



Intangible Cultural Heritage: Koogere Oral Tradition

1. Identification of the element

1.1 Name of the element as used by the community

Oruganikyo rwa Koogere

1.2 Short, maximally informative title

Koogere Oral Tradition

1.3 Community (ies) concerned

Basongora, Batooro and Banyoro

1.4 Physical location (s) of the element

Busongora (Kasese district) Tooro and Bunyoro regions

1.5 Short description of the element

The Koogere oral tradition is a popular story describing successes of a reign of a great woman ruler and entrepreneur called Koogere who was a chief of Busongora chiefdom in the ancient Kitara Empire during the Batembuzi dynasty about 1500 years ago.

Kitara was the biggest African empire south of the Sahara, stretching from Madi and Bukidi present day Eastern Uganda to Karagwe in Northern Tanzania and Ituri and Bulenga both in the present day Eastern part of Democratic Republic of Congo. The story is told among the communities of former Bunyoro and Tooro Kingdoms where Koogere ruled as a chief and which was the headquarters and epicentre of the empire. Koogere is the only surviving story covering the ancient and pre-historical times of the communities in the two kingdoms.

The story which has been orally passed on, from generation to generation, is told through a set of episodes, sayings, words of wisdoms, poems and folksongs which describe wisdom and achievement of a heroine-Koogere and the socio-economic prosperity of the chiefdom during her reign.

The Koogere oral tradition provides themes for the biggest part of the traditional folklore of the concerned communities.

The story presents Koogere, who was a daughter of a king as the richest and wisest person in the "world." She got chance to display her wisdom and enterprise skills when the king decided to appoint women to govern the different provinces of the kingdom. She built a lot of wealth for herself and the entire chiefdom as presented in sayings, poems and folksongs which describe the actions and behaviour of massive cows which are a sign of wealth. Hence popular and very old sayings like "Busongora bwa Koogere mbere ikamwa niboroga" and specialised songs and poems for cows "ebizina byente" which form a big percentage of the traditional folklore of these communities.

The story describes Koogere's success in using female servants to interpreted numerous riddles and save the kingdom which task had failed all people in the "world" It is from this that the story presents Koogere as the wisest person in the world.

This story gives a basis of value and belief system which survives in these communities today. For instance, the belief that wisdom is inherited from a mother and not father. All married women are called "Nyina Bwenge" literally translated as "mother of wisdom"

women are custodians of the home's wealth and the man's blessings and power. Unmarried man can't make wealth and should not be given public responsibilities, etc.

The Koogere oral tradition therefore, is a vehicle which carries the communities' beliefs and value systems from generation to generation.

The Koogere story is told mainly when people are resting collectively after a satisfying accomplishment. Thus it is told by herdsman while resting under a shade looking at their satisfied cows.

It is also told during a family social evening around a fire place (Hakyoto Mukairirizi). It is again told during elders discussion sessions (Isaaza). It is also presented in celebrations after a social accomplishment.

The Koogere story facilitates reflection, meditation, relaxation, generation of ideas and intergenerational transfer of information. It embodies and propagates the core belief and values of the concerned communities.

The Koogere oral tradition which is about 1500 years old presents the oldest collective philosophy, knowledge and memory of the communities concerned. It presents the oldest sayings and language in its original version. Therefore, among the concerned communities, Koogere oral tradition gives a sense of identity and continuity and it is a basis of building confidence, creativity and mutual respect.

The Koogere oral tradition provides themes for the biggest part of the traditional folklore of the concerned communities.

2. Characteristics of the element

2.1 Associated tangible elements

- Milk items including gourds, calabashes and smoking pots
- Music instruments including drums, tube fiddle and harp

2.2 Associated intangible elements

- Singing, reciting, murmuring, narrating, gestulating, clapping, solo performing, playing instruments and dancing.

2.3 Language (s)

Runyoro – Rutooro

2.4 Perceived origin

Life and experience of ancient Busongora chiefdom of Bunyoro Kitara Empire during the Batembuzi dynasty about 1500 years ago.

3. Persons and institutions involved with the element

Name	Age	Gender	Social status	Village
Mrs. Kanamura Jane	39	F	Practitioner	Busunga
Mrs. Ali Jane	35	F	Practitioner	Muhokya
Rev. Richard Baguma	81	M	Practitioner	Fort Portal

3.2 Other participants (e.g holders/participants)

The elders, traditionalists, story tellers, poets and cultural music groups in Busongora, Tooro and Bunyoro

3.3 Customary practices governing access to the element or to aspects of it

It is an oral tradition, freely accessible to all members of the communities without customary restrictions

3.4 Modes of transmission

- Listening to story tellers
- Training and rehearsals of music groups
- Cultural Programmes on community radio's

3.5 Concerned organizations (NGO and others)

- Engabu Za Tooro NGO
- Ministry of culture – Tooro Kingdom
- Ministry of culture – Bunyoro Kingdom

4. State of the element: viability

4.1 Threats to enactment

- It is not adapted to modern social spaces and audiences
- It is not adapted to modern social programmes

4.2 Threats to transmission

- Practitioners are not professionalized
- It is not adapted to modern commercial entertainment
- It is not documented and not adapted to modern transmission instruments

4.3 Viability of associated tangible and intangible elements:

Tangible: Milk items and traditional music instruments are still used in daily life and raw materials from which they are made are still available

Intangible: Narrating, story telling, reciting, solo performance, gestulating, playing instruments and dancing are still important aspects of human life and getting specialized and professionalized in modern times.

4.4 Safeguarding measures in place

- Limited number of elders, traditionalists and story tellers are still existing and performing in limited spaces and audiences
- Few elders are beginning to adapt the story to the cultural programmes on community radios

5. Data gathering and inventorying

5.1 Consent from and involvement of the community/group in data gathering and inventorying

- Community members through their 25 community based groups and institutions sponsored the whole exercise of data collection and inventorying by providing resource people, money and facilities. They provided free, prior and informed consent to inventorying their element and to publish the collected information to re-enforcing safeguarding measures

5.2 Restriction, if any on use of inventoried data

There was not any restriction

5.3 Resource persons; name, status or affiliations

S/N	NAME	AGE	SEX	RELIGION	RESIDENCE	TRIBE/CLAN
1	Stephen Rwagweri	40	M	Catholic	Fort Portal	Mutooro/Mufumambogo
2	Deo Kabagambe	45	M	Catholic	Gweri	Mutooro/Musingo
3	Solomon Akugizibwe	30	M	Protestant	Kitumba	Mutooro/Mugweri

5.4 Date and place of data gathering

DATE	VILLAGE OF DATA COLLECTION
June - July, 2011	Muhokya
June - July, 2011	Busunga
June - July, 2011	Kigwengwe

5.5 Date of entering data into inventory

Entered in the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development in January 2012

5.6 The inventory entry compiled by:

- 1) Stephen Rwagweri
- 2) Deo Kabagambe
- 3) Solomon Akugizibwe

5.7 Reference to literature, discography, audiovisual materials, achieves.