

Title: Storytelling among the Bakiga of Uganda: Changing Form, Applications, and Performance Contexts, 1930 – 2009.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the changing form, applications, and performance contexts for Bakiga storytelling from 1930 to 2009. Bakiga have always employed storytelling to respond to their everyday needs and challenges. Contrary to the view that storytelling among the Bakiga is declining, the study shows that storytelling endures as a socially engaged expression that fosters communal action and epistemic plurality. The study engages with *Emigane* (folktales), *Okugabuka* (performances by brides), *Emirengye* (performances by men), drama, and Theatre for Development as units of analysis. Four objectives guided the study: to explore the function of storytelling among the Bakiga, to assess how Christianity influenced Bakiga storytelling, to analyse how the Bakiga revitalised and reimagined their performances in the context of Western education, and to examine how migration shaped storytelling of the Bakiga.

The study utilised a phenomenological research design and qualitative approach, collecting data through interviews, Embodied Inquiry, Focus Group Discussions, archival sources, document analysis, and audio-visual recordings. Findings show that Bakiga performances facilitated transformation through intergenerational knowledge transfer, identity formation, gendered imaginaries, psycho-social support, social critique, and speaking to power in the context of Christianity, Western formal schooling and migration. Utilising Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity and Richard Schechner's performance theory, the study argues that Bakiga storytelling was a dynamic performance whose form, function, and contexts changed to respond to people's realities. The study demonstrates that storytelling was a fluid practice that redefined and re-contextualised people's modes of praxis and their social imaginaries. In doing so, the study decentres knowledge hierarchies in applied performances and recognises the embodied practices of peripheral populations for sustainable development. It presents innovative mechanisms for interpreting storytelling, centring it as an egalitarian approach to development in Uganda.