The study of African orature in the form of animation: the case of Sankuru in the Democratic Republic of Congo

By

Lodi Paul Inga

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree: Master of Technology in Graphic Design for the Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Student No.: 207001936

Supervisors: Dr Alettia Chisin

Prof. Monwabisi Ralarala

DECLARATION

I, Lodi Paul Inga, declare that the contents of this thesis represent my own unaided work, and that the thesis has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

17 August 2019

_____   _____

Signed   **Date**

Acknowledgements

Abstract

The research aims to demonstrate the extent to which animation can be used to depict the performance aspect of African oral literature by taking into consideration the various forms of meaning-making that accompany a typical oral literature event. Oral tradition is among the oldest traditions in African culture; it is the channel through which the moral values and belief systems of African peoples were transmitted from older generations to younger ones.

African oral literature, or simply orature[1], has arguably survived the risk of extinction through publication. Libraries throughout the world feature books on African poetry and written collections of African folktales. However, the one aspect that cannot be depicted in a written format is the element of performance[2]. Finnegan (2007) states that performance is intrinsic to African oral literature; and, without it, the oral experience cannot be fully realised and still maintain the identity of African narration.

Using a selected instance of orature in the Sankuru district in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), this autoethnographic study explores the extent to which animation can be used to capture the intrinsic components of African oral literature. To incorporate the various semiotic devices that are displayed during an orature performance, a multimodal framework was used as a means for 'looking beyond' spoken language.

The findings of this exploratory research point to the fact that Sankuru performers embody the essence of their respective performances. The latter are a combination of signs and signifiers which are deeply rooted in the culture as they are imbedded in the performer's words, in the clothes he or she wears, and in the settings within which the performances are held. Thus the performances cannot be divorced from their cultural context.

The practical component that resulted from the research suggests an approach in which animation is used to depict and stage the world of the storytelling performance by bringing elements of the story 'into existence' while weaving said depiction with essential semiotic components of the performance.

[1] 'Orature' is a term coined by Ugandan critic Pio Zirimu and later popularised by N'gugi Wa Thiong'o (Coplan, 1994:8). It refers to the type of literature that is not written but spoken.

[2] In the context of this research, performance implies "activity of an individual in front of a particular set of observers, or audience and which has some influence on the observers" (Goffman, 1956:8).

Glossary of terms

Orature   'Orature' is a term coined by Ugandan critic Pio Zirimu and later popularised by N'gugi Wa Thiong'o. It refers to the type of literature that is not written, but spoken (Coplan, 1994:8).

Performance   In the context of this research, performance implies "activity of an individual in front of a particular set of observers, or audience and which has some influence on the observers" (Goffman, 1956:8).

Animation   Due to diversity of procedures, material and its association with technological advancements, as well as the subsequent advent of digital media, the definition of animation cannot be covered within one complete description. However, based on its general structure, animation can be defined as a technical process that simulates motion in the viewer through the sequencing of static images and can be produced either digitally or in the analogue environment (Martinez, 2015).

Multimodality Derived from social semiotics, it is an approach that recognises that communication occurs at multiple levels and that language is just one mode of making meaning among a range of modes of communication (Jewitt et al., 2013).

Key terms: Orature, Culture, Performance, Animation, Autoethnography, Semiotics, Multimodality

Table of contents

List of figures

List of tables

Appendices

Chapter 1: Introduction

With the advent of colonialism and the subsequent abrupt intrusion of capitalism and Western administrative systems, many components of African culture have lost the status they once held (Gale, 1995). These include the African oral performers whose function in the community was no longer highly regarded as Western cultures predominated. Despite the existent of a plethora of publications on orature in libraries across the globe, there has not been enough emphasis on capturing its performance.

The present research aims to demonstrate the extent to which the medium of animation can be used to depict the performance aspect of African oral literature by taking into consideration the various means of meaning-making that accompany a typical orature event. To incorporate the various semiotic devices that are displayed during an orature performance, a multimodal framework was used, as a means for 'looking beyond' spoken language. Multimodality was developed by Michael Halliday (1978) whose focus was to create a theory around the idea of meaning as choice (cited in Jewitt et al., 2013). Later on, Kress and Van Leeuwen (1998) expanded it from language to other semiotic systems by including other modes, leading to multimodality (cited in Jewitt et al., 2013).

The data collection methods used throughout this autoethnographic research were selected with the intention of capturing the intrinsic components of selected oral performances from the district of Sankuru in order to explore the possibility of incorporating them into the medium of animation.

1.1 Background to the research

I was born in Lubumbashi in the south of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). I grew up and I spent most of my childhood in Lubumbashi; it is a melting pot of people and tribes from all parts of the country.

Growing up, I never paid much attention to what tribes friends or classmates belonged to; it did not matter, since everybody spoke either Swahili, French, or both; and we were all 'Lushois', which is a slang word used to refer to Lubumbashi inhabitants. Though I considered myself Lushois, in my mind there was not a shadow of a doubt about the fact that, culturally, I was a Tetela tribesman. Tetela people, also known as Atetela, are from central DRC; that is where my parents were born and that is where we are from. From a young age, I learnt to love and appreciate my cultural heritage; and by the time I was four, I was fluent in Tetela. The fact

that it was the only acceptable language in our home had a lot to do with it, even though, at school and everywhere else, nobody could speak Tetela.

One of the fondest memories of my childhood is the evenings spent listening to stories told by Ama Ndowa, my late maternal grandmother. The stories were usually folktales of Monkey outsmarting much bigger animals, such as Leopard and Elephant. Sometimes the stories involved humans; stories from 'days when humans and animals still spoke the same language'. Those evening sessions were crucial in building my appreciation for oral literature, an appreciation which was further consolidated by my dad's recurrent use of elements of Tetela orature, such as riddles and proverbs, added to his frequent reference to great oral performers whom he had known either in his youth or during his many trips to Sankuru.

Storytelling was my favourite genre, as I enjoyed retelling the stories told by my grandmother to either friends or relatives. One thing that captured my attention was the fact that my grandmother told the stories from memory: she could not read or write. I was fascinated by her ability to keep my siblings and me captivated through the mere use of her vocal intonations and the occasional raising of hands for spatial emphasis. As a child with a highly imaginative mind, who responded better to visual stimuli, such devices were highly effective.

The stories were usually told around a charcoal stove where sometimes the sound of a pot of beans boiling provided the perfect soundscape. It took me a long time to realise that my grandmother had not memorised the stories she told, at least not word for word. Instead, she retold the stories in her own words, making use of her amazing improvisation skills. Lord (1960:125) wrote that, since oral performances are not based on written texts, the performers do not use the exact words whenever they perform the same oral piece; as a word-for-word replica of a performance cannot be expected of true oral tradition. The stories told by my grandmother were never exactly the same every time she retold them: she sometimes added a call-and-response chorus or a sing-along song. The additions were meant to keep us entertained and ensure we were listening.

My grandmother passed away over twelve years ago and the last time I saw her was eight years before her passing. Many of the stories she told went along with her as I cannot remember most; only a few have mysteriously 'survived'. After all, it has been more than twenty years. However, the main reason why I cannot remember many of the stories is that my mind relies widely on my ability to read and write. Sylvester (2014:251) states that cultures that rely solely on memory to store information not only have superior ability to internalise information, but

they also have a more intimate relationship with knowledge than those who rely less on memory. My mother, whom I once asked if she remembered some of the stories told by Ama Ndowa, could not remember most because she, too, is literate. It seems to be true, then, that "Whenever an elder die, a library burns down" (Bâ, 1982), because that vast assemblage of knowledge is lost.

I wish I had had a chance to record Ama Ndowa telling stories; I wish I had taken a photograph of her telling stories; I wish I had at least a decent photograph of her sitting on her favourite wooden chair as she told stories …. Twenty years ago, there were no cellular phones and the only way I could have recorded her would have been through a radio cassette recorder. But even if I had possessed a recording device, twenty years ago I did not have the same appreciation for her skilful oratory display that I do now; and perhaps I somehow thought she would always be available. It took coming to Cape Town and getting involved with a local storytelling community for me to appreciate truly the gap she left in my world; and only then did I realise how irreplaceable she had turned out to be.

I obtained a degree in graphic design in 2010, but I knew long before concluding my studies that I did not want to conform to the traditional profile of a graphic designer by focusing mostly on print-based options. I was more interested in moving images: from filmmaking to motion graphics and animation. In fact, my final degree project involved storytelling and animation. So, when I decided to embark on my Master's studies, one thing was clear: I wanted to explore ways in which the medium of animation could help capture elements of oral literature that had not been captured through other modes of representation. In other words, if I had had a chance to record my grandmother telling stories twenty years ago, what would I have done to share her stories with contemporary audiences while showcasing not only the tricks she used to tell stories but also the context in which they were told?

1.2 Research questions

To gain a good understanding of the scale of the current enquiry, the following research question and sub-questions were compiled:

1.2.1 Main question

How can the intrinsic aspects of orature be depicted in the medium of animation?

The following sub-questions were derived from the main research question:

1.2.2 Sub-questions

1. What are the intrinsic characteristics of orature?
2. How have the intrinsic components of orature been depicted in written literature?
3. To what extent can technology be used to depict and visually represent elements of oral literature?

1.3 Aim of the study

The aim of this research is to explore the extent to which animation can be used to depict the intrinsic components of orature, by honouring both the role of the performer during the performance of an oral literary event and the context within which the performance took place. Representations based on African oral literary events have focused mostly on content, thus not giving enough consideration to the context and the semiotic devices that were displayed during the performances. Finnegan (2007:79) asserts the importance of visible means – such as the speaker's gestures, his expressions and mimicry – in orally delivered forms; and how, without these crucial components, one cannot offer a reliable representation.

1.4 Objectives of the study

- To identify the intrinsic components of orature.
- To examine the extent to which written literature has incorporated intrinsic components of orature.
- To explore the contribution of technological advancements in the depiction and visual representation of oral literature.

1.5 Research methodology

My irrepressible willingness to discover elements of my roots, as I visited 'the land of my forefathers' for the first time, was a decisive factor when opting for an autoethnographic approach as opposed to 'pure' ethnography. This approach allows understanding the dynamics of oral literature from an empirical point of view (Pace, 2012:2). I could not ignore my own experience as a trained storyteller and a musician, nor my cultural identity as a Tetela man who was exposed to the language and the culture from a young age. As such, my writing is influenced by a deeply personalised style as I tackle elements of my own story and cultural identity while exploring and analysing the dynamics of oral performances in Sankuru.

Participatory methods were chosen as a perfect fit for this autoethnographic study which employs a multimodal approach. Participatory methods allow for increasing the research participants' involvement which grants them control over data generation (Rule & John, 2011). Such involvement was paramount in the context of this research as it encouraged participants to produce and share knowledge – an important consideration, seeing that the performer is at the centre of the performance as he embodies many of the intrinsic elements during the orature event.

Additionally, first-hand observation and field notes captured in the form of a journal were used to establish parallels and contrasts between my own views and experiences and the reality of how events unfolded during field research.

1.6 Significance of the study

The outcome of this study will contribute to shaping the discourse of animation based on African oral literature, encouraging a deeper interpretation of the performance of African oral literature from the perspective of the performer by including essential semiotic components of the performance. In other words, instead of focusing solely on the content of an oral literary event, thus ignoring the performer, this research aims to explore the possibility of creating animated content that foregrounds the African performer who is the link to the culture she or he represents. The modality of animation is such that the audience can experience the performance in a format that depicts its cultural values, instead of relying on stereotypical depictions of African stories, as has been the case in most audio-visual productions based on African culture.

The current study will be of interest to the following: 1. People who have a vested interest in African oral literature, such as academics and students working in the field of cultural studies; 2. Animation practitioners, visual storytelling enthusiasts and filmmakers who are interested in experimental approaches; and 3. Academics who believe in the inherent power of storytelling.

1.7 Ethical considerations

Research ethics is defined as set of guidelines about how researchers and research organisations should conduct themselves when dealing with participants, other researchers and colleagues (Oliver, 2010). This study adhered to ethical standards during the data collection process. To

avoid creating discomfort and being invasive, there was at least a day-long interval between data collection sessions. Participants were aware of the intent of the data collection methods; and data collected was always used in the way the respondents had been informed it would be used.

Written informed consent was provided by the gatekeeper (see Appendix B) who, in this case, is the district administrator of Sankuru. A written authorisation from the gatekeeper was provided, along with a French version of the Research Participation Form from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (Appendix A), which was read and signed by the district administrator.

1.8 Organisation of the thesis

THESIS:

The study of African orature in the form of animation: the case of Sankuru, Democratic Republic of Congo

Chapter 1
Introduction

Chapter 2
Literature review and theoretical framework

Chapter 3
Research methodology

Chapter 4
Findings
Through songs and beats: my fieldtrip 'in the land of my forefathers'

Chapter 5
Analysis of the findings

Chapter 6
Conclusion and recommendations

References

Appendices

Figure 1.1: Organisation of the thesis

As illustrated in figure 1, the content of the thesis is organised in seven chapters as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

The chapter introduces the thesis by providing an outline of the research topic as well as an overview of the aims and objectives of this research. The methods and approaches employed during the research process are formulated, along with an outline of what led the researcher to conduct the research. The significance of the current study and ethical considerations are also discussed.

Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical framework

This chapter provides firstly an overview of existing literature on the research topic as follows:

- A brief overview of literature on Indigenous Knowledge which is aimed at introducing African oral literature as a small element within the broader spectrum of African knowledge systems.
- An overview of the concept of African identity and how it has shaped contrasting views on the understanding of what it means to be African.
- An analysis of the components of African oral literature, including its translation, interpretation and application into other mediums of communication.
- A discussion on the suitability of the medium of animation for depicting African oral literature and its performance.

Literature review is followed by the theoretical framework. Multimodality is introduced as the framework that guides this research; and an overview of its historical position is provided. This is followed by a discussion of key principles that underpin multimodality, as well as an overview of the six concepts that are at the core of multimodality and which are: "mode, semiotic resource, materiality, modal affordance, multimodal ensemble and meaning functions" (Jewitt, 2013:253). Lwin's model (2010) for multimodal narrative is also discussed, along with how it applies to *How Dog became the most feared animal*, one of the stories told by Djoko, a key participant, and upon which the practical component of this study is based.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

In chapter four, an overview of autoethnography and its relevance in the present research is provided. The participants' selection and criteria that guided the sampling process are

presented and the chapter ends with an overview of the data collection and data analysis methods and their relevance.

Chapter 4: Findings

Through songs and beats: my field trip in 'the land of my forefathers'

In this chapter, an extensive account of my fieldtrip in Sankuru is provided; a step by step description of the sampling of participants; the capturing of oral performances and the data collection process through participatory methods, for each of the key participants. In order to garner greater insight into a broader set of social phenomena inside the Sankuru district, my personal experience and empirical data provided an insider's perspective on the data collected.

Chapter 5: Analysis of the findings

How Dog became the most feared animal **– depiction of performance in animation**

Chapter six comprises of insights on creative decisions that led to the final practical component; it provides a rationale for the approach used in the animated component and a discussion of the tools used to achieve the desired stylistic treatment. A breakdown of each of the main sections of the video is provided.

A multimodal analysis of the story of *How Dog became the most feared animal* is presented followed by a summary of findings:

- To describe the various modes of meaning-making that were featured during the performance of the story.
- To assess the interplay between components of different semiotic modes during the performance
- To describe the various layers of meaning that emanated from the relationship between my personal experience and the broader set of socio-cultural phenomena encountered in the field.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations

The concluding chapter seven is a summary of the primary arguments of the thesis. A brief overview of the main aspects of the thesis is offered. It is demonstated how each of the research questions were answered. The chapter ends with recommendations for future studies as many experiments and techniques still need to be investigated.

Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical framework

2.0 Introduction to the literature review

An overview of existing literature on the research topic is provided. The aims of this section are to address the main research question, familiarise the reader with existing studies on oral literature, both globally and from an African perspective, and to analyse the possibility of establishing links between African oral literature and the medium of animation.

The literature review chapter provides an overview of literature on Indigenous Knowledge, an overview of the concept of African identity, an analysis of the components of African oral literature, and a discussion on the suitability of the medium of animation for depicting African oral literature and its performance.

2.1 Indigenous knowledge

"What matters is not to know the world but to change it" (Fanon, 1952).

When trying to understand the nature of knowledge, it is important to distinguish between different types of knowledge. Fatnowna and Pickett (2002:217) speak of a contrast between formal, academic and scientific knowledge versus common-sense, everyday knowledge. Most of our actions are primarily dictated by the empirical knowledge from our daily interactions while acquired academic and professional knowledge come second (ibid). By discussing knowledge that is acquired through empirical processes, we may, ipso facto, refer to societies whose people inherited knowledge from preceding generations; mostly through non-written forms such as oral transmission and practice-based approaches.

In a broader sense, this type of knowledge is known as Indigenous Knowledge; and, although knowledge is usually delimitated within a specific space, Odora Hoppers (2002:5) states that knowledge is a universal issue and not an exclusive concern of the peoples from whose setting the knowledge comes. As such, it is important that platforms and initiatives are established to ensure its preservation, dissemination and management through the use of adequate methods.

Whatever the methods used to disseminate knowledge, establishing the source of knowledge or information is usually indicative of the validity of material; and it is more so in the current information-driven era. When dealing with knowledge, it is always important knowing who is

writing such knowledge, about whom it is written and into what context the knowledge fits (Fatnowna & Pickett, 2002:71).

Many scholars have written on the role of colonialism in establishing a biased and often inaccurate view of the colonies' knowledge systems (Fanon 1961; Kanneh 1998; Hountondji, 2002). Odora Hoppers (2002:6) states that many Western discourses on knowledge systems from non-Western societies were established through scientific paradigms that were far removed from socio-cultural practices of the societies in question. The revised discourses were reintroduced in these societies through lectures, language, policies and methods of inquiry (ibid).

The history of modern anthropology began with European travellers who published their personal accounts on the cultures they encountered during their explorations (Hountondji, 2002). The scientific communities of the colonising countries found interest in the data on the Indigenous cultures and were particularly compelled to analyse and understand their systems of thought (ibid). Such is the context in which the studies of Indigenous people were developed: first in the form of ethno-science; and later as studies which expanded into other disciplines.

Indigenous Knowledge systems concern the fusion of various knowledge systems at various levels: technological, societal, economical and philosophical, as well as public policies, to name just a few (Odora Hoppers, 2002:9). Although the general understanding of Indigenous Knowledge is that it alludes to traditional artefacts and public displays of cultural material destined for the consumption of tourists or cultural enthusiasts, Indigenous Knowledge refers to a much broader collection of disciplines (a topic that falls beyond the scope of this research). However, it is worth noting that Indigenous Knowledge in agriculture, health, medicine and many other disciplines was and still is marginalised, mainly due to the fact that it was seen by the West as being in opposition to modern knowledge systems (Hountondji 2002; Ciaffa 2008; Lajul 2014). Hountondji (2002) asserts that the interpretation of data from Indigenous practices in the field of medicine, agriculture and textile, for example, were conducted in the colonising countries, and removed from the settings within which the data originated. The disregard toward the Indigenous practitioners in the process of analysis and interpretation of data was greatly influenced by an imperial paradigm and this shaped the way Indigenous societies perceived themselves (in addition to a myriad of recurrent issues generated at socio, political and economic levels and which we will not expound upon in this research). However, there

were similar patterns across all Indigenous societies, as far as the colonial impact on local knowledge systems is concerned:

2.1.1 Impact of colonisation on the Australian Aboriginal knowledge system

Watson (2016) argues that Aboriginal Australians, just like the African Americans through the path of history, have been represented as inferior on the basis of their racial features. She adds that many of the myths surrounding them were used as a measure to justify colonisation (Watson, 2016:259). The Aboriginals' knowledge of land management was not taken into consideration by the coloniser who went as far as omitting their right to land in the legal system (ibid:260).

Similarly, Fatnowna and Pickett (2002:72) refer to how the Aboriginal education system, which employed successful teaching methods, was replaced by a Western system, which was then presented as the only viable option and, implicitly – and sometimes explicitly – rejected many elements of the aboriginal culture.

Watson states, however, that in recent decades, there has been an appropriation of aspects of aboriginal culture by the Australian settler society which has also borrowed Aboriginal motifs for use in the arts and in branding. However, the author believes many of the practices are still rooted in colonisation (Watson, 2016:262).

2.1.2 An instance of disruption in the New Zealand Maori knowledge system

The New Zealand Maori, much like Indigenous Indians in Brazil and North America Indians, were subjected to European invasion and the encounter caused great changes at socio-cultural and administrative levels. For the Maori of New Zealand, land is the basis of complex socio-cultural networks (Hikuroa et al., 2011). The authors state that a 1954 government decree that authorised the construction of a pulp and paper mill did not take into consideration the importance of land in Maori culture and its role in the socio-economic structure of the people (ibid). The concept of *mauri* (life force) as an intrinsic constituent of Maori way of life, the basis of their philosophy around existence and their way of thinking, was overlooked during the decision-making process (ibid). Though the disruption of Maori Indigenous Knowledge Systems caused by land appropriation may not be directly credited to colonialism, as it was an initiative of the ruling government. It was, however, motivated by an imperialist paradigm.

However, Hikura et al. (2011) state that solutions are being investigated with the intent of applying elements from Maori Indigenous Knowledge, such as their language and belief system, as a methodological tool for finding solutions that are relevant to the affected Maori population.

2.1.3 Africa's Indigenous Knowledge System versus Western knowledge system

By referring to 'Africa', in contrast to more specific delimitations such as 'New Zealand Maori' or 'Australia Aboriginals', we are led to question whether there is a uniformity of cultural values and knowledge systems across the entire African continent – a topic discussed in upcoming sections. However, Lajul (2014:45) suggests that Indigenous Knowledge takes shape within specific locations and it is not static, as it has evolved through socio-cultural changes in each of the societies within which the sets of beliefs were produced.

Lajul (2014:43) states that Africa has always tried to catch up with other knowledge systems from around the world. He suggests that the current state of African knowledge systems is such that they have forcibly attempted to incorporate elements of the modern knowledge system; and, as result, the mix has done very little to respond to Africa's current challenges. Hountondji (2002:43) corroborates this view as he states that, through colonisation and the introduction of initiatives toward globalisation, Africans have adopted the discourse of colonisers on the continent, thus undervaluing Africa's own heritage.

One of the reasons why there has not been a 'happy marriage' between African Indigenous Knowledge and modern knowledge systems is that they are each built upon opposing philosophies: modern knowledge is mostly science and technology-based (which means that probing existing knowledge is what validates its claims), whereas African Indigenous Knowledge is empirical (it is inherited from previous generations and provides a connection between the surroundings and the people) (Lajul, 2014:48). While Odora Hoppers (2002:9) states that, despite being at the forefront of many inventions and a great number of solutions to societal issues, Western knowledge has failed to respond to countless other issues, among which are the unfair exploitation of resources and the subsequent fast depletion of the planet's natural resources. Hountondji (2002:33) adds that the solution does not lie in a total rejection of Western knowledge; and the author warns against blind devotion to African heritage. He urges Africans to acknowledge the great advantages offered by scientific knowledge and to

study ways in which it can 'join forces' with traditional knowledge to improve people's living conditions (ibid).

Hountondji (2002:33) asserts that, in order to promote the individualities and the unique identity of our cultures, we first need to identify the universal elements that have been embedded in them and investigate whether or not these elevate Indigenous Knowledge for the advancement of Africa and its people. In the next section, the notion of identity is analysed, and whether it is possible to establish the elements that constitute an African identity.

2. 2 Is there such thing as an 'African identity'?

Kanneh (1998) explores the meanings of 'Africa' and 'blackness' by looking at existing literary documents on the subject. He argues that, to investigate the meanings of Africa and, subsequently, 'African identities', it is important to look at existing discourses of Africa, mainly the ones established by disciplines and genres of colonial anthropologies, travel narratives, ethno- philosophies and literary works (Kanneh, 1998:2). He compares literary texts from different authors to expound his argument.

As an example, Kanneh demonstrates the gaps of continuity between oral and literate worlds by comparing Chinua Achebe's *Things fall apart* (1958) with Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* (1939). The author chose these two literary works because they are both based on a representation of Nigerian societies and cultural authority (Kanneh, 1998:22). Kanneh argues that Achebe's understanding of land and space as an interpretation of time allows the novel to present an entirely self-sufficient view of oral culture. Achebe does not comment on the subject from an outsider perspective but rather from an empirical point of view; and his use of oral elements specific to the culture in question elevates his novel to the rank of both an anthropological and historical document. By contrast, Kanneh describes Cary's *Mister Johnson* as a very detached representation of subject matter: a disconnected commentary which is not empirical and rather presents a very superficial view of Nigeria and its customs.

Kanneh does not offer a list of elements that define 'Africa' or 'African identities', and no one should expect him to do so. Africa is a vast and diverse continent, with diverse cultural values. The author mainly presents his views on what constitutes a fair representation of Africa and what should not be considered a reliable depiction of African realities. By alluding to 'a proper definition of Africa', Kanneh (1998) suggests the existence of common cultural values across the entire continent.

Many authors have warned against the tendency to see Africa as a single unit, hence paying little attention to its diversity. Such a view is discussed by Eze (2014:235) who rejects the concept of a unified Africa and the notion that there is such a thing as 'pure African'. The author further expounds his argument by stating that the concept of an African identity that is based on opposition between Africa and the West was endorsed by the likes of Achebe, Mudimbe (1998) and Kanneh (1998) as a response to the reality of racism and prejudice manifested through various Western colonial discourses and an overall perception of Africa. Eze's opposition to the notion of a 'unified Africa' was previously echoed by Murphy (2000) and Kalua (2009) who both rejected the notion that Africa should be considered a single unit by disregarding the cultural diversity and individual entities within the continent. Similarly, both authors criticised the concept of an African identity that is based on the polarity between Afrocentrism and Eurocentrism.

2.2.1. An 'Africa' defined by its opposition to the West

A brief history of European colonial discourse on Africa may help contextualise the views of many African intellectuals of the early post-colonial era whose writings focused on the opposing values between Africa and Europe. Ciaffa (2008:124) states that the literature of European intellectuals such as Lucien Levy-Bruhl, Hegel and Kant was instrumental in cementing, in the European mind, the notion that Africans were a primitive people and that they were "hardly capable of abstract thought" (ibid). Such discourse was instrumental in various European initiatives aimed at the African continent.

It was not until a Belgian missionary, Placide Tempels, published his 'findings' in a publication entitled *Bantu Philosophy* that a more realistic and more empirical view of Africa was made accessible, not only to Europeans but also to African intellectuals who were greatly inspired by Tempels's text (Ciaffa, 2008:124). Tempels's publication rejected many elements of the European discourse on Africa, including the racist notion of black inferiority preached by the likes of Levy-Bruhl and Hegel (Ciaffa, 2008:124).

According to Hampaté Bâ (1982:193), among Africans, to 'know' means 'to live', and no foreigner will be able to understand the reality of an African society without experiencing it. A verbal explanation simply does not suffice.

Inspired by the work of Tempels, many African intellectuals expounded on some of the concepts. Leopold Senghor was one of the first who made a significant impact with his

philosophical ideal of 'Négritude' which rested on the fundamental differences between black Africans and white Europeans (Ciaffa, 2008:125).

Kalua (2009:9) asserts that some of the early efforts aimed at 'reclaiming' the 'African identity', such as Pan-Africanism and Négritude – and more recently, Thabo Mbeki's attempt at launching an African Renaissance – were born from the need for a common political and cultural identity that placed emphasis on the difference between black people and other races, thus race was used as a symbol of unity across the entire continent. Kalua (ibid) adds that the term 'Africa' is in fact an embodiment of such a misconception, as it emphasises the notion of a continent that shares the same cultural values based on race (blackness) and geographic location.

2.2.2. A broader definition for 'Africa'

The etymology of the word 'Africa' is unclear. Fourie (2015: 2) cites five explanations which are considered the most widely accepted: 1. The notion that Africa comes from 'aphrike', which is Greek for 'without cold'; 2. The claim by Hellenistic era writers that the word refers to descendant of mythical god Afer; 3. The belief that 'Africa' comes from 'ifri', a Berber word for cave; 4. The argument that it is derived from Afri, which is an ethnic group that existed in present-day Tunisia and which the Romans encountered first.

Fourie argues however that, despite the lack of agreement amongst scholars on the etymology of the word, the common denominator is that the word 'Africa' was initially used by the Roman Empire upon the colonisation of North Africa (2015: 2).

Although Kalua (2009) acknowledges the existence of multiple black identities within the continent as opposed to one unified identity, he does not expound on the complex reality of cross-cultural identities among Africans of mixed cultural heritage and those living in the diaspora, nor on the phenomenon of assimilation that is a prominent feature of the current technology-driven era. In *Rethinking African culture and identity: the Afropolitan model,* Eze (2014:235) addresses the issue by declaring that being African is no longer strictly geographical or cultural: rather, there is a cross-cultural, cross-religious and cross-racial integration which has been taking place in post-colonial Africa.

Such complex integration of various socio-cultural elements calls for a new understanding of what it means to be African because it is no longer based on opposition but rather on an integration of African values and the many other influences that Africans are exposed to which

are evident in the form of literature, art, film and much more (2014:235). Eze roots for the term 'Afropolitanism' to address what he considers a failure of the word 'African' to embrace the reality of being African with different backgrounds or being of African descent in the current world.

Eze (2014) argues that Afropolitanism acknowledges that, although people are born in specific places and within specific cultures, they are not bound to those places but they expand their views through assimilation of other socio-cultural elements. The ability to move between places can inevitably trigger changes in perception.

Although the terminology Eze uses sounds elaborate, the author makes a valid point by acknowledging that Africa is not a static concept and being African should not allude to a singular cultural background but should also consider more complex sets of influences from various sources.

The concept of 'identity' cannot be discussed without referring to language as the carrier of knowledge systems and the identity of a people. African oral literature is one of the core representatives of African identities and certainly one of the oldest art forms present on the African continent. The next section discusses this unique literary genre.

2.3 African 'orature'

This study favours the term 'orature' over 'oral literature' when referring to the form of African literature that is spoken and not written; it is a term coined by Ugandan critic Pio Zirimu and later popularised by N'gugi Wa Thiong'o (cited in Coplan, 1994:8). The term 'orature' was coined to counter the tendency to see the forms of literature communicated orally and received aurally as inferior to written ones.

2.3.1. Can African oral art be considered literature?

Because of the etymological association between 'literature' and letters (writing) and considering oral art relies on performance for its creation, Finnegan (2007) writes that many scholars have argued against the use of the term 'literature' when referring to African oral art. Ong (2005:11), for example, asserts that the use of the concept 'oral literature' reveals an inability to rely on the heritage of verbally created materials, as if the oral form of communication was a variant of writing.

In a more recent publication, Kaboré (2014:15) argues that, before the invention of writing, there was a literature: one that was oral; and another that was based on drums. He adds that, although African traditional societies did not use 'letters', they used mnemonic devices instead, devices which he called 'tried words'. Kaboré argues that 'tried words' are nothing but an oral version of 'letters', therefore the term 'literature' still applies to Africa's non-written communication (ibid).

Kaboré (2014:15) argues that Pio Zirimu's definition of 'orature' emphasised the divergence between 'letter' and 'word'. However, with the recent realisation that 'tried words' were actually the equivalent of 'letters', many scholars have chosen to stick to the terms 'oral literature' to acknowledge the similarity between the two genres of literature. Kaboré, who still endorses the word 'orature' instead of 'oral literature', suggests a new definition for 'orature', one that incorporates the many genres of performed literature that the term did not previously allude to. He states that it is a mixture of oral, written forms and performance. The author argues that, though 'orature' contains elements of 'oral literature', it is not reduced to it (Kaboré, 2014:15); instead, orature is a mixture of many genres and the performance that goes along with it. This definition also partially defines 'technauriture', a recent effort towards the studies of the use of technologies in the crossing between the practice, the processes, the capturing and dissemination of oral performances (Kaschula & Mostert, 2009; Kaschula, 2016)

The stance of this thesis matches that of Kaboré, Finnegan and African scholars such as Ngugi Wa Thiog'o, Pitika Ntuli and many others who support the idea that the vast body of African oral tales, poems, songs and proverbs fall within the domain of literature called oral literature or simply 'orature'. It is therefore important to provide an overview of the main oral literary genres as well as their respective functions in African traditional societies.

2.4 Genres of orature

Ogunjimi and Na'Allah (2005) provide a helpful insight on the different forms of orature, as well as their functions in African traditional societies.

Before discussing the various forms of African oral literature, we will discuss the concept of 'archetypes' which the authors define as actions, images and phenomena that repeat themselves in the course of human development. Archetypes are useful since they allow identifying

common denominators in the literature of any ages and social settings (Ogunjimi & Na'Allah, 2005:49).

To study archetype, it is important to consider the following elements:

1. **The subject matter:** the core of action that provokes issues, ideas and functions in any work of art, for example, birth, coming of age, death, guilt.
   Actions and seduction are commonplace subject matter in human experience and are important components of many African traditional societies (Ogunjimi & Na'Allah, 2005).

2. **The themes:** ideas or visions that, in the first instance, motivated the writer to write. Themes may include certain human traits that are good or bad, including moral and ethical issues.
   Betrayal is a common theme that is strongly archetypal in nature (Ogunjimi & Na'Allah, 2005).

3. **Characterisation:** characters are very important in translating actions into reality in the plot of any narrative, whether oral or written. Because of their vital roles in articulating social, political and philosophical images, characters may have archetypal meanings. They are not only restricted to human beings but also include demons, spirits, animals and even inanimate object such as rocks, for example (Ogunjimi & Na'Allah, 2005).

4. **Setting:** setting is fundamental to the plot pattern of any narrative. It is the locale where the actions of a narrative take place and characters dramatise their will, emotion and actions. Setting in traditional narratives may have archetypal relevance because they can still be traced to the mythical or historical past (Ogunjimi & Na'Allah, 2005).

2.4.1 Oral narratives forms

There are five oral narrative forms that will be discussed: myths, legends, folktales, proverbs and riddles and jokes.

1. **Myths**

Myths encompass both humans and the forces above them. The world of myth comprises a Supreme Being, the lesser gods and goddesses, spirits, ancestors, and human beings. Myths connect the worlds of the supernatural and the world of humans (Ogunjimi & Na'Allah, 2005).

2. Legends

Legends embrace the world of man and the forces below him. Despite the fact that characters involved in legends performed historic and heroic roles, they are not necessarily considered gods, even if they are deified (Ogunjimi & Na'Allah, 2005).

3. Folktales

Folktales in African oral narratives are, in most cases, told by elders to children. Folktales focus on the natural world. Characters in these tales include man and all the forces below him, such as animate and inanimate objects like trees, rock and waters (Ogunjimi & Na'Allah, 2005). Such tales fall into three basic categories: dilemma tales, moral tales and fairy tales (ibid).

There are three basic types of folktales in Africa:

A. Dilemma tales

In dilemma tales, the audience is required to chose from a variety of alternatives at the end of the narration to resolve the conflicts in the story (Ogunjimi & Na'Allah, 2005).

B. Moral tales

These generally teach moral lessons, like goodness to parents and orphans, hard work, hospitality to strangers and good relationships (Ogunjimi & Na'Allah, 2005).

C. Fairy tales

These are tales of ghosts and spirits. This type of tale is different from the other two types already discussed. One area in which myths, legends and folktales are similar is that some of their characters possess good qualities that are expected to be emulated in the society. Another area is that myths and legends are (most of the time) like folktales, stories that also contain songs (Ogunjimi & Na'Allah, 2005).

4. Proverbs

Proverbs embrace the philosophical and socio-cultural value systems of the peoples and they are inspired by people's cosmological and social environment. In Africa, proverbs are a special prerogative of the elders (Ogunjimi & Na'Allah, 2005).

5. **Riddles and jokes**

The function of riddles and jokes is to test the strength of human perception and intellect and they are usually brief and concise (Ogunjimi & Na'Allah, 2005).

2.4.2 Oral poetry forms

Some of the main oral poetry forms are praise-poetry (also known as salutation poetry), lullaby, occupational poetry (usually performed during execution of daily tasks), heroic poetry and epic poetry (Ogunjimi & Na'Allah, 2005).

Finnegan (1970) wrote of another important yet unique form of literature: *drum literature.* This form of literature is mainly found in West and Central Africa, particularly in the Sankuru where the fieldwork for the research took place. This form of literature is played either on drums or other similar instruments.

2.4.3 Merging of genres in orature

Finnegan (1970:7) wrote on African oral performers' use of varied oral techniques such as dramatized dialogue and manipulation of the audience's sense of humor, during orally delivered performances. Such combination of oral devices was overly present during oral performances in Sankuru as oral performers combined multiple genres in their delivery; even when they performed praise poetry, there were elements of the proverb genre that were presented sometimes in a song form, thus making also use of the genre of music. Djoko's storytelling performances were preceded by riddles which were meant to serve as introductions to the stories, and music was also used during his storytelling performances, to provide pace and create the right mood for the story. Perhaps De Paris, another key informant's, was the most eclectic as he combined praise poetry, dance, music, and even drama during a single performance.

Muleka (2014:86), who insists on the importance of context as the determining factor as far as shape and form of oral performances are concerned, states that oral performances are un-predictable as there are determined by the oral performer's choices. Since the performer decides the form, the extent to which he involves his audience, it is up to him to decide whether a riddle should precede the praise poetry or if a song is required to conclude the performance. Additionally, Opondo (2014:124) states that the performer manipulates the text, context, audience, time and space to accommodate the intended narrative. This aspect of oral

performances allows performers to make use of multiple genres within the same performance.

2.5 Orature versus written literature

Finnegan (2007), who has conducted extensive research on orature, states that, in the late 20th century and perhaps more recently, it was assumed that those living in cultures that made little use of writing had little or no explicit awareness of the subtleties and depths of linguistic expression. Finnegan (ibid), asserts that most academics assumed that the members of such cultures lacked the power of analysis due to domination by non-verbal forms of expression, which left little to no capacity for abstract thought. Ong (2005:8) rebuts this, stating that such a misconception is due to the fact that a literate person cannot fully understand what the word represents to purely oral people simply because she/he tends to regard oral creations as variants of written productions, while oral art forms are seen as texts which are not written down.

Sylvester (2014:251) argues along Ong's lines as she states that societies which do not rely so much on memory to preserve information do not have an intimate relationship with the information because it is 'stored' in external agents, so there is no need to internalise it. However, the opposite can be said of cultures that rely solely on memory as information. Not only is information internalised but there is an intimate relationship with knowledge, a process that requires great mental acuity (ibid). Cultures that use writing rely on sight-based devices, hence the information can be revisited at will. However, oral-based cultures rely on both the individual's and the community's memory to preserve knowledge.

Ong (2005:8) states, however, that an explanatory and abstract sequential examination of phenomena cannot be achieved without writing and reading. In other words, the people from what Ong calls 'primary oral cultures' – those who do not use writing to communicate – have the ability to acquire new knowledge but they do not 'study' in the strict sense of the word; rather, they learn by apprenticeship (ibid). Ong (2005:15) argues that writing has reshaped human consciousness. He also states that the literate mind would certainly not be the same without it (ibid: 77). Despite the many benefits of writing and the subsequent technological advancements that were made possible by the invention, the process of 'transferring' oral creation into written format is delicate and requires more than mere mastery of the written practice, a topic discussed in the next section.

2.6 The problem with orature translations

"Oral literature is by definition dependent on a performer who formulates it in words on specific occasions; there is no other way in which it can be realised as a literary product" (Finnegan, 2007:78).

2.6.1 Translating para-textual elements

Finnegan (2007:22), who extensively studied the Limba people of Sierra Leone, esteems the artistry in their use of oral literature yet she is dissatisfied that the artistic elements that characterise the Limba's skilful use of orature fail to come across in written or translated versions of the Limba's oral literary performance (ibid).

Finnegan (2007:79) asserts that, in written versions of African poetry, proverbs, and folktales, characterisation may appear less important because literate cultures require most details to be explicitly included in the text, while oral forms of communication can be delivered through the use of gestures, voice intonation and mimicry, which are visible means. Additionally, a mood can be conveyed not only by the performer's attire but also by the objects or instruments they may carry (Finnegan, 2007:80). Sometimes the visual aspect involves spontaneous dance and dramatic gestures that may involve members of the audience (Finnegan, 2007:80). This need for an accurate interpretation of oral literary form into publication is further discussed by Sheldon-Heeg (2003) who analyses the work of Phyllis Savory, an author who translated a significant number of collections of African folk tales into English.

2.6.2 Translating cultural nuances

Sheldon-Heeg investigates Savory's published work by exploring the extent to which the latter depicted what are claimed to be authentic representations of African folk tales (Sheldon-Heeg, 2003:105). Although the author clearly acknowledges the unique contribution of Savory through the publication of hundreds of tales from Xhosa, Matabele and Batswana in her book entitled *African fireside tales* (1982)*, he demonstrates that her interpretation of these tales was far from flawless. By comparing Savory's work with other translations by black South African authors, Sheldon-Heeg concludes that Savory's text displays evidence of a cultural and ideological shift (Sheldon-Heeg, 2003:107). Translating oral literature requires detailed questions about not only the circumstance in which the piece was performed but also its social background and the personality of the performer.

The issue around achieving an accurate translation of orature into written format is not only present when translation is attempted by a Western author, it is present, albeit in a slightly different shape, even when African authors transfer orature texts into written forms. On the latter, Gyasi (2003:144) argues that authors such as Chinua Achebe of Nigeria and Henri Lopes and Ahmadou Kourouma of Ivory Coast were successful in 'adapting' colonial languages such as French and English in such a way that these languages captured the nuances of their respective mother-tongues. A successful translation of orature text by an African author may rest upon two elements: firstly, the degree to which the writer masters the Western language in which she/he writes; and the extent to which the Western language can capture the imagination of the African language in question.

In some cases, there is a negotiation process taking place, as some concepts may not be easily translated into English, French or whatever colonial language the African writer chooses to write in. Such has been the case with this research, as most fieldwork data was collected in Tetela, my mother tongue. There have been many instances where there was not an equivalent English word that perfectly captured the subtleties of a Tetela word or the perfect English equivalent for a Tetela expression. As Jay-Rayon (2013:174) clearly states, the translator of oral literature texts is required to match the ideological essence of the original text by paying attention to rhetoric and style, instead of treating the translation as a free, separate entity,

There are many additional resources that oral performers can call upon during a performance. However, it is important to acknowledge that the detailed ways in which oral performances are delivered vary from culture to culture and even within the same language, they may vary among the different literary forms (Finnegan, 2007). Although Finnegan clearly demonstrates how poor translation of African 'orature' in written format can result in an inaccurate and poor representation of the oral literature event, Okpewho (1992:117) argues that the survival of African oral traditions may lie in its appropriation of contemporary forms of communication.

2.7. Orature in African literature

Okpewho (1992) argues that many African writers chose to resist colonialism by embracing the literary traditions imposed by European imperialists; such as English and French and using them to promote their own traditions. Thus, there was an emphasis on embracing new mediums of communication in order to ensure the survival of African traditions. Okpewho cites Chinua Achebe as one of the first writers who incorporated elements of African oral traditions in their fiction writings. Others include Taban Lo Liyong, Ngugi Wa Thiog'o and Ben Okri.

Gyasi (1999:76) wrote that early African writers were determined to use colonial languages to achieve their objective which consisted of destroying the stereotypical representations of Africa. The author adds that the writings of many African writers feature either a subconscious reference to their own mother tongues or an intended interference between the mother tongue and the colonial language, as was the case with the writing of Chinua Achebe.

Orally delivered forms of communication have existed without the use of writing; however, writing cannot exist without orality (Ong, 2005:8). The invention of writing has ensured the survival of orature through publication. However, the process of transferring oral forms into written ones is not straightforward: it requires a careful strategy for capturing oral data, a process further complicated by African oral art's reliance on performance.

2.8 Capturing and interpreting orature performance

Two main approaches to research based on performance are stated by Coplan (1994), who conducted ethnographic research on the oral performance of Basotho migrants. He asserts a difference between the critic who applies his or her own cultural standards to evaluate performances and performers of a given society, and the ethnological analyst who seeks to reveal socio-cultural elements in performance that would never be voiced by their creators. Coplan's view corroborates that of Finnegan (2007), stating the performance of a poem, for example, should also take into consideration the context within which it takes place, the quality of the performer's voice, facial expressions, the movements and musical setting of the poem. This aspect of performance is often ignored during the process of recording and interpreting oral literature (Coplan, 1994). According to Finnegan, practical difficulties may be one of the reasons why written translation has been the first choice of anthropologists and others who were interested in capturing orature; yet she argues that the main reason behind the lack of consideration for performance is the unconscious reference to the written form (Finnegan, 2007:79).

Finnegan argues that audio recorders are good alternatives for the recording of African oral literature because the medium has successfully solved some of the limitations of recording oral performances (2007:79). However, to better grasp the importance of capturing information from an ethnographic perspective, Piault (1994) provides a brief historical description of the use of images in anthropology.

Piault (1994:1) states that the first visual elements introduced in anthropology were drawings, sketches and, later on, still photographs brought back from faraway fields by early anthropologists who felt that they could not provide an accurate description of the main elements of the cultures totally unknown in their own society. Due to the ambiguous nature of image, there was a need to add texts to provide further explanations. Although photographs had some kind of autonomy, they were limited in time and space, and the context could not be easily understood. Hence, these photographs also needed to be supported by words and texts (Piault, 1994:2).

Piault (1994:2) argues that the birth of cinema was an important stimulant to the work of anthropologists because cinema had great potential to improve their work by adding animated images to their data. Yet the invention of synchronous sound in the 1960s proved to be the critical turning point, as it gave a feeling of closeness and intimacy missing in preceding mediums (ibid).

2.9 The interplay between orature and the digital world

2.9.1 Orature in cinema

In her essay entitled *Ouédraogo and the aesthetic of silence*, Nagib (2001) analysed the work of Idrissa Ouédraogo, one of the finest contemporary African filmmakers. The genius of Ouédraogo, according to the author, lies in the special way in which he depicts oral tales, which are the basis of several of his movies. Before analysing Nagib's take on Ouédraogo's work, it is important to clarify a few points about the African cinema discourse.

In cinema (as well as in written literature) in sub-Saharan Africa, the opposition between modernity and tradition was frequently expressed through the antagonism between the countryside and the city. One of the most widespread subjects in African post-colonial arts was the conflicts between the villagers – supposedly pure and honest in their traditional customs – and the urban invaders who are supposedly corrupted by money and the thirst for power (Murphy, 2000; Nagib, 2001).

A first generation of African filmmakers collaborated to consolidate systems of oppositions, such as tradition/modernity, countryside/city, old/new, good/evil. Nagib (2001) argues that such polarity was inevitable and even necessary at the time to denounce the horrors of colonialism. The author cites Ousmane Sembene as one of few of that generation who expressed their anticolonial feelings with brilliance. Some other filmmakers, on the other hand,

failed to use the medium to their advantage, resulting in simplistic and disingenuous plots and technically clumsy images in which the content usually prevailed over the form (Nagib, 2001). By comparing work by three different African filmmakers, Murphy (2000:241) demonstrated how each represented oppositions through their own personal views of Africa: while Sembene Ousmane offered a more radical representation of the opposition between African and Western values, others such as Djibril Diop Mambety and Souleymane Cissé focused more on cultural issues and mythical themes respectively.

Murphy (2000:241) states that, although African filmmakers have incorporated elements of orature into their films, the medium of cinema introduces a different dimension to the cultural dynamic due to the fact that it allows viewing the world from a different perspective; the components of orature have to be adapted to fit the format and expressiveness of the medium. Currently, there is little use in repeating the formula of the heroic traditional Africans in their attempt to express their opposition to the modern 'invader' (Nagib, 2001:101).

Ouédraogo does not work with a system of oppositions but under the sign of integration. He was born and brought up in Burkina Faso, but he acquired his cinematic education in Europe, mainly in France (Nagib, 2001:101). The filmmaker learned how to use the culture of the former coloniser to his advantage so as better to tell stories that promote his own culture. Ouédraogo's strategy is to incorporate what he has learned about European techniques to give the best possible expression of an African idiom.

Rather than focusing on achieving a genre of cinema that is opposed to Western cinema discourses which is, according to the Murphy (2000), a paradox, considering cinema is a Western invention, the emphasis should be placed on how the encounter of different cultures could interact and complement one another. Murphy roots for an approach that integrates both the universal and the local aspect of cinema without relying on the empty promises of a cinema that is free from Western influence.

Nagib (2001) states that the weakness of African cinema lies in the dialogue. Sometimes there is a narrator who provides voice-over translation of the dialogue. However, the frequency with which the narrators interject through voice-over commentary in the movies is a real setback. She further adds that, in black African cinema in general, the images and the action tend to be much more eloquent than the verbal explanations. This explanation gap in the dialogues often generates the need for an explainer, whether as a voice-over third person or as an internal narrative character.

In the filmographies of the francophone area of Sahel, the most usual manner of translating oral tales is in the introduction, in the form of a voice-over commentary, of a *griot* or equivalent oral narrator. Malines and Burkinabe films often have, among the characters, a *griot* who tells the story, giving it a moralising and didactic function within a social group (Nagib, 2001:104).

2.9.2 Storyteller versus filmmaker

In the article entitled *The cineaste as a modern griot in West Africa,* Wynchank (1994) compares the storyteller to the filmmaker. Among the differences between the two genres, the author states that the storyteller speaks directly to his audience and the setting allows him to determine his choice of subject, his tone and idiom. However, a film is made once, and for all types of audience and can be viewed by anyone at any moment. Nevertheless, Wynchank (1994) argues that there is a kind of indirect and deferred dialogue between the filmmaker and his audience, though the dialogue does not take place literally. The filmmaker can anticipate the reactions of the public; and he can access their reaction by reading the reviews. In this way, he engages in some sort of dialogue with the spectators.

Another difference between the storyteller and the filmmaker is that the audience listening to a *griot* (storyteller, poet) recounting his tale can only use their imagination to see the characters and actions in the narrative. By contrast, a film shows a series of images which create the illusion of reality (Wynchank, 1994). It is therefore the filmmaker's responsibility to create an enhanced experience of the event that is depicted.

Despite the fact that technological advancements have changed the way people interact with visual media, the fact remains that, in order for viewers to engage with any given projection of reality, the filmmaker must present the visuals in such a way that the sum of all components is captivating, entertaining and, above all, informative.

One of the mediums that have widely benefited from technological advancements is animation. In the next section, the relevance of this medium is discussed in depicting the performance of orature.

2.9.3 The power of animation to contemporise oral narrative

Furniss (1997:11) states the film industry has relied on adaptations of great works of literature to provide scenarios for the cinema throughout its history. She further argues that audiences are often attracted to films based on stories that are familiar and hold a certain amount of cultural significance (ibid).

Classic children literature and traditional literature have provided sources for adaptation in literary works such as *Beauty and the Beast*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Cinderella* and many others (Furniss, 1997:13). To depict dream states, fantasy, and other forms of subjectivity, including the highly subjective orature, one can only make attempts at visualisation.

In *Animation is the most important art form of the twentieth century*, Wells (1997:2) states that animation has its own well-defined language despite encompassing many other art forms. He further asserts that it possesses the broadest vocabulary since it can be achieved across a wide range of materials and techniques (1997:2). Perhaps the most important statement by Wells, at least in the context of this research, is that animation allows the artist to have full control over representation and interpretation (ibid).

Wells (1997:2) states, "All animators embark upon the re-invention of the world", arguing that animation still maintains an implied desire to change the world in which we live. This statement may sound exaggerated, yet it is verified by the fact that animation speaks to the relationships between the artist and the means of expression. Using the widest range of tools (from paint to puppets, collage to cut-outs, oils to objects, clay to clutter), the animator reveals or invents worlds that enact themselves and offer alternative models of perception and experience (ibid).

The multimodality aspect of animation enables often thrilling combinations of innovative images and sounds, calling upon all other art forms to surrender their dynamic spirit and intrinsic essence because of the range of forms animation encompasses (Wells, 1997:3).

2.9.4 Depiction of performance in animation

Ryan Woodward's *I thought of you* (2010) is a perfect example of how animation can capture the expressiveness of movement and emotions. Through expressive figure drawings and contemporary dance, the artist explores the theme of love; and it is a simple story about a man and a woman which finds deep roots in the viewer's own memory and triggers a sense of nostalgia. The song that accompanies the piece, and upon which the title is based, is perfectly intertwined with the visuals to create a unique sensorial experience in just three minutes.

Just like *I thought of you*, an earlier example of emotional expression that is self-evident in music and dance in the language of animation is *Feet of song* by Erica Russel (1988). Using a soundtrack made of up fast-plucked percussive music tempo with intense rhythms and Yoruba dance, among others, *Feet of song* is a beautiful piece of art that undeniably carries the essence of Africa.

During her preparation of the animation, Russell worked with a dance group called Shikisha, a South African dance troupe, and she also collaborated with a Nigerian choreographer who helped her understand the aesthetics of the dance (Russell, 1997:38). Through this work, Russell attempted to demonstrate that Africa has had an enormous influence over what is called modern art – cubism, jazz, and so on, as well as the *joie de vivre* that characterises African dance. Whether or not Russell was successful in her attempt at demonstrating the influence of Africa in modern art is debatable; however, she certainly was successful in demonstrating that shape, colour, form and sound carry with them emotive charges which, rather than seeming random and disjunctive, create a continuity based on emotional movements.

An important aspect of both Woodward's *I thought of you* and Russell's *Feet of song* is that every element within the animation has been chosen to serve a purpose but has also resulted from the need to interpret the performance and dance in accordance with the featured music.

2.9.5 Animation and ethnographic documentary

This section demonstrates animation's potential in heightening the representation of reality. This research aims at using animated visuals in such a way that they engage, entertain and inform the viewer of what occurs beyond the visible which would otherwise go unseen.

In an article entitled *The beautiful village and the true village – A consideration of animation and the documentary aesthetic*, Wells (1997a) analyses *The struggle for the film,* an essay by Hans Richter (1930) in which the latter states the dilemma that faces the documentary filmmaker who has to choose between passively recording footage and actively interpreting the content. Richter's essay addresses how this quest is further complicated when the documentary filmmaker is an animator wishing to combine the usual non-fiction essence of documentary films with the fictional nature of animation (Wells, 1997a:40).

The mere ability of the camera to photograph events made everything in the 'real world' more significant. However, once the significance of exact reproduction was no longer appealing, documentaries sought alternative 'facts' in other fields such as ethnography, anthropology, travel studies, etc. (Wells, 1997a:40). The discovery of the camera led filmmakers to seek the embellishing of 'the real' by borrowing previously established models of 'the beautiful' from the fine arts (ibid).

Richter states that by pursuing beautiful imagery, the documentary resulted in "superficial reportage" with paid little attention to social documentation (Richter in Wells, 1997:40). In

other words, the quest for the picturesque resulted in the distortion of the truth; the pursuit of beautiful imagery resulted in falsification of the true story. However, Richter argues that even a mediocre cartoon film provides more cinematic truth than many documentary forms: because the cartoon film is incapable of reproducing life-like movement, it is forced to select movement (ibid). Richter adds that this selection and omission of various movements create a mechanical style which is in ideal conformity with the technology and therefore extraordinarily effective.

By disrupting the authenticity of the image itself through the use of animation (and thus shifting the imperative of the documentary enterprise from the notion of presenting 'fact' to representing 'the truth'), the animator questions the meaning of 'actuality' and how 'real' is perceived in the context of documentary filmmaking (Wells, 1997:40).

2.10. Depiction of cultural identity in animation: the case of Japanese anime

Japanese animation, known as *anime,* is recognisable not only for its visuals but also its approach to characterisation and subject matter. These characteristics are what differentiate anime from its Western counterpart. A study of Japanese animation enables a solid understanding of the cultural elements that characterise this form of animation and identifies the elements that contribute to its success independently from the Western animation 'currents'. Thus, the Japanese approach could be used in the African context, creating animation that reflects the essence of African cultural identities.

Miyazaki is one of Japan's most celebrated animation directors. He mainly works in the science-fiction genre and his films are usually youth-oriented. Wells (1997:22) states that Miyazaki has managed to successfully combine elements of live action cinema and other forms of representation with the distinctive vocabulary of animation. Wells adds that an important characteristic of Miyazaki's work is that despite such intricate fusion of literary sources and influences, his work is easily identifiable as Japanese (ibid).

One aspect of Miyazaki's work that is noteworthy is that other elements of Japanese art have seamlessly been incorporated in his animated films, yet his work still maintains a high level of originality (Wells, 1997:22). It is evident that 'originality' carries a different meaning in the Japanese context when compared to Western understanding of what it means to be original.

An important aspect of Japanese anime that may be useful in the creation of animated films inspired by African cultural heritage is that, in Japanese art, new artistic styles do not replace the ones which precede them but meaning is re-invented accordingly. The author adds that,

while in Western cultures new models replace the previous ones, in Japanese art there is a sense of "superposition" (Wells, 1997:22). Part of the reason for this abnormally is that cultural models are defined as part of spiritual and philosophic systems. Needless to say that much of anime is based on Shinto mythology and folklore.

An example of this juxtaposition, as explained by Wells (1997:22), is Miyazaki's depiction of the Zen Buddhism ideals which are intertwined with action sequences of filmmakers Kurosawa and Mizoguchi, along with an obvious reference to the narrative structure of Disney films. The author argues that Miyazaki's inclusion of diverse genres, including their respective signs and signifiers, allows him to create animation that suits the contemporary Japanese context (ibid).

In a similar context, the multimodal nature of an orature performance can be best 'packaged' through the medium of animation as seen through this analysis of the work of Miyazaki.

2.11. Digital preservation and dissemination of orature

Kaschula (2001) optimistically states that orature will continue to be a source of valuable literary wealth not only nationally but at a global level as well, despite technological advances and the impact of modern media (ibid). He demonstrates how technology can enhance the documentation, rendition and dissemination of 'orature' globally through what he calls *technauriture*. Kaschula (2016:352) describes technauriture as: "… a theoretical paradigm for the interface between oral performances, the capturing of performance as well as the dissemination of oral performance through the medium of new technologies including the world-wide-web".

In *Analyzing, digitizing and technologizing the oral word: the case of Bongani Sitole* (Kaschula & Mostert, 2009), the authors explore the relationship between orality, literacy and technology. They discuss how tradition has adapted into a technologised, globalised world where the three embodiments of oral literature can now interact. They further demonstrate how these three forms can comfortably co-exist by discussing the work of the late Xhosa poet, Bongani Sitole, whose poems have been transferred into digital form (ibid). Sitole is among the South African praise poets who have adapted the content and form of their art to the socio-political realities of their societies, including the current technological advances such as the internet (ibid).

Like Kaschula, Derive (2007) emphasises the importance of using technology to allow oral literature to adapt to social changes that are threatening it, and to allow it to remain alive, despite some mutations. He suggests that the systematic development of cassettes, CDs, or

audio and visual DVDs should be taken advantage of to store oral literary work that could then be consumed by an Indigenous urban audience – and even by a rural audience for whom they tend to be less available. However, Derive (2007) insists that, whatever the form in which literary work is stored, there must be a rigorous editorial policy that would present oral literature in the best possible condition, to expand the knowledge of an exogenous public.

Another example of innovative work in terms of *technauriture* is the *Verba Africana Series,* an initiative of the University of Leiden (Netherlands), whose aim is to document African oral genres for both teaching and research purposes, an initiative that has resulted from a collaboration between various universities in Europe (Kaschula & Mostert, 2009).

2.12 The role of the researcher as a contemporary performer

A common denominator between oral performance and the medium of animation is the intimate relationship between both the oral performer and the animator with their respective 'tools'. One of the core features of orature is the performer's ability to use whichever device he finds relevant to create a unique experience and therefore transmit his message to the audience. Although oral performances are defined within specific cultures, the authenticity of the performances is not measured against previous performances of the same theme; in other words, the performer reinvents his performance every time he recites known poetry, tells a popular story, or sings a well-known lullaby.

As an animator, performer and trained storyteller, I use the medium of animation in my capacity as a contemporary performer who retells stories, re-recites poetry, or sings lullabies for my contemporary audience who views the performances in an audio-visual format.

I am compelled to declare that, in the present research, I am not a filmmaker wanting to share footage of 'exotic' performances with an urban audience: I am a performer, a member of the Tetela tribe, wanting to offer a different take on captured oral performances from Sankuru, the land of my forefathers. I do so using my personal, acquired visual aesthetic, my storytelling sensitivity and my animating skills to visualise the content of captured oral performances.

Through an autoethnographic approach, the visualisation is driven by my personal style, largely influenced by images, colours, scents, textures, landscapes and flavours in which I immersed myself during my life-changing fieldwork in Sankuru.

The practical component is of a collaborative nature as my aim was to depict the performance aspect of orature by keeping the original performances as the basis for visualisation. Animation did not replace the original performances, as has been the case so far in animated representations of African themes. Instead, it was integrated within the performances in such a way that, not only did it heighten the captured performances, but it also provided a context to the content of the performances, a better alternative to the mere written translation of sung lyrics or spoken words.

By watching the animation, the audience should be able to **'feel'** the presence of the person who originally told the story or performed the poem; **see** visual signifiers that are directly related to the performance; and **hear** audio elements that were featured in the original performance. Including all these elements in the medium of representation, will provide an integration of the traditional art within a contemporary medium of communication.

In light of the fact that this exploratory research is based on selected instances of oral performance from the Sankuru district, it is important that a brief history and key historic elements are provided.

2.13 Brief history of the Sankuru district

Sankuru is a district that is part of the Eastern Kasai province. Located at the heart of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the current geographic configuration was formed in 1904 (Emongo, 2011). Today, the district comprises seven administrative regions: Lodja, Lubefu, Lusambo, Lubao, Kole, Lomela and Katako-kombe.

Sankuru inhabitants are descendants of Mongo people; hence they are known as *Ana wa Mongo* (descendants of Mongo). There are many unverified accounts on the origin of each of the *Ana wa Mongo* sub-groups: one of them claims that *Ana wa Mongo* came from the West, mainly along the Lomami River and that their distant ancestor's name is Otekele (Emongo, 2011). There are no accounts of where he came from. It is believed that he may have settled in the city currently known as Bumba, in the Equator Province (ibid). Otekele fathered Mongo, the ancestor of all *Ana wa Mongo* who supposedly moved along the forest, between either the rivers Laha or Tshuapa and Lomami in the East. Mongo fathered Membele who, in turn, fathered Okutshu Membele (ibid).

Okutshu Membele may have returned to Bumba and there he fathered Ndjovu, Ngando and Watambolo (Emongo, 2011). It is believed that the descendants of Mongo may have moved

first along the Congo River, then the Laha and Lomami rivers, all the way up to Enyamba la Wadi site, in The Katako-Kombe Section (ibid). It is believed that that is where the current Sankuru natives came from.

Although Sankuru populations are generally identified as Atetela, there are actually many groups within the district: Ahamba, Wakusu, Bankutshu, Bakela, Bayonga, Asambala (to which I belong), Nambelo and Basongomeno, amongst others (Emongo, 2011). Despite the diverse groups, kinship between all Atetela people is undeniable: they not only share cultural values and practices, but they also share the language, despite slight variations (ibid).

Though the present historic accounts are merely an indication, it is widely reported that Asambala are descendants of Ngongo Leteta, the great chief Tetela who resisted enslavement and helped the Arabs slave traders fight King Leopold of Belgium. Atetela are known as stubborn people who value their freedom, as has been the case throughout history.

In the early nineteen sixties, there were xenophobic tendencies that caused division among Atetela, with the conflicts caused by distinctions between 'people from the forest' and 'those from the savannah'. Current generations have turned such a sad page in the history of Sankuru and are mostly working towards learning more about their origins and building the land of their forefathers (Emongo, 2011).

The current investigation is my attempt at contributing to existing efforts to create awareness of the rich cultural resources that constitute the district of Sankuru and its inhabitants.

2.14 Restating the knowledge gap and summary

In this chapter, I provided an overview of available literature on the present topic. The chapter covered the writing of various scholars with the aim of answering the research sub-questions and providing supporting grounds for the claims of this research. Additionally, through selected literature, I demonstrated that animation is the preferred medium for capturing the performance of orature and allowing the performer to be visible in the final animated output.

The animation genre is more than capable of depicting oral literary work. There are many animated films that have used oral literary work as premise. There also are many current initiatives aimed at promoting the digitalisation of oral literature for its conservation and dissemination. However, there have not been attempts at using the medium of animation to capture orature performance in such a way that the performer is at the centre of the

representation. Erica Russel's *Feet of song* beautifully captured an African dance performance; but her interest was capturing movement through animated figures, hence the performers who inspired the animation are not visible, neither does the animated short indicate the setting or the context within which the performance was held. She wrote in an article dedicated to the animated short that her focus was on demonstrating the impact of 'Africa' on modern art, but without necessarily focusing on the part of Africa to which the dance referred.

By including the performer in the final output, animation becomes an extension of the live performance; and animated visuals offer the possibility of enhancing the original performance to uncharted heights. In the next section, I look at multimodality and I discuss its relevance in the present study.

2.15 Introduction to theoretical framework

Important topics relating to multimodality are explored in the first part of this section, including an overview of key assumptions and concepts that underpin multimodality. In the second part of the section, I examine the extent to which the dynamics of narrative development in the performance of oral storytelling can be captured to assess the effectiveness of its aesthetic and its communicative aspects, based on a model proposed by Lwin (2010).

2.15.1 Multimodality

Multimodality originated from the work of Michael Halliday (1978), who was interested in social semiotic aspects of language (cited in Jewitt et al., 2013:252). Halliday relooked at how language was perceived as a static system and proposed an approach that took into consideration its social aspect. He created a theory related to the concept that people make meaning choices. Hodge and Kress (1998) (cited in Jewitt et al., 2013:252) and, later on, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) (cited in Jewitt et al., 2013:252), expanded it from language to other semiotic systems, incorporating a wide range of means of meaning-making which led to multimodality.

Three assumptions underpin multimodality:

(1) Although language is considered the most significant mode of communication, it is still just a part of a multimodal ensemble (Jewitt, 2013:251). In other words, language is a separate mode among a collective of modes. One of the main reasons why the publications of African orature have, in most cases, not been able to depict the true essence of the cultures from which the orature originated is because they only relied on verbal speech. Other means of creating meaning, such as the performer's gestures and his voice intonation, were usually not taken into account.

(2) Like language, all modes are defined by culture, history and social realities in order to respond to the needs of specific communities (Jewitt, 2013:251). Language provides an obvious socio-cultural connection to, and a social context for, African orature. However, with other communication devices that accompany an oral performance, the connection to the culture may be less tangible, which may lead to said devices being ignored and excluded from any representations of the performance. All non-verbal devices used during an oral performance in Sankuru are defined within the context of the Tetela culture and are usually intended to produce meaning, even when they are meant to trigger an audience's response.

(3) Meaning is created by people's selection and arranging of modes and the relationship between the various modes (Jewitt, 2013:251). In the context of African oral performance, meaning is produced by the relationship between gestures, gaze, intonation, pause and costumes; all supporting spoken words in communicating the desired information to the audience.

Kress and Leeuwen (2001) state that, at the heart of most work in the area of multimodal discourse, is the notion that communication takes place across a variety of modes. The Sankuru oral performers make meaning using a combination of voice and gestures during their performance; and musical instruments she/he or the band members play to create emphasis, draw the attention of the audience or set the mood of the performance. A single receptive mode does not provide a complete 'picture' of the oral performance. As Jewitt (2013:253) notes, "Multimodality can partly be understood as the demand to look beyond language in a rapidly changing social and technological landscape".

The six concepts that define multimodality will be discussed below:

2.15.1.1 Mode

Mode refers to resources of producing meaning which are culturally and socially defined and can only be recognised when they are accepted as meaning-making systems in a community (Jewitt, 2013:253). The Lokombe players in the district of Sankuru can make important announcements of a wedding or a funeral by beating the instrument in a particular way. Thus the Lokombe is a semiotic mode in Sankuru, since it is recognised as a meaning-making device. Gesture, posture, picture, typography, intonation and colour are all examples of modes (ibid).

2.15.1.2 Semiotic resource

This term refers to actions and artefacts that people use to produce meaning and which can either be physiological or material, along with the order in which they are produced (Jewitt, 2013:253).). A traditional oral performer uses different semiotic resources to engage with the audience and to create a particular atmosphere, as does the old woman who uses different voice intonations to set the mood for a particularly scary tale that is meant to frighten her young audience, the way my grandmother used to do.

Semiotic resources have meaning potential based on how they were used in the past, as well as a set of possible meanings they might carry, both of which depend on the context (Van Leeuwen, cited in Jewitt, 2013).

2.15.1.3 Materiality

Materiality refers to the fact that physical and material items are assigned meanings under the influence of social agents, within specific cultural settings (Jewitt, 2013:254). Gesture has different material potentiality to sound, for example, as gestures can be used to produce meaning in ways sound cannot and vice versa.

2.15.1.4 Modal affordance

This term refers to capabilities and limitations of modes, meaning that what can be expressed and represented with the resource of a particular mode versus what cannot be used to produce meaning (Jewitt, 2013:254). However, this is subject to constant social meaning. To draw on the example of drum literature in Sankuru, the drum has a different modal affordance in that region because it can be used to communicate messages, while, in urban societies, the drum has a completely different modal affordance since it is used mainly to make music.

2.15.1.5 Multimodal ensembles

These are interactions of two or more modes (Jewitt, 2013:255). It is worthwhile noting that meaning is not always evenly spread across all modes as each carries only part of the message, including speech and writing (ibid). The author argues that the meaning realised by two modes can be aligned, contradictory, or in tension (ibid).

2.15.1.6 Meaning functions

Multimodality is based on the idea that people's choices of meaning making modes and their chosen configuration, are essential to communication (Jewitt, 2013:255). The choices may also involve people's selection of resources that better describe their surrounding and the way they perceive it, along with the way they represent their interaction with others (ibid).

2.15.1.7 A social semiotic approach to multimodality

Bezemer and Jewitt (2010:183), assert that communicational acts are socially made and draw meaning from the social environment within which they are made. There are three assumptions to social semiotic approaches to multimodality:

Firstly, social semiotics focuses on the analyses and description of the full repertoire of resources of making meaning which people make use of in a variety of contexts (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2010:183).

Secondly, people consider all communicational acts as part of the social environment in which they are made (ibid); for example, the voice intonation of the Sankuru praise-poet and the length of his gaze, while he interacts with the person on the receiving end of the praise-poetry, are all part of resources of making meaning (Bezemer and Jewitt, 2010:184).

Thirdly, the meanings produced by a mode intertwine with the ones made by other modes which take part in the communication (Bezemer and Jewitt, 2010:184). For example, when De Paris (one of my key informers) dances and sings while playing his Anemba, the entire set of semiotic devices (gesture, dance, beats, musical notes) take part in the production of meaning and cannot be divorced from it.

Bezemer and Jewitt (2010:184) state that the more a set of resources is used in a given community, the more articulated it will become. This is the case with communities such as the hearing impaired, in which gesture has been shaped into particular modes. It is however important to mention that in order for something to become a 'mode' it needs to be defined within a specific culture which uses it as resource for producing meaning.

.
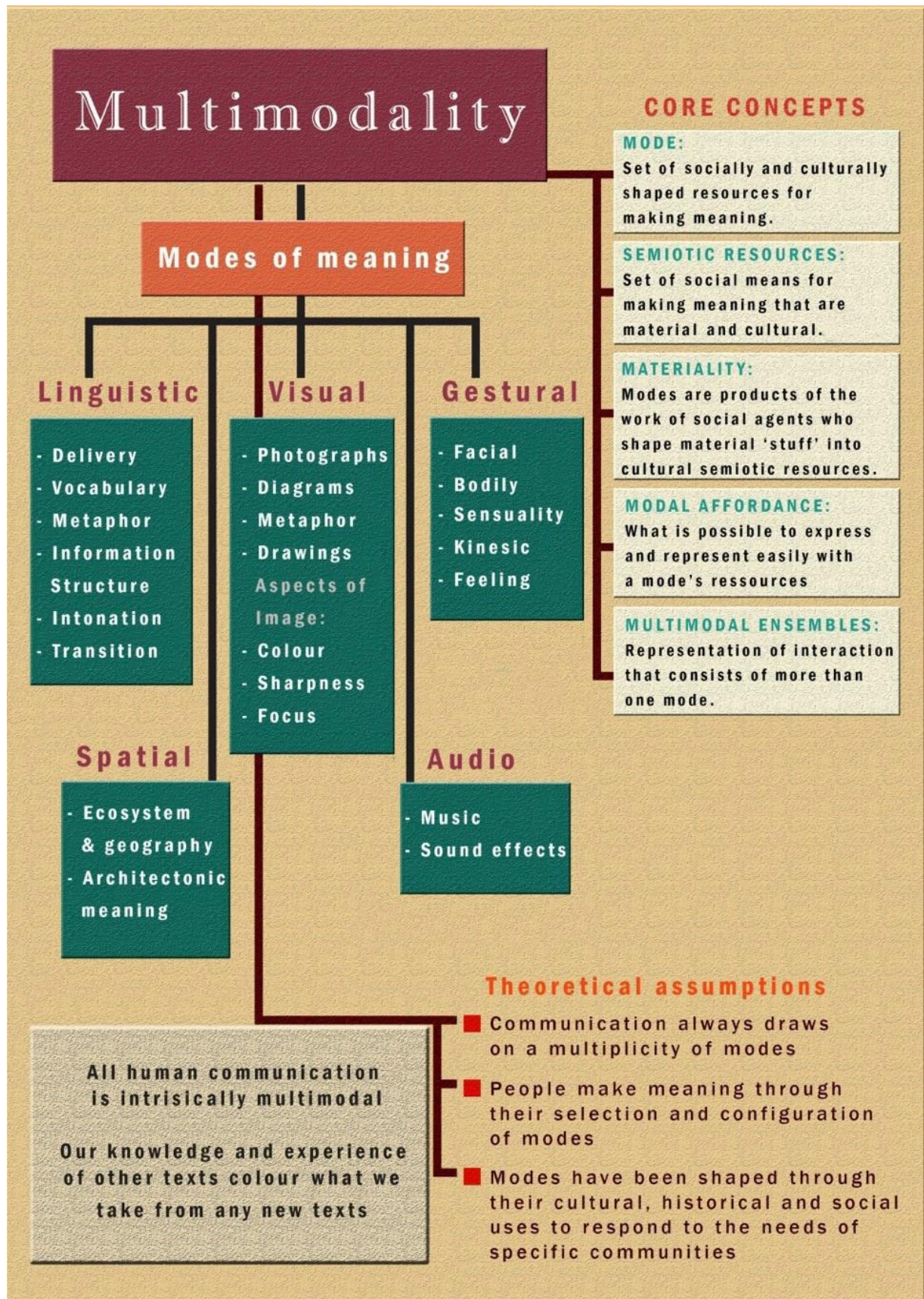
Figure 2.1: Visual interpretation of multimodality (Lodi Paul Inga, 2015)

2.16. Lwin's model for multimodal narrative

In an article that discusses the use of a multimodal perspective of oral storytelling, Lwin (2010:360) states there is a difference between the story (the content which includes characters, plot, location and event) and the storytelling discourse (which is the set of features which storytellers use to express themselves during performances).

Lwin's study focuses on contemporary storytelling performances which take place in institutions. However, she examines the extent to which the processes of narrative development in the performance of oral stories, can be captured to assess the effectiveness of storytelling aesthetic and communicative aspects. The author examines how the combination of verbal, vocal and visual components produces meanings and interpretations (Lwin, 2010:358).

Lwin's study is particularly valuable for this research as it offers a multimodal approach to capturing the dynamics of oral storytelling performances. By taking into consideration the multimodal aspects of a Sankuru storytelling performance, we acknowledge that these performances are multi-layered, considering that they are complex and highly creative.

Djoko, who is one of the greatest storytellers I have ever had the opportunity to listen to, is a dynamic and highly creative performer who makes great use of his voice, his body and the space around him, to engage with his audience. His performance of *How Dog became the most feared animal* was chosen to explore the extent to which animation can be incorporated with the aim of not only using animated contents to visualise the story but also to ensure the performer is central to the story depiction. The process of creating animated contents required identifying semiotic elements that took place during the delivery of the performance and there was no better way than to examine the aesthetic, the communicative aspects of dynamics of narrative development of the performance. Needless to say that performance is embedded in Sankuru orature and cannot be separated from it; indeed, Lwin (2010:359) states that orature is produced during its performance and therefore performance is not a simple addition to verbal text.

Lwin (2010:361) distinguishes three major aspects of expression in oral performances:

2.16.1 The verbal aspect which includes both form and choice of language. Despite my fluency in Tetela, there were instances when I needed the performers to explain the meaning of certain words during video elicitation. During data collection, the performers' choice of words played an important role.

2.16.2 The vocal aspect which concerns the way the performer manipulates his voice during an oral performance, such as varying the pace, the tone (the emotional connotation attached to vocal features) and the use of pauses. As an example, during the performance of 'Verone' by De Paris, one of my key informants, I could sense a hint of sadness permeated his voice as he sang about a deceased lover who was so dear to him. The vocal quality was crucial in providing the emotional connotation of the performance.

2.16.3 The visual aspect involves the spontaneous use of gestures, including facial expressions (Lwin, 2010:361). Lwin (2010:362) classifies gestures into four major types:

2.16.3.1 Mimic gestures concern the movements of hands and arms and are linked to speech. Such gestures were frequently used by Djoko as he performed storytelling. He made constant use of his hands for spatial emphasis and sometimes to provide an estimated dimension.

2.16.3.2 Metaphoric gestures correspond to an abstract concept as opposed to a tangible object. For example, some of my key informants, four performers known as *Mama ya Beya*, waved both arms as they sang 'anyanya ato' (which means 'all is vanity') to refer to the ephemeral nature of human realities. Since 'vanity' is an abstract concept, the gesture is used as a metaphor.

2.16.3.3 Beats correspond to rhythmical moves of the hands that are led by rhythms of speech (Lwin, 2010:362). They are used to signal the significance of a word or phrase. A frequently used gesture in Sankuru is the clapping of hands that accompanies the repetition of a word or a sentence, usually to express surprise or disbelief.

2.16.3.4 Deictic gestures involve pointing either at objects around the performer or even at an empty space (Lwin, 2010:362). Such a device was used by Djoko as he referred to "wild animals who held a meeting around a fireplace". By pointing at the 'empty' surroundings, the performer allows the audience spatially to 'position' the characters and objects referred to in the story world.

Storytelling discourse		
Verbal features Specific forms of language such as: -Discourse markers -Expressive elaborations -Quotations from dialogues -Syntactic parallelism	**Vocal features** Manipulations of voice: -Pitch -Pace -Volume -Pause -Inflection	**Visual features** Spontaneous gestures and facial expressions: -Mimic gestures -Metaphoric gestures -Beats -Deictic gestures

Figure 2.2: Lwin's (2010) multimodal parameters for storytelling discourse

In this chapter, multimodality is introduced as the theoretical framework that guides this research. Kress and Leeuwen (2001) have stated that at the heart of most work in the area of multimodal discourse is the principle that communication involves a variety of modes hence it is multimodal. Additionally, both Lwin (2010) and Jewitt (2013) attest that language is only a mode which is part of a collective of modes. Sankuru oral performers use a combination of voice, gestures, musical instruments and mimicry to create emphasis, to keep the audience engaged or set the mood of the performance. All non-verbal devices used during an oral performance in Sankuru are defined within the context of the Tetela culture and are usually intended to produce meaning.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

The choice of a research paradigm is dictated by the nature of the data required to explore the issue under study. The current study is qualitative in nature. Autoethnography was chosen owing to the fact that my personal experience and my cultural identity as a member of the Tetela tribe were building blocks for a broader understanding of cultural phenomena during my field research in the district of Sankuru. The research used an approach to autoethnography in which the author's self-exposure is present while implementing an analytical framework throughout the research. My personal experience provided an insider's perspective as it allowed greater insight into a wider set of social phenomena within the Sankuru district.

Chapter four is structured as follows:

3.1. I will provide an overview of autoethnography and its relevance in the present research; 3.2. I will discuss the participants' selection and the criteria that guided the sampling process; 3.3. I will provide an overview of the data collection and data analysis methods and their relevance in the present research.

3.1. Understanding autoethnography

Autoethnography is a qualitative approach that allows the author to draw from her/his own experience to promote a broader understanding of social phenomena (Wall, 2006). According to Chase (2005:243), autoethnography aims at illustrating cultural experiences rather than merely describing them; as a result, this approach disrupts the power dynamics inherent in "traditional forms of representations, and traditional social science orientations to audiences".

The relevance of autoethnography in this research, as opposed to 'pure' ethnography, is that it provides the opportunity for understanding the dynamics of oral literature and performance from an experiential point of view (Pace, 2012:2). I cannot ignore my own experience as a storyteller, music performer, my cultural identity as a Tetela, the fact that I speak the language and have been exposed to the culture from a young age. Further, my irrepressible willingness to discover elements of my roots had a great impact on my field research as it allowed me to establish connections that led to a greater understanding of the dynamics of oral performance in Sankuru.

There are two main types of autoethnography:

3.1.1 **Evocative autoethnography**, an approach promoted by Ellis and Bochner (2000), it connects the individual to the culture and the writer uses an autobiographical form of writing. This approach employs autobiographic storytelling techniques such as: 1. The author makes herself/himself visible by writing in the first person; 2. The written narrative is evocative and may often contain elements of the author's own story or private life; and 3. Relationships are dramatised as linked episodes which are gradually revealed as the narrative progresses (Pace, 2000:5).

3.1.2 **Analytic autoethnography,** promoted by Anderson (2006:386-387), the author attempts at gaining deeper insights into broader set of social phenomena. In this approach: 1. The researcher is a member of the society under study; 2. She/he acknowledges the connection and subsequent reciprocal influence between her/himself, the setting within which the phenomenon takes place and the informants; 3. The *self* is consistently present in the narrative; 4. The informants are engaged at a level that goes beyond the *self* and the researcher tackles broader themes around socio-cultural issues; and 5. The researcher is committed to theoretical analysis as opposed to simply presenting the data collected from the individuals and the setting in which they operate.

3.1.3 **Chang's approach to autoethnography**, in her book, *Autoethnography as a method* (2008), Chang promotes an approach that combines cultural analysis and a first-hand, personal interpretation of data. The author, who does not express her affiliation to either the evocative or the analytic approach, presents a version of autoethographic research in which the researchers make themselves visible as members of the group or setting being investigated, while committing to a strict analysis aimed at gaining greater understanding of both theories and social practices related to the phenomena under study (Chang, 2008).

Although Chang's view is closer to analytic autoethnography, she positions self as the central element around which all socio-cultural concepts should revolve. She (2008:26) states: "Autoethnography benefits greatly from the thought that self is an extension of community rather than it is an independent, self-sufficient being". Hence the research adopted Chang's approach to autoethnography by allowing the author's self-exposure throughout the research while implementing an analytical framework. In other words, my personal experience provided

an insider's perspective and the empirical data intertwined with 'found' data, thus allowing greater understanding of social phenomena inside the Sankuru district.

In *Evocative Autoethnography: Writing Lives and Telling Stories* (2016*),* Ellis and Bochner provide a critique of traditional methodologies in social sciences. The authors promote the idea that everyone is an author and storyteller. They emphasize the importance of subjectivity in the writing process and the publication is a blend of personal reflections with academic discussions which succeed in establishing a relationship between the text and the reader. Additionally, Marechal (2010:43) discusses two additional approaches to autoethnography; the first being *subjectivist experiential* autoethnographic writing in which personal stories are singular expressions that give shape to the text; an approach often used to account for experience of illness or discrimination as in the case of repressed voices of minorities. The second is *Postmodern/poststructuralist* autoethnography which is a staged approach that uses self and identity as a starting point of social, cultural and political dialogue, in a 'flamboyant' form (ibid). In this approach, everyday practices are invaded by urges to self-document and constant references to the self.

It is worth mentioning that autoethnographies have drawn controversy in the research field as there have been many debates around the methodology's usefulness and its lack of objectivity.

3.2. Participants: purposive sampling

This study employed a purposive sampling technique for the selection of participants. This sampling method is defined as one where the researcher chooses participants who can either shed most light or different light on a case (Rule & John, 2011:63). Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016) add that, aside from knowledge and experience, the paticipants' availability, their willingness to take part in the research, along with their ability to communicate and share their experience are factors that dictate the sampling process.

The initial criteria for selecting participant were as follows:

3.2.1 Participants who are active performers: I wanted to favour participants who have been active in the performance of their respective oral art for a relatively long period. Although age can be a good indicator of the length of their involvement with oral performance, a mixed sample comprising older and relatively younger performers, both male and female, was ideal. Considering this autoethnographic research was not aimed at achieving generalisable outcomes but rather exploring the possibility that the medium of animation depicts instances of orature

in Sankuru, a sample size of twenty-four participants was sufficient to offer varied perspectives on the performance of oral art in Sankuru. Seven of the participants were the main performers and the remaining seventeen were members of the community.

3.2.2 Storytelling in the form of a private performance: Additionally, I was hoping to come across storytelling in the form of a private performance, as it is certainly the most popular form of oral performance to have been translated into a published format. In Tetela culture, much like most African cultures, storytelling is the prerogative of women who are usually older and who entertain the younger members of the family. As such, I was hoping to capture the intimacy of such a performance, though there were both ethical and logistical concerns regarding such an 'intrusive' process.

Of the seven performers who took part in this research, three were male and aged between 32 and 44. The other participants were a group of four female performers aged between 40 and 65. It is worth mentioning that two of the three male performers work with a supporting cast; and, though each is the central piece of their group, each supporting cast member plays an important role in the delivery of their respective oral performances.

Table 3.1: Performances composition

Main performers	Supporting cast
1. De Paris (male)	Five men who play musical instruments and provide backup vocals
2. Dabe (male)	None
3. Djoko (male)	Two men who both play the Lokombe and provide backup vocals
4. Mama ya Beya (Four women)	Although there is one leader who introduces most songs and praise-poems in their repertoire, all four women are key members of the group.

3.3. Data collection methods

To collect field data during this research, the following data collection methods were used:

3.3.1 First-hand observation

Cresswell (2008:489) states that the focus of data collection in autoethnography is not on the time spent in the field but rather on the extent of data and the collaboration between the researcher and the culture in question. The autoethnographer's personal experience is the primary data source as opposed to the belief that it is the interaction with cultural elements which is the primary data source. My personal experience and my cultural identity as a member of the Tetela tribe were building blocks for a broader understanding of cultural phenomena during my field research in the district of Sankuru.

Simons (2009) states five reasons why observation is suitable for similar qualitative researches studies:

- It allows gaining a broad 'picture' of the site that cannot be expressed by words;
- It provides a basis for further analysis and interpretation;
- It allows discovering the norms and values within a given society or culture;
- It offers a good alternative for capturing the experience of those who are less articulate; and
- It strengthens the validity of the account.

Observation embodies the essence of a multimodal framework as it allows an analysis of the modes of communication in a manner that would not be possible through other methods.

Additional first-hand observation was achieved through audio-visual devices. The use of a video recording device is justified given that it is the only way to capture a performance in its fullness. Suryani (2008:124) asserts that the increasing use of technologies, such as audio and video recording, enables a detailed micro analysis of a particular situation within ethnographic studies. Considering that one of the sub-questions of this research seeks to understand the intrinsic aspects of African oral literature, video capturing of data provides a solid basis for analysing the oral, audio, visual, and kinetic elements that accompany the realisation of oral performance in the chosen context.

3.3.2 Participatory methods

Participatory methods allow increasing research participants' involvement and control of the data generation process (Rule & John, 2011). Such involvement is crucial in the context of this research as it promotes a sense of ownership on the part of the participants which could encourage them to produce and share knowledge. The performer is at the centre of the performance as she/he embodies the intrinsic aspects of the oral literary performance. The process of analysing and interpreting data is therefore initiated through these methods as the participant provides further information on various aspects related to their oral performance. The following participatory methods were used:

3.3.2.1 Video elicitation

Rule and John (2011) discuss a participatory method called 'photo-elicitation' in which the participants are asked to respond to photographs taken by the researcher. The aim of this method is to provide rich descriptions of subjective experience that can generate unexpected data from the participant's perspective (ibid). I used a similar approach that substituted photographs with video, considering the importance of the audio and kinetic nature of an African oral performance. Once the data had been captured in video format, the participants were approached to conduct video-elicitation. The sessions were intimate and aimed at pinpointing specific elements of the recorded performances in order to gather insights from the content and generate para-textual inputs that helped provide a context for the data at hand.

In-depth interviews were 'embedded' in this method. Each interview was based on a set of open-ended questions directed at each participant and which accompanied the video-elicitation process. Open-ended questions enabled me to generate insights from participants; and answers to the questions constituted the focus of preliminary analysis as each participant 'drove' the process of providing meaning to the recorded data.

3.3.2.2 Transect walks

This is a process whereby the researcher asks participants to take him on a walk through their community, with the participants identifying elements they consider historically or personally significant (Rule & John, 2011). Another open-ended interview was conducted with each participant during the walk to gather further insight.

It is worth mentioning that this method had to be modified and adapted when collecting data from my fourth set of participants, a group of female performers known as *Mama ya Beya*. It is not common practice to ask a female to go for a walk, let alone older, respectable married women. Nevertheless, this method allowed for the generation of further insights and offered me an opportunity to record additional audio-visual data that were used for analysis.

3.3.2.3 Focus group discussion with audience

A focus group discussion was conducted with audience members to garner an understanding of how a local audience experiences the performances in general. However, this method also allowed evaluating the audience's responses to a planned projection of the captured performance. The aim was to stimulate and record the audience members' reactions and test whether or not the semiotic devices used by the performers were altered by a screening of a video recording of their performances. This method provided a deeper understanding of the context in which the performances were held and what the audience's overall perception of the performers and their performances was in the current socio-cultural context.

3.3.3 Journal

My journal was the cornerstone of this autoethnographic approach as it was the 'carrier' of field notes. Field notes included thoughts, ideas, intuitions and interactions. Raab (2013:9) argues that, to attain the most poignant field notes for an autoethnographic research study, researchers should spend time with their participants in the participants' own environment and learn from their everyday practices as they take notes. He further states that, once the researchers return back home, they should take time to establish links between personal memories and the reality of what they encountered on the field, process which, according to the author, should take place no long after data has been collected (ibid:10). During this research, such was the process used to record field notes which were crucial in establishing parallels between the researcher's personal views, experiences and the reality of how things unfolded during field research.

3.3.4 Ethical considerations

An important consideration that must be addressed focuses on the ethical practices of my data collection process, as I recorded oral performances with the intent of using the recorded data in my own animation. As such, prior to collecting data, I ensured that the performers were aware of the intent of the data collection methods. I had a written consent from the district

administrator, which not only authorised me to conduct my research but also ensured there were no hidden agendas to my stay in Sankuru. However, I did not assume that the administrator's letter granted me special rights over my participants or that they were at my mercy. I made sure that I met each participant prior to the performance for a meeting which was meant to clarify the purpose of my presence; I needed to ensure they were fully aware of what I intended doing with the recorded performances but also that the expected inducement met their expectations. The video elicitation sessions that followed the performances as well as the focus group discussions during which the recorded performances were viewed by the audience, were meant to ensure the ethical standard were further met and that any possible concerns were raised by either the performer or the community members.

Table 3.2: Depiction of data collection process

Sub-questions	Objectives	Methods
1. *What are the intrinsic characteristics of orature?*	• To identify the intrinsic components of orature. • To investigate whether the non-verbal components of Sankuru orature can be demarcated from spoken language.	-First-hand observation through audio-visual devices, photographs and journal entries. -Participatory methods: video elicitation, transect walks and focus group interviews.
2. *How have the intrinsic components of orature been depicted in written literature?*	• To examine the extent to which written literature has incorporated intrinsic components of orature. • To analyse the contribution as well as the limitations of	-Content analysis of literature on the topic.

	written text in capturing the components of an oral performance.	
3. *To what extent can technology be used to depict and represent elements of oral literature?*	• To study the contribution of technological advancements in the depiction and representation of oral literature. • To identify current and previous efforts in capturing and presenting elements of oral literature.	-Content analysis of audio-visual content that is based on oral literature. -Participatory methods: video elicitation, transect walks and focus group interviews.

3.4. Data analysis

The analysis of data for autoethnographies begins with recalling events of the past and how they relate to the most memorable moments within the data collection period. Ellis (2004:19) favours the theorising that happens in the story rather than outside the storyline.

Focusing on elements that were meaningful to me and others and which stood out during my field research allowed me to present topics that I felt were important and relevant. This approach acknowledges the fact that autoethnographies are entirely subjective and, as Ellis (2004:123) states, "Validity is interpretive and dependent on context and the understandings we bring to the observation". For instance, when Djoko, one of my key informants, makes use of metaphoric gestures by repeatedly pointing his right-hand index finger to the right then pointing it back to the area next to him; for me, and everyone else who was present when the performer told the story of *how Dog became the most feared animal,* the gestures were meant to spatially locate the animals that were referred to in the story.

In the context of this research, multimodality is crucial, as it provides tools for analysing digital data such as music, film, and digital animation, amongst others, thus opening a wide range of opportunities for this exploratory research.

In analysing data, I sought to gather insights from the text and also take into account para-textual inputs from collected data during and after the performances. The analysis had to also take into consideration the context within which the performances were held. 'Mode' was used as the basis of analysis; Bezemer and Jewitt's (2010:180) define 'mode' as "an organising principle of representation and communication…" The authors state that the central units of analysis of modes of communication other than language are usually linguistic units such as intonation or those which are defined in linguistic terms. Hence, the data analysis of the present research is based on linguistic units which extend to social understanding of language and the entire set of modes of representations and communication that form part of the Tetela culture in the Sankuru district.

Based on the principle that representation and communication are inherently multimodal, with each mode contributing to meaning (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2010:183), the analysis of data includes a description of meaning-making resources which the participants use in a variety of contexts; from visual to spoken. Multimodality assumes that, just like language, all modes have been defined by their cultural and social contexts. Therefore, the analysis and interpretation of data that emerged from the various means of communication, is defined within the Tetela culture, including its historical and social contexts.

As I analysed data, I also had to consider that meanings created by any mode intertwine with those made by other modes which are featured during the communication event (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2010:184). In applying multimodality, I recognised that data would have to be analysed through the lenses of social interpretation of language as well as the entire set of modes of communication and representation employed in the Tetela culture, in the Sankuru district. For instance, by beating his instrument, the Losambi, after major story thresholds, Djoko uses the mode of music to ensure everybody is listening and also to signify an important moment; it is a frequently used device among Sankuru oral performers and the audience is aware of its significance.

3.4.1 Bezemer and Jewitt's proposed approach to multimodal analysis

Bezemer and Jewitt (2010) suggest four steps that can be taken in social semiotic approach to multimodal research:

Step 1: *Collecting and logging data*

Since multimodal texts are likely to include video recordings, field notes and materials and texts used during captured interaction, Bezemer and Jewitt (2010:185) who conducted multimodal analysis of face-to-face interaction in a classroom, suggest viewing video recording along with field notes collected during the interaction and subsequently making a descriptive account from the video recording viewing. The authors suggest writing a video log, which is a synopsis of what went on during the observations, along with analytical thoughts, ideas and questions (ibid). When analysing the video performance of the story of *How Dog became the most feared animal*, I had to make extensive use of field notes written following the performance, along with data collected during participatory methods to gain better understanding of the semiotic devices that took place during the performances.

Step 2: *Viewing data*

Multimodal analysis involves repeatedly viewing data; as such, Bezemer and Jewitt (2010) employed a variety of methods in order to garner different perspectives. These included: asking the opinion of people external to the project, viewing video data without sound and listening to audio data without images as well as viewing in slow motion (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2010:186). This approach allowed identifying patterns of gesture, and making sense of the data at hand. In the present research, participatory methods allowed collecting a variety of data; firstly, video-elicitation sessions which allowed pinpointing elements of the recorded sessions to gain insights from the text and generate para-textual inputs; secondly, Transect walks which allowed generating further para-textual insights through informal interview conducted with key informants; thirdly, focus group discussion with selected members of the community which allowed testing whether or not the semiotic devices used by the performers were altered by a screening video recording of their performances. During the discussions, I projected the video data of the performances without sound which the audience members were asked to react to, after which I also asked them to listen and react to audio data without images. The aim was to garner a deeper understanding of the context in which the performances were held and what the audience's overall perception of the performers and their performances was.

Step 3: *Sampling data*

Bezemer and Jewitt (2010:186) assert that multimodal transcription and analysis are intensive and time consuming. Therefore, the authors opted for selected instances of the video recording for data analysis; they focused on moments where "the interaction order is disturbed or where a convention is broken…" (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2010:186). Since I could not omit essential elements of the story of *How Dog became the most feared animal* without affecting the overall meaning, I was compelled to include many of the performer's gestures in the analysis, and only leave out involuntary bodily movements that did not provide any significant semiotic value.

Step 4: *Transcribing and analysing data*

During this stage, transcription was used to express features of speech (intonations, hesitations and pauses) which cannot be expressed in writing (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2010:186). The authors state however that even the most sophisticated approach cannot escape the fact that there are details that cannot be included, and these comprise phonemic interpretation of sounds, voice quality, and so forth (ibid). It is evident these aspects could not be included in my analysis; as an example, I did not find it necessary to describe every changes in Djoko's voice intonation during the performance. I wrote down a bare-bone version of the story; a list of all main components of the video recording of the performance and I included in the transcription and analysis the ones without which the story would not carry the same significance.

In this chapter, autoethnography was presented as the chosen research paradigm for this qualitative research. The choice of this paradigm owes to the fact that my personal experience was the building block for the understanding of broader set of social phenomena in the Sankuru district. The criteria that guided the selection of participants and the sampling process were presented and finally, an overview of the data collection and data analysis methods and their relevance were provided.

The next chapter is an account of my field trip which is intertwined with analytical thoughts on various cultural and personal topics. This story is by no means a complete account as it is highly fragmented owing to my own interpretations and personal constructs.

Chapter 4: Findings

Through songs and beats - my fieldtrip in the 4land of my forefathers'

This chapter provides an extensive account of my fieldtrip in Sankuru. It is a step-by-step description of the sampling of participants, the capturing of oral performances and the data collection process, through participatory methods, for each of my key participants. Using a personal and intimate form of writing, this autoethnographic account is driven by my insider perspective and my own experience which allowed me to garner great insight into a set of social phenomena inside the Sankuru district throughout the data collection process. Topics are written chronologically, based on their order of occurrence. However, I have also made constant reference to other events or memories which took place in the past and which are relevant to the topic being discussed. The accounts of my field trip are also accompanied by photographs which aim to help the reader contextualise the content of my narrative and also provide a glimpse of my highly visual fieldwork experience.

Figure 4.1: View of a Sankuru village (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

First impression

I landed in Sankuru on Monday 7 November 2016. As the airplane finally flew over Sankuru sky, I noticed the green landscape and the clear rivers through the airplane window. Unlike the reddish rivers I had seen as we flew over Lubumbashi or on the flight to Kinshasa, the water there looked quite clear, even when seen from above.

Once at Lodja airport, I noticed something else was quite different: it was the warmth in the way people interacted – the handshakes, the hugs, and the language. Tetela could be heard everywhere. It was the first time I had come across that many people who spoke Tetela at once and I found it quite amusing and quite comforting at the same time, considering it is my mother tongue, despite the fact that my appearance might have suggested otherwise.

Apa Lofungola

Apa Lofungola, my uncle, was waiting for me at the airport. He had been living in Sankuru for over 35 years. A local authority, he works for an entity that allocates salaries to school teachers across the entire district. He is an educated man, very insightful and well spoken. I was one year old when he last saw me. We spent a few hours chatting and 'reconnecting' once we arrived at Pezzota, the guesthouse where I was going to reside. I knew my uncle was a little disappointed because I had chosen not to stay in his home for the duration of my stay, so I explained to him that the equipment I carried required a consistent electricity supply and the guesthouse was the only place in the area where I could get access to electricity for three hours a day, when the power generator was turned on. (Though there are also a few locations where one could charge electronics devices such as laptops and cell phones in exchange for a few Congolese Francs, the local currency, the rest of Lodja has absolutely no power supply.)

My uncle is related to both my parents. He explained to me that he is my uncle on my mother's side because he is my mom's cousin; however, he is my cousin on my dad's side because my dad is his uncle's cousin, which is quite confusing. Such things are very common in Sankuru. Lineage is an important component of one's identity and most people in Sankuru know enough about their lineage that they can trace their ancestors up to three generations back, so most people can often trace a common ancestor.

Figure 4.2: First meeting with Apa Lofungola (Photograph: Lievain, 2016)

An overview of the state of oral performance in Sankuru

Apa Lofungola gave me an overview of the current state of oral performance in Sankuru. He said that oral literature was no longer what it used to be simply because of the current economic situation. He added that, in the past, oral performers had been accorded the same rank as the king's wives, meaning that they were taken care of by the community and they would benefit from the same treatment granted to the king's family. The community took care of them, giving them presents, food and much more. However, since the administration system had adopted a Western structure, things had become quite different. The oral performer is now no longer supported by the community like it used to be. Instead, they are offered alcohol as remuneration for their service during funerals and other celebrations. Alcohol is the only inducement most people can afford. Thus, many contemporary oral performers have developed alcohol addiction. According to my uncle, many great performers have died due to alcohol-related problems.

Part 1: My first key informant: De Paris

On the day I met my first key informant, three days after my arrival in Lodja, I woke up at 5 a.m., though I had gone to bed quite late the previous night. It must have been because I was nervous: I was going to meet a man by the name of De Paris. I had heard of De Paris the night preceding my arrival in Lodja, while I was in Kinshasa. I was shown a picture of him playing the Anemba (a type of xylophone). Instead of playing seated like most players do, he had built his instrument in such a way that he can play it while standing, which allows him to dance and

sing at the same time. I was told that he resides in Lodja and, unless he had been called to perform elsewhere, I should find him there.

Figure 4.3: De Paris's performance accessories (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

I went to meet De Paris accompanied by Apa Lofungola, my cousin Emmanu (his son), and my male assistant, Lievain. I had been in contact with Lievain since a year before I left Cape Town. I had been told he was very knowledgeable about, and had travelled all around, the region. Lievain also worked for Pezzota, the guesthouse where I resided, so he was the go-to man whenever a guest needed any kind of assistance. However, one of his greatest skills was his mastery of everything to do with motor bikes, the main mean of transport in the Sankuru. This turned out to be a crucial asset during my field explorations.

Figure 4.4: On the way to De Paris's house (Photograph: Lievain, 2016)

The king's home

De Paris's home is a compound with about seven separate huts. Each hut comprises a few rooms, all made of mud and covered by beautifully layered dry leaves, unlike most huts in the area which have straw roofs. I was told that those leaves were quite expensive because they could last many decades and were very hard to find. The place looked quite exotic and quite different to all other homes in the area; it was also the only home that had a wall fence thus making it seem like a little world apart.

Figure 4.5: Outside view of De Paris's home (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

A young man offered us chairs; Lievain and I were given plastic chairs, the mass-produced type found in most African cities, while my uncle and my cousin were given hand-crafted wooden chairs. I could not help noticing how easily I spotted things that seemed out of place to me. For example, I felt that the plastic chairs did not belong in that otherwise exotic-looking setting. I would have loved to sit on those wooden chairs as they appeared comfortable and, more importantly, I found them more 'culturally relevant'. More than once, I found myself making mental selections of things that 'did not belong'. Perhaps such exercises in futility was a result of the fact that I was still struggling to reconcile my preconceived image of Sankuru with the reality of how things were at the time.

Figure 4.6: The chair I wanted versus the one I was given (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

The dichotomy between what appears 'contemporary', 'mass-produced', 'unoriginal' and everything that is considered 'cultural', 'traditional' or 'original', does not seem to exist in people's minds or, at least, there is a different understanding of it. The mass-produced plastic chairs, for example, were seen as valuable pieces of furniture as they had been 'imported' from urban areas, hence they were a statement of the host's good taste. Wherever I went, my hosts would try their best to make me feel 'comfortable' by sourcing items that they assumed I was accustomed to in my 'urban lifestyle'. I could not easily convince them that I was comfortable sitting on small wooden chairs or a straw carpet, or even eating with my hands like many people did … I had the impression that they didn't quite believe me when I told them that I was willing to experiment with new things and that all new experiences were rather welcome.

As we sat on our respective chairs waiting for De Paris who was apparently taking a shower, two men in their twenties came to greet us. As they shook our hands, they placed their left hands under their right forearms – a sign of respect. I immediately recalled that I, too, used to do it that way whenever I shook an elder's hand; I used to do it spontaneously! I used to know how to receive something respectfully from an elder's hand … I still know many components of our tradition but I had lost touch because I had been disconnected for so long that these gestures are no longer spontaneous; instead, they have almost become gimmicks, after 17 years out of the country. The simple fact that I was aware of such details, which would otherwise go unnoticed, spoke volumes for my research.

De Paris's band

In the hut next to where we sat, there were three young men playing a board game, Checkers. I soon learnt that all those young men were part of De Paris's band. I had assumed that De Paris played solo because of the picture of him I had seen while I was in Kinshasa. I decided not to tell him about my assumption as I did not want him to alter anything just to meet my expectations. I actually was quite eager to see what all those band members brought to the table!

Figure 4.7: Three of De Paris's band members (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

De Paris is one of the most sought after performers at festive celebrations or funerals, partly because he has adapted his craft to the socio-economic reality of the region; he has found a way to combine the sound of his Anemba gracefully with contemporary instruments such as guitars (although tuned quite differently to the standard guitar tuning). He later told me that he used to perform solo but opted for a band to add dynamism, and also to emulate the structure of contemporary Congolese music known as 'Congolese Rumba'. De Paris's name is a good indicator of the integration between the contemporary and the traditional: 'De Paris', which means 'from Paris', emulates a typically Congolese practice of adopting nicknames of well-known international figures and sometimes even famous places.

All of De Paris's band members lived in his compound, with their wives and children too. De Paris himself had four wives and many children of his own, who all lived in the compound. The man was admired and respected by all his 'followers' and I could see it in the way everybody behaved in his presence: the way he was offered a seat when he finally came to meet us for our introductory meeting; and the way his 'elder wife' knelt before whispering something

into his ears. I did not see fear; I saw admiration and respect, and it was the kind of respect that is rooted in tradition, the kind that is reserved for those one considers superior due to their social rank.

A special talent

De Paris is surprisingly soft spoken and polite in his demeanour. I did not hear him elevate his voice or give orders when he spoke to his crew, though the opposite would not surprise me; he is after all the boss, the one who should have the last say in most matters. I could not help imagining how celebrities – in an urban setting – would react when visited by strangers in their own mansions. De Paris is indeed a celebrity: everybody seems to know him. There are not many people, especially young ones, who do what he does. At the time of my visit, he was 40 and that is quite young for somebody who is a carrier of a culture. He greeted my uncle and I with the same gesture of respect.

Figure 4.8: De Paris (left) and some of his band members (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

De Paris has succeeded in combining traditional orality with dynamic performance by adding contemporary musical instruments to his masterly playing of Anemba, along with skilful dancing. He is, however, deeply rooted in the tradition. Although Lodja is mostly rural, it is modernised to some degree: there is a cellular phone network, though finding stable network is a challenge. People have adopted different elements of Western culture: youths can be spotted wearing Nike T-shirts and wearing sunglasses; many people have adopted the use of small solar panels which can be seen on the roofs of straw huts and which are mostly used to run radios

and light bulbs. De Paris, too, owns a cellular phone and dresses like any other contemporary African males but he chooses to live like many oral performers of the past, who were known for being polygamous.

Notes on polygamy

I was quite surprised by how prolific polygamy is in Sankuru: many people I met were married to at least two wives. One man with whom I was having a conversation jokingly said that those who are married to one woman might as well stay single …. In fact, some, like Chief Okito of the village of Nkonde where I met some of my key participants, have up to six wives.

My uncle shed light on why polygamy is prolific in the Sankuru. He said that agriculture is the main mean of subsistence and people still use rudimentary means to sow their fields. Working in the field from early morning till late in the afternoon, six times a week, is not an easy matter. Such hard work is the reason why many people look slender, which may be considered 'healthy' by Western standards, but the reality is that it is a draining activity and, according to my father who saw the photographs I took in Sankuru, it is the reason why many people look much older than they actually are. The harder one works, the better the harvest is guaranteed to be, which also means that one is able to sell part of the harvest to buy other necessary items such as clothing, electronics (radios, solar panels, torches, etc.) or anything that can only be acquired with money. A successful harvest is guaranteed not only by how hard people work but mostly by how many tenacious hands work for countless hours to ensure there is more than enough food come harvest season. A predictable weather pattern and frequent rains are the reasons why Sankuru is an exceptionally fertile region.

Sankuru is a patriarchal society where men hold power and women usually remain in the background. My uncle stated that, by marrying many wives, a man is guaranteed to have many children (which is regarded as a sign of prosperity), but also many hands to sow the fields as each wife is allocated her own space to cultivate rice, corn, groundnuts, cassava and so much more to feed the offspring. While many men help their wives in the fields and some choose the manly task of woodcutting, for example, the duty of looking after the field lies mostly in the hands of women.

My uncle's revealing account on the reasons behind polygamy in the Sankuru was not an entirely new concept to me; polygamy exists even in the city where I grew up and many of my

childhood friends came from polygamous households. It was perfectly normal to hear a friend refer to '... my sibling from another mother' or even '… my dad's other wife'.

For Atetela (Tetela-speaking people), polygamy is a cultural phenomenon. However, the city way of life differs greatly from the village one where agriculture is the main means of subsistence and where women are likely to only work in the fields. In the city, both men and women aspire to other types of work, the kinds that are better suited to the city lifestyle. Many Atetela men living in the city have had children with different women without necessarily being married to all of them. However, for those 'city men' who 'officially' marry two or more women (though two is more common), the dynamic greatly differs from the village. For instance, in the village, the wives of the same man often live in the same compound (usually in separate huts), whereas in the city they usually live far away from each other, partly owing to the competitive temperament of 'city people'.

Growing up in Lubumbashi, I recall the word *mbanda* (which translates as 'rival') being used to refer to two women sharing the same man. It is a Lingala term (Lingala being one of the five national languages). In Sankuru, however, the Tetela word, *wadidiemi,* is used to refer to a woman with whom one shares a husband; the term can roughly translate as 'co-wife'. The difference in terminology speaks volumes about how differently polygamy is perceived among the Atetela compared with the people of Sankuru. Perhaps it would be a bold statement to claim that the Sankuru women who share a husband live in perfect harmony and do not compete with one another, as rivalry is to be expected in such instances. The fact that two or more wives of the same man live in the same place, as is standard, ensures that they get acquainted with one another and see each other as associates rather than rivals.

It is worth mentioning that the first wife, who is commonly called the 'elder wife', is considered the 'mother of all wives' in Tetela tradition. As an example, De Paris told me of his first wife. She is the one whom he travels with whenever he is invited to perform far from home. He never travels alone; and, apparently, she also happens to be a dancer. The privilege of being the one who travels with the artist is understandable if one considers the fact that she was the first woman he chose to marry; and the culture dictates that the husband asks for the first wife's approval before marrying another woman. In a sense, she was the one who was deprived of her 'only-wife' status when she accepted to 'share' her husband – not to say that she would have changed his mind had she been opposed to the proposition – but to a certain extent, she is the most entitled of all. Another obvious reason why De Paris's elder wife has special privileges is

the fact that she is older than the other three. Usually, the tendency is for men to marry women who are younger than their youngest wife; and, by the look of things, his youngest (fourth) wife was almost young enough to be the elder wife's daughter.

As familiar as I may be with polygamy, I have to admit that I was quite surprised by its proliferation in Sankuru. The biggest surprise was finding out that polygamy has a lucrative purpose which is a legitimate component of the culture dynamic.

Having been exposed to a predominantly Western belief system, words such as 'sexism', 'labour exploitation' and 'machismo' kept creeping into my mind. The fact that, after months of hard labour, it is still the husband who decides what to do with the harvest or the money collected once part of it is sold, made me wonder what gender equality activists would make of it. However, one cannot understand the phenomenon without taking into account the context in which such beliefs are held.

The woman's role

The role of the woman in Sankuru goes way beyond her crop-caring duties. She is, first of all, the one who bears life, the one whose womb nurtures every living human, from the ordinary villager to the most illustrious members of the clans. The fact that the Sankuru woman is accustomed to multitasking as she works in the field, takes care of the household, cooks food, feeds the children and washes them does not make her the husband's servant. Her ability to multitask is, on the contrary, a testimony to her greatness as she is the one upon whom the order and structure of the entire family rests. Fertility of the soil and that of the people who plough it is a sign of blessing in Tetela culture.

Figure 4.9: A woman from Nkonde on her way to the field (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

To further expound on the argument, some of my key informants were a group of female traditional performers known as *Mama ya Beya* (an entire section is dedicated to them in later paragraphs). Their repertoire revolves mostly around social issues relevant to everyday life in the Sankuru region. When I met them, they performed one of their most popular songs, *Kamba Tsho*, which translates as 'Keep working'. The song has been part of their repertoire for over thirty years, which marks the length of their performing career; and the song is a social criticism aimed at 'lazy women'.

The song starts off with a call and response repetition of the chorus "… *Kamba Tsho, Kamba Tsho …."*. The lead vocalist sang the words in her melancholic voice and the remaining three members responded in a style that is reminiscent of blues music. I could picture the chorus being sung as an exhortation tune while people performed manual labour, as my grandmother used to do when she pounded cassava leaves or did the laundry. The second part of the song went into more detail over the characteristics of a lazy woman and why such a woman is not of an honourable kind: "She wants to eat but she does not want to sow"; "She is the queen of gossip; she has nothing else to do".

The fact that the song was composed by women who stated the importance of work and how it is an honourable aspect of their social status, speaks volumes about why a woman's condition and her position in Sankuru society can only be fully understood if seen from the cultural perspective of the society in question and not from a biased paradigm. It is worth mentioning that three of the four group members are wives of the same man, who also happens to be the artistic director of the group.

The schedule

I was hoping De Paris would produce a schedule for the coming week; and I have to admit I was expecting him to own a (note) book containing performance dates, like the ones I keep for my own gigs. However, I quickly realised that diaries, along with signed contracts and written agreements, are not part of how people operate in traditional societies: people still rely on their memory to recall their engagements and a verbal agreement is all that is required. De Paris told me there was nothing lined up for the following days and he usually received short-notice requests. He often performed at funerals which were usually unexpected; and he added that he is like a 'Minute-Photo' (a reference to the cameras that print photographs within a minute): he does not need long preparation.

In the past, when oral performers were supported by the community, the inducement was in the form of goods, food, clothing, presents. Nowadays, things are different: the contemporary oral performer no longer lives under the chief's wings, and the community no longer sustains performers materially. De Paris's main income comes from inducements he receives for his services. When I asked him how much I should keep aside as inducement for his service, De Paris said 50,000 Francs (the equivalent of US$45), a bottle of traditional spirits and two packets of cigarettes. I was quite intrigued by the two last items and I promised myself to ask him why he did not ask for the equivalent in money.

Praise-poetry

Oral performers, especially those who include praise-poetry in their performance, have a great memory and an incredible improvisational ability. I woke up one morning to the voice of a man singing my name by the doorstep of my guesthouse room. He sang while playing the Losambi also known as Elondja (a metallic percussive instrument that is used mostly by poets to accompany their singing voices and create aural emphasis). The performer invited me to step outside my room. When I finally came out, he sang praising words, praising my mom and dad for being the progenitors of an 'illustrious man', praising me for paying a visit to the land of my forefathers and much more. I was quite surprised by how much he knew about me; then I realised that he must have done his homework before coming to see me. I knew he would have carried on until I gave him money; and, as there was a fast growing crowd around and I was not quite comfortable being the centre of attention that early in the morning, I quickly gave him what I had, which, instead of sending him away, prompted him to sing more praising words, stating that '… above all my obvious qualities I was also a generous man who took care of his people'.

Figure 4.10: Losambi, an instrument used by praise-poets (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

Praise-poets were always present whenever there was a funeral in my family or my relatives' families. They were really good at making people give them money. They usually started off by praising their 'targets'; and, if the latter were too stingy to give them money, they would sometimes use derogatory words to describe them until the victims finally decided to put an end to it by paying their due. I do not recall anybody ever getting upset or exchanging angry words with the performers: on the contrary, such exchanges were a delight to everybody who was present.

De Paris is not only a great praise-poet, he is also a storyteller and skilled dancer. Unlike other xylophone players who place the instrument on the ground, De Paris, who is also a skilled craftsman, designed his instrument in such a way that he can carry it using straps. This allows him to play his instrument while singing and dancing at the same time.

De Paris's approach to orality

De Paris's understanding of his audience is the basis of his approach to orality; his dancing while playing the xylophone is what sets him apart from his peers. He performs with a band of which he is the leader. The band comprises the following: two percussionists, the first one of which beats a hollow bamboo trunk with a stick, while the second shakes the Asaka (a sand-filled type of maracas); two guitarists, one providing rhythm and the other playing single lines (both guitars in alternate tuning); a bassist playing an unusual instrument that is a hybrid between a bass guitar and a drum, which the bassist plays by plucking the rubber strings to

produce a sound that is reminiscent of the double bass; and there is the Atalaku (commonly found in Congolese rhumba music, this is a person who uses his voice to announce dance moves and dictate the tempo of the performance).

An 'authentic' performance

When I asked De Paris about his upcoming schedule, I was hoping to record him as he performed at a planned ceremony, as I thought such would be a more naturalistic setting; I thought, if he had to play at my request, it would probably be less indicative of the way he would normally perform, hence the performance would be less authentic. However, I promptly realised that the contemporary oral performer does not perform unless there is an opportunity for him or her to offer a service; and such performers are no longer dependent on the traditional authority as was the case in the past due to the change in the administration system and subsequent emphasis on monetary value. The contemporary performer has to find a way to earn a living on a consistent basis and that is through performances held either at festivities, funerals or simply praise-poetry performances to honour guests. The latter is perhaps the most consistent source of revenue, as visitors from the city, and sometimes urban political figures born in the region, are delighted by crafted oratory display. They do not hesitate to show their appreciation and, to some extent, prove to the audience that they are worthy of all the praises by donating substantial amounts of money or valued gifts.

By requesting a public performance, I was simply doing what contemporary oral performers, at least the most accomplished ones, are accustomed to: they are usually approached by people requesting their services. However, when oral performers are aware of the presence of a guest (or guests), they often initiate the process by going to their encounter for an impromptu performance. Although I was not exactly a 'high profile' guest, I knew it was just a matter of time before De Paris heard of my presence and decided to show up at my doorstep. I therefore decided to get ahead by meeting him and requesting a performance.

During our introductory meeting, I told De Paris that I wanted him to feel free and play his usual repertoire. I told him I had an hour of recording time and he could do whatever he wanted.

I spent the two following days in the artist's company as I went to his house in the late morning and would only return home in the evening. We had agreed that the performance would take place two days later at an empty yard a hundred metres from his house. The area is surrounded by huts and I realised it was the usual spot for public performances.

De Paris's performance props include a wig that is made of plaited hair and a skirt made of string-like fibres known as *Loduva* which was traditionally worn by female performers of yesteryear. The entire attire made him look like a woman. He explained to me later that the reason why he dresses as a woman is because, in most of his acts, he tries to emulate the way women dance and he finds it more fitting to dress like them. This was an interesting statement to me, as I was surprised that a man who has four wives would try to emulate women and go to the extent of trying to dance like them.

Figure 4.11: De Paris getting ready (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

The performance

I captured the performance using two cameras. The first was an entry-level Canon digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) camera which I used as a static camera on a tripod to capture a wide angle of the performer, as well as his band members, each of whom plays specific roles in the acts. The camera also captured part of the audience. The second camera was a higher-end Canon 70D which I handled using a monopod. I used it for medium-distance and close-up shots of the performers so as to capture emotional responses and details that were essential to the performance. I had to find a way to capture not only De Paris but also the audience whenever there was a notable reaction on their part.

De Paris began with a praising piece in which he welcomed me to the land. He started off by introducing himself, referring to his lineage and where he was born and grew up. As was to be expected, he carried on with an improvised praise-poetry about me, as the custom dictates that the performer 'introduces' the person who requested the performance. De Paris praised me, my

family, my ancestry, and he also praised the fact that I had come to visit the land of my ancestors, despite having been raised in the city.

Figure 4.12: Playing the Anemba while dancing at the same time (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

The performer played the Anemba seated. I was impressed by the beautiful accompanying harmony that he produced on the instrument; but I was more impressed by how beautiful and how synchronised the music sounded once all components, including guitars, percussions and backup singers, came into play. It was simply outstanding, to say the least.

Five minutes into the performance, De Paris stopped playing the Anemba while his crew carried on; he stood up and started dancing. I got to witness his remarkable dancing skills and I knew right there that the man lived up to his reputation. He danced as if his hips were totally independent from the rest of his body as he tapped his feet and gracefully moved his arms. At the climax of the first piece, De Paris executed his trademark move, the one thing that sets him apart from everybody else: he carried his Anemba around his neck and danced while playing the instrument and singing at the same time. The audience cheered; it was the highlight of his act, something that everybody looked forward to. It was so effortless and so beautiful that I had to try hard to hold the camera steady as I was tempted to witness the performance with my eyes, without the limiting scope of the camera lens. The first piece was over 20 minutes long.

Figure 4.13: Nobody dances like De Paris (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

The second piece began with De Paris playing seated, just like during the first piece. Then he moved on to playing his Anemba while standing for a few minutes, then put it back down. It was quite clear that, although the piece is part of the repertoire and that his crew sang in chorus the words "*Anyanya ato*" (all is vain), there were many improvised elements as the performance was not bound to a strict structure. The piece discussed the ephemeral nature of life and the performer mentioned names of people dear to him, many of whom are long gone.

De Paris's art is difficult to classify as one needs more than a few words to describe what he does: it is a combination of storytelling, poetry, dance, music and even drama. I have opted for the word 'performance' in the hope that the reader will understand that oral literature in the Sankuru is an eclectic combination of various genres, similar to how the musical genre incorporates many different art forms. The artist swiftly shifts from singing lines into spoken words without ever altering the tempo of the accompanying music. Although each of the pieces has a title and follows a certain narrative, the performer is not bound to trying to replicate the exact lines every time. At any moment, he can recall an instance, a person or even mention an audience member while still maintaining relevance to the topic. It is, however, the chorus that ties it all in; and an audience member who does not understand the language may easily be tricked into thinking that everything is presented as planned and that the performance follows a rigid formula.

Figure 4.14: De Paris entertaining the audience (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

Verone

The last piece was entitled 'Verone'. I was captivated by the melancholic narrative of a mysterious woman known as Verone; but it was also the words, the melody, the haunting chorus and the theatricality of De Paris's performance that made it so memorable. The shift in body language suggested it was one of the crew's most special pieces. It was dedicated to a young woman who had been De Paris's lover, as he told me few days later, adding that she had died years before he met his first wife. I could not help but notice a hint of sadness in his tone as he admitted that he did not like to discuss it around his wives who became jealous when he talked about the special young woman who was so dear to him.

The song began with guitars and percussionists playing a rhythmic pattern in a four-by-four time signature, followed by the crew joining in with the chorus '*Alowa e, Alowa e …*' (*Alowa* means groundnuts and is a reference to the groundnut field where De Paris and the young lady supposedly met).

The one other element that stood out from this performance, when compared to De Paris's previous pieces and subsequent performances by other oral performers (who will be discussed later in this thesis), is that De Paris is not afraid to tackle his emotions and get personal through such a personal story. Most oratory displays, in whatever form they may be, tend to consist of the artist's take on existing narratives: the deeds of long-gone ancestors and illustrious sons

and daughters of the land, the songs, riddles, folktales and poems which were verbally disseminated across generations; or expertly selected praise words to adulate a subject. Usually, when oratory display is based on personal experiences, it is either for a humorous take on the situation, using a light-hearted approach without really committing to publicly exploring one's emotions.

De Paris started off playing a beautiful harmony on his Anemba, right after the crew had sung the chorus. Having played the melody for nine measures, he grabbed a Yaamba which was placed against a palm tree right behind him and he wore it on his back. The Yaamba is exclusively used by women to carry food and other goods to or from the field. Seeing the artist wear it on his back made me realise that he had taken it a step further: he had, at that moment, become Verone, hence the change in walk and stance to emulate the way she used to walk. From that point on, De Paris enacted the process of sewing, collecting and selecting groundnuts, the way Verone did.

Every now and then, De Paris would repeat the line, "*Mama ambo tsho tsha to tshima okonda ande wa alowa mete, Verone, Verone, kota mbohoka …*", which translates as, 'My babe has gone to the field to collect groundnuts, Verone, please do remember me ….' It is a plea aimed at the young woman, a reference to her frequent trips to the groundnuts field as the artist asked her to remember him from whichever groundnuts field where she may happen to be.

De Paris's reference to the groundnut field not only establishes the setting but it is also used metaphorically to allude to the sexual escapades that took place at the fields, their secret meeting spot. De Paris's enactment, along with both his remarkable dancing and singing and the crew's accompanying melody and vocals, were so well synchronised that I could hardly believe the piece only lasted three-and-a-half minutes, in contrast to the previous pieces each of which lasted over 20 minutes.

Figure 4.15: After the performance (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

The last performance ended right after 6 p.m. and I thanked De Paris and his crew for an unforgettable experience and promised to return the following day for additional inquiry.

A special aroma

When recording De Paris's performance, the pungent aroma of the local traditional 'liquor' was overly present. Prior to the performance, De Paris and his crew members had indulged in over a litre of '*wano wa dja*' (hot drink) which I had sponsored at De Paris's request. The 'liquor' is an integral part of De Paris's performance; and, as he explained later, it helps him overcome shyness and be more focussed during his performances.

Everybody drinks traditional liquor. In fact, one of my maternal uncles had a very interesting take on why every man should drink the 'hot drink': he said, "*Osambala hano wano ete on' oseka*" which translates as: "Any Osambala man who does not drink (alcohol) is the son of his mom's lover …". In other words, his Osambala dad is not his real dad …

I bought traditional 'liquor' as a sign of respect and appreciation whenever I went to a new place, including when I visited the village where my father grew up and where both my grandfather, after whom I am named, and my beloved late Aunt Emilie are buried. I can still recall the spark in people's eyes. It was not a gift they could display in their houses or a clothing item they could wear: it was just a few glasses of the potent alcoholic mixture and that was all they needed as a sign of appreciation from the son who had arrived from a 'far away country'.

Once I had captured De Paris's performance, I knew there was a lot to be done, as I still needed to conduct Transect walks, Video elicitation and Focus group discussions.

<u>Transect walk</u>

The following day, I went to De Paris's home at around 11 a.m. with the aim of proceeding to the next part of my inquiry: Transect walks. Through this method, I wanted a performer to take me on a walk around his community to find out more about him, his story, his origins, and aspirations, etc. and how these related to the setting within which he operated. This method offers an opportunity for an insightful conversation through a set of open-ended questions; however, it is also an opportunity to identify core cultural elements that constitute the oral literary performance.

Otetela with an accent

When I arrived at De Paris's home, he welcomed me with a big smile and most of his crew members and some of his wives, who happened to be there, were visibly pleased to see me again. I understood that part of it was that they were quite impressed by my fluency in Otetela and my Losambala accent which is a quite different from the way people speak in Lodja. Losambala is mostly spoken by Asambala who are the majority inhabitants of the Katako-Kombe region – the area where my parents are from – situated 120 km from Lodja. Asambala are proud people, partly because they are descendants of Ngongo Lutete, the great Tetela chief who resisted enslavement and became an ally of the Arabs in their fight against King Leopold II.

We were taught to speak Losambala from a young age; and, growing up in Lubumbashi, where people mostly speak Swahili, we were unaware that there were different variants of the Otetela language as far as vocabulary and pronunciation are concerned. Whenever my siblings and I heard somebody speak with a different accent, we always found it strange. We were raised with a sense of pride toward our Losambala identity. People's admiration for my accent might have been accentuated by the fact that they did not expect me to speak Otetela at all. Although I did not want to admit it to myself, I often anticipated a reaction from those who heard me speak for the first time – and I was never disappointed.

A private conversation

De Paris invited me to his backyard, a five-metre square of land located next to his personal fishpond, framed between palm trees on each of the adjacent sides. It was the only place where we could have a private conversation as I had requested. Before we headed off for a short walk around the area, De Paris invited me to share a plate of succulent fried plantain. Inspired by the sense of intimacy that emanated from the simple act of sharing a meal, I decided to produce my voice recorder and proceed with the first part of my questionnaire. It was the perfect setting for an intimate interview.

Figure 4.16: First interview with De Paris (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

After the first set of questions, we decided to go for a walk. The sight of De Paris (who is a local celebrity) and me (wearing an unusual brown hat that covered my thick dreadlocks) was a perfect recipe for attracting people around. The artist told me so much about himself; and it all happened very casually as we walked around. I would only interrupt him when I did not understand something or when I needed to validate his words. He even took me to a groundnut field at my request. I still had my voice recorder on, so I recorded everything he said. I also carried my camera to take photos of whatever raised interest and I ended up taking many photos of people who wanted their image to be captured. I still remember the sparkle in their eyes when I showed them a preview of the pictures on the camera screen.

Figure 4.17: Transect walk with De Paris (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

Video elicitation

Following the Transect walk session, I asked De Paris if he would be available the following day for the next part of the inquiry. Having been around him for almost five hours, I figured that it was best if we proceeded with Video-elicitation the following day. He left it up to me.

Through this method, I managed to identify the core cultural elements that constitute the oral literary performance and to understand the extent to which other existing modes of representations (in this case, video) can incorporate the performance aspect.

Video-elicitation consisted of an intimate session that was aimed at pinpointing specific elements of the recorded performance to gather insight from the content and generate para-textual inputs that could help provide a context to the collected data.

I met De Paris around 1 p.m. as I had been busy the whole morning waiting for my electronic devices (laptop, chargers and cell phone) to be fully charged at a little cabin where it was done in exchange for a few Congolese Francs.

I found De Paris sitting on a plastic chair. He had been waiting for me. I apologised for not arriving earlier but he told me there was no need to apologise; he said he did not have anywhere else to go and he would make himself available until I got everything I needed. I was quite relieved by his statement but I also hoped he did not have to cancel any important plans just so he could accommodate my needs.

Time keeping

Coming from the city, I know how important time keeping is and how it can be an indicator of a person's integrity. I always try to live by that motto. However, in instances where I cannot be on time for a meeting owing to traffic or any other unexpected impediment, I always make sure to inform whoever is expecting me in advance, usually either by phoning or texting the person.

In the Sankuru, there generally is a different understanding of time keeping and the setting up of appointments. When people agree to meet, they usually do not tend to be very specific about the exact time and they rather mention the time as an 'approximation'. It is very common for people to say, 'I will see you sometime in the morning', or 'I will see you in the early afternoon', and so on. This is not because people do not care about being on time but it is rather because they are more 'flexible' and generally more lenient towards the unexpected. Additionally, most people still travel by foot and use rudimentary means on a daily basis. Though a cell phone network has been installed in recent years, most people do not own a cell phone; and those who do make sparing use of them. Word of mouth is still practised to transmit messages; and it is common that an unexpected encounter with an acquaintance turns into a lengthy conversation about the health of a relative, the state of crops or any other information that is worthy of being shared.

The captured performance

De Paris invited me to an empty hut right next to the main entrance. It is the waiting room, the foyer where he and his crew members rehearse and socialise. As we entered the hut, I noticed it barely accommodated my height. On the other corner of the room, two of his crew members were playing Checkers. I was offered the usual 'fancy' plastic chair; and as soon as I was seated, I produced my laptop and set it up to play the piece I had chosen to conduct Video elicitation on 'Verone'. As soon as I played the video, I heard footsteps coming toward us; and, in no time, there was an audience of at least eight people, with a few more peeping through the window. They were all very excited to see their likeness on the computer. I knew it would be a special moment for them, hence I made a promise that I would let them watch the entire video of the performance later but that I first wanted to discuss a few points privately with De Paris. They agreed to my proposition and let De Paris and I proceed with the inquiry, though every now and then an uninformed 'intruder' would pop in.

I positioned my Canon 70D camera facing the laptop in such a way that I could record both De Paris's voice as he answered my questions and the sections of the video that were referred to. I would often press 'play' and 'pause' to allow him to visualise the video and get a chance to react whenever he needed to.

Once I had completed with the interview, I played the entire video of *Verone* and was amused by De Paris's reaction. He was visibly pleased to see his likeness on screen. Video elicitation lasted less than 20 minutes as many of the components of the performance had already been expounded upon during the Transect walk. However, the performer provided very useful insights, mostly on less obvious elements, the ones that would easily have gone unnoticed.

Figure 4.18: Video elicitation with De Paris (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

Having completed the Video elicitation, I gathered some of the participants whom I had initially contacted for the next part of my inquiry: the Focus group interview with audience members. Earlier on, as I was on my way to De Paris's home, I had contacted a man and a woman, both of whom I recalled seeing at the performance. From what it appeared, the woman was in her thirties and the young man in his twenties. Having told them what the intent of the interview was, I had asked them if they were willing to be interviewed about the performance. The fact that Lievain, my assistant, was acquainted with them made it easy to approach them. They were both visibly thrilled to be part of the focus group interview; and, additionally, I contacted two of De Paris's wives, the ones who had been present during the performance.

Focus group discussion with audience members

This method was aimed at garnering insights from selected members of the community who had so far only been exposed to live performances of De Paris's orality. The method was designed to evaluate the extent to which the audio-visual format can not only preserve but also

redefine the portrayal of oral literary events, with an emphasis on how it can incorporate the performance aspect of De Paris's oral art. The data collection would be achieved by gathering the audience members' input upon visualising excerpts of the captured performance on my computer screen. The participants were encouraged to comment on how the semiotic devices used by the performer during his performance translated into an audio-visual format and whether or not this 'translation' affected the overall cultural significance of the performance.

I asked De Paris if I could use the same space for the focus group discussion; but he suggested that I used another room opposite the foyer, as it could accommodate more people.

Selected witnesses

I firstly let the five informants view the entire performance of *Verone* on my laptop screen, then we proceeded with the discussion. As usual, more people arrived to watch the captured performance and I knew that having different voices was beneficial. I thus told the audience that anybody who had anything to say should feel free to do so. There were eight participants, four of whom were women and four men.

The four women were visibly intrigued and seemed somehow nervous – perhaps because I had a camera pointed at them and they might have felt the pressure to deliver whatever they thought I expected of them. I assured them that it was a simple discussion and that, as much as I wanted them to share their thoughts on the points that would be raised, no one should feel obliged to speak.

Figure 4.19: Focus group interview (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

The session went really well. I did not get everybody to speak as some of the participants were perhaps a little too self-conscious; however, most were visibly enthusiastic and the initial uneasiness eventually faded away. There were instances where I could not get them to expound on their answers and I had to resist the urge to make them say what I expected them to say and just be thankful for whatever I was able to elicit from them.

The city 'standard'

Though I wanted merely to be a listener, I found myself explaining to them that life in the city is not as wonderful as they may think it to be. I told them there are many special aspects about Sankuru which are lacking in the city way of life. For instance, people's hospitality and general sense of community is difficult to find in the city. My comment was a reaction to a request by one of my participants who suggested that I replaced the huts with straw roofs (the huts were visible in the video of De Paris's performance) with something more 'stylish', considering the video would be viewed by city people who are supposedly 'used to a certain standard'.

At their request, I let them watch a few more videos of the performance, to everybody's delight. I was grateful for their valuable contribution and I thanked them with a small token of my appreciation.

Part 2: The search for the next key informant

Having concluded my inquiry on De Paris and his oral art, I needed to gear up for the next oral performer. I knew, however, that my next key informant would have to be someone from inland; I did not want another performer from Lodja, despite the fact that it would have been more convenient. I wanted a different perspective, a different genre of oral performance, from a village that was as far away from Lodja as possible.

I was told that the Watambulu area comprises some of the finest oral performers of the district and that it would be worthwhile visiting the area, provided I was somehow able to get there. I was told of a great oral performer by the name of Djoko and of a group of women who play a style known as 'beya'.

Watambulu is roughly 80 km from Lodja. That is surely not such a long distance if you live in the city and if road infrastructure is decent. However, the district of Sankuru suffers from poor roads conditions. In fact, some areas are so impractical to visit by road that the only motor vehicle that can access them is the motorcycle. I had difficulty believing that the majority of

people cover such distance on foot. Those who own bicycles mostly use them to carry heavy sacks full of goods and have no other option but to push them, since riding them with such loads would be impossible.

The motorcycle and I

I was fortunate enough that my uncle lent me his motorcycle so that I could travel within Lodja. It was a medium-sized motorcycle of the TVS brand, quite popular in the region, though it looked small for someone my size, let alone with another person on board. Lievain did the riding and I opted for the back seat. I was not comfortable riding a motorcycle, neither was I comfortable being carried on one. In fact, I have not been a fan of motorcycles ever since I fell off my dad's motorcycle when I was fifteen or sixteen. It was pretty uncomfortable for the first few days as Lievain carried me: the bumpy roads did not make it any easier and I thought it was just a matter of time before we fell or bumped into somebody or something.

Figure 4.20: The motorcycle that made the visit possible (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

In time, I became accustomed to being carried on the motorcycle and soon we were on the greatest adventure yet: hunting for the next oral performer, 80 km away in the Watambulu region.

Lievain and I agreed that it made more sense if we spent the weekend in Lodja, gathering the necessary items before the trip. I took the motorcycle for full servicing and took all my electronic equipment for full charging.

Attending mass

On the Sunday preceding the trip, I attended mass. I had promised my mum that I would film the entire mass for her; she wanted to revive her childhood memories. At first, I was hesitant to go to mass because of what I thought people's perception would be: I thought my dreadlocks would create an unnecessary distraction as I knew most of the congregants had not seen a man with hair as long as mine. I decided to go, nonetheless, not sure whether I wanted to challenge their assumptions or verify if my own were well-founded.

I quickly realised that I had been correct: I was an exotic creature who inspired curiosity. They must have concluded that anything could be expected of foreigners. Great was their surprise when they heard me speak Otetela to the priest prior to mass.

Having lived in the city most of my life, I know that taking pictures of total strangers without their authorisation is disrespectful, so I was self-conscious while filming and taking photos of people after mass. However, I quickly learnt that most people there like their photos to be taken and I saw wide smiles on their faces once I showed them the preview on my camera. A teenager asked me to take a photo of him. Soon after, I heard someone call me; it was the boy's mother and another lady who both wanted a picture of them to be taken, which I did with pleasure. It appeared as if people wanted the acknowledgement that they, too, deserved to be immortalised; it was the need to be remembered, through those pictures, by whomever would view them. I thought of the many oral performers who had never had a chance to be recorded. Perhaps they, too, would have been excited to see their likeness in a video or at least in photos.

There are many great oral performers of whom my dad always spoke highly and I grew up listening to the tales of many of the great poets of the Sankuru. I once showed my uncle the list my dad had scribbled of must-see oral performers and where to find them. My uncle shook his head and told me that almost all the people on the list were dead, leaving behind only the memory of their existence in the minds of the few people that still remembered them. Unlike my dad, most people may not remember them at all. Perhaps my dad still imagined Sankuru the way it was over twenty years ago when he was last there; or perhaps he was reluctant to

admit that the region might no longer be the melting pot of great oral tradition and talented performers to the extent it was decades ago.

Even the priest, with whom I briefly spoke about my research after mass, thought that oral literature is no longer what it used to be: many contemporary performers are doing what he called *'la politique du ventre'* which translates as 'politics of the belly'. In other words, they are after money and survival. He added that many current performers, especially the ones living in Lodja with its affluent local authorities and prominent 'children of the land' (who return from the cities every once in a while, either for a visit or sometimes to bury their recently deceased relatives), are their main income source. He, however, encouraged me to visit Watambulu and he, too, mentioned the name *Mama ya Beya* and 'Djoko', adding that he was not sure I would find them.

The adventure continues

Figure 4.21: The adventure continues (Photograph: my cousin Emmanu, 2016)

We left Lodja at 07:45 on 14 November 2016. I was excited about what lay ahead but I was worried at the same time. I could not think of other options in case I did not find the people I expected to meet. I am generally pragmatic and quite resolute once I have set a goal; but I could hear in my mind the voices of all the people who stated the possibility of not finding the oral performers from whom I was hoping to collect data.

The trip went fairly well, despite my fear of the motorcycle not surviving our combined weight and the endless bumps and thick sandy terrains that Lievain had to battle. The pain in my lower back was intense and the never-ending bounces took a toll on my body, though I did not dare complain. I knew Lievain was not having an easy task either. He was the one doing the hard work and all I did was sit and try to stay balanced. Whenever we reached rocky paths or heavy sands, I kept thinking that a fall was imminent. Lievain always reassured me as he sensed my stiffness when I sometimes spread my legs to anticipate a fall. He told me it was not a good idea, not only because he had a harder time staying balanced but I ran the risk of injuring myself, or worse, breaking a leg. He once told me that for all his years of riding a motorcycle on the most gruesome terrains, he had never fallen nor been involved in an accident. Every now and then, I reminded myself of those words – but I knew it still did not mean that it could never happen!

The only setback occurred two hours after we left Lodja: the motorcycle's chain loosened up and it needed to be made tighter. Fortunately, there was a mechanic in the village of Olomo who lent Lievain a spanner which he used to tighten the chain; and within 15 minutes we were ready to move on. I was worried there would be more trouble ahead since it had happened despite our having taken the motorbike for full servicing; but we not once ran into any further issues.

First stop: Ngembe

Our next stop was the village known as Ngembe. It was around 1 p.m. when we stopped at a white house topped with a tin roof. Being the only brick house in the immediate surroundings, it was difficult to miss. The house was supposedly the headquarters of *Mama ya Beya*, a group of women who perform two of the oldest surviving genres of traditional oral art: Beya and Londolo.

Figure 4.22: A rare sighting of a vehicle (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

As we entered the yard, we saw an old man sitting in the shade of a tree, a few metres from the house. Lievain greeted him by his name, 'Papa Albert', and that is when I found out that the two were acquainted. It seemed that Lievain knew pretty much everybody. He introduced the old man as 'Papa Djongesongo Yema Albert'; he was a retired notary of the Watambulu section. Before I too could introduce myself, I was offered a chair: a beautiful wooden, handcrafted chair – a dream come true. Yippee! I told Papa Albert my name but I did not want to get into what I was there for quite yet. I let Lievain handle the introduction part. He had done it so often that he had become so adept at presenting a simplified version of what my research was about, which, of course, lacked important elements but I did not care. I was merely grateful not to have to look for clear-cut terms repeatedly to explain the aims and objectives of my research.

Lievain asked for the whereabouts of Papa Albert's wife, the lady in charge of *Mama Ya Beya*. *Mama ya Beya* translates as 'the women who perform Beya'. Beya is an old form of oral performance which is accompanied by a specific dance pattern and rhythmic beats produced on the Lokombe. It finds its origin in earlier history when our forefathers would celebrate important events, such as the arrival of a chief or a funeral, by singing, dancing and playing the Lokombe in a manner that reflected the essence of the ceremony. Beya differs from Londolo, another form of oral performance with different dance and rhythmic patterns. Only a trained ear can differentiate the two; and, despite my musical experience, I had difficulty distinguishing the two styles.

Papa Albert told us that his wife and the rest of the crew had gone to the field and that they should be back around 6 p.m. I was relieved to know that they were reachable. We initially thought of waiting until they returned but I suggested that we go to Nkonde first since the *Mama ya Beya's* location had been established and we knew how and when to find them. My main concern at that moment was Djoko, the man whom many had recommended and who was considered one of the best, if not the best, at what he does. Papa Albert told me of another performer who is an *Odimba a Lokombe* (a Lokombe player) and who had apparently performed with *Mama ya Beya* on numerous occasions. He said that he, too, lived in Konde and that I should find him there, unless his Lokombe had taken him to some other places.

We had promised Papa Albert that we would either return the following day, in case we did not find any of the performers, or a few days from then, if we were successful. Ngembe was a mandatory passage, after all, so there was no way we would not return. As we rode on the way to Nkonde, I was overwhelmed by the possibility of not finding either Djoko or the Lokombe player whose name is Dabe, as I later found out. I knew I was fortunate that at least I was guaranteed to collect data from the *Mama Ya Beya* group who were perhaps the last of their kind and that was highly significant. Nevertheless, Djoko and Dabe would offer varied perspectives as each represented a different facet of Sankuru oral literature, so finding both of them had become mandatory and I was going to try to do whatever possible to ensure I found them.

The way to Nkonde

It took us two hours to reach Nkonde, and a total of roughly eight hours from the time we left Lodja. The entire trajectory was as follows:

Lodja – Otema Ambo Langa – Esenge – Ome Kenge – Kongu – Otomba – Tokeke – Lokamba – Longanga – Olomo – Lohotame – Momba – Kutsha Koyi – Okundji – Etenge – Shopo – Okungu – Okutsh'a konga – Hiambe – Anyeme – Owadi – **Ngembe** – Osombo – Djemo – Ekanda Ashimbi – Waho – Weni – **Nkonde.**

Some of the villages are less than two kilometres apart, while others are separated by beautiful green areas that extend to over three kilometres. Many were breathtakingly beautiful; every now and then I had to ask Lievain to stop the motorcycle just so I could take photos. His amusement was quite apparent and I was not sure he believed me when I told him that some of the green areas were the most beautiful I had ever seen. My dad always referred to Sankuru as

a lost paradise and many of the lands I saw could make a solid argument for such a claim. I imagined beautiful houses erected in the middle of some of them; but then I thought perhaps the beauty of those lands, the reason why we can still appreciate the apparent perfection of the landscape, is precisely because they have been kept free from human interventions. Perhaps it should stay that way.

Figure 4.23: One of the countless beautiful landscapes (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

On a negative note, there were some less spectacular scenes, such as some of the precarious bridges we had to cross along the way. They were either made of tree trunks or sometimes wooden pieces that might once have been solid enough to allow a safe crossing of people and their bicycles and even motorcycles. However, the state in which I found some of them made me wonder what more pertinent issues local government officials could possibly have on their desks. I wondered if anybody had noticed what a missed opportunity the lack of decent road infrastructure presented to the economy. For the entire trip, not once did we meet a car and it is not difficult to figure out the reason. Every time we came across such bridges, we needed to hold our breath, be very meticulous as we pushed the motorcycle and pray for luck to be on our side.

Figure 4.24: One of the many dangerous bridges (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

Finally, in Nkonde

Nkonde, unlike some of the villages we passed along the way, has huts randomly placed off the sandy road, with no clear structure as far as placement is concerned. The many trees and plants of all kinds give it a homey, welcoming feel and it is surely a testimony to the land's fertility. The village seemed almost empty when we arrived: there were only a few children playing along the sandy road and a few people scattered on either side of the road. Not knowing where to go, we decided to carry on all the way to the end of the road where it diverges into two smaller roads. Once there, we saw a half dozen men sitting under a straw-covered enclosure. The sound of the motorcycle created a commotion among them; and, by then, children had gathered around the motorcycle and there were suddenly more people coming from different parts of the village.

We moved towards the group and introduced ourselves. We were promptly offered seats, once again handcrafted wooden chairs for both Lievain and me. I quickly realised that the straw-covered enclosure was, in fact, a restaurant and the men were waiting for their meal to be served. The aroma coming from another enclosure on the opposite side went through my nostrils and I realised that I could do with a warm plate of food. A lady was busy dishing up rice and what seemed like meat onto aluminium plates.

Figure 4.25: Finally, in Nkonde (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

I am prone to stomach upsets, thus I carried anti-diarrhoea pills everywhere I went. I was very careful with what I put into my mouth and the last thing I wanted was to be disrupted by endless trips to the bathroom, or the bush. Lievain and I had agreed that whenever we were offered food that looked 'suspicious'; either game meat that did not smell 'fresh' or any food item that could potentially upset my bowels, I would let him taste it first and wait for his verdict. I carried a few tins of canned sardines as back up.

We were offered food which we politely declined. Before we decided on the length of our stay and whether we wanted to settle down, we first wanted to know the whereabouts of Djoko and Dabe.

Where is Djoko?

We received disappointing news: we were told that Djoko had left for another village. 'Performers are never static ...' said one of the men, '... they go where they can find money'. To make matters worse, they said that sometimes he goes away for days. Nobody seemed to know his whereabouts, they only knew the direction he had followed when he left. Djoko apparently did not own a cell phone; and, even if he did, there was no reliable network connection and nowhere to charge an empty battery. I felt a tightness in my stomach that had nothing to do with food.

Somebody suggested we ask his wife, so I followed a man known as Fally who told me that his wife's field was 'close by'. We walked for almost twenty minutes before saw any rice fields. By then, I had already learnt that my understanding of 'proximity' greatly differs from theirs. Fally pointed at a lady who wore a yellow blouse that almost matched the colour of the rice crops she was busy collecting. Djoko's elder wife did not know her husband's whereabouts.

Figure 4.26: Djoko's wife (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

How about Dabe?

Having asked a group of men about Dabe's whereabouts, we were told that he was not in the area either; he had gone with his sick child to the mountains and had taken his Lokombe with him, which meant he might have had other plans (more disappointing news). Andre, the owner of the restaurant, who also happened to own a motorcycle, is the local 'taxi driver'. He offered to go looking for Dabe and, if found, he would let him know we were waiting for him. Soon after we had agreed on the cost of his service, he left with his motorcycle, following the path I had taken earlier when I went to the rice fields.

Food and money

Before we left Lodja, I had converted a substantial number of Congolese Francs into small bank notes so that I could offer a note as a token of my gratitude. Whenever I gave people

money, they were so grateful as they visibly did not expect it. People still do things without necessarily expecting money in return.

Money certainly has different value in urban societies compared to a place such as Sankuru. In the cities, we need money for almost everything: we pay for silence; we pay a lot of money just so we can eat 'organic'; we even pay money to live close to nature, which has become a luxury in our so-called 'urban lifestyle'. In the Sankuru, it is all about life in its purest form: people live in nature, in a pollution-free environment; organic food is all they eat, as they are not familiar with genetically modified food. The food taste is unlike anything I have ever eaten.

Atetela are primarily rice eaters and I grew up eating rice. However, the rice I was served there was completely different from anything I had known: the aroma and taste were such that I could eat it without any sauce. The reason is quite simple: rice crops are freshly collected from the field, cherry-picked, pounded to remove the skin and served while still fresh.

Figure 4.27: Rice like no other (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

Some good news

It was almost 6 p.m. when Andre returned. He was on his own. The good news was that he had met Dabe, but the performer could not come along because his wife was apparently away and there was nobody who could take care of the sick child in his absence. He had promised to join us first thing in the morning.

When the moon is out of sight, a Sankuru village can easily be the darkest place one could possibly imagine. There was not one single light visible in the dark surrounding and it got so dark that I could not even make out the silhouettes of the people I was having a conversation

with as we sat in the straw-covered enclosure. Everything comes to a halt when it is nighttime and people tend to sleep quite early.

Andre had set up an entire hut for Lievain and me, a single room that was separated from his main, bigger hut. Chief Okito, the traditional authority, had wanted us to stay in his home but I preferred the intimacy of Andre's place and the fact that we were not in anybody's way. I was told that the chief was not very pleased about it. It is worth mentioning that Chief Okito has six wives and a great number of children. When Lievain and I went to pay our respect, I had the impression there were at least ten adults living in his courtyard, not including the many children whom I saw coming from everywhere. It turned out that Chief Okito thought we were part of an NGO; and, even when I told him that I was just a student conducting research, he did not seem to believe me. Consequently, I chose not to make any further comments about my research. Besides, Lievain had already described it in simple terms and if Chief Okito still thought there was a secret agenda, then there was not much I could do about it.

The following morning, I woke up with a new burst of optimism. I realised that I was in a much better position than the day before; and, assuming Djoko was completely out of the picture, at least I had Dabe, though it was 10 a.m. and he still had not arrived. I had to remind myself that I was in Sankuru; he had said he would come in the morning and, technically, it was still morning.

It was almost 11 a.m. when I heard the beats of Dabe's Lokombe. I was told that, though the sound seemed to be coming from the rice field nearby, he was actually much further away, at least three kilometres away. The Lokombe, it turned out, can be heard at up to 15 km distant.

Lokombe: much more than just a percussion instrument

Figure 4.28: Dabe's 50-year-old Lokombe (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

The Lokombe is a trapeze-shaped instrument made of one single piece of wood with a narrow slot in the middle which allows it to resonate. One side of the instrument is usually thicker and sound is created by beating both sides with two wooden sticks, thus allowing the creation of different tones. Glue or rubber is used to cover the parts of the sticks that come into contact with the instrument; and the ability to combine rhythms with various tonalities is what makes it an exceptional mean of communication.

The best Lokombe are made from the trunk of a tree known as Lokoka; and though some other trees have been used lately due to the rarity of Lokoka, the quality of resonance can tell them apart. Usually the lower-end version is used in churches or by Lokombe enthusiasts, whereas real Odimba a Lokombe only use those made from Lokoka and generally theirs are very old instruments inherited from their deceased relatives.

The low, deep register sound of the Lokombe can be heard in villages many kilometres away; which is why it is used to transmit information to neighbouring villages. In the case of news that needs to be spread across the entire territory, the villages that are located within reaching distant take over the role of retransmitting the message to other villages, and so on, until the entire territory is informed. Nowadays, there may be no need to cover such vast areas but the Lokombe is still used, though mostly as a mean of communication on a smaller scale and as a musical instrument.

Understanding the language of the Lokombe is not an easy task, especially for the untrained ear. The language is based on the spoken language; and the sound made on the Lokombe is a reproduction of its spoken counterpart, Tetela, it being a phonetic language. However, there is a strict structure in the way the message is transmitted, mainly because two identically spelt Tetela words with the same number of syllables can mean something different, depending on the choice of syllable on which the accent is placed. For example, the word Olongo (o-lo-ngo), with no accent placed on any of the syllables, means 'sky'. However, once the accent is placed on the second syllable, Olongo (o-lo-ngo) refers to 'the region above the buttocks'; and, once the accent is placed on the third syllable, Olongo (o-lo-ngo) means 'burned'.

Dabe later told me that Lokombe language has been developed over centuries and each Tetela chief of the past had their own Odimba a Lokombe who played a crucial role in the traditional administration system. Each sentence in Lokombe language is an encoded transcription of the key message, either concerning the chief, a recently deceased member of the community, a meeting notification for notaries, or a particular event that has occurred.

The following stages make up the structure of a Lokombe announcement, according to Apa Lodi, an Odimba a Lokombe whom I met in Omeonga (my maternal grandmother's village) and to whom I am, de facto, related:

Stage 1: The call for attention (warning)

Stage 2: Notifying who is sending the message

Stage 3: What the message is about

Stage 4: Conclusion of the message

Dabe … finally

Half an hour after hearing the first Lokombe beats, I finally saw Dabe coming along the narrow path that leads to rice fields. He carried his Lokombe using a strap and the apparent weight of the instrument caused him to walk slowly, majestically, as if his pace was dictated by some external force. It was spectacular. I was told that he was announcing our presence on the Lokombe; informing everyone, including neighbouring villages, that Nkonde had just welcomed an honourable guest. I was flattered.

Dabe greeted me with a smile while still playing his instrument so I let him finish the welcoming act before I could introduce myself and tell him what I was there for. In the meantime, a crew had gathered along Andre's courtyard as I stood and recorded the entire scene through my camera lens.

The meeting

After we were seated in the 'restaurant', I introduced myself to Dabe and told him what the intent of my presence was. Lievain was mostly silent as he sensed I needed to be as precise as possible when explaining the key concepts of my research to my key informants. The hardest aspect, in all my meetings with oral performers, was talking 'money'. In other words, how much money the performers wanted me to pay them as an inducement for their performance. As explained, though oral performers of yesteryear did not have such conversations since they were remunerated through gifts and donations offered to the king by the community, the contemporary performer no longer benefits from such privilege. Besides, presents in the form of food or clothing is perhaps not their preferred form of inducement. Contemporary oral performers prefer money.

Figure 4.29: First meeting with Dabe (Photograph: Lievain, 2016)

At first, Dabe did not set a price; he said it was up to me to determine how much I thought he was worth. However, I told him that I preferred it if he told me instead, as I had no idea what represented a 'fair' amount. Money negotiation has never been my forte and I knew deep down that I would not have been able to argue had he requested an amount that was over my budget. I always felt that it would appear as if I undermined the performer's talent or that I did not think they deserved the stated amount. As a performer, I dislike it when people ask me to adjust the price once I have told them how much a performance will cost. Luckily, we did not go back-and-forth; Dabe said 30,000 Congolese Francs would help him pay the medical bills for his sick child.

Dabe was in his early forties at the time; he wore a long-sleeved shirt, black pants and a pair of slippers. He did not look like the stereotypical idea of an African oral performer. With his soft-spoken voice and polite demeanour, he might have been a local clerk or somebody who works in an office for local government.

The guardian of tradition

During the meeting, I told him that he was free to play whatever he wanted and that I would record him. Outside the 'restaurant', the crowd was getting bigger. Soon after we concluded our introductory meeting. As Dabe was getting ready to make his Lokombe 'talk', a man who must have been in his early sixties came to my encounter. He said to me that he was a 'guardian of the tradition'. The elder quickly captivated my attention, mainly due to his alleged 'title' and I felt he was somebody worth having around for the duration of my inquiry. He said to me that he had known Dabe's late father and, after the latter had died, he had become one of the people whom Dabe went to for advice, mostly for issues related to tradition and its safe keeping. He said he knew the ins and outs of the Lokombe and he understood the language better than most.

The performance

Soon after Dabe began to make his Lokombe talk, as I filmed him, I noticed that an even bigger crowd had gathered around us. I had told the performer that he could play as long as he wanted and that he was free to perform anything that he would find relevant. As soon as he started beating his Lokombe, there was an abrupt silence in the audience; and, by the look on the elder's face and some of the audience members' faces, I knew they were listening not to the rhythm, as I did, but to the 'words' that were being said on the Lokombe.

Figure 4.30: Dabe's performance (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

Dabe played non-stop for almost five minutes, then stopped for a few seconds. At that moment, the elder, who was standing next to me, told me that the performer had just finished, introducing himself and his ancestry. The second part of the performance lasted about four minutes. I was told that Dabe had followed up with various rhythmic patterns from the 'old days', thus making music on his Lokombe, contrary to the first part when he spoke solely through the instrument.

The entire performance lasted about ten minutes. Dabe asked me if I wanted him to carry on and I said to him that he did not have to. I did not expect him to continue making his Lokombe talk as, just like with spoken language, one can only speak when there is something to say. He had concluded the message he wanted to communicate through his instrument and that was fine for me. It was not about quantity but rather quality of the collected data.

After the performance, I told Dabe that I would love him to take me on a walk as I had a few questions I wanted to ask him. I asked him to choose whichever trajectory suited him and that I was also willing to know Nkonde a little more. Dabe suggested we took one of the two diverging roads next to Andre's home; he wanted to show me what the Lokoka tree looks like and he also wanted me to see the area where he was born.

The elder asked if he could join us and I said to him it would be an honour. A few children followed us for a while but eventually gave up when they realised we were getting farther from the village.

<u>Transect walk with Dabe</u>

The Transect walk went fairly well; I used my voice recorder to capture the interview and I used my camera to take photos of anything that drew my interest. Lievain, who followed a few metres behind, would also take photos of us. The walk lasted about 45 minutes. Once we returned to the village, I asked Dabe if he would be available for the next part of my inquiry later that day. I feared he might have to return to the mountains, hence I wanted to capitalise on his availability. Luckily, Dabe told me he would still be around the following day.

The elder, who turned out to be the school principal of the local primary school, said he had something to attend to later that day; however, he was willing to postpone it if I needed him to provide his input during Video elicitation. I really wanted to have him present, as I thought his input would be invaluable to the Video elicitation session but, at the same time, I did not want him to cancel his own appointment. Hence, I proposed to Dabe that we conducted the session the following day instead, provided it would be more convenient for the elder. It turned out that they both liked the idea, so we agreed to meet at around 9 a.m., though deep down I knew it meant, 'Let's meet sometime in the morning'.

Figure 4.31: Transect walk with Dabe (Photograph: Lievain, 2016)

I cannot remember the elder's name as Lievain forgot to turn on the button of the camera's external microphone when he did an impromptu recording of him talking. Lievain enjoyed the attention received every time he was seen handling the camera; he was always willing to

explain to the crowd his own take on how a digital camera works. Interviewing the elder was his own initiative and I was amused to see him look 'cool' while filming the elder and a few other people. Unfortunately, he was unaware that, once an external microphone is connected to a DSLR camera, it becomes the only audio input, so if the microphone is turned off, there is no sound coming through.

<u>Video elicitation</u>

Video elicitation was more exciting than I had anticipated. I had spent the previous evening planning the interview session. I had made the decision that I would play a few seconds of the recorded performance at a time and let Dabe and the elder interpret that segment for me. I had also decided that I would not include the part where he played rhythmic patterns, since there was not much to say about it.

I had positioned the camera in such a way that it pointed at the laptop so I could record our voices and the section of the recording video that were referred to. There were a few people around the 'restaurant' as I conducted Video elicitation. They would giggle every time I came across an unfamiliar word and asked for its meaning. I had realised that, the further from Lodja, the 'deeper' the accent and the higher the chance of coming across unfamiliar words.

As we went through the performance video, Dabe interpreted every few seconds of the recording, repeating the exact words 'said' on the Lokombe, while the elder provided a paraphrase using terms that were clearer and so easier for me to grasp. This approach proved to be crucial, especially because Dabe used a lot of proverbs and riddles, both of which are made up of metaphors whose meaning is not always obvious.

Figure 4.32: Video elicitation with Dabe (Photograph: Lievain, 2016)

Video elicitation lasted slightly over twenty minutes and I was glad I only had five minutes of recording time. I imagined how long the session would have lasted had I recorded over twenty minutes of footage.

It was around 11 a.m. when we wrapped up the Video elicitation session and I asked the elder if he would be available later on for the last part of my inquiry: a Focus group discussion with selected audience members. I had initially contacted four people whom I had seen at the performance, asking them if they would be willing to provide their opinion on a few points related to Dabe and his performance. I had initially invited three older males, two younger men and two women. One of the younger males was a preacher at a local church.

Focus group interview with selected participants

When the session began, only one woman had arrived; the other one had opted not to come along, apparently because she thought she would not be at ease. However, the woman who was there would not say a word during the entire session, even when I directed questions at her. All she did was smile. I understood that the reason for her silence might have been that the male participants were intimidating due to how eloquent they sounded; they promptly responded whenever I asked a question. The woman might have felt that her contribution would not have been of any value since the men seemed to know the answer to everything I asked.

The session lasted almost 20 minutes and I thanked them for their invaluable contribution, thus concluding my inquiry on Dabe, my second key informant.

Figure 4.33: Focus group interview with Dabe's audience (Photograph: Lievain, 2016)

Part 3: The third key informant

Having concluded the inquiry with Dabe, I thought of the possibility of not meeting Djoko as I sat on a wooden chair, having had a plate of rice with delicious game meat. It was around 5 p.m. when Andre told me that Djoko had apparently been spotted in a village situated 15 km from Nkonde. Andre proposed to search for him the following day since it was already quite late and it would have been difficult to locate him after nightfall. I was very pleased by the news and I slept exceptionally well that night.

Searching for Djoko

The following day, at around 9 a.m., Andre left Nkonde in search of Djoko. We had agreed on 8,000 Francs, not only because the village was apparently 15 km from Nkonde, but also because, as Andre stated, Djoko always travelled with one of his two wives, thus Andre expected to carry two people. By then I was unfazed by the thought of three passengers on a motorcycle. In Lodja, I had seen a motorcycle carrying four passengers: one of them sat on the gas tank, between the handlebars and the rider, and two sat at the back. The most impressive

part was the serene look on their faces, as if they did not think anything could go wrong. They certainly had acquired a level of confidence equal to circus stuntmen.

There was Djoko

Less than three hours later, we heard the sound of Andre's motorcycle. Some children ran to inform me that Djoko had arrived. I saw the three passengers from a distance but the motorbike did not head toward us; I assumed that Andre had taken the performer and his wife to their home first, which made good sense. I was quite relieved that the man had been found.

Around 35 minutes later, I heard the sound of the Losambi. There was Djoko. He wore a black jacket and black T-shirt and could not have been over thirty-five, from what it appeared. He slowly walked toward me and stopped after every few steps while still singing and playing percussion on his Losambi. As soon as our eyes met, I heard him sing: "Why don't you want to come to my home, if I'm truly the one you have been waiting for?" I was not sure what to say, so I told him I did not know I was invited to his home. I blamed it on the fact that I was unaware of many standard customs and apologised to him, having told him that I was willing to go with him to his home; and so we did.

Figure 4.34: Djoko singing "Why do you not come to my home?" (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

First meeting with Djoko

Once in his two-room hut, we were offered wooden chairs. Djoko introduced us to his two wives and four of his six children. Once we were comfortably seated, I introduced myself and told him the purpose of my visit. I was fairly sure that Andre had provided him with an overview. Once I felt that I had covered all that needed to be said about me and my research, I wanted to move on to the less exciting part of the 'meeting': the money talk. I could not imagine any less 'rigid' approach to the topic; I was certain there was a customary, more organic approach but I clearly was unaware of it.

In my years of performing, I have learnt that money should be one of the first topics to be discussed, not so much because it is one of the most important points, but rather because it needs to be taken 'out of the way' just so that people can focus on other issues. Djoko, just like every other performer I have met, is not used to stating his 'price'. Just like Dabe before him, he suggested that I offer him whatever I felt he deserved, which was not something I was willing to do.

The right approach to incentive

It took me a while to realise that the concept of a 'once-off payment' was not something oral performers were accustomed to: they did not expect to be paid 'in full' but rather in small increments. Not to say that they had an amount in mind and expected it to be broken down into smaller notes but rather they expected to be 'rewarded' at various stages of their performance, especially when praise-poetry was performed. The custom consists of 'sticking' bank notes on the performer's forehead or sliding them into the instrument, as a sign of appreciation for his or her work.

While I thought a once-off payment would ensure money was got 'out of the way', I quickly found out that it was actually during the performance that I was supposed to show my appreciation as a sign of validation, a showcase of my gratitude towards the words that were being said, the dance that was being performed, or sometimes at the performer's or his crew's request. Paying an inducement to the performer in private and prior to the actual performance is not seen as a sign of appreciation while nobody sees it happen; it is by donating money or other valuables during the performance and before the audience that one can truly attest to one's appreciation for all the remarkable things that take place during a performance. Djoko finally suggested 50,000 Congolese Francs, the exact amount requested by De Paris.

Djoko's band

I found out during the meeting that Djoko performed with a band. He mentioned two additional members of his group who both performed the Lokombe. He said that one of them played the bigger, heavier 'bass' Lokombe, while the other played the smaller, lighter 'tenor' Lokombe. However, his supporting crew was not there, so he said he would try to contact them. Djoko added that, when he travelled on his own to distant locations in search of opportunities, as he had recently done, he was forced to perform solo. However, whenever he was in Nkonde, both Lokombe players always accompanied him. The performer added that he wanted me to experience a full performance, with the entire band, and I told him I was keen to observe whatever worked for him.

It was past 5 p.m. and I thought it was unlikely that Djoko would locate his crew before nightfall, hence I suggested that he performed the following day, just so I could ease off the pressure that he might have felt. Later that evening, Djoko invited Lievain and I to his home for supper, having informed us that the chief wanted us to go to his court afterward for an official welcome. I was not exactly delighted by the chief's invitation but I knew it would eventually happen as we had not been officially invited to his home. Djoko's wives had cooked rice and meat; and though the sauce was a little too oily for my liking, everybody else seemed to enjoy it. I preferred the cooking of Andre's wife and perhaps that was the reason why she ran a seemingly successful restaurant business.

Halfway into our meal, we heard a knock at the door; and there was Dabe and another man who happened to be one of Djoko's Lokombe players and whom I heard Djoko call 'Defao'. Djoko invited both guests to join us at the table and, as we chatted and ate, I learnt that Dabe was in fact an original member of Djoko's ensemble and that they usually re-united whenever there was an opportunity, provided they were both in the village.

Heading to the chief's

After the meal, we were immersed in a dark, moonless night once outside Djoko's home. Luckily, I had brought my small torch. We headed towards the chief's court to the heavy percussive sounds of both Dabe's and Defao's Lokombe, and the distinct, high-pitched beats of Djoko's Losambi. Djoko sang improvised verses and the crew responded in unison. I walked in the front and Djoko and his crew followed right behind. We were followed by a crowd of mostly children whose silhouettes I could barely see due to the limited scope of my torch.

Figure 4.35: On the way to chief's home (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

When we finally reached the chief's court, two hundred meters from Djoko's home, there was a small crowd of women and children. Close to the entrance of what seemed to be the biggest hut sat a group of about seven men, the chief among them. He asked me to sit next to him and I noticed a small table in the middle as we all formed a semicircle around it. The performers stood right opposite where I was seated so that everybody would know I was the one being honoured.

An unexpected treat

The music intensified; it started to make sense why Djoko had wanted me to hear the full band. I was amazed, to say the least. It was a combination of poetry, music and storytelling. Djoko started off with praise-poetry: he praised my name, my family, my ancestry and the land where my parents are from. He posed riddles and asked the audience to guess the meaning; he then revealed the meaning, using a humorous twist, to the delight of everybody, including the chief. In the midst of all that, Djoko raised his arm, the music softened and Defao played a repetitive rhythm by hitting the least resonant part of his Lokombe. Djoko then asked the audience if anybody knew which was the most feared of all animals. He looked at me and I said it was the lion. There were a few different suggestions among the audience: some mentioned the elephant while others cited the leopard. The performer went on to tell the tale of how dog became man's companion and the most feared animal.

Coming to Sankuru, I had had a mental image of how I thought storytelling was performed; having grown up listening to the tales of animals told by my late maternal grandmother. I was hoping to find the old art still practised in the region. However, upon hearing all the comments about the changes in the oral literature landscape, I ended up believing that storytelling, in its purest form, was no longer practised in the Sankuru. Perhaps current elders did not feel the need to share stories with younger members of the communities or perhaps the latter were not interested in hearing them tell stories. Whichever the case, I thought it was unlikely that I would come across somebody telling folktales.

Figure 4.36: Screenshot of Djoko's captured performance (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

I was greatly surprised upon hearing Djoko spontaneously tell the story of *How Dog became the most feared animal*. I did not anticipate that. I witnessed something I did not expect to see, in a format that was way different from anything I had imagined, and far better, too. I was mesmerised by Djoko's oratory display. The beauty was in the combination of rhythmic patterns made on the Lokombe, the performer's sporadic use of the Losambi as he told the story, the silent audience whose presence was signalled only by gasps and responses, and the surrounding darkness as I had aimed the soft light of my torch at the performer. It was too good to be true.

Figure 4.37: On my left: Chief Okito (Photograph: Lievain, 2016)

As I listened to Djoko's mastery of the language, his flawlessly constructed sentences, I understood why the man was revered by many, despite his young age. I thought it was not possible to become that skilled through mere practice; one had to be naturally gifted. There certainly is a reason why there are not many who could do what he does. A great memory, incredible improvisation skills, an unmatched charisma … people have made a name for themselves with one of those qualities, yet this man seemed to have all of them.

That evening's performance was not supposed to count as part of my data collection; it was by pure chance that I happened to have my best DSLR camera as I did not think there would be anything worth recording that night at the chief's home. I was looking forward to the following day instead. It turned out, however, that I was lucky to have had my camera and been able to record what I think to be the single best storytelling performance I have ever witnessed.

As a storyteller, I have always been interested in 'painting pictures' using only words when I tell stories to either children or to a mixed audience. Having learnt different devices that may be used to capture the audience's attention and turn any story into a memorable journey through imaginary worlds, I thought I knew it all when it comes to traditional forms of storytelling. I clearly did not. Djoko's ability to integrate three forms of orality seamlessly into one performance, without pausing in between, was so special. He told folktales, added riddles and improvised praise words without ever 'losing' the audience.

That performance would not have been the same had it taken place during the day; it certainly would not have carried the same significance. I am quite certain that Djoko would not have

told stories, considering storytelling is a night affair. My grandmother would never tell us stories during the day: 'It is forbidden', she used to say. The truth is, during the day, people are busy working, either in their fields or taking care of other business; only a lazy person would ever consider telling or listening to stories during the day.

Djoko told two more stories that evening. Combined with the singing and the dancing that took place thereafter, we stayed there for over three hours. I had experienced so much more than I had expected and, by the end of the performance, I was satisfied with what I had collected to the extent that I decided there was no need for Djoko to stage a second performance the following day. Instead, I would proceed with the next part of my inquiry.

Early-morning praises

On Saturday 18 November, it was 5 a.m. in the morning and I was still asleep when I heard Djoko's unmistakable voice and the bangs he produced on his Losambi; he was singing my name, asking me to step outside. I was quite exhausted, and I would have loved to sleep a little longer, but I knew he would not stop until I went out and put some money in his instrument. I had a few loose Congolese Francs and a $10 note which I was reluctant to let go. I had already spent more than half of the money that I had saved for my research and I needed to control my expenditure or else it would be difficult to continue. Though food cost almost nothing, I needed money for other expenses, such as petrol for the motorcycle, inducements for future key informants and the guesthouse room for which I paid $10 a day, including when I was away. I had stored all my belongings in the room and did not want to run the risk of losing the spot next to the main entrance.

Figure 4.38: Lievain and I, the morning after Djoko's performance (Photograph: André, 2016)

Less than five minutes after Djoko had begun his impromptu early-morning praise-poetry, I heard noises and giggles. I looked through the wooden window and saw children and a few adults standing in Andre's yard. The day begins early in the village. I quickly got dressed, went outside and put the $10 note into the Losambi, which prompted Djoko to sing even louder as he thanked me for the donation. Once the performer had concluded his performance, I asked him if he was available thereafter for an interview and if he was willing to go for a walk around the village. He told me he was ready for it.

Transect walk with Djoko

Having set up my recording devices, I followed Djoko off-road along the narrow paths as I proceeded with the questionnaire and recorded the interview using my voice recorder. Lievain took photos as usual. Every once in a while, we would come across a group of people, mostly women, carrying empty Yaamba on their way to their fields.

Figure 4.39: Transect walk with Djoko (Photograph: Lievain, 2016)

The interview session was very informative, and I learnt a lot about the performer. Among other things, he told me about his early struggles, including his stint with the army before deciding to return to the village and follow his 'calling'. There was something magical about the atmosphere of such early hours of the day, perhaps due to the fact that my mind was still 'fresh' and I did not have anything to worry about. I had been able to meet the one person who

cast a shadow of doubt over the possibility of collecting data from one of the best representatives of oral performance in the region.

<u>Another Video elicitation with selected witnesses</u>

Video elicitation took place around 11 a.m. Aside from Djoko, there were few people in attendance and we used Andre's restaurant, the same space previously used for Dabe. There were, in fact, a few familiar faces I recognised from Dabe's data collection sessions. Djoko's Video elicitation revolved around the story of *How Dog became the most feared animal*. I had made up my mind that this would be the focus as soon as I heard Djoko tell the story the night before. The other two stories were also fascinating, but I could only choose one.

As to be expected, I encountered a mild language barrier; however, Djoko and some of the audience members, particularly an elder who lives opposite Djoko's home, very finely explained some of the unfamiliar words. As usual, the session was very animated: there were frequent giggles as the audience was amused that I was not unacquainted with some of the expressions used during the performance. They were visibly pleased to see Djoko in a

Figure 4.40: Video elicitation with Djoko and audience (Photograph: Lievain, 2016)

format that was unusual, yet somehow not so different from the way they had always experienced his performances. It was also interesting to notice that the audience displayed similar reactions to what occurred during live performances: they gasped and responded to the

performer's calls from the recording as if the medium did not 'dilute' their experience of the performance.

<u>Focus group discussion with audience members</u>

The Focus group discussion took place half an hour after Video elicitation. I had decided to leave for Ngembe, home of *Mama ya Beya*, soon after I had concluded the Focus group discussion. I had to maximise the fact that it was Saturday and the women were not expected to perform field duties on Sunday.

The session comprised four informants: two elders, of which one was Djoko's neighbour who had attended Video elicitation; the other was his uncle. There was also a younger man in his twenties and Djoko's elder wife whom I thought would bring a valuable contribution to the interview. Though the session was not engaging to the extent of Dabe's Focus group discussion, once again, the male informants proved to be more vocal than Djoko's wife who was silent for most of the session. Her silence might also have been caused by the presence of her in-law; Djoko's uncle. In Tetela culture, the relationship between in-laws is one that is delicate and subject to a lot of scrutiny.

I had initially tried to invite both wives but it appeared that the younger wife had to take care of household duties and I did not want to insist. Andre's wife, who had initially showed interest in joining the discussion, did not arrive when the session took place and I decided to settle for those who were present. Among other points raised during the Focus group interview was the importance of Djoko's role in the community. Interestingly, the informants stated they were not worried about the survival of Djoko's art as they were confident one of his children, or perhaps somebody else, would take over.

Figure 4.41: Focus group interview (Photograph: Lievain, 2016)

Fally, the man who took me to the rice fields upon my arrival in Nkonde as we went in search of Djoko's first wife, turned out to be the cornerstone of the discussion. He single-handedly initiated the discussions on most of the questions that were raised, thus prompting the rest of the informants to react, either by stating their approval or adding to his statements. My attempts to generate more inputs were moderately successful but I did not want to sound 'pushy'. Besides, I had gathered what I needed and I could only be grateful for getting so much in such a short space of time.

The farewell performance

The session ended with Djoko joining in, accompanied with his Losambi. He made a demonstration of how the Losambi works, explaining how each of the three hollow parts produces a different pitch. The artist went on to perform one last piece which was, in true Djoko fashion, a combination of riddles, praise-poetry and a beautiful, deep, farewell message in which he asked me to stay loyal to my family and be a peacekeeper whenever there was discord. The message was so profound that I was greatly humbled as it appeared the man had known me for a long time. He said things that reminded me of words that came from the mouths of both my grandmothers, women who often reminded me that I was the head of my entire family and that I was the one to whom many would be looking.

Figure 4.42: Time to leave Nkonde (Photograph: André, 2016)

I left half an hour later, having said my farewells to those who were present, including the chief who gifted me with a live chicken. I was touched by the gesture and all the kindness that had been on display. The four days spent in Nkonde had generated lifelong memories and a desire to return there one day for another visit.

Part 4: The fourth set of key informants

We left Nkonde on Saturday around 12:30. Saturday was a perfect day to meet the *Mama ya Beya* who were not expected to go to the fields on Sunday. It was the appropriate day to start the proceeding so that, if all went well, we would do the rest of the inquiry on Sunday. I did not want to force the women to delay their trip to the fields just so they could accommodate us, therefore Monday was not an option.

Once again in Ngembe …

It was almost 2 p.m. when we arrived in Ngembe. Papa Albert, who was sitting under the same tree where we found him the first time, told us that the women were at the fields. He added that they had waited for us on the evening following our first visit but, in the end, they assumed we had been successful with our quest to meet Nkonde performers. We explained that there was no way we could have informed them of the updates of our plans and that their guess was accurate, as we had been able to contact both Djoko and Dabe.

Since the women were only supposed to return around 5 p.m. and both my cameras and laptop were almost running out of power, Lievain suggested that we went to Hiambe – 10 km from Ngembe – where there is a health centre that runs on generators. We promised Papa Albert that we would be back around 5 p.m. when the ladies would have returned from the fields.

In transit to Hiambe

Once in Hiambe, Lievain took my chargers and laptop to the health care centre while I waited for him at one of his relatives' house. One of his cousins told me of a lady known as Mama Lobengu who was, in many people's opinion, one of the best female praise-poets in the region. He added that she was trained by *Mama ya Beya* but had apparently surpassed her trainers. It was unlikely that I had come across her since she lived in a distant village, he said.

Figure 4.43: Women pounding rice in Hiambe (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

Lievain joined me thirty minutes later and we sat under a straw-covered enclosure where we were served a plate of delicious fried plantain. Half a dozen people joined us inside the enclosure as I detailed, at their request, an overview of typical day-to-day life in South Africa. They were particularly interested in everything regarding lifestyle, food and interpersonal relationships in South African metropolises and I did my best to provide an overview of what it is like to live in Cape Town. Their interest was so genuine and so enticing that I decided to show them some of the pictures I kept on my cell phone, including of my wife and children. I was amused by their genuine enjoyment as they passed the cell phone along.

Back to Ngembe

At around 4 p.m., we rode back to Ngembe and got there right on time as the women had just arrived from the field, we were told. We sat with Papa Albert under the tree for about fifteen minutes until we were told to go inside the house where we met the woman in charge of the group. She was seated on one of the couches covered with a fabric that had African motifs imprinted on it. The house was surprisingly big on the inside: the lounge was big enough to feature a living area and a big dinner table; and the door opposite the main entrance led to a corridor that suggested there were at least three additional rooms.

The woman stood to greet us with a friendly smile. Something about her looked familiar; her beautifully tailored traditional clothing and her demeanour reminded me of some of the ladies I knew growing up. I recognised the temperament, the maternal look and the way she asked us how we were doing. The Catholic motifs all around the lounge reminded me of our home and the homes of some of my aunts.

Figure 4.44: With friends I met in Ngembe (Photograph: Lievain, 2016)

The meeting

As usual, I introduced myself and explained the object of my presence. The woman told me she was happy that I was interested in their art form; she was especially grateful that I had come all the way from South Africa. Papa Albert was present during the meeting and it turned out he was the 'technical director' of the group, which came as a bit of a surprise to me.

I told the woman that I had put aside some money as a sign of appreciation for her willingness to let me record her group performance and for the conversation that would take place afterwards. I told her that the amount was 50,000 Congolese Francs and that I left it up to her

to decide how I should proceed. She raised her eyebrows when I mentioned the amount and, for a moment, I thought it was less than she had expected, but I was quickly reassured when she laid both her hands upon my right hand and with a smile said, 'Thank you'. I was deeply touched by the gesture; none of my previous informants had showed that level of appreciation. There was something so caring and so gracious about the gesture that made me think of my own mother. Papa Albert, too, seemed pleased as he too said, 'Thank you'.

The group members

The entire group comprises four women, three of whom are Papa Albert's wives. The representative of the group is his second wife whose daughter is the fourth member. There are two additional crew members, young men in their twenties who play, respectively, the tenor and bass Lokombe. The generation gap was interesting, considering that the wives were all over 60 and the daughter must have been in her late thirties. It is worth mentioning that the group was created over 30 years ago and the younger crew members had certainly not yet been born at the time. I recalled Papa Albert once told me that the women often performed with Dabe, hence I doubted the young Lokombe players were called upon on for planned performances during official ceremonies.

Thirty minutes passed as we waited for all members to get ready. I heard the sound of the Lokombe as the young men 'warmed' the instruments with loud beats, which prompted the gathering of a crowd around the yard. There were over twenty-five people, many being children who gathered around me to watch in amazement as I unpacked my equipment and set it up for the recording of the performance.

Figure 4.45: Papa Albert Djongesongo saying a few words before the performance (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

The performance

Before the performance began, Papa Albert introduced himself while standing right in front of the camera; he thanked us for coming to Ngembe to capture the group's performance (Figure 5.44). Perhaps inspired by the presence of cameras, and while the women were still seated right behind him, Papa Albert surprisingly announced that he would sing an introductory song before the 'main act'; it was a patriotic song from the 1960s in the early days of Congolese independence. The song had a chorus during which the women would respond in unison.

After the introduction, the women stood and the Lokombe players began playing. The first song was a welcome song in which they sang my name, greeted me and welcomed me to their village. It was beautiful praise-poetry. The women danced as they sang. They moved with such ease, a testament to the many years of performing together. There was no interruption between tunes: the Lokombe beat simply changed to announce either the next piece or a different dance move while the women danced graciously in a perfectly coordinated manner.

The third tune was entitled '*Lombo ohomba*'; it discussed the importance of wisdom in one's decision-making, stating different situations in which the lack of wisdom had resulted in undesirable outcomes. The following tune was a familiar tune that my dad used to play on his guitar. I was so fascinated to hear it performed by the ladies that I promised that, once I returned

to Mozambique after my fieldwork, I would let my dad hear it. It was a praise-poem about an important man, a 'jewel' from the Congo, a man so good at everything he does. The structure was almost exactly as my dad performed it on the guitar, except the name, which is subject to change, depending on who is being honoured. On that day, it was I who was the 'jewel from the Congo'; and, since I had learnt from previous experience, I signalled Lievain to put some money into the ladies' hands to show my appreciation (I had given him a few loose notes for that purpose).

Figure 4.46: *Mama Ya Beya'*s performance (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

My favourite piece

Each of the subsequent songs was different from the previous; and each consisted of a different rhythmic pattern on the Lokombe, with different co-ordinated dance moves that involved mainly the upper body. Atetela do not incorporate any major foot movement into their dancing; it is mostly the upper body with a special emphasis on the hips. The one song that caught my attention, mostly due to both its subject and melody, was the one entitled 'Kamba Tsho'*,* which translates as 'keep working'. The song is a social criticism aimed at 'lazy women'.

It started off with a call and response of the words, "… *Kamba Tsho, Kamba Tsho …".* The lead vocalist sang the words in her melancholic voice and the remaining three members responded in a style that was reminiscent of blues music. The tune sounded like an exhortation tune, the kind that my grandmother used to sing when she pounded cassava leaves or did the laundry. The second part of the song went into more detail over the characteristics of a lazy

woman and why such woman is not of an honourable kind: "*She wants to eat but she does not want to sow… She is the queen of gossip; she has nothing else to do …*".

Figure 4.47: *Mama Ya Beya* **in action (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)**

Perhaps *Mama ya Beya*'s views of women's place in society is quite 'old-school' (the tune was composed circa 30 years ago); and perhaps such views have only but slightly changed, along with the socio-political landscape of the country. However, the fact that women have to work hard on a daily basis to sustain the needs of the households is still very much part of the everyday lives of the majority of women in the Sankuru who do not see it as a curse to their existence, contrary to what an outsider may make of the situation.

Figure 4.48: Asaka (maracas) and donga (bell) are important devices during *Mama ya Beya's* **performance (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)**

The performance went on until late in the evening. There was an even bigger crowd after nightfall; I assumed it was the neighbours who had returned from the fields much later or simply those who had been away for other reasons. Village life usually comes to a standstill

after nightfall and Saturdays are no exception; but whenever there is sound and music, everybody is curious to know what it is about.

Figure 4.49: *Mama ya Beya* **displaying intricate dance moves (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)**

I tried a few times to signal to the ladies that I had recorded enough of their performance and that they could stop and take a highly deserved rest, but they ignored my pleas and carried on. It did not look like they felt forced to carry on; however, just to make sure, I whispered to Papa Albert to let him know that I was happy with what I had captured by then. Papa Albert smiled and said to me, "The ladies are honoured to be performing tonight; it has been a while since it last happened ... they are pleased for the opportunity". In other words, I did not have to worry.

<u>Video elicitation and focus group discussion</u>

When the performance ended, it was past 7 p.m. and I thought that each of the ladies would then go their separate way, hence I had to find out about their availability right away. Then I remembered that three of them were married to Papa Albert and it was probable that they all lived in the yard. Considering the following day was Sunday and the ladies were likely to prepare for church, aside from other tasks they might only be able to execute on Sunday, I thought I should rather proceed with the rest of the inquiry that evening and not count so much on the fact that Sunday was the one day they did not have to work at the fields. I discussed the idea with the representative and she, too, liked it.

Thirty minutes later, I was sitting on a stool with a crowd of over 30 children who seemed highly impressed by the animated drawings from Walt Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* which I played for them on my laptop. I had to interrupt the movie projection once I was told that the ladies were ready to meet me in the lounge, to the dismay of the children who were not impressed. However, I still needed the laptop for what would follow.

Adjusting methods

My data collection methods had to be altered to meet the requirement of my informants. *Mama ya Beya* operate as a group, hence I could not take away from the group entity by conducting separate interviews with each member without creating an unwanted sense of conspiracy. A Transect walk was out of question, not only because I could not ask a group of women to walk around with me, even if it was in broad daylight, but also because it would not have been culturally appropriate to ask someone's wife to go for a walk. With this in mind, I felt compelled to adapt my data collection methods by combining elements from the Transect walk and a Focus group discussion into one set of open-ended questions, with the focus-group participants being the very group members, including Papa Albert.

The session was highly animated as almost everybody expressed their opinion on different points that were raised, with some making requests on what the group needed and why I should make an effort to find them sponsors who could take them to other parts of the world so that more people would know about them. However, most comments were on topic; and though, every now and then, I had to bring the conversation back on track, it was generally a very informative session during which I learnt much about the history of the group. Among other things, I learnt that, for many years, they had been the favourite traditional performers of many political figures from the capital city, as well of as local authorities, throughout the three decades of their existence.

Video elicitation was based on *Kamba Tsho* and was equally engaging, as I found out about how the song was created and how it had been part of their repertoire for 30 years. Unlike most of the pieces in their repertoire that are either praise-poetry or songs inherited from previous generations of oral performers, Kamba Tsho is their own composition. I thought of the possibility that such a beautiful piece may not be known by enough people to guarantee its survival years after the ladies are gone.

After the meeting, Lievain and I were served delicious food; and, as we sat on the couch after the meal, I thought of how lucky I had been: everything had gone so well and there I was sitting on a couch far away from my family, yet I never once felt like I was that far away. For five days I had been given food and shelter without ever having to pay a cent for either. I felt so humbled by the experience.

Then comes Mama Lobengu

Figure 4.50: Then came Mama Lobengu (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

Later that evening, I was chatting with Papa Albert when I heard a commotion coming from outside. It was Mama Lobengu, the lady I had been told of by Lievain's cousin the previous day when we were in Hiambe; the lady who had apparently outshone the *Mama ya Beya.* She came into the lounge where we were seated and started singing a praise-poem in my honour. Her energy was such that, despite previously feeling tired, I felt re-energised and ready to follow her outside where she invited me. Before I realised it, Mama Lobengu had gathered the entire group for a second performance and this time she was the leading voice. It was impressive.

Figure 4.51: A new set with Mama Lobengu (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

A crowd had gathered once again and it did not take long before I agreed with those who believe in the greatness of her talent. Her charisma reminded me of Djoko and her beautiful voice was unique, with an immensely haunting quality that eludes description. There was more singing and more dancing. The performance lasted another hour and I was glad I had been able to record it, albeit dark and I could barely see my surroundings. How she found out about my presence, and how long it took her to get to Ngembe from the remote village where she apparently resided, will forever be a mystery. It did not matter; all that mattered was that I was the luckiest man.

Time to say goodbye

The next morning at nine o' clock, after breakfast that consisted of fried plantains and following a final performance from Mama Lobengu and the *Mama ya Beya,* we were ready to go. It was an emotional farewell; everybody wished me well and thanked me for spending time with them, which was ironic, as I felt I was the one who should be thankful as I owed them so much for their kindness, generosity and for the unforgettable memories that I will cherish for the rest of my days.

Figure 4.52: Mama Lobengu's farewell praise-poetry (Photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

As we left Ngembe, I knew there was something I still wanted to do after I had returned to Lodja and organised all the captured data into a logical order: I wanted to go up to the North-West to visit the land where my parents were born and grew up, to meet the living relatives who still reside there and also see the gravesite of my beloved Tante Emilie who had passed away 24 years before while on yet another visit to the land where she had spent a good part of her childhood. I later visited the place and wrote a poem in honour of Tante Emilie and my late grand-father whom I never met.

Somewhere in this yard
there once was a house;
between proudly erected red-brick walls
lived six children, their mom and dad.

He was a deputy,
the elected voice of his people
a quiet man
who did not live long enough to see
what his children became.

Somewhere in this yard
my dad ran topless;
only boy among girls,
only stone among pearls.
The brightest pearl
once left the city and never returned.

I was just a boy
when she saw the artist in me
and I will never forget Tante Emilie.

In my heart I found peace
Once I found out
the yard is her resting place.

The yard by Lodi Paul Inga
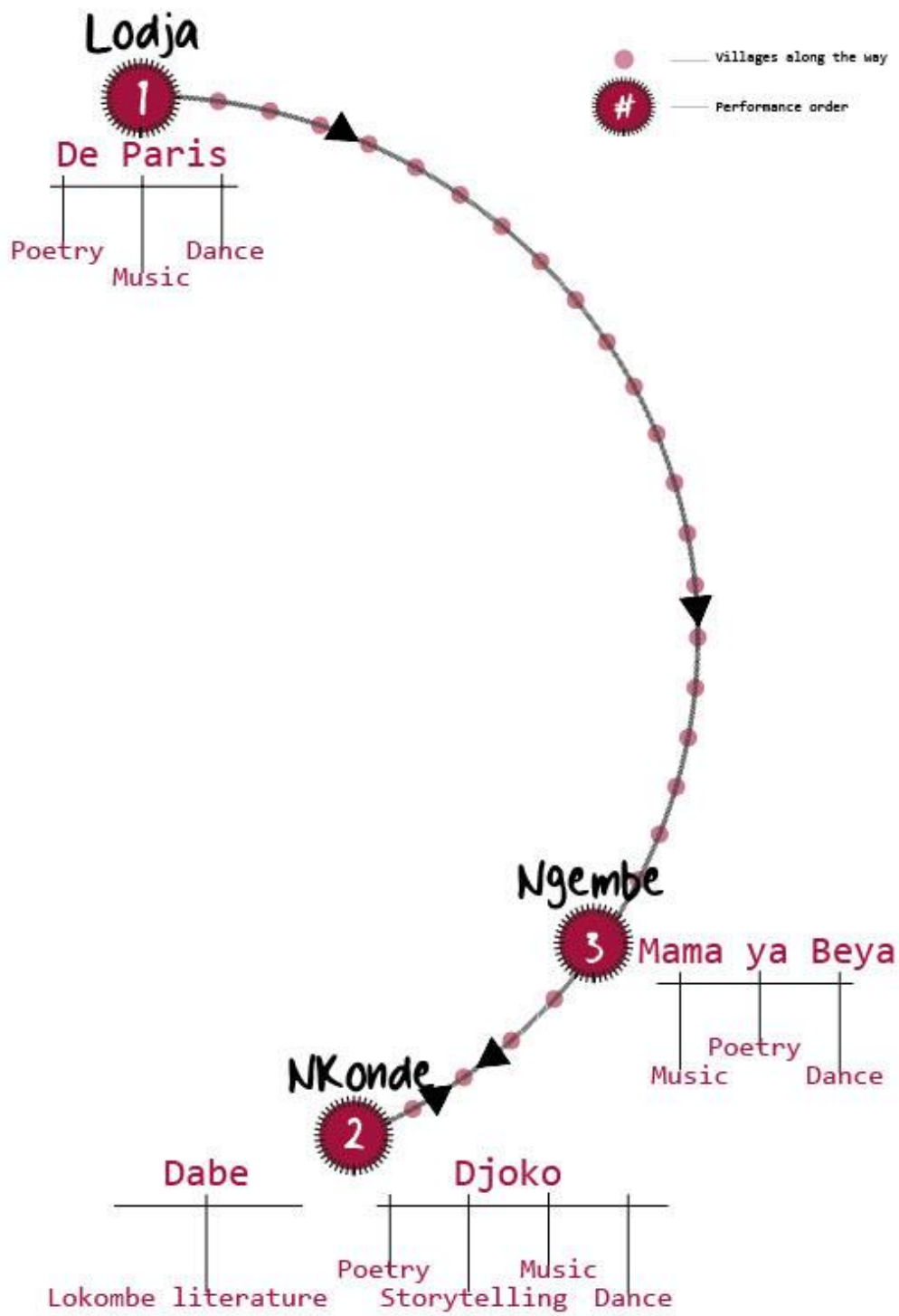
Figure 4.53: Schematic of performances (Schematic by Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

In this chapter, I have provided a step-by-step account of my field trip in Sankuru, beginning with an in-depth narrative of how I proceeded with the sampling process for each of my key participants. I also provided an account of how participatory methods of inquiry were adapted and implemented for each of my participants and how each of the performers relate to the broader set of cultural practices in the region. A variety of topics were discussed throughout this section and many of the questions which needed answers were discussed, not only from the perspective of my key informants, but also from the perspectives of Apa Lofungola, my uncle, Lievain, my assistant, and other members of the community whom I only briefly met, such as the Catholic priest who provided valuable insights. However, most importantly, my own perspective and personal experience were included throughout this chapter to provide the basis for my understanding and analysis of the topics discussed.

Throughout data collection, it was evident that the current society is not as communal as it once was; and my fieldtrip also showcased how visual the oral performances in Sankuru are – from the performers' dress code, to the colourful surroundings. This chapter also discussed the multi-layered nature of Sankuru oral performances and how these cannot be analysed outside their cultural context: the performances connect past to present; and while culture finds its roots in the past, it is brought to existence in the present.

Chapter 5: Analysis of the findings

This chapter comprises insights on creative decisions that led to the final practical component of the animation produced; it provides a rationale for the approach used in the animated component and a discussion of the tools used to achieve the desired look. This chapter also discusses the various stages of production: from conceptualisation to the final rendering of the animated content. A breakdown of each of the main sections of the animated video is provided.

5. 1. *How Dog became the most feared animal* **– depiction of performance in animation**

5.1.1   Deciding on the practical component

When I decided to embark on this journey, I could not foresee the outcome of the practical component. The only thing I knew was that I was going to use the medium of animation to explore the extent to which it can capture the performance of an instance of Sankuru orature. The diversity of techniques and approaches to animation prevented me from predicting which would be the most appropriate once I had collected data; in fact, the entire data collection process was a total mystery prior to arriving in Sankuru.

Once I had collected data and I finally returned home to Cape Town, I realised that the task ahead was more daunting than I had anticipated. I could not think of ways or techniques that could better represent the data I had gathered, as I felt like a messenger who had been entrusted with important cultural knowledge. As a result, I spent many hours deciding which of the recorded performances offered greater opportunities for the medium of animation. Each performer had offered a different facet of Sankuru orature; and though each presented great premises for animation, I could only choose one if I wished to complete my Masters degree within a reasonable timeframe.

I opted for one of three stories told by Djoko during his impromptu welcoming performance at Chief Okito's home in Nkonde. I chose the story of *How Dog became the most feared animal*, which I found to be the most interesting as far as subject matter and overall structure of performance are concerned. The footage was captured in low light conditions; it was a moonless night which meant there were no visible light sources in the immediate surroundings. Thankfully, I had carried my small LED light which I pointed at the performer. The darkness around him was initially thought to be a problem but it turned out to be a blessing in disguise, as it was the perfect canvas for animated content.

It took me a while to figure out which was the most suitable approach as I wanted to capture Djoko's energy and charisma and ensure that animated content would enhance his performance rather than overshadow it. I also wanted animated content to be integrated in the footage by taking into consideration the performer's gestures, his on-screen placement, along with the way he moved his body. With all that in mind, I opted for a mixed technique: 3D animation using Autodesk Maya® for the main characters in the story (Dog, Elephant and Hunter); and all secondary characters were animated in 2D, using Adobe After Effects® and Adobe Animate®. I used Adobe Photoshop® and Adobe After Effects® for matte painting, as background elements and environment were added separately; and Adobe Premiere Pro® was used to edit the final video and for colour corrections and grading.

5.1.2   Stages of the design process

The first stage of the design process consisted of rough sketches which allowed me to have clarity on what I wanted, as far as the look of animated characters and stylistic approach are concerned. At this early stage, I prefer sketching on paper rather than working digitally. Since my early sketches are usually rough as I try to figure things out, I carried a small notebook where I drew quick thumbnails that were roughly ten centimetres in size. Once I began to have a clearer idea of what I wanted, I proceeded with slightly bigger and more detailed drawings which included elements from the quick thumbnails – mainly the things that I liked from selected drawings. The sketching stage, including the planning, lasted just over a month.

Once the first look was established, Adobe Illustrator® was used to translate the initial sketches into detailed, two-dimensional colour versions of characters and background. This stage was crucial in establishing the look of all visual elements, including colour and textures and especially how all characters relate stylistically. The flat two-dimensional version also allowed altering the initial sketch, thus improving details that needed to be enhanced. This stage lasted three weeks as I made constant adjustments to the characters' look.

I opted for a non-realistic character design but I also did not want an overly stylised approach; animation is effective at depicting reality but it does not have to look so real that it is mistaken for live footage, at least in the context of this project. I wanted the story world to depict elements of the performer's surrounding and my creative decisions were dictated by data collected through Participatory methods (Video elicitation and Transect walk with Djoko, along with the Focus group interview with audience members); and through my primary data collection using field notes, photographs and video recordings. Every aspect of the design was

inspired by the people and the environment. For example, the design of the Hunter character was inspired by a dog owner I met in Nkonde (Figure 5.1): his dog was the inspiration for the Dog character design; and Elephant was designed stylistically to match Dog's appearance. The slender body shape is typical of hunters who spend hours and sometimes days in search of preys, which makes it a very physically intense activity. A local hunter from Nkonde once told me that some hunters paint their bodies with special mixtures which are meant to protect them when they come across dangerous animals and some may improve their chances of capturing preys. Hence, I decided to paint Hunter character's body with pattern inspired by local artwork.
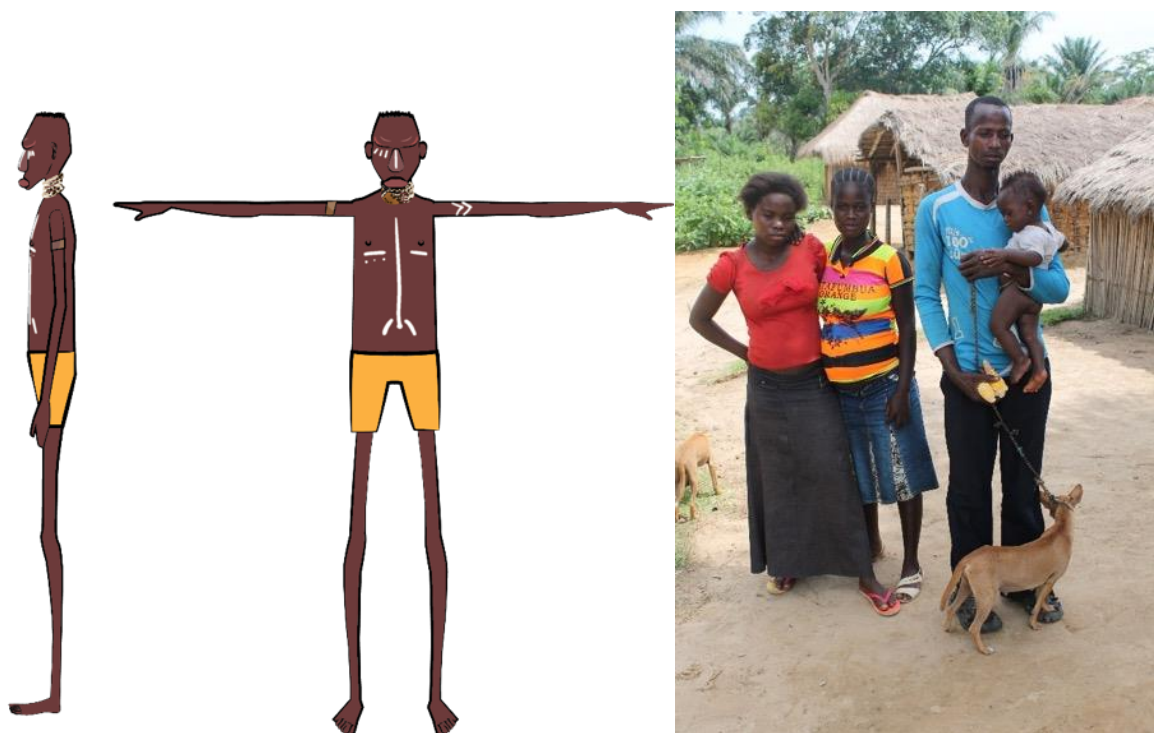
Figure 5.1: The dog owner (right) who inspired the 2D Hunter character design (left) (Figure and photograph: Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

Figure 5.2: Screenshot from final three-dimensional character design (right) (Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

Figure 5.3: Screenshot of Hunter and Dog (from the animation by Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

I embellished all animal characters with patterns inspired by those found on locally made fabrics and murals I spotted along some of the walls and doors. Photographs I had taken of Nkonde and its surroundings, both during Transect walk with Djoko and on my own, were used as primary resources for designing the set. For example, all trees and roads that appear in the animated content were extracted from photographs and modified to achieve the desired look, using Adobe Photoshop®.

Lastly, I recorded my own voice to provide the voice-over for Djoko's narration as he told the story in Tetela. I favoured voice-over over subtitles because the human mind cannot focus on multiple elements at the same time with the same level of attention. I wanted the viewer to focus on the on-screen interactions between the performer and animated content while I translated, instead of relying on subtitles. I also added sound effects to accompany some of the animated visuals and also to create the desired atmosphere.

The following is a breakdown of the final practical component which, aside from being based on the chosen performance, its content and the context within which it was told, is also an experimental endeavour in which I, the artist and storyteller, have instilled much of my personal taste and artistic vision.

5.1.3   Providing a context

As discussed in previous sections, the context within which a performance is held is crucial and, in many case, it dictates the format and the content of the performance. It is also the *first act* as it establishes the premises of the story (Figure 5.4).

As such, the video begins with animated text and simple graphics describing the location and the occasion that led to the performance. I used the colour orange to put emphasis on Sankuru as I locate it within an outlined map of Africa while music plays in the background. I chose a soundscape from the most rhythmically engaging segment of Djoko's performance to introduce the video and to set the mood.
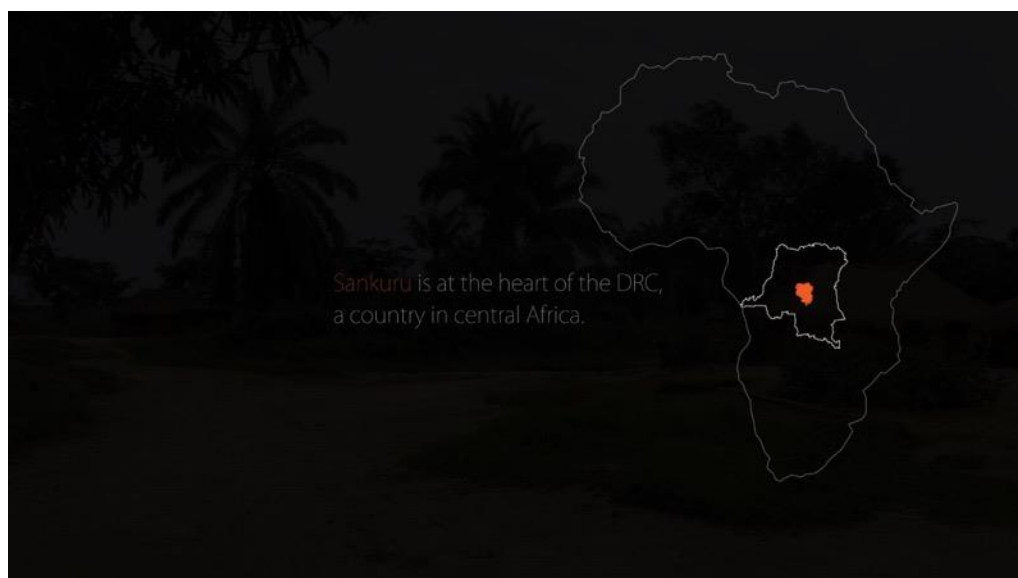
Figure 5.4: Screenshot of the introduction shot (Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

5.1.4 Djoko

The introduction fades-out into a shot of Djoko who is soon after seen looking at the camera, which I handheld, as he asked which animal, of both wild and domesticated species, is the most feared. This is an important component of Sankuru orature as the audience is expected to interact: this is either through call-and-response or sing-along tunes; at times, interaction is simply in the form questions that the performer asks, either test the audience's knowledge or simply make sure everyone is listening (Figures 5.5 & 5.6).

Figure 5.5 & 5.6: Screenshots from Djoko's opening shot (Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

5.1.5   Fire

When Djoko began telling the story, he referred to a gathering in which all animals decided to establish conclusively which was the most feared of them all. I used fire to symbolise the gathering, since disputes, night-time palavers or issues that need to be addressed publicly, usually require a fire (Figure 5.7).

Figure 5.7: Screenshot of an early sequence (Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

5.1.6   The animals

As the performer began to cite animals that took part in the 'big gathering', Elephant, Leopard, Lion, Warthog, Buffalo, Hippo and Crocodile are revealed, one by one. With the exception of Elephant, these animals were animated in Adobe After Effects® and Animate® because they are secondary characters whose role is merely to define the context.

Hunter, Dog and Elephant were designed and animated with the help of the 3D animation program, Autodesk Maya®. These characters were required to 'move' and 'interact', and the story is based upon them. In other terms, one can replace all the secondary animals with other similar animals; however, Dog, Elephant and Hunter carry the essence of the story and cannot be replaced without affecting the message of the story. It took a total of five months to: 1. Model the three characters in Autodesk Maya® by creating a three-dimensional geometry for

each which was based on the two-dimensional images created in Adobe Illustrator®; 2. Create the texture in Adobe Photoshop® which was then applied to the three-dimensional geometry through a process known as UV Mapping; 3. Create the rig (skeleton structure) which was then attached to the geometry to allow its deformation; 4. To achieve desirable deformation, I performed what is known as 'weight painting' which consists of assigning the influence that each bone should have on affected body parts; 5. I then proceeded with the animation by setting key poses for walk cycles, as well non-repetitive motions, both of which were based on the storyboard which was developed prior to designing characters; 6. Lastly, I animated the in-between poses and fine-tuned each motion, either to achieve arcs or ease the motion for smooth movements. I should also mention that I made extensive use of reference videos and still images to study the mechanics of both dogs and elephants' movements, a process which lasted over two weeks.

I made use of the 'scatter effect' to make the animals appear and disappear in small powder-like particles – a reference to Sankuru soil which both humans and animals feed off and which they both turn into once they pass on.

Figure 5.8: Screenshot of Lion disagreeing with Leopard (Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

5.1.7   Dog

All the 'big' animals disappear to make way for Dog who is introduced once Djoko refers to a 'tiny animal' that bravely stood before the big animals and told them he was not afraid of any of them. Djoko pointed to his left as a way to provide spatial emphasis; hence, I made Dog's character appear where the performer pointed; and the path, which is a modified version of a Nkonde's sandy road, appears along with plants.

Figure 5.9: Screenshot of Dog entering the scene (Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

5.1.8 Elephant

Elephant appears again; he walks towards Dog as he plans to punish him for his arrogance. The confrontation is a key narrative element: it is the beginning of the *second act* which establishes the main conflict in the story. For this reason, I made the performer temporarily disappear to draw attention to the two animal characters. Both Djoko's appearance and his disappearance are synchronised with his playing of the Losambi to create emphasis during the performance.
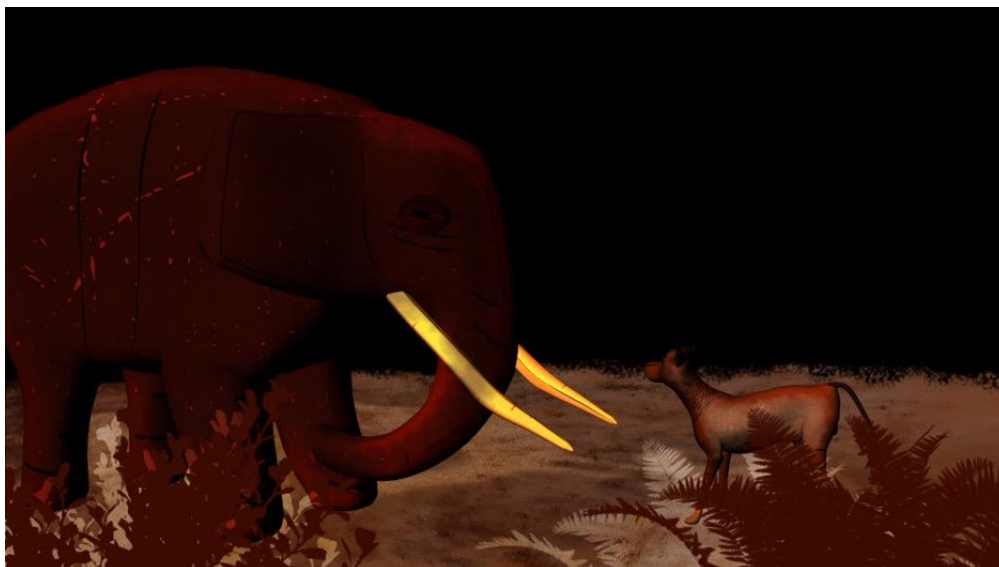
Figure 5.10: Screenshot of Dog challenging Elephant to a fight (Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

5.1.9   The 'poetic' segment

After Dog publicly challenged Elephant to a fight at dawn the following day, all the animals go their respective ways. Djoko brilliantly chooses not to rush into the final face-off between Dog and Elephant. Instead, he goes on with a poetic description of what takes place on a typical Sankuru night before sunrise as a way to provide a side story that is meant to shift the audience's attention temporarily from the main story. Such techniques showcase how much the performance of Sankuru orature relies on the performer's own ability to deliver the story or poetry in a format that he or she finds most suitable.

As a storyteller who is retelling the story by adapting it into a screen-based format that incorporates animated contents, I opted for a stylistic approach that better portrays the poetic value of the segment. I drew all visual elements in Adobe Photoshop®, using textured brush strokes, then animated them in Adobe After Effects® while maintaining a black background to allude to the fact that the segment does not take place in any particular setting and that it is a free-flowing depiction of the section. As this takes place during night-time, I made use of a 'turbulence' effect to achieve a 'torn' look which I felt perfectly depicted the evasive and often unsettling nature of dreams.

In the 'poetic' segment, Djoko refers to the crowing cock, the cooing pigeon, the cuckoo bird, the Lokole beaters, women pounding rice with mortar and pestles, river goers, and the sweeping brooms that precede the rising of the sun.
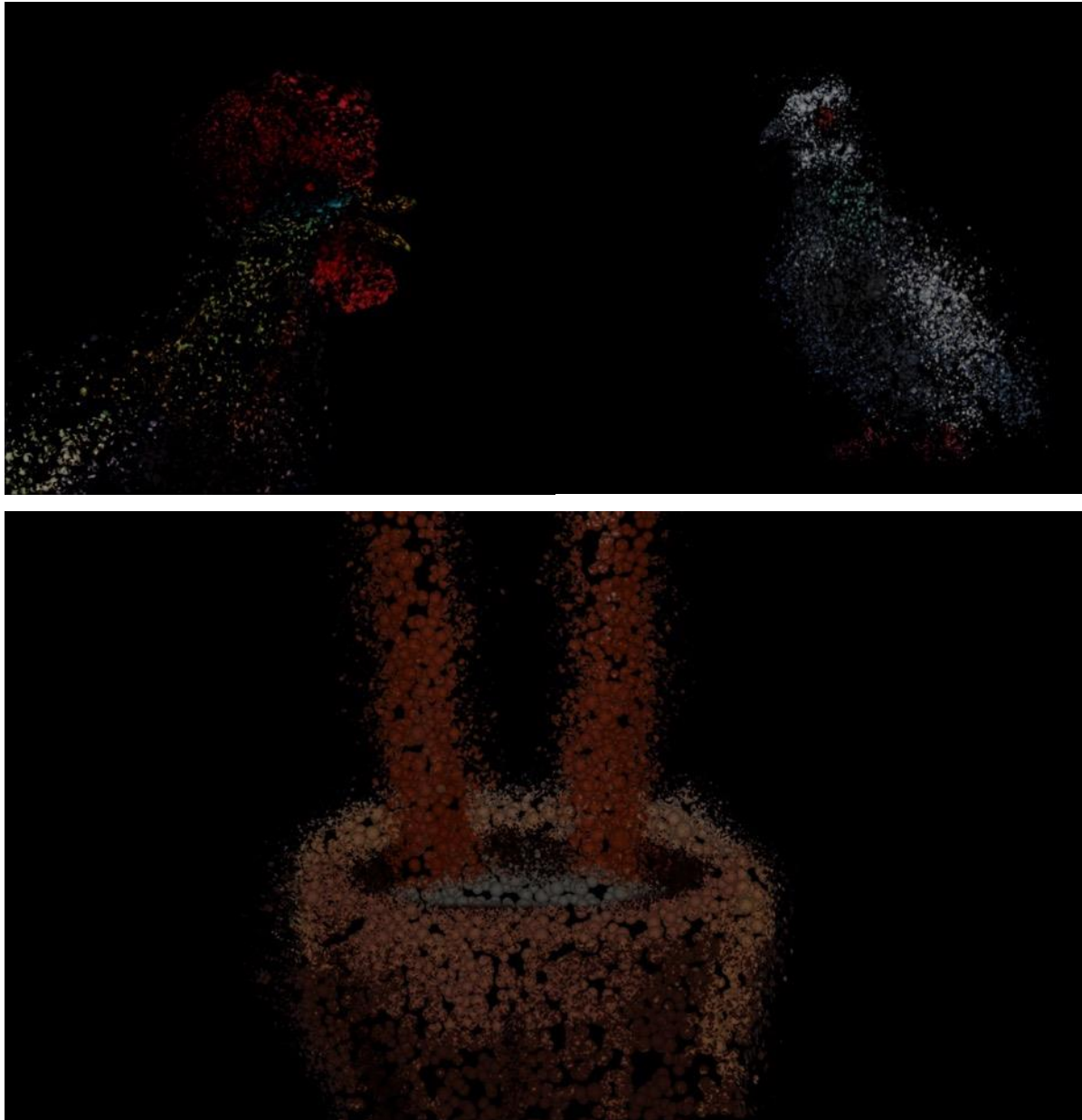
Figure 5.11: Screenshot from the 'poetic segment' (Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

5.1.10 Third act: Dog versus Elephant

"Dog was ready long before the sun was up … and so was Elephant …". Djoko introduces the face-off between Dog and Elephant which is meant to be the conclusion, the final act of the story. Only his voice is heard, as I chose to keep him invisible to maintain suspense.

As a way to add dynamism to this section, I opted to open the scene with a low angle camera view (Figure 5.13) that emphasises how big Elephant is compared to Dog. Soon after, the camera moves to a side view that portrays the two animals facing one another (Figure 5.14), at which moment the performer reappears in the scene. I added trees and the ground to provide a

context to the setting within which the 'fight' is meant to take place. When Elephant falls into a trap which he was not aware of, it appears the story has reached the end …. However, Djoko announces a new development to the third act of the story: the Hunter character who was on his way after he reportedly heard the commotion caused by barking Dog; and confused Elephant who could not figure a way to get out of Dog's trap.

Figure 5.13 & 5.14: Screenshots of the face-off (Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

5.1.11 Hunter and conclusion

In the story, Djoko introduces Hunter and wraps the story up after Dog has begged Hunter not to kill him. Having told Hunter that he had captured the biggest prey (Elephant) as a gift to him, Dog asks the human to take him to his village.

I wanted a more cinematic ending; hence I added an arc shot of the camera going around Hunter who is holding his weapon as he tries to figure out what is going on and whether or not he

should kill Dog. The shot is homage to a few of my personal cinematic influences, such as Eastern martial art films, along with the Western genre.

The last scene is the resolution of the *third act* as Hunter stretches his arm and affectionately strokes Dog's neck (Figure 6.17). Djoko concludes, saying, "That is how Dog became man's companion and the most feared animal … from that day on, all the animals learnt that, whenever Dog barks, the hunter is not far away …".

Figure 5.15: Screenshot of Hunter (Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

Figure 5.16: Screenshot of Hunter wanting to kill Dog (Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

Figure 5.17: Screenshot of Hunter developing a liking for Dog (Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

5.1.12 Ending on a good note (or rhythm)

After both Hunter and Dog have disappeared once the story has ended, I chose not to end the video immediately but rather let the footage roll a little longer as Djoko asks his two crew members to play a rhythm on their Lokombe to which he begins to sing. The end credit only appears thereafter. This is to show that the story was just a small component within Djoko's entire performance, which was a combination of storytelling, praise-poetry, dance and even drama.

Figure 5.18: Screenshot of Djoko singing after telling the story (Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)

https://youtu.be/LXvZVsG8Chw

Figure 5.19: QR code and link to practical component

5.2. Multimodal analysis of Djoko's orature performance

In this section, I will analyse the story *How Dog became the most feared animal,* which is one of three stories told by Djoko and upon which the practical component of this research is based. The analysis follows Lwin's (2010) parameters for a multimodal analysis.

The story is analysed for these purposes:

- Firstly, to describe the various modes of meaning-making that were featured during the performance of the story of *How Dog became the most feared animal*;
- Secondly, to assess the interplay between features from different semiotic modes during the performance;
- Thirdly, to provide detailed descriptions of the semiotic components that comprised each of the main story moments; fourthly, to provide a breakdown of the event sequence in the story.

To capture the various sign systems that are used during a storytelling performance, the oral story performance was recorded with my DSLR camera, then the performance was transcribed as a multimodal interaction. It is worth mentioning that, due to the complexity of signals transmitted during performance and the limitation of print as medium, Lwin (2010:363) states it would not only be unreasonable but unproductive to capture all the signals that take place during an oral performance. Also, one runs the risk of overloading the text with information (ibid).

For analysis and discussion in the present study, I included some verbal, vocal and visual features, as per Figure 3.3.

5.2.1 Event sequence in the story:

First evening: All the animals gather to establish once and for all who is the most feared.

Elephant stands before them claiming his size makes him the most feared

Leopard disagrees with Elephant, claiming he is the most feared.

Lion disagrees with Leopard.

Warthog claims he is the most feared.

Buffalo disagrees with him.

Hippo states he is the most feared.

Crocodile thinks otherwise.

The deliberations go on for a long time and they can't decide who is the most feared.

Dog stands before all the animals stating he does not fear any of them; and that he only fears Hunter, the humanwhom he claims to be the most fearsome creature.

Elephant is offended by Dog's arrogance and wants to punish him publicly.

Dog suggests that they do not fight right then and that they should rather meet at dawn the following morning.

Next morning: Dog was awake long before the sun was up.

So was Elephant who was determined to teach Dog a lesson.

Elephant charges towards barking Dog, determined to teach him a lesson.

Elephant is so blinded by rage that he does not notice the trap ahead of him.

Elephant falls into the trap and is unable to get out of it.

Dog begins to bark continually.

The noise made by Dog's barking reaches the ears of human Hunter.

Hunter silently arrives at the scene and is intrigued by what he sees.

Hunter thinks of killing Dog but the latter begs him to not kill him.

Dog promises to capture many more prey for Hunter if he accepts to take him to the village.

From that moment, Dog becomes Hunter's companion and the most feared animal; all the animals find out that Dog's barking means Hunter is on his way.

5.2.2   Main characters: Two humanised animal characters, Elephant and Dog; and a human character, Hunter.

5.2.3   Supporting characters: Six humanised animal characters who set the premises of the story: Leopard, Lion, Warthog, Buffalo, Hippo and Crocodile.

5.2.4   Time and location: Except for the chronological timeline (First evening, Next morning) there is no precise specification of time or period. Similarly, no particular place or region is specified except for general terminology such as jungle and village.

5.2.5   A breakdown of the story components

To assess the interplay between features from different semiotic modes during the performance, an analysis of different components of the story structure was carried out, based on Lwin's (2010) model.

5.2.5.1 Abstract

Features in the abstract are aimed at drawing the audience's attention. Lwin (2010:365) states they are intended to "draw the audience's attention and trigger their expectations for upcoming characters and events".

Table 5.1: **Features in the abstract**

VERBAL	VOCAL AND VISUAL
Djoko: "*Nyama yetondo yele lokonda…ko ndo nyam'ongelo … ombite ele owandji awa nyama wa lama asekande ...?*"	*Mimic gesture*: Djoko makes a circular motion with his right hand at waist level, palm facing down, to locate spatially the vast area covered by the jungle.

Translation: Of all animals in the jungle (pause) and those which are domesticated (pause) which is the most feared of them all? (long pause). He repeats the same question … **Djoko:** "*Nyama yetondo yele lokonda … ko ndo nyam'ongelo … ombite ele owandji awa nyama wa lama asekande?*" **Me:** *"Koyi"* (leopard). The pause is used as a device to ensure the audience is listening and also to allow the audience to process the information which, in this case, is the question that needs an answer.	Djoko makes use of *beats*: the motion of his right hand matches the tempo of his words as he asks the question. Djoko walks a few steps forward (towards me), stretches his arm, palm facing up, to signal that he is awaiting my response.

5.2.5.2 Orientation – Background information to introduce the characters

Following my attempt at answering the question (my answer was "Leopard", as I thought Leopard should be the most feared animal), Djoko transitioned into the orientation to provide background information. He made use of a discourse marker by saying *'Mete?'* (Are you sure?), asking me if I was sure Leopard is the most feared. Right then, I realised it was a trick question and I could not wait to hear the rest of the story, sharing this expectation with the rest of the audience.

Table 5.2: Introducing the characters

VERBAL	VOCAL AND VISUAL
Djoko: "*Nyama yetondo ndjetana losanganye … Ndjovu ndj'emala a tondo awa nyame … ate dimi konyoleki dikundju woke, dimi ko kime ewanga … dimi kele fumu kanyu.*"	*Mimic gesture*: raising of shoulder to signify how big Elephant is and raising of arms to depict Elephant's enormous tusks. The pace is slow as he introduces Elephant.

Translation: One day, all animals in the jungle gathered to discuss this matter (pause), Elephant stood before them and said: "I am the biggest, I have the biggest tusks (pause) I should be the most feared." Djoko goes on to introduce the other six animal characters; each claims to hold the right to be considered the most feared.	*Abstract pointing* *Metaphoric gesture*: the right-hand index finger points to the right and then points back to the area next to him. The pointed finger provides spatial emphasis and it appears as if the performer is dragging the animals to 'where the audience can see them'. The pace is slightly faster when he introduces the other animals (Lion, Leopard, Warthog, Buffalo, Hippo and Crocodile).

5.2.5.3 Orientation – General frame

The general frame provides the audience with both a spatial and a temporal orientation which is necessary for the story world (Lwin, 2010:368). The performer uses abstract pointing to incite the audience's awareness of time and location (Figure 6.20).

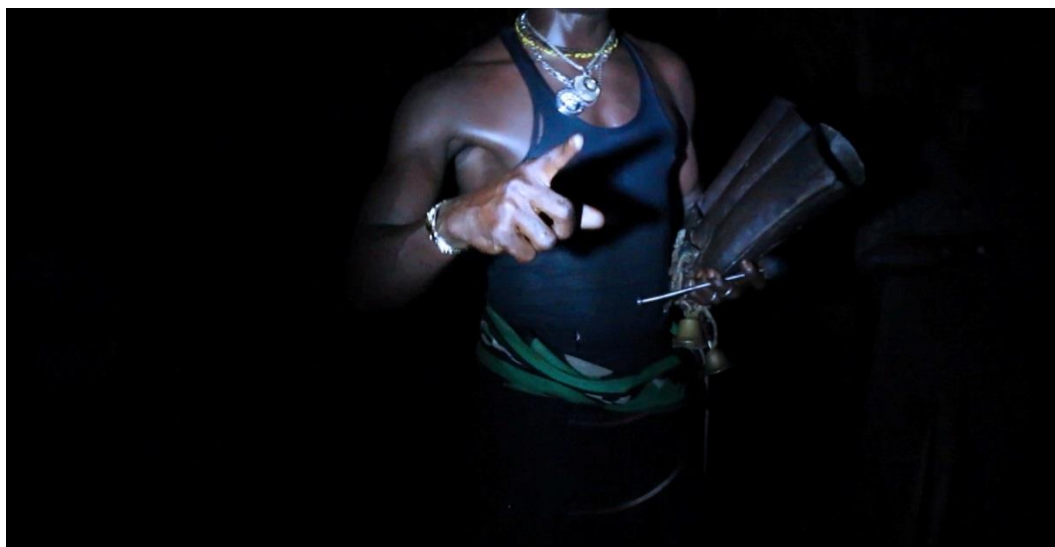**Figure 5.20: Abstract pointing (Screenshot from video by Lodi Paul Inga, 2016**)

5.2.5.4 Orientation – Narrow frame

As the story continues, the general frame moves to narrow frame, which is the central action of the narration (Lwin, 2010:367). Here, it is Dog challenging Elephant to a fight and the latter is determined to teach Dog a lesson. The interaction between verbal, vocal and visual

components is put on display as the performer attempts to create suspense at this point of the storytelling performance.

Table 5.3: **Features in the narrow frame**

VERBAL	VOCAL AND VISUAL
Djoko: "*Ndjovu ambemala ate mbo komole, yana ya dikenda ko nanga monga fuma a ngelo ... Fo ate papa w'eko opalanga, aha ya konge loyi a pendju ko to mbishe elongi?.*" Translation: Elephant wanted to punish Dog for his arrogance (pause) but Dog said to him: "Why don't you and I meet at dawn tomorrow?"	*Metaphoric gesture*: Djoko waves his right hand with a pointed index-finger in a gesture commonly used to state negation, as Dog tells Elephant they do not have to fight right then. Djoko then makes a few beats on his Losambi as a way to ensure everybody is listening and also to signify an important threshold.

5.2.5.5 Main action

The main action consists of a detailed representation of the events (Lwin, 2010:367). In this section, the performer makes use of vocal and visual elements along with mimic gestures and facial expressions to introduce the audience to the climax of the second act of the story: the final encounter between Elephant and Dog.

Table 5.4: **Features in the main action**

VERBAL	VOCAL/VISUAL
Djoko: "*Fo amana lolonga, ngienongeno to shamo lo dikote ... Wonya wo hotwende ndjovu ambediye wa nyama ndjovu ndame la tondo ....* *Wa kome lo dikote ko Fo ambo hango ... Ndjovu ate mbidje ote wolo ....*"	*Metaphoric gesture*: Djoko moves his right arm left and right to represent the path along which the 'face-off' takes place. He uses a faster pace and the volume of his voice becomes louder as a way to build suspense for the climax of the story.

Translation: Dog was awake long before the sun was up (pause) and so was Elephant who was determined to teach Dog a lesson (pause). Dog began to bark arrogantly (pause) Elephant was so determined to teach Dog a lesson … (he did not notice the trap).	*Mimic gesture*: miming Elephant's fall into the trap. Djoko then makes four beats on his Losambi as a way to ensure everybody is listening and also to announce an important moment. *Mimic gesture*: miming Elephant unsuccessfully attempting to lift his heavy body out of the trap, moving both forward and backward.

5.2.5.6 Resolution

The resolution comprises the arrival of Hunter who is attracted by the noise made by barking Dog. Hunter notices that Elephant is trapped, and he attempts to kill Dog, the animal he had never seen before, but the latter asks him to spare his life and to take him to the village in exchange for his loyalty.

Table 5.5: Features in the resolution

VERBAL	VOCAL/VISUAL
Djoko: "*Ko vo ndjele mengenga okonda … We keya kanda ekoma lehito … Oyeta toteni oheka wamboto tena ….*" *Translation*: The noise reached Hunter's ears (pause) he whom all animals fear and never wish to meet … **Djoko:** "*Okongo diko ambo wena ate mbo dje dja lo demba ko Fo ambo tshindje wela … Ate toko we kele fuma aka ma kongaki te kele yo minye lokonda wa ngama lendo.*" *Translation*: When he arrived at the scene, Hunter wanted to kill the small animal but	*Metaphoric gesture*: Djoko uses his thumb to point to the back, referring to the area where lives Hunter who hears Dog's barking. He maintains a faster pace up until Hunter reaches the scene and hears Dog's plea to spare his life. *Mimic gesture*: Djoko then acts as if he is Hunter; he looks down to the area where imaginary Dog stands. *Mimic gesture*: Djoko waves his pointed right-hand index finger to mimic Dog waving his tail.

Dog waved his tail and said: "Please don't kill me, take me with you to your village and I will get you many more (prey)".	*Mimic gesture*: Djoko then holds his Losambi as if it is a gun and points it at imaginary Dog as he tells how the latter asks Hunter to spare his life (Figure 3.4).

Figure 5.21: **Djoko holding his Losambi as if it is a gun (Screenshot from video by Lodi Paul Inga, 2016)**

5.2.5.7 Coda

The resolution of the story is followed by the concluding passage (coda) which establishes connections between the events narrated in the story world and how these have shaped reality in the real world.

Table 5.6: Features in the coda

VERBAL	VOCAL/VISUAL
Djoko: "*Hoke lama ambo yo koka wodja la fumu o ngelo ... nyame lokonda koshaka fumu o ngelo ko nyate ona anyo yo sanga donga.*"	*Metaphoric gesture*: Djoko open his arms and stands straight to signify the story is over. The pace slows down.

153

Translation: From that day, all animals big and small, strong and weak, knew that Dog's barking means Hunter is on his way. **Djoko:** "*Pene wa mbapa te ta kosha moyo.*" (Greetings to you, Beloved.) **Me:** *"Losaka efula."* (Thank you.)	Djoko then beats his Losambi to signal the official end of the story.

5.3. Summary of findings

Findings were presented for these purposes:

- Firstly, describe the various layers of meaning that emanated from multimodal texts during oral performances;

- Secondly, describe the relationship between my personal experience and the broader set of socio-cultural phenomena encountered in the field;

- Thirdly, expound upon how the data informed the creation of a practical component that attempted to answer the main research question;

- Fourthly, to employ both multimodality and literature as frameworks for data interpretation;

- Finally, to discuss the outcome of participatory methods and how the resulting cultural knowledge helped in the understanding and interpretation of collected data

The structure of this section is as follows:

5.3.1. The 'visible'and the 'invisible'semiotic resources in Sankuru orature

5.3.2. Structure of Sankuru orature

5.3.3. The role of music in Sankuru orature

5.3.4. Anonymity in Sankuru orature

5.3.5. Capturing Sankuru oral performances

5.3.6. Translating Sankuru orature

5.3.7. Wearing different hats

5.3.8. Opposing values and how I changed my own perceptions

5.3.9. My perspectives on Sankuru way of life

5.3.1. The 'visible' and the 'invisible' semiotic resources in Sankuru orature

The visible semiotic resources

A very important component of orature in Sankuru is the dress code: all my key informants were dressed in a way that was meant to add meaning to their performances; and they were visibly content that I took notice of their costumes when I asked them how important garments were to their oral performances. The performer goes to great lengths to ensure that he is dressed in a way that adds value to his performance, and Djoko's costume is a rightful component of his performance; a testimony to how 'visual' Sankuru oral performances are.

I recall my dad owning cassette recordings of oral performances of some of the greatest oral performers from Sankuru. He would play them on his cassette player, usually on weekends. My dad, who is an accomplished storyteller, excels at describing, so he would provide a context to the recordings and would sometimes even dance to 'paint a picture' of how the oral performances would usually take place. His efforts were meant to help my siblings and I imagine the atmosphere during oral performances in Mauka, the village he is from. However, sound has limited affordances when compared to images; we could hear the songs and the rhythmic patterns of Lokombe but not even my dad's dancing could provide a clear picture of what Sankuru oral performances are really like.

It took my going to Sankuru in person to understand that the only way to capture the real essence of an oral performance and be immersed within the experience, is to watch it in person. There are a lot of visual components that can only be appreciated if seen with one's own eyes. The vibrant colours of the area: the green vegetation; brownish huts walls with occasional paintings executed in a non-assertive style; the reddish soil; the colourful patterns on women's wrapping clothes … these form part of the 'Sankuru experience' and are an integral component of public oral performances in Sankuru. To capture these intangible components of Sankuru, I had to rely firstly on my camera through photography and video recording, as the captured images served as triggers during my evening reflections and I would subsequently write down words and concepts that came to mind. Lastly, I would try to elaborate with a 'deconstruction' of what the concepts really meant to me and how I really felt as I experienced the various moments throughout the day.

The invisible semiotic resources

Finnegan (2007) and Sheldon-Heeg (2003) explain how para-textual components of African oral literature define the essence of the genre. My initial understanding of the term 'intrinsic' as I formulated my research question, was that it refers solely to the 'intangible', to the 'unexplainable'. I thought of it as a combination of all things that take place during oral performances and which one cannot find ways to describe with words only. This definition is partly valid, as 'intrinsic' mostly refers to semiotic elements which are at the core and could also be invisible. However, I came to the realisation that 'intrinsic' may therefore also refer to components of oral literature whose perception and understanding cannot easily be transmitted, unless the viewer (or reader) has had similar experiences. Though this research aimed at suggesting animation as a viable alternative to written formats of Sankuru orature, only selected 'intrinsic' semiotic components can be included in this formidable mode of representation.

For example, the pungent aroma of the local traditional 'liquor', which may be considered an integral part of life in Sankuru, as it was overly present during oral performances by the likes of Djoko, Dabe and De Paris, can obviously not be included in an audio-visual representation. The point is not to provide a representation that includes all components, as it is simply not possible; the aim is to provide a more holistic depiction of the oral literary instance, one that incorporates as many modes as the medium allows. Murphy (2000:241) states that the medium of cinema introduces a different dimension to the cultural dynamic since it allows viewing the world from a different perspective; therefore, the components of orature have to be adapted to fit the format and expressiveness of the medium.

5.3.2. Structure of Sankuru orature

Orature and the mode of writing

Coplan (1994), along with Finnegan (2007) and Jay-Rayon (2013), to name just a few, have stated the limitation of written versions of African oral literature and how they do not offer a reliable depiction of the oral literary performances on which they are based.

Based on what I experienced, it is clear that Sankuru oral performances do not follow a strictly rigid formula: two performances of the same piece by the same performer would certainly have

variations in length, wording and the like. However, for a local audience, for example, those who are familiar with the performer and his performance style and those who belong to his cultural setting, the performances carry the same basics, the same essence, despite variations and the change of wording, tempo, setting, occasion or person on the receiving end. Like language, all modes are defined by their cultural and social contexts to respond to the needs of the specific communities (Jewitt, 2013).

Let us take the example of Djoko; as he told the story of *How Dog became the most feared animal*, I was fascinated by the crafty oratory display, the magical setting and the accompanying instruments. I could not focus solely on the mode of language (what was being said) as there were so many other communicational modes in action, added to the fact that the story referred to names of a few animals that I was not familiar with. I had to listen to the story a few times, put the entire multimodal ensembles into perspective and conduct Video elicitation to fully grasp its context and gain an even greater appreciation for the manner in which the story was told.

Djoko referred at some point to "*Nyama yetondo*", which translates literally as 'whole animals', hence it did not quite make sense to me. Upon conducting Video elicitation, I found out that Djoko was referring to 'live animals' and I would have expected him to say *Nyama yoseni* or *Nyama ya sena*. Another instance was when he referred to "*kyudumbe*", which turned out to be 'pigeon'; we call it *kudimba* in Losambala. Such slight misunderstandings were present, despite my fluency in Tetela.

The salient point that needs interrogation is: if a written version of Djoko's story was to be published for local Sankuru's literate audience, there certainly would be no need to hold a discussion around the accuracy of the text and whether it is faithful to the actual performance. The fact that the audience is familiar with the setting within which the storytelling usually takes place, along with all the elements that accompany the performance, allows the written version of the story to serve as a trigger to what they know empirically. Sylvester (2014:251) argues that societies which rely mostly on memory to preserve information have an intimate relationship with information, as it is mostly based on empirical knowledge; this is not the case with societies that rely mostly on writing and other methods of storing information.

Additionally, Kanneh (1998) stated the importance of empirical knowledge in interpreting cultural phenomena when referring to the late Chinua Achebe's *Things fall apart*, in which the author presented a description of Nigerian customs that was based on an empirical point of

view and hence offered an accurate and reliable narrative. Because Djoko's audience is familiar with the context as well as his approach to storytelling, the written text of his storytelling performance is just a symbol of what they already know too well. As Posner (2004:3) states, when interpreting a sign, the recipient and the sender both apply a code which associates a signifier and a signified, with 'code' being a set of guidelines which determine the reciprocal relation between signified and signifier.

In the case of Sankuru cultural elements, the local population was educated in the format and meaning of signs and signifier that are produced during oral performances, hence they extract a standardised interpretation of the modes of meaning-making which are in display. Posner (2004:17) added that culture is shaped by its members; however, its members are, in turn, shaped by the culture. Both Djoko and De Paris are at the forefront of the contemporary iterations of Sankuru oral literature and, in a sense, they are shaping the culture by adapting it to societal changes. However, despite the changes and adaptations that may have taken place, both performers operate within the cultural context of Sankuru orature which has been defined through many years of cultural practices. Lotman (2002:6) refers to culture as a 'collective intellect' which is formed from two main features: the creation of a whole from heterogeneous associations; and the creation of novelties. As such, though Sankuru orature is defined by many years of cultural practice, its format and, subsequently, its interpretation has also been affected by the individuality and creativity of each of the contemporary exponents of the genre.

Written versions of oral performances are problematic when dealing with an audience that is unaware of the context in which the performances were held and completely oblivious to the semiotic elements that were on display during the performance, those which carry the essence of said performance.

The Sankuru performer's thinking process

Ong (2005) rightfully refutes the notion that people living in cultures that made little use of writing had little or no explicit awareness of the subtleties and depths of linguistic expression. He, however, argues that an explanatory and abstract sequential examination of phenomena cannot be achieved without writing and reading. Upon listening repeatedly to my recordings of oratory displays by both De Paris and Djoko, I could not entirely agree with Ong's statement, at least in the context of the cited performers. Much has been written about the concept of ownership in African oral literature: the fact that oral performers can interpret an existing body of oral literature without having to trace or cite the 'original' author. Ong and many other

scholars may have unknowingly assumed that there is little room for original content in the so-called 'primary oral cultures'.

De Paris, for example, performs his own brand of oral literature which is a potpourri of various oral literary genres, from proverbs to riddles and poems, which are beautifully interwoven with the sound of his voice and his band's musical instruments. However, it is worth noting that De Paris also performs a few original pieces such as 'Verone', a piece dedicated to a deceased lover. Although there were improvised elements in the performance, it was obvious that the sung poem followed a certain structure and that his words were carefully selected to describe his feelings and 'paint a picture' as he enacted the process of collecting groundnuts, the way his lover used to do – a device which he used for dramatic purpose.

De Paris is illiterate, and he certainly did not write down the piece; however, he performed with a clear purpose and nothing in his movement or his words seemed random; everything had its purpose. Jaja and Badey (2012:96) argue that the logic of a people is woven into their language and mode of thought; and that African logic is interlaced with religious, socio-cultural and metaphysical worldviews. Jaja and Badey (2012:98) add that, since logic is concerned with how well people can naturally reason at their best, such principles are evident in African modes of thought as they help solve practical problems. There clearly was an abstract sequential examination of the phenomenon in De Paris's approach to orality. Additionally, both De Paris and Djoko excel at praise-poetry. Praise-poetry is, by nature, a widely improvised process in which one needs to create appropriate descriptors of the person on the receiving end upon having memorised the most relevant information about them: generally, their occupation, the village their ancestors come from, and the names of their closest relatives.

The artistry of great praise-poets is a tricky thing to describe; the best way to appreciate the skilful combination of traditional wisdom in the form of proverbs and riddles, is to be on the receiving end. Praise-poetry relies more on the intellect than on the person's ability to memorise information; the speed at which the performer effortlessly construct beautifully crafted sentences, which are so pertinent it seems they have been read from hidden notes, can only attest to a superior ability to conduct quick analytical thinking. As discussed in Chapter four, all four of the participants performed praise-poetry to honour my presence; and I was enormously impressed, not only by the accuracy with which they described me and my lineage but mostly by the structure of the praise-poetry and the limited timeframe required to internalise

such an amount of information. This is yet another testimony to the impressive analytical minds of the performers.

The merging of genres

Oral performances in Sankuru are not easy to label partly because they are usually a combination of a variety of genres of orature. Performances do not feature solely one form; even when, for example, the term praise-poetry is used to describe the form that was predominant during a performance, it is worthwhile noting that other genres and subgenres of orature are usually featured in one way or another and that the performer uses them to play specific roles during the delivery of the performance. The performer is aware of the modal affordance of each of the genres hence he uses them accordingly. For instance, the performer would make use of the riddle genre at the beginning of the performance by asking a question which the audience is required to answer, or she/he may use the proverb genre to either help elaborate a concept or simply showcase his overall wisdom (which usually triggers a reaction from the audience), during the performance.

The genre of music is overly present, as music is used to set the mood during performances. Praise-poets always carry a percussive instrument as praise-poetry is not recited, it is sung. Perhaps De Paris is the perfect example of the blurred line between genres during oral deliveries in Sankuru; he combines praise-poetry, dance, music, and even drama in a single performance. Such eclectic merging of genres may in fact be hard to label thus 'praise-poetry' may not be the most accurate descriptive. However, this cross genres approach is a feature of Sankuru orature and the need to single out the various genres that take place during a performance is certainly not a concern of Sankuru audiences.

5.3.3. The role of music in Sankuru orature

Music as carrier of culture

Having dedicated many years of my life to studying the guitar, I have developed a traditional opinion on what it takes for one to be considered a 'good' guitarist and how to play the guitar 'the proper way'. The mark of a good guitarist is, in my eyes, a combination of great technique and decent knowledge of chords progressions.

When I heard De Paris's band, I was impressed by the arrangements but mostly by how well everything worked as a whole. What was even more impressive to me was the fact that both

guitars were tuned in alternate tuning, hence I could not make out the chords that were being played. I found out that the tuning was 'standard' among all guitarists in Sankuru. I could not collect an historical account of how that approach to playing the guitar had come about and how it defied the 'classical' approaches that had been established over the years ever since the instrument was created in Europe. Bezemer and Jewitt (2010:184) state that the more a set of resources is used in a given community, the more articulated it will become. Such approach to playing the guitar has certainly found its place in the society and it has become the standard way of tuning the guitar among all if not most Sankuru guitarists.

One thing was certain: though it was clearly the same instrument (albeit the use of strings made from bicycle brakes), it was played very differently from the way it is commonly played. To better appreciate the value of how music is performed in Sankuru, as I came to realise, one should put aside any preconceived knowledge and rather seek to accept or understand the cultural context that shapes its practice.

A good example of how music carries the history and cultural identity of the people of Sankuru is the two genres of rhythmic patterns or styles played on the Lokombe, known as Beya and Londolo. Both styles find their origin in the days of kings, when Lokombe beaters accompanied kings wherever they went.

I spent four days in the company of *Mama ya Beya*, who are some of the most popular exponents of the genres, but I still could not easily differentiate between them. In Sankuru, music is not just a form of expression, as performers do not play just so they can express themselves the way a solo instrumentalist would do in an urban context – as an individual – it is mostly about cultural expression: the collective. Every time Djoko, De Paris or *Mama ya Beya* perform, they are recreating the past as they perform songs and poems from the ancestors; but they are also alluding to the present, to the 'now', through praise-poetry about a guest who is present at the performance, or through shout-outs directed at audience members. They connect past to present as culture finds its roots in the past but is brought to life by the present, hence it is constantly made relevant through new iterations.

Mama ya Beya performed a song entitled '*Lombo ohomba*' which translates as 'Wisdom is essential'; but the song which my dad used to play on his guitar when I was a child was played quite differently from my dad's version. In their version, the performers referred to some of the topics that they judged relevant to contemporary Sankuru. For instance, they referred to how contemporary youths do not want to work, yet they want 'the best of what life offers';

they also referred to the fact many of those who had left the Sankuru for the city did not make the effort to improve the living conditions in their native land.

The Lokombe's modal affordance

Finnegan (1970) wrote of drum literature as she referred to the 'talking drum' which is a phenomenon that takes place in certain parts of Africa. It certainly is a significant component of Tetela culture; and though I had witnessed a Lokombe performance before when I was eight or nine years old, I really came to appreciate the beauty and artistry of Lokombe performances in Sankuru. However, I learned that the term 'drum literature' is limiting and not quite accurate when referring to Sankuru's Lokombe, as it implies that the Lokombe is solely used to recite or reformulate elements of orature, the way a pianist or a virtuoso guitarist would play an instrumental arrangement of a well-known song. Dabe, one of my informants, explained to me how the Lokombe 'language' is, in fact, based on the spoken language and that the sound it produces emulates the phonetic structure of Tetela.

The Lokombe is not just an instrument that emulates spoken words, neither can it be reduced to a musical instrument. The Lokombe is, first, a communication tool and, as such, it has also been used to express elements of oral literature, but not exclusively. Its key role is to communicate in the way it has been used throughout the years, that is, to translate important information from one village to another. Thanks to its incredible resonance, the Lokombe can be heard up to fifteen kilometres away, I was told. The fact that Dabe announced my presence to surrounding villages was a great testimony to how efficient it can be as a communication tool. The Lokombe has a different modal affordance in Sankuru because it can be used to make meaning while in urban societies the drum is used mainly to make music.

Despite being a Tetela speaker, I could not understand the Lokombe language, unlike most people present at the performance, such as the elder who introduced himself as 'the guardian of tradition' and André who was my host while in Nkonde. It made me question the extent to which I was 'one of them'. I realised that, though language is a carrier of culture, there are many more components of said culture that one cannot learn remotely; there are those which require a complete immersion into the culture. Clifford (1983) argues that "participant observation obliges its practitioners to experience, at a bodily as well as intellectual level, the vicissitudes of translation", as the author referred to challenges faced by fieldworkers when trying to understand cultural differences. Perhaps I was 'one of them' with an asterisk. A good analogy may be that I was like a recent graduate who goes to his first work experience and tries

to verify all the knowledge acquired during his training, while being open to learning new skills, the kind that can only be acquired in the workplace.

5.3.4. Anonymity in Sankuru orature

Anonymity is a significant component of African oral literature: nobody can claim the copyright to the content of an oral performance. Jordan (2004:13) states that the explanation for this anomaly lies in the collectivist principle of traditional societies: artistic creations were regarded as collective works rather than the product of an individual. Such is still the case for oral performances in the Sankuru: Djoko did not have to mention the person who originally told the story, recited the poem or came up with the riddle. The main reason behind it is the freedom to interpret oral performances in one's own words without worrying about saying it in the exact format that the performances may originally have been held, unlike Western traditions where exact replication is required.

The only crediting of source that may have taken place during my field research was when the performers said: "*Washeso waka taka vate*", which translates as, 'Our forefathers used to say that …' This is not because the performers did not want people to think the words were their own invention; on the contrary, referring to the fact that the poem or story has been around for much longer, attests to the communality of oral performances. 'Our forefathers' is a generic term, as it does not specify the person, village or tribe from which the orature originated and it is not meant to.

5.3.5 Capturing Sankuru oral performances

Impact of video camera on captured oral performances

An important question I kept asking myself, once I was finally home after I had left Sankuru, was: How much impact did the presence of the camera have on the captured oral performances?

A performance is, by its very nature, a display, a showcase that relies to a great extent on an audience which would either actively or passively affect the way in which the performance unfolds.

The Sankuru oral performer, like any other, performs for an audience. The camera is without a doubt the subject of interest for many Sankuru inhabitants. This is not to say that most people have not seen a camera but having a performance recorded means it will be viewed by people from the 'city'. With that in mind, the performer might have felt the need to excel at what they

produced and perhaps that was not a bad thing, as it meant I recorded nothing but the best of what the performers were capable of offering.

The only instances when I thought my camera might have been intrusive was when I set it up indoors, during video elicitation and focus group interviews, as I noticed that most of my interviewees were self-conscious as they perhaps felt the pressure to 'look good' and not disappoint me or themselves, despite my effort to suggest otherwise. However, it is true that, if there was any concern on their part, there was also a level of excitement at the thought that the moment would be recorded and 'preserved' for a very long time.

Materiality of audio and video as semiotic resources

When asked whether either audio or video would be the most crucial component if one wishes to witness a more reliable depiction of oral performances, all my participants agreed that the combination of both offers a more complete depiction of the performances and that one without the other only offered a partial indication of what the performance is about. Focus group participants in both Lodja, where I met De Paris, and Nkonde, where I met both Djoko and Dabe, were in favour of the way in which video recording of the performers provided a 'fuller' depiction of the performances; and they also felt that the omission of either audio or video did not do justice to the overall performance.

It was evident that my participants were fascinated by the possibilities offered by screen versions of the performances; and the fact that they still reacted to the call and responses as they watched the performances spoke volumes about how they engaged with the recorded performances. When watching De Paris's performance of 'Verone', the participants responded in unison "*Alowe alo alowe alo*" whenever De Paris said: "*Verone, Verone, kota mboho ka …*"; or when visualising the video of Djoko telling the story of *How Dog became the most feared animal*, the participants reacted with interjecting sounds such as 'Mhm', '*Ngaso!*' (That's the way it is!) or '*Mêtê*!' (True!).

Similarly, my focus group participants, who had also been around the performers for most of their lives, were particularly in favour of the screen version of the captured performances. Not only did they feel that the screen version did not 'dilute' their perception of the semiotic devices on display, but they believed the format allowed for the dissemination of the culture – and, most of all, the performers and their performances would be made immortal through the video capturing. When referring to Djoko, one of the focus group participants stated that the artist

might not always be available for a performance, either due to travel or other impediments; however, through a 'screen' version of his performance, one would be able to view his performance at any time.

Storing versus preserving Sankuru orature

There have been many efforts to preserve and disseminate oral performances. One of the most noticeable initiatives is Technauriture which aims at using technology to enhance the documentation, rendition and dissemination of orature (Kaschula & Mostert, 2009; Kaschula, 2016). However, 'preservation' may not be the most accurate word when referring to the recording and 'storing' of Sankuru oral literary performances; the word may allude to an 'inert' state. The multi-layered essence of a Sankuru oral performance is an antithesis of what 'preservation' may suggest; one can continually draw new meanings from an oral performance recording, as has been the case for me: every time I visualise an instance of a recorded oral performance, I discover new possibilities, new interpretations and new hidden contexts.

The need to preserve oral literature is a valid concern of urban societies to ensure that these valuable components of human history do not disappear; but, unlike other efforts to fight extinction, such as that of rare animal species or significant historic sites, traditional societies such as Sankuru can take care of themselves. It is easy to assume that the members of traditional societies do not understand the value of their own cultural heritage and therefore need assistance to ensure that these do not disappear irreversibly. However, Lajul (2014:45) has suggested that traditional knowledge is not static as it has evolved through socio-cultural changes in each of the societies within which the sets of beliefs were produced. Though the encounter between African knowledge systems and knowledge systems from around the world may have resulted in a devaluation by Africans of their own knowledge system (Hountondji, 2002). Idang (2015:107) acknowledges that the willingness to embrace change is often dictated and conditioned by the compatibility of the expected change with the culture that embraces it. Usually, cultures are likely to embrace values which either provide alternatives or extend their own values merely by adding new things to it (Idang, 2015:107).

I have to admit that I had, at some point, considered myself a contributor to the fight against the imminent extinction of my cultural heritage; but I quickly found out that, though there are not as many oral performers as there used to be decades ago, the performance of oral literature will not disappear, though it will certainly have to adapt to societal changes, as has been the case with the likes of De Paris and Djoko who have embraced changes without altering the

essence of their crafts. Even those whom the local Catholic priest referred to as practising "*la politique du ventre*" (those using oral literature as a way to earn a living, without fully committing to it) are still valuable contributors to the 'survival' of the genre.

My journal as an extension of audio-visual recording

Thanks to technology, I am able to relive some of the most memorable moments I experienced in Sankuru through the audio-visual recording I captured with my DSLR camera. As stated in a previous paragraph, Kaschula (2009) has demonstrated how technology can enhance the documentation, rendition and dissemination of orature through *technauriture*. Additionally, Coplan (1994), Finnegan (2007) and Derive (2007) had previously stated the importance of capturing a performance in its fullness through the use of audio-visual devices.

However, it took me a long time to understand that, though my camera was crucial in the recording of performances, my journal was perhaps the most important recording 'device'. The entire experience was overwhelming as there was so much novelty for my mind to record that I needed to be able to process at the same time. I could not assess my emotions and feelings while recording oral performances. The camera could only record what was seen through the viewpoint. What about everything else that the camera could not capture? What about surrounding aromas which were an integral part of the experience, as discussed earlier? And what about how I felt as I witnessed all the events that took place before my eyes during my stay in Sankuru?

My journal was an opportunity to turn the intangible into visuals in the form of words. It was almost the reverse process: while my camera captured visuals which helped trigger feelings and memories from the captured moments, my journal help convert thoughts and emotions into the visual realm of written words. The magic of my journal was such that it allowed the exploring of hidden corners of my mind in order to reach for hidden thoughts and feelings. Raab (2013) argues that researchers should reflect on their own similar memories upon being with a participant(s) in her or his own setting and revise the notes in order to attain the most poignant field notes for autoethnographic research.

5.3.6 Translating Sankuru orature

Proverb versus praise-poetry

When looking at the broad spectrum of oral literary genres in the Sankuru, it is worth noting that, though the challenge of adapting or translating oral forms into other languages is always present, each oral form represents a different kind of challenge, as some are less demanding than others.

To expound on my argument, I would compare two of the most common oral literary genres in Sankuru: proverb and praise-poetry. There is a Tetela proverb which alludes to someone who unnecessarily seeks conflict or trouble: it says '*Onongo kema kyolo mboka'*. When translating this proverb for an English-speaking audience, one should certainly not use a literal translation which would probably read as: 'trouble has no feet'. This translation would probably make no sense to the English speaker, unless it is contextualised by taking into account the cultural context and the overall structure of the English language. An 'oblique translation' would certainly make more sense: 'Trouble will not find you, unless you look for it'; or 'Who seeks trouble will find it'. It is worth noting that the Tetela word '*Onongo*' is not really an exact equivalent of 'trouble'; the closest English translation of '*Onongo*' would be 'trouble arising from an argument'.

Based on the above example, it is evident that context is important when translating a proverb from Tetela into English, French or another language. However, context does not play as important a role in other oral genres such as praise-poetry. The very essence of a proverb is that it is not meant to be performed as 'standalone' orality but as a supporting device during discussions or conversations, as it is widely considered an indication of one's wisdom. In Sankuru, proverbs are also included in other oral genres such as praise-poetry and folktales.

Praise-poetry, on the other hand, would offer a different challenge as far as translation is concerned. The context within which the poetry is held is of utmost importance and cannot be divorced from the actual performances. The performer is inspired by what happens as he performs praise-poetry, so his surroundings have a huge impact on the outcome of his poetry: whether or not there is a crowd; whether it is a public or private performance; and the person being praised and where they are from. These are all factors that can impact the performance of praise-poetry.

With all that in mind, it is obvious that focusing merely on achieving an accurate translation does not suffice, as there is much more to Sankuru praise-poetry than the linguistic component. Context, along with all the various intangibles which take place during the performance as well as the improvised nature of the genre, make it impossible to turn it into a reliable written format with success.

The role of writing in the final animated component

The old saying, "Show, don't tell" was constantly brought up during my formative years as a graphic design student and I quite often refer to this when helping my own students understand the inherent power of images. Though my final practical component incorporates the elements of Sankuru oral literature that cannot easily be captured in written format, the context would not be easily grasped without using the mode of writing in the form of on-screen text. Writing, in the form of title sequences, opening credits and subtitles, has been used to contextualise video representations and this convention sometimes serves as an easier way to provide back story.

Writing may help provide a more holistic depiction of the oral literary event. However, there are a few notable downsides to using subtitles, especially when dealing with an audio-visual representation in which visual elements are designed and placed in such a way that they can fully capture the essence of the visualisation. Wells (1997) states that animation allows great degree of control over how narratives are interpreted and executed.

The role of typography in the final animated video

While typography was used to provide a context to the final animated video, particularly in the opening seconds, voice-over was favoured over subtitles to translate the performer's word. Voice-over is justified by the fact that the viewer cannot maintain the same level of attention if he or she were to view the animated visuals while reading subtitles to make sense of what is being said. However, voice-over was used in such a way that it did not completely suppress the performer's own voice.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Sankuru performances are a combination of signs and signifiers which are deeply embedded in the culture and therefore embrace all areas of social and cultural expression. The local audience neither needs any introduction to the theme of the performance nor do they need to be provided with a context. Context is embedded in the

expression, it is in the performer's words, in the clothes that he or she wears, in the setting within which the performances are held and so cannot be divorced from it.

It was therefore part of my job to provide a context in the form of on-screen text, as I am presenting the visualisation of the performances to a different audience, one that has not been introduced to Sankuru oral literature. It is a necessity because my audience is not aware of the semiotic devices that are put into play during a Sankuru oral literary event.

5.3.7 Wearing different hats

As an observer

Once I arrived in Sankuru, I quickly realised that the only way I would absorb all the knowledge that I expected to garner during my research and set myself up for an immersive experience was by acknowledging my position vis-à-vis my 'mission'; and thus, when required, I needed to reduce my role to that of an observer as I set aside my own bias and preconceived ideas.

Watching the performances through the limiting scope of my camera was a necessary process; how else would I be able to record and remember such multi-layered, highly visual experiences? However, I never lost sight of the fact that I would, at some point, have to create a summative product of my field research which would be presented in the form of an animated video. I was an integral part of the research and yet I was also an observer, a student of my own culture, exploring ways in which I could use a contemporary medium to depict and celebrate some of my culture's greatest constituents.

As an artist

As an artist and a performer, I have always had deep appreciation for skilful display of talent. Knowing how long it takes for one to master any given skill, I never take for granted the ability to woo a crowd with skills and talent.

When I started performing music in public, I was very self-conscious and would always try to guess what the audience's perception of my music was. It took me a while to be able to bypass such tendencies and simply learn to enjoy the moment and trust that the audience would enjoy my performance if I enjoyed it myself.

Being on the receiving end, as I watched all my informants perform and effortlessly embody the essence of their respective performances, it consolidated in my mind the belief that a great

performance has to appear as an extension of the performer, even when the performance is not based on original content.

Having told traditional stories on numerous occasions, I would always provide a context to the stories as a way to ensure understanding of the cultural setting of the stories (sometimes those told by my grandmother). However, traditional oral performers such as Djoko do not have to go through that process; they perform storytelling for people who understand all the nuances and context of the story. The fact that their audience would promptly respond to a chant or a riddle in unison provided me with a profound perspective on how different it is not to have to provide the cultural context or back story and trust that the audience will capture the message exactly as intended.

5.3.8 Opposing values and how I changed my own perceptions

The notion of opposing values between Africa and the West played a great part in the theorising of Africa and what it meant to be African from the perspective of many African writers. Though the notion of an Africa based on polarity between the continent and the West was rejected by the likes of Kalua (2009), Eze (2014) and many other scholars, it is worth mentioning that, in the minds of many contemporary Congolese urban citizens, the demarcation between Western culture and what can be considered 'local' culture is quite blurred in people's mind. Many aspects of everyday life, including cultural forms such as music and fashion to name just a few, have an undeniably 'Western' influence, a descriptor which is seen as a compliment, considering many see the West as the epitome of excellence.

There have been attempts at restoring a sense of pride and respect for Congolese cultural values but many have been superficial and served as cover-up for a hidden political agenda. I would like to refer mainly to late president Mobutu's hypocritical attempt at restoring what he labelled 'authenticité' by prohibiting the use of a neck-tie, along with the Western-style suit, only to impose his own 'abacost' which was nothing but a short-sleeved variant of the Western-style suit. I have a vivid memory of the day the 'neck-tie ban' was lifted as I recall my dad being quite happy about it and streets being flooded with people celebrating the return of such an important garment, along with the abolition of the single-party regime. It is difficult to tell which was more important.

Another important ban that had been lifted was one that forbade citizens from using their Christian names in favour of their African names. As a way to lead by example, president

Mobutu, who was born Desiré Mobutu Seseseko, had dropped 'Desiré' from his name and everyone had been summoned to do the same.

Growing up, I was affectionately known as 'Popol', which is a variant of my Christian name 'Paul'. In DR Congo, most people have a Christian name and prefer being called by it. It was the case for me as well, until I came to Cape Town.

My cultural identity was never something I had thought about deeply when growing up and the reason is quite simple: everybody shared a similar, if not the same, cultural identity and so there was no need to assert one's identity as it was never in question. However, it took coming to Cape Town to appreciate truly my cultural heritage and be aware of what made me different from other people with whom I came into contact.

The urge not to lose my identity in the face of various cultural clashes; and the never-experienced-before Western influences that dictate many aspects of life in Cape Town, including my chosen field of study (graphic design), made me decide to assert my cultural heritage and not compromise it. Hence the decision to drop 'Paul' and promote my other name 'Lodi'. It may not sound like a 'big deal'; however, it was a defining signifier of my own cultural awareness.

The integration of Western cultural elements into the Congolese way of life takes a completely different shape in Sankuru: people describe urban way of life as '*Kisungu*', which translates as 'the white people's way'. This popular term refers to anything that is considered 'civilised' or 'classy' without necessarily referring to Europe or skin colour. It is an obvious legacy of our colonial history. While most urban citizens have the West in mind when referring to 'civilised', most Sankuru inhabitants see urban areas of the country as the epitome of excellence.

5.3.9 My perspective on Sankuru way of life

One of the reasons why my recollection of the one-and-a-half months spent in Sankuru will – unlike any other experience I have been through – always be so special to me, is the overall feeling that time somehow stood still when I was there. Coming from a place where everything is fast, where people are constantly on the move, where everyone is busy, where there are so many moving cars that, even when indoors, the rumbling of engines and buzzing of car horns can still be heard … I suddenly was in a place where I would easily not see or hear a car for an entire week, where people are not always in a rush and where they genuinely expect a reply when they ask, 'How are you?'

In the cities, we worry about many things; there are many things that prevent us from leading a happier life. It is true that life in Sankuru is not perfect, that they wish they had better roads so that they would be able to sell the agricultural goods to merchants from big cities and get money to buy themselves the basics. However, people are not obsessed about these needs to the extent of losing sleep; they do not try to foresee what will happen the following week, the following month or the following year; and such talk does not normally form part of their conversations.

For the first time in a long time, I could wake up in the morning and not feel like I had to make a quick mental scan of what I had to do during the day. Despite the fact that I had limited time and had to collect data within the allocated time, I felt that I was in control while not trying to control everything. It may sound like a paradox but the fact that there was no need to rush as there was no train to catch, no traffic to beat, made me feel like it was entirely up to me and I could decide how and when to do things without having to stress over the how and the when.

Such is life in Sankuru: the day begins early in the morning and ends quite early as people go to bed before 8 p.m. To the eyes of a person who has so many options, so many possible things to take care of, life may appear monotonous but it is not, to them: they have learnt that life can be lived fully in its simplicity; and doing the same thing day in and day out is not a 'bad thing' if one does not take life for granted, if one can take a moment to appreciate the present, to appreciate life as it comes. I learnt how to enjoy the moment and be fully part of a conversation without thinking of the next thing on my to-do list. Owing to the way people live and interact in Sankuru, it is not hard to understand why there is not a Tetela equivalent for the word 'stress'.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations

This chapter begins with the conclusion section which summarises the primary arguments of the thesis. The chapter offers a brief overview of the main aspects of the thesis and demonstrates how each of the research questions was answered.

The conclusion is followed by recommendations which lay the foundation for future studies to be undertaken, as many adaptations, experiments and methods have been left for the future owing to time constraints.

6. 1. Conclusion

The aim of this research study was to explore the extent to which the medium of animation can be used to depict the intrinsic components of orature, by honouring both the role of the performer during the performance of an oral literary event and the context within which the performance takes place. There are many animated films that have used oral literary work as premise. There also are many current initiatives aimed at promoting the digitalisation of oral literature for its conservation and dissemination. However, this investigation was inspired by the fact that there have not been attempts at using the medium of animation to capture an orature performance in such a way that the performer is at the centre of the representation.

By including the performer in the final output, animation becomes an extension of the live performance and animated visuals offer the possibility of enhancing the original performance to uncharted heights. Through my fieldwork research in Sankuru, it was evident that Sankuru orature relies heavily on performance. Despite the fact that each of my key informants represented a different aspect of Sankuru orature, each showcased just how the content of the performances cannot be divorced from both the form and the context within which the performances are held.

Jewitt (2013) states that language is a mode among a collective of modes. Additionally, Kress and Leeuwen (2001) argue that most efforts in the area of multimodal discourse recognise that communication involves a variety of modes of meaning making. During his performance, the Sankuru oral performer makes meaning using a combination of voice, gestures, musical instruments that he, she or the crew plays to create emphasis, draw the attention of the audience, or set the mood of the performance.

To answer the sub-question which sought to find out *the ways in which the intrinsic components of orature have been depicted in written literature*, it was argued that one of the main reasons why many representations of African orature have, in most cases, not been able to depict the true essence of the cultures from which the orature originated is because they relied on verbal speech only. Other means of creating meaning, such as the performer's gesture and his voice intonation, were usually not taken into account.

Written versions of oral performances are problematic when dealing with an audience that is unaware of the context in which the performances were held and completely oblivious of the semiotic elements that were on display during the performance, those which carry the essence of said performance. When the audience is aware of the performer's style and all the semiotic elements that he or she uses during the performance, then a written version may simply be a trigger which allows them to reimagine the stories or poetries in a format with which they are familiar and with which they are empirically acquainted.

What are the intrinsic characteristics of orature? All non-verbal devices used during an oral performance in Sankuru are defined within the context of the Tetela culture and are usually intended to produce meaning, even when they are meant to trigger the audience's response. Dance and mimicry were an important component of the performances and primary data collection also demonstrated the role of the performer's outfit and how it contributed in setting the mood of the performance. Sankuru oral performances are highly visual: they are a combination of signs and signifiers which are intended to communicate. Orature is only a small component in the wide spectrum of Sankuru cultural practices. However, it is undeniably a carrier of cultural identity as it provides great insight into the current state of the culture and how it positions itself vis-à-vis inevitable changes that have occurred as a result of cultural exchanges and external socio-political influences.

One of the poignant points that were discussed was the fact that not all intrinsic components of Sankuru orature could be included in the medium of animation. For example, the pungent aroma of traditional liquor, which is an integral part of life in Sankuru, including in oral performances, can surely not be included in an audio-visual representation. The point is not to provide a representation that includes all components, as it is simply not possible; the aim is to provide a more holistic depiction of the oral literary instance, one that incorporates as many elements as the medium allows.

This research used an autoethnographic approach due to the fact that the autoethnographer's personal experiences is the primary data source, as opposed to the belief that it is rather the interaction with cultural elements which provides the primary data source. My personal experience and my cultural identity as a member of the Tetela tribe were building blocks for a broader understanding of cultural phenomena during my field research in the district of Sankuru. The present research adopted Chang's (2008) approach to autoethnography by allowing the author's self-exposure throughout the research while implementing an analytical framework. In other words, my personal experience provided an insider's perspective and the empirical data intertwined with 'found' data allowed greater insight into a larger set of social phenomena inside the Sankuru district.

Participatory methods of inquiry were chosen due to the fact that they allow increasing research participants' involvement and control of the data generation process (Rule & John, 2011). Such involvement was crucial in the context of this research as it promoted a sense of ownership on the part of the participants which encouraged them to produce and share knowledge. The performer is at the centre of the performance as he embodies the intrinsic aspects of the oral literary performance.

This research used Video elicitation, considering the importance of audio and the kinetic nature of an African oral performance. Once the data had been captured in video format, the participant was approached to conduct Video elicitation. The session was intimate and aimed at pinpointing specific elements of the recorded performance in order to gather insight from the text and generate para-textual inputs that helped provide a context for the data at hand.

Along with Video elicitation, an in-depth Interview was 'embedded' in this method: it was a set of open-ended questions directed at each participant and which accompanied the Video-elicitation process. Open-ended questions enabled the researcher to generate insights from participants and answers to the questions which constituted the preliminary analysis as the participant 'drove' the process of providing meaning to the recorded data.

Focus group discussions were used to stimulate and record the participants' reactions and test whether or not the semiotic devices used by the performers during the performances were altered by there being a 'screen' version of the performances. This method provided a deeper understanding of the context in which the performances were held and of what the overall perception of the performers and their performances are in the current socio-cultural context.

Lastly*,* my journal was the cornerstone of this autoethnographic approach as it was the 'carrier' of field notes. Field notes included thoughts, ideas, intuitions, and interactions.

To what extent can technology be used to depict and represent elements of oral literature? The multimodal capabilities of animation as a medium allow the genre to carry the various layers of meaning-making from an instance of oral performance. Through the practical component, I was truly able to put the medium of animation to the test by constantly exploring possibilities through experimentation with various combinations until I eventually reached the desired outcome. It is true that Djoko's story, though chosen for its narrative value and overall structure, did not lead to a seamless integration into animated format; I had to restructure some of the content, omit a few elements, just so that the story could translate better into the medium of animation.

However, as I went through the process of restructuring and omitting what did not translate well visually, one thing was clear: I was aware of how adaptations could have affected the overall context. Hence, I had to ensure the changes did not result in a paradigm shift or a misrepresentation of the culture. Going through the process of adapting the story for better integration of animated content made me realise the importance of a deep understanding of the culture that is being represented. The medium of animation offers countless creative possibilities; hence it is very easy for the animator or filmmaker to detach himself from the culture, or misrepresent it as a result of focusing solely on creating 'beautiful' animation. It is important that creative decisions take into consideration the cultural value of the performance and the semiotic devices that accompany it.

I would like to assert that I do not condemn animated adaptations of literary work that are loosely based on original stories as I am an enthusiastic supporter of many of the animated adaptations by the Disney Company, for example, which created some of the classic examples of great storytelling meeting beautiful animation. Many of the best animated films are based on a representation of a culture. Disney's latest offering, *Coco* (2018), has been highly praised due to the sensitive and accurate depiction of Mexican culture. It is not difficult to figure out why the most successful animation studios spend months, if not years, researching and, when necessary, engaging with a culture through travel and interaction, prior to representing it through live action or animation. The point is that, if animation is meant to represent a culture faithfully, then the author needs either to be a member of the culture or a non-member of the

culture who conducts extensive research to gain a deeper understanding of the culture in question.

Sankuru orature is not immune to societal changes: its current form has been defined by many years of cultural practice; its format and, subsequently, its interpretation have also been affected by the individuality and creativity of each of the contemporary exponents of the genre.

Though my data collections methods revealed that my participants do not worry about the possible disappearance of orature, despite current societal changes, I still wanted to share the beauty of my culture by suggesting an alternative that depicts oral literature in a brighter light than has been the case with most written versions. The research was a great discovery process as it helped assess how I view my cultural identity and it also helped me gain a greater appreciation for my culture, along with the desire to use my acquired skills to promote and celebrate its beauty and intricacy. Though I do not consider this modest contribution to have any meaningful impact on the lives of the people of Sankuru, I feel proud to have initiated something that, I hope, I will be able to develop further in future.

6.2. Recommendations for future studies

The current study focused mainly on a storytelling performance as only one of the featured performances could be selected, mostly due to how time-consuming animation is. 3D animation, for example, is a combination of specific skillsets: modelling, rigging, texturing, lighting, compositing and animation usually takes place towards the end of the pipeline. Having to do everything on my own meant I had to handle all the tasks myself; and, while it is not the first time I have created a 3D animation on my own, it is not the most sustainable approach, timewise. If I had had more time and resources, I would have liked to explore how effectively each of the main animation techniques could be used to capture elements of oral literature.

There are a few other areas that need to be researched:

1. I was fascinated by how prolific the Lokombe still is and how similar it is to kinetic typography, a technique widely used in motion graphics today and which relies on the principles of staging, timing and rhythm, among others, to communicate the essence of the concept which typography represents. The length of the beat produced on the Lokombe varies according to which part of the instrument the sound is generated from, which also affects how the sound is interpreted. I could not help but notice the parallel between the two forms and how

an in-depth study could help generate interesting insights that may help garner a greater understanding of both genres.

 2. Another relevant area of study would be to investigate how animation can portray biographical texts such as praise-poetry; and how metaphorical description of space, feelings and emotions can be visually captured through moving shapes and animated imagery.

The current research will be of interest to academics and students who have vested interest in the study of orature by suggesting an approach in which the performers and the essential semiotic components of their performances are included in the selected mode of representation. Visual storytellers such as filmmakers and animators will also find interest in the proposed experimental approach which weaves storytelling performance with cultural values in a unique blend that is only possible thanks to contemporary digital storytelling tools.

References

Anderson, L. 2006. Analytical autoethnography. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography,* 35(4):373-395.

Bâ, A.H. 1982. A tradiçao viva. In *Historia geral da Africa.* Sao Paulo: Atica/Unesco. 181-218.

Bezemer, J. & Jewitt, C. 2010. Multimodal analysis: key issues. In Litosseliti, L. (ed.), *Research methods in linguistics*. London: Continuum. 180-197.

Bochner, A.P. & Ellis, C. 2016. *Evocative Autoethnography: Writing Lives and Telling Stories*. New York: Routledge.

Chang, H. 2008. *Autoethnography as method.* Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Chase, S. E. 2005. Narrative inquiry: Multiple Lenses, Approaches, Voices... In Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, V.S. (eds). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (651-679). London, Thousand Oaks, CA, and New Delhi: Sage.

Ciaffa, J.A. 2008. Tradition and modernity in postcolonial African philosophy. *Humanitas,* 21(1&2):121-145.

Clifford, J. 1983. On ethnographic authority. *Representations*, 1(2):118-146.

Coplan, D.B. 1994. *In the time of cannibals: the words of South Africa's Basotho migrants*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Creswell, J.W. 2008. *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Merrill Education.

Derive, J. 2007. Some propositions for norms of preservation and fixation of African literature. *Research in African Literatures*, 38(3):155-161.

Ellis, C.S. 2004. *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel About Autoethnography*. Walnut Creek: Alta Mira.

Ellis, C.S. & Bochner, A.P. 2006. Analysing analytic autoethnography. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography,* 35(4):429-449.

Emongo, L. 2011. Ana Mongo du Sankuru, Quelques repères historiques. [Online]. Available : http://territoiredekatakokombe.weebly.com/actualiteacutes.html.

Etikan, I., Musa, S., & Alkassim, R. 2016. Comparison convenience sampling and purposive sampling. American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics, 5(1):1-4.

Eze, C. 2014. Rethinking African culture and identity: the Afropolitan model. *Journal of African Studies*, 26(2):234-247.

Fanon, F. 1952. *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Black skin, white masks). Paris, France: Editions du Seuil.

Fatnowna, S. & Pickett, H. 2002. *The place of Indigenous knowledge systems in the post-postmodern integrative paradigm shift*. Claremont, Cape Town: New Africa Books

Finnegan, R. 1970. *Oral literature in Africa*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Finnegan, R. 2007. *The oral and beyond: doing things with words in Africa.* Oxford: James Currey.

Furniss, M. 1997. Adapting Alice. *Art & Design Magazine*, 12(3/4):11-13.

Fleming, J. Talbott, S.L. & Murakami, T. 2001. *Contemporary art and the culture of Japanese animation*. New York: Independent Curators International.

Gale, S.H. 1995. *West African folktales.* Lincolnwood, Il: NTC Publishing Group.

Gyasi, K A. 1999. Writing as Translation: African Literature and the Challenges of Translation. *Research in African Literatures*. 30(2): 75-87, Summer 1999.

Gyasi, K A. 2003. The African writer as translator: writing African Languages through French. *Journal of African Cultural Studies.* 16(2): 143-159, December 2003.

Goffman, E. 1956. *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Social Sciences Research Centre.

Halliday, M. 1978. *Language as a social semiotic*. London: Edward Arnold.

Hikuroa, D. Slade, A. & Gravley, D. 2011. Implementing Mãori Indigenous knowledge (mãtauranga) in a scientific paradigm: restoring the mauri to Te Kete Poutama. *MAI Review 3.* 1-9.

Hodge, R., & Kress, G. 1998. *Social semiotics.* Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Hountondji, P.J. 2002. Knowledge appropriation in a post-colonial context. In Odora Hoppers, C. (ed.). 2002. *Indigenous knowledge and the integration of knowledge systems: towards a philosophy of articulation.* Claremont, Cape Town: New Africa Books. 23-38.

Idang, G. E. 2015. African Culture and Values. *Unisa Press*, 16(2):97-111.

Jaja, J.M. & Badey, P.P. 2012. Logic in African Philosophy: Examples from two Niger Delta Societies. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 2(4):95-101.

Jay-Rayon, L. 2013. Translating Aural Aesthetics in Contemporary African Narratives: A Case Study. *Research in African Literatures.* 44 (1): 166-175.

Jewitt, C., Price, S. & Brown, B. (eds). 2013. *Handbook of digital technology research.* London: SAGE.

Jordan, A.C. 2004. *Tales from Southern Africa.* Jeppestown: AD Donker Publishers.

Kaboré, A. 2014. Orature as a Characteristic of the Literatures of Werewere-Liking and Pacéré. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL),* 2 (4):13-30.

Kalua, F. 2009. Homi Bhabha's Third Space and African identity. *Journal of African Cultural Studies,* 21(1):23-32.

Kaschula, R. (ed.). 2001. *African oral literature – functions in contemporary contexts.* Cape Town: New Africa Books.

Kaschula, R. 2016. Technauriture as an Educational Tool in South Africa. *Nordic Journal of African Studies,* 25(3&4):349-363.

Kaschula, R. & Mostert, A. 2009. Analyzing, digitizing and technologizing the oral word: the case of Bongani Sitole. *Journal of African Cultural Studies,* 21(2):159-175.

Kanneh K. 1998. *African identities: race, nation and culture in ethnography, Pan-Africanism and black literature*. London: Routledge.

Kress, G. & Leeuwen, T.V. 2001. *Multimodal discourse: the modes and media of contemporary communication*. London: Hodder Education.

Lajul, W. 2014. Management of the African knowledge system and the future of Africa in the world. *Philosophia Africana*, 16(1):43-57.

Lord, A. B. 1960. *The Singer of Tales*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Lotman, J. 2002. Semiotics of the individual and society. *Sign Systems Studies* 30(2): 573–576.

Lwin, S.M. 2010. Capturing the dynamics of narrative development in an oral storytelling performance: a multimodal perspective. *Language and Literature,* 19(4):357-377.

Marechal, G. 2010. Autoethnography. In Durepos, G. & Wiebe, E. (eds). 2010. *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*. London: Sage. 43-45.

Martinez, O.L. 2015. *Criteria for defining animation: a revision of the definition of animation in the advent of digital moving images.* https://doi.org/10.1177/1746847715571234 [27 February 2015].

Moen, K. 2015. Imagination and Natural Movement: The Bray Studios and the "Invention" of Animated Film. *Film History*. 27(4): 130-150.

Mudimbe, V.Y. 1988. *The invention of Africa-Gnosis, philosophy, and the order of knowledge*. Oxford: James Currey Ltd.

Muleka, J. 2014. Theory in the study of African Oral Literature: The Oral Artist's Agenda. *Journal of Arts and Humanities*. 3(7):85-91.

Murphy, D. 2000. Africans filming Africa: questioning theories of an authentic African Cinema. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 13(2):239-249.

Nagib, L. 2001. Ouédraogo and the Aesthetics of Silence. In Kashula, R H (ed). *African Oral Literature: Functions in Contemporary Contexts* (100-110). Cape Town: New Africa Books.

Odora Hoppers, C. (ed.). 2002. *Indigenous knowledge and the integration of knowledge systems: towards a philosophy of articulation*. Claremont: New Africa Books.

Okpewho, I. 1992. *African oral literature – backgrounds, character, and continuity*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Ogunjimi, B. & Na' Allah, A.R. 2005. *Introduction to African oral literature and performance*. Trenton, NJ: African World Press.

Oliver, P. 2010. *The student's guide to research ethics*. 2nd ed. London: Open University Press.

Ong, W. 2005. *Orality and literacy*. New York: Routledge.

Opondo, R. A. 2014. Oral storytelling and national kinship: Reflections on the oral narrative performance in the Kenya Schools and Colleges drama Festivals. *Tydskrif Vir Letterkunde*. 51(1):118-131.

Pace, S. 2012. *Writing the self into research: Using grounded theory analytic strategies in autoethnography*. In McLoughlin, N. & Brien, D.L. (eds). *TEXT Special Issue: Creativity: Cognitive, Social and Cultural Perspectives*, 1-14. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303971439_Writing_the_self_into_research_Using _grounded_theory_analytic_strategies_in_autoethnography   [18 June 2019].

Piault, C. 1994. Some thoughts on verbal and non-verbal expression in anthropological fims. In *Evolution, technique, strategies problems. Durban, South Africa*, 1994, 1-11. The Campbell Collections and Centre for Oral Studies, University of Natal.

Posner, R. 2004. Basic tasks of cultural semiotics. In Withalm, G. & Wallmannsberger, J. (eds). *Signs of power – power of Signs. Essays in Honor of Jeff Bernard.* Vienna: INST. 56-89.

Propp, V. 1968. [1928]. Morphology *of the folktale* (translated by The American Folklore Society) USA: Indiana University.

Raab, D. 2013. Transpersonal Approaches to Autoethnographic Research and Writing. *The Qualitative Report*, 18(42):1-18.

Richter, H. 1986. *The struggle for the film: towards a socially responsible cinema*. Aldershot: Scolar Press

Rule, P. & John, V. 2011. *Your guide to cases study research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Russell, E. 1997. Dance Animation and The Post-Modern: New Juxtapositions and Outrageous Couplings. *Art and Design*, 12(3/4):35-39.

Sheldon-Heeg, M.J. 2003. The representation of orality in *African fireside tales,* by Phyllis Savory. *English in Africa*, 30(1):103-122.

Simons, H. 2009. *Case study research in practice*. London: SAGE.

Suryani, A. 2008. Comparing case study and ethnography as qualitative research approaches. *Ilmo Komunikasi,* 5(1):117-127.

Sylvester, R. 2014. Shifting traditions: Chaucer's narrative accomplishment in the Wife of Bath's Tale considered in the context of the shift from oral tradition to literate print tradition. *The Next Generation*, 10(2):248-257.

Wa Thiong'o, N. 2007. Notes towards a Performance Theory of Orature. *Performance Research.* 12(3): 4-7, September 2007.

Wall, S.S. 2006. An autoethnography on learning. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods,* 5(2):146-160. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F160940690600500205 [19 June 2019].

Wall, S.S. 2016. Toward a moderate autoethnography. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 15(1). https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1609406916674966 [19 June 2019].

Watson, N. 2016. *What do Aboriginal storytellers bring to crime fiction?* PhD thesis, University of Technology, Sydney.

Wells, P. 1997a. Animation is the most important art form of the Twentieth Century. *Art & Design Magazine*, 12(3/4):2-3.

Wells, P. 1997b. Hayao Miyazaki – Floating Worlds, Floating Signifiers. *Art & Design Magazine*. 12(3/4): 22-23, March – April 1997.

Willem, F. 2015. Four concepts of Africa. *Theological Studies*.71(3): 1-10 https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v71i3.2847 [12 May 2015].

Wynchank, A. 1994. The cineaste as a modern griot in West Africa. In Sienaert, E. Cowper-Lewis. M. & Bell, N. (eds). Oral tradition and its transmission: the many forms of messages.University of Natal, Durban. 12-26.

Appendix A: Ethics Clearance from the Faculty of Informatics and Design

Cape Peninsula
University of Technology

P.O. Box 652 • Cape Town 8000 South Africa •Tel: +27 21 469 1012 • Fax +27 21 469 1002
80 Roeland Street, Vredehoek, Cape Town 8001

Office of the Research Ethics Committee	Faculty of Informatics and Design

At a meeting of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee, ethics approval was granted to

MR LODI PAUL INGA, student number 207001936 for research activities related to the

MTech: Graphic Design degree at the Faculty of Informatics and Design, Cape Peninsula

University of Technology.

Title of dissertation/thesis:	African 'orature' in the form of animation: The case of Sankuru, Democratic Republic of Congo

Comments

Research activities are restricted to those detailed in the research proposal.

Signed: Faculty Research Ethics Committee	28/4/2015 Date

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
INFORMATICS AND DESIGN
ETHICS APPROVAL GRANTED

: 2 8 APR 2015

Cape Peninsula
University of Technology

Appendix B: Letter of Consent by District Administrator (in French)

Moi...William...Henya Lubaya...M.......Administrateur du territoire de.....Lolja........,

Viens par la présente autoriser le nommé **Lodi Paul Inga** à entreprendre ses recherches d'études universitaires au sein de cette juridiction. Etant conscient du fait qu'il fera recours à certains membres de ce district, en vue d'obtenir des informations requises pour entreprendre ses recherches, je détiens le droit de suspendre le cours de ces recherches au cas où elles enfreindraient aux droits humains, ou porteraient atteinte à la dignité des participants ou aux valeurs morales constituant notre culture.

Signé...William...Henya.....date 2/10 2014

W. HENYA LUBAYA M.
Administrateur de Territoire

Appendix C: Letter of Consent by District Administrator (English translation)

I....Luboya Mbiya Luboya M...territorial administrator of ...Lodja...

Hereby authorise Lodi Paul Inga to conduct his academic studies in this jurisdiction. I am aware that he will require the assistance of members of this district in order to gather data for his studies; I reserve the right to terminate the process of his fieldwork in case his actions affect in any negative way the participants' human rights, their dignity or if the study appears to be contrary to moral values which form our culture.

Signed....William Mbiya....on 21 October 2014

signature

Appendix D: Sample of interview for Transect walk with performers

Introduction: Establish rapport and give an in-depth introduction of myself, background and research details.

Purpose of the interview

>I would like to ask questions relating to your personal life and the work that you do.

Motivation

>I would like to use the information to understand where you come from and find out more about your art form and how it positions itself within this setting you live and perform in.

The questionnaire is a series of open-ended questions which are meant to take place in a relaxed, open-air environment, while the performer and I walk around the village.

Here are the questions:

- What is your full name?
- Where were you born?
- How long have you been performing?
- How did you learn this art form?
- What or who inspired you to follow this line of work?
- Do you perform in a way that emulates the performers of yesteryears or do you tailor your performance based on your own preferences? Would you please elaborate?
- What are the things that affect (either positively or negatively) the way you perform, as a contemporary practitioner of the genre?
- How does what you wear during performance impact the overall execution and significance of the performance?
- Are there any elements without which you cannot perform? (Or at least your performance would not be the same?)
- What are they and how important are they to the overall performance?
- What do you think the community's perception of you is?
- How important do you think your place in your community is?
- What do you think the future of your artform is?

Appendix E: Sample of interview for Video elicitation with performer

Here are the types of questions: (The questions will be designed based on content, upon visualising the video prior to the meeting)

• Tell me about the performance: what is the story behind this piece?

• Do you know who the author is? Is it your own composition?

• How did it come about? Who or what inspired its creation? (if it is their own composition)

• What is happening in this instance? (Pinpointing particular moments in the performance). Does it have any particular meaning? What is it?

• Why is a particular symbol, gesture or motif used at a particular stage of the performance?

• What is the relationship between different elements within the frame?

• How are they related to the social context of Sankuru?

• How is the audience contributing to your output during performance?

• What is your take on having your performance captured on video? Are there any advantages? disadvantages?

Appendix F: Sample of interview for Focus group discussion with audience/community members (Who either were at the performance or are familiar with the performer's work)

Introduction: Establish rapport and give an in-depth introduction of myself, background and research details.

Purpose of the interview

> I would like to ask questions relating to the performer and his performance in general but I also would like to ask you questions about a particular piece from the captured performance.

Motivation

> I would like to use the information to find out about how the performer is perceived by you, the community members who have regularly seen him perform and also I would like to find out about how you interpret elements of his performances and what they mean to you.

Here are the questions:

- Was yesterday (or the day before) the first time you witnessed this performance? If the answer is no … How often have you witnessed the performance of this piece? (various answers can be expected)

- Has the performance been executed the same way every time you witnessed it? If not, what do you think may have affected the changes?

- Can anybody tell me what is happening in this instance? (Pinpointing particular moments in the performance). Does it have any particular meaning to you?

- Do you know why a particular symbol, gesture or motif is used at a particular stage of the performance?

- How is the performance related to the social context of Sankuru?

- Would you be interested if the performance was done in a language you do not understand? Why so?

- Are there, in your opinion, any requirements for one to become a performer?

- What do you think is your contribution (as audience members) to the overall content and form of the performance?

- How do you feel about capturing a performance on video?

- What do you think is the future of this artform?

Appendix G: Early stage of Dog and Elephant character design
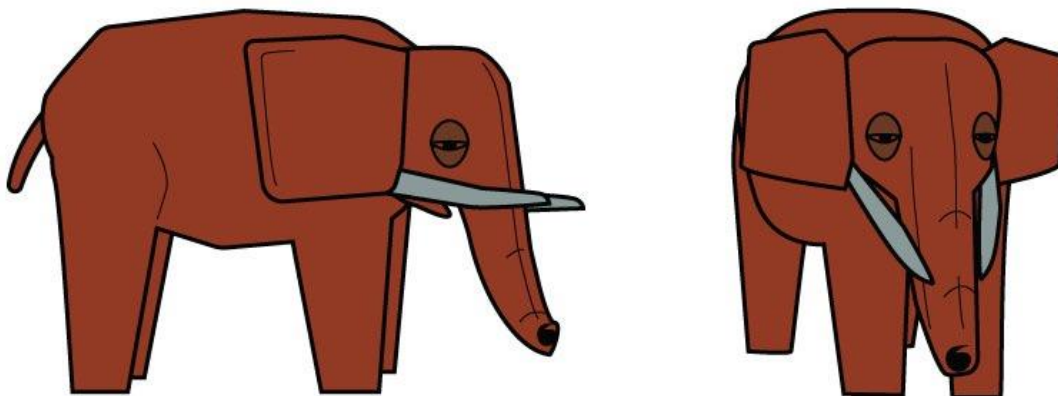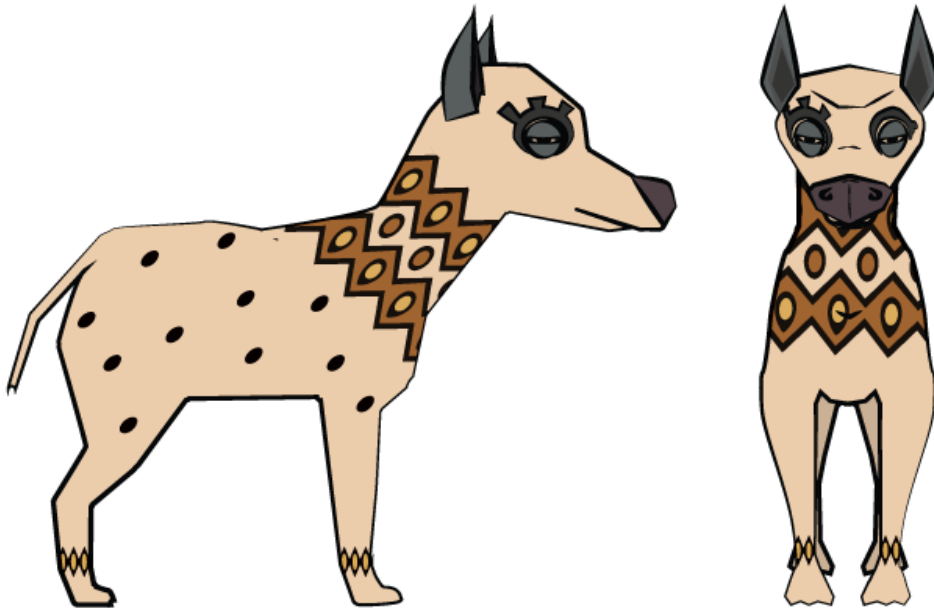
Appendix H: Storyboard for animated component.