

Theatre for Peace

*Community Development and Peace building is one of the programs of **Holy Trinity Peace Village (HTPV) Kuron.***

In cooperation with St Thomas Primary School a theatre group is recruited among the pupils. The group has been given instructions, they have written a play, and developed the choreography.

The play is performed by nearby Toposa villages in the evenings after dark.

Text and photos: Per Nordmark

The play is based on a true story among the group members.

The story

The play is telling a story of two Toposa orphans, two brothers, where the elder is taking care of the younger; sending him to school and paying his school fees.

The elder brother has got a girlfriend, and the young couple wants to marry. However the father of the girl has a great interest in cattle, and he wants many cows as dowry. He also appreciates the bravery of raiding cattle.

Some young men plan to go for raiding, and they ask the elder brother to join them. He does not want to go, and refuse to join. However when he next meet his girlfriend she encourage him to go for raiding, and make it clear that this is a must for him to marry her.

The cattle raiders



So, as he really wants to marry the girl, he join the group and the go for raiding cattle.

The raiders returns with cattle and they celebrate, and the girls come and join in the celebration. However the girl cannot find her boyfriend, and she asks the leader where he is. Then she is told he was killed during their raiding.

Celebration of the raiders' return



Now the celebration turns into mourning.

The girl blames the leader of the raiders.

The younger brother of the killed man blames the girl for having sent his brother to die. Asking her how he now will manage, as he is not supported anymore!

Theatre in the Cattle Kraal

On 10th of August the Theatre group went out from Kuron in the evening, travelling by the HTPV Unimog on the way to Boma, about 17 km.



The Theatre Group is preparing to depart for a performance at a Cattle Kraal

In this area the Toposa have a large Cattle Kraal. Here they stay with large number of cattle. During rainy season they are grassing them in the

nearby areas. Not only men stays her with the cattle, also many families. Here they to a large extent feed on milk and some blood from the animals. It is popular to stay in the Kraals.

The challenge of crossing the river

The group arrived at the Kraal just after dark, after having got stuck when crossing a small river, where the riverbank was very steep. However by digging a path and filling in tree trunks and stones the Unimog finally passed. AS the group came near the Kraal the smell of cattle



became strong, however pleasant as it was a dry and warm evening. The low sounds from the resting cattle within the Kraal fences, made of thorny branches and bushes was creating an atmosphere of peace. It was all dark except a vague light from a fire somewhere inside the Kraal. The sky above was full of stars.

Now and then there was the sound of an animal crying out. And then there was the singing of the Toposa men, staying with their cattle, a particular animal and singing its' praise; How he got the animal, how he love the animal, how he will take care of the animal and protect it etc.

The Toposa love their animals, and they rarely slaughter them.

The main value of the animals is for paying dowry when marrying. And for creating status, as well as providing milk and blood for food. Transforming the value of the animals for other purposes is not normal.



Toposa audience at an evening performance by the Theatre Group

The Toposa will not come for any activity, until they have completed the duties of the day, prepared food and eaten the main meal of the day.

Therefore, 1 ½ hour after dark the audience for the Theatre group could be expected to arrive, around 8.30 pm.

The audience sits on the ground in a half circle in front of what is made to be the stage. 4 lights are placed on poles, and in addition the actors are lit up by torches. A whistle and a drum are used to create some effects.

This evening more than 100 people came to attend the performance; men, women and children, some men bringing their guns. Children were in highest number. The men were sitting to the right, women and children to the left.



The school boy is now without his caring elder brother

The play was conducted in a very good way and presented in Toposa language.

After the final act the audience was asked how they were thinking the reactions of the various persons in the play would be, and how they themselves looked upon what had happened.

Generally raiding of cattle for marriage was not approved by any in this audience. Even if it was informed, that several of the men themselves earlier had participated in cattle raiding.

After the performance was ended the Theatre Group returned to the compound of HTPV Primary Health Care Clinic where they spent the night in tents. This was due to the fear of rain, as the road from the Cattle Kraal is very difficult to pass when wet.

The group arrived safely around 11.30 pm.

The boys' tents



Members of the Theatre Group have breakfast after a night in tents

To be able discuss important values, tradition and cultural questions in Toposa community is a challenge.

By using theatre HTPV find a positive and acceptable way to allow these questions to be discussed in public, and in an open and constructive way.

Another play will be presented before the end of August 2012, focusing on the challenges and importance of education, and also on the topic of use and misuse of alcohol.