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RESEARCH ARTICLE

REVEALING HEALTHY DISCOURSES THROUGH MDUMANGE SONGS PERFORMANCE IN KISAMBAA.

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to discuss reflection of Sambia healthy discourses through the performance of traditional songs. As a result, the researcher demonstrates the power of singers in clarifying the Sambia world views on illness, diagnostic and treatment. In short, the paper starts with general background of the Sambia language and culture, mdumange songs performance and finally the paper discusses the role of mdumange songs in portraying the Sambia healthy discourse.

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Introduction:-

General Background of the Sambia Language and Culture:-

Kisambaa is a Bantu language spoken by Wasambaa community from the Northeast Coastal of Tanzania (Nurse et al. 1981). According to Guthrie (1971), Kisambaa is classified as G23. Guthrie's G20 group also includes Asu (Pare), Bondei and Taveta. Asu and Bondei are spoken by the immediate neighbours of the Kisambaa. According to Mwalonya (2004), the other languages spoken by neighbouring communities are Ngulu and Zigula (G30), Digo (E73) and Swahili (G42). Mbugu, Maasai and Dhaiso are very different from the other languages of the area. Dhaiso is most closely related to the Central Kenya Bantu languages (Nurse 2000), and Mbugu is a "mixed language" with Bantu and Cushitic origins (Mous, 2003b). On the other hand, Maasai is a Nilotic language. The Wasambaa or Washambaa community who spoke Kisambaa live in two mountain ranges: the Eastern and Western Usambara Mountains. This area includes the Lushoto district and parts of the Muheza and Korogwe districts, all of which belong to the Tanga region in the north-east, Tanzania.

The Languages of Tanzania (LOT) project calculates that Sambia has 565,276 speakers (Rugemalira and Muzale, 2008), while Johnstone and Mandryk (2001) estimate it to have as many as 664,000 speakers. The LOT figure places Sambia amongst the 15 biggest languages of Tanzania in terms of number of speakers. However, data on the number of speakers of Tanzanian languages are relatively unreliable since the official census neither includes questions on ethnic group nor on languages spoken (Rugemalira and Muzale, 2008).

There are a number of anthropological studies of the Sambia history, customs, indigenous political systems, and healing traditions (Feierman 1974, 1990). According to these scholars, the Sambia traditional healing system involves various changes and innovations. With the incoming of modern technologies, new strategies were introduced in school and media. Though people like muslim followers had some skills on healing arts, the most system used in healing, diagnostic and illness identification is based on traditional medicine or herbal medicine. In the following sections, we explore aspects relating to Sambia healing discourse namely diagnosis, categories, and treatment of illness as reflected in Kisambaa language of mdumange songs performance.

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The Mdumange Song Performance:-

Mdumange songs are traditional oral poetry among the Sambia people that are accompanied by a traditional drum called mdumange. The Sambia people use these songs to educate and entertain members of the community during social gatherings such as initiation, marriage, weekend entertainment, New Year as well as religious celebrations. Historically, the mdumange songs have been used by the Sambia people since pre-colonial period till today as a major medium of socialization and affirmation of their cultural identity. On the basis of this, the current paper is a summary of an ongoing research examining the relationship between performances of the mdumange songs on one hand and the reflection of the Sambia world view on other hand.

Diagnosis, Treatment and Categories of Illness in Mdumange Song Performance:-

When the Sambia people want to decide the source or essence of illness they undertake different rhetorical strategies. These strategies are being reflected through their language, specifically through song performance. The most common words used to denote this particular type of discourse are *kuuza sia* (the quest for the paths), *kutoa bao* (to fore see) and *maano* (to sacrifice). The use of these terms in songs performance is indicated in the following texts:-

KISAMBAA TEXTS	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
Naitakwemaano, nahauya mzungu Wavyazi waabulwa, neja wana mnkei tuni akifue Hati mwaakoma siihiwe, hati mwaahonya siihiwe Jai kwenyama, babu jangu mnkei Nkunde ajiete	I went and made sacrifice I realized that parents do suffers I am not angry if you kill, or you heal Just take the meat, give my skin to Nkunde

From the above song we note that, making sacrifice is among the methods used by the Sambia to search out about the causes of problems including illness. Through the use of this technique, the Sambia recognizes two major categories of illnesses: *Utamu wa Muungu* (the illness from God) and *Utamu wa mntu* (illness from person). The illness of God is described as an illness that happens without any spiritual or social cause. This illness happens because it happens as an event in the world of material objects. Furthermore, illness from God can easily be treated with tree herbs as it is considered to be a natural disease.

On the other hand the illness from God is contrasted with illness of person which in Kisambaa language is expressed as *utamu wa mntu*. According to the Shambaa community, this is an illness caused by someone's hostile or aggressive actions. As far as mdumange songs performance is concerned, the performers use the songs to clarify this type of illness by mentioning wizard in the community as shown below:-

KISAMBAA TEXT	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
Hati umshai tuanyungu ee waume Hati walogha tuanyungu ee wanangu wapate kaugima	If you are a wizard kill yourself If you bewitch kill yourself so that my children can get well

The quotation given above indicates that according to Sambia ideology, some illnesses are caused not by the power of God, but from the power and wish of human beings.

Together with these two categories there are other types of conditions that fall into neither. The Sambia ideas of illness also shows that there is a close relationship between the two major categories of illnesses. In an informal interview with Mzee Shauri, he mentions *kisimo* and *shakiizi* as the two major forms of artificial illnesses recognized by the Shambaa community. *Kisimo* is a medicine to confuse a person so that he (or she) should not want to seek treatment. She should not be treated. This act of aggression which causes healthy problems was also responsible for attacking the diagnostic process and on the efficacy of therapy. The presence of aggression made it difficult to sort out a proper course of action. On the other hand *Shakiizi*, refers to a variety of sorcery which had the capacity to disorder the intelligence of the person under attack. When this was used, sorcery was simultaneously the cause of a disease and an obstacle to its proper treatment.

Apart from the examples of artificial illnesses given above, the Sambia people also believe that there are other types of illnesses associated with genetic inheritance. Such illnesses are generally termed as *Mpakanya*. In addition to this, the Wasambaa also recognize the existence of inherited based type of medicine, expressed as *mfuko*. The two terms have been elaborated as follows:

There are two senses of the word *Mpakanya*. First it refers to the health condition or illness penetrating through genetic inheritance. Such illness could consist several diseases such as *mpumu*, *lumo* and *laziness*. Secondly, *mpakanya* is used metaphorically to denote types of diseases that could be healed only through the ritual participation of a whole descent group. The illness of *mpumu* is a form of wheezing, labored breathing, cough and in most cases it is similar to asthma. This type of illness does not spread from person to person in an infectious way, but it is taken to be a form of *mpakanya* diseases. This is because, it does not grasp a person if there is no relative of that person who used to have *mpumu*.

Another type of disease that is taken to be the form of *mpakanya* is *lumo*. It is a disease of the stomach. People with *lumo* illness had to ask very carefully the history of their forefathers. A person with *lumo*, usually his/her stomach hurts, and needs dry food. *Uvizu* (Laziness) is also among the examples of *mpakanya* illness. In the following song, the singer explain that in most cases children do inherit laziness behavior from their mother traits:-

KISAMBAA TEXT	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
Mkazangu hadaha ima, N’kunda n’muighae na kwawe Tate du anighamba mueke, Ateghua vya nine akwe	My wife cannot farm I want to divorce her My father tells me not to divorce her As she inherited the behaviour from her mother

From the verse given above, laziness is an illness caused by inheritance. Furthermore, the singer insists that if a woman cannot farm she should be divorced. This particular verse informs us about the Sambia world views on illness and gender differences.

Its also assumed that during the time when ancestor sacrifice was still practiced and even among the few clans where this ritual is practiced, some illnesses are seen as being caused by the ancestors. This ideology is mostly honored by traditionalist, but even the most religious Muslims, or Christians, still believe that their fates is being tied up to their dead ancestors. In this case, the *mpakanya* ritual becomes one of the most form of treating such diseases. It is being performed with the participation of the whole clan members (*ukoo*). The head of the clan collected money from other members to raise funds for the ritual. With regard to mdumange songs’ performance, singers do portray a number of rituals including rituals for the young boys and girls as elaborated here under:-

KISAMBAA TEXT	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
Make wetu ishwi niSheuta Na Sheuta yakwe ni mivigha Kuna Gao naNkimbizi Na ndio mivigha mikuu Mlezi ni kulea wana	Our ancestor is Sheuta Who is defined by the rituals Such as rituals for young males and females These are the biggest rituals Which cures youths from various diseases

In the song above we note that, rituals are used as medicine or treatment strategies. Also, there are two forms of rituals made to the young male and female generation: *gao* and *nkimbizi* respectively. It can be stated that, *gao* and *nkimbizi* are rituals that refers to the living community, especially youths. On the other hand, the Sambia participate in rituals for the dead as a way of curing some illnesses. This happens when mother and father dies as explained in the following song:-

KISAMBAA TEXT	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
Nyokwe akifa Jakwe n’huto nine ja mbuzi uzabinda Wazimu hawana ubaya Ukibinda uya na kwedini Wala hakuna ubaya Kia mntu anaasili zakwe	When your mother dies Her ritual needs a femal goat To please the spirits Then come back to the religion There is no problem Every person has his culture

In another verse of the same song singer mentions a ritual to be done when father dies by saying that:-

KISAMBAA TEXT	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
Isho akifa Jakwe ni huto na kuna fika zikunda kushia Cha boosi ni kutoa huto	When your father dies First he needs an introductory ritual Firstly make introduction of the ritual

Fika ya chekecheke kubinda, Fika ya kirurumo kubinda Kaya chikunda ng'ombe Bila ya fika uzabinda	Make chekecheke ritual And kirurumo ritual Your home should posses cows Without rituals the cows will perish
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The Sambia believe that if one suffers from genetic form of illness and one does not perform the ritual of *mpakanya*, one will never be cured by even the medicines from hospital. Hospital medicines becomes inactive, unless one performs *mpakanya* ritual. Since the *mpakanya* ritual brings community members together, it can be said that apart from curing the ill person, it holds the whole lineage.

Mfuko is a healer's medicine bag. It is an idiom used by members of the community to speak about social deprivation as a cause of illness. With reference to this type of illness, a person could talk about his health condition that he/she is being sought out, or pursued by an *mfuko*. Generally *mfuko* was an emblem of lineage continuity, and also of continuity in the capacity to preserve life within the group. It comprises a basket filled with healing objects, and it is supposed to be passed from generation to generation. Its heir, usually a senior male, use the objects to heal himself and heal others. The heir stood as a mediator between the ancestors and their living descendants.

During the course of illness, some people may claim that the heirs to *mifuko* are not playing their proper roles of healing and nurturing their relatives. Each of these people think that if she/he could take control of the *mfuko*, she/he would be able to heal her/himself and others. By using the healing objects in their material form the heir would change her relationship to the *mfuko* and at the same time change the way her/his body was situated in a web of social relations. Only through an action in which the social and the material were fused was it possible for her to be cured. In short, *Mpakanya* and *mfuko* represent two linguistic forms of cultural artifacts that has to be inherited. The inherited diseases of *mpakanya* and the inherited medicines of the *mfuko* indicates a strong emphasis on the way an individual is located in a web of relationships among other people in the community.

Some more examples of Illnesses Expressed by Using Kisambaa Language:-

Duazi refers to a disease which involves congestion of the chest, or swelling. With reference to the philosophy of illness of God vs illness of person the *duazi* can be classified into two categories. These includes *duazi* of medicine-making and the *duazi* of God. According to the Wasambaa world view, the illness which comes from God can be cured by using tree medicine or the herbs because the trees belongs to God. On the other hand, the illness from person cannot be cured by medicine because the same herbs which could be used to cure, are the ones that cause the illness after they have been transformed by person. That means, the same herbs that heal can be transformed so as to cause the condition. We can say that, the Sambia community use their language to communicate two categories of illnesses. There is a natural *duazi* which originates from God's will and the artificial *duazi* which is a consequence of medicine-making.

Shango refers to different types of illnesses associated with worms that causes problem to human being when the abdomen is overfull with food. Its also described as an illness of large intestine that arises when one lacks good things. For example, this particular type of illness is in conflict with *mpeho* (cold). That's why if a child is very hot on the nape of the neck, it is considered to be the result of shango illness. Furthermore, the Sambia community believes that, the large *mshango* is capable of producing different types of *mishango* [worms]. However, according to the Sambia discourse the *mshango* will never excreted.

There are different types of *shango* illnesses (worms). These are like *Kifafa* (epilepsy), *ngii* (warthog), *miundi* (legs ache). *Kifafa* is an illness of *mishango* (worm) that causes the head to fall. Its narrated that, this type of worm is caused by gall. At this kind of illness, the Sambia believe that the *mshango* (worm) has entered an extreme state. Medicine that is used most times is fat. For a person to treat shango, he should cook an infusion of wild herbs and mix it with a bone.

Another type of *shango* is called *shango ja ngii* (the worm if ngii). This type of illness is considered as worms (*shango*) that has been transformed (transformed). The Sambia refer this type of illness as *shango ja hituka*. The symptoms of this illness are back ache, especially after one had worked for a long time. While *shango* is a disease of the region below the diaphragm, *duazi* originates in the region above it. It too is treated with herbal or dietary therapies. Diseases of the upper region are characterized by swelling. *Duazi* affects the chest, which may swell up. If it went on from there it takes hold of the knees, which swell. But it is a matter of the chest. It begins with some coughing and then moves on to a place where there are bones.

Conclusion:-

This paper has demonstrated the use of Mdumange songs' performance in revealing Sambia world views on illness and healthy. It has been shown that in the Kisambia language and culture, illness is described based on the assumed cause and treatment. As a result, the Sambia community recognizes two types of illnesses depending on the causes and the possible way of treatment: Illness of God and illness of person. While the illnesses of God are being treated at hospitals, the other types of illnesses are cured by using plant medicines as well as spirit possession ceremonies. This suggests that, the Sambia consider it appropriate to explore the nature of illnesses before starting any treatment. Such exploration involves processes of finding out reasons about illness and predicting possible strategy of treatment. It also involves processes of interrogating the patient, the disease, and the medicine. During this process, patients are requested to explain their problems concerning healing and illness. This suggests that, there are different varieties of illness causations such as spirit, manmade and God made that needs to be explored.

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