

# Narrating Memory: The Sociocultural Archive in Kadongokamu Songs of Herman Busudde Ssemakula

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## Abstract

This paper revitalises the artist, Herman Basudde Ssemakula, by offering an analysis of four Kadongokamu narrative songs selected from his oeuvre. These function as repositories of the Ganda sociocultural memories and highlight Basudde's notion of the archive and memory making. I argue that the archive as *heterotopia* relates strongly and immediately to Herman Basudde's engagement with social reality in his Kadongokamu songs. I also envisage the fact that Basudde's message is gradually becoming dearer to listeners as years after his death increase because what he focused on is more evident in the contemporary society, something that appears to crown him as a local prophet. I draw on Michel Foucault's concept of the archive and heterotopia. Foucault (1984), suggests that archives make sense and become closer to us according to the spaces they occupy in our lives; those that are immediate to us in time and association control us while those distanced by space and time may be dim in strength and authority. I argue that Basudde's song texts: *Africa, Ensi Egenze Wala, Byetwalaba* and *Abayimbi* provide spaces that have more layers of meaning and relationships to places and real-life experiences than immediately meets the eye. They are, in my analysis, items of culture that people select and collect to store in their minds or in their private "jukeboxes," to reference later.

*Keywords: Herman Basudde Ssemakula, Kadongokamu, heterotopia, Archive*

## Introduction

It is imperative to refocus attention on past popular song artists that have stood out to express their societal values, beliefs, and tradition through their lyrical song narratives. Such artists like Herman Basudde Ssemakula can be a gateway to archival information on culture through the strands of memories embedded in their songs. The archive of Kadongokamu – a traditional form of folk-solo music that is said to have evolved from the phenomenon of the Kabaka's harpists in Buganda, and which was performed by lone musicians in the king's court (Kiguli, 2004), is a repository of sociocultural memories. This, in essence, offers an insightful reflection on societal values, challenges, joys as well as beliefs and norms of a community which seem to be on the periphery in the modern song performances in Buganda.

1

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Kadongokamu, is part of the blueprint in identification of social values in time and space which encompass the collective memory of a society. “Collective memory is a representation of the past shared by members of a group such as a generation or nation-state” (Wertsch, 2008, p. 120). In their narratives, Basudde’s songs present a recollection embedded in their archive that contextualises and reinvigorates debates on what happens in contemporary society as well as providing a method of evaluating change in a bid to understand self and societal progress through their repository. These cultural sources, the *Kadongokamu* songs, play out the expectations of the community by stating the societal way of looking at things; because “the best way to understand the culture of a specific society is by listening to the music that means something to the people” (Tabula, 2015, p.16).

## **Herman Basudde Ssemakula**

Herman Busudde Ssemakula (1958-1997) was a prominent *Kadongokamu* song performer in Buganda. An oral composer, performer, and recording artist, Basudde hailed from Bubondo Village, Butenga Town Council, Bukomansimbi District. Performing between 1987 and 1997, Basudde’s songs express the Ganda worldviews – her memories then and before. One can view Basudde’s art and literature as the use of language explicitly to express individuality and community identity by digging through his repositories and archival deposits in song lyrics. In fact, according to Andrew Kaggwa, (The Observer, July 4, 2016, p. 22), “famed for his powerful lyrics, Basudde was one of the most recognized figures in the Kadongokamu genre and left a legacy that put him among the legends of Ugandan music”. He, according to Gabriel Buule, (Sunday Monitor, June 16, 2024), “used the introduction of his songs not just to celebrate himself, but to literally paint a picture that he was a distinct musician who will never be replaced.”

I argue that Basudde’s legacy came about because he understood the social function he had as an artist to his society and composed songs that chronicled topical debates in his society while navigating the historical narrative and reclaiming the societal cultural legacy. These songs are key in expressing his perception and value of the archive and heterotopia and in engaging history for posterity.

## **Theoretical Perspective**

This paper is guided by Michel Foucault’s notion of the archive and heterotopia, which represents real places, spaces and texts that create coexistence and allow for contrasts. It analyses the spaces that the lyrics of the *Kadongokamu* songs of Basudde create. These songs function as archival methods and explore in their recalling, storing, and production of knowledge, the cultural memories, and the socio-political experiences of the Ganda society. Foucault and Miskowiec (1986) believe that these archival deposits present layers of meaning which form the spaces that more fundamentally define our anxieties more than time. These spaces, they argue, have been accepted and respected without question: and people are differentiated by them and are bound to behave differently in each given space, be it private or public. Within these large encompassing spaces, one can fall under family space, social space, cultural space, useful space, and spaces for work and for leisure. Some spaces are sacred and others allow free interaction. In this paper, I argue that understanding spaces that archives create in our lives is key in toning

meaning out of Basudde's *Kadongokamu* song narratives. Basudde positions himself in a number of spaces and uses each space to give out a message that the community must receive with authority and trust. It was, therefore, his role to use spaces open to him as an artist, to instruct his society and share its insights and perceptions as well as archiving its traditions and memories for posterity. His social commentary and projection of a future when things go amiss has written him on the lips of Ugandans who celebrate him every June 11, a commemoration of his fatal death in a motor accident at Kabaale Bugonzi in 1997.

## Collective Cultural Memories

It was in the mind of Sillars (2008) that "the recovery of cultural forms that existed long before the imposition of alien genres impresses the need for an infinitely longer perspective in the reader and scholar, suggesting the re-emergence of traditional cultures" (p. 26). By recovery of cultural forms, Sillars is referring to those means of expression such as song that have represented Africa's ideology before the advent of the White man and those during colonialism and after. These art forms have had evident transformation today and studying the original forms awakens debates on traditional cultures. I argue that bringing back these forms such as Kadongokamu to the debate is an essential stage forward in the process of genuine cultural awareness. This must have purpose and concern the listener more to know why they are the bases of today's understanding of society:

The diatribe of retrogression is a formidable heirloom in the house of popular culture theories. But treasures of the past are most valuable when they are pawned for more pressing needs of the present. If the physicality of a particular music is indeed retrogressive, we need to ask why. (Chow, 1993, p. 147)

It is imperative in this sense to accord our respect to song texts that transform us into the memory codes and realise why they do so. I argue that Kadongokamu, through its narratives, is a deposit of tangent memories that instruct us about societal values, culture and social-political rendition which challenges the way society views its present.

Whereas Herman Basudde Ssemakula is just an individual artist, I argue that studying the corpus of his Kadongokamu songs, provides a vantage into the sociocultural memories of the Baganda. This is because:

...ideas and perceptions expressed by individual oral artists in the texts of their performance cannot be regarded as simply the brain work of these individuals, because these worldviews often have a social basis in the material and social activities and relations prevailing in society at a particular time. (Benge, 2008, p. 71)

Basudde, therefore, relies on his cognition as a resident of Bubondo, in his early life, as a child raised under the guidance of his parents and the community, and later as a travelled Ugandan and a Muganda, in exploring what society has taught him. Uttering out these ideas in his songs gives him prominence as the voice behind them. He is simply the voice but the worldviews he explores are handed down to him by his society and so, they are owned by it. His songs, therefore, are bound to reveal a lot about the Ganda people, by exploring through their true son, their thoughts and feelings

about themselves and others, and how their society is constituted. This way, the Ganda society's perceptions, aspirations, and experiences find a concentrated expression in his recorded song performances.

The hybridity society has been fused in poses limited threat with the presence of traditional poets and musicians like Herman Basudde. In fact, p'Bitek (1973) argues that after the meaningless church concerts, people go into the countryside and hear real music. By real music, p'Bitek was referring to music that enables the poets and storytellers to comment on the social scene and use their art as repositories of those traditions, values and customs that society cohesion was built upon. In the Ganda case, such music is Kadongokamu and Herman Basudde masters it to explore his society's beliefs, traditions, and philosophy which define the way of life of his people.

## Memories of the State

Herman Basudde, as a Ugandan citizen, uses his songs to archive memories of Uganda as a state. He traces, in scattered deposits in different songs the history, political, social, and economic organisation of his society as well as the struggles. The colonial, traditional, and modern Ugandan society is well situated in his lyrical narratives. These trace key events and refer to incidents that have been central in the collective memory and lives of Ugandans. He gives precedence for the change that has happened over the years that has affected society in different lanes.

Foucault (1967) argues that there has been a shift in spaces from those of binary opposition: of opened and closed, private and public, sacred and profane to a new homogeneous and heterogeneous landscape that functions through heterotopia. Heterotopia, just like utopia, Foucault asserts, has "the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect" (Foucault, 1967, p. 24). These real spaces are counter-sites simultaneously representing contesting and inverting all other conventional sites. They present juxtaposition, relational sites that represent incompatible spaces and reveal paradoxes. This in view, I argue that Basudde's songs destabilise heterotopias of power and state and present societal memories that fuse through such sites like the Mengo palace, which, in *Byetwalaba*, he envisages to be infested with skulls that speak of the history of Buganda but has been restricted to the public and tourists. Basudde argues that such spaces of power that deny access to the masses should be opened to the society to help it appreciate the memories of the past struggles to transcendence and for picking lessons to enhance societal development. He is afraid that Africa's current position is wanting in relation to development of Europe and that the Europeans will soon mould a human being because their archives have been opened to inventors and they are using them for diversification.

Basudde also uses his song *Africa* to record the colonial history of Uganda as well as the history surrounding the religions of Africa that obliterated the society's inclination to traditional worship. He uses the song to express melancholy and bitterness over fellow Africans who have been brainwashed by the West to forget the things that held them together such as their customs and values by accepting Western philosophies and ways of life without question. He attempts to respond to the question, '*what happened?*' and consequently visualises what might happen. He provides his perception

of ancient Africa and chronicles its current predicaments. Like the renowned African proverb, “until lions have their own storytellers, hunters will always be the hero in their story,” Basudde understands this unfortunate position, that there is no complete story until one hears from all sides. He, therefore, offers himself to deconstruct the narrative the West has painted in representing African history. Africans, for example, have been painted as savages who are below all decency and civilisation but Basudde destabilises this narrative.

*Sooka weevume ekintu ekyakutonza munsu  
N’oyitibwa muw’Africa  
Ate n’akuwa ensi Africa ekulukuta omubisi  
Wakati nemunsonda  
Bwe kyamala okubeera kityo  
Abeeru nebateeka lo era nebatuzinda wano  
Nnebakolerera oginyaga mu buli ngeri esoboka  
Tompakanya munnange  
Baasooka kukalubirirwamu  
Kati webatuuse Abeeru baatumenze dda  
Kale bamenze n’okuluma nnyabula nebassaako*

*Tompakanya munnange*

### **English Translation:**

Curse the fact that you were created on earth  
And were called an African  
And He gave you Africa that permeates with honey  
In the middle and corners  
And when that happened so  
The whites developed a grudge and attacked us here  
And determined to plunder it in whatever possible way  
Do not argue with me  
At first they found some difficulty  
As of now the whites have wrestled us down  
They have wrestled us down and even bitten us

Do not argue with me

- Herman Basudde, *Africa*

Basudde realises that it has become a cursed position to be African because Africa’s endowment with valuables that permeate through its annals with honey and milk and because of its beauty and minerals, has attracted many enemies in the name of the West that have devised ways of plundering all that Africa had in every possible way. He notes that they had some difficulty at the start but as of today, they have wrestled Africa down because they held the brains, hoodwinked and imperiled Africans making them follow whatever the West suggested. This unfortunate position, Basudde argues, should make all Africans embittered if they are as foresighted as he is. This kind of narrative angle is not found in books of history written by Westerners; it is the version that people

air out silently and which fuses in their worldviews that their bold son expresses in song. Presenting this narrative is not without challenges and Basudde is afraid of what may befall him although he is ready to be sacrificed than keeping quiet:

*Njakwongerera okumwogerera  
Ajje abuulirize ewange ankoone kujjoba nsambe  
Mulibuulira abaana nti yalangira omutemu*

*Obubbi n'atufaako atyo*

### **English Translation**

I will continue to discuss him  
And he spies my whereabouts to knock off my head  
You will relate to the children that he accused a murderer

And thief and died by it

- Herman Basudde, *Africa*

He commits himself to continued discussion of the White man's atrocities and ulterior motive in Africa. He is afraid the White man will not take this lightly and will spy his whereabouts and hammer him to death. He is, however, sure that they will not be able to kill his memory from his people and it will be related to the children that he accused the murderer and thief and was killed for that bold attempt. It should be noted that Ugandans were led through fear of the White man and expected that he had a panopticon through which he viewed their actions wherever he was and used espionage to learn about their plans. It is this same fear that Basudde is unwilling to adhere to. The White man can use his power to kill him but he cannot actually stop him from publicising his malicious secret mission against Africa.

In *Africa*, Basudde tells the story of the colonial encounter with Africa and Uganda in particular and animates the West as vultures that came to prey on Africans and made them hate their heritage. The song presupposes that Africa would be highly developed through its artisan, iron metallurgy, and carpentry, to mention a few, but these crumbled because the White man did not approve of them. He notes that when the White man came to Uganda he did not find the country as primitive as it has been sold out:

*Omuzungu bwe yatuuka wano  
Yatusanga n'enkumbi twalima nga weewuunye  
Yatusanga n'amaato nga tubajja  
N'okujja kuno yasaabaza nga ago  
Twali twambala tewali gweyasanga bwereere  
Twalina embugo zaffe  
N'ebivuga twabirina mubudde mwetuwummulira  
Si ggita ne zi bandi  
Omutonzi twali twamumanya dda  
Nga tumusinza nnyo n'amasabo twazimba  
Wadde tegaali ga kalina n'amategula n'ebyoowe  
Yali atusanga omwo  
Twalina empisa ennungi n'amateeka  
Wadde nga tegaali mubuwandiike*

*Omuzungu ekitali wano kimu kya kuwandiika*

*Kye manyi kyeyajja nakyo*

### **English Translation**

When the White man reached here  
He found us with hoes, marvel that we used to farm  
He found us with boats and we could do carpentry  
He even travelled by them to get here  
We were dressed up no one he found naked  
For we had our bark cloths  
We also had instruments in the times of leisure  
Not the guitar or band  
We had already known God  
And we were praising him greatly and had built shrines  
Though there weren't flats with tiles and decorations  
He was meeting us in them  
We had good behaviour and laws  
Though they were not written down  
Before the Whites, only writing wasn't here

That I know they came with.

- Herman Basudde, *Africa*

The Baganda, for example, Basudde argues, had garden tools they were using for agriculture. They had a developed water transport system and the White man used boats moulded by local carpenters to get on to the society. They had clothes weaved from bark cloth; he found no one naked. The Baganda also had musical instruments even though they were not as complex and multi-layered as the White man's guitars and band. The Baganda also knew God and were worshipping Him from their shrines though these were not built with bricks or decorated with paint. They also had good discipline and morals as they were guided and governed by etiquette, customs, values, and taboos that functioned as law even though they were not written down. Basudde believes that the only thing the White man probably came with that was not in Buganda was the art of writing. The rest was available and the Whites simply distorted them because they were not like theirs. It should be noted, however, that even the first form of writing in cuneiform started in Egypt in around 3000 BC. It can, therefore, be argued that even the claim that the West brought writing in Africa is a stolen legacy. What is most annoying for Basudde is the fact that the West has brainwashed Africans to think of themselves as primitive and to measure themselves by their standards. He, therefore, believes that all Africans would feel angry if only they had followed up the issue of colonisation in Africa. This new narrative is imperative in making Africa realise her strength and search herself for the information from archival resources available.

Basudde also retells the slave trade narrative to depict the despicable and brutal mistreatment millions of Blacks endured on the journey to the West during the transatlantic slave trade. They were hashed out and whoever died would be abandoned and the rest would be forced to trek on as if nothing had happened. Basudde uses the term, *baatusuubulako* (they traded us) to denote the fact that some African chiefs

collaborated with the colonisers and collected hundreds of their subjects and seemingly sold them to the Whites as slaves. Local leaders exchanged their people for goods such as guns and clothes which denote the trade Basudde talks about. (*Okusuubula* means to buy produce in large quantities or on wholesale with an aim of reselling them to the final consumers. This is true with slave trade because those that endured the journey were resold to aristocrats in the White man's land and they became their slaves. Basudde, however, emphasises the fact that the White man was more interested in ivory and precious stones which they plundered and loaded on slaves' heads to be delivered to their motherland.

*Mwakimanyako e mabega nti baatusuubulako  
Nnetubeera baddu eri  
Omwafririka mukkirize yabonabona nnyo nnyo  
Ku lukalu lw'Abeeru  
Amayinja ag'omuwendu gano  
Namassanga munnange ababbi bagayoola nga  
Ng'ate bagatikka ffe kumitwe  
Atafa y'asigala (o)kugasomosa cwabwe  
Mwebatuweeseza mmotoka  
N'ebirungi byetulaba wano netuwuniikirira  
Teri nakubwasisi omuntu alabye n'omubbi*

*Kitalo nnyo bannange*

### **English Translation**

You know that in the past they traded us  
And we were made slaves  
The African, believe me, suffered a lot  
On white men's continents  
These precious stones  
And ivory was gathered by these thieves  
And they loaded them on our heads  
He who could not die would remain to cross them home  
From those they make for us cars  
And beautiful things we are amazed at  
There's no consolation we are unlucky for thieves

What a pity my dears!

- Herman Basudde, *Africa*

The most surprising thing for Basudde is that the things the present Africans clamour for are those that have been made from the minerals and ivory that European colonisers stole from Africa. Chimamanda Adichie, in her televised speech, exposes stolen African 'Art' in European Museums. She says art lives in history and history lives in art. Even when artisans appeared small wooden moulds, they were documents that told stories and were repositories of spiritual meaning that were sacred to the people. These African treasures that were looted have been beneficial to the West even though some were stolen by missionaries because they did not want the African belief system. I argue



that it is significant to hear dissenting voices as that of Basudde trying to reconstruct our African narrative that has been obliterated by the European versions that are intentional in erasing African repository.

Basudde is also worried that if Africa does not rise by responding to this colonial nostalgia and the blindness to the past, the continent will be lost to the White man. He claims that the White man is determined to see Africans coming to extinction and this he supports through the idea that even the emergence of diseases such as HIV/AIDS did not come from nowhere but Europe. He is embittered to note that the West through various organisations, such as Uganda Family planning Consortium, UNFPA Uganda, Reproductive Health Uganda, among others, preaches to Africans to use family planning methods which he thinks is a plunk that will eventually leave Africa with no people so that their beautiful continent is stolen by the Whites. He wonders why countries like China which are growing vertically and which are densely populated are not their bother and yet Uganda with vast lands becomes their concern. He thinks this is hypocrisy that should be understood and counteracted. However blind Basudde's argument may be, it is instructive in a way that, in addition to creating a space for an alternative narrative, it offers a heterotopia by offering commentary on cultural aspirations of the West that have made them strive to control other lands. He also provides a shared space for expression and identity for his listeners which halts their apparent comfort and highlights the need to examine what the West does because this could be another way of erasing African history.

In *Africa*, Basudde argues that it is ironical that Africans do not see the enemy in the West and end up killing themselves, something that makes the West reach its goal of wiping out Africans. This way, they make treaties with desperate African leaders in dire need of assistance and they have appointed themselves overseers of the peace and superpowers out of industrial products that Basudde claims were made out of Africa's stolen minerals and ivory during slave trade and the long-distance trade. Although some of Basudde's claims are not well informed, they reflect his people's broader perceptions of the West. He conveys the idea that reclaiming Africa's image requires looking back to its state before decline and rebuilding unity and political organisation.

Basudde also astutely points out that wars have thrived in Africa with reinforcement and funding from the West that prides in having the people of this continent wiped out:

*Bw'oba okyatudde nga olojja Omuzungu  
N'entalo zigenderere  
Omuzungu y'aziseesaamu  
Anti bwe twongera okwetta ye asemberera e goolo  
Omuzungu bw'akuwa emmundu  
Gw'ogenda o(ku)kuba ye amuwa mukaaga ddu  
Olwa edda noddayo nti owange,*

*"Omusajja wamaanyi nnyongerayo n'ezindi"*

### **English Translation**

If you are seated wondering about the White man

Mind also about the wars  
It is the White man who fuels them  
Because when we continue to kill one another he nears his goal  
When the White man gives you a gun  
He gives your opponent six  
You later go back to him and confide,

“The opponent is formidable get me other guns”

- Herman Basudde, *Africa*

He claims that they supply ammunition to feuding parties separately and make each of them think he is the only one supported. In the lyrics above, he notes that when the White man gives you a gun to face your assailant, he will give your opponent six stronger machine guns to counter you. You later go back to him begging and he gives you more with conditions that you have to dance to. Eventually, the unsuspecting Africans continue killing one another with support from the West in the guise of creating peace and guarding human rights.

### **Memories of the Ganda Tradition**

According to the Nnaabagereka Queen Sylvia Nagginda Luswata (2023), “the most important unit in Buganda’s culture is the clan” (p. 24) in which a group of people who can trace their lineage to a common ancestor is represented. The Nnaabagereka in a speech, “Called to Serve” (00:45-1:52), objects to the tensions confronted by native African societies whose culture is disparaged. She says, however, that the Baganda love their king, the Kabaka of Buganda, and cherish their cultural heritage. There is, however, a constant struggle between soft Westernisation and modernisation. The Nnaabagereka and many leaders with the mandate to conserve the traditions have had to resolve a riddle of embracing modernisation in the fast- changing world and conserving culture and accentuating what it can do in the lives of people in the modern world. This challenge is shared by the artist Herman Basudde who, in *Ensi Egenze Wala*, compares the past with the present and archives the values, customs, tradition, and culture of the Ganda society that has been watered down by modernity.

The modern youth, in Basudde’s view, have neglected the role of the clan system and have done abominations such as marrying from their mothers’ clan or that of their fathers’, something that threatens the social cohesion that the clans have been bringing about in the recent past. This song builds on the idea that modernity has buried the values and culture of the Baganda and people now move on earth with no sense of direction and empathy as though they were zombies. Basudde’s song provides a vantage from which to watch the Ganda society, traditional and modern through the analysis of historical spaces and memory. The spaces in the song *Ensi Egenze Wala* define the nature of chauvinism in the Ganda society through the expression of the place of women in the society. Basudde is seemingly disappointed in the modern woman and wants her to emulate the docility of the traditional Ganda women who accepted their humble position without a murmur.

*Ensi ekyuuse kaakati edduka nga ssaawa*  
*Naye eraga mumaaso oba edda mabega?*  
*Ebyaliwo edda ennyo kaakati biringa embooji*

*Kiki awo kyennimbye abaagalwa?  
Nzijjukira ebyedda wano baanyumizaako abedda  
Nti omulimu gw'abakyala kwali kulima  
Nga n'enju ya gundi oli anaagiwasaamu abuuza  
Asookera kumpisa ekindi mirimu  
Kubyakyuuka ate ekyo nekikyuka okkamala  
  
Abakyala baleero enkumbi muziro.*

### **English translation**

The world has changed and is at the speed of a watch  
But is it going forward or backward?  
What used to happen now sounds like a folktale  
What have I lied about my dears?  
I remember practices of the past that I was told about  
That the woman's chief role was digging  
And whoever wanted to court a girl from a home would ask  
First about discipline and ability to do chores  
Among what changed that drastically did  
  
Today's women have the hoe as their totem.

- Herman Basudde, *Ensi Egenze Wala*

Basudde presents the memory of traditional Buganda, where women were primarily agriculturalist who laboured at farms manually to provide food for their families. In Buganda, therefore, choice of a woman for marriage privileged her ability to work on the farm and moral uprightness that was discernible in good social behaviours. There was no strict consideration for the man in terms of morals as long as he was strong enough, industrious and with the ability to defend his family. No matter how good the intentions in this could be, the Ganda society in this sense was patriarchal and very chauvinistic. However, there are drastic changes, which have happened in this sociocultural space of recent, and many women presume that working in the field is hard labour. This was unheard of among the traditional Ganda. Women took charge of the well-being of their families and men provided protection and a few other necessities that needed energy and financial support. On the look of things, the past women had more power and their kitchens were private offices where you would not just be vagrant. They owned and made the homes. Without a woman there was no home. This is the notion that the modern woman challenges because it made traditional woman a man's private affair and she could not carry decisions of her own. It is important to note that most of the rules of morality in Africa and Buganda centred on women. If children grew up undisciplined, for example, it was the mother blamed for such an occurrence and the taboos in the community were more stringent on women.

Amadiume (1985, 2015), in offering an insight and understanding into the nature of sex and gender in an African society argues that in pre-colonial Nigeria, the Igbo women could be 'husbands' as well as wives, and that many political roles were ascribed to both sexes. In Uganda today, it is common for a single mother to say, "Nze

*maama, nze Taata wa baana bange*” (I am the mother and father to my children). However, in the Ganda culture, even though women, such as aunts, mothers-in-law and grandmothers held very powerful positions and sometimes acted like and on behalf of men in their families, they would not think of themselves as men. The idea of husbands that are female came in only in reference to the sisters-in-law. These women were husbands without trousers whom the sisters-in-law referred to as “*mwami bikooyi*”, a derogatory term because somehow they superimposed themselves on their brothers’ wives. The place of woman was held inferior because a woman usually had no financial power or say and she was instructed by her aunts upon marriage to always submit to her husband even in sexual matters. Basudde seems to prefer the traditional woman who he considers to be cultured in submitting to servitude while the modern woman who has fought her way into many things is like a curse from Basudde’s perspective. Society has different expectations for women and men and this song is instrumental in tracing, through its archive, the gender roles that are crucial in understanding the societal dictates for both men and women in the Ganda community.

In *Ensi Egenze Wala*, Basudde elucidates that virginity was highly recommended for girls and everyone looked forward to receiving a goat after the wedding night to signal that the newly-wed wife was a virgin. If she were not found a virgin, the entire family and her aunt would be shrouded in shame.

*Nzijjukira ebyedda ng’okufumbiza okw’edda  
Kati enkuuma y’abaana yadda mabega  
Edda baawasa nga abawala nebatwala  
Enkya nebaleeta akabuzi okwebaza  
Abaaleero ekyo bakiraba ng’ekivve  
Kw’okuuma abaana kwadda mabega  
Olowooza okumunanya oli gwawasiza osonyiwa  
Obwa malaaya kati buva waggulu  
Bak’abasajja kaakati balinga Mmende*

*Babuuka n’obumasu beewonye enjala*

### English Translation

I remember the past such as giving out girls in marriage  
Protection of children subsided recently  
In the past men married girls and took them away  
And would bring a goat the next day to appreciate  
Today’s girl looks at that as an abomination  
Protecting children really subsided  
You think about blaming the marrying girl and get ashamed  
Prostitution starts from above these days  
Married women are now like farm rodents

They even jump rat traps to kill hunger

- Herman Basudde, *Ensi Egenze Wala*

Infidelity was not allowed for a woman and each married woman protected herself against the shame of being found to be adulterous. Mothers-in-law were meant to fear and distance themselves from their sons-in-law to avoid incest. When the son-in-law visited, the mother-in-law greeted them from behind the doors and went to keep themselves in their kitchens. Once they met on the way, she would rush into the nearby shrub to let the son-in-law pass. The daughters-in-law, on the other hand, were restricted from passing through the father-in-law's courtyard. They covered themselves in *busuuti* (Gomesi) and it was unheard of for them to expose their breasts or thighs to the father-in-law. Basudde is proud of these customs and expects his listeners to compare with the modern society and reclaim the good old days.

Women were also restricted from partaking some foods in the Ganda culture such as chicken, eggs, grasshoppers, and fish. They prepared these for their husbands who shared them with their neighbours. If a husband died, the wife was meant to mourn him for a year and wear a bark cloth around her waist to show that she was the widow. During this period, she was not expected to engage in sexual intercourse until the last funeral rite of her husband had been performed and the heir positioned.

*Ba nazaala b'abantu edda nga batya nnyo abaana  
 Omuko bw'atuuka badda munzigi  
 Nga ne mukkubo bwe basisinkana omu akyama  
 Kale ekitiibwa ekyo kayali kizibu  
 Kati mu Takisi omu alera munne nti no,  
 "Nze sireka mmotoka kaabule buko".  
 Enkoko, embizzi, n'amaggi tebyaliibwa nga  
 Abakyala b'edda wano beefuga nga  
 Nga n'enseenene bazikwatira babbaabwe  
 Mpozzi n'abaana, gyali miziro  
 Naye ebyo byaggawo ebyedda babivaako  
 Enkoko n'okumanya kati baayigga dda.  
 Ssezaala w'omuntu edda yatiibwa nga nnyo  
 Ng'omulaga otya ebbeere notatanga?  
 Ye nga entumbwe ogifungula otya waali  
 Ng'obeera likamwana eggwagwagwagwa!*

### English Translation

Mothers-in-law were so fearful of their son-in-laws  
 If the son-in-law arrived home, they would hide behind doors  
 If they met on the way one would branch off  
 That kind of respect was impressive  
 Today in a taxi in-laws sit on one another  
 Saying, "a vehicle can't leave me because in-law taboos"  
 Chicken, pork, and eggs were not eaten  
 The traditional women exercised self-control  
 Even the grasshoppers were caught for their husbands  
 And maybe children, for they were a taboo  
 But all those disappeared they neglected tradition  
 They already learnt to pluck the chicken  
 The father-in-law was venerated in the past

You would pay a ransom if you showed your breasts to him  
How could you even uncover your calves before him?

You would be dubbed an imbecilled daughter-in-law

- Herman Basudde, *Ensi Egeenze Wala*

Basudde asserts that such restrictive behaviour for the women went to the dogs in modern society and a mother-in-law would today sit closely with or get lifted by her son-in-law in a taxi claiming she could not accept being left behind simply because they are in-laws. In the same vein, the daughters-in-law today, Basudde notes, shamelessly visit their husbands' parents wearing skimpy dresses as well as open back dresses that expose the marks of their backs. This, he thinks, has lowered the value of women in the community and he wants them to embrace the stringent ancient tradition for better relations. However, some of the restrictive measures Basudde praises were a promulgation of servitude for the women that fostered female subjectivity. For example, women were restricted from eating nutritious foods, including chicken, eggs, grasshoppers, and pork. According to Basudde's other song, *Abakazi Okwekolera*, ancient Ganda women composed themselves and accepted this without a murmur because they were ruled like goats and could not go anywhere a man had not planned. They prepared the delicious foods for their husbands who enjoyed them with their immediate neighbours. These songs, therefore, privilege the memories of the Ganda tradition and help Basudde's listeners to examine the magnitude of change as well as the damage and emancipation that has been made with modernity.

In *Ensi Egeenze Wala*, Basudde is bitter because the illiterate traditional Baganda who were restrictive in their behaviour and avoided shameful acts that would smudge their public image and reputation are better than the educated modern ones. The Baganda set up unwritten rules that helped them coexist. Such rules made the taboos, norms, customs, traditions, and other elements of culture that the people revered and lived by. Looking back to the image of Africa and Buganda, in particular, there is nostalgia considering the magnitude of change that has taken place in society, a change that has not only altered the sociocultural life of the Ganda but has made it impossible for people to embrace humanism and respect for themselves. There are numerous acts of moral decadency and disrespect for elders and authority in today's society which show the urgent need to revisit our archives to set the society back to a normal axle.

The values and norms, which were held in veneration in every homestead of the traditional Muganda because they provided behavioural checks, have been lost with modernity according to Basudde's *Ensi Egeenze Wala*. This song title suggests that Africa and Buganda, in particular, has deteriorated in morals extremely and has taken unexpected turns with modernity. In every homestead, for example, traditional Ganda values were golden and children were presumed to be like ivory and so deserved protection through moralistic doctrines. Basudde warrants reintroduction of worth practices that have died with modernity because, as he reports, today children begin to become loose at a much early stage. Society today seems to be spinning at a high velocity like the second hand of the clock while people are less sure of whether it is moving forward or backwards.

Basudde also notes that the Ganda society had deep respect for the dead even for criminals killed by roadsides. Ending someone's life was abominable, cataclysmic, and against the earth gods. Fire stages would be set up for the vigil, people of the neighbouring area where the killing or sudden death had occurred would be interrogated, and they would make statements when they were behind bars. This respect for life meant that the ancient Buganda treated death and the dead with respect and had many rituals to appease death not to toll more on them. Kaggwa (1918) documents the customs of the Baganda, including those associated with the last funeral rite whose modernisation bothers Basudde. Today, immediately after a burial, a quick last funeral rite is held, presided over sometimes by the church or a family member, and the heir is revealed. This rushed celebration of life underrates the centrality of this ritual in the Ganda culture. In the past, the last funeral rite was organised long after burial to allow for those who might have missed the burial to be around to bid their final farewells to the loved one. It followed a process and meant respect of the clan hierarchy, which authorised the ritual and guided on how to share the deceased's property amongst his children and relatives.

### **The Notion of the Archive and Heterotopia**

In *Byetwalaba*, inspired by his journey to Munich, Basudde emphasises archiving as a path to progress. This experience later shapes *Abayimbi*, where he proposes creating an artists' cemetery that would also serve as a music museum – preserving Uganda's musical history while allowing artists to honour colleagues who may have been buried while they were away on tours.

It is often said that one needs to understand his current position before he can yearn for the next. In *Byetwalaba*, Basudde marvels at the growth of Europe, which presupposes came about through keeping the history and archives alive. He is afraid that in the modern Ganda society people are concerned about today, jump on things without having grips on anything and this compromises creativity, and fosters dependency. Europe's development as of 1994 when this song was recorded, and that of Munich, in particular, was and still is an offshore dream for a country like Uganda. Basudde portrays that the Europeans are not where they are because they are rich but because they have archived the things of value in their society. Before one marvels at the skyscrapers they have, he needs to find out how they have been able to build them. Basudde reckons in shock that in Uganda, it is difficult to trace the stone tools that people used before the advent of Asians and Europeans into the country. Yet, if these had been archived in the country's museums, there could be reference for progress in form of the archive.

Basudde recalls the man-made lake they visited that had about 40 square kilometres. Here, he saw old canoes and boats that had been built in the ancient times. The Germans and tourists used these boats to navigate through the lake and have a feel of the pre-historic times. Basudde was able to construct spaces in time to understand how the Germans had progressed to their current economic muscle, their social-political changes and how these were in dialogue with the past. These had been maintained by the society to carry around visitors as a means of reliving the memories of the past and telling the visitors in practical terms the far the nation had moved on to the position it held politically, economically, and socially at the time of the visit. These heterotopias of time would formulate the memories in the minds of the visitors and make them get their own

interpretation of the society's method of archiving. For Basudde, the physical spaces he had visited made him recast his own memories, which he recollected with frustration. Even though it was vivid that the people of Munich were so rich, that did not hold significantly for Basudde. What mattered to him was that he considered in dismay that Uganda could not counter the West in development if it maintained its behavioural patterns and policy of neglecting its archives. It would be extremely difficult to expect growth at the rate of Europe no matter how many loans from World Bank if Ugandans remained the same consuming and destroying whatever comes their way.

Basudde is challenged by an old farmer he encounters on a tractor in the scorching afternoon ploughing his garden by himself. He had not hired anyone to plough his garden although he could afford it. In Uganda, Basudde notes, people love to be in charge and give orders without practically taking part in the activities in their businesses. Those who get rich forget how they struggled to have it and hire labour for every small activity and fail in their supervisory roles. The old man explains to Basudde that he had reached that far by working overtime in his garden and it would be blasphemous and filial ingratitude if he walked out of his vocation or stopped working on his farm through which God had blessed him. The old farmer's attitude to work perturbs Basudde as he thinks about his own society Uganda. For example, a good mechanic in Uganda will diversify immediately he gets rich to sell new cars and disappoint his customers at the garage. He would never again desire to be identified as a mechanic but as a trader and this skill would perhaps not even be passed on to someone else because they never want their children for apprentices. Such an attitude, according to Basudde, has hindered Uganda from expanding its knowledge base because there are no clear-cut and intentional customs in Ugandan culture that instils perseverance and the desire to gain and maintain expert knowledge in one's vocation.

Unlike Uganda, in Europe, according to Basudde, a person maintains his job and diversifies within by gaining expert knowledge. Such expert knowledge later helps, for example, an engine mechanic to get to the greater good by inventing his own brand of engines. Given this background, Basudde does not speculate a time when Uganda will even be able to manufacture a bicycle if people continued with this attitude to life. This rejoinder is a sad one because a bicycle is not even electric and has been at the periphery of technology in the transport sector. Ugandan bicycle mechanics would rather fly to India to deal in new bicycles and never interrogate the methodology that the Indians use to make these bicycles. Basudde's ideas are key in directing Ugandans to the source of their problem in a bid to grow by reference to the archive. Foucault, in considering the archeology of knowledge, believes that archives are the only way a society can invigorate itself and position its future through building expert knowledge systems based on past innovations.

In *Byetwalaba*, Basudde returns home from Europe distraught, downcast because of small cares that have maintained Ugandans below the poverty line. They have failed to maintain and/or archive their cultural heritage and keep taking on the culture of foreigners they bump into without question. The Whites, however, are steadfast in maintaining and conserving their culture through customs, lineage, and clans. For example, in Germany, Basudde learnt that dogs were a source of meaning and identity to the nationals. The Bierver Terriers, for example, were dogs for virgin girls in their



youthful stage. These carried them around as they moved in the streets to differentiate them from married women and the immoral prostitutes. Young men intending to marry would know the women they would consider for marriage by seeing them with these white dogs. Such a practice in Germany amazes Basudde but also embitters him to imagine that back in Uganda elders have reprimanded the youth to respect their culture to no avail.

Considering music artists during Livingstone Kasozi's vigil, Basudde composes the song, *Abayimbi*, that suggests that without unity, song artists will continue to live sad and lonely lives, die and have miserable burial ceremonies. He is disappointed because none of the musicians is a moron; yet, they have failed to conceive a method of bringing themselves together. And this makes them fail to care for fellow artists or to be present when some of them die. Their apparent popularity is, therefore, a mirage because they die like disunited rodents and their fellows never get wind of news until they have returned from music trips. Kadongokamu song artists and other musicians were travelling artists in Basudde's time and there were limited radio and television stations in the country. Performers would go with their crew to rural districts where their performances were more appealing and spend weeks without returning to Kampala. There were no mobile phones, coverage signals of some radio stations would not reach most villages, and so announcements of the death of artists would not reach some of their fellows:

*Tetweziika nsinze mukono  
Ampakanya gugwo tema  
Lwansonga twabulwa enkola  
Munansonyiwa siri muvumi  
Kuba abayimbi tuli bagezi*

*Naye nga muwekyo nyooma*

### **English Translation**

I bet my hand we never bury each other  
If you contend there it is cut it  
Reason is that we failed to conceive a method  
You will excuse me am not an abuser  
Because we music artists are brilliant  
But in that I despise

- *Abayimbi*, Herman Basudde

He, therefore, calls upon them to use the example of herbalists who assembled themselves in Jubilee Park, Katwe, to have a place from where they could have their legacy and memories archived for centuries. He remembers the hundreds of music artists who died and had their memories lost immediately they were buried. The sad reality is that some were not even buried by their close associates, because the nature of their job scatters them across different communities in the country in search for the Golden Fleece. Basudde, therefore, wants the song artists to get out of their cloud of ignorance that was enveloping them with apparent fame, which is a mere mirage, because their death and how they were buried presented them as paupers.

Basudde suggests that song artists should restrain themselves from concentrating on grudges and fights and get united for progress. He realises that for disunity, some song artists who fall sick never find medical attention and die miserably; yet, they could be helped by a joint pool of resources to get specialised treatment. They could be able to look after each other and give support to the children of departed artists. This unity, in the form of a SACCO, Basudde believed, would yield pooling resources for buying land and creating their space, that would be a cemetery and musical museum where all song artists who died would be laid to rest. This, in turn, would act as a tourist attraction and a place of reference where visitors would be told by curators the stories of these fallen artists and explain that when Ugandan music artists die, they are buried in the same cemetery – because they are teachers of the nation. Basudde here is thinking about a museum of fallen music artists, a place where information about the musicians and their music would be archived. This would bring returns to the fraternity, provide hope for the widows and orphans, and perhaps stop the current tendencies of musicians becoming beggars whenever they face major challenges.

What Basudde suggests is in line with the theorising of Foucault (1969, 1972) who identifies archival spaces like the cemetery that allow for a studious acumen as people use these archival deposits and repositories to construct memories around the subject in question. These spaces of interpretation and heterotopia provide incomparable and incompatible kinds of space that converge to emphasise the idea of a network of networks which provide alternative and different kinds of frameworks that help in thinking about contemporary happenings and memories (Foucault, 1986a). The story of Ugandan music, given this thinking, would be well presented and community people, researchers and visitors would have reference for Ugandan music and life stories of the fallen performers. The position of a sage for a community is a respectful position according to Basudde that requires one to do one's best and live a life that is worth one's contribution to society. This call is paramount today when the industry is large but disunited for it can provide a method of improving working conditions, getting copyright and focusing on repositories for future ages.

## **Conclusion**

The discourse surrounding the person of Herman Basudde Ssemakula, given the repertoire of his oral archives, is a constant reminder to his listeners and those who watched his performances live, of the culture of Ganda people in its totality, the sociocultural archive, and the imperative in keeping memories alive. The recorded songs are vital to the construction of personal and collective cultural memory and provide spaces that have more layers of meaning and relationships to places and real-life experiences than immediately meets the eye. They are items of culture that people select and collect to store into their minds or in their private “jukeboxes,” to recall later. The songs, in themselves, are a representation and approximation of a utopian apparel that conceals and archives those items of nostalgia and power that are sacred to society such as its norms, customs, and taboos that keep society in check. Basudde's songs, rich in reminiscence, serve as archives that enable listeners to journey through time, reflecting on themselves and society while recovering aspects of lost cultural heritage. Basudde's songs, therefore, voice salient memories in Ganda society, Uganda, and those of Africa

in general. These memories create a corpus of the sociocultural archive from which we can draw both tradition and social issues affecting the singer's society.

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