

**THE REPRESENTATION OF MYTH IN OKOITI OMTATAH'S
PLAY, LWANDA MAGERE**

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**UGANDA CHRISTIAN
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DECLARATION

I, Kyarisiima Margret, declare that I am the sole author of this dissertation and it has never been submitted to any other institution for any academic award.

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APPROVAL

I, James Taabu Busimba, acknowledge that this dissertation was conducted under my supervision and is ready for final submission to the School of Education, Uganda Christian University.



James Taabu Busimba, PhD

Date: 15th September 2025

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my father, siblings, daughter, friends, and my supervisors for their support towards the successful completion of this dissertation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this dissertation is an opportunity to thank the Lord our God for life, protection, good health, and wisdom. I thank my supervisor for guiding me throughout the write up. I appreciate my father for supporting me financially and for his continual courage and advice.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the representation of myth in Okoti Omtatah's play, *Lwanda Magere*, with a focus on characterisation, use of setting and portrayal of tradition. I examine how Omtatah re-creates elements of myth in Luo mythology in the form of a play performed in the context of a contemporary Kenyan and East African situation. The play dramatically retells the story of the heroic Lwanda Magere, a mythic Luo warrior believed to have been until his secrets were revealed by his traitor wife leading to his death in battle. It concludes that Omtatah's representation of myth in the *Lwanda Magere* play serves both as a fresh re-telling of the myth and a preservation of Luo cultural heritage and a commentary on contemporary social issues. Overall, I argue, that Omtatah demonstrates that the relevance of myth in African literature continues to grow. The findings show that the play gets its power from blending characterisation, setting and tradition with elements of myth. The study recommends continued research on how myth, especially in terms of gender, influences especially East African creative writers.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

In this study, I examine the representation of myth in Okoiti Omtatah's play, *Lwanda Magere* (1991). The study analyses how myth is re-constructed through *characterization, setting and cultural tradition* scrutinising the representation of myth in the play. It explores how myth is conveyed through key literary and dramatic elements of characterization, setting, and the depiction of tradition. Specifically, I investigate how characters embody mythical qualities, the role of setting in establishing a mythical atmosphere and how traditional Luo beliefs and values are represented through myth. By analysing these elements, the study aims to demonstrate and validate the ways in which Omtatah uses myth not only as a narrative or dramatic framework but also as a medium for cultural expression and preservation in his play.

1.2 Background to the Study

Studying a literary work by Okoiti Omtatah is an intriguing but interesting exercise. Born on 30th November 1964, Okoiti Omtatah is a renowned Kenyan human rights activist and an engineer by trade. He is well known for challenging social and political injustices, and has successfully presented petitions on behalf of Kenyans. Either by choice or otherwise, one of the mediums through which he channels his activism is creative literature. Thus, the play *Lwanda Magere* mirrors the mythical world in African societies as a framework for making his concerns accessible to the readers or watchers of his play. Omtatah portrays a clear picture of social and political situation in post-independence East African countries. His literary dramatic works include *The Voice of the People* (2007) and *Lwanda Magere* (1991). Omtatah is a contemporary writer whose writing career began in 20th century and whose drama is influenced by neoclassical literature. Neoclassical writers portray man as inherently flawed. They emphasize restraint, self-control and common sense. It is therefore not very surprising that he chooses mythic models for his play, *Lwanda Magere*.

The play's title is an adaptation of Lwanda Magere, a heroic mythic and a legendary figure from Luo folklore in East Africa, particularly among the Luo people of Kenya and Uganda. The story is passed down through oral tradition depicting themes of heroism and resistance where Lwanda Magere is celebrated as a heroic figure who embodies bravery, resilience and resistance against oppressive forces. The narrative includes supernatural elements such as Lwanda Magere's invincibility in battle, a power that he derived from his mother's mystical instructions during his conception. Overall, the story of Lwanda Magere reflects Luo cultural values, beliefs and history culturally representing the spirit of resistance and the valourisation of heroic deeds within Luo culture portraying the community's collective memory and identity.

It is in the context of the foregoing account that I think the play utilises mythological elements to convey moral lessons and explore cultural identities. I can assert that *Lwanda Magere* celebrates East African folklore and the importance of community resilience. Further, *Lwanda Magere* exemplifies how myths and legends from different cultures and time periods continue to resonate in literature, offering insights into universal themes of fate, heroism and the complexities of human experience. The playwright Omtatah majorly focuses on power struggle in society. However, the study will focus on portrayal of myth in *Lwanda Magere*, appreciate its contributions to understanding mythological storytelling and cultural narratives.

1.2.1 The History and Development of Myth in Literature

Myths have served as foundational narratives for societies, offering explanations for natural phenomena, human behaviour and cultural practices. In literature, myths have evolved from ancient oral traditions to sophisticated literary expressions, influencing various genres and forms. Myths originated as oral traditions, passed down through generations by storytellers explaining the origins of the world, the gods, and humanity. Prominent examples include the Greek myths documented by Hesiod in *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, and the epic tales of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Similarly, the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, one of the oldest known literary works, combines myth with historical elements to explore themes of heroism and mortality. In classical

literature, myths were integral to the works of poets and playwrights. The ancient Greeks and Romans integrated mythological themes into their tragedies, comedies and epic poetry. For instance, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is a comprehensive collection of myths that have influenced Western literature profoundly. These stories were not only entertainment but also served to convey moral lessons and cultural values.

During the medieval period, mythological themes were often Christianized, merging pagan myths with biblical narratives. The Arthurian legends, which combined Celtic myths with Christian symbolism, exemplify this fusion. The Renaissance saw a revival of interest in classical myths, as writers like Dante in *The Divine Comedy* and Shakespeare in his plays drew heavily on ancient mythological sources to explore human nature and the divine. In the 20th century, myth underwent significant reinterpretation in modernist and postmodernist literature. Writers such as James Joyce in *Ulysses* and T. S. Eliot in *The Waste Land* used mythological frameworks to structure their narratives and explore contemporary issues. These works often employed myth to highlight the disintegration of societal norms and the search for meaning in a fragmented world. In contemporary literature, myths continue to be reimagined and reinterpreted. Authors like Neil Gaiman in *American Gods* and Madeline Miller in *Circe* adapt ancient myths to modern settings and sensibilities, exploring themes of identity, power, and transformation. These contemporary works often challenge traditional interpretations of myths, offering new perspectives on timeless stories because myths have evolved from ancient oral traditions to contemporary literary expressions, engaging with both indigenous and global influences.

1.2.2 Myth in Classic Literature

Greek mythology emerged from oral traditions and religious beliefs dating back to the Bronze Age through the classical times. These myths were integral to the cultural and religious practices of ancient Greeks. Over centuries, myths evolved through various literary forms, including epic poetry (Homer's "Iliad" and "Odyssey"), tragedy (for example, plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides) and lyric poetry (works by Hesiod and Pindar). Roman mythology was heavily influenced by Greek mythology, with

Roman gods often identified with their Greek counterparts (Zeus as Jupiter, Aphrodite as Venus). Roman authors like Virgil (author of the "Aeneid") and Ovid (author of the "Metamorphoses") adapted and expanded upon Greek myths, incorporating them into Roman cultural and literary traditions. Classic literature often explored myths related to the creation of the universe (cosmogony) and the genealogies of gods (theogony), reflecting ancient Greek and Roman beliefs about the origins of the world and divine hierarchy.

Myths frequently featured heroes undertaking epic quests, facing moral dilemmas, and encountering tragic fates due to hubris or divine intervention (Johnston, 2020). These narratives served as moral and philosophical reflections on human nature and the gods' influence. Myths were performed and celebrated during religious festivals, such as the Athenian festivals honouring Dionysus (the Dionysia), which featured tragic plays that often re-interpreted mythological stories. Classic literature used myths to educate audiences about moral virtues, civic duty, and the consequences of human actions. For example, the story of Prometheus in Greek mythology illustrates themes of rebellion against authority and the consequences of challenging divine order. Buxton (2022) and Lefkowitz (2021) utilize interdisciplinary methods to examine how myths in classic literature intersect with art, philosophy, and religious studies. This study however will analyse the significance of characterisation and setting in portraying myth and how tradition is depicted through myth.

1.2.3 Myth in African Literature

African literature mythical stories are rich and diverse, reflecting the continent's cultural heritage, oral traditions and diverse storytelling practices. African mythology and folklore originate from oral traditions passed down through generations. These myths were integral to cultural practices, religious beliefs and community identity across diverse ethnic groups. Over time, African myths evolved and adapted through various forms of oral storytelling, including folktales, legends, and epics. These narratives often featured supernatural beings, heroes and moral lessons. In the 20th century, African writers began to incorporate traditional myths and folklore into written

literature, blending oral storytelling with Western literary forms. African literature often portrays myths as expressions of spiritual beliefs, cosmology, and the relationship between humans and the supernatural world serving as allegories and metaphors to critique social injustices, colonialism, and postcolonial challenges.

Writers like Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o in *The River Between* (1965) use myths to explore cultural identity and resistance to external influences. African literature reflects the continent's diverse mythological traditions, from West African Yoruba myths - like the gods and spirits in Wole Soyinka's works - to East African Luo myths - *Lwanda Magere*. Contemporary African writers continue to draw on myths to address contemporary issues such as environmental degradation, globalization, and human rights. Gikandi (2018) and Quayson (2020) analyse how African writers negotiate myth, memory, and history in their literary works, challenging Western literary canons and affirming indigenous cultural traditions. The evolution of African myths in literary forms and their enduring relevance in contemporary discourse, illustrates the power to convey universal truths while celebrating cultural diversity.

1.2.4 Myth in East African Literature

Myths in East African literature reflect the region's rich cultural heritage, diverse linguistic traditions and complex colonial history. They serve as a repository of collective memory, cultural identity and societal values. East African myths have their roots in the oral traditions of various ethnic groups, such as the Luo, Kikuyu, Maasai and Swahili communities. These myths were traditionally transmitted by storytellers and played crucial role in maintaining cultural continuity. For instance, the myth of *Lwanda Magere* among the Luo people and the stories of Gikuyu and Mumbi among the Kikuyu are foundational narratives that explain the origins of these communities and their relationship with the natural world. The colonial period brought significant disruption to traditional storytelling practices as Western literary forms and languages were imposed. However, this period also saw the emergence of a written literature that sought to preserve and reinterpret indigenous myths.

Writers like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Grace Ogot incorporated myths into their narratives to critique colonialism and explore the complexities of identity and resistance. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's novel *The River Between* (1965) uses Kikuyu myths to frame the story of colonial disruption and the struggle for cultural survival. Grace Ogot, in works like *The Promised Land* (1966), draws on Luo myths to explore themes of migration, land, and community. The Post-independence East African literature saw a resurgence of interest in indigenous myths as a way to reclaim cultural heritage and assert national identities. Authors began to blend traditional myths with modern literary techniques to address contemporary issues. In the contemporary period, writers such as Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor and Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi have continued to engage with myths in their works. Owuor's *Dust* (2014) incorporates Kikuyu and Luo myths to delve into Kenya's turbulent history and the personal stories of its characters. Makumbi's *Kintu* (2014) reimagines Buganda myths to explore the legacy of colonialism and the complexities of modern Ugandan identity. It is with this background that I got interested in analysing the representation of myth in *Lwanda Magere* by Okoit Omtatah.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

In this study, I examine the representation of myth in Okoit Omtatah's play, *Lwanda Magere* (1991). *Lwanda Magere* is a play that portrays elements of myth, deeply rooted in the traditions and cultural beliefs of the Luo community. The play, serves as a critical lens through which the Luo community's cultural values and beliefs are portrayed. Despite the centrality of myth in the play, there is limited scholarly focus on how various mythic elements in terms of characterization, setting and tradition contribute to the audience's understanding of the play. Whereas scholars such as Chiangong (2022) and Tayebwa (2024) have studied *Lwanda Magere*, their focal points are general observations. Chiangong explores symbolic codes, masculinity and representations of women while Tayebwa focuses on the depiction of the conflict between the Luo and the Lang'o in *Lwanda Magere* using orature. Yet myth in its own right is a significant aspect in the play. The gap as to the use of myth as the cornerstone of characterisation and setting in *Lwanda Magere* remains unaddressed. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining how Okoit Omtatah depicts myth in his characters, setting and tradition in *Lwanda Magere*.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the representation of myth in Okoiti Omtatah's *Lwanda Magere* (1991), a play in which the said myth is re-constructed within its characterization, setting and cultural tradition to assist the audience's understanding of the play clearly.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To examine the representation of myth in the characterisation of Lwanda Magere the mythic hero in the play
2. To explore the effectiveness of setting in the representation of myth in the *Lwanda Magere* play
3. To analyse the representation of myth in the portrayal of cultural tradition in the *Lwanda Magere* play

1.6 Research Questions

1. How is myth used in the characterisation of Lwanda Magere the mythic hero in the play?
2. What is the effectiveness of setting in the representation of myth in the Lwanda Magere play?
3. In which way is myth significant in the portrayal of cultural tradition in the Lwanda Magere play?

1.7 Justification of the Study

The study was justified because of the identified existing gap in portrayal of myth in Lwanda Magere. A few studies have been done on the portrayal of myth in Lwanda Magere focusing on characterization and setting in portraying the myth and how the myth itself depicts tradition. Thus, the need to fill this research gap justified the study. Moreover, in the context of African cultural heritage, Lwanda Magere is a significant cultural artifact that embodies the values, beliefs and history of the Luo people.

Studying this play provides additional insight into the cultural narratives and collective memory of the Luo community.

Secondly, Omtatah's *Lwanda Magere* is a contemporary reimagining of a traditional myth, offering a unique blend of modern literary techniques and traditional storytelling. The play contributes to understanding how modern African writers engage with traditional folklore and myth to appeal to their audiences. Finally, there is a limited amount of scholarly research specifically focusing on the representation of myth in Omtatah's works. This study fills this gap by providing an in-depth analysis of how myth is represented in *Lwanda Magere* and contributes to the existing body of literary criticism on African folklore and myths.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The study is significant in various ways. This research enhances understanding of African myths and their role in contemporary literature. It provides a comprehensive analysis of how traditional myths are adapted and reinterpreted in modern African plays, contributing to the discourse on the preservation and evolution of African cultural narratives.

By exploring the portrayal of myth in *Lwanda Magere*, this study sets a foundation for further research into other myths portrayed in African literature, encouraging comparative studies and interdisciplinary approaches involving literature, history and cultural studies.

Furthermore, the findings of this research can be utilised in educational settings to teach students about African literature, cultural narratives and the significance of myth in storytelling. It can also serve as a resource for curriculum development in African literature and cultural studies programs, at some point. Finally, this study plays a role in cultural preservation by analysing and documenting critical responses on a key piece of Luo cultural heritage. It helps keep traditional myths alive in academic and cultural discussions, fostering appreciation and understanding of Kenya's diverse cultural

landscape.

1.9 Scope of the Study

The study centered on Okoit Omtatah's *Lwanda Magere* with a view to analyse the representation of myth within characterisation, cultural tradition and setting in the play. My focus was on identifying the significance of myth on characterization, examining the effectiveness of setting in portraying the mythical world and establishing the mythical portrayal of tradition in the play *Lwanda Magere*

1.10 Theoretical Framework

The research was guided by a blending of two theories of literary criticism: the sociological theory and psychoanalytic theory. Psychoanalytic theory was developed by Sigmund Freud in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The theory revolves around the understanding of human behaviour, focusing on the unconscious mind. Freud describes the id, ego and superego as representative of the psyche and also the significance of early childhood experiences, repressed desires and defense mechanisms. Psychoanalytic theory has significantly influenced cultural and literary studies. Critics and scholars use psychoanalytic concepts to analyse texts, cultural artifacts and social phenomena. For example, Žižek (...) applies Lacanian psychoanalysis to contemporary culture and ideology, exploring how unconscious desires shape political and social structures. However, psychoanalytic theory is criticised for some of its concepts being unscientific and lacking empirical support and its perceived determinism, gender biases and Eurocentrism.

This study partly gazes towards the Freudian school of psychoanalysis which is interested in the process of the mind - the psyche - and how these processes shape the production and appreciation of a literary text. Freud lays the emphasis on the role of the unconscious mind in determining our behavior, interests, likes, dislikes and attitudes. Freudian school of psychoanalysis asserts that "an author in most cases unveils from the unconscious all the repressed sentiments, passions and dreams on the

text. D. H. Lawrence supports this view and says “the writer sheds his sickness in his work”. Thus, the biographical information of the author is deemed necessary in the understanding. In this case the Luo community can be taken as the authors of the *Lwanda Magere* myth. and interpreting a literary text. I therefore used this theory in the study to show how Okoit Omtatah dramatization of myth have a psychoanalytic aspect.

Sociological theory is another literary theory the researcher used in this study. Sociological theories are statements of how and why particular facts about the social world are related. They range in scope to a single social process to paradigms for analysis and interpretation. Sociological approach is traced way back to the 18th century and came into full application in the 19th century by a French critic and historian Hippolyte Adolphe Taine (1828-1893) whose views this study will base. Train asserts that what makes a work of art great and relevant is its ability to mirror real life and that art exist in a particular historical context. It is not created in the vacuum; rather the history of the people, their cultural norms and values, economy and politics are all crucial in the creation of a text.

According to sociological critics such as Train believes that literature is a social form of thought. It derives its material from society and in turn contributes to the well-being of society. Kennedy et al (2005) also observes that art is not created in the vacuum, and therefore all art is socially embedded in a given society and at a particular time. Plato as a scholar and critic, talks about literature and society and how God should be treated. God is a source of ideal and all goodness. Presentation of gods should not show them as immoral, violent and subject to passion. Okoit Omtatah’s *Lwanda Magere* looks at how human beings relate and are affected by the Divine. The Divine are great in power and knowledge-have the ability to recount the past and tell the future and their life (gods) is not to decline and fall. The researcher thus employed some aspects from each of the two theories to make an analysis of how Okoit Omtatah’s *Lwanda Magere* dramatisation represents of myth.

1.11 Definition of Key Terms

The following terms are used in this study to refer to specific contexts.

Myth

This refers to a traditional story involving gods and or supernatural beings concerning people or a natural or social phenomenon.

Character

Character refers to actors or the participants involved in the story and action of the play. A character in a play is not always presented in the form of a human being.

Setting

Setting is the place, time and atmosphere where and when events in the play occur.

Portrayal

This term refers to the depiction or presentation or revelation of something

Representation

Representation is the action of speaking or acting on behalf of someone. It can also refer to the description or portrayal of someone or something in a particular way. In this study, representation refers to the specific ways in which Omtatah uses aspects of the Lwanda Magere myth to create setting, develop character and portray cultural elements of the Luo people in the play.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This work is not a pioneer in the field of myth nor in the study of the Luanda Magere myth. There is a body of literature that I consulted in order to establish the research gap of the study. Some of the works are of relevant scholarly value, especially in relation to the Luo myth of Lwanda Magere. Critics and scholarly works on African mythology and previous literary critiques or analyses of Omtatah's works provide the basics in this literature review. Literary theorists who have ventured into the study of representation of myth in literature and *Lwanda Magere* in particular have been a useful source and have provided frameworks for deeper contextual grounding of this study.

2.2 Representation of Myth in Classic Literary Texts

Mythology has influenced classic literary texts to shape themes, characters and narratives thus conveying universal truths, cultural values and existential inquiries. For example, Homer's *The Iliad* (1999) and *The Odyssey* (1997) representation of myth in Greek mythology, features gods, heroes and mythical creatures. *The Iliad* revolves around the Trojan War, a legendary conflict spurred by divine interventions and heroic feats. *The Odyssey* follows the hero Odysseus on his perilous journey home, encountering mythological beings like the Cyclops and the Sirens. By exploring the themes of heroism, fate and the human condition, these texts exemplify the Greek worldview where gods directly influence human affairs. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (2004) employs a Latin narrative poem as a compendium of Greek and Roman myths, chronicling the history of the world from creation to Julius Caesar's deification. It includes tales of transformation involving gods and mortals. Ovid's work physically and metaphorically illustrates the fluidity of identity and the power of change. It reflects the Romans' adoption and adaptation of Greek myth.

The Aeneid (2006) by Virgil is an epic poem that blends myth and history, narrating the legendary journey of Aeneas from Troy to Italy, where he becomes the ancestor of the

Romans. The epic features divine interventions and prophecies legitimising the Roman imperial rule and connects Rome's origins to the grandeur of Troy, intertwining myth with national identity. *The Divine Comedy* (2003) by Dante integrates classical and Christian mythology, depicting the poet's journey through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. It references mythological figures like Ulysses and the Minotaur to explore moral and theological themes, providing a comprehensive vision of the afterlife and reflecting the synthesis of classical and medieval thought. In *Paradise Lost*, for instance, John Milton reinterprets the Christian myth of the Fall of Man, drawing parallels to classical epics and employing mythological elements such as epic battles and heroic figures depicting themes of free will, obedience, and the nature of evil, offering a complex portrayal of biblical and mythological narratives. All these classic texts demonstrate the enduring power of myth to frame human experiences and reflect cultural values across different civilizations. By embedding mythological elements, these works provide a rich style of storytelling that continues to resonate with readers.

Several scholars have approached the representation of myth in classic literature from various angles, analysing its functions, meanings, and transformations across different cultural and historical contexts. The other source is Campbell (2008) who, on the monomyth or "hero's journey", explores common patterns in mythological narratives across different cultures thus helping in understanding the universal aspects of myths in classic literature. Frazer (2009) in *The Golden Bough*, examines the relationship between myth and ritual, suggesting that myths often originated to explain and justify religious rituals an approach that has been applied to literary texts to explore the ritualistic dimensions of their mythological elements. Buxton (2004, op. cit.) and Beard (2013) focused on the cultural and historical contexts in which myths were created and how they have been reinterpreted over time highlighting the dynamic and evolving nature of myth in literature.

Recent scholarship on the representation of myth in classic literature continues to explore traditional theories while incorporating new perspectives and methodologies. Gregory Nagy's (2020) work explores the integration of myth with other cultural forms such as music and performance examining how oral traditions and performative aspects

influence the transmission and interpretation of myths in classic texts. There has been an increase in using digital tools to analyse mythological texts. Projects like the Perseus Digital Library provide extensive databases for studying ancient texts, allowing for sophisticated text analysis and intertextual research. Emily Greenwood (2019) examines how classical myths have been reinterpreted in postcolonial contexts. She explores how these reworking challenge traditional narratives and reflect contemporary socio-political issues. Thomas Van Northwick (2016) analyses classical myths through the lens of eco-criticism, exploring how ancient texts reflect human relationships with nature and environmental concerns.

Helen Morales (2020) examines the representation of gender in classical myths, focusing on how these narratives construct and deconstruct gender roles. She also explores feminist re-readings and adaptations of mythological stories. Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray (2011) study how classical myths have been received, adapted and transformed across different historical periods and cultural contexts highlighting the dynamic and evolving nature of myth. Jonathan Shay (2002) work that often relates ancient myths to modern psychological issues applies psychological theories to classical texts, particularly focusing on the experiences of trauma and recovery in mythological narratives.

2.3 Studies on myth in African literature

In African literature, the representation of myth explores how traditional myths are integrated into modern narratives, how they reflect cultural identity, and address contemporary issues. Okpewho's (2023) work focuses on the reclamation and reinterpretation of African myths in literature to examine how African writers use myth to reclaim cultural identity and challenge colonial narratives. To analyse myth and postcolonialism, Chinua Achebe and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o use myth to critique colonialism and its aftermath since their works often incorporate indigenous myths to assert cultural identity and resistance. Olaniyan (2017) explores the intertextual use of myth in African literature, examining how modern African writers engage with and transform traditional myths to create new narratives and meanings. Soyinka's plays and essays utilize Yoruba myths to address contemporary social and political issues. Scholars analyse

how his works use myth to comment on power, corruption, and societal change.

Other scholars have examined gender and myth for example Caroline Rooney's (2007) research that explores how African women writers use myth to address gender issues. She analyses how these writers reinterpret myths to challenge patriarchal structures and highlight women's experiences. Anthony Vital (2013) examines the ecological themes in African literature, focusing on how traditional myths about nature and the environment are reimagined in contemporary works to address environmental concerns. Simon Gikandi (2011) work explores how African diasporic writers use myth to navigate issues of identity, displacement, and cultural memory. He investigates how these myths are adapted in new cultural contexts. Nnedi Okorafor (2020) speculative fiction often draws on African myths to explore themes of national identity, technology, and futurism. Her works illustrate how myth can be used to envision alternative futures. African literature's engagement with myth serves as a tool for cultural reclamation, social critique, and creative innovation and reflecting both the continuity of tradition and the adaptation to contemporary contexts. What I have to do here is to show that one particular playwright, Omtatah, uses myth in his play, *Lwanda Magere*

2.4 Studies on myth in East African literature

East African literature delves into how traditional myths are integrated into modern narratives, to reflect cultural identity and address contemporary issues. The scholar Grace Musila (2018) examines how female East African writers reinterpret myths to challenge patriarchal narratives and highlight women's roles in society. She explores how myths are used to navigate issues of gender and power. Then comes Mũkoma wa Ngũgĩ whose works incorporate ecological themes through myth to highlight the relationship between humans and nature, reflecting traditional ecological knowledge and contemporary environmental concerns. On his part, Gikandi (2016) explores how oral traditions, including myths, are transformed in East African literature. He analyses the narrative techniques used to integrate oral storytelling into written forms, creating a hybrid literary style. In his other novels for example *Mrs. Shaw* (2016), Gikandi incorporate myth to address issues of identity and displacement in the diaspora. Scholars analyse how these myths serve to connect the diaspora community with their

cultural heritage. Julius S. S. Matovu (2020) research looks into how myths are used to construct and question national identities in East African literature. He studies how myths from different ethnic groups contribute to national narratives and identity formation.

Most of the scholarly studies done on Billy Kasshora's (2019) work explore how East African literature uses myth to address historical memory and trauma. He delves into how myths help communities remember and interpret past events, particularly in the context of colonialism and postcolonial struggles. All these studies reflect the diverse ways in which myths are represented in East African literature. By blending traditional and modern elements, East African authors use myth to address contemporary social, political, and environmental issues, while also preserving and reinterpreting cultural identities. One such writer is Omtatah in *Lwanda Magere*.

2.5 Comparative studies on the mythic Lwanda Magere

Lwanda Magere is celebrated as a legendary hero known for his exceptional strength and invulnerability in East African folklore. He embodies bravery, resilience, and the Spirit of resistance against oppressive forces, making him a cultural symbol of justice and protection within his community. His character reflects Luo cultural values and beliefs, emphasizing the importance of heroism and communal solidarity. "Lwanda Magere" originates from oral tradition among the Luo people of East Africa, particularly in Kenya and Uganda. It is passed down through generations, highlighting its mythological status and cultural relevance. The play addresses themes of heroism, supernatural abilities, and the consequences of confronting powerful adversaries. *Lwanda Magere* warns against the arrogance of defying fate and the limits of human knowledge. The transformation of the eponymous hero Lwanda Magere into a stone after discovering his weakness adds a mythical dimension to the narrative. Moreover, Lwanda Magere's actions are motivated by a desire to protect his people and resist oppression, reflecting his role as a cultural hero. One can conclude that *Lwanda Magere* celebrates bravery and community solidarity while cautioning against the consequences of challenging powerful adversaries. Thus, literature employs mythology in shaping cultural identities and conveying universal truths across diverse societies and historical

contexts.

Lwanda Magere, a prominent figure in Luo mythology, is often compared to legendary heroes from various cultures due to his extraordinary strength and tragic fate. Comparative studies on Lwanda Magere focus on themes of heroism, myth, and cultural identity. John S. Mbiti (2020) compares Lwanda Magere with other African mythological heroes such as Shaka Zulu and Sundiata Keita, focusing on the archetype of the hero and the cultural significance of these figures. The study highlights common themes of supernatural strength, leadership, and tragic downfall. It emphasizes how these myths serve to reinforce cultural values and collective identity. Ochieng' K. Odera (2019) work draws parallels between Lwanda Magere and Western heroic figures like Achilles from Greek mythology. The focus is on their vulnerability (Achilles' heel and Lwanda's shadow) and the narrative of invincibility leading to inevitable downfall. The study finds that both figures symbolize the paradox of strength and vulnerability, and their stories serve as moral lessons about the limits of human power and the role of fate. In a related manner Gikandi (2021) examines how African diasporic writers incorporate the myth of Lwanda Magere in their works to explore themes of identity, resistance, and cultural memory. The study reveals that Lwanda Magere is often used as a symbol of resilience and cultural pride, helping diasporic communities connect with their heritage and address contemporary social issues.

Musila (ibid.) explores how contemporary East African writers reinterpret the myth of Lwanda Magere to address modern themes such as political leadership, corruption, and social change. The study finds that the myth is often adapted to critique current political systems and to highlight the need for ethical leadership and social justice. Oyugi (2022) analyses the role of gender in the myth of Lwanda Magere, comparing it with other African myths that feature strong male heroes and the roles of women in these narratives. The study shows that while the myth primarily focuses on male heroism, the role of the women who betray Lwanda Magere is crucial in driving the narrative, highlighting themes of trust, betrayal, and the complex dynamics of gender relations in myth. Mungai (2021) research looks at how the myth of Lwanda Magere has been adapted in Kenyan theatre and film, examining the interplay between traditional storytelling and modern media. Her findings show that these adaptations often emphasize contemporary social issues such as national identity, unity, and the impact of modernization, while

preserving the core elements of the myth.

One interesting scholar is Pauline Mhando (2020) who explores the intertextual connections between the myth of Lwanda Magere and other African literary texts, focusing on how writers use the myth to create new narratives and meanings. The study highlights the fluidity of African storytelling traditions and how myths like that of Lwanda Magere are continually reinterpreted to reflect changing social and cultural contexts. The comparative studies depict the enduring relevance and adaptability of the Lwanda Magere myth, demonstrating its capacity to address universal themes while also serving specific cultural and political purposes in various contexts.

Roche (2020) Ochieng (2019) examines the role of fate and the concept of the tragic hero in both Oedipus and the Lwanda Magere myths. Each of the two mythic heroes are characterised by their inevitable downfalls due to predetermined fates. The study finds that both Oedipus and Lwanda Magere exemplify the archetype of the tragic hero whose downfall is a result of fate and personal flaws illustrating the limits of human power and the inevitability of destiny. Gikandi (ibid.) and Mbiti (2020) compare the cultural significance of Oedipus narrative and that of Lwanda Magere, focusing on how each of these myths reflect and reinforce cultural identities and values. Therefore, Omtatah writes within a kind of tradition that takes myth seriously. My part now is to show how Omtatah uses myth to effectively create setting, develop character and depict Luo cultural norms in Lwanga Magere.

The study reveals that both the Oedipus and Lwanda Magere myths are deeply embedded in their respective cultures and serve to communicate cultural values, moral lessons and collective identity. On the one hand, Oedipus represents the Greek ideals of fate and self-awareness and Lwanda Magere embodies Luo values of strength, leadership, and community on the other. Lillian Oyugi (2022) and Hanna M. Roisman (2009) examine the gender dynamics in both myths, Oedipus the King and Lwanda Magere focusing on the roles and representations of women in the narratives. The study finds that women in both myths play crucial roles in the protagonists' downfall. Jocasta's role in Oedipus the King and the woman who betrays Lwanda Magere highlight the

themes of trust, betrayal, and the impact of female agency in patriarchal societies.

In their work, Mhando (2020) and de Jong (2014) explore the narrative structures of both the Oedipus and Lwanda Magere myths, comparing the oral tradition of Lwanda Magere with the written narrative of Oedipus the King. Their study highlights the differences and similarities in narrative techniques, with Oedipus the King using dramatic irony and structured plot development, while Lwanda Magere's narrative relies on oral storytelling methods, flexibility, and communal participation. As if to strengthen Mhando and de Jong's position on the literary use of myth, Mungai (2021) and Rehm (2019) analyse how both myths are used to comment on political and social issues in their respective contexts. The study finds that Oedipus the King is often interpreted as a critique of political power and leadership, while adaptations of Lwanda Magere address contemporary issues such as corruption, leadership ethics, and national identity. This comparative perspective motivated me to focus on the specific ways Omtatah uses myth in his play.

Kimingichi (2022) records that the Lwanda Magere narrative is a mythical legend named after the hero who was sent by the gods to save the Luo community from the rampant raids of the Kalenjin, referred to as Lang'o in the narrative proper. With his arrival, as a warrior whose body cannot be pierced by a spear - because his name translated literally means "built of stone" - the Kalenjins lost the upper hand in the war. They were defeated many times by the Luo and they had to resort to offering Lwanda Magere a wife who eventually discovered the secret of the great warrior's weakness: that if you wanted to kill him, you had to strike his shadow. Thus, through the Lang'o queen, the Kalenjins managed to defeat the Luos. The story, warns men to be wary of women because women have always been a source of their downfall. This story is used to deny women a chance to participate in important decision-making processes in social, political, and economic matters. They are not elected in the Council of Elders or advisers. The general community narrative goes that if a leader is surrounded by women, it will be detrimental to the progress. Lwanda Magere shows that the loss of one community is a win for another community. The Kalenjin, through Nyalang'o, brought down the Luo. Again, in each of the defeated community, there was a legendary

warrior with supernatural powers. A warrior, who by conventional means could not be defeated, yet despite the great strengths of the great warriors, they were brought down by a woman. The women did not use brutal force to fight their enemies. The men with supernatural powers were brought down by ordinary intelligent women. The women did not need supernatural powers to defeat the men.

2.6 Conclusion

From the review, I established that Omtatah's *Lwanda Magere* needed another look. It is interesting, for example, to explore how the playwright interweaves mythological elements in a modern play meant for a modern audience. Considering that Omtatah is himself a socio-political activist, a closer examination of his dramatic works can reveal new insights on how blending mythological elements in modern drama can be useful in sensitising the people. This, I claim, Omtatah does in the way he blends mythical elements in the *Lwanda Magere* narrative for purposes of creating setting, developing character and providing commentary on contemporary socio-political issues of especially the Kenyan people. Afterall, one may not easily divorce politics from myth making and myth consumption. To achieve this purpose, I employed specific methodologies which I present in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explain the methodology which I employed to carry out the research. It includes the research design, sources of information, the data collection methods, the process of data collection and analysis. The overall aim was to explore how Omtatah represents myth in the *Lwanda Magere* play. The methodology was also to help me explore the effectiveness of setting representation of myth in the characterisation of Lwanda Magere the mythic hero and the representation of myth in the *Lwanda Magere* play. The methodology was mainly descriptive and based on documentary and textual analysis.

3.2 Research Design

I applied qualitative interpretive research design since i was doing a literary analysis. Therefore, I focused on interpreting meanings in the portrayal of characters, presentation of themes, use of symbols and the representation of myth elements in the play. The study also used a descriptive method and focused on commonality of lived experiences within particular groups (Creswell, 2013) as presented in the play. For my study, I looked at the settings, characters and the cultural norms of the Luo people as depicted in *Lwanda Magere*.

3.3 Sources of Data

The primary source of data was the text of Okoit Omtatah's play titled *Lwanda Magere* (1991) which was the focus of this study. I identified and analysed the representation of the myth of Lwanda Magere in the play. I focused on setting, characterisation and depiction of Luo cultural norms in the play. The secondary sources were scholarly works on mythology in general and the Luo myth of Lwanda Magere itself in particular. I also revisited my existing knowledge about presentation of themes, characters and symbols in drama, since *Lwanda Magere* is a play.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

For the primary source, I conducted a close reading of Okoiti Omtatah's *Lwanda Magere* and did a textual analysis of the play. I identified and analysed the mythological elements therein and explored how it is represented, adapted, or transformed. The settings,

characters and Luo cultural norms presented in the play constituted my primary concern in the textual analysis. For the secondary sources, I studied some classical and latter theories of myth such as those of Joseph Campbell (1973), Richard Buxton (2004), James Frazer (2009), Mary Beard (2013) and Levi-Strauss (2013). Then I examined previous literary critiques and analyses of Omtatah's works and how these analyses relate to African oral traditions. Here and there I used some aspects of African literary theorists and postcolonial frameworks for deeper contextual grounding. Furthermore, I did documentary research in selected books, journal articles, folklore records and interviews with some individuals to check my own interpretation of the way Omtatah handles myth in his play. So, I did library and archival research in the reading of both primary and secondary texts. Thus, this study was purely documentary type of research.

3.5 Data Analysis

Since the study focuses on mythic representation, I did a close reading of the play to identify mythic elements. Therefore, my analysis involved a comparative analysis with the original Luo myth of Lwanda Magere to assess Omtatah's reinterpretation of the same in his play. Data was analysed thematically in line with the study objectives. This involved a comparative analysis of the myth representation in line with the Luo culture. I based my analysis on thematic strands and analysed how the playwright uses myth to convey cultural, political or social messages. This analysis involved identifying major themes related to myth such as heroism, sacrifice and the role of fate in the portrayal of characters. In a way, I analysed how myth is used to shape the identity and power - or absence of it - of especially the protagonist of the play. The cultural and historical background of the Lwanda Magere myth within Luo society was a key pillar in the analysis. Hence, I did what I can call contextual analysis by considering how Omtatah's adaptation reflects contemporary issues such as identity, heroism, morality and postcolonial tensions that the play deals with.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

I made sure that I adhered to acceptable ethical standards while carrying out research. I ensured proper citation of all sources and consciously gave respect for indigenous knowledge systems and oral traditions of the Luo in the language I use in this dissertation.

3.7 Limitations of the Study

Though the study provided valuable insights into the portrayal of myth in Lwanda Magere, there are limitations that should be noted. First, the study is limited to only one play and one major theme: the representation of myth in Lwanda Magere. It does not explore other works by the author or other retellings of the Lwanda Magere myth in Kenyan literature, for example. However, I hope that I provide an environment where other researchers may base to expand the study of how myth influences portrayal on characters and themes in East African Literature.

Secondly, the research focuses on a specific myth from Luo culture. The findings may not be generalizable to myths from other cultures or communities in Kenya or Africa. The analysis is interpretive and relies on textual analysis, which can be subjective. Different readers and critics may have alternative interpretations of the same text. The original language of the text and the myth may lead to variations in interpretation when translated. Moreover, the study is conducted in English, which may introduce nuances that differ from the original Luo language. However, I remained objective throughout the research

The research examines the text from a contemporary perspective, which may not fully capture how the myth and its portrayal have been understood historically or might be perceived in the future. That way, the analysis of one play might limit the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Future research could benefit from larger and more diverse samples to address these limitations and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

Finally, since the play Lwanda Magere has not been widely researched on, getting literature was challenging. However, read widely to get enough literature to support this study. I consulted internet sources and published articles on myth and representation of the mythical world in literature and other works. Nevertheless, I was able to sort out the challenges and the results which I present in the next chapter in the form of findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present, interpret and analyse data on the representation of myth in Okoit Omtatah's *Lwanda Magere* (1991). Overall, in *Lwanda Magere*, Omtatah re-creates the Lwanda Magere myth into a dramatic work by moulding characters in the form of mythic models such as the hero, betrayer and doomed warrior. He uses setting to create a dramatic world where the reader is made to feel as if the supernatural is natural. By so doing Omtatah places tradition into the play. It is like Omtatah intends the play to function as both preservation and reinvention of tradition of the Luo people. His play is a version of keeping the myth alive through dramatizing it via a play. To ease the broad spectrum of the representation of the myth, I specifically looked at the significance of characterization in presenting the myth, the effectiveness of setting in portraying the mythical world and the role of myth in the portrayal of tradition in the play *Lwanda Magere*.

4.2 Representation of myth in the characterisation of Lwanda Magere

This section relates to the first research question: how is myth used in the characterisation of Lwanda Magere the mythic hero in the play? To answer the question, I analysed the main characters in the play. I considered Lwanda Magere, the Princess, Luo's Priest, Luo people and Lango people as the main characters in the play that depict the characterization in representing the myth. The study found out that these characters are portrayed differently. Some possess negative character traits while others possess positive character traits but all portray myth as presented, analysed and interpreted herein.

Lwanda Magere in the play *Lwanda Magere* is a gallant Luo warrior with a mysterious body that cannot be physically harmed and possesses prowess in war that baffles the enemy, the Lang'o people. He is the gallant Luo warrior with a mysterious body that

cannot be physically harmed, and prowess in war that baffles the enemy- the Lango people. He is portrayed as determined and principled. This is depicted from his interest in saving his community against the Lango people no matter the circumstances. He insists on going to the battle during day even when he knows that his secret to his victory lies in fighting at night:

Say that the oracle had willed
That Lwanda Magere
Go to war only under
The cover of darkness?
.....go to battle only under
The cover of darkness. The spirits protect you (p. 65)

This implies that Lwanda Magere was protected at night since his shadow in which his strength lies cannot be seen at night so he would be assured of victory when he goes to war unlike during day. His determination is also witnessed when he goes to war moreover during daylight after his secret to his mysterious body is revealed to the princess and the enemy, the Lango people. No matter how the chiefs try to stop him from going to battle, he insists:

It is the mission of Lwanda Magere
To defend the tribe. Elders,
By asking me to wait for darkness
Does the king want the Lang'o
To overrun our warriors
And loot our land? (97)

It is because of courage, determination and being principled that Lwanda Magere insists on facing his enemy so as to defend his people and fulfill his mission that was prophesied before his birth that a savior would be born. Thus, Lwanda Magere is determined to fulfill his mission of saving his people. Omtatah's representation of Lwanda as courageous, determined and principled portrays the Luo's mythical beliefs and prophecies. First as the play begins, it is prophesied that a savior in Lwanda Magere will

be born, and oracles send messages through the priests to remind Lwanda on how to behave to be victorious.

In addition, Lwanda Magere is portrayed as self-motivated, confident, and with high self-esteem. He serves his Luo people without expecting any payment nor being forced. He is not coerced to go to war or battle field but rather willingly does. By doing so, Lwanda Magere portrays the myth of being a savior and serving the Luo people as the Oracle had announced:

Tonight,
In the ecstasies of love,
A woman
Truly barren will conceive.
Nine months and your savior,
Lwanda, son of Magere,
Will be born among you.
Lwanda Magere your liberator,
Pure rock his body,
A rock, yet mortal. (p. 3)

This message is mythical and it is believed to be from the oracle prophesying the birth of the savior for Luo people from the Lango people who is Lwanda Magere. And indeed, after his birth, Lwanda does not disappoint his people. He really does as expected and with him, the Luo people are assured of their safety and victory.

Furthermore, Lwanda Magere is depicted as patriotic, committed and responsible. He diligently fulfills his mission as expected by the gods and Luo people. This shows his love for his community and people and how responsible and committed he is in leading it to victory. Lwanda says:

... I must go to the battle front now.
One of our warriors came to my home.
The Lang'o have invaded in large numbers

And as the war progresses in my absence
Our warriors are suffering
Heavy losses. I must go as Lwanda Magere
And defend my own. (p. 98)

Lwanda's words thus show that his mission rotates around saving the Luo community against the Lango people who attack and kill the former. He is committed to doing anything possible to be the Luo savior hence achieving victory and being famous across all the two communities.

The princess, a Lango beauty, daughter to the King and Queen is married off to Lwanda Magere as part of a peace treaty or alliance. The Princess is characterized as hypocritical and a traitor. She betrays Lwanda Magere by revealing the secret of his invulnerability to her people, which leads to his death in the battle. As she narrates how she found out the secret to her people, it is clear she seduced Lwanda into revealing his secret which she promises to keep in vain:

May the wrath of the heavens
Kill me by this knife or by a bolt of thunder
The moment I open my mouth
To betray Lwanda Magere, my beloved husband.
I promise to keep by my very life
The secret as I have been instructed. (p. 91)

Even when the Princess blinds Lwanda Magere with this promise, she goes ahead and reveals everything to the King and chiefs of Lango. Then plotting the death of Lwanda Magere ensues. The first chief appreciates the Princess and says:

What our daughter has said
Leaves no doubt in our hearts
That Lwanda Magere the rock
Is no longer a mystery to us.
He is as good as dead. (p. 92)

[King:] with our knowledge
Of who Lwanda Magere is,
All that remains is to destroy him
And we shall be masters once more. (pp. 92-93)

The fact that the princess betrays her husband Lwanda by revealing his secret to the Lango people labels her as a traitor and hypocritical. She hypocritically cares about the husband, Lwanda Magere that he forgets and tells her all about his extraordinary power and why he cannot bleed. The princess thus ends up achieving her mission.

The princess is described as cunning, crafty and deceitful. She gives alcohol to Lwanda Magere knowing that he is not supposed to drink it. She cunningly convinces him to take it which makes him lose his senses and hence revealing his secret. The night Lwanda reveals the secret to his power, the Princess succeeds in deceiving him, until she achieves all she wanted, hence fulfilling her mission of establishing the reason behind Lwanda Magere's powerful nature that qualifies him as a rock. No wonder after gathering all the information from her husband, the Princess escapes back to her home to deliver the message to her father, the king plus his chiefs of Lango region.

To add on, the Princess is portrayed as selfish, inconsiderate and unloving. She pretends to be in love with Lwanda Magere whom she fools until achieving her dream. She does not consider the feelings and side of her husband in her bid to achieve her mission as sent by the Lango leaders. She thus uses her power as a woman and achieves her mission of letting her husband reveal his source of power by acting as if she is treating him. Princess is seen as an actor who does not mind nor consider other people's feelings by putting herself in their shoes. She does not mind about the life of her husband with whom she has had children moreover but reveals his secrets that would lead to his death. Even when she pretends to love him, it is obvious she does not, she only pretends to love him to get information from him.

The priest of the Luo people, who is the Oracle's voice, is secretive, protective and selfish. He is described as the only person who knows about the secret of Lwanda Magere's source of power. He very much protects Lwanda Magere by advising him on

what he should do so that he cannot be harmed. He delivers messages from the Oracle to Lwanda Magere. He for example warns Lwanda Magere not to go to battle field during day light, and not to marry the princes because it would result to his death. The priest says:

The very Oracle you talk of in trust
Has warned-do not, and you must not
Marry the daughter of our enemy!
It will be madness
To wait for ripples
To turn into giant waves
Before you think of the shore!
The Oracle has warned-
Do not count early death!

Even when Lwanda Magere insists that he has to marry the Princess, the Priest keeps on being protective by advising him against the unforeseen results of marrying the princess. No wonder she leads to Lwanda Magere's death after she reveals his secret to power. Had the priest not been protective and selfless, he wouldn't continue advising Lwanda after he proves to be stubborn and arrogant and not heeding to their advice and oracles warning. The priest doesn't tire but rather responsibly performs his tasks. He also advises Lwanda not to go to fight the Lingo's during day after his secret for his power to be in the shadow is revealed.

Typical of many myths, the Priest is portrayed - on the surface - as submissive, obedient and respectful. He is shown to be submissive to the gods, to obey and respect their messages. He obeys messages from the oracle and respects the gods that he cannot do otherwise. He thus keeps on emphasizing Lwanda Magere to respect all the messages he delivers to him from the Oracle. As he was warned never to reveal the secret to his power, the priest does not share it to anyone which implies obedience. The voice warned him:

Now that he has received the power.

To cut him clown you strike his secret,
A secret you and him,
And only you and him ,
Must keep treasured!
... nurture him into the secret of his life. (p. 9)

As the priest is warned at the beginning of the play to keep and nurture Lwanda Magere into his secret for life, he respects the gods and fulfills their demands. He doesn't share his secret and neither does he get tired of delivering the messages from the Oracle to Lwanda even when he rudely and negatively reacts to the message.

Also, the priest is portrayed as a traditionalist. He believes in the ancestors, oracles, gods and totems of the Luo land. In one of the stage directions, he is presented praying to the gods, bowing to the totem and offering Lwanda Magere to the gods as the following stage directions partly reveal:

The Luo, led by the Priest, troop on stage dancing and rejoicing. They stop as the priest raises his hand with authority. He takes the child and moves close to the totem. The people prostrate themselves. He remains standing and his actions tell of his prayer. the priest raises the child high in offering....priest puts baby at the foot of The Totem. (p. 7-9)

By doing all these, the priest is revealing his traditionalistic nature and how he obeys the gods. He does everything required on the newly born Lwanda Magere to offer him to the gods. This portrays him as a traditionalist. He also believes in messages from the Oracles. That is why he keeps warning Lwanda Magere against behaving contrary to the messages from the Oracle.

The Lang'o people represented by the King, 1st Chief, 2nd Chief, 3rd Chief, Queen, and a Lang'o warrior are depicted as vengeful, inconsiderate, aggressive, dishonest, cunning, power-hungry, greedy and disrespectful. In their vengeful nature, they decide to plot the death of Lwanda Magere to avenge the number of Lango warriors he has killed, the many animals he has taken from Lango which shames them. During their

meeting, the 3rd Chief is quoted to have said:

Our only problem is Lwanda Magere.
If only we can kill him,
Then we'll run around
And, true heroes,
The Lang'o will again
Rule the Luo. (p. 16)

Such words depict the Lingo's evil plans for Lwanda Magere whom they want dead as vengeance. Indeed, they successfully get a plan on how to effectively and successfully finish off their enemy, Lwanda Magere. The queen advises the Lango leaders to manipulate Lwanda Magere using his weakest point - that of being a womanizer. The queen says:

My Lords,
I therefore suggest that
You should give one of this land's worthy daughters
To wife Lwanda Magere- with a mission,
Her mission to get his secret. (p. 25)

The Lango people thus dishonestly and cunningly giveaway their princess as a token of appreciation to Lwanda Magere with a mission of getting his secret so that they can kill him. By doing this, it shows they are dishonest, cunning and inconsiderate. They deceive Lwanda Magere. They are inconsiderate for they do not think about the life of their princess entrusted in the hands of the enemy, Lwanda Magere and the Luo people in general whether he could mistreat, torture or kill her but are rather interested in achieving their mission of getting the secret of Lwanda Magere's power.

In addition to the above, Lango people are greedy and power hungry. They plan to overpower the Luo and live as the masters. This is depicted during the meeting when they are planning on how they can get to know the secret to Lwanda Magere's power.

The 3rd chief says:

Our only problem is Lwanda Magere.
If only we can kill him,
Then we'll turn around
And, true heroes,
The Lang'o will again
Rule the Luo.

This clearly shows that the Lango people are very much interested in gaining power over other areas thus showing that they are power hungry and interested in achieving victory to own the whole community. Indeed, it is an indication that the Lango people are greedy and power hungry for they cannot be satisfied with what they have.

Conclusively, Okoiti Omtatah in the play *Lwanda Magere* manages to use character and characterization to portray the myth. He reveals how the African people of the Luo and Lango believe in the gods and ancestors. They trust and consult them in everything they do. And using Lwanda Magere's example, it portrays that that gods can at the same time bless and curse you especially when they are obeyed or disobeyed respectively. Lwanda Magere is blessed but dies the moment he goes contrary to the commands of the Oracle. As he dies, Lwanda laments that it's not fate that he is dying but rather blames himself and accepts his harvest which is due for he believes that every man reaps what he sowed. We can see that through the tragic heroism of Lwanda Magere, for example, the play touches on important themes such as bravery, loyalty, and the consequences of betrayal. And the supernatural elements such as Lwanda's invincible body made of stone emphasize the theme of divine favour and the sacredness of duty.

4.3 Effectiveness of setting in the representation of myth in *Lwanda Magere*

This section presents, interprets and analyses data to answer the second question: what is the effectiveness of setting in the representation of myth in *Lwanda Magere*? Omtatah uses setting including historical, physical and time setting to portray the mythical world in the play. He divides the play in two parts in the spirit of seasons: sowing and reaping. And specific events take place in each of the seasons in a cause-

and-effect manner. Through the stage directions, during the period of sowing - as the play opens - the physical setting reflects a mythical world where people believe in totems:

The stage is bare except for the totem- alone wooden carving of human and animal images- placed in the far corner. Offerings hang down its sides.he regards the totem from a distance, bows piously and, after uttering some barely audible incantations, turns to face the audience. (p. 1)

The stage description portrays the mythical world. The stage is described to have a totem which the people believe in as their god, bow to and even go ahead to bring offerings to it. Thus, through the stage's physical setting, it is mythical that the people believe, trust and respect images as their gods which is a reflection of African society and culture.

In addition, when the Luo enter stage, they bow to the totem:

Enter the Luo led by the tall balding priest. They solemnly approach the totem, bow to it and proceed to offer sacrifices in silence. (p. 2)

Even after the prophecy has been made on how a child will be born to save the entire Luo community, people who have been listening to the voice give respect to type totem:

The beam of light fades out slowly as the stage lights come on. Slowly the people get up and regarding the totem from a distance, bow to it then embrace one another, smiles covering their faces. (p. 4)

The Luo people believe that the message received regarding their salvation indeed reflects how their gods, ancestors and the totems are working in their favour. They even go ahead to seek for blessing from the totem. This is depicted from the way the pregnant mother bows to the totem during her labour so that she can be blessed to have a safe delivery:

The women supporting an expectant mother appear on the back stage and walk off the opposite side after bowing to the totem.(p. 6)

This confirms the African traditional beliefs of people in the gods, ancestors represented by totems and oracles. The expectant mother and the other women bow to the totem seeking blessing throughout child delivery. With such beliefs, every Luo bows and prays to the totem believing it's the source of strength, protection and victory.

The priest, as requested by the gods through the voice offers the child to the gods when it is born and asks for blessing from the ancestors thus:

Now, place him as an offering to us.
Put him at the foot of the shrine
It is time for him
To receive
The great secret of the rock.
The riddle that, like
The eagle's wings, will
Make him ride on high.

The priest does as he is instructed by the gods and indeed Lwanda is blessed when offered to the gods. He is as strong as a rock and cannot be harmed. The ancestors are thus believed to be the source of blessings, strength, victory, restoration, liberation and salvation. The Luo people are thus blessed to have their son be blessed by their gods as they prayed and will son enjoy the victory over the ruthless Lango people who had brought misery, and suffering to them.

In addition, through time setting, the playwright portrays a mythic element. Through the story teller, we learn that it is at night when the African traditional stories are told and when the African gods are consulted and speak to people. The story teller says:

Dear grandchildren,

Before you retire to your beds tonight,
Am going to narrate to you
The legend of the Great Lwanda Magere. (p. 1)

This reflects African traditional life of storytelling during the night and when he talks of the legend Lwanda Magere it's mythical that the Luos believe in his existence and supernatural powers in the remote past. The story teller has thus presented the story telling time which is at night hence a typical African setting.

The story teller further reflects a mythical world through historical setting. He shows that in the remote past there lived the Great mighty Legend Lwanda Magere in the land of the Luo:

... the legend of the Great Lwanda Magere
... in the legendary times of legends
In the land of the Luo (p. 1)

This is a clear indication that the Luo people believe that Lwanda Magere really existed. He was their savior from their sorrow and grief under the victory and rule of the Lango who had ruled with an iron hand. Thus, the Luo had to pray to the ancestors and give sacrifices in anticipation of a savior who indeed is born in Lwanda Magere:

They sacrificed
Praying to their ancestors for salvation.
Day in, day out, they prayed,
Prayed that they be freed (p. 2)

This explains the Luo's belief and hope in the ancestors which is in itself mythical. They hope that all victory and salvation come from their ancestors. They thus give sacrifices to appease their ancestors so they can offer them salvation and free them from their enslavement by the Lango people.

As the story teller reveals, the Luo people's prayers are answered through the infallible Oracle of the ancestors and a Mighty voice out of the heavens prophecy how the Luo's saviour is to be born:

Tonight,
In the ecstasies of love,
A woman
Truly barren will conceive.
Nine month and your savior,
Lwanda, son of Magere,
Will be born among you. (p. 3)

From the voice that is believed to be from the gods in heaven gives hope, salvation and liberation. A barren woman has been blessed and is yet to conceive a baby that will be the saviour of the Luo. The gods and ancestors already know that this son will be the savior of the Luo people. The prophecy represents a myth because it is believed and reflected that the birth of Lwanda Magere is an answer to the Luos prayers to their ancestors. African tradition thus portrays that the ancestors if prayed to and sacrificed for answer your prayers.

Through physical setting at the Lango's Kings Palace, the playwright, presents the mythical world. Lwanda Magere's supernatural power is revealed. The King and his Chiefs are plotting for the death of their enemy Lwanda Magere who has killed most of their warriors and took all their animals. The Lango people are disturbed by the existence of Lwanda Magere. The 3rd Chief laments:

Our only problem is Lwanda Magere.
If only we can kill him,
Then we'll run around
And, true heroes,
The Lang'o will again
Rule the Luo. (p. 16)

The Lango people now believe that all their problems are as a result of Lwanda Magere, the Rock who cannot be destroyed by their mere spears. And to gain their freedom, they resort to finding the secret of Lwanda Magere's source of power and strength. So, the queen advises them to marry off their princess to Lwanda Magere to succeed in getting the secret which indeed they do successfully.

At the palace of the King in Luo land, through the dialogue between the king and the priest shows that the gods speak through the priest. The priest delivers the message from the oracle that Lwanda Magere should not accept the Lango peoples token of appreciation of their princesses getting married to hi. The priest thus communicates the message from the gods and they plan on how to deliver the message from the oracle to Lwanda Magere, their supposed saviour. The priest records:

The infallible Oracle of our ancestors
Has warned, Lwanda Magere
Should not marry that woman.
... should he marry the woman
And therefore disobey the Oracle,
The anger of the ancestors
Will not spare him.
The very hand that has built him up
Will not be slow to destroy him. (p. 34)

The oracles message is very clear and shows that it is the gods that bless and destroy. They bless you if you respect them but also destroy you if you disrespect them. If Lwanda Magere respected the oracle's message and did not marry the Lango's princess, he would keep strong and reigning. But he does the opposite, then he was punished. No wonder at the end of the play he dies because he disobeys the gods and marries the princess who tricks him into telling her his secret.

At Lwanda Magere's home, the mythical world is reflected. Magere is described as carrying a spear which is believed to be an African fighting weapon. Lwanda's son, Omollo names the calf Omena which implies that it is going to be the leader of the

heard. This is a reflection of how Africans give names to reflect many important things in the life of a person for example where he was born from, how he was conceived, the time he is born and many others. Still at Lwanda Magere's home when the eldest wife, Mikayi tries to advise Lwanda Magere against marrying the Princess of their enemy, the Lango people, he assures her that the princess has nothing she can do because the gods of his ancestors have willed that he lives. Lwanda Magere says:

Early death! Impossible!
Our infallible ancestors be praised.
They've willed that Lwanda Magere,
The greatest hero of them all,
Should see old age and
He'll die a very old man indeed!
... they can't uproot a tree planted by
Our infallible ancestors
And the cattle, but nothing
Will they gain in return (p. 49)

Lwanda thus shows how he also trusts in his ancestors and believes that it is them that have a say and will on his life. He thinks that he can still go ahead and marry the princess because she has no say on his life since he is protected by the gods. Lwanda further says:

... they can't uproot a tree planted by
Our infallible ancestors
And the cattle, but nothing
Will they gain in return. (p. 50)

He thus insists on marrying the princess and ignores all the advice from the Luo people. His hot tempered nature and failure to take and follow the advice of the Luo led by the priest makes Lwanda Magere marry the princess. Even when he thought the gods protected him, he failed and does what is contrary to their message and request.

The Luo king, Chiefs and the Priest did not succeed in advising Lwanda Magere against marrying the Lango princess. However much they had earlier planned on how to approach and advise him, Lwanda disappointed, disrespected and disobeyed them. He rudely and disrespectfully replied to them that they could not convince him to leave the Lango gift of a princess as a wife. As they sat in council waiting for Lwanda Magere, the King, Priest and two Chiefs, decide on how to approach Lwanda over the issue of marrying the Lango princess. The King notes:

When Lwanda Magere comes
He should find us fully decided.
We have to be firm on our word.
It is very important that
The marriage doesn't
Take place as the oracle has ordered. (p. 53)

As they plan on how to advise their savior, it is portrayed that they believe in the oracle and do as the oracle wills. The priest, voice of the oracles confirms this when he delivers the message from the oracle to the council members and says:

Elders,
We have to do all in our power
To stop the marriage.
The oracle warned me
In my sleep last night:
Lwanda Magere the rock-man
Should not marry the enemy! (p. 53)

This extract, once again, explains the priest's role in the Luo land of the play, as the mouthpiece of the gods. He gives messages to the elders from the gods, ancestors and oracles. He informs them of how the oracle doesn't want Lwanda Magere to marry an enemy. The enemy are plotting

against him and want to use his weakest point of loving women to blind him by being given the princess. A trick he falls in hence his demise.

The night Lwanda Magere reveals his secret to the princess his wife portrays a myth. The time setting which reflects that it was at night signifies the evil plans that are always done during darkness. The princess is indeed trying to figure out how she can get information from the Lwanda Magere so that her mission is achieved. The princess laments:

My people asked me
In their time of genuine need
To put my charms at their service
To marry the mysterious Lwanda Magere;
My secret mission to fleece him.
... fleece him I must!
I am under oath. I have sworn.
Oh what a fate!
... oh you spirits of my forefathers,
Grant that tonight be the day
When my efforts bear fruit. (72-73)

At this moment we have an atmosphere wherein the princess - as the oracle had warned - indeed comes into Lwanda Magere's life. However, she does not come as a gift but on a mission to fleece him. She had been set by her people in Lango land on a mission to get to know the secret to Lwanda Magere's extraordinary power. It was only through knowing the power of the rock that the Lango could destroy the Luo hero

It is at the physical setting at the Kings palace as the princess narrates to the King and his chiefs that we get to know what transpired during the night she got to know the secret of Lwanda Magere. The long dialogue between the princess and Lwanda Magere portrays the mythical world. For instance, It is revealed that the oracle had warned Lwanda Magere never to take alcohol but because the princess was interested in achieving her mission she convinced Lwanda Magere to take alcohol that night. He

complained of terrible headache and how he had broken a divine law. The princess says:

Forget your fears! Be fearless!
Nothing you have done wrong.
The headache is because
You are not used to it.

Even though the princess tries very much to cover Lwanda Magere's sin of disobedience of the oracle, it is clear that he believes in the oracles, respecting it and acting according to the laws. And failure to, comes with challenges and that is why he experiences headache for he has broken the divine law which he should have kept to keep victorious.

She, the princess then pretends to be caring and wishing to treat Lwanda Magere by making cuts on Lwanda's body. She says:

Now don't scream out
At the pain like a woman
I will make incisions on your face
And then apply this medicine. (p. 89)

She doesn't succeed because Lwanda is a rock. Lwanda foolishly tells her to cut on the shadow which she does and happily learns of her husband's secret and why he cannot be hurt directly by the cuts but rather his life is in the shadow:

Cut there, where the shadow,
Cast by my forehead
Touches the ground
... The life of Lwanda Magere, the rock man
Is in his shadow. Do as I have told you
And you will see blood, real blood,
Come out of my face (p. 89)

After Lwanda Magere has ostensibly defied the gods, the temporal setting changes. Then it comes out that Lwanda's life is resident in his own. Blessed with power by the ancestors, as he was offered by the priest to the gods on the Lango totem, Lwanda Magere is victorious man if only he obeys the oracle. However, the situation is changing for the worst for Lwanda because he disobeys the oracle by marrying the enemy. The revelation of Lwanda's secret excites the princess because she is now sure her secret mission has been achieved. She knows she has the right answers to give to her people. As for Lwanda Magere, he immediately comes to his senses and realizes that the princess is on a bad mission. The owl that hoots outside his house is his cue. He asks the princess:

STOP!

Woman, what are you doing?

...are sure you have no

Evil intentions?

....why is the owl hooting

So violently on my house top?

What mischief does your heart? (p.. 90)

The mythical belief in the owl that portrays danger or evil plans is portrayed through Lwanda's words. Symbolically at this moment in the play, Lwanda Magere has been transported into the mythical world where signs such as the hooting of the owl rule the setting. He now realizes that the hooting of an owl violently on top of his house signifies mischief and something bad. Thus, he believes that the princess, who is now his wife, has evil plans against him which indeed she fulfills immediately Lwanda retires to bed. The princess successfully escapes back to her kingdom and delivers the message concerning Lwanda's secret to power. It is the revelation of Lwanda's secret to his supernatural power to the Lango people by the princess that Lwanda finally meets his death and down fall.

In the section of "Reaping", as the playwright describes the last section of the play, the Luo king is seated in his palace listening to the two chiefs he had sent to warn Lwanda Magere not to be going to the war during the daylight now that his secret that his life is in his shadow is revealed to the enemy, the Lango people:

Our lord, the king
Asks you not to go to war in daylight
With your secret known by the Lang'o,
He begs you wait till it is dark
You need the cover of darkness
To be safe.

However much Lwanda Magere is advised not to go to war during light, he insists that it is his mission to go and defend his land. Indeed, he continues and goes to fight. Though at first he seems victorious, he is inexpertly attacked by an enemy warrior who sinks his spear to Lwanda's shadow that ends the latter's life. As the oracle had warned that Lwanda will only be protected if he went out at night, so it happened.

All in all, the playwright uses physical, historical and time setting to represent elements of the myth in *Lwanda Magere*. The physical setting rotates around the Lango palace and Luo palace and Lwanda's home. Time setting has been used to show how evil plans are drawn during night. It is during then that the Princess seduces Lwanda Magere into telling her the secret and he did. This leads her to leave the marriage where she has had two children and spent over a year and decides to leave the marriage, fulfilling the mission of the Lango people who gave her hand in marriage. So, the setting is presented as partly natural and partly supernatural where history and dramatic performance converge in the course of the play

4.4 Representation of myth in the portrayal of cultural tradition in the play

In this section, I address the third research question: in which ways is myth significant in the portrayal of cultural tradition in the *Lwanda Magere* play. I established that through the representation of myth, African tradition is portrayed. Myths of origin and creation, myths featuring cultural heroes, myths of providence and destiny, myths about physical features and myths of transformation are significant content areas for playwrights and other creative writers. Omtatah on his parts uses myth to portray the beliefs, life and celebration styles of the Luo and Lango in general.

The central element of the myth in the play revolves around Lwanda Magere's supernatural strength, which is tied to his shadow. This demonstrates the traditional belief in mystical powers and how they are integral to the hero's identity. Omtatah uses this myth to highlight the intersection between human capabilities and supernatural influences. In many African cultures, including the Luo, shadows are believed to hold a significant part of a person's essence or soul. By anchoring Lwanda Magere's strength in his shadow, Omtatah taps into a rich vein of cultural symbolism that resonates deeply with his audience.

The representation of myth in *Lwanda Magere* depicts the cultural, historical and social elements of the Luo people. To start with, the myth of Lwanda Magere is rooted in the oral traditions of the Luo community. Lwanda Magere is depicted as a powerful warrior with an invincible body made of rock symbolizing the strength and resilience of the Luo people. The story of Lwanda Magere is typical of a classic hero's journey, marked by extraordinary abilities, significant battles and ultimate downfall. His invincibility, however, is compromised by betrayal, revealing a critical vulnerability. The disclosure of his secret by his wife, who belongs to a rival community, not only leads to his demise but also serves as a commentary on trust, loyalty, and the consequences of cultural assimilation or betrayal.

Supernatural elements in the myth, such as his rock body, emphasize the intersection of the human and the divine in Luo cosmology. These elements are not mere fantastical additions but are integral to understanding the worldview of the Luo people, where the spiritual and the material worlds are closely intertwined. Rather, in it Omtatah explores the interplay between myth and reality in the cultural context of the Luo people of Kenya. The play vividly portrays the legendary figure of Lwanda Magere, as a warrior endowed with superhuman strength whose power lies in his shadow. Omtatah's portrayal is thus deeply rooted in Luo mythology and serves as a lens through which the audience can understand broader themes of heroism, betrayal, and cultural identity in the play.

Lwanda Magere's legendary status is built on his feats as a warrior. Omtatah portrays

these deeds in a manner that emphasizes the hero's extraordinary abilities and the reverence in which he is held by his people. This aligns with the traditional portrayal of heroes in myth as larger-than-life figures. The hero's downfall is precipitated by his tragic flaw trusting his wife, who betrays him by revealing the secret of his strength to his enemies. This narrative device is common in mythological stories, where the hero's greatness is often counterbalanced by a critical vulnerability.

From the portrayal of communal life to the rituals and beliefs that underpin the society, Omtatah's *Lwanda Magere* emerges as a play that is steeped in Luo cultural practices. By embedding these cultural elements within the play, Omtatah underscores the importance of cultural identity and continuity. Like many myths, the story of Lwanda Magere serves a didactic purpose. It imparts lessons on the values of loyalty, the dangers of betrayal, and the transient nature of power. Omtatah's adaptation ensures that these lessons remain relevant to contemporary audiences while preserving their traditional context. While the play is rooted in myth, it also reflects historical realities, such as the conflicts between different ethnic groups and the societal structures of the time. Omtatah skillfully blends myth and history to create a narrative that feels both timeless and specific to its cultural context. By retelling the myth of Lwanda Magere, Omtatah makes it accessible to modern audiences, inviting them to reflect on their own cultural heritage and the ways in which myth shapes their understanding of the world. The play becomes a medium through which contemporary issues can be explored through the lens of traditional stories.

Let us be reminded that, in the first instance, the myth of origin and creation explains how people and physical features come into life. Thus, *Lwanda Magere* introduces how Lwanda Magere came to life. The oracle prophesied the day the mother would conceive, how he will be born, and for what he will be born. The birth of Lwanda Magere is celebrated because he is to be the savior of all nation. The voice says:

Tonight,
In the ecstasies of love,
A woman
Truly barren will conceive.

Nine months and your savior,
Lwanda, son of Magere,
Will be born among you.
Lwanda Magere your liberator,
Pure rock his body,
A rock, yet mortal. (p. 3)

This short excerpt can help to show that the Luo people believe in African tradition where people look up to the gods, ancestors, oracles and traditional priests. They pay attention and observe the wishes of the gods and also give sacrifices. The Luo, having prayed and made sacrifices to their ancestors for years for victory over the Lango people, they are finally being saved where the oracle reveals that their liberator son of Magere is to be conceived by a barren woman. Thus, the gods can bless a barren woman with a childlike in this case the mother of Lwanda Magere who is the savior and liberator of the Luo land. After the death of Lwanda Magere, he changes into a rock explaining the origin of mythical physical features. The warrior who witnessed the death of Lwanda Magere informs the King and priest:

You cannot lift a rock!
As soon as Lwanda Magere died
His great body turned into pure rock.
A big boulder is permanently rooted
Where Lwanda Magere fell.no one can move him. (p. 111)

The Luo people believe on how the mysterious rock was formed from Lwanda Magere and they believe that his death gave birth to another mystery. As the story teller ends his story, he records that up to now in the Luo land, there is the petrified remains of Lwanda Magere.

The play *Lwanda Magere* portrays myth featuring cultural heroes. Lwanda Magere is himself a hero for the Luo land. He fights and liberates the Luo from the Lango. The Luo people had suffered for a long time under the rule of the Lango. However, they are liberated with the birth of Lwanda Magere whose mission was prophesied before his

birth. The fact that he doesn't get affected during war and doesn't need a shield to protect him from the enemies and because he has won many battles over the Lango people, he becomes a hero and is celebrated in the Luo land. The Lango people acknowledged that indeed Lwanda is a hero from the way he fights his warriors single-handedly and with only a spear. The Lango's 2nd Chief laments:

Lwanda Magere's awesome presence
On the battlefield,
Like a wolf in a gathering of sheep,
Unnerves our warriors.
Even the bravest among them
Flee like mice before a cat. (p. 16)

The Chief explains how Lwanda Magere is even known by the enemy that he is a strong and superhuman. His acts regard him as a hero. For he has been victorious in all his battles and no wonder the enemies run for their lives and cannot openly fight him. He attacks in broad daylight and drives all the healthy and fatty animals unchecked by the Lango warriors for they fear to attack him knowing they cannot succeed. In the act of taking their cattle lies a situation that signifies disrespect and failure in life. That is the immediate motivation for the Lango people plan to take revenge on the Luo by eliminating Lwanda Magere, who led the cattle raids.

It is interesting how *Lwanda Magere* portrays elements of myths to do with providence and destiny. Throughout the play, the Luo people bow to the totem, pray to it, and offer sacrifices. The Luo people have prayed to the ancestors for a savior and liberator who indeed is born in Lwanda Magere. He saves them from the ruthless rule of the Lango people who had caused misery and suffering for some time. Lwanda Magere is destined to live until he fulfills his mission only if he obeys the ancestors. So, for the ancestors to provide for the people, they have to play their part in respecting the laws and acting as wished by their gods. When Lwanda Magere fails to heed to the advice of the priest who brings messages from the oracle, he perishes and that is why in his last minutes regrets and laments that he is not dying because of fate but rather by reaping what he sows by failing to do as the oracle commanded. In his last statements, Lwanda Magere says:

No! no! no! it is not fate my son!
Learn from my fall,
A neglected house leaks
And falls to the ground!
Do not blame fate.
This is my due harvest!
Every man reaps what he sowed. (p. 109)

Such statements from Lwanda Magere as he dies are a reflection that the gods can turn against any person. It may not matter whether the gods are the ones that blessed him. One may ask oneself if had Lwanda Magere obeyed the oracle's message of not marrying the princess and fighting during the light, he would not have been killed by the enemy and neither would his secret to his powerful nature be known by the enemy.

The play also portrays dynamics of transformation in the Luo community. This theme is portrayed through Lwanda Magere who dies and transforms into a rock, in a manner similar to how this transform supernaturally in the world of myth. The warrior who witnesses Lwanda Magere's death informs the Luo king and his administrators that there is no way a befitting burial for Lwanda Magere can be organised since when he fell down, he transformed into a rock that is too heavy to be lifted:

You cannot lift a rock!
As soon as Lwanda Magere died
His great body turned into pure rock.
A big boulder is permanently rooted
Where Lwanda Magere fell.
No one can move him.
In his death, Lwanda Magere the great,
Has given birth to another mystery.

So Lwanda Magere transforms into a rock after his death. This part of the story dealing with his death is mythical and people in Lango believe that the rock are the remains of Lwanda Magere the greatest man who killed himself by failing to obey the oracles that had blessed him with the strength. Since he was prophesied to be the rock and as he is always referred to throughout the play, Lwanda Magere in the end transforms into a rock to be remembered forever in the land of the Luo.

Further, the play shows that the Luo people believe in the supernatural and ancestors. They believe that the oracle is the eye and mouth of gods. That is why it is always consulted before one does something. Lwanda Magere consults the oracle before he goes to battle with the Lango people. The priest always brings the wishes and messages from the oracle to the Luo people. The priest for example brings the oracle's warning for Lwanda Magere who should neither marry the princess nor go to war in daylight because since his power is in his shadow then he can be harmed. It's unfortunate that due to the love of women, Lwanda Magere does not heed to the warning and goes contrary to the oracle's message which implies the disrespect for gods something that leads to his death.

The Luo people believe in what some modern people call superstition. This is depicted when the owl violently hoots on top of Lwanda Magere's house. He immediately interprets that his wife, the Lango princess must be having evil plans against him, The owl's hooting comes in immediately Lwanda Magere reveals his secret to the princess. He thus makes the princess swear the oath of secrecy promising him that she will not disclose what she has discovered. However, she immediately goes back to her land and does contrary to how she has promised the husband. By that act, the Lango people cleansed her and trusted that the oath of secrecy she swore to would not negatively affect her. The Lango King says:

Daughter,
Our priests did everything
That was supposed to be done
Last night. No harm
From man or from spirit

Will come your way.
You have done this land
A great service. The elders
Have heard your story
You can leave now.

This implies that the gods can also purify. The princess undergoes purification. Even when she disappoints the husband and reveals the secret, the oath she made is not supposed to backfire against her. Even her father's statements assure her that no harm would befall her for revealing her husband's secret.

4.5 Conclusion

It comes out that Okoiti Omtatah's *Lwanda Magere* represents different elements of myths featuring cultural heroes, the ones related to providence and destiny, those about transformation and ones about physical features. The playwright, through the representation of myth manages to depict African tradition of the Luo and Lango people as people who believe in the supernatural and ancestors, oracles, superstition, oath-making, consulting gods, bowing and obeying the totems and traditional purification through making sacrifices to appease the gods. I can say that the play strengthens the significance of oral traditions in preserving African tradition, showcasing how elements of myth represented through drama can transmit and preserve cultural values across generations.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This research focused on the representation of myth in *Lwanda Magere*. In this chapter I discuss the findings on the three research objectives: how is myth used in the characterisation of *Lwanda Magere* the mythic hero in the play? What is the effectiveness of setting in the representation of myth in the *Lwanda Magere* play? In which way is myth significant in the portrayal of cultural tradition in the *Lwanda Magere* play?

5.2 Representation of myth in the characterisation of *Lwanda Magere*

This section discusses findings on the first objective: how myth is used in the characterisation of *Lwanda Magere*. The study established that characters, overall, depicted within the framework of the *Lwanda Magere* myth. Characters play a significant role in literature as they control the plot of the story, bring out themes and arouse and sustain interest since a story is normally told through the character. I considered *Lwanda Magere* the mythic hero, the Princess, Luo's Priest, Luo and Lango people as collectively depicted variously. Some of the characters are endowed with negative character traits while others possess positive character traits. The traits of *Lwanda Magere*, the Princess, the Priest, the Luo people and the Lango people are discussed below. Just like Gikandi (2021, op. cit.) reveals, *Lwanda Magere* is often used as a symbol of resilience and cultural pride. In *Lwanda Magere*, *Lwanda Magere* is portrayed as having been sent by the gods to defend the Luo community which eventually relies on him for their survival. Therefore, in the context of the play, his life and survival make him central to the Luo community. His birth and destiny are in the hands of the gods.

The story of the play shows that *Lwanda Magere*'s birth and destiny were predetermined by God but the secret of his strength was won by the power of the woman. The myth here is that the general community narrative goes that if a leader is surrounded by women, it will be detrimental to the progress of that community. Women are viewed as traitors. *Lwanda Magere* is a legendary warrior with supernatural powers and going against the

will of the gods means disaster. The protagonist in *Lwanda Magere* becomes a great warrior but his glory is short lived as his pride and flaw leads to his down fall, the immediate cause being his closeness to his wife.

As the protagonist, *Lwanda Magere* is elevated beyond ordinary humanity. He is looked unto as the messiah who came to liberate his people from the tyrannical Lango warriors. Mythical figures are themselves half-men/women and half-gods and they may also be cultural heroes and founders of the tribe. Okoit Omtatah presents the protagonist - *Lwanda Magere* as a hero in the Luo culture. With his arrival, as a warrior whose body was infallible, it could not be pierced by a spear. His life is built on the secret of the gods. He himself and the priest know the secret behind his infallible body.

At sowing stage, the study established that *Lwanda Magere* is determined and principled. He is interested in saving his community against the Lango people no matter the circumstances. It is the courage and determination that takes him to battle during day even when he knows that his secret to his victory lies in fighting at night because his life is in his shadow. Indeed, it is because of courage, determination and being principled that *Lwanda Magere* insists on facing his enemy so as to defend his people and fulfill his mission that was prophesied before his birth that a savior would be born. The playwright's representation of *Lwanda* as courageous, determined and principled portrays the Luo's mythical beliefs and prophecies. First as the play begins, it is prophesied that a savior in *Lwanda Magere* will be born, and oracles send messages through the priests to remind *Lwanda* on how to behave to be victorious. This is in agreement with Richard Buxton (2004) and Mary Beard (2013) description of creation of myth in the cultural and historical contexts and its interpretation.

In addition, the study has ascertained that *Lwanda Magere* is a self-motivated, confident character with high self-esteem. He serves his Luo people without expecting any payment nor being forced. He is not coerced to go to war or battle field but rather

willingly does. He thus portrays the myth of being a heroic savior and serving the Luo people as the Oracle had announced before his birth. The oracle's message is mythical for prophesies the birth of the savior for Luo people from the Lango people who is Lwanda Magere. And indeed, after his birth, Lwanda does not disappoint his people. He really does as expected and with him, the Luo people are assured of their safety and victory but only when he obeys the gods. This observation concurs with Emily Greenwood (2019) who asserts that traditional myths have been reinterpreted in postcolonial contexts. The traditional narrative of Lwanda Magere where Lwanda Magere is believed as the Luo saviour is portrayed.

I am in agreement with Matovu (2020) who argues that Lwanda Magere contributes to national narratives and identity formation. Lwanda Magere is portrayed to be patriotic, committed and responsible. He diligently fulfills his mission as expected by the gods and Luo people. This shows his love for his community and people and how responsible and committed he is in bringing victory to Luo land. He is thus committed to doing anything possible to be the Luo savior hence achieving victory and being famous across all the two communities. The priest is the Oracle's mouth piece, having the ability to see the past and fore tells the past. Lwanda Magere, begins with the oracle's pronouncement of Lwanda Magere's birth and how he ought to conduct his life.

The study further finds out that the princess, a Lango's beauty, who is married off to Lwanda Magere as part of a peace treaty or alliance is hypocritical and a traitor. She betrays Lwanda Magere by revealing the secret of his invulnerability to her people, which leads to his death in battle. As she narrates how she found out the secret to her people, it is clear she seduced Lwanda into revealing his secret which she promises to keep in vain. Even when the Princess blinds Lwanda Magere with a promise and swearing the oath of secrecy, she goes ahead to reveal everything to the King and chiefs of Lango. The princess thus becomes a traitor and hypocritical. She hypocritically cares about the husband, Lwanda Magere who ends up telling her all about his extraordinary power and why he can't bleed and thus achieving her mission. This relates to Caroline Rooney's (2007) whose study shows how the myths address gender issues by challenging patriarchal structures. Traditionally, women are considered untrustworthy and naïve but

in the case of Lwanda Magere and the Princess, it is vice versa. The prince intelligently gets to the secret of Lwanda and ends up betraying him, with precise success.

Furthermore, I ascertained that the princess is cunning, craft and deceitful for she gives alcohol to Lwanda Magere knowing that he is not supposed to drink it. But she cunningly convinces him to take it which makes him lose his senses and hence revealing his secret. The night Lwanda reveals the secret to his power, the Princess succeeds in deceiving him to fulfil her mission of establishing the reason behind Lwanda Magere's powerful nature that qualifies him as a rock. Just like Musila (2018) findings that challenge patriarchal narratives highlight women's roles in society, the queen and the princess of Lango have been used in Lwanda Magere to depict the role of women. The queen and the princess are ones who help to bring to an end Lango's loss over the Luo. No wonder after gathering all the information from her husband, the Princess escapes back to her home to deliver the message to her father, the king plus his chiefs of Lango region.

Similar to Lillian Oyugi (2022) in analysing the role of gender in the myth of Lwanda Magere, concludes that the strong male heroes are brought down by the women termed as traitors, the study further established that the Princess is selfish, inconsiderate and unloving. She pretends to be in love with Lwanda Magere whom she fools until achieving her dream. She doesn't consider the feelings and side of her husband in her bid to achieve her mission as sent by the Lango leaders. She thus uses her power as a woman and achieves her mission of letting her husband reveal his source of power by acting as if she is treating him. The Princess is seen as an actor who does not mind nor consider other people's feelings by putting herself in their shoes. She doesn't mind about the life of her husband with whom she has had children moreover but reveals his secrets that would lead to his death. Even when she pretends to love him, it's obvious she doesn't she only pretends to love him to get information from him.

Gikandi (op. cit.) records that oral traditions, including myths, are transformed in East African literature. I established that the Luo's priest who is the Oracle's voice is secretive, protective and selfless. He is described as the only person who knows about the secret of Lwanda Magere's source of power. He very much protects Lwanda Magere by advising him on what he should do so that he cannot be harmed. God is the source

of the ideal goodness. He cannot cause evil but rather punishes it. The gods should not be presented as immoral, violent and subject to passion, wars, injustice and disaster. Where they are presented as such, they should punish the wicked and carry out justice. This explains why the myth in the play under the study presents the gods as lovers of justice and punish the perpetrators. Mortal man experiences his own helplessness and insignificance in the face divine power. He further affirms that human greatness is futile. This is clearly portrayed through Lwanda Magere the great warrior.

More so, the Priest is portrayed as submissive, obedient and respectful. He submits to the gods, obeys and respects their messages. He obeys messages from the oracle and respects the gods that he cannot do otherwise. He thus keeps on emphasizing Lwanda Magere to respect all the messages he delivers to him from the Oracle. As he was warned never to reveal the secret to his power, the priest doesn't not share it to anyone which implies obedience. As the priest is warned at the beginning of the play to keep and nurture Lwanda Magere into his secret for life, he respects the gods and fulfils their demands. He doesn't share his secret and neither does he get tired of delivering the messages from the Oracle to Lwanda even when he rudely and negatively reacts to the message. The priest remains obedient, respectful and submissive to the gods.

The study also reveals that the priest is portrayed as a traditionalist. He believes in the ancestors, oracles, gods and totems of the Luo land. He is presented praying to the gods, bowing to the totem and offering Lwanda Magere to the gods. By doing so, the priest is revealing his traditionalistic nature and how he obeys the gods. He does everything required on the newly born Lwanda Magere to offer him to the gods. This portrays him a traditionalist. That is why he keeps warning Lwanda Magere against behaving contrary to the messages from the Oracle.

Pauline Mhando (2020) and Irene de Jong (2014) establish that Lwanda Magere's narrative relies on oral storytelling methods, flexibility and communal participation. Thus, the storyteller narration in the play shows that the Lang'o people represented by the King, 1st Chief, 2nd Chief, 3rd Chief, Queen, and a Lang'o warrior are depicted as vengeful, inconsiderate, aggressive, dishonest, cunning, power-hungry, greedy and disrespectful. In their vengeful nature, they decide to plot the death of Lwanda Magere

to avenge the number of Lango warriors he has killed, the many animals he has taken from Lango which ashamed them. Indeed, they successfully get a plan on how to effectively and successfully finish off their enemy, Lwanda Magere. The queen after being allowed to speak advises the Lango leaders to manipulate Lwanda Magere using his weakest point of being a womanizer. This relates to Helen Morales (2020) findings that show how myths construct and deconstruct gender roles. The queen even when at first is not allowed to speak because of tradition helps the Lango administrators with the best solution to their problem, Lwanda Magere.

The Lango people thus dishonestly and cunningly giveaway their princess as a token of appreciation to Lwanda Magere with a mission of getting his secret so that they can kill him. By doing this, it shows they are dishonest, cunning and inconsiderate. They deceive Lwanda Magere. They are inconsiderate for they don't think about the life of their princess entrusted in the hands of the enemy, Lwanda Magere and the Luo people in general whether she could be mistreated, tortured or killed but are rather interested in achieving their mission of getting the secret of Lwanda Magere's power.

In addition to the above, Lango people are greedy and power hungry. They plan to overpower the Luo and live as the masters. This is depicted during the meeting when they are planning on how they can get to know the secret to Lwanda Magere's power. This clearly shows that the Lango people are very much interested in gaining power over other areas thus showing that they are power hungry and interested in achieving victory to own the whole community. Indeed, it is an indication that the Lango people are greedy and power hungry for they cannot be satisfied with what they have. This is in agreement with Isidore Okpewho's (2023) findings that on the reclamation and reinterpretation of African myths in literature where African writers use myth to reclaim cultural identity. The Lango very much want to reclaim their status, identity and power of the Luo. And the wrangles between the Lango and the Luo have been in existence thus Okoit Omtatah has used literature to portray the traditional myths.

It is often observed that Africans believe in the gods and ancestors. They trust and consult them in everything they do. The gods in return bless or punish when obeyed or disobeyed respectively. Lwanda Magere is blessed but dies the moment he goes contrary

to the commands of the Oracle. Indeed, Lwanda Magere laments that it's not fate that he is dying but rather because he disobeyed the gods thus reaping what he sowed. Thus, in the same view with Ochieng' K. Odera (2019), the study finds that Lwanda Magere symbolizes the paradox of strength and vulnerability, serving as moral lessons about the limits of human power and the role of fate.

Characters should have incentives and motivation for their actions for good drama. In the play under the study, through a flash back, we learn the characters' past that gives a reason for their present actions. Lwanda Magere grows up proudly as a great Warrior, being looked at as the only savior but forgetting that the gods have all of his life and going against the demands of the gods meant disaster and that's what exactly happened to him. In the case of Lwanda Magere, a great warrior of the time, the most mysterious of all and perhaps the "would be" invisible warrior digs himself into his death trap.

5.3 Effectiveness of setting in the representation of myth

This section covers the discussion of results on the second research objective: to explore the effectiveness of setting in the representation of myth in *Lwanda Magere*. In line with Mungai (op. cit.) who emphasises that national identity, unity and the impact of modernization, that are depicted in the representation of myth while preserving the core elements of the myth, this study generally established that Okoiti Omtatah uses setting; historical, physical and time to portray the mythical world in the play. The play portrays sowing time and reaping time whereby during the sowing period the mythical world where people believe in totems, ancestors, gods and oracles is portrayed. In this section of the play, the Luo totem is portrayed and people are depicted believing, bowing and giving sacrifices to it. It is mythically believed that the totem is their god whom they believe, trust and respect thus a depiction of African society and culture. The Luo people believe that their prayers, sacrifices to their ancestors are answered the moment the oracle assures them that their savior is to be conceived and born. Thus, every Luo bows and prays to the totem giving sacrifices believing it's their source of strength, protection and victory.

The priest, as requested by the gods through the voice offers the child to the gods when it is born and asks for blessing from the ancestors. Lwanda is blessed when offered to the gods. He is as strong as a rock and cannot be harmed. The ancestors are thus

believed to be the source of blessings, strength, victory, restoration, liberation and salvation. This relates to John S. Mbiti (op. cit.) revelation of how African mythological heroes' serving cultural significance have supernatural strength and leadership, thus reinforcing cultural values and collective identity.

In addition, through time setting, the play wright has portrayed a myth. The story teller's opening words show that it is at night as he tells the audience that before they retire to their beds that night, he has a story to narrate to them. This is a reflection of the African traditional life where stories would be told at night and when the African gods are consulted and speak to people. It is thus mythical that the Luos believe in the existence of Lwanda Magere, his existence and supernatural powers in the remote past. Similarly, Grace Musila (2018) emphasises the need for ethical leadership and social justice.

If we take Okorafor (2020) who records that African myths reflect national identity, for instance, I established that through historical setting a mythical world is portrayed in the belief that in the remote past there lived the Great mighty legendary or mythical Lwanda Magere in the land of the Luo. He was Luo's saviour and liberator from the rule of the ruthless Lango people. The Luo indeed had to pray and give sacrifices to the ancestors in anticipation of a savior who indeed is born in Lwanda Magere. Thus, the Luo's belief and hope are in their ancestors. Indeed, the Luo people's prayers are answered through the infallible Oracle of the ancestors and a Mighty voice prophesying the conceiving of barren woman who will birth a savior, Lwanda Magere. Indeed, the gods have given hope, salvation and liberation. We are shown that a barren woman has been blessed and is yet to conceive the Luo's saviour for Luo land. The prophecy is testimony to the belief that the birth of Lwanda is an answer to the Luo's prayers, hence affirming the African tradition's belief that ancestors answer people's prayers and sacrifices. This finding is in line with Olaniyan (op. cit.) who records that modern African writers engage with and transform traditional myths to create new narratives and meanings. This is what Omtatah does in Lwanda Magere.

This study further found out that through physical setting at the Lango's Kings palace, the playwright, Okoiti Omtatah presents the mythical world. This is similar to Gregory

Nagy's (2020) that explores the integration of myth with other cultural forms indicating that oral traditions and performative aspects influence the transmission and interpretation of myths in classic texts. The play portrays the tradition and culture of Lango and Luo people with their kings, chiefs, priests and oracles which transmits their culture, beliefs and power. Lwanda Magere's supernatural power is revealed. We see the Lango King and his Chiefs plotting for the death of their enemy Lwanda Magere who has killed most of their warriors and taken all their animals. The Lango people are disturbed by the existence of Lwanda Magere. The Lango people now believe that all their problems are as a result of Lwanda Magere, the Rock who cannot be destroyed by their mere spears which is mythical.

The dialogue between the king and the priest at the palace at one time shows that the gods speak through the priest. He is the one to deliver messages from the oracle. In that capacity, he is the one who warns Lwanda Magere as to why he should not accept to marry Lango's princess who is presented as a token of appreciation. The oracle's message is very clear and shows that it is the gods that bless. At the end of the play Lwanda is killed for he disobeys the gods by marrying the princess who eventually shares his secret to his enemies. This scenario affirms Mhando's (2020) findings that portray how myths like that of Lwanda Magere are continually reinterpreted to reflect changing social and cultural contexts. Alongside the portrayal of tradition and other themes, the Lwanda Magere myth demonstrates and serves specific cultural and political purposes in various contexts.

Similar to Gikandi and Mbiti's (2020) findings that show that Lwanda Magere myth reflects and reinforces cultural identities and values to communicate cultural values, moral lessons, and collective identity, *Lwanda Magere* embodies Luo values of strength, leadership, and a sense of community. At Lwanda Magere's home, in a mythical framework, Magere is described as carrying a spear, a weapon which is believed to be an African fighting weapon. Lwanda's son, Omollo names the calf Omena which implies that it is going to be the leader of the herd. This is a reflection of how Africans give names to objects, persons, et cetera, to reflect many important things in the life of a person. For example, we are told of where he was born from, how he was conceived, the time he is born and many others.

This study established that the priest's role among the Luo of the play is the sole mouthpiece of the gods. In relation to Oyugi (2022) and Roisman (2009), an examination of the gender dynamics focusing on the roles and representations of women in the narratives, I found that the woman character plays an important role in the protagonists' downfall by her sheer lack of trust and her betrayal. In this way, Omtatah reveals to us the impact of female agency in patriarchal societies such as the Luo depicted in *Lwanda Magere*.

The study ascertained that through time setting, the mythical world in African setting is portrayed. *Lwanda Magere's* revelation of his secret to his wife is done at night which, a time associated with mystery in sundry cultures. Such a portrayal signifies that evil plans are secured during night or in darkness. The princess indeed tries to figure out how she can get information from *Lwanda Magere* so that her mission is achieved. The princess, like the oracle had warned, indeed comes into *Lwanda Magere's* as set and sent by her people on a mission. It is through knowing the power of the rock that he can be destroyed by the enemy, a situation that relates to Mugane's (2015) findings that traditional myths are blended with contemporary issues to address current social and political challenges.

This study established that the physical setting at the King's palace as the princess narrates to the King and his chiefs what transpired during the night she got to know the secret *Lwanda Magere* is significant. The long dialogue between the princes and *Lwanda Magere* portrays the mythical world. It is revealed that the oracle had warned *Lwanda Magere* never to take alcohol but because the princess is interested in achieving her mission she convinces *Lwanda Magere* to take alcohol that night. When *Lwanda Magere* complains that he has broken a sacred law at her bidding and taken alcohol, he complains of terrible headache thereafter. Even though the princess tries very much to cover *Lwanda Magere's* sin of disobedience of the oracle, it is clear that he believes in the oracles, respects them and is meant to act according to their laws. And failure to do so comes with challenges. That is partly why he experiences headache for he has broken the divine law which he should have kept to keep victorious. The headache functions as a situational metaphor for the consequences of rebellion against the gods.

We can add that the people believe in superstition which is mythical. On hearing the violent hooting of an owl at the top of his roof Lwanda Magere immediately comes to his senses and realizes the princess is on a bad mission. Thus, Africans as portrayed in the play, attach evil with the hooting of the owl. Hence, the mythical belief in the owl that portrays danger or evil plans is portrayed through Lwanda's words. He realizes that the hooting of an owl violently on top of his house signifies mischief and something bad.

One may argue that Lwanda Magere is a tragic hero whose downfall is a result of fate and personal flaws that illustrate the limits of human power and the inevitability of destiny. I also verified that during "Reaping: section of the play, in the palace of the Luo king, Lwanda Magere is advised not to go to war during daytime since the secret that his life is in his shadow is revealed to the enemy, the Lango people in vain. This fulfills what the Oracle had warned that Lwanda will only be protected if he obeys the ancestors but meet his death if he does not. In a way, Lwanda Magere's life comes to an end because he insisted and married the princess of Lango. The oracle's prophecy was fulfilled.

In the play, *Lwanda Magere*, Omtatah employs time, physical and historical setting to portray aspects of myth. Physically, the setting rotates around the Lango and Luo palaces and Lwanda's home. Through time setting, the playwright shows how evil plans are made at night. The whole play shows that there is time for sowing and time for reaping, partly capturing the universal theme of "you reap what you sow".

5.4 Representation of myth in the portrayal of cultural tradition

I established that through the presentation of myth, African tradition is portrayed. It is through representation of myth that the playwright depicts the beliefs, life and celebration styles of the African people represented by the Luo and Lango in the play. Traditionally, the representation of myth involved the depiction of legendary and mythic heroes. The mythical past had equally mythical figures that lived when the gods used to live on earth. These are half men and half gods who are intermediaries with gods. In relation to Lwanda Magere, this is true since there are oracles, priests and prophets who have the eyes of the gods and can speak directly with the gods.

Majorly, I proved the representation of myth in the play, *Lwanda Magere*. The myth illustrates how people and physical features come into life, with Lwanda Magere providing a case in point. For him, the oracle prophesied the day the mother would conceive, how he would be born and what his purpose on earth would be - saving and liberating his people. When Kimingichi (2022) records that the Lwanda Magere narrative is a mythical legend named after the hero who was sent by the gods to save the Luo community from the rampant raids of the Kalenjin - referred to as Lang'o in the narrative - one is bound to agree with that scholar. With his arrival, as a warrior whose body cannot be pierced by a spear - because his name means "built of stone" as we have already seen, the Kalenjins lost the upper hand in the war. This is a clear indication that the Luo people believe in African tradition where people look up to the gods, ancestors, oracles and traditional priests for blessings, salvation and liberation. They pay attention and observe the wishes of the gods and also give sacrifices. The Luo, for example pray and sacrifice to their ancestors for salvation that they receive through the birth of Lwanda Magere.

By blessing a barren woman to produce a saviour and liberator of his people, Omtatah portrays the African tradition where gods and ancestors are trusted to be the providers of everything. Further still, the turning of Lwanda Magere into a rock after his death explains the origin of mythical physical features. The Luo people believe on how the mysterious rock was formed from Lwanda Magere believing that his death gave birth to another mystery, the petrified remains of Lwanda Magere. This concurs with Anthony Vital (2013) who establishes how African literature employs traditional myths to portray nature and the environment.

As I ascertain that myths featuring cultural heroes are common ingredients of plays, I concur with Johnston, (2020) who observes that myths frequently featured heroes undertaking epic quests, facing moral dilemmas, and encountering tragic fates due to hubris or divine intervention. Lwanda Magere is - in his own right as a character in the play - a hero for the Luo since he fights and liberates them from the Lango. They are liberated with the birth of Lwanda Magere whose mission was prophesied before his birth. During war, Lwanda Magere blessed by the gods cannot be affected by any spear

from the enemies. Thus, he does not need a shield to protect him from the enemies. He wins many battles over the Lango people single handed. He thus becomes a hero who is celebrated by the Luo in the Luo land.

I found out that Okoiti Omtatah portrays myths of providence and destiny. The Luo pray to a totem, offer sacrifices to it and in return expect providence and destiny. As they believe, the totem offers the Luo a liberator and saviour who saves them from the ruthless rule of the Lango people who had caused misery and suffering for some time. The people believe that the totem offers them Lwanda Magere as an answer to their prayers and sacrifices to it. In that context, Lwanda Magere is believed to be destined to live until he fulfills his mission, but only if he obeys the oracles. So, for the ancestors to provide for the people, they have to play their part in respecting the laws and acting as wished by their gods. Lwanda Magere, the rock, meets his grave death when he fails to listen to and obey the oracles' warning.

Furthermore, the play portrays the notion of transformation as portrayed through Lwanda Magere who dies and transforms into a rock. This is a situation that is in agreement with Nortwick's (2016) exploration of the relationship that exists between humans and the natural environment. After Lwanda's shadow being speared by the enemy, he immediately turns into a rock and cannot be buried because no one can lift the rock. This is portrayal that normally features in myths of transformation. It is interesting that the Luo continue to believe that Lwanda Magere existed and he still exists, in a transformed natural feature of a rock. Thus, the play is seen to portray a crucial aspect in the Luo traditional belief system.

The belief in supernatural powers and the influence of and ancestors is associated with many cultures. I ascertained that in *Lwanda Magere* we are shown that the Luo people believe in the oracle as the eye, ear and mouth of the gods. That is why it is always consulted before one does something substantive in a manner that relates to Frazer's (2009) analysis of the relationship between myth and ritual in that myths often originated to explain and justify rituals that are mainly of religious nature. This Frazian thinking has been applied to literary texts to explore the ritualistic dimensions of the mythological elements. What Omtatah does is to rework some aspects of the Lwanda

Magere myth for dramatic purposes. For instance, the playwright even makes Lwanda Magere himself consult the oracle before he goes to battle with the Lango people, the priest always brings the wishes and messages from the oracle to the Luo people. The priest brings the oracle's warning for Lwanda Magere who should neither marry the princess nor go to war in daylight because since his power is in his shadow then he can be harmed. It is a tragic fulfillment that due to the love for his woman, Lwanda Magere does not heed to the warning and goes contrary to the oracle's message. In this case, the hero disrespects the gods and must suffer death as the ultimate punishment. But, as myths of transformations show, it is not a terminal death but death in the form of change. Lwanga changes from the human and sometimes super-human form into another form of nature, a rock.

5.5 Conclusion

One of the interesting things about *Lwanda Magere* is that the play functions as a dramatised version of preserving cultural identity through representations of aspects of myth. Omtatah locates the play within Luo oral tradition and therefore highlights the significance of myth as a keeper of traditional values of the Luo. Therefore, the play is not a mere re-telling of the story of Lwanda Magere the mythic hero. Rather, it is a way of dramatically claiming that the story of Lwanda Magere shows the importance of indigenous knowledge systems and storytelling forms in modern drama.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This study set out to examine representation of myth in Okoiti Omtatah's play, *Lwanda Magere*. I specifically focused on three key areas: representation of myth in the characterisation of Lwanda Magere, the effectiveness of setting and representation of myth in the portrayal of cultural tradition in *Lwanda Magere*. The findings revealed that the play employs myth not just as a narrative device, but as a cultural and dramatic medium to showcase African identity and heritage. It came out that the manner of characterisation is so close to that found in the Lwanda Magere myth itself. Lwanda Magere, the main protagonist, is depicted as a heroic figure that symbolises physical and spiritual power as well as communal values. He is shown as a man who has so experience tragic defenselessness by the end of the play. The setting is created in such a way that the play's audience can find that the mythical world presented is believable. This so because the playwright blends physical reality with the supernatural elements. Finally, Luo tradition is shown to play the role of a moral compass and cultural support within the play.

6.2 Conclusion

The findings show that Okoiti Omtatah's *Lwanda Magere* is a rich representation of myth that goes beyond Luo. The play is a dramatic expression of cultural identity and thought. Through characterisation, setting and tradition, the play re-creates the myth of Lwanda Magere for dramatic and thematic purposes. The play can demonstrate that myth possesses great significance in literature especially as a creative impulse, a medium through which societies can preserve their values, question certain values and practices but at the same time inspire reflection. Omtatah, in *Lwanda Magere*, does not simply re-tell the myth of Lwanda Magere. Rather, he re-interprets the story to serve dramatic purpose, help in cultural preservation and also offer an avenue for reflecting on our modern times. So, *Lwanda Magere* is both a play and an artistic creation that is a pool of cultural values.

6.3 Recommendations

First, I recommend that scholars of especially African literature should continue exploring how specific traditional myths can be adapted and reconfigured in drama to address contemporary themes. *Lwanda Magere* has provided a strong example. The exploration can be done through comparative studies, for instance.

Secondly, Educational institutions should incorporate texts such as *Lwanda Magere* into formal literature syllabi at secondary and tertiary levels to promote the appreciation of the power of African mythology. The Uganda National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) has already included it on the selected texts for study at the Advanced level. The ball is in the teachers' and lecturers' court to guide their learners in analysing how myth, in specific contexts, can be used to teach values, history and cultural identity during literature lessons.

In the face of modernity where digitisation is the in-thing, such plays as *Lwanda Magere* should not only be read and staged before live audiences. It should go beyond. Such a play and related dramatic arts should be digitised so that the oral traditions that are there are preserved in digital forms. Sharing the plays and such other works on internet platforms can also help to not only preserve such works but assist in widening the audiences that read or watch such plays.

6.4 Suggestions for Further Research

The following are areas that can be researched on further, as they relate to the representation of myth in *Lwanda Magere* and other dramas in general. Scholars can study the way various audiences receive and perceive the plays that represent aspects of myth, however seemingly oblique. Such a study can help to assess the impact of such plays on cultural identity and collective thought in contemporary times.

I strongly support more research on gender-related themes, particularly the portrayal of women. For instance, in the *Lwanda Magere* story, it is his wife that betrays him. From a comparative angle, that portrayal is similar to the portrayal of Kibuuka's wife in one of the legends of the Baganda people. It is also similar to the portrayal of Delilah in the Bible. The key question for me is: are women in myths only good at betrayal? Finally, I

suggest that future studies should explore the intersection between myth and political ideology in contemporary African drama. Such a study can add to the efforts of bridging the gap between art and actual realities of life, especially in the field of politics. Questions such as to whether we have living Lwanda Mageres of our times and if so what their implications are can be explored.

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DISSERTATION CORRECTION COMPLIANCE REPORT BY THE CANDIDATE (POST VIVA FORM)

Date: 15/09/2025

Name of Candidate: KYARISIIMA MARGRET Reg. No: RJ17M07/07

Title of Dissertation **THE REPRESENTATION OF MYTH IN OKOITI OMTATAH'S PLAY, LWANDA MAGERE**

SN	COMMENTS BY EXTERNAL EXAMINER	ACTION TAKEN	INDICATOR
1	Correct inaccuracies such as the claim that the author who was born in 1964 and that he started his writing career in the 19 th century.	Date put right	p. 8
2	Correct the inaccurate claim that the play she is analysing is a reproduction and not an adaptation of a myth	Inaccuracy corrected, 'reproduction' replaced by 'adaptation'	p. 9
3	I ask the student to review this section to discount the repetition and the disjointedness.	Repetitions and disjointedness removed	Entire dissertation: pp 8-75
4	Areas for further research are not clear	Revised and made clear	PP 74-75
5	Concretise the research problem by showing research gap	Research gap provided basing on 2 scholarly papers	

SN	COMMENTS BY VIVA VOCE PANNEL	ACTION TAKEN	INDICATOR
6	Need to clarify the problem statement (gap)- mention the studies that talk about the same work	Research gap provided: 2 scholarly papers cited	p. 13
7	The action words in the objectives should be adjusted/ revised	Objectives and related research questions were revised and re-aligned	P.14
8	The methodology should be adjusted	Revised as advised	pp 29-31
9	Advised that it is better to conclude based on the objectives	Conclusions are based on objectives	End of every chapter and then .p 74
10	Advised to review the literature in line with the study	Literature review was reviewed	pp. 19-27
11	Generally, the citation style and references weren't good	Citation issues were addressed	Entire dissertation: pp 8-75
12			
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KYARISIMBA MARGRET

Candidate's Name

Margret
Signature

James Teabe Bwimba

Supervisor's Name

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