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MASTER OF ARTS

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A Field work:

The field work was done in two trips of three months each, April to June, 1972, and September to November, 1973. The first one and a half months were a familiarization period, when I visited people, talked to them informally,

and explained the purpose of my study. In this way I managed to get friends who invited me to their homes and introduced me to other friends. During this time, I was able to collect the oral history and observe the social relationships in the community. I also made a beginning at learning the language, and got introduction to both

Kimaa and Kimbughu.

I avoided using the tape-recorder or carrying my writing pad around, as that would have put off my informants. During the following one and a half months of the first trip, I started using the tape recorder by taping any conversation, not necessarily in Kimaa, and then playing it back to the informants. This type of feedback proved to be very helpful in familiarising them with the machine and they later freely talked in Kimaa while the tape recorder was running. It was always important to play back the tape, so as to prove to them that the machine took only those words or things which they said and intended to be heard.

After the initial suspicion of the purpose of my trip was over, and my informants got used to the tape recorder, it was easy for me to use my writing pad to record words and sentences which I then read aloud, studied at home, and repeated to my teacher the next day.

The second trip was more interesting because I knew just where to and whom to contact. This time, I was fortunate to get an informant in Kimaa who knew how to read and write. This young man was very patient and understanding, and he did not only help me to improve my knowledge of Kimaa, he also helped me to transcribe a lot of the material which I had collected earlier.

Learning Kimaa was by no means easy. I had no problem with Kimbughu because of my knowledge of Kishambala; although I could not speak it, it was easy to understand. Kimaa took much longer to learn and I never managed to have more than a working knowledge of the language.

That is, I was able to understand much of what was being said, but I never mastered the

pronunciation to the point of conversing freely. On the other hand, after the first once and a half month, I at least knew where to mark the morpheme boundaries, which proved very important in writing down sentences spoken in informal conversations.

The material collected on Kimaa is of two main types

(i) Much of it was tape recorded in informal gatherings. After the first one and a half months, my informants ignored my presence and talked in Kimaa whenever I was around without being reminded to do so. In this way I was able to keep the tape recorder running while at the same time listening to the "switches" in their speech, from Kimaa to Kimbughu to kighambala.

(i i) The root of the material was written down. I wrote down words and sentences in Kishambale and then asked for the equivalents in Kimaa and Kimbughu. The material on the history of the Wamaa and their relationship with the Washambala was mostly done orally. Some of it was tape recorded. But most of the time I relied on taking down notes, and asking a question here and another there from different people, among both the Jamaa and the Washambala.

B. The Chief Informants:

It is obvious that in research work of the nature described above, informants play a very major role. So it is just appropriate that I should devote a whole section to my chief informants and helpers, and the role each, individually or in groups, played.