddle means the opposite of what it says. The study of what Saussure (1983) called ‘the role of signs’. The role of signs as part of social life plays an important role in arriving at the answer to this riddle as well as to all the riddles discussed in this chapter. The challenger uses a metaphor, a description of something that is known to the cultural community to introduce a new sign. As Ronald Barthes (1998:12) observes:

No sooner is a form seen than it must resemble something. Figures of Speech enable us to see one thing in terms of another; as with paradigm and syntagm, tropes orchestrate the interactions of signifiers and signifieds in discourse.

Thus, the signifier here, ‘cow’ and the signified, ‘needle’ has been used in the imaginative mind of the respondent to arrive at the answer.

Atinye tetanyun ne ngobir ropta komakikee – kibiritit,(‘I have a cow whom when rained on cannot be milked- a match box’).

This is a new riddle which uses the past analogy to talk of the present. A cow that has been rained on refuses to be milked. Similarly, match box when soaked by water cannot light fire. The composition of the riddle features the economic background of the Kipsigis while the answer points at one of the new items introduced into the community during the colonial regime. *Tetanyun* (my cow) expresses pride one has in possessing a cow, *kegei* (to milk) further explain that the pleasure of having a cow is to milk. Thus the two terms “*tetanyun*” and “*kegei*” are dominant images that structures the Kipsigis livelihood. Cattle rearing were a common activity in every family as evidenced by this work and the previous works of authors like Barton (1923), Peristiany (1939), Orchardson (1931, 1961), Manners (1967), Mwanzi (1977), Toweett (1979) and Fish & Fish (1995) as earlier discussed. Every man owned at least one cow. The number of herds one had determined his position in the society as described in the previous chapters. In the mind of the challenger, modern ideology has been coupled with the past ideology to create the riddle but the meaning implied is purely recent, a match box. Rhetoric plays an important role here; the influence on thoughts and how these thoughts are presented in a figurative manner is evident in this riddle. The riddle reveals part of the economic history of the community and opens new ideas and modern items introduced into the community.

Change and continuity of riddles is manifested through the way riddle meaning are arrived at whereas the formulation of the riddle maintains the past cherished values of the community.

Health and strength of the livestock was also a matter of concern of the individual owner as elaborated through the following riddle;

Atinye kirkinyun ne ngout koletoksei banyek – tinga, ‘I have a bull whom when he bellows his flesh gets taut- a grinding mill’).

The formulation of this riddle still revolves around the value accorded to cattle and especially bulls in this case. They were the main concern of the owner or men who guarded them. These men lived in a small house called *Kaptuguut*²⁵ which was built at the *Kaptich*. The *Kaptich* included both the *Kaptuguut* and the *piyuut* (fenced area where cattle slept) (Fish & Fish 1995, 148 – 149). There were herdsmen who guarded the cattle in shifts to cover twenty four hours. Arap Too, one of the resource persons, in an interview explained that these men took well care of the cattle. In Soin areas where he has lived for the last sixty seven years, people regularly took their cattle to a place called *Ng’eny* to lick *ng’eenda*²⁶ and drink *suguteek*²⁷ which both improved their cattle’s health. The practice was also recorded by other scholars; (Fish & Fish 1995, 150 – 151; Toweett 1979, 39). *Ng’eenda* was occasionally given to livestock. The bull’s strength and fierceness demonstrated by its bellowing added pride to the owner as it affirmed his good care of the livestock.

The riddle phrase, ‘his flesh gets taut’ implies the general health of the animal and has been used in the riddle to denote the power of a grinding mill which is a recent phenomenon, capable of grinding maize into flour. Its sound is equated to the bellowing of the bull whereas the grinding power is considered equal to the value accorded to bulls. Hybridization process is employed here through bringing together parts of cultural elements of the past and those of the present, a process which Barber calls ‘composition by fragments’. This and the preceding riddles show the continual creation of riddles and the adaptation of new figures in the riddle formation and meaning.

Cheptanyun ne tieni ‘kipress’ – tinga – (‘My daughter who sings ‘kipress’ –grinding mill’).

The grinding mill is personified as a daughter who sings *kipress*. *Kipress* is a term used to imply a foreign song or a song which is not common in the community. It implies either to the

²⁵ Kaptuguut is a fenced area where cattle slept; it was built at the *Kaptich*, a large reserve for cattle keeping in the Kipsigis community.

²⁶ Salty clay found at the river bed.

²⁷ Water from the river where cattle have their salt-lick.

new songs introduced into Kipsigis by the neighbouring communities or white people's songs and dances introduced into the community during the colonial era. The riddle paradoxically denote to the conflicting culture of the West and the African culture. New forms of entertainment such as songs and dances have influenced Kipsigis' perception of their cultural practices which initially were considered pure and educative. Rhythm of traditional songs was very important to the Kalenjin for it showed the emotions being felt by the singers. Kalenjin songs had a message which might refer to something which needed to be done or something to look forward to, something to be remembered or something to be done. Songs were also for rejoicing and to mark various stages of initiation. Dances were done at daytime and sometimes in the evening; the evening dance was referred to as *Kiplangatit*²⁸. The youths danced to their satisfaction and returned to their various homes safely. They behaved decently thus immorality was a rare case among them. There were also occasional dances like *kambaget*; a song performed to appreciate the warriors after a successful raid. Other songs were performed during initiation ceremonies like circumcision and marriage. The expression in the riddle, 'My daughter who sings *Kipress*' therefore, is a sign of alienation of this cultural social order. Modern dance and songs greatly differ from the traditional dance and songs in the way they are performed. They are also perceived to be of no importance as they lack objectives to the audience.

The answer to the riddle is a grinding mill, a recent innovation which in this riddle symbolizes social alienation. The noise made by a grinding mill is likened with the modern songs and dances. The riddle thus expresses a new simile to show the distaste of the new culture. However these songs have gained popularity to the extent that the Kipsigis artists have also adapted the rhythm and often formulate their songs following the new rhythm.

Obot Chelang'at ak arekyik- ndisinik ('Chelang'at's mother and her kids- bananas').

Bananas are fruit plants which were introduced to Kipsigis by the neighbouring Kisii²⁹. At harvest time, people could get several bunches of bananas which they referred to in this riddle as kids (*arek*) implying children. The riddle opens a discussion on how the Kipsigis valued children; a married woman desired to have as many children as she could. It was considered a misfortune for a woman to be childless. Men were also concerned on producing children; childless people had no one to care for them in their old age. It was also through sons that

²⁸ One of the dances performed by the Kipsigis in the past; it was usually performed in the evening before the night fell.

²⁹ This was remarked by Obot Borness interviewed on April, 2014.

properties, flocks and herds were passed on from one generation to the other in the family. Thus anything good, introduced into the community was compared to children. The riddle also shows how the Kipsigis' interaction with the neighbouring communities influenced their economic life. New crops introduced into the community were reflected in riddles as well as in other genres. Food crops such as bananas, maize, beans, cassava, potatoes and some vegetables were not part of Kipsigis staple food. The Kipsigis learn to use them through interaction with the neighbouring Luos and Kisii, thus they started planting them and eventually adapted as part of their meal. This further explains why the Kipsigis do not have a referent name for bananas; instead they use a borrowed name 'ndisi' a Swahili name for bananas to form a noun *ndisiot* and its plural *ndisinik*. This probably was acquired from the Arabs who earlier came for trade. The following is a picture of a banana plantation in one of the farms in Soin area. In the pre-colonial and colonial past, no such plantations were seen anywhere in this area. It is a new crop which has been adapted from the neighbouring Kisii community.



Plate 14: A boy stands before a banana garden at Kapsitii farm in Soin area, Kericho County.

The following riddle also draws from the elements of culture in the past to talk of the present.

Chepkulung kituiyo met- chemakurer/muguryot ('Wristlet with its head closed- a string-like bangle tied round a baby's wrist').

This is one of the old riddles which have acquired another new meaning in order to fit into the current society. The framing of the riddle and the answer thereof has not changed. But during performance several answers to the same riddle were given. These included *kiptimbo*, *tamokiet*, *olmera* and *oliondo* all of which are cultural bangles worn for decoration purposes but a

tamokiet had an added significance; it was made from the hide of an animal killed for a sacrifice or for some guests and the entrails had shown good omen thus wearing of it was a sign of honour. The latter two bracelets were metal ornaments made from metals obtained from the neighbouring Luo and Kisii communities respectively. Many participants particularly resource persons to which the riddle was obtained contested that the initial answer to the riddle should not be neglected as it carried with it moral lessons to be passed on to the new generations. The social background from which the riddle was formulated in the past seemed to have dominated the minds of the riddle users especially the older members of the society. The riddle is symbolic and was cited as an example of Kipsigis riddles by almost every resource person during fieldwork though the implication of the riddle was concealed by almost all male respondents. Two women respondents explained that *muguryot*³⁰ was a traditional bangle tied to a child's wrist to monitor his or her growth. As the child grew it was supposed to tighten to the extent that it was removed and another one put on. This showed that the mother took good care of the child. It also implied that she had not had any sexual affair with her husband or any other man. It was an offence to do so or even mingle with men before the baby attained six months as it was believed that the baby would be subjected to several ailments and would grow thin and weak. This was the main reason why the *muguryot* was tied to a baby's wrist. The offence was punishable by culturally sanctioned beating of the wife by her husband. One of the resource persons demonstrated how *muguryot* was tied to a baby's wrist as follows;



³⁰ Muguryot was a string-like bangle tied on a baby's wrist to monitor his or her growth; as the baby grew it was supposed to tighten, another one was then put on the baby until the baby reached two years of age.

Plate 1: Obot Bornes (A resource person) demonstrating how *muguryot* was tied to a baby's wrist [Chepkemoi (above) is three months old].

The baby's right hand above shows *muguryot* tied on her wrist. The resource person (above) is seemingly preparing another *muguryot* to be tied on the right ankle of the baby's leg. This was a practice which, as explained earlier served to maintain marital order and discipline.

The same riddle was explained by a respondent Kiptalam, (53 years old) who added that the meaning of the riddle has changed. The new answer to the same riddle is "handcuffs" with which a suspect is tied when arrested over an offence. The 'bangle' (*muguryot*) is thus regarded as a reminder of deep and extensive social memories, which are retrieved and recounted through the riddle. The ancient term used in the riddle calls for the need to continue some aspects of social life remembered from the past. Moreover, both versions of the answers to the riddle have a common goal geared towards the maintenance of social order. The current study also revealed that these Kipsigis bangles- *muguryot*, *kiptimbo*, *tamokiet*, *olmera* and *oliondo*, far from being mere traditional ornaments, are regarded as reminders of deep and extensive social memories, which are retrieved and recounted in contemplation of the lost social culture. Some of these ornaments such as *olmera* and *oliondo* came from the neighbouring people. The ironworking in Kipsigis community was the work of people who either came from the Maasai or the Kisii, or had learned their skills from contact with these people. The more metals the Kipsigis were able to obtain, the more uses they found for it. They made bracelets, anklets and rings. They even formulated riddles on this for instance;

Grrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr. Ringit, Grrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr – Ring.

This indicates the sound of a ring.

The following section expounds on the riddles which have been created after the interaction of the Kipsigis with the colonial people. Their perception of things and other people after the interaction are also expressed in the riddles.

4.3.2 New Riddles in the Kipsigis Community

This section discusses riddles that are produced in present day Kipsigis land. Pick (1973) explains that the riddle's subject matter confines itself with the environment which the people inhabit and also things and images that litter their world of everyday activities. The riddles discussed here draws from the Kipsigis environment at the present time and the perception of new items adapted in the contemporary Kipsigis community. Topics covered in the riddle in the past were certainly meant to impart in the children the knowledge of the world they lived in; the hut, homestead, village, members of the family domestic animals and their habits, the birds, the field, the crops, the forest and the different kinds of trees among others. All these have changed, we rarely find huts in the village instead brick houses; storey houses and the like dominate the village. Homesteads have been fenced and often flowers and foreign trees decorate the compound. Domestic animals have become fewer as they have been sold and exchanged with hybrid type which are kept mostly at zero grazing. Forests have been cleared for farming as explained earlier in this chapter. Generally, the Kipsigis outlook has changed; the activities therein have also changed. Thus the riddles discussed here reflect the new stance of things in the current Kipsigis community. Language has prevalently switched to accommodate new items which were not there before as evidenced in the use of borrowed words in the riddles.

Siling mi barak – Ndegeit – a shilling in the air– (response: aeroplane).

The shilling as used in this riddle represents Kipsigis attempt to make sense of the currency introduced first by the Indians, then Europeans in the early nineteenth centuries. An aero-plane is also a new figure representing the new technology and innovation that changed our understanding of travel, distance and time, which has been appreciated by the Kipsigis people. The modern concept of currency thus radically changed people's understanding of the world in relation to the pre-colonial mode of trade and exchange which was mainly barter trade. Often, people had to travel long distances with the items for exchange using donkeys, or even in their own backs. Animals like goats and sheep were also driven for long distances to be exchanged with foodstuff, particularly millet from the neighbouring Kisii people. This happened usually during prolonged drought. The challenge was valuing the two types of goods. The advent of money therefore changed the way the existing relationship of exchange of goods was understood. The trading pattern shifted from the pre – colonial past to post-colonial present as people's conception of trade and exchange also shifted. Thus, as the novel mode of transport, aero-plane so captivated the imagination of the Kipsigis people that for a long time it was the

focus of everyday discourses. Children would run outside the houses at the detection of the slightest sound that was deemed similar to that of the plane so as not to miss the opportunity to gaze at the aero – plane that might be overflying the village. Over time, children even formulated a song about planes which they would sing as they gazed at the plane in the skies. The association of the two signifiers of modernity therefore invokes the creative mind to think of the appearance of these two objects in the riddle and establish a relation. For instance, through observation objects appear big when they are near while they appear small when they are far away. In this case an aero-plane appears too big on the ground but high up in the the sky, it is no bigger than a shilling. Thus the response to the riddle is arrived at through comparison of the size of the shilling to the apparent size of the distant plane in full flight. At another level, the shinny appearance of the shilling resembles the white appearance of a plane at a distance. To further express this puzzlement of the plane as a new innovation, more riddles about it was further formulated each reflecting different points of view of what the riddles depict.

Kutkutenin koris koitin chumbeek- ndegeit, (Let the wind blow you to Europe -aero plane).

Kutkutenin akoi Indoi – ndegeit; (Let it fly you to India- Aero plane)

Atinye lakwenyun newendi akoi Nairobi/ Kisumu- Ndegeit; (I have my child who goes up to Nairobi/ Kisumu – aeroplane).

Atinye ndegeinyun ne marube Kenya; kalyang'at – I have a plane which does not land in Kenya-housefly.*Atinye ndegeinyun ne makyole – koita* – I have a plane which cannot be bought- stone.

Each of these riddles represents different perspectives of the plane by the Kipsigis people. However, what is common in all of them is the aspect of flight. All alludes to flying within and outside the country. The later presumes the costly means of air travel.

Air travel is believed to be the most expensive means of transport not only in Kenya but also in the entire African continent. The Kipsigis thus formed this riddle to express the irony; a stone cannot be bought as it is a natural feature whereas the aero plane which is as a western innovation is both expensive in terms of transport and in terms of possessing it. The expressions of the riddle reflect perplexity of the man-made things and how they seem hard to be accessed by ordinary people. The other riddles describe how the planes move in the air;

Kutkutenin koris koitin chumbeek – ndegeit, (Let the wind blow you to Europe -aero plane). The riddle introduces air travel which is a new and fast mode of transport. The Kipsigis people do not fancy doing things in a hurry as the saying goes “*Kibendi mutyo machei kel*”- (go slowly without the sound of footsteps) implying that whatever one does should be done cautiously. The new innovation as reflected in this riddle was cautiously accepted as it was perceived to bring a lot of risks to the people’s lives. Thus it was introduced to the riddle with some kind of horror words as in the expression ‘*Kutkutenin koris*’. The phrase ‘*kutkutenin koris*’³¹ is a curse in itself. Orchardson (1961) argues that it is the curse that is feared by the Kipsigis and not the spirits. The curse (*chupisiet*) comprises two different activities: the verbal cursing of a person or persons by individuals and the curse which is brought upon the man when he breaks any law or custom. According to Orchardson (1961:117) the natural curse plays a very important role in Kipsigis life, as it is the ultimate sanction behind the recognition and maintenance of tribal custom.

The riddle implies that air travel, though fast may involve some unforeseen risks, like being blown away by the wind literally. The riddle depicts the continuity of some aspects of Kipsigis life in the past and some of the beliefs which are still held in the minds of the people for instance observance of the communal laws and acceptance of penalty on breaking them. Another riddle expressing a similar view is; *Kutkutenin akoi Indoi- ndegeit*; (Let it fly you to India – Aero plane)

The riddle literally implies the strong ‘wind’ which might carry one overseas but alludes to the possibility of declaring a perpetual customary law breaker an outcast. India stands for overseas and foreign countries. An outcast becomes a wanderer and may live peacefully only in a foreign country. Another riddle with the same response is; *Atinye lakwenyun newendi akoi Nairobi/ Kisumu- Ndegeit*; (I have my child who goes up to Nairobi/ Kisumu- aeroplane). The riddle literally alludes to the air travel within Kenya. Nairobi and Kisumu cities by then were the only places with airports. The riddle; *Atinye ndegeinyun ne marube Kenya; kalyang’at* – (I have a plane which does not land in Kenya-housefly) expresses some uncertainty of the use of aero planes. The riddle is expressed in a metaphor, as said earlier, an aeroplane is one of the signifiers of modernity and has been used here to denote the high speed at which a house fly can move and land on uncertain place without anyone’s awareness, implied by the words ‘does not land in Kenya’. The riddle also explains some misfortunes associated with the flight as

³¹ May the wind blow you away.

previously cited. It is not a guarantee that anyone who boards an aero plane or flies it can reach the designated destination. The riddle embodies the open dislike of certain technological items associated with some risks and brings into attention the awareness of the pros and cons of new innovations showing that people in this community have also adapted the current worldview of things.

Riddles on motor vehicle have also been created as expressed below;

Atinye rwoik che rwaie sait age tugul-Mugungonikab karit ('I have athletes who run all the time-car tyres').

Atinye lagok ang'wan che one ge ako manome ge-Mugungonikab karit (I have four children who chase each other but cannot catch each other- car tyres).

These two riddles have the similar meaning which introduces new innovation which in this case is a car. The metaphor of runners (*rwoik*) is associated with car tyres in the first riddle. Running was and is still a social activity and a hobby for many Kipsigis people and the Kalenjin as a whole. Fast runners served the community by carrying messages from one place to another during colonial and pre-colonial days. This was usually so when the recipient of the message lived far away from the village to which they were sent. Those messengers could cover long distances signified by the phrase 'as far as Nandi'. They were not supposed to stop or greet anyone before delivering their message. Running was treated as a hobby but also served the community in delivering crucial messages. In this riddle, a speeding car is compared to the fast runners. In the second riddle; *Atinye lagok ang'wan che one ge ako manome ge-Mugungonikab karit* (I have four children who chase each other but cannot catch each other – car tyres), the implication is that the past and the present means of communication are of a diverse nature as the latter have obtained faster means of communication than it has hitherto been realised. The riddle thus represents the 'past in the present' resonating with what Karin Barber (1989) says;

A past which they have brought with them 'texts' which can be re-opened and re-activated by their agency. They also represent the 'present in the past', for through all the stages of their transmission they do not lose their relationship of contemporaneity

to the events they refer to. They are not thought to be about the past; they are fragments of the past, living encapsulated in the present' Barber (pp.124).

The two riddles, though introducing a vehicle, reminds people of their social activities and the importance accorded to them. Riddles then can open windows simultaneously into the past and into the present. Running as a way of relaying important information in the past is remembered through the riddle. Riddles can thus be regarded as the principal means by which a living relationship with the past is reconstituted in the present. Consequently, the contemporary riddle provides a way of experiencing the past by bringing it back to the present. More riddles on new innovations are illustrated in the following riddles.

Atinye karinyun ne malanye chii – Chepkokochet, ('I have a car which nobody travels in – tortoise').

A tortoise is a timeless creature that is known today just as it was in the past. It is a small animal recognized by its slow pace whereas a car is a recent innovation popular for its speed. The contrast here is the speed with which each one travels. A four legged tortoise is compared to a vehicle which also has four wheels but a significant contrast in speed is also registered. The riddle borrows from the past ideology to talk of the present; a concept which Noss (2006, 36) also observed in his study of Gbaya riddles. According to him, the riddle itself may be timeless or modern yet the setting of the riddle is always direct and contemporary. This is also true of Kipsigis riddles. The use of a tortoise and a car in the riddle depicts a conflict oriented view of social and cultural life in the mind of the composer. This confirms the argument made by Claude Levi-Straus (1963) and also observed by Okpewho (1992, 178-179) that in the process of acquiring competence, in any language the human mind organizes the various concepts of that language into a scheme of oppositions so as to grasp them better. In other words the human mind naturally operates in a binary fashion.

Riddles about a bicycle were expressed differently as illustrated in the following riddles.

Chepkerat en ndani- baskilit, ('a closet in an inner side of the house – a bicycle').

Kiawe Kiptere akang'wal ng'wal – baskilit – ('I went to Kiptere as I 'coiled' – bicycle').

Kiatyech Chelangat kober kowek- baskili t- ('I stepped on Chelang'at till the bones stretched out-bicycle').

A bicycle was one of the first mobile machines introduced to Kipsigis in the 19th centuries. The missionaries used it to travel to interior parts of the area spreading Christian message; later the clergy who had been trained to spread this new gospel were also provided with the bicycles. As the years progressed some people also acquired them through buying. At that time the bicycle was the most valuable asset. Thus people stored it inside the house in fear of being stolen hence the expression *Chepkerat en ndani*, ('a closet inside the house -a bicycle'). A 'closet' here refers to something secretly hidden. 'Ndani' is a Swahili word which is borrowed and used directly to mean an inner side of the room. Thus the expression '*Chepkerat en ndani*' denotes both the bicycle and a new structure of a Kipsigis house. Other riddles describing the bicycle include:

Kiawe Kiptere akang'wal ng'wal- baskilit ('I went to Kiptere as I 'coiled'- bicycle').

The term *ng'wal* describes how a bicycle moves while Kiptere is one of the trading centers in Kericho County, established during the post-colonial period. People could travel to this place to buy or sell goods. Those who were far from the market center mainly used bicycles. The Kipsigis had no name for a bicycle thus they used the borrowed Swahili word 'baiskeli' and amended it as *baskilit* to suit their dialect. In a similar riddle;

Kiatyech Chelangat kober kowek – baskilit ('I stepped on Chelang'at till the bones stretched out-bicycle'), implies how a cyclist could struggle riding a bicycle for long distances sometimes even falling down and getting injured.

These riddles show how the referent object-bicycle was first acquired and used in the community. Being one of the first locomotive brought by the early missionaries, it become the object of admiration and people desired to possess and used it to ease travelling. At the advent of colonialism, some people had already learnt how to use it. At a later time, motorbikes were also introduced hence riddles about them were formulated as exemplified in the following sound riddle.

Tigeeeee.....pikipiki, (Tigeeeee....(sound); motorbike).

This indicates the sound of a motorbike. The Kipsigis do not have the original name for the motorbike thus they used the borrowed word '*pikipiki*' adapted from the Kiswahili language.

Most of the items which were adapted from other cultures, particularly the modern culture have no referent names in the Kipsigis community thus they retained the names from the

community they acquired the items from. The following riddles depict this language borrowing;

Atinye koitanyun ne letieni- 'D'lait, ('I have my stone which shines- 'D' light'- a device which uses solar energy to produce light).

A 'D' Light is a source of light which recently has become famous in its use especially in remote areas where electricity has not been installed. The riddle was posed by a young boy during a riddling session at their school³². Asked where the riddle came from, he explained that they use the 'D' light in their home. Through his creative mind he formulated the riddle. Further investigation of the area revealed that there are significant changes in the way people view things. New items are being adapted for use and the education system is taking root as opposed to the past where young children identified themselves with members of the same gender and learn through them. Modern items as well as modern education are being embraced and young people are getting more and more enlightened. Figurative language becomes part of the everyday speech in this culture as new signs are adapted and used in cultural genres such as the riddles. The stone, as used in this riddle signifies the 'D' light. The two unrelated objects are connected through metaphorical imagination of the challenger. The respondent on the other hand need to employ an imaginative leap; think from one domain to the other in order to arrive at the answer to the riddle as there is no direct connection between the stone and the object in question.

Some riddles were formulated at the spur of the moment in a classroom situation during a riddling session explained above. The following riddles about books, map and camera were established. The rationale behind this formulation of riddles was the availability of the modern items in school. Learning materials as well as new methods of learning including collaborative approach to learning also played a role in the child's imaginative and creative mind.

Keron amatweku- kamera,('It sees me but it cannot talk- camera').

This is a new riddle which was created by a pupil on the spur of the moment during our fieldwork at Barng'oror Primary school³³. One of the tools used for data collection was a video camera, a challenger critically observed its working and formulated and posed the riddle to the

³²Barng'oror primary at an interview session carried out on 8th May, 2014 by a researcher in the presence of a field assistant, their English teacher and the head of the institution.

³³Data was collected on 8th May, 2014 during a riddling session.

audience. Several responses were given by the audience before one of them, after careful observation of the items in the classroom and its surrounding one of the pupil gave the correct answer – camera which the challenger accepted challenging others to be keener on the new items around. The continual creation of riddles can be observed through this riddle. As a phenomenon occurs, people think of ways of bringing them into daily experience therefore they express it in different ways. Putting it in riddle form seems to be the easiest way as riddles allow for repetition and through this process the meaning is retained in the mind of the participant and can be passed on from one generation to the other.

Chematweek ako chang ng'alek – Kitabut ('Dumb but with many words-book').

The riddle is newly invented as depicted by the alien metaphor- book. Formal learning introduced during the colonial era enabled learners to acquire knowledge through reading. The referent- book in this riddle symbolizes the formal education in general. The composition of this riddle rests in the assumption that texts cannot speak for themselves; they are 'dumb' unless someone talks of them. This advocates for formal learning where learners acquire new knowledge through teaching and learning in a school setting. The riddle signifies formal education which gradually affected the informal learning that was part of the Kipsigis lifestyle. Learning in the past took place informally and in non-formal occasions such as the initiation period where the initiates were secluded for a period of six to twelve months and taught lessons on cultural lifestyle. The initiates learned many practical things which would help them in later life. They were also initiated into the secret rituals of the tribe and the teaching of tribal customs. Modern education has surpassed this practice and learners can find the information on oral traditions through studying oral literature texts. The riddle thus emphasizes the fact that texts contain lots of information which can be retrieved through reading. Speculations about how the books came about are also expressed through riddles as in the following;

Akwong'e ne kiyoe kii asomani – mashinit – ('I wonder who made this thing I am reading-paper manufacturing machine').

The riddle is posed as an astonishment of which the answer is machine used to manufacture papers for making books. The machine is an important item used to manufacture all kinds of reading and learning materials. It is expressed in the riddle as a wonder because without it, formal learning would have been difficult to execute. The riddle thus expresses the acceptance of formal education in the Kipsigis community. In the pre-colonial past children learnt informally through their elderly men and women in the community. At present, formal learning

has spread to the interior parts of this community, Barn'goror Primary School in Soin division being one of them³⁴. The expression of the riddle showed how the children in the current generation expand on their traditional knowledge on oral traditions. One of the ways of doing this is through creation of new riddles based on the current circumstances and the new items introduced into the community.

Another riddle raised by the pupil in a similar classroom setting is as follows;

Tindo Cherono kuinoik ang'wan – mapit. ('Cherono has four horns- map/compass').

The name Cherono is a name given to a girl born in the late afternoon, "when the goats are returning home" as the Kipsigis would say. It was perceived to be a good time and good expectations were anticipated at that time. As explained earlier, some names were used as nuances in the Kipsigis community. Thus, Cherono here is used to indicate the positive appreciation of the map. The 'horns' as used in the riddle implies cattle herding which was the main economic activity of the Kipsigis community in the past. The riddle is a metaphor introducing the map, a recent innovation which shows position and direction of a place. Though initially the Kalenjin were aware of the four major directions; East, West, North and South, only two; the East and the West seem to have been of major significance in their ceremonies and practices. The East plays an important part in all Kipsigis ceremonies associated with God (*Asis*) and the spirit world (Orchardson 1961: 25). East was the direction of health, life and prosperity whereas west was the direction of darkness, death, decline and cursing of enemies (Fish & Fish, 1995:177). This was affirmed by the respondents; they remarked that when the Kipsigis started burying their dead, they laid them to the West of the homestead. The burial took place at sunset³⁵.

The introduction of the map therefore was just but a continuation of what was there though it was not yet represented on paper. The four horns referring to four compass directions; North, East, South and West were also used to refer to the four corners of the world. Initially, the answer to the riddle was rainbow which was usually observed in the evening after the rain. Change in the riddle answer denotes a shift in the idea. The formal learning which introduced the use of a map created this shift. The girl with the four horns represents the Kipsigis land

³⁴ Barn'goror is a derivative word from the phrase bai ng'oror which means keeping goats. The area was a grassland and a forested area which befitted keeping of livestock. In pre-colonial times, livestock keeping and particularly goats were a major economic activity in this area.

³⁵ The resource persons; Obot Christina & Obot Kiptalam interviewed at different times (2014), talked in length about the Kipsigis rituals and ceremonies associated with birth, initiation, marriage and death. (They both died in 2017 & 2018 at the age of 98 and 96 respectively).

which initially had four Districts namely Belgut, Waldai, Bureti and Sot. These districts have been classified under one county which is Kericho County.

Some more riddles continue to be created based on the new items of use which has also changed the perception of life in the current situation.

Atinye bakinyun ne makali- pepabag ('I have my bag which is not expensive- Polythene paper').

Bags and other new artefacts were adapted by the Kipsigis because of their ease of use. In the past the Kipsigis bought baskets through barter trade from the neighbouring Luo traders. Polythene papers which were multipurpose and cheap later became popular as they were cheaper than the baskets. The riddle also shows how children have started formulating riddles based on the new items which have become popular in their usage. Any item introduced into the community was made popular through riddles. Children's continual practice of riddling enhances their chances of retaining and formulating more riddles.

Some riddles also pointed at the awareness of the economic strain in terms of resources which to be acquired required money. The preceding riddle described the preference of cheaper items than the old ones which deemed expensive. The following riddle contrasts the idea.

Atinye lakwenyun naboe amaetu – tait. ('I have a child whom I always feed but he doesn't grow – a lamp').

A lamp is metaphorically treated as a child who is fed but does not grow. A child's growth was a joy to everyone concern, social stages were also a concern for the Kipsigis; *Ng'etet*-a boy was expected to grow into *muren*- a warrior, after circumcision, *chonginyot*- a middle-aged man and *boiyot* – an old man while *chepta* – a girl, uncircumcised was to grow into *mureret* a young woman, after circumcision, *kapsirwoniot* – a middle-aged woman then *chebioset* – an old woman. Thus a child who, despite all the provisions given failed to grow was a let down to the parents. Likewise, those who failed to live up to the standards of their social division were a burden to the family and the community at large. The riddle uses this allegory to introduce the kerosene lamp which, though it's fed with kerosene all the time it is used, it never 'grows' or get satisfied. The riddle is used to negate the new items of use introduced by colonialists on one hand and on the other hand to negate the European ways perceived to be alienating to the Kipsigis way of life as they are thought to have neglected the Kipsigis custom. Ocharadson (1931) remarked that the Kipsigis have often been heard saying that the European custom are

excellent for the European, Kipsigis custom for the Kipsigis. Thus the Kipsigis neither despised the European custom nor desired to ape their custom. Instead, they desired to remain with their custom. But then, since the European custom overwhelmed them, they had to accept them but they never stopped reminding themselves of their own ways. The cultural genres therefore become agents of transmitting them to the next generations.

Kinyo chumbindet en Ulaya ak konyokonam suet en Kenya- Kikombet ('A white man came from Europe and came to hold his hand 'akimbo' in Kenya- a cup').

The cup here has been used as a descriptive element; it is one of the signifiers of modernity in the Kipsigis community. Before the arrival of the British, the Kipsigis used gourds to take milk and curved cow – horns served as containers for storing cream and other milk products. The adaptation of cups to replace these cultural items is implied by the riddle. Assertion of authority is also inferred in the riddle; putting hands on the waist (which is sometimes termed as putting hands 'akimbo' in this community as well as in many African communities symbolizes power and authority. The exertion of power symbolized by the expression '*konam suet*' is indicative of how the British governance is enforced on the African communities and the Kipsigis in particular. Holding hands on the waist was a sign of asserting power to one self, a practice which was highly prohibited especially for women and children in the past.

Thus the riddle paradoxically talks of the colonial experience and the acceptance of their rule on one hand and on the other hand it talks of acquiring their possessions (signifiers of modernity). A similar riddle is expressed as follows;

Atinye lakwenyun ne tindo itit agenge – kikombet ('I have a child who has one ear – cup').

The riddle uses a metaphor of a physically disabled child to denote some kind of distaste of the European culture. Children were of great value in the Kipsigis community as explained in the previous riddles. However a child born with disability was believed to have been influenced by the evil spirits and was reluctantly accepted by the society. In such cases, cleansing ceremonies for the parents were first made before the birth ceremonies were done. Thus the use of 'a child with one ear' explains how the Kipsigis did not wholly embrace the foreign culture though the new items like cups were accepted. Some of the descriptive elements involved here are straight forward though not easily recognized; the use of an 'ear' is just as a referent to the handle of the cup. The answer is derived from the allowance made for new responses that exploit the new association of the two different cultures with their different items.

The following riddle expound on how the modern culture has impacted on the Kipsigis culture and the neighbouring communities.

Kiawirte kirungyun komoyo lemek – chepkelelyot/mureret ('I threw my club, the uncircumcised scramble for it a circumcised girl who had just come out of seclusion)

The term *kirungut* refers to a traditional club usually used by used by respected elderly men in the Kipsigis community. It was also presented to male initiates after circumcision i.e at the end of the seclusion period which took six to twelve months. The initiates used it to swear at their passing out ceremony. They were sworn in to keep the secrets of the society and to adhere to the traditional beliefs and customs. They were also allowed to marry within their culture.

The riddle implies the cross – border marriages and other possible intermarriages which had come up as a result of free interaction with other communities. Kipsigis people interacted more frequently with other cultural communities through trade and agricultural activities outside their locality. Settler farmers introduced new ways of farming which included large scale farming. This shift to commercial agriculture encouraged the Kipsigis youth to engage in cash economy where they interacted closely with people from other communities. Modern education which also created chance for both boys and girls to go to school heightened the interaction among various cultures and weakened the cultural ties of the Kipsigis. In the process, intermarriages set in. It was unusual for instance for Kipsigis women to be married to the Luos. Unlike the Kipsigis, the community did not practice circumcision hence they were referred to as *lemek* (a derogatory term meaning uncircumcised) thus they were considered unsuitable for marrying the Kipsigis women. Luo women were also not allowed to be married by the Kipsigis men. Any woman married to a Luo was considered an outcast as the riddle suggests; 'I threw away my club'. A club was a sign of manhood; after circumcision rite, boys were then considered adults eligible for marriage and were allowed to possess a club as a sign of power. Throwing it away meant that they could marry beyond the boundaries earlier set by the cultural ties which were then biased. Similarly, the riddle implies the success of the Luo men to finally get access to Kipsigis women whom they were forbidden to marry by the cultural implication before colonialism. Thus, the riddle was formulated as a sign of liberation from the cultural bondage. Another riddle with similar implication is as follows.

Kiawirte sosionyun komoyo lemek – sumonit – ('I threw my *sosiot*³⁶ and the Luos scramble for it- fifty cent coin').

The two unrelated items *sosiot* and *sumonit*³⁷ are brought together to introduce the later as a valuable item. Introduction of money replaced the old means of trade such as the use of cowry shells in transactions alongside barter trade practiced among the neighbouring Kisii and Luo communities. Introduction of money made the trade easier. The earlier methods could not allow efficient transactions. Cowry shells were hardly found and were valuable compared to money use.³⁸ The riddle implies the preference of money use in trading by most communities. The composition of this riddles is basically based on the trends of trade factions among the neighbouring communities. Here the Kipsigis, Luo and the Kisii communities had long been carrying out trade though in different methods. They started from barter then later, the use of cowry shells introduced by the Arabs and eventually the use of money introduced by the white settlers before the British government endorsed its use. The riddle thus expresses how these former methods of trade has been 'thrown' or abandoned and the new method of using money embraced.

Kiawa Nairobi ko biriren lagok – Gsu in operation ('I went to Nairobi and I found red children- Red-berret, Gsu Personel').

The riddle was cited by a pupil during a riddling session.³⁹ An inquiry from the pupil on the background of the riddle revealed that the children accesses the information from the media and formulate riddles based on their understanding. The riddle uses metonymy to express the reality involved in the riddle. The 'red' here signify the General Service Unit (GSU) personnel (normally wearing red caps). According to the pupils they are situated in Nairobi. The law breakers particularly the 'Alshabab' have terrorized people in the cities, a painful experience which is felt by all contemporary Kenyans. Nairobi in this case is a symbol of a nation as a whole. The insecurity in the country and across the border is felt even by the youngest generation. The riddle is directly connected to reality and grounded in people's experiences. The riddle also suggests that there is quite an awareness of the current affairs within and outside the community. The media has helped spread the news both good and bad to the interior parts

³⁶ A type of bamboo stick used to clean gourds.

³⁷ A fifty cent coin, and therefore money.

³⁸ An interview with Reverent Joseph Tonui and his wife Lydia Tonui on 27th April, 2014 revealed all these trade activities and how it was made easier by the arrival of the British.

³⁹ The riddling session was carried out on 9th May 2014 at Kapsorok primary in the presence of a researcher.

of the country such as the *Soin* area which was originally grazing land for the Kipsigis⁴⁰. Today the place has become a dwelling place for people. Permanent houses have been built with bricks and roofed with iron sheets. Recently electricity have been installed thus communication has greatly improved.

Names of places have been used in riddles to denote modernity. Nairobi City for instance has dominated the current riddles perhaps because of its first recognition as the capital city of the country. It is also a point of reference because people went to look for white collar jobs there after independence. This expression is found in the following riddle.

Bun yon abun yu ketuiyejin Nairobi – mosibit ('Pass here I pass there we meet at Nairobi- a belt').

The riddle is new and is metaphorically used to denote two things- travel and attire. The two are signifiers of modernity. Nairobi has also been used by the challenger to symbolize modernity. The challenger conveniently uses Nairobi as a significant metropolis in Kenya to signify modernity. The riddle portrays how Kipsigis people have become exposed through travel across ethnic borders and to new places. The riddle also exploits how their manner of dressing has changed due to the interaction with other cultures and the influence of modernity. A belt for instance have replaced the leather strap cut from hides and used to tie *kolikoik*⁴¹ together. The emergence of modern clothes was seen as having some resemblance to their past clothes especially in colour combination. Misik & Bunei⁴² explained that the Europeans emulated their dressing; the dressing were made in such a way that it was easier for them to wear; a blouse, skirt and dress resembled in appearance with the Kipsigis attire- *koliket*, *chepkaut* and *menegubet* respectively. The colour combinations were the same as those used by the Kipsigis to decorate their hide clothes with beads. This cultural exchange apparently led to acceptance of the use of modern clothes. However, the Kipsigis' hides are reserved for initiation purposes. The riddle unveils the hybridization process which took place during colonization. Some of the symbols of assimilation included modern clothes and interaction with other cultures which was made easier through improved infrastructure. The dressing style has shifted from the past, girls and women no longer adorn themselves in the manner the older

⁴⁰John A. Too, in an interview done on 28th April, 2014 at Kapsorok village confirmed that the place was grassland meant only for cattle; it was referred to as *Kaptich*;

⁴¹ The plural for the term *koliket* which refers to the traditional animal-hide clothes worn by the Kipsigis at various occasions in the past..

⁴²Pauline Misik and Esther Bunei in an interview held on 28th April, 2014 at Tabaiitha village, Kaplelartet location explained and demonstrated how these clothes were sewn and worn

generations did. Instead they have adopted modern way of dressing. Beauty has also been mirrored through the modern ways as expressed in the following riddle.

lit siker ne chome – kiyoit (‘Peep to see the one you love – mirror’).

A mirror is one of the new items introduced by the colonialists and gained popularity of its use by the Kipsigis. This was one of the items which was positively adapted and used without much resistance. It was taken with critical amazement; looking at one’s image in the mirror was a great fun and a sign of self-admiration especially for women as they used to adorn themselves with lots of jewellery. Some riddles were comic but also contained some message to their users as illustrated in the following riddles.

Itu chumbindet en tirisho- seberyot – A white man is peeping at the window-mucus.

Itu Tebit en tirisho- seberyot – (‘David is peeping through the window-mucus’).

The two riddles were cited by pupils in different riddling sessions⁴³ but the explanation of their implication was given by the resource person Arap Lang’at at an interview⁴⁴. These comic riddles relate to the European contact with the Kipsigis and expresses some negative attitude which the African people in general and Kipsigis in particular had towards the White people. They were seen as alien people even though they forced themselves to stay and inhabit African lands. Nevertheless the black people believed that there would be a time when they would force them out of their lands. As the riddle suggests, the Kipsigis thought that, like mucus which exists because of a cold or a cough and disappears after the victim’s struggle to expel or sometimes disappears naturally, the colonialists were also perceived in the same way.

The Kipsigis, with the aid of the *Orkoik*⁴⁵ struggled to resist the colonialist for a length of time and were relieved when the Europeans eventually left their lands. However the people who had collaborated with them obtained their riches and the riddles were modified to suit them. This is expressed in the following riddle;

Konori mogoriot kowirto Kibananiat- seberyot-(‘the rich keeps it but the poor discards it- nose mucus’).

⁴³ Riddle session carried out at Chepyegon primary on 11th May 2014 and another at Kapsorok primary on 12th May, 2014 in the presence of a researcher.

⁴⁴ Arap Langat was interviewed on the influence of the European culture on the Kipsigis culture on April, 2014.

⁴⁵ Nandi diviners

The rich use a handkerchief to blow their nose but the poor uses the hand to blow their nose and throw away the mucus. Synonymous to this riddle is a Basotho riddle cited by Hamnett (1976) “We Basotho just discard it, but the Europeans hoard it up – Nose mucus” (which the Europeans expel into their handkerchiefs). Here, an objectionable excretion creates a comic relationship between African and Europeans impliedly to the latter’s discredit. Also, as regards to this riddle the rich has taken the European position in that they accumulate wealth for themselves leaving the masses languishing in poverty. This also alludes to Barber’s (1995:6) comment that “the enormous differentials between the richest and the poorest is so great that a poor man can live for a year on what a rich man spends on a single evening out”.

The following riddles mainly reflect the historical background of the Kipsigis. Migration of the Kipsigis, their settlement areas and how they have adapted the neighbouring culture and the European culture are inculcated in these riddles. New infra-structure is also expressed in the meaning of riddles.

Atinye rokoenyun ne koi ako marate kwenik- oretab lam (‘I have a long rope but does not tie firewood- tarmac road’).

This is a new riddle which uses the analogy of the rope to introduce tarmac roads. A rope is used to tie firewood, among other uses, in the Kipsigis community. In the past women and girls went to fetch firewood in far distant places. For easy carrying they tied them properly and carried them in their backs or on their heads. They would then walk back home through short routes. The Kipsigis then started to talk about this new phenomenon in various ways. Soon it gained popularity when they started using it in riddles; it was termed as a long rope which could not tie firewood because it could not be twisted, there was no way it could tie firewood. Alternatively the riddle also introduces new infrastructure expected to change the economic and social life of the African community as a whole. Other formulations based on infrastructure were as follows:

Kilul ketit en Terik koit simamik oli- oret (‘A tree fell in Terik and its branches reached this side- road’). *Kilul ketit en Bureti koit simamik koroni- oret ab lam*, (‘A tree fell from Bureti and its branches reached this side- tarmac road’).

The two riddles allude to the migratory paths the Kipsigis followed to their present location (Orchardson, 1961). At the same time it introduces the infrastructure – road, which has made it easier for the Kipsigis to move further from their settlement areas to newer places. The first riddle depicts the migration of the Kipsigis from their cradle land while the second one shows

the relatively recent movement of the Kipsigis to newer places such as Bureti, Belgut and Soin areas.

Terik people seem to refer to those who were left behind by the Kalenjin people at the time of migration. Mwanzi (1977) had suggested that part of the Kipoiis clan of Nandi tribe came from Kipsigis country and settled on Terik Hill, overlooking Kisumu. These early settlers moved to occupy more land further north and east in the present Nandi district. The riddle alludes to the Kalenjin migration history as described by the scholars, Peristiany (1939) and Orchardson (1961) who studied the oral history of the Kalenjin. According to these scholars, Terik people seem to have been lost on the way and decided to live on their own. However the Kipsigis and other Kalenjin ethnic groups still remember them and keep reminding the new generations of their existence. Riddles therefore, as depicted in this riddle are a form of oral art that is capable of storing the whole or part of the history of a community. The use of Terik in the riddle justifies the migration narrative of the community whereas the meaning of the riddle denotes the present road infrastructure. The change in the riddle meaning reflects change in the perception of things and the events that impacted on the Kipsigis' life in general.

In the second riddle, a different interpretation is realised through the use of the name of a place-Bureti as opposed to the sub-ethnic group name –Terik. This indicates that the meaning is slightly different. However, it still talks about migration but in this case the migration process is more recent. Bureti was formerly inhabited by the Kisii people. After a protracted battle between the two communities at Chemoiben area, the Kipsigis conquered the Kisii people and occupied their lands. Jamji, Chemosit, Chemosot, Litein and Chemoiben in Bureti area were annexed as new Kipsigis land (Toweett, 1978, 14 –15). The Kipsigis spread to these areas all the way from Lumbwa, (the present Kipkelion) where they first settled (at a place called *Tuluap Sigis*, eight miles to the west of Lumbwa). They pushed south and west from the *Tuluap Sigis* into the bush and forest country near Belgut in Kericho and finally to Bureti ousting the Kisii (*Kosobek*). The origin and migration history of the Kipsigis are veiled in these riddles and they are passed on from generation to generation. Riddles then can be said to be powerful condensers of unarticulated societal history. More riddles on infrastructure are being formulated as the following riddle shows;

Kilul ketit en Sudan koit simamik Kenya- oret ab lam ('A tree fell in Sudan but the branches reached Kenya- tarmac road').

This further implies the extension of road from the neighbouring countries (such as Sudan) to Kenya. Presence of roads made travelling outside the country easier. Thus interaction between countries was made possible as trade and employment opportunities were made possible. Consequently the riddle infers to the migration routes through which the Kalenjin passed before spreading and settling in their present lands.

4.3.3 Conclusion

The foregoing riddles and their consequent answers show that riddles in the contemporary Kipsigis community are composed through a careful consideration of all aspect of life in the past and that of the present. This phenomenon is reflective of the dynamic nature of culture which imbibes changes and at the same time keeps the old features intact. Continuity of riddles is evident in the content in which the ancient terms are included for instance *muguryot*, (signifying present handcuffs) and *kiptitilyet*, (signifying present mobile phones) and traditional names such as Cherono and Chelang'at. New meaning is created by making use of all available contemporary resources. These include new innovations such as motor vehicles, aero planes, tarmac road, mobile phones, camera and national flag among others. Consequently, more riddles are refashioned to fit into the modern context. Some riddles have undergone mutations with replacement of old metaphors with new metaphors. Contemporary riddles also reveal that modern education, Christianity and the media have greatly influenced the way riddles are formulated and disseminated to the audience. New riddles, it is illustrated are formulated by school children in the classroom context. Formal education has inculcated in them ingenuity and creativity in addition to learning riddles through their peers and elderly people, in the traditional system. Evidently, children formulate their own riddles based on the cultural knowledge, the knowledge acquired in school, social interaction and the media. These locales are new sites for riddle performances that not only compliment the old sites but compete with it, reflecting change and continuity of cultural values among the Kipsigis.

The consciousness of both pre-colonial and the postcolonial contexts in the process of riddle composition and the generation of meaning have been demonstrated in the riddles presented in this chapter. Renewal of meaning of contemporary Kipsigis riddles therefore is achieved through hybridization process. Hybridization as initially explained is a devise of bringing the past into the understanding of the present of the text. The dynamics of change are significant in riddles which imply change in Kipsigis cultural disposition. Adaptation of modern culture is demonstrated by the new metaphors contained in the riddle whereas maintenance of cultural

values is expressed by the use of the ancient terms in the constitution of new riddles. The elements of modernity such as schools, churches and social media have shaped the course by which people understand and draw meaning from what they see, listen to or read, in this regard, the genre has gained more popularity creating more attention to audience of varying ages. Style in Kipsigis riddles is also apparent as expressed in tone or sound riddles discussed in this section. These riddles are characterized by an analogy of tone, rhythm and meaning. Like other tone riddles recorded in the past by some authors like Finnegan (1970) very often the ‘question’ consists of just one word or phrase to suggest the answer through its sound alone. This sound may be one which gives a direct onomatopoeic impression even to the foreigners. Sometimes both sound and visual images are combined in a riddle but the answer or solution rests mostly on the sound. The meaning may be one-word reply or phrases involving tonal and rhythmic correspondence as illustrated by the riddles cited in this section.

Apparently, in the new riddles discussed above, the Kipsigis has adopted vocabularies from other cultures and used them directly or modified them to fit into their dialect. Words such as *kamera*, *mapit* and *D lait* as used in the riddles are English borrowed words: camera, map and D light respectively. Other words such as *kitabut*, *tait* and *kikombet* are Kiswahili words: *Kitabu*, *taa* and *kikombe* respectively. These express the fluid nature of the Kipsigis language.

CHAPTER FIVE:

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the research findings which led to the conclusions and recommendations for further study. The summary includes the salient points discussed in the study while the conclusions are derived from the arguments based on the objectives of the

study. Recommendations are derived from what the study managed to cover on the basis the results and objectives of the study.

5.1 Summary

The study set out to investigate Kipsigis riddles and riddle performances and how riddling and riddles have changed as a result of socio- cultural and economic circumstances brought to bear on the Kipsigis community. This was achieved through exploration of the influence of post-colonial socio-cultural events on Kipsigis culture and traditions. The findings revealed that Kipsigis riddles reflect the social, cultural and economic life of the Kipsigis people.

In chapter one, contextual overview of recent Kipsigis historical and socio-cultural experience and how that has manifested on community cultural expression and worldview was discussed. The outcome is that most of these experiences are appropriated in riddles as represented in the examples of riddle on migration history “*Kikulungyon boiyon kong’eten Terik agoi oli- chebutyet*” (An old man crawled from Terik up this place- a hairy caterpillar). This study has taken a perspective of investigating the genre by regarding riddles as texts which can be read like any other literature texts and that riddles and riddling mirrors a community’s culture. The exploration of riddles in this study disclosed their capability to speak of the past as well as the present of a given community.

The historical background of the Kipsigis helped in understanding the Kipsigis origin which is also alluded in some riddles as in the riddle “*Kilul ketit en Sudan koit simamik Kenya – oret ab lam*, (‘A tree fell in Sudan but the branches reached Kenya- tarmac road’). Though the riddle denotes the current improvement of roads which have eased travelling, it also reminds the Kipsigis and the Kalenjin at large of their alleged origin – South Sudan. Their belief system and socio-cultural and economic practices in the pre-colonial past also serve as the basis of determining aspects of culture that informed riddling in the Kipsigis community. The belief in supernatural being, *Asis* in particular as their God, worshipped in different sacred places including the *mabwaita*, diviners such as the *orkoik* and the beliefs in supernatural powers such as those of the *ilet*, ancestral spirits among others formed the spiritual perspective of Kipsigis understanding of life.

The rearing of livestock especially cattle, farming activities and the introduction of new crops into the community by neighbouring cultures also show the economic aspect of the community in the past. War activities and sporting activities also formed part of the social activities in the community. All these activities are represented in riddles which have been elaborated in the

thesis as the riddle; *Arwap ilat kerer ng'wony- mogombetab eik*; ('Son of lightning splits the ground – an ox-plough) shows. *Ilat*, a supernatural power known from the past is used to introduce a new item ox-plough into the community. *Atinye tetanyun ne ngobir ropta komakikee – kibiritit* ('I have a cow whom when rained on cannot be milked – a match box'). The riddle, though introduces a new item- match box, signify the importance of cows, specifically that of producing milk which is regarded highly in the community. *Atinye rwoik che rwaie sait age tugul – mugungonikab karit*, ('I have athletes who run all the time-car tyres'). *Atinye lagok ang'wan che one ge ako manome ge – mugungonikab karit*, (I have four children who chase each other but cannot catch each other – car tyres. Running has been a long time sporting activity which characterizes the Kalenjin people as argued in this study.

From these examples, it is apparent that Kipsigis riddles largely drew from spheres of life in this community. The significance of understanding the Kipsigis culture is that we get to know the aspects that have been changed, those that have been modified and those that are being continued as reflected in the Kipsigis riddles. Riddle therefore is a genre which mirrors the society. Knowledge and information from pre-colonial era are stored in the riddle genre, in this way valuable messages are passed on from one generation to the other.

This study has also established that riddles and riddling process change with time as culture changes. Cultural circulation is therefore paramount in this study as observed through the influence of the Kipsigis culture by the neighbouring cultures as well as the colonial culture. Change in the structure and meaning of riddles in this study reflect the change in the society's worldview and activities thereof. Modern socio- cultural dynamics such as the formal education and religious practices have played major roles in restructuring of riddles and discerning riddle meaning in contemporary Kipsigis community.

These findings are well elaborated in section one of chapter four where I argued that post-colonial socio-political events have influenced the Kipsigis culture and traditions thus affecting the modes of production of riddles and riddle meaning among the Kipsigis. In that case, investigation on the extent of the influence of modernity on Kipsigis cultural identity through, for instance, Christianity, modern education, modern farming methods, dress mode, and the rise of migrant labor was carried out. Christianity has gradually taken away the pre-colonial conception of spirituality in general. Most of the ancient practices like worshipping in shrines have faded away as many Kipsigis people have converted to the Christian lifestyles. The church has taken from the sacred places which people used to go to worship for instance the

community no longer gather together for worship at some hill top and under sacred trees as it used to be in the pre-colonial past. Spirit of communalism in worship and at work has shifted and individualism has set in as evidenced in this study. Modern education has also created more opportunities for people to expand on the traditional knowledge and pursue their career of choice as opposed to the hereditary skills acquired in the past. The riddle genre and its practice have therefore undergone some transition in order to accommodate these changes. Performance, for instance has shifted to a great extent from the grandmother's hut to the classroom context; position and time for the genre practice have changed as argued in the discussion section of this study.

The economic activities in this community have also changed as a result of modern farming methods and introduction of new crops into the community. Mixed crop farming for instance is a practice copied from the west, implying that some aspects of the white man's culture benefited the community. This is also evidenced in the acquisition of grade cattle as discussed earlier; remembered in the riddle: '*Muraran Kapmassian- tugat labot*'- 'as lucid as Massia's homestead- Sodom apples'. Moreover, farm implements continued to be adapted in the community as a result, many farms were created and cultivation of lands became expanded. These were made easy by the use of ox- ploughs and tractors which gradually replaced the use of hoes for cultivation. Away from these economic activities in the village, people also went to work in the expansive plantations of tea and coffee for pay. Tea plantations in Kericho and Kipkelion areas particularly attracted migrant laborers from different ethnic communities in Kenya as the study revealed. As argued earlier, the Kipsigis in this way interacted with migrant labourers from different communities. The interaction eventually influenced their lifestyles. As a result intermarriages set in and began to be more common and acceptable than before. The outcome is that there has been a rise of a hybrid culture in settler farms and urban areas as well as in Kipsigis lands. Kipsigis culture therefore has changed; as a result riddles have been used to reflect this change.

The study has utilized the cultural based methodology of composition by fragments to ascertain the objectives of the research. The Kipsigis culture and traditions in the pre-colonial past as discussed in this study has laid a foundation through which the modern changes were ascertained. Change in the Kipsigis cultural disposition as argued in the preceding chapter has greatly influenced the way riddles are formulated, refashioned and created a new in the midst of the changing culture. The dynamics of change and vicissitude of life in the Kipsigis community are reflected in contemporary Kipsigis riddles as illustrated in the preceding

chapter. The exploration of contemporary riddles and their meaning points to the consequences of the colonial power which disrupted the old social order and rendered the Kipsigis social relations irrelevant. For instance in these riddles '*Arereni Chelangat en kapolis-benderet*'- ('Chelang'at is hysterically dancing in the police station- a flag') and the riddle '*Katyechyu kabun yu karkang- asikarindet*', ('he stepped here, he passed here with a thud!'-Policeman'), it is apparent that Kipsigis like other Kalenjin groups resisted colonialism and its authoritative powers. Thus they expressed their distaste through riddles.

Socio- cultural practices have significantly changed as a result of the impact of colonialism and its signifiers. Some traditional rites and customs of this society have either been discarded or modified to fit into the new system of modernity. Birth and naming ceremonies are rarely practiced. The procedure has been disrupted by modern sites including the hospitals where birth deliveries takes place away from the midwives and elderly women who under such circumstances, gather to invoke the departed relative's spirit into the newborn baby. Hospitals have denied them this privilege and where a chance prevails, the Christian faith of the parents and even themselves infringes their practice. Thus the practice is gradually suppressed by the new faith. Circumcision has also been modified to suit the current need for children to attend formal education. Consequently, formal education created a new forum of imparting modern knowledge and new ways of surviving. Thus cultural education which reached its climax during the seclusion period after circumcision rite has been challenged by the new outlook of education. Marriage has also taken a new trend, as explained earlier in this study. The onset of intermarriage among the neighbouring cultures set a new perspective of the importance of this rite of passage. Modern education has also influenced this practice as individuals take time to pursue their careers at the expense of marriage.

By providing the historical background of the Kipsigis community in the pre-colonial past, this thesis provides an alternative way of looking at the Kipsigis through focusing on how the past is represented in riddles on one hand and how modernity is represented through the same riddles on the other hand. In this regard, some of the riddles espoused follow the same traditional pattern in terms of wording, the realization is that the answers change as the challengers and respondents are now dealing with a set of new socio- cultural, economic and political background away from the traditional past from which the riddles had been set. Therefore the riddle, as has been observed in this study is a flexible genre that adapts and evolves to the changing circumstances that the African societies find themselves in.

In this exploration on riddles and riddle process, the past and tradition on the one hand and the West and innovation on the other are incorporated and re-envisioned in radically different ways. For instance, some riddles are about the past, talk about the Kalenjins in general, their shared norms and traditions before they migrated to various parts. Some are about the migration history while some were acquired differently depending on where each ethnic group passed through at the period of their migration, the people they met, interacted with or even helped them in one way or another. Riddles therefore can be placed in their historical and social context and usually, they talk about matters of deep interest and concern to the people who produce and use them. Similarly what is outside or beyond the present situation is incorporated into riddles so that in the process of looking for meaning, people realise new elements or aspect of life that has emerged. Riddles therefore can act as a means of recollecting the past, tracing common identities and redirecting the emerging generation to understand the roots of their community.

Generally, the rhythms of life gradually started to change as colonial rule generated the prospect of a better system of life. However, despite these entire predicaments, the impact of colonialisms and its signifiers of modern social life did not totally change the Kipsigis social system. Some aspects of culture continue to manifest themselves in the Kipsigis social interaction as was realised in riddle analysis in chapter four. Hence the study affirms that there are certain core aspects of the community that cannot be changed as revealed through the ancient riddles which are still practically used for instance: *'Abuich maba!- kinaikab teta*, 'turn it upside down but it cannot spilt!- cow's teats/ udder. The riddle, as argued in the first chapter of this thesis, is an appeal to the Kalenjin to safeguard their customs and traditions as well as an aide memoire of the cherished value of cows and milk production in the Kipsigis and Kalenjin community as a whole.

The riddles discussed in section three of chapter four in this study expounded on the Kipsigis transition period revealing how they resisted some foreign behavior and expressed distaste to colonialisms and their signifiers. At the same time, through riddles, maintenance of Kipsigis culture is exposed; their cherished values are inculcated in new riddles while the old riddles are made relevant by refashioning their structure and meaning. Most riddles reveal part of the social and economic history and how the Kipsigis people struggled to adjust to the modern lifestyle.

The riddles also showed some kind of resemblance to other traditional genres like songs, dances and proverbs implying that riddles equally serve the same purpose as these genres. They are also characterized by the use of symbols, images, metaphors and many other stylistic figures. It also reveals the transient nature of culture and the need to focus on the contextual factors and the process of cultural composition in the study of meaning of cultural genres.

5.2 Conclusions

These conclusions are based on the three objectives which this study set to achieve. The first objective expounded on the influence of post-colonial socio-cultural events on the Kipsigis culture and traditions. It is apparent from the foregoing that the post colonial socio-cultural events greatly influenced the Kipsigis culture and traditions. Kipsigis culture therefore has changed; as a result riddles have been used to reflect this change. Thus it can be concluded that as society change the riddles also change. In this regard, contemporary riddles bear both the pre-colonial traditional practices and the contemporary beliefs and practices in this particular community. New images in riddles have been used to reflect the new perspective of Kipsigis cultural outlook. Contemporary riddles therefore embody the past, points to the present concerns and emphasize the need to take into consideration the twofold meaning of any riddle utterance by shifting emphasis from its historical representation as a mere childish game to explicating the style of its new constitution and meaning.

The study has therefore called attention to the importance of cultural circulation which has directly influenced the way riddles are formulated in the present time. The riddles discussed revealed that the composition of riddles depend on the contextual factors in the past and at the present. Thus, riddles, as observed in this study are refashioned through the use of images alluding to the pre-colonial past but at the same time talking of the present time. Therefore, it should be regarded as a rich source of educational development. Further, some riddles explored in the study showed how riddles in this community exemplify the incorporation of vocabulary borrowed from the cultures that influence their culture in different historical context. This study has also demonstrated that riddles and riddle process keeps alive the collective memories, myths, experience and heroic adventure of a community. These features contain essential knowledge for learners who need to be well grounded with indigenous learning practices to be able to expand on the newer knowledge.

The second objective sought to establish the changes brought in by modernity as reflected in the contemporary riddling process among the Kipsigis. Change in riddling was ascertained by assessing the genre performance in all the riddle sessions during my research. Considerations such as time, space and age were examined to establish the extent of shifts in riddling and ways in which such shifts might be attributed to recent shifts in Kipsigis cultural experience. Contemporary riddle performance draws ideas from both the past and the present context. Riddling is still regarded as a social activity as it was in the pre-colonial past. However, the content, context and even participation have expanded. Because of its flexible nature, it has been able to accommodate changes that have been brought into fore in this society. Modernity has also changed the perception of riddles as solely for young children. Riddling has become liberal thus children and adults participate in the genre practice at any given time. Children can even challenge adults through riddles, a practice which was rare before. Children can also formulate their own riddles based on their understanding and intelligence without any opposition from their elders or even peers. The genre has also gained more popularity through the modern ways of interaction. Through school, media and the church, the genre performance has increasingly expanded its span by attracting many audiences of varying ages and cross-cultural boundaries. In this regard, some Kenyan communities have borrowed vocabularies from their neighbouring communities and incorporated them in riddles as was observed from some of the Kipsigis riddles which contain the vocabulary borrowed from the culture of the people they interacted with such as the Luo and the Kisii people. The genre performance in school has also taken consideration on the school environment as well as the modern technology as was realised through the riddles spontaneously posed by the pupils during riddle performance in the schools visited. Children have also become free to pose riddles to adults in a relaxed manner unlike in the past when riddling was patronized by elderly people.

Thus riddling has emerged as a boundless activity as it is no longer bound to any age-group and no specific time is set for riddling as the previous works on riddles revealed. The reason behind this is that the rhythms of life has changed. At the present time children spend most of their time in school thus they learn and engage in riddling more in a school set up than at their homes in the evening with their grandmother as in the past. Participants vary depending on the purpose of riddling and usually children engaged in riddling for competition, hence it can be done in a classroom setting as a competition exercise. Children further engage in riddling competition through the media. This new technology has advanced the genre's competitive

nature and attracted more audiences. All these changes brought in by modernity has impacted on the contemporary riddle process among the Kipsigis.

The third objective sought to find out how modernity impacted on the modes of production of riddles and riddle meaning among the Kipsigis. In this regard, fifty riddles, collected from the old and the young were analysed and interpreted. The outcome is that, the Kipsigis riddle has adjusted to accommodate the meaningful changes that have been brought into the community. New riddles have also been developed using the new strategies of constructing the riddles. Thus, the formation of riddles depends on the performer's creativity. The riddles collected from the older resource persons for instance were mostly those that have been restructured to include the new features in the community. Others included the old riddles that have acquired new meaning and done away with the old meaning or have retained the old meaning implying that both meanings are accepted for use. The riddles collected from school age children both within and outside the classroom setting comprised mainly new riddles and a few which includes some features or practices which are still carried out in the society. The language of these riddles inclined to the acquired or borrowed languages from the neighbouring cultures as well as the foreign culture which impacted on the Kipsigis culture.

Thus the composition of riddles in the present time affirm that people make sense of what happened in the past or is happening at the present to constitute new riddles. In this regard, riddles are constituted in contextual framework, pre-colonial context and post-colonial contexts form grounds in which riddles are reconstructed.

The effects of post-colonial events on Kipsigis culture and tradition is revealed through the modes of creating new riddles that take cognizance of cultural shifts and the new meaning making process that is influenced by changed values. The riddles covered almost all spheres of Kipsigis cultural life. They comprise of riddles on modern technology and those that echo the consequences of the colonial heritage. There are also riddles alluding to the Kipsigis pre-colonial past which opens discussions on people's life in the past; the communal activities, rites of passages, norms and taboos in the society, social and economic activities, maintenance of law and order, political system and even war activities as revealed through the cultural weapons used in the study. All these new trends in the Kipsigis community show how modernity has impacted on the process of production of riddles and the mode of arriving at meaning.

Thus it can be concluded that riddles can be regarded as texts which contain the history of the community in a condensed manner. Consequently, through riddles we can establish how the

Kipsigis people interacted with their neighbouring cultures and more importantly, how the British colonial authority impacted on the Kipsigiis culture and traditions. Hence the study has extended the literature by drawing attention to an area that has not been ventured by most researchers in this field.

5.3 Recommendations

The study has manifested that the riddle genre can be studied in its own capacity to investigate the dynamic nature of a given culture. The genre has helped in illuminating the importance of traditional epistemology and ideology in the present African society. The choice of some riddles alludes to the traditional practice of communalism as opposed to the Western individualism. Thus, the study opened more gaps on looking at riddles as a genre which can be used to unfold the history of a community, its cultural transformations and new knowledge-making using the riddle strategy. There is need therefore to investigate more on the cultural genres particularly the riddles to generate more ideas on how riddles operate in the Kenyan communities (as well as other African communities) and whether the traditional forms of riddles can be co-opted to validate the modern riddles by providing them with roots without necessarily being superseded by the modern elite forms. There is also need to explore the influence of foreign languages on Kipsigis oral genres, which this study did not cover.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Kipsigis Riddles

1. *'Abuich maba!- kinaikab teta*, 'turn it upside down but it cannot spilt! – cow's teats
2. *Akwong'e ne kiyoe kii asomani- mashinit* – ('I wonder who made this thing I am reading- paper manufacturing machine').
3. *Arereni Chelangat en kapolis-benderet* – ('Chelang'at is hysterically dancing in the police station – a flag').
4. *Arwap ilat kerer ng'wony – mogombetab eik*; ('Son of lightning splits the ground an ox-plough')
5. *Atinye kirkinyun ne ngout koletoksei banyek-tinga*, 'I have a bull whom when he bellows his flesh gets taut – a grinding mill').
6. *Atinye koitanyun ne letieni – D'lait*, ('I have my stone which shines – 'D' light' - a device which uses solar energy to produce light).
7. *Atinye bakinyun ne makali – pepabag* – ('I have my bag which is not expensive- Polythene paper').
8. *Atinye lakwenyun naboe amaetu – tait*. ('I have a child whom I always feed but he doesn't grow – a lamp').
9. *Atinye rokoenyun ne koi ako marate kwenik- oretab lam* ('I have a long rope but does not tie firewood – tarmac road').
10. *Atinye rwoik che rwaie sait age tugul-Mugungonikab karit*, ('I have athletes who run all the time – car tyres').
11. *Atinye lagok ang'wan che one ge ako manome ge-Mugungonikab karit*, (I have four children who chase each other but cannot catch each other – car tyres.
12. *Atinye tetanyun ne ngobir ropta komakikee – kibiritit*,('I have a cow whom when rained on cannot be milked – a match box').
13. *Atinye tetanyun ne ngomakirat ko maakete- Sindanut*. ('I have my cow if not tied, cannot graze – needle'). There are also sound riddles with the same meaning;
14. *Atinye lakwenyun ne tindo itit agenge- kikombet* – ('I have a child who has one ear- cup').
15. *Atinye lakwenyun newendi akoi Nairobi/ Kisumu –Ndegeit*; (I have my child who goes up to Nairobi/ Kisumu- aeroplane).
16. *Atinye ndegeinyun ne marube Kenya; kalyang'at* – I have a plane which does not land in Kenya – housefly. *Atinye ndegeinyun ne makyole- koita* – I have a plane which cannot be bought- stone

17. *'Bun yon abun yu ng'etuitosi ko biriren eunek' – chobinik*, ('pass here, let me pass there when we meet our hands will be red').
18. *Chematweek ako chang ng'alek – Kitabut*, ('Dumb but with many words-book').
19. *Chepkulung kituiyo met- chemakurer/muguryot* ('Wristlet with its head closed- a string-like bangle tied round a baby's wrist').
20. *Cheptanyun ne tieni 'kipress' – tinga* – ('My daughter who sings 'kipress' - grinding mill').
21. *Chepkerat en ndani- baskilit*, ('a closet in an inner side of the house – a bicycle').
22. *Chipit chipit akobet –sindanut*, 'drop' 'drop'and it gets lost- needle.
23. *Grrrrrrrrrrrrrr. Ringit*, Grrrrrrrrrrrrrr. Ring (This indicates the sound of a ring).
24. *Iuti birirmet en imbar – terekta*. (A red-headed ox is bellowing in the farm- a tractor.)
25. *Iutote birirmet katar Nandi- Terekta* – (A red-headed ox is bellowing as he swarms over Nandi).
26. *Katyechyu kabun yu karkang- asikarindet*, ('he stepped here, he passed here with a thud!' – Policeman').
27. *Karkang karkang – mogombetab eik, Kargang kargang* (sound) - an ox- plough.
28. *Keron amatweku – kamera*,('It sees me but it cannot talk – camera').
29. *Kiawe Kiptere akang'wal ng'wal- baskilit* – ('I went to Kiptere as I 'coiled'- bicycle').
30. *Kiatyech Chelangat kober kowek- baskilit-* ('I stepped on Chelang'at till the bones stretched out-bicycle').
31. *Kinyo chumbindet en Ulaya ak konyokonam suet en Kenya- Kikombet*, (' A white man came from Europe and came to hold his hand 'akimbo' in Kenya – a cup').
32. *Kiawirte kirungunyun komoyo lemek- chepkelelyot/mureret* – ('I threw my club, the uncircumcised scramble for it – a circumcised girl)
33. *Kiawirte sosionyun komoyo lemek – sumonit*, ('I threw my *sosiot*⁴⁶ and the Luos scramble for it- fifty cent coin').
34. *Kiawe Nairobi ko biriren lagok- Gsu in operation* ('I went to Nairobi and I found red children-Red-berret, Gsu Personel')
35. *Kiptiltilyet mi itit – simoit*, ('A woodpecker on the ear- mobile phone').
36. *Konori mogoriot kowirto Kibananiat- seberyot*-('The rich keeps it but the poor discards it-mucus').

⁴⁶ A type of bamboo stick used to clean gourds.

37. *Kutkutenin koris koitin chumbeek – ndegeit*, (Let the wind blow you to Europe - aero plane).
38. *Kutkutenin akoi Indoi – ndegeit*; (Let it fly you to India – Aero plane)
39. *Kutkutenin koris koitin chumbeek – ndegeit*, (Let the wind blow you to Europe – aero plane).
40. *Kwilis kwilis ak kobet sindanut*, ‘kwilis kwilis’(sound) and it gets lost- needle
41. *Iit siker ne chome- kiyoit –* (‘Peep to see the one you love – mirror’).
42. *Itu chumbindet en tirisho – seberyot –* (A white man is peeping at the window-mucus).
43. *Itu Tebit en tirisho- seberyot –* (‘David is peeping through the window-mucus’).
44. *Kilul ketit en Terik koit simamik oli – oret* (‘a tree fell in Terik and its branches reached this side- road’).
45. *Kilul ketit en Bureti koit simamik koroni- oret ab lam*,(‘a tree fell from Bureti and its branches reached this side- tarmac road’).
46. *Kilul ketit en Sudan koit simamik Kenya- oret ab lam*, (‘a tree fell in Sudan but the branches reached Kenya – tarmac road’).
47. *‘Muraran Kapmassia – tugat labot’–*‘as lucid as Massia’s homestead- Sodom apples’.
48. *Obot Chelang’at ak arekyik – ndisinik* (‘Chelang’at’s mother and her kids- bananas’).
49. *Siling mi barak-Ndegeit –* a shilling in the air – (response: aeroplane).
50. *Tindo Cherono kuinoik ang ’wan – mapit*. (‘Cherono has four horns – map’).

APPENDIX 2:

Interview Excerpt

Cherono: After the detailed information about the background of the Kipsigis community and the influence of the white people, now tell me about riddles, particularly riddles you used to tell each other in the past.

Misik: We did riddling when we were young.

Bunei: Riddling was not done during the day it was done in the evening,

Misik: Anyone telling riddles during the day would become blind.

Cherono: How did that happened? Please explain.

Misik: It did not happened literary, the sentiment was meant to threaten children not to engage in riddling during the day when they were supposed to be doing other chores.

Bunei: Riddling was done in the evening alongside evening stories after the children had completed the chores.

Misik: Yes, that is true. The process is started with an opening formula; '*Tangoch*' [a phrase which was passed on from one generation to the other – literary it means play] and the audience would respond '*chong*'. [Which is just a way of accepting to participate in the riddle process].

Cherono: Was it *Chong* or *Chom*?

Misik: *Chong*. Some people in the present generation mispronounce the word.

Bunei: After the response, the challenger poses a riddle and one of the audiences responds, if he or she fails to give the right answer after several attempts, then he or she was asked to give out a number of cattle.

Cherono: Can you give me an example of a riddle?

Misik: *Tangoch*? (This is an opening formula for all riddle sessions).

Cherono: *Chong*! (This is a response to the above opening formula).

Misik: *Kiawe koi ko keringon awe koi ko keringon*, (I went to this house, it was holes I went to that house, it was holes).

Cherono: *Kenut* (a wooden vessel)

Misik: No. You fail, that's not the answer.

Cherono: Then give me the answer.

Misik: Give me some cattle first

Cherono: '*Onchon tuga taman chebo kiret* - here I give you ten grade cattle.

Misik: *Menai nee menai kisgisik i?* What don't you know? Don't you know *kiskisik*⁴⁷?

Cherono: Can you please explain to me how those traditional serving bowls (*kiskisik*) were made?

Bunei: They were made from tree barks "*sosiot*" and a specific type of crawling tree called "*tabarariet*"

Misik: It was like that type of tree (pointing at the nearby thorn tree)

Cherono: All right what did you use to sew?

Bunei: There was a type of needle tree, one could pick its needle and use it to sew some cultural artifacts.

Misik: *Kisyet* was specifically used to serve elder people, children ate from a curved hide called *Kirebeita*. Both are traditional utensils used specifically to serve ugali.

Cherono: Tell me more riddles

Misik: 'Tangoch'?

Cherono: Chong!

Misik: '*Kirkinyun kipkeleny tulwo*' (My bull which pull up the mountain/hill)

⁴⁷ Plural of the word *kisyet* which is a woven kind of traditional bowl used to serve ugali in the past.

Bunei: *Bobator* 'bwolo' - A mushroom.

Misik: You got it right. But the answer could also be *toiyot* –A termite.

Cherono: You mention the word 'bwolo' it sounds like a Luo word, did you borrow the word from the Luo?

Bunei: The Luo called it 'abuolo' perhaps that's where we extract the word *buolo* from otherwise it means a big mushroom. Sometimes we share these names.

Cherono: Why do you share the names? Did you meet regularly with them?

Bunei: We interacted together since time immemorial. They used to come early in the morning to work on our farms.

Misik: They used to grow sweet potatoes. The Kipsigis could take firewood to them and exchange with the sweet potatoes.

Bunei: Even sorghum was exchanged with finger millet, we had no sorghum.

Misik: We lived together in peace; they could bring pots in exchange for other farm products.

APPENDIX 3

JOURNAL PUBLICATION

Culture, Change and Continuity in Riddle and Riddle Performance among the Kipsigis, Kenya

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Abstract

This paper interrogates contemporary riddles and riddle performance in the Kipsigis community. It illustrates the ways in which post-colonial social changes have influenced Kipsigis riddles. Review of related literature reveals that the question of change and continuity in riddles and riddle performance has not received much attention in the corpus of the genre. The paper is based on the theoretical stipulation that privileges cultural circulation and appropriation of fragments from other cultures and genres in the process of cultural production as opposed to the assumption that culture is stable and its constituent elements functions to maintain its stability. Data was collected from the Kipsigis respondents aged eight years and above, sampled from Kapsorok, Chepyegon, Barn'goror and Kaplelartet locations in Soin Division of Kericho County, Kenya. These areas are appreciably rich in oral traditions because most oral genres are still being lively performed. Participant observation method was used to collect riddles, while interviews were used for data about the culture and historical background of the community against which the changes were assessed. We conclude that formation of riddles is dependent on the cultural context both in the past and at the present. Thus new figures of speech in contemporary Kipsigis riddles reflect change in Kipsigis perspective of life during and after the colonial era.

Introduction

This paper focuses on a critical interrogation of post-colonial social changes and the ways they have influenced Kipsigis riddles. The Kipsigis are one of the nine sub-ethnic groups that comprise the larger Nilotic Kalenjin