



## OZA AND NDAGHIO INITIATION CEREMONIES: THE SIGNIFICANT NARRATIVES IN THE SHAMBAA COMMUNITY

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### **Abstract:**

The Shambaa continue to hold to their oral traditions. They use them to inculcate Shambaa values and morals to their children. However, there is a claim that narratives of oral traditions, particularly initiation ceremonies are no longer significant to a modern generation since Christianity, formal education and modernity have replaced them. Although these claims cannot be totally ignored, it is important to indicate that Shambaa oral traditions have been narrated by elders during family events such as dowry, wedding and burial ceremonies where Shambaa rituals are still practiced. This paper therefore, argues that narratives of Shambaa oral traditions still reign supreme among the Shambaa. It presents the narratives of *Oza* and *Ndaghio* initiation ceremonies as aspects of Shambaa traditions and culture. This paper examines their significance in upbringing Shambaa youth. The paper uses Victor Turner's theory of "liminality" and Tzevan Todorov's narrative theory as theoretical framework to analyze how these initiation ceremonies transform a Shambaa girl or boy into adult woman and man and how the transformative process informs individuals' personalities.

**Keywords:** initiation ceremonies narratives, performance, dramatic representation, transformative process

### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1 The Shambaa**

The Shambaa (also called the Sambaa or Shambala) are an ethnic and linguistic group based in the Usambara Mountains of northeastern Tanzania. Nkondokaya (2003) describes Shambaa as mountaineers, people who live in the scattered mountains. According to Nkondokaya the name Wasambaa in Kiswahili emerged from 'waliosambaa' (scattered) from the Zigua ethnic group in which they have their roots. The Wasambaa or Washambaa community who speak Kisambaa/Kishambaa live in two mountain ranges: the Eastern and Western Usambara Mountains. This area includes the Lushoto district and parts of the

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Muheza and Korogwe districts, all of which belong to the Tanga region in the north-east, Tanzania. Johnstone and Mandryk (2001) give an estimate of 664,000 Shambaa speakers while the Languages of Tanzania (LOT) project reports that Shambaa has 565,276 speakers (Riedel, 2009). This report places Shambaa amongst the 15 biggest languages of Tanzania in terms of number of speakers (Rugemalira and Muzale, 2008). However, Rugemalira and Muzale point out that data on the number of speakers of Tanzanian languages are relatively unreliable since the official census neither includes questions on ethnic group nor on languages spoken.

Usambara was, for several reasons, a suitable place for the establishment of a mission station (Krapf, 1858). Krapf was the first European to visit this mountainous area in 1844 and 1852. According to Krapf, Europeans and missionaries chose to stay in Usambara Mountains because the mountains were malaria free and had a mild climate. Other qualities were the political and economic stable situation. During Krapf's visit, Usambara was the core area of the Kilindi "kingdom", which was ruled by the Simbamwene Kimweri, whose residence was at Vuga. Krapf visit was followed by Burton and Speke who visited the Kilindi ruler in 1858. A detailed image of the political situation of Usambara during Kimweri's leadership is provided by Abdullah bin Hemedi '1 Ajjem (1963), who was working with the local Kilindi elite during this period.

The Shambaa have had a record for strong leadership since the times of Kimweri and Mbega (Hemedi '1 Ajjem, 1963; Huijzendveld, 2008; Skinner, 2005) and they had a sense of respect and authority for elders. The respect given to elders had an effect on the maintenance of customs, traditions, norms, and values of the society concerned. When people broke morals and values, they suffered shame in the sight of society (Shemsanga, 2013). Apart from the chief authority, Shambaa have a way of organizing and settling clan issues at the lower levels. The authority system has been of a great importance in the Shambaa political order not only because the relations among chiefs are largely structured in a familiar way, but also because kinship groups retain a considerable responsibility for the security of the individual and the regulation of social relationships (Winans, 1962). This is still practiced especially when it comes to family matters such as initiations, marriage and death.

Additionally, the Shambaa had their moral code and conduct which governed their behaviour in the society. There were norms and taboos that tried to address the need of the individual in terms of security of life and property (Shemsanga, 2013). Most of the norms, taboos, and prohibitions were aimed at protecting the community, promoting peace and harmony, and preserving their culture.

Traditionally, the Shambaa believe in myths which tend to control their physical beings. Spiritually, they believe that there is life after death (Pelt, 1982). This is exemplified in some rituals like '*fika*' and '*huto*'; the performances that are conducted in order to ask ancestors for their support. They believe that ancestors play a great role in their lives, and that forgetting or ignoring them may cause misfortunes. Diseases, hunger, stock loss and floods are normally associated with ignoring ancestors. When these misfortunes occur, the selected community leaders who have titles of wisdom lead prayers and give sacrifice to the

ancestors. The sacrifice involves shading blood of a healthy animal. They believe that the shading blood pleases the gods and the dead.

The largest part of the Usambara Mountain populations consists of agriculturalist and only small numbers are cattle-keepers. Most of economic activities of the Shambaa have been traditionally done in a communal way. The work distribution is determined by age, gender and special skills of individuals. The main crops some of which are cash crops include maize, cassava, sweet potatoes, round/ Irish potatoes, banana, coffee, tea, vegetables such as tomatoes and cabbages; fruits like peas, peaches and plums (Feireman, 1972). Slash and burn cultivation methods, seasonal rain dependent agriculture, irrigation farming, intensive permanent cultivation and commercial farming are essential elements of the agricultural practices in Usambara Mountains. Apart from growing crops, the Shambaa do curving, hunting, bee-keeping and cattle grazing.

The Shambaa communication system incorporates sayings, proverbs, idioms, similes and metaphors which enrich their conversation. Jokes, accompanied with riddles are favourably used according to event and age. Songs are major ingredients during manual work such as farming and house building, particularly in the rural areas where the communal activities are strongly encouraged (Pelt, 1982). Evening sessions are pleasurable in the homestead. Usually, elders tell their children the Shambaa tales and legends after long working hours. Through these songs and dances, the Shambaa values are inculcated to the children. According to Martin (2014), this oral tradition is allegedly strong and accurate enough to preserve Shambaa history, either partially or fully. He emphasizes that the successful way of preserving Shambaa history, language, and culture is through its oral tradition.

## 1.2 Initiation rites

Initiation rites are like the birth of young people into a state of maturity and responsibility. Initiation rites enacted and effected the incorporation of the youth into the full life of the society (Bujo, 2003). It played an even more decisive function in the education of the young. The time covered the period of life in which young people were integrated into their community, when they learned with particular intensity the entire history of their ancestors and their ethnic group as a whole. The goal during the period of initiation was to attain a new kind of dynamism in the community and to pass on to the coming generations the virtues acquired through the “new birth” (Bujo 2003:47).

## 2. The Shambaa initiation rites of passage

There are about five major stages from birth to death that a Shambaa has to pass through if he/she to be accepted as a member of the Shambaa community and earn an identity. These include birth, circumcision, adulthood, marriage and death. The naming of an infant is the first stage after birth. This stage involves elders particularly from the child’s father’s lineage. They hold a special ceremony for naming the child. The child is normally named after his/her grandfather or grandmother. Circumcision stage is called *bakwa* in Shambaa and it involves

boys. Men are the most responsible people for this stage as they conduct the act of circumcision. *Gao*, *Oza* and *Ndaghio* initiations indicate a stage that passes boys and girls from childhood stage to adulthood. This stage is followed by a marriage stage whereby its rituals involve paying a bride price, the pregnancy teachings and the birth of the first child (*Ng'wana mph'aa*). Death is the last passage that has also its rituals which mostly involve the deceased's family.

Puberty is the criteria to *Gao*, *Oza* and *Ndaghio* initiations in Shambaa community. These rites of passage are meant to help boys and girls move smoothly from childhood into adulthood. A boy maturity was normally observed by elder men in the community. The father in particular, gave directives to the boy after recognizing signs of puberty in him. The grandfather was also responsible in informing the boy about all the necessary details of this stage. In case of a girl, the most basic sign and affirmation of her maturity was to encounter her first period of menstrual cycle. The girl normally reported such a physical change to her grandmother and in return the grandmother explained what should be done; keeping oneself tidy and in good behavior. The report reached her mother as well and in return the mother talked to her daughter. The grandmother and the mother were both expected to communicate the responsibilities of a growing woman. The boys and girls who reached this puberty stage were qualified and had the right to undergo *ngoma* (initiation dance) which officially instilled into them all necessary knowledge about who they were and what they were expected to do in building the community.

In *Gao* initiation boys were taught their responsibilities including the importance of building their traditional sleeping huts (*mabweni*) in their homestead so that they would never again need to share the same sleeping huts with their parents. During *Oza* initiations, girls were taught how to take care of themselves. The teaching included how to avoid sexual intercourse before marriage and how to take care of their husbands and children when getting married. Through initiation ceremonies, young girls and boys learned about the traditions and expectations of their community. In every stage there were some rituals performed, initiation dances and blood shedding that involved goat or bull slaughtering. The initiation teachings enabled them to contribute in the maintenance of social order. The purpose of initiation was therefore, educational.

### **2.1 *Oza* and *Ndaghio* performance**

Even though *Gao* is a significant initiation stage for boys, this paper is more focused on the performance of *Oza* and *Ndaghio* initiations and their significance to the Shambaa community. Below, is the list of initiation terms that are usually used during initiation performances. It is therefore important to know their meanings before presenting and analyzing the performances of *Oza* and *Ndaghio* initiations.

*Bindu*: a roundish ring made by banana leaves and barks worn around the waist by boys and men in a *Gao* dance.

*Gao*: is an initiation performance for boys.

*Kibwebwe*: a famous Shambaa women dance that gathers women to celebrate wedding events. The dance is also performed when a woman gives birth.

*Madodi*: bangles worn by initiated girls and mothers.

*Mange*: is a rope used to fit in *nkungu* during the dance.

*Mbe*: two attractive strings of beads worn by an initiated girl to add beauty and cute look.

*Mbughi*: metal bangles worn around the ankles, sonerate when dancing.

*Miimo*: refers to the teachings about Shambaa traditions and customs given to the boys and girls.

*Mshamazi*: an initiation leader.

*Ngoma*: the whole initiation performance including teachings, songs and dances.

*N'kungu*: a round nut used mostly by women giving birth. It produces both cooking and body oil for the mother and a child.

*Ndaghio*: an initiation ceremony which involves boys, girls and the community.

*Oza*: an initiation performance for girls.

*Ukoa*: is white clay found in Shambaa used for decorations. Traditional dances smear it on their faces and bodies. It is also used by Shambaa girls and women to decorate houses.

## 2.2 Oza performance

*Oza* is a girls' initiation ceremony which is staged only for girls who are recognized to have reached puberty. The initiation ceremony for these girls signifies their maturity and readiness to start marriage institution and run their independent families. These girls are therefore expected to have fiancées or ready to get married.

The initial stage of *Oza* initiation starts by gathering girls in the community who are supposed to take part in the ceremony. The girls who are engaged in initiation ceremony are also called *Wai*. These *Wai* are led by their leader called *Mshamazi* or *Washamazi* (leaders) to a special place separate from their homes. This special place is a compound that is selected by the community elders and is fenced to maintain privacy.

The *Washamazi* are women who are trusted by the community to mentor the girls and give teachings on morals and values of a Shambaa woman who is expected to have a full responsibility of running her own family after the initiation. Among other things, the girls are basically taught to respect themselves and try to become wise as they mature. They also enable them to understand how they should handle their husband and raise their own children in the near future. This exercise can take three to four days depending on the number of the initiates.

When the *Washamazi* are satisfied with their teachings, the girls move to another stage that involves the *Oza* dancing or *ngoma* which is done in a public space. In this stage, the girls can be accompanied by other women who are already married, neighbours and friends besides their siblings to the *ngoma*. During the *ngoma*, the *Wai* wear a piece of white cloth that covers the breasts. It leaves a girl with bare shoulders and chest. They also wear another piece of cloth around their waist and on top of it; they wear *mange*, a rope fitted with round nuts known as *n'kungu* in Shambaa and *kweme* in Swahili. This artistic ornament is prepared by the mother of the girl. In addition, the mother prepares a necklace and bangles called

*madodi* for her. She also wears a trinket on her face that is traditionally called *mbe*. In addition to other ornaments, she puts on two attractive strings of beads to add beauty and a cute look. In *Oza* dance, the mothers prepare the daughters for such a dance and the fathers slaughter bulls for their daughters' ceremony. The dance takes a full night with drums and dancing songs of praise to the girl. Friends and neighbors give rewards to *Wai* as a sign of congratulating them for gaining a new status. The *Mshamazi* leads the dance in a skillful way and the *Wai* listen, watch and imitate them. As *Mshamazi* sings the songs of moral teachings, the girls sing in return. *Mshamazi* is supposed to be the model in this performance. Her singing and dramatic movement has much effectiveness of the song and the whole performance. The songs intend to instill values and morals to the girls and the audience that accompanies her. The following are some of the songs which are sung during the *Oza* initiation;

**Mwena nine aja kii**

*Mwena nine aja kii ee oi aja kii*

*Mwena nine aja kii vikidahikana hata kane kane (x2)*

*Neasheje zeze kii nae kia saa aaitangwa?*

**A child with a mother eats twice**

A child with a mother eats twice eats twice (x2)

A child with a mother eats twice and can even eat four times a day (x2)

How can't she! while she is always called in?

This song reminds the girls on how a mother is important to a child and how generous and kind she should be as the singer says: "*Mwena nine aja kii hata vikidahikana kane kane*" (line 2). It implies that the girls are expected to be kind and generous to their children. Furthermore, the song implicitly reminds the girls to mother even those who have lost their mothers. Instead of loving and caring their biological daughters only, they should consider and love the step daughters as well. Thus, mothers are reminded to extend their generosity to others apart from their daughters.

**Aho kale nike mdodo**

*Aho kale kale nike mdodo weangu nike mdodo (x2)*

*N'chekunda imi nitainkwa duee onane mame (x2)*

*Ivi leleo mame nzakua imi ee dunia n'sungu du (x2)*

*Aho kale kale nike mdodo weangu nike mdodo weangu,*

*N'chekunda imi nitainkwa duee onane mame (x2)*

**When I was a little child**

A long time when I was a little child my friend, when I was little (x2)

I got all I wanted (x2)

Today I am grown up the world is full of problems (x2)

A long time when I was a little child my friend when I was little (x2)

I got all I wanted (x2)

This song tells how a singer remembers her childhood. The persona used to get everything she needed from her family as she says: “*Nchekunda imi n'tain'kwa duee*” (line 2). When she becomes an adult, she sees a different world. The life becomes difficult as her grown up status limits her to totally depend on her parents. She says: “*Ivi lelo nzakua imi ee dunia n'sungu du*” (line 3). The song expresses the hardship of the life of persona. She tells us that the separation from her parents is painful because she can no longer depend on them. The song therefore, alerts the girls about the anticipated hardships of motherhood but it also indirectly encourages them to face the situation and try to overcome it because a matured woman is expected to tackle the challenges she encounters. The initiation thus, prepares her to face her life in the next stage which is a marriage stage.

In Shambaa community, parents, women in particular are held responsible for their children's behaviours. The following song exemplifies it:

**Weume neja ng'wenyu nfisha hii cheni changu.**

*Waume neja ng'wenyu nfisha hii cheni changu iyeiye oo nane (x2)*

*Waume nengwie hii ng'wenyu nzakiwa hoo mame nane (x2)*

*Ng'wana n'kighija nkaiva aang'gea shoni weangu oo iye (x2)*

*Akihazwa na hoya ainuka na kamundu hoo mame nane (x2)*

*Waume neja ng'wenyu nfisha hii cheni changu iyeiye oo nane (x2)*

*Ng'wana akiita mtoi nkauya nguzu, akiita nkuni ahumua ghuko (x2)*

*Akiita ghuio mpaka anegwia ha Shen'kawa, undoo heumshia oo iye (x2)*

*Waume neja ng'wenyu nfisha hii cheni changu iyeiye oo nane (x2)*

*Ng'wana aeka nshinda omana na ishe, kwe kibwebwe naaimbighwa (x2)*

**My friends where shall I hide my face!**

My friends where shall I hide my face, oh my! (x2)

My friends where shall I go, I don't know what to do, oh (x2)

The child is not respectful; I am ashamed of her (x2)

My friends where shall I hide my face, oh my! (x2)

When I stop her from playing with an axe, she takes a bush knife oh my mother (x2)

My friends where shall I hide my face, she takes so long at the well (x2)

It takes her the whole day for a bundle of firewood (x2)

She has to visit Shen'kalwa whenever she goes to the market, and she stares at men

My friends where shall I hide my face, oh my! (x2)

She makes me fight with her father; they sing me in “*kibwebwe*” (x2)

They call me names; I am ashamed I can't cheer up! (x2)

This song is about a mother who tells her friends about her mischievous daughter and how she is ashamed of this daughter because of the behaviour that displeases her and the community. She demonstrates her stubbornness by using metaphors ‘*kamundu*’ and ‘*hoya*’

when she says: “*Akihazwa na hoya ainuka na kamundu*” (line 4, stanza one). ‘*Hoya*’ and ‘*kamundu*’ are household equipment that is used by girls and women for collecting firewood and when mishandled, they become harmful as they can kill someone particularly when they are used in a fight. The song therefore, describes how a Shambaa girl should behave. She should assist her mother to fetch water, firewood and to go to the market. It also emphasizes that a dutiful and respected girl is ought to perform these activities diligently. She should not pay unnecessary visits to people, particularly men. Doing so, she is considered a disrespectful girl and a disgrace to the family.

Furthermore, the song reveals that a husband in this community assumes that bringing up a female child in a respectable manner is a mother’s duty and failure to do (so) it means that she has failed to perform her duty (line 1, stanza three). This blame does not end at the family level but extends to the community level as we see the persona lamenting on her neighbours’ condemnation for her failure to raise the daughter in a well-mannered way: “*Kwe kibwebwe naaimbighwa...*” (line 2, stanza three). During *Kibwebwe* dance, women use this opportunity to condemn those who misbehave or those who do not perform their duties well. This implies that a shameful daughter is a humiliation to her mother in the community. On the other hand, a well-mannered girl is a credit to her mother, her entire family and the community. This emphasizes the significant role of a mother in upbringing a mature and respectable woman who can be recognized and appreciated by the whole community.

It is important to note that these songs are sung to the girl (girls) so that they can learn what the community expects them to be and how they can cause trouble to their parents if they misbehave. The girls are also warned against evil deeds like adultery, pregnancy before marriage. The white clothes they wear in this initiation dance signify purity that is indicated by their virginity. The ornaments they put on, express the beauty of keeping oneself neat and pretty. These ornaments demonstrate also the art the mothers own and their desire to praise their daughters.

*Oza* dance normally ends before dawn and the *Mshamazi* or her assistants escort the *Wai* back to their homes. On the arrival, the girls give a special greeting that is taught at the *ngoma*:

**Wamame na watate taingia**

*Wamame taingia, watate taingia. Tizughuiei tiomboke, Eoee eee!*

**Our mothers and fathers, we are coming in.**

Our mothers and fathers, we are coming in. Allow us to enter, *Eoee eee!*

These girls’ salutation draws a special attention to their parents as they ask them to open the doors and receive them. The parents and the relatives in the neighbourhood respond to this song by singing the chorus: “*limoe halimo oe miimo, eoee eee!*” which signifies an acknowledgement of the inculcation of traditions and customs of their community to the youth. Their response is an applause and approval of their return and an indication of welcoming them back. As the parents continue singing, the girls continue to recite this verse for several times. This mutual response implies mutual satisfaction. It also emphasizes that



the goal of inculcating morals, traditions and customs of Shambaa community to the community members is achieved.

When the girls are already in their houses, the *Mshamazi* also greets the family using the same verse. She enters the house as well when the parents start singing the chorus. The parents' response allows *Mshamazi* to enter. As she enters in, the *Mshamazi* dances and squats in a skillful way. As she squats, she gives words of wisdom, sings, displays sayings and praises her cleverness besides showing her skills and energy. The audience cheers, applaud, and ululate to appreciate her dancing. The performance of *Mshamazi* emphasizes the fidelity to the Shambaa traditions and customs not only for the girl but also to the family and people around the homestead. This performance demonstrates the act of handing over the girls back to her parents after the initiation ceremony.

After *Mshamazi* completes her job, the mothers accompanied by the rest of the family sing songs to welcome their girls and to congratulate them. The following song exemplifies songs that are sung to appreciate the initiated girls:

**Nghambie nkeudahe**

*Nghambie nkeudahe* (x2)

*Uzadaha oo uzadaha mtihani* (x2)

*So ngongo n'kuiyeke* (x2)

*Oo uzadaha mtihani* (x2)

**I thought you would not make it**

I thought you would not make it (x2)

You made it; you won the game (x2)

Come and I will carry you on my back (x2)

You have won the game (x2)

This song expresses the happiness of the mother. To appreciate her daughter, she gives her a pair of *kanga* (a piece of cloth) as a gift and carries her on her back. The mother's happiness signifies her praise to her daughter who has successfully entered into the adult stage. She has gained a womanhood status and has given praise to the mother, the entire family and the community at large. From the song, we can argue that raising a child in a Shambaa community is a challenge to a mother because she has to raise her children according to the community standards. Failure to do so, the community denigrates her motherhood quality. This also implies that the behaviour and personality of a Shambaa woman is determined or influenced by the morals and values of the community.

As a rite of passage, *Oza* initiation can be related to Victor Turner's (1995) liminal period in rites of passage. Turner borrows his theory of "liminality" from Arnold van Gennep's (1990) phases of rite of passage that include separation, transition (liminal) and reaggregation (incorporation) stage. In Gennep's initial phase, the individual or the group is distanced from their former identities. The transition phase is the period between states whereby the individual/group has left one place or state but has not yet entered or joined the

next state. In reaggregation (incorporation) phase, the individual/ group is readmitted to society as bearer of new status.

Turner views the liminal period as “a period of seclusion during which “initiants” are submitted to ordeal by initiated senior or elders” (1981:154) in order to support a transformative process from one state of a social position to another. It is a time of “a becoming” (1995[1969]:94). Turner sees also the liminal period as the socializing medium. He points out that in this period, the symbol inherent in rituals manifest in a diversity of expression of community values, and it is these values that give the community its identity.

Turner’s liminal period, corresponds to the *Oza* period of seclusion of the girls from their parents. The girls (initiants) are submitted to the *Mshamazi*, the initiation leader. The teachings they receive from *Oza* initiation ceremony, transform them. They construct their ‘becoming’. After *Oza* initiation, the girls identify themselves as dignified women who know values, customs and traditions of their community. They bury their old status (childhood) and gain new status (dignified women). In this gained status, women are expected to live according to the Shambaa values. We also learn that after passing this stage successfully, a girl qualifies to perform *Ndaghio* initiation, the advanced stage that gives her an opportunity to be introduced to her future husband. This stage prepares a woman to become a wife and a mother.

### 2.3 *Ndaghio* performance

*Ndaghio* is a performance held after *Oza* initiation. Different from *Oza*, *Ndaghio* initiation ceremony involves initiated men and women. In this ceremony, the newly initiated girls dance with the boys who are initiated through *Gao* initiations and are expected to marry soon.

The aim of *Ndaghio* initiation is to reinforce and instill young men and women a sense of awareness, courage, prudence, stability, wisdom, hard work and responsibility to the community besides other worth taking values of the Shambaa community. Parents are highly involved in the preparation of this initiation.

In this ceremony, the initiated girls appear in their most attractive traditional dress which they wore during *Oza* performance with more beads necklaces, bangles and other ornaments which their mothers and parents awarded them. After *Mshamazi* introduces the subject of the day, the performance starts. Initiated boys make half a circle and the initiated girls make the other half. They take a big part in dancing and parents, family, relatives and neighbours come intermittently. As the dancing goes on, the initiated boys and girls sing the following song to identify their status:

#### **Wamnaa na watate tizakua**

*Wamnaa na watate tizakua awai mtiwee*

*Wamame na watate awai kangi mtiwee*

*Hii mkitiweea tizakua; Tinkei nyumba tizakua*

*Tiingie nyumbai tizakua.*

**Our fathers and mothers we are matured now**

Our fathers and mothers we are matured now; come out and see what we have become

Our mothers and fathers just come out and see what we have become

We are matured now; give us houses to live in.

We need our own houses because we have become adults.

The song gives further evidence on the way Shambaa initiations; *Oza* and *Gao*, transforms individuals as we see the initiated boys and girls in the song declaring their new status of adulthood. They see themselves as matured people who deserve to have their own homes. This also demonstrates that they are confident enough to run their own life without depending on their parents. The word '*nyumbai*' signifies their urge to get into marriage life and to become independent. However, although the young men and women in the song declare their intention to the parents and the community at large, the parents and elders do not take their declaration for granted. The family of a young man who claims to be matured enough to marry and run his own family, has to assure the community that their son is ready to do it. On the other hand, the mother has also to declare to the public that her daughter is ready to step into marriage life. This affirms Turner's (1981) view of the initiated senior or elders supporting the young individuals in the transformative process. *Mshamazi* and parents in *Ndaghio* initiation have a significant role to play in the young men and women's transformation process. This argument can be exemplified by the following performance in *Ndaghio* initiation. As the dancing continues, one of the women whose daughter is about to marry but she is not sure whether the young man is ready to marry her daughter or not, she will sing the following song loudly and in emotional tone:

**Ng'wanangu hana ng'wenye**

*Ng'wanangu hana ng'wenye waume*

*Hana ng'wenye; Ni wangu ng'wenye!*

**My daughter is not engaged**

My daughter is not engaged

Nobody has engaged her, she is mine!

From this song, the mother provokes the son-in-law and his relatives who will immediately come at the center of the circle as a group and dance majestically. As they swing rhythmically and hum, the group sings the song: *Ng'wenye ahaha!* (The owner is here!). They sing this song several times, as they move towards the girl who is a fiancée to demonstrate that their son is determined to marry the girl. To prove further, they will pull the girl from the circle to the center and award her with ornaments, clothes and money.

As this performance goes on, the girl's parents and relative(s) clap and ululate to appreciate their commitment to their daughter. Everything is done artistically. The steps, the humming, the singing and actions correspond with the drum beats. The whistles and claps as well as women ululation match with the rhythm. They dance for a while in the middle of the

circle and take their original position. The audience cheers them up as they take their position.

The response of the in-laws tells the audience that the girl is engaged and is welcomed to her in-laws' home. This gives the mother pride because it assures her that the daughter is accepted. The gifts given to the fiancée indicates the man's commitment and promised care to his wife to be. The whole act demonstrates a mutual agreement and happiness. It introduces the new status to the young woman and man. From this point, the young man and his relatives are allowed to start processing the payment of dowry following the Shambaa traditional procedures.

*Ndaghio* initiation performances affirm what Ruth Finnegan (2007:29-30) terms "performative utterances" whereby the performances are used to accept, agree or approve gifts and in making contracts. Finnegan also mentions that gift is a central word and is used broadly in requesting, pleading, persuading and negotiating of marriage. She also informs that performative utterances are very significant and they create mutual relationship. In the above performance, we see gift becoming a central act to requesting for a hand of marriage. In addition, the acceptance of gift denotes that the girl has accepted the request. Furthermore, the audience clapping and ululating signify parents and community approval of the new relationship.

After the acceptance of the gifts, both sides celebrate by eating and drinking as they make jokes and exchanging sayings that target the young ones' group. When it is almost down, *Mshamazi* prepares the closing by giving a brief speech that emphasizes on the significance of what the initiated boys and girls are already taught in *Oza* and *Gao* initiations. After this speech, the *Mshamazi* starts a farewell song as he leaves and the audience responds to the song as they disperse. The song marks the end of the ceremony.

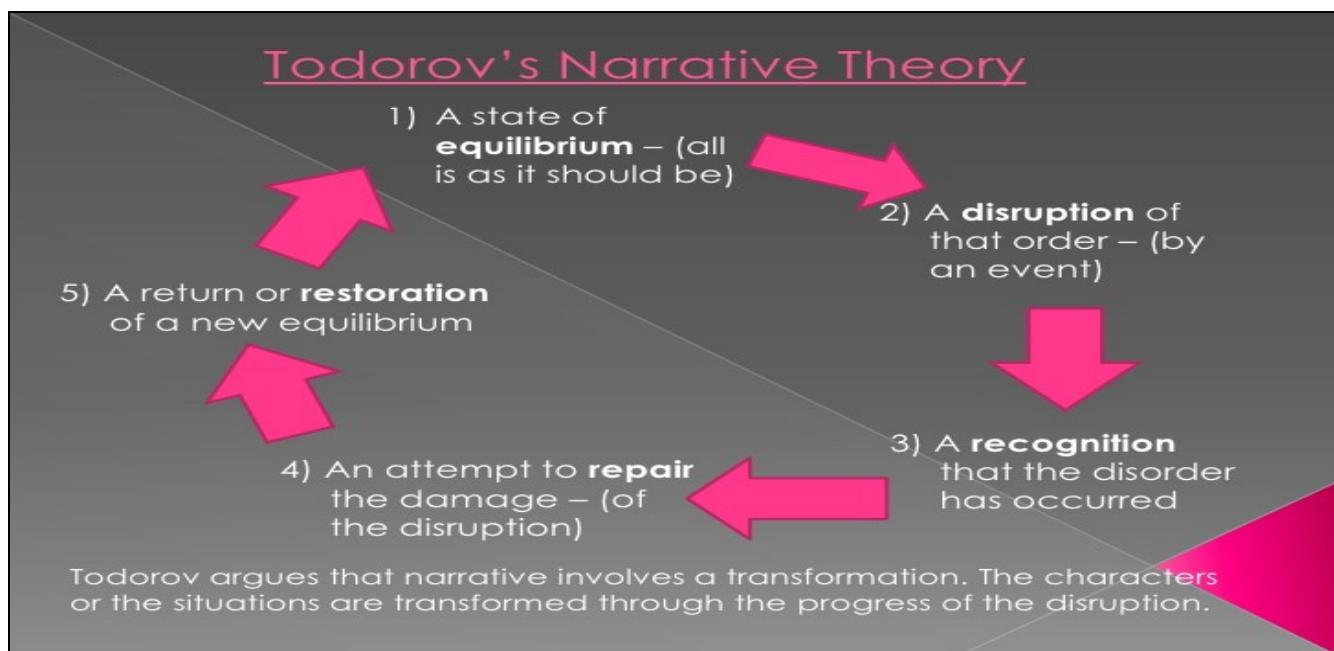
#### **2.4 *Oza* and *Ndaghio* as narrative genres**

This paper considers *Oza* and *Ndaghio* initiations as genres that are discursive and have allowed various interpretations particularly from songs and dramatic actions. It also regards these initiations as community discourses that seek to construct and identify their individuals. The construction of meaning from the songs and dramatic actions in *Oza* and *Ndaghio* are not fixed as the paper recognizes literary genres as discursive and fluid subjects. The paper therefore uses Tzevan Todorov's (1990) notion of genres to analyze and interpret *Oza* and *Ndaghio* initiations as Shambaa literary genres whose meanings are not fixed. According to Todorov, genres are not taxonomic but discursive classification which, generate horizons of exploration for the audience seeking to appreciate them. Todorov emphasizes that genres are by no means fixed and closed system.

Considering that *Oza* and *Ndaghio* initiations in this paper are Shambaa narratives and they transform individuals in the community, the paper uses also Todorov's theory of narrative to analyze and interpret them. Todorov in Huhn et al (2009) argues that a transformation occurs throughout the narrative. This is where the characters are transformed through the situations or events that have happened to them. Todorov mentions that the structure of a narrative is governed by five stages (Malpas and Wake, 2013). The first stage is

a state of equilibrium whereby everything is considered normal. The second stage is a disruption stage. In this stage, the equilibrium is disturbed by an event occurring. The third stage is a recognition or realization stage. In this stage there is a realization or an acknowledgement that the event has disturbed the equilibrium. After this stage, the following stage is an attempt to repair the damage that has been made. It is then followed by a restoration stage whereby things are back to the way they are supposed to be. This is also seen as the new equilibrium.

Applying Todorov's theory is an important key element when thinking about the process of initiation like *Oza* as we observe the girls being transformed from childhood to adulthood. We see the initiations becoming transitional rituals. They transit the girls into mature and fuller Shambaa women. The following diagram can also assist in analyzing *Oza* initiation as a narrative genre.



From the above diagram, we observe Todorov's pattern of his narrative theory in *Oza* initiation process. The initiation starts at the equilibrium stage and the equilibrium is disrupted when a group of the girls is separated from their parents. They are secluded in an isolated place away from the community. The Todorov's stage of recognition that disorder has occurred and attempt to repair the disruption in *Oza* is marked by the stage whereby the girls are taught new knowledge and tested by elders. The *Mshamazi* who represent elders and inculcate values of Shambaa community to the girls, teach them the necessary skills for adulthood. She teaches what is considered appropriate behavior for girls. The teachings include; problem solving, rules and taboos of the community and social responsibility. In the process of the initiation, the leader tests the girls.

The testing usually involves demonstrating physical endurance, mental strength, and intelligence. They must undergo the whole operation without showing any sign of reluctance and without expressing any discomfort. Failure to perform the required skills and

demonstrate understanding would bring shame and dishonor to them and their family. From this stage the girls are expected to have understood and gain a greater knowledge of the community, deeper consciousness, insight and wisdom.

When the *Mshamazi* is satisfied with the girls' understanding, and approve that the restoration has taken place in the initiated girls, she prepares them to return to their homes. The initiates' return to their families with new status marks the time of their rebirth which is the new equilibrium. This successful completion of the rite of adulthood is appreciated and celebrated by the whole community.

The narratives of *Oza* and *Ndaghio* initiations portray symbolic explanations of the Shambaa culture. We have noted that these narratives are not only for the entertainment but have educative purpose. The songs and the dramatic actions during the *Oza* and *Ndaghio* initiation ceremony carry weight in shaping and constructing ones behaviour and personality. They function to create and shape individual's identity in the Shambaa community.

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