

## SURA YA SITA

The whole village turned out on the ilo, men, women and children. They stood round in a huge circle leaving the centre of the playground free. The elders and grandees of the village sat on their own stools brought there by their young sons or slaves. Okonkwo was among them. All others stood except those who came early enough to secure places on the few stands which had been built by placing smooth logs on forked pillars.

The wrestlers were not there yet and the drummers held the field. They too sat just in front of the huge circle of spectators, facing the elders. Behind them was the

Kijiji kizima kiligeuka ilo, wanaume, wanawake na watoto. Walisimama pande zote katika duara kubwa na kuacha katikati ya uwanja wa michezo bila malipo. Wazee na wakubwa wa kijiji waliketi kwenye viti vyao wenyewe vilivyoletwa hapo na wana wao wachanga au watumwa. Okonkwo alikuwa miongoni mwao. Wengine wote walisimama isipokuwa wale waliokuja mapema vya kutosha ili kupata mahali pa juu ya stendi chache zilizokuwa zimejengwa kwa kuweka magogo laini kwenye nguzo zenye uma.

Wacheza mieleka bado hawakuwepo na wapiga ngoma walishika uwanja. Wao pia waliketi mbele ya duara kubwa la watazamaji, wakiwatazama wazee.

## *Chinua Achebe*

big and ancient silk-cotton tree which was sacred. Spirits of good children lived in that tree waiting to be born. On ordinary days young women who desired children came to sit under its shade.

There were seven drums and they were arranged according to their sizes in a long wooden basket. Three men beat them with sticks, working feverishly from one drum to another. They were possessed by the spirit of the drums.

The young men who kept order on these occasions dashed about, consulting among themselves and with the leaders of the two wrestling teams, who were still outside the circle, behind the crowd. Once in a while two young men carrying palm fronds ran round the circle and kept the crowd back by beating the ground in front of them or, if they were stubborn, their legs and feet.

At last the two teams danced into the circle and the crowd roared

Nyuma yao kulikuwa na mti mkubwa na wa zamani wa pamba ya hariri ambao ulikuwa mtakatifu. Roho za watoto wema ziliishi kwenye mti huo zikingoja kuzaliwa. Katika siku za kawaida wanawake wachanga waliotamani watoto walikuja kuketi chini ya kivuli chake.

Kulikuwa na ngoma saba na zilipangwa kulingana na ukubwa wake katika kikapu kirefu cha mbao. Wanaume watatu waliwapiga kwa fimbo, wakifanya kazi kwa joto kutoka kwa ngoma moja hadi nyingine. Waliingiwa na roho ya ngoma.

Vijana walioweka utaratibu katika hafla hizi walikimbia huku na huko, wakishauriana wao kwa wao na viongozi wa timu mbili za mieleka, ambao walikuwa bado nje ya duara, nyuma ya umati. Mara kwa mara vijana wawili waliobeba matawi ya mitende walikimbia kuzunguka duara na kuuzuia umati nyuma kwa kupiga ardhi mbele yao au, ikiwa walikuwa na ukaidi, miguu na miguu yao.

Hatimaye timu hizo mbili zilicheza kwenye duara na umati

## Mambo Husambaratika

and clapped. The drums rose to a frenzy. The people surged forward. The young men who kept order flew around, waving their palm fronds. Old men nodded to the beat of the drums and remembered the days when they wrestled to its intoxicating rhythm.

The contest began with boys of fifteen or sixteen. There were only three such boys in each team. They were not the real wrestlers, - they merely set the scene. Within a short time the first two bouts were over. But the third created a big sensation even among the elders who did not usually show their excitement so openly. It was as quick as the other two, perhaps even quicker. But very few people had ever seen that kind of wrestling before. As soon as the two boys closed in, one of them did something which no one could describe because it had been as quick as a flash. And the other boy was flat on his back. The crowd roared and clapped and for a while drowned the frenzied drums. Okonkwo sprang to his feet and quickly sat down again. Three young men from the victorious

ukanguruma na kupiga makofi. Ngoma zilipanda sauti. Watu wakasonga mbele. Vijana waliweka utaratibu waliruka huku na huko, wakipeperusha viganja vyao. Wazee waliitikia kwa kichwa mdundo wa ngoma na kukumbuka enzi zile walipopigana mieleka kwa mdundo wake wa kilevi.

Mashindano yalianza na wavulana wa miaka kumi na tano au kumi na sita. Kulikuwa na wavulana watatu tu katika kila timu. Hawakuwa wapiganaji wa kweli, - waliweka tu eneo. Ndani ya muda mfupi mapambano mawili ya kwanza yalikwisha. Lakini wa tatu aliunda hisia kubwa hata kati ya wazee ambao hawakuonyesha msisimko wao waziwazi. Ilikuwa haraka kama zile zingine mbili, labda hata haraka zaidi. Lakini watu wachache sana walikuwa wamewahi kuona aina hiyo ya mieleka hapo awali. Mara tu wavulana hao wawili walipoingia ndani, mmoja wao alifanya jambo ambalo hakuna mtu aliyeweza kulielezea kwa sababu lilikuwa ni la haraka kama mwako. Na mvulana mwingine alikuwa gorofa mgongoni mwake. Umati wa watu ulipiga kelele na kupiga makofi na

## *Chinua Achebe*

boy's team ran forward, carried him shoulder high and danced through the cheering crowd. Everybody soon knew who the boy was. His name was Maduka, the son of Obierika.

The drummers stopped for a brief rest before the real matches. Their bodies shone with sweat, and they took up fans and began to fan themselves. They also drank water from small pots and ate kola nuts. They became ordinary human beings again, talking and laughing among themselves and with others who stood near them. The air, which had been stretched taut with excitement, relaxed again. It was as if water had been poured on the tightened skin of a drum. Many people looked around, perhaps for the first time, and saw those who stood or sat next to them.

"I did not know it was you,"

kwa muda walizamisha ngoma hizo zilizokuwa na kelele. Okonkwo alisimama kwa miguu yake na kuketi tena kwa haraka. Vijana watatu kutoka kwa timu ya mvulana mshindi walikimbia mbele, wakambeba bega juu na kucheza katikati ya umati uliokuwa ukishangilia. Hivi karibuni kila mtu alijua mvulana huyo alikuwa nani. Jina lake lilikuwa Maduka, mwana wa Obierika.

Wapiga ngoma walisimama kwa mapumziko mafupi kabla ya mechi halisi. Miili yao iling'aa kwa jasho, wakachukua mashabiki na kuanza kujipepea. Pia walikunywa maji kutoka kwenye sufuria ndogo na kula karanga za kola. Wakawa binadamu wa kawaida tena, wakizungumza na kucheka kati yao na wengine waliosimama karibu nao. hewa, ambayo alikuwa aliweka taut kwa msisimko, walishirikiana tena. Ni kana kwamba maji yamemwagwa kwenye ngozi iliyokazwa ya ngoma. Watu wengi walitazama huku na huku, labda kwa mara ya kwanza, na kuwaona wale waliosimama au kuketi karibu nao.

“Sikujua ni wewe,” Ekwefi

## Mambo Husambaratika

Ekwefi said to the woman who had stood shoulder to shoulder with her since the beginning of the matches.

"I do not blame you," said the woman. "I have never seen such a large crowd of people. Is it true that Okonkwo nearly killed you with his gun?"

"It is true indeed, my dear friend. I cannot yet find a mouth with which to tell the story."

"I think she has. How old is she now?" "She is about ten years old."

"I think she will stay. They usually stay if they do not die before the age of six." "I pray she stays," said Ekwefi with a heavy sigh.

The woman with whom she talked was called Chielo. She was the priestess of Agbala, the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves. In ordinary life Chielo was a widow with two children. She was very friendly with Ekwefi and they shared a common shed in the market. She was particularly fond of Ekwefi's only daughter, Ezinma, whom she called "my daughter." Quite often she bought beancakes and gave Ekwefi some to take home to Ezinma. Anyone seeing Chielo in ordinary life

alimwambia mwanamke aliyekuwa naye bega kwa bega tangu mwanzo wa mechi.

"Sikulaumu," alisema mwanamke huyo. "Sijawahi kuona umati mkubwa kama huu wa watu. Je! ni kweli Okonkwo alikaribia kukuua kwa bunduki yake?"

"Ni kweli, rafiki yangu mpendwa. Sijapata mdomo wa kusimulia hadithi."

"Nadhani ana umri gani sasa?"

"Ana umri wa miaka kumi hivi."

"Nadhani atakaa. Kawaida hukaa ikiwa hawatakufa kabla ya umri wa miaka sita." "Naomba abaki," alisema Ekwefi huku akihema sana.

Mwanamke ambaye alizungumza naye alitwa Chielo. Alikuwa kuhani wa Agbala, Oracle ya Milima na Mapango. Katika maisha ya kawaida Chielo alikuwa mjane mwenye watoto wawili. Alikuwa rafiki sana na Ekwefi na walishiriki kibanda cha pamoja sokoni. Alikuwa akimpenda sana binti pekee wa Ekwefi, Ezinma, ambaye alimwita "binti yangu." Mara nyingi alinunua keki na kumpa Ekwefi baadhi ya kwenda nazo nyumbani Ezinma. Mtu yeyote anayemwona Chielo katika

## *Chinua Achebe*

would hardly believe she was the same person who prophesied when the spirit of Agbala was upon her.

The drummers took up their sticks and the air shivered and grew tense like a tightened bow.

The two teams were ranged facing each other across the clear space. A young man from one team danced across the centre to the other side and pointed at whomever he wanted to fight. They danced back to the centre together and then closed in.

There were twelve men on each side and the challenge went from one side to the other. Two judges walked around the wrestlers and when they thought they were equally matched, stopped them. Five matches ended in this way. But the really exciting moments were when a man was thrown. The huge voice of the crowd then rose to the sky and in every direction. It was even heard in the surrounding villages.

The last match was between the leaders of the teams. They were among the best wrestlers in all the

maisha ya kawaida hangeweza kuamini kuwa alikuwa ni mtu yule yule aliyetabiri wakati roho ya Agbala ilikuwa juu yake.

Wapiga ngoma walichukua vijiti vyao na hewa ikatetemeka na kukaza kama upinde uliokazwa.

Timu hizo mbili zilipangwa zikitazamana katika nafasi iliyo wazi. Kijana wa timu moja alicheza katikati hadi upande mwingine na akamwonyesha yeyote anayetaka kupigana. Walicheza tena hadi kituoni pamoja kisha wakafunga.

Kulikuwa na wanaume kumi na wawili kila upande na changamoto ilitoka upande mmoja hadi mwingine. Majaji wawili waliwazunguka wapiganaji hao na walipofikiri walikuwa wamelingana sawa, waliwasimamisha. Mechi tano zilimalizika hivi. Lakini wakati wa kulisimua sana ulikuwa wakati mtu alitupwa. Sauti kubwa ya umati kisha ikapanda angani na kila upande. Ilisikika hata katika vijiji vya jirani.

Mechi ya mwisho ilikuwa kati ya viongozi wa timu hizo. Walikuwa miongoni mwa wapiganaji bora

## Mambo Husambaratika

nine villages. The crowd wondered who would throw the other this year. Some said Okafo was the better man, others said he was not the equal of Ikezue. Last year neither of them had thrown the other even though the judges had allowed the contest to go on longer than was the custom. They had the same style and one saw the other's plans beforehand. It might happen again this year.

Dusk was already approaching when their contest began. The drums went mad and the crowds also. They surged forward as the two young men danced into the circle. The palm fronds were helpless in keeping them back.

Ikezue held out his right hand. Okafo seized it, and they closed in. It was a fierce contest. Ikezue strove to dig in his right heel behind Okafo so as to pitch him backwards in the clever ege style. But the one knew what the other was thinking. The crowd had surrounded and swallowed up the drummers, whose frantic rhythm was no longer a mere disembodied sound but the very heartbeat of the

katika vijiji vyote tisa. Umati ulijiuliza nani angemrusha mwingine mwaka huu. Wengine walisema Okafo alikuwa mtu bora, wengine walisema hakuwa sawa na Ikezue. Mwaka jana hakuna hata mmoja wao aliyemtupa mwingine ingawa majaji walikuwa wameruhusu shindano hilo kuendelea kwa muda mrefu kuliko ilivyokuwa desturi. Walikuwa na mtindo sawa na mmoja aliona mipango ya mwingine kabla. Inaweza kutokea tena mwaka huu.

Jioni ilikuwa tayari inakaribia wakati shindano lao lilianza. Ngoma zikawa wazimu na umati wa watu pia. Walisonga mbele huku vijana hao wawili wakicheza kwenye duara. Mawese hayakuwa na uwezo wa kuyazuia.

Ikezue alinyoosha mkono wake wa kulia. Okafo akaikamata, na wakafunga. Ilikuwa ni mchuano mkali. Ikezue alijitahidi kuchimba kisigino chake cha kulia nyuma ya Okafo ili kumrudisha nyuma kwa mtindo wa werevu. Lakini mmoja alijua kile ambacho mwingine alikuwa akifikiria. Umati wa watu ulikuwa umewazunguka na kuwameza wapiga ngoma, ambao mdundo wao wa kufoka haukuwa

## *Chinua Achebe*

people.

The wrestlers were now almost still in each other's grip. The muscles on their arms and their thighs and on their backs stood out and twitched. It looked like an equal match. The two judges were already moving forward to separate them when Ikezue, now desperate, went down quickly on one knee in an attempt to fling his man backwards over his head. It was a sad miscalculation. Quick as the lightning of Amadiora, Okafo raised his right leg and swung it over his rival's head. The crowd burst into a thunderous roar. Okafo was swept off his feet by his supporters and carried home shoulder high. They sang his praise and the young women clapped their hands: "Who will wrestle for our village?"

Okafo will wrestle for our village. Has he thrown a hundred men? He has thrown four hundred men. Has he thrown a hundred Cats?

He has thrown four hundred Cats. Then send him word to fight for us."

tena sauti isiyo na mwili bali mapigo ya moyo ya watu. Wacheza mieleka sasa walikuwa karibu bado wameshikana. Misuli ya mikono na mapaja yao na migongoni ilisimama na kutetemeka. Ilionekana kama mechi sawa. Majaji hao wawili walikuwa tayari wanasonga mbele kuwatenganisha wakati Ikezue, sasa

akiwa amekata tamaa, alishuka haraka kwa goti moja katika jaribio la kumrudisha mtu wake nyuma juu ya kichwa chake. Ilikuwa ni hesabu mbaya ya kusikitisha. Haraka kama umeme wa Amadiora, Okafo aliinua mguu wake wa kulia na kuuzungusha juu ya kichwa cha mpinzani wake. Umati ulipasuka kwa kishindo kikubwa. Okafo alifagiliwa na wafuasi wake na kubebwa mabega juu. Waliimba sifa zake na wanawake vijana wakapiga makofi: "Nani atapigania kijiji chetu?"

Okafo atapigania kijiji chetu. Ametupa wanaume mia moja? Ametupa watu mia nne. Ametupa Paka mia?

Ametupa Paka mia nne. Kisha mpe neno ili atupiganie."