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## Riddling Among the Banyankore and Baganda in Uganda\*

### ABSTRACT

This essay examines the typology and social function of the riddling culture among the Baganda and Banyankore of central and south-western Uganda. It draws on examples from various categories of riddle collected in these communities to analyse the kinds of coda, text structures, and metanarrative devices that are employed in riddling discourse. The essay discusses the extent to which riddles function as a crossover form in these societies, and it examines whether those posed by children among themselves, or by adults and children to a mixed audience, differ in terms of the complexity of themes and metaphors used by the performers. It argues that the use of established coda and metanarrative devices helps to index the ongoing social interaction between the performer and audience and to structure riddling in accordance with social reality. The essay further argues that although riddles posed to a crossover audience may differ greatly from those targeting an exclusively adult audience, our understanding of the functional value of riddles depends on the prevailing social issues in the community at the time of performance. Understanding riddling as a discourse in these Ugandan cultures thus depends as much on unravelling the way the established formulas function as on exploring the way the metanarrative and other language devices relate to the nature of a given audience and to the prevailing social realities in the community at the time of the performance.

### Introduction

**I**N THIS ESSAY, I examine the question of typology in the riddling culture of the Baganda and Banyankore communities in central and south-western Uganda. Drawing examples from various categories of riddles in the above communities, I argue that while riddling follows an established

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\*This essay has appeared as parts of Chapter 1, “Oral Texts for Children: Audience Dynamics, Form, and Social Value,” in Aaron Mushengyezi, *Oral Literature for Children: Rethinking Orality, Literacy, Performance, and Documentation Practices* (Cross/Cultures 154; Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2013). Reprinted here by permission of Editions Rodopi B.V.

©*Performing Wisdom: Proverbial Lore in Modern Ugandan Society*, ed. Dominica Dipio & Stuart Sillars (*Matatu* 42; Amsterdam & New York NY: Rodopi, 2013).