

## SURA YA KUMI

Large crowds began to gather on the village ilo as soon as the edge had worn off the sun's heat and it was no longer painful on the body. Most communal ceremonies took place at that time of the day, so that even when it was said that a ceremony would begin "after the midday meal" everyone understood that it would begin a long time later, when the sun's heat had softened.

It was clear from the way the

Umati mkubwa wa watu ulianza kukusanyika pale kijijini ilo mara tu makali yalipoisha joto la jua halina uchungu tena mwilini. Sherehe nyingi za jumuiya zilifanyika wakati huo wa siku, ili hata iliposemekana kuwa sherehe itaanza "baada ya chakula cha mchana" kila mtu alielewa kwamba itaanza muda mrefu baadaye, wakati joto la jua lilikuwa limepungua.

Ilikuwa wazi kutokana na jinsi

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crowd stood or sat that the ceremony was for men. There were many women, but they looked on from the fringe like outsiders. The titled men and elders sat on their stools waiting for the trials to begin. In front of them was a row of stools on which nobody sat. There were nine of them. Two little groups of people stood at a respectable distance beyond the stools. They faced the elders. There were three men in one group and three men and one woman in the other. The woman was Mgbafo and the three men with her were her brothers. In the other group were her husband, Uzowulu, and his relatives. Mgbafo and her brothers were as still as statues into whose faces the artist has moulded defiance. Uzowulu and his relative, on the other hand, were whispering together. It looked like whispering, but they were really talking at the top of their voices. Everybody in the crowd was talking. It was like the market. From a distance the noise was a deep rumble carried by the wind.

umati ulivyosimama au kuketi kwamba sherehe hiyo ilikuwa ya wanaume. Kulikuwa na wanawake wengi, lakini walitazama kutoka nje kama watu wa nje. Wanaume na wazee wenye vyeo walikaa kwenye viti vyao wakisubiri kesi kuanza. Mbele yao kulikuwa na safu ya viti ambavyo hakuna mtu aliyeketi. Kulikuwa na tisa kati yao. Vikundi viwili vidogo vya watu vilisimama kwa umbali wa heshima zaidi ya viti. Wakawakabili wazee. Kulikuwa na wanaume watatu katika kundi moja na wanaume watatu na mwanamke mmoja katika kundi lingine. Mwanamke huyo alikuwa Mgbafo na wanaume watatu waliokuwa naye walikuwa kaka zake. Katika kundi lingine walikuwa mume wake, Uzowulu, na jamaa zake. Mgbafo na kaka zake walikuwa bado wametulia kama vinyago ambavyo msanii huyo ameweka chuki kwenye nyuso zao. Kwa upande mwingine, Uzowulu na jamaa yake walikuwa wakinong'ona. Ilionekana kama kunong'ona, lakini walikuwa wakiongea kwa sauti ya juu kabisa. Kila mtu katika umati alikuwa akiongea. Ilikuwa kama soko. Kwa mbali kelele ilikuwa ni sauti kubwa

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An iron gong sounded, setting up a wave of expectation in the crowd. Everyone looked in the direction of the egwugwu house. Gome, gome, gome, gome went the gong, and a powerful flute blew a high-pitched blast. Then came the voices of the egwugwu, guttural and awesome. The wave struck the women and children and there was a backward stampede. But it was momentary. They were already far enough where they stood and there was room for running away if any of them should go towards them.

The drum sounded again and the flute blew. The house was now a pandemonium of quavering voices: Am oyim de de de de! filled the air as the spirits of the ancestors, just emerged from the earth, greeted themselves in their esoteric language. The egwugwu house into which they emerged faced the forest, away from the crowd, who saw only its back with the many-coloured patterns and drawings done by specially chosen women at regular intervals. These women never saw the inside of the

Gongo la chuma lilisikika, na kuanzisha wimbi la matarajio katika umati. Kila mtu alitazama upande wa nyumba ya egwugwu. Gome, gome, gome, gome akaenda gongo, na filimbi yenye nguvu ikapiga mlio wa sauti ya juu. Kisha zikaja sauti za egwugwu, guttural na kutisha. Wimbi hilo liliwapiga wanawake na watoto na kulikuwa na mkanyagano wa nyuma. Lakini ilikuwa ya kitambo. Tayari walikuwa wamefika mahali waliposimama na kulikuwa na nafasi ya kukimbia ikiwa yeyote kati yao angewaelekea.

Ngoma ilisikika tena na filimbi ikavuma. Sasa nyumba ilikuwa ya sauti nyingi za kutetemeka: Am oyim de de de de! ilijaza hewa huku roho za mababu, zikitoka tu kutoka duniani, zikijisalimia kwa lugha yao ya kikabila. Nyumba ya egwugwu ambayo walitokea ilikabili msitu, mbali na umati wa watu, ambao waliona tu mgongo wake na mifumo ya rangi nyingi na michoro iliyofanywa na wanawake waliochaguliwa maalum mara kwa mara. Wanawake hawa hawakuwahi

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hut. No woman ever did. They scrubbed and painted the outside walls under the supervision of men. If they imagined what was inside, they kept their imagination to themselves. No woman ever asked questions about the most powerful and the most secret cult in the clan.

Am oyim de de de de! flew around the dark, closed hut like tongues of fire. The ancestral spirits of the clan were abroad.

The metal gong beat continuously now and the flute, shrill and powerful, floated on the chaos.

And then the egwugwu appeared. The women and children sent up a great shout and took to their heels. It was instinctive. A woman fled as soon as an egwugwu came in sight. And when, as on that day, nine of the greatest masked spirits in the clan came out together it was a terrifying spectacle. Even Mgbafo took to her heels and had to be restrained by her brothers.

Each of the nine egwugwu represented a village of the clan.

kuona ndani ya kibanda. Hakuna mwanamke aliyewahi kufanya hivyo. Walisugua na kupaka rangi kuta za nje chini ya uangalizi wa wanaume. Ikiwa waliwazia kilichomo ndani, waliweka mawazo yao kwao wenyewe. Hakuna mwanamke aliyewahi kuuliza maswali kuhusu ibada yenye nguvu zaidi na ya siri zaidi katika ukoo.

Mimi ni de de de de! akaruka kuzunguka kibanda chenye giza, kilichofungwa kama ndimi za moto. Roho za mababu za ukoo zilikuwa nje ya nchi.

Gongo la chuma lilipiga mara kwa mara sasa na filimbi, iliyokuwa ikivuma na yenye nguvu, ilielea kwenye fujo.

Na kisha egwugwu akatokea. Wanawake na watoto walipiga kelele kubwa na kuchukua visigino vyao. Ilikuwa ya asili. Mwanamke mmoja alikimbia mara tu egwugwu alipoonekana. Na wakati, kama siku hiyo, roho tisa wakubwa waliofunika uso katika ukoo walipotoka pamoja ilikuwa ni tamasha la kutisha. Hata Mgbafo alichukua mkondo wake na ikabidi azuiliwe na kaka zake.

Kila mmoja wa egwugwu tisa aliwakilisha kijiji cha ukoo.

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Their leader was called Evil Forest. Smoke poured out of his head.

The nine villages of Umuofia had grown out of the nine sons of the first father of the clan. Evil Forest represented the village of Umueru, or the children of Eru, who was the eldest of the nine sons.

"Umuofia kwenu!" shouted the leading egwugwu, pushing the air with his raffia arms. The elders of the clan replied, "Yaa!"

"Umuofia kwenu!" "Yaa!"

"Umuofia kwenu!" "Yaa!"

Evil Forest then thrust the pointed end of his rattling staff into the earth. And it began to shake and rattle, like something agitating with a metallic life. He took the first of the empty stools and the eight other egwugwu began to sit in order of seniority after him.

Okonkwo's wives, and perhaps other women as well, might have noticed that the second egwugwu had the springy walk of Okonkwo. And they might also have noticed that Okonkwo was not among the titled men and elders who sat behind the row of egwugwu. But if they thought these things they kept

Kiongozi wao alitwa Msitu Mwovu. Moshi ulimwagika kichwani mwake.

Vijiji tisa vya Umuofia vilikuwa vimetoka kati ya wana tisa wa baba wa kwanza wa ukoo huo. Msitu Mwovu uliwakilisha kijiji cha Umueru, au watoto wa Eru, ambaye alikuwa mkubwa wa wana tisa.

"Umuofia kwenu!" akapiga kelele egwugwu inayoongoza, akisukuma hewa kwa mikono yake ya raffia. Wazee wa ukoo wakajibu, "Yaa!"

"Umuofia kwenu!" "Yaa!"

"Umuofia kwenu!" "Yaa!"

Msitu Mwovu kisha akasukuma ncha iliyochongoka ya fimbo yake inayotambaa duniani. Na ilianza kutikisika na kutetemeka, kama kitu kinachosisimua na maisha ya chuma. Alichukua ya kwanza ya viti tupu na egwugwu wengine nane wakaanza kukaa katika mpangilio wa cheo baada yake.

Wake za Okonkwo, na labda wanawake wengine pia, wanaweza kuwa waligundua kwamba egwugwu wa pili alikuwa na matembezi marefu ya Okonkwo. Na wanaweza pia kugundua kuwa Okonkwo hakuwa miongoni mwa wanaume na wazee wenye majina walioketi nyuma ya safu ya

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them within themselves. The egwugwu with the springy walk was one of the dead fathers of the clan. He looked terrible with the smoked raffia "body, a huge wooden face painted white except for the round hollow eyes and the charred teeth that were as big as a man's fingers. On his head were two powerful horns.

When all the egwugwu had sat down and the sound of the many tiny bells and rattles on their bodies had subsided, Evil Forest addressed the two groups of people facing them.

"Uzowulu's body, I salute you," he said. Spirits always addressed humans as "bodies." Uzowulu bent down and touched the earth with his right hand as a sign of submission.

"Our father, my hand has touched the ground," he said. "Uzowulu's body, do you know me?" asked the spirit.

"How can I know you, father? You are beyond our knowledge." Evil Forest then turned to the other group and addressed the eldest of

egwugwu. Lakini ikiwa walifikiri mambo haya waliyaweka ndani yao wenyewe. Egwugwu na matembezi ya chemchemi alikuwa mmoja wa baba waliokufa wa ukoo. Alionekana kutisha na mwili wa raffia ", sura kubwa ya mbao iliyopakwa rangi nyeupe isipokuwa macho ya pande zote matupu na meno yaliyowaka ambayo yalikuwa makubwa kama vidole vya mtu. Kichwani mwake kulikuwa na pembe mbili zenye nguvu.

Wakati egwugwu wote walikuwa wameketi chini na sauti ya kengele nyingi ndogo na njuga juu ya miili yao ilikuwa imepungua, Msitu Mwovu ulihutubia makundi mawili ya watu yanayowakabili.

"Mwili wa Uzowulu, nakupigia saluti," alisema. Roho sikuzote ziliwaita wanadamu "miili."

Uzowulu aliinama chini na kuigusa ardhi kwa mkono wake wa kulia kama ishara ya kunyenyekea.

"Baba yetu, mkono wangu umegusa ardhi," alisema. "Mwili wa Uzowulu, unanifahamu?" aliuliza roho.

"Nikujueje baba? Upo nje ya uwezo wetu."

Msitu Mwovu kisha akageukia kundi lingine na kuhutubia

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the three brothers.

"The body of Odukwe, I greet you," he said, and Odukwe bent down and touched the earth. The hearing then began.

Uzowulu stepped forward and presented his case.

"That woman standing there is my wife, Mgbafo. I married her with my money and my yams. I do not owe my in-laws anything. I owe them no yams. I owe them no coco-yams. One morning three of them came to my house, beat me up and took my wife and children away. This happened in the rainy season. I have waited in vain for my wife to return. At last I went to my in-laws and said to them, 'You have taken back your sister. I did not send her away. You yourselves took her. The law of the clan is that you should return her bride-price.' But my wife's brothers said they had nothing to tell me. So I have brought the matter to the fathers of the clan. My case is finished. I salute you."

"Your words are good," said the leader of the ecjwucjwu. "Let us hear Odukwe. His words may also be good."

mkubwa wa wale ndugu watatu.

"Mwili wa Odukwe, nakusalimia," alisema, na Odukwe akainama na kuigusa ardhi. Kesi ikaanza. Uzowulu akasonga mbele na kuwasilisha kesi yake.

"Huyo mwanamke aliyesimama pale ni mke wangu Mgbafo, nilimuoa kwa pesa zangu na viazi vikuu vyangu, sina deni na wakwe zangu, sina deni nao, sina deni nao. Siku moja asubuhi watatu kati yao. alikuja nyumbani kwangu, akanipiga na kunichukua mke wangu na watoto wangu, hii ilitokea wakati wa mvua. Nimesubiri bure mke wangu arudi, mwishowe nikaenda kwa wakwe zangu na kuwaambia, 'Ninyi mmemchukua dada yenu, mimi sikumfukuza, ninyi wenyewe mlimtwaa, na sheria ya ukoo ni kwamba mtamrudishia mahari yake. Lakini ndugu wa mke wangu walisema hawana la kuniambia, kwa hiyo suala hilo nimelifikisha kwa baba wa ukoo, kesi yangu imekamilika, nakusalimu."

"Maneno yako ni mazuri," kiongozi wa ecjwucjwu alisema. "Hebu tumsikie Odukwe. Maneno yake yanaweza pia kuwa mazuri."

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Odukwe was short and thickset. He stepped forward, saluted the spirits and began his story. "My in-law has told you that we went to his house, beat him up and took our sister and her children away. All that is true. He told you that he came to take back her bride-price and we refused to give it him. That also is true. My in-law, Uzowulu, is a beast. My sister lived with him for nine years. During those years no single day passed in the sky without his beating the woman. We have tried to settle their quarrels time without number and on each occasion Uzowulu was guilty-- "It is a lie!" Uzowulu shouted.

"Two years ago," continued Odukwe, "when she was pregnant, he beat her until she miscarried."

"It is a lie. She miscarried after she had gone to sleep with her lover." "Uzowulu's body, I salute you," said Evil Forest, silencing him. "What kind of lover sleeps with a pregnant woman?" There was a loud murmur of approbation from the crowd. Odukwe continued: "Last year when my sister was recovering from an illness, he beat her again so that if the neighbours

Odukwe alikuwa mfupi na mnene. Akasogea mbele, akasalimu roho na kuanza hadithi yake. "Shemeji amekuambia tulienda nyumbani kwake tukampiga na tukamchukua dada yetu na watoto wake, hayo yote ni kweli, alikuambia alikuja kumrudishia mahari tukagoma kutoa. Ni yeye. Hiyo pia ni kweli. Mkwe wangu, Uzowulu, ni mnyama. Dada yangu aliishi naye kwa miaka tisa. Katika miaka hiyo hakuna hata siku moja iliyopita angani bila kumpiga mwanamke. Tumejaribu kusuluhisha zao hilo. muda wa ugomvi bila idadi na kila tukio Uzowulu alikuwa na hatia-- "Ni uongo!" Uzowulu alifoka. "Miaka miwili iliyopita," aliendelea Odukwe, "alipokuwa mjamzito, alimpiga hadi mimba ikaharibika." "Ni uongo. Alipoteza mimba baada ya kwenda kulala na mpenzi wake." "Mwili wa Uzowulu, nakupigia saluti," alisema Msitu mbaya na kumnyamazisha. "Ni mpenzi gani anayelala na mwanamke mjamzito?" Kulikuwa na manung'uniko makubwa ya kuidhinishwa na umati. Odukwe aliendelea: "Mwaka jana dada yangu alipokuwa akiugua,



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had not gone in to save her she would have been killed. We heard of it, and did as you have been told. The law of Umuofia is that if a woman runs away from her husband her bride-price is returned. But in this case she ran away to save her life. Her two children belong to Uzowulu. We do not dispute it, but they are too young to leave their mother. If, in the other hand, Uzowulu should recover from his madness and come in the proper way to beg his wife to return she will do so on the understanding that if he ever beats her again we shall cut off his genitals for him."

The crowd roared with laughter. Evil Forest rose to his feet and order was immediately restored. A steady cloud of smoke rose from his head. He sat down again and called two witnesses. They were both Uzowulu's neighbours, and they agreed about the beating. Evil Forest then stood up, pulled out his staff and thrust it into the earth again. He ran a few steps in the direction of the women,- they all fled in terror, only to return to their places almost immediately. The nine egwugwu then went away to consult together in their house. They were silent for a long

alimpiga tena ili majirani wasingeingia kumuokoa angeuawa. Tulisikia, na kufanya kama ulivyoambiwa. Sheria ya Umuofia ni kwamba mwanamke akimkimbia mumewe mahari yake inarudishwa. Lakini kwa hali hii alikimbia kuokoa maisha yake. Watoto wake wawili ni wa Uzowulu. Hatupingii, lakini wao pia. Ikiwa, kwa upande mwingine, Uzowulu atapona wazimu wake na kuja kwa njia ifaayo kumsihi mkewe arejee atafanya hivyo kwa kufahamu kwamba akimpiga tena tutamkata. sehemu za siri kwa ajili yake."

Umati ulinguruma kwa kicheko. Msitu mbaya ulisimama kwa miguu yake na utaratibu ulirejeshwa mara moja. Wingu thabiti la moshi lilipanda kutoka kichwani mwake. Akaketi tena na kuita mashahidi wawili. Wote wawili walikuwa majirani wa Uzowulu, na walikubaliana kuhusu kupigwa. Msitu Mwovu kisha akasimama, akatoa fimbo yake na kuitupa tena duniani. Alikimbia hatua chache kuelekea kwa wanawake, - wote walikimbia kwa hofu, lakini wakarudi kwenye maeneo yao mara moja. Egwugwu tisa kisha wakaenda kushauriana

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time. Then the metal gong sounded and the flute was blown. The egwugwu had emerged once again from their underground home. They saluted one another and then reappeared on the ilo.

"Umuofia kwenu!" roared Evil Forest, facing the elders and grandees of the clan. "Yaa!" replied the thunderous crowd, - then silence descended from the sky and swallowed the noise. Evil Forest began to speak and all the while he spoke everyone was silent. The eight other egwugwu were as still as statues.

"We have heard both sides of the case," said Evil Forest. "Our duty is not to blame this man or to praise that, but to settle the dispute." He turned to Uzowulu's group and allowed a short pause. "Uzowulu's body, I salute you," he said. "Our father, my hand has touched the ground," replied Uzowulu, touching the earth.

"Uzowulu's body, do you know me?"  
"How can I know you, father?"

pamoja katika nyumba yao. Walikaa kimya kwa muda mrefu. Kisha gongo la chuma likalia na filimbi ikapulizwa. Egwugwu alikuwa ameibuka tena kutoka kwa nyumba yao ya chini ya ardhi. Wakasalimiana kisha wakatokea tena kwenye ilo.

"Umuofia kwenu!" Msitu mbaya uliunguruma, ukikabili wazee na wakuu wa ukoo. "Yaa!" alijibu umati wa radi, kisha ukimya ulishuka kutoka mbinguni na kumeza kelele.

Msitu mbaya alianza kuongea na muda wote akiongea kila mtu alikuwa kimya. Egwugwu wengine wanane walikuwa wametulia kama sanamu.

"Tumesikiliza pande zote mbili za kesi," alisema Evil Forest.

"Wajibu wetu sio kumlaumu mtu huyu au kusifia hilo, bali kusuluhisha mzozo." Aligeukia kundi la Uzowulu na kuruhusu pumziko fupi.

"Mwili wa Uzowulu, nakupigia saluti," alisema.

"Baba yetu, mkono wangu umegusa ardhi," Uzowulu alijibu akigusa ardhi.

"Mwili wa Uzowulu, unanifahamu?"

"Nikujeeje baba? Uko nje ya

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You are beyond our knowledge," Uzowulu replied. "I am Evil Forest. I kill a man on the day that his life is sweetest to him."  
"That is true," replied Uzowulu.

"Go to your in-laws with a pot of wine and beg your wife to return to you. It is not bravery when a man fights with a woman." He turned to Odukwe, and allowed a brief pause.

"Odukwe's body, I greet you," he said.

"My hand is on the ground," replied Odukwe. "Do you know me?"

"No man can know you," replied Odukwe.

"I am Evil Forest, I am Dry-meat-that-fills-the-mouth, I am Fire-that-burns- without-faggots. If your in-law brings wine to you, let your sister go with him. I salute you." He pulled his staff from the hard earth and thrust it back.

"Umuofia kwenu!" he roared, and the crowd answered.

"I don't know why such a trifle should come before, then said one elder to another.

"Don't you know what kind of man Uzowulu is? He will not listen to any other decision,"

uwezo wetu," Uzowulu alijibu.

"Mimi ni Msitu Mwovu. Ninaua mtu siku ambayo maisha yake ni matamu kwake."

"Hiyo ni kweli," alijibu Uzowulu.

"Nenda kwa wakwe zako na chungu cha mvinyo na umwombe mkeo arudi kwako. Sio ushujaa mwanaume anapopigana na mwanamke." Akamgeukia Odukwe, na kuruhusu atulie kidogo.

"Mwili wa Odukwe, nakusalimia," alisema.

"Mkono wangu upo chini," alijibu Odukwe. "Unanijua?"

"Hakuna mwanaume anayeweza kukujua," alijibu Odukwe.

"Mimi ni Msitu Mwovu, Mimi ni nyama-kavu-inayojaza-mdomo, Mimi ni Moto-unaowaka-usio na fagisi. Mkwe wako akikuletea divai, mwache dada yako aende naye. nikusalimu." Alichomoa fimbo yake kutoka kwenye ardhi ngumu na kuirudisha nyuma.

"Umuofia kwenu!" alinguruma, na umati ukajibu.

"Sijui ni kwa nini tama kama hiyo inapaswa kuja hapo awali, kisha mzee mmoja akamwambia mwenzake.

"Si unajua Uzowulu ni mtu wa aina gani? Hatasikiliza uamuzi

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replied the other.

As they spoke two other groups of people had replaced the first before the egwugwu, and a great land case began.

mwingine wowote," alijibu mwingine.

Walipokuwa wakizungumza makundi mengine mawili ya watu yalikuwa yamechukua nafasi ya kwanza kabla ya egwugwu, na kesi kubwa ya ardhi ilianza.