

TITLE:

FORGING CULTURAL IDENTITY FROM THE “MARGINS”: AN INVESTIGATION INTO ITESO TRADITIONAL MUSIC AND PERFORMANCES (A MULTIMODAL THESIS)



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ACADEMIC YEAR

2020/2021

MA African Studies.

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CONTENTS

TITLE:	1
LINKS TO MY ITESO MULTIMODAL ARCHIVE	3
My Artist website;	3
My Organization website;	3
YouTube	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
ABSTRACT	5
CHAPTER 1	6
Introduction	6
Research Questions and Purpose	6
Background of my interest in this research	8
Justification of the Study	10
Who are the Iteso?	12
Iteso verbal and visual arts	13
CHAPTER 2	15
A theoretical and conceptual framework (Literature Review)	15
CHAPTER 3	19
Methodology: (Research Design)	19
CHAPTER 4	22
Video story of my findings	22
Corpus in my video story:	22
Snippet description of featured instruments	23
<i>Akogo, Adongo aka Akembe</i>	23
<i>ADUNGU</i>	24
<i>Amagarait- Aleejat</i>	24
<i>Ebilo, Aluti or Alamaru</i>	26
CHAPTER 5	27
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	27
APPENDIX	31
Theories Of Iteso Origin	31

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....35

LINKS TO MY ITESO MULTIMODAL ARCHIVE

As published in:

My Artist website; [HTTP://WWW.DANIELOKIROR.COM/RESEARCH/](http://www.danielokiror.com/research/)

My Organization website; [HTTP://BEATSOFHOPEAFRICA.ORG/RESEARCH-ARCHIVE/](http://beatsofhopeafrica.org/research-archive/)

YOUTUBE; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85ZV_yVVySQ&list=FLU5WwctGEoa3myrSyBw2vFQ

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge that this journey was only possible by the grace of God, for this research was done at a chaotic period of my life with a lot of transitions.

My teachers of Africa in practice Dr Adre Leliveld and Dr Yinka Akinyoade for their patience and encouragement during the course.

Another special thanks goes to Dr Mirjam de Bruijm for introducing me to ethnography and the concept of digital humanities. Also for an internship at voice 4 thought in Amsterdam where I sharpened my digital research skills.

I would also like to acknowledge my supervisor Dr Anachiara Raia for all her great input and positivity, moreover, speaking to me in Swahili made me feel at home during the entire process.

I acknowledge the *Emorimor* Iteso and all Iteso elders for their work of bringing the Iteso into one united unit as well as contributing to this knowledge; Chief Vance Omome, “*eyalama noi aisisianakin engo einono Iteso*”- for giving me input on Iteso culture.

Another special thanks to my partners of Akogo Festival especially Edulu Emmanuel and Polycarp Engole,” *Isap ka, apak wok ngesi na. aisa Ateker, ainyakakun epoget Iteso*”-my fellow Iteso boys, it is our turn to rekindle the Iteso nostalgia through their music.

Lastly, special thanks to my little Epoledeke Abio Okiror Eleja for being a sweet 8-year-old , a true inspiration during my complex learning period. I love you my daughter and want you to learn Iteso culture and speak Ateso.

ABSTRACT

In today's interconnected world, inclusive development necessitates every community to participate by contributing its unique knowledge in diversity. The rapidly advancing multi-media and technological environment gives each citizen with a mobile phone the capacity to record their experience and share it instantly with the world via the internet yet the gradually disappearing cultural identity of the Iteso remains under researched.

This multimodal work provides insight into Iteso cultural identity by archiving and analysing the Iteso traditional music and performance corpus, finding alternatives to ensure continuity of Iteso Knowledge in this error where the oral traditions are vanishing while urbanization and internationalization evict younger Iteso generations from their local villages of socialization with a promise of a better and modern life

The introduction gives you insights into my main questions, purpose, motivation for this as well as my justification for this research.

Chapter 3 is my methodology while in Chapter 4, I give a summary of the corpus in my video story plus some featured traditional instruments and a link to my findings in form of a video story in which I give answers to most of my research questions. I elaborate the question of Iteso identity in terms of origin, migration, basic characteristics, dressing, evolving, marriage customs, political structure, food and majoring on their music in relation to my own personal journey as an Iteso musician who left my village 20 years ago yet doing my best to keep in contact with my roots.

In chapter 5, I draw conclusions and recommendations including the reality that Iteso culture could disappear with the next 50 years, yet there is no need to worry or merely complaining about this erosion, instead, we should maximize technology to archive a hybrid form of orality making it available in all modern formats, the "the internet never forgets"!

Whereas a post-colonial renewal of Iteso cultural identity and knowledge is slowly happening as myself and my partners are establishing new avenues of reviving Iteso cultural music through Akogo Festival, Africa Safari Festival as well as my continuous archival research and music tours, I recommend more Afrocentric and citizen research to cover all aspects of the Iteso society. Also pertinent is a revival in the Iteso chieftaincy to drift away from English structuring and naming of Iteso a sacred organization that symbolizes Iteso pride, they should abandon the Iteso cultural union brand and adopt *Ateker Iteso* or concentrate on *Einos Iteso Kopitane*. A symbol of Iteso pride should be in Ateso not foreign languages.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND PURPOSE

This research aims at culminating the cultural identity of the Iteso by investigating their traditional music and performances from precolonial times to the year 2000, showing what these archives reflect, how to ensure continuity of this knowledge from one generation while their oral traditions fade as well as tracing the root of the Iteso cultural identity.

Practically archiving the traditional music and performances I recorded in from as early as 2017 and before, I created an Iteso archive on you tube then embedded it on my two websites.

After analysis, I then made a video story covering the questions of different Iteso musical genres, musical instruments, dressing, food, basic characteristics, origins, migration etc. in this paper I explain the playing techniques of featured instruments revealing how all these mirrors the Iteso cultural identity

I also elaborated my own paradox as a constantly travelling Iteso musician, explaining the challenges that drift me away from Iteso culture, how I personally bridge this gap, a case study that could apply to fellow Iteso youth caught up in a similar web. I also give historical facts on these genres and musical instruments as well as some key aspects of Iteso culture like marriage, values as well as exploring the relationship between tradition, modernity, and post-colonial dynamics.

I was guided by the propositions that the Iteso music genres have been threatened by modernity and forgotten by the local community from pre -colonial period to the year 2000 and on the flip side that, a post-colonial renaissance of traditional music and dance is taking place in nowadays Teso.

This research is a big step toward renewing Iteso cultural identity this topic generates a lot of interest and receives good reviews online that shows a renaissance is in the making.

My main research question was to establish the specific conventions of the Iteso music genres, instruments, and their ethnographic meaning; what instruments are used in Ajosi, *Ebuda*, *Amongin*, *Aigwonga- Ekaarie*, *Afriteso Sound* , *Ekembe (Akogo dance)*, *Etida*, *Akisom*, *Edonga*, *Ekira kira*, *Ekiria Kiria* etc and the role of their instruments; Emidiri, Ideteta, Isiman, *Abole*, *Alamaru-Ebilo*, *Arigirigi-ageregeret*, *Adeudeu-Adungu*, *Akembe-Adongo-Akogo*, *Amagarait/Aleejat*), *ayekeyeket* etc. as well as costumes like hides- *Emukule*, masks, flags , sticks,etc

I was curious how and with what materials these instruments were constructed, how they are played, tuned and what they reveal about the Iteso civilization.

This research also questioned which stylised usage of language in the Iteso performances can be found that are lacking in modern music genres, why cultures produce verbal arts like music and why traditional music says what otherwise could not be said and lastly, the theories that shade light on Iteso Hebrew roots as recorded in their oral traditions.

This work is structured in such a way that; chapter one gives you insights of my main questions and purpose, motivation for this research as well as my justification.

Chapter 2 introduces the concept of Iteso verbal and visual arts, as well as the conceptual and theoretical framework

Chapter 3 explains my methodology while in Chapter 4, a discussion of Iteso Origin theories as well as video story of my findings posted on my personal website www.danielokiror.com/research before I conclude and give my recommendations in chapter 5.

BACKGROUND OF MY INTEREST IN THIS RESEARCH

Growing up between the village and slums of Soroti Uganda, I have always been fascinated by African music and culture at large, In fact at the age of three years, I made my first song “Papa Ijaaka”. I later taught myself several instruments before affirming my skills when I enrolled to Africa institute of music for my college diploma in music in 2006.

I started this music study in second year as a Bachelor of Arts in social sciences student at Makerere University having enrolled in 2005. In 2010, I went on to do MA in project planning and management at University of Nairobi in order to consolidate my dreams and in the same year of 2010, officially became a multidisciplinary having established a double career that combines my social science skills with my music skills having establishing www.beatsofhopeafrica.org in Mombasa Kenya. With this organization I played my music internationally, hosted a home for street boys, did traditional music archiving with my own recording studio and operated a volunteer’s house for international interns interested in an African immersive experience or gap year.

While I did all these studies and work, I noticed an inconsistency between my own reality with that portrayed about Africa in mainstream media, is consistently represented negatively in the press. I saw complete misconception and mishandling of the African reality. That provoked me to think of ways to make the world know my own ‘truth’ about Africa perhaps through writing a book alongside my own music.

In the process of developing an exchange program and attempt at writing my autobiography, I discovered the MA African studies. I believed this course would enhance my process of finding answers to questions like, what is Africa capable of, how can Africa tell her own story as well as protect her reputation, showcasing what the world seldom knows about her etc.

On a personal level, my life in Kenya had taken a twist when I married a Dutch woman. This set me into a ‘triangular’ life in between Kenya, Uganda, and the Netherlands, with all its unforeseen complications that pulled me further from my traditional Iteso lifestyle.

The question of my identity became visible while I worked to integrate in my new environments of Kenya and the Netherlands while maintaining my Ugandan Iteso roots, it was very difficult to teach Ateso to my own child!

I witnessed gradually, the radicle me who never wanted to settle in Europe for whatever purpose, now getting lured into The Netherlands in the interest of my family life.

I now experienced firsthand how young Iteso generations are forced to 'abandon' their roots sometimes against their wish. Dealing with internal conflicts of a desire to belong to their culture VS the reality of family life, work, and other pull factors to new environments.

Although they hope to someday go back home, this sometimes never happens because the price to pay while integrating in these new environment is too high to relocate back home to restart a fresh when their effort has just begins bearing fruit, Sadly, while they are dealing with integration, their Iteso social structures are changing drastically changing when communicating back home becomes very expensive as well as death of their loved once /elders in their absence, they feel isolated and trapped to logically continue in their new environments instead of returning back home.

With this experience, taking on the topic of Iteso Cultural Identity through the lens of their traditional music came naturally, my own attempt to bridge this dilemma as well as further conceptualize my own archival work that I began with my studio, I wanted to go deeper into understanding the music I performed, dig into understanding the history and philosophy of my own people and hence share this better understanding with fellow Iteso and the world interested in this topic.

Yet, this process was not without impediments like the pandemic. The limited contact possible led to isolated learning!

Worse still, my fieldwork plans of travelling to Uganda to update my Iteso archive were no longer possible due to covid rules.

Also, my topic was quite wide for the purposes of a masters' thesis, I therefore had to narrow it down several times, Infact my failure to go back to the field in Uganda as planned helped me consolidate my research on the corpus I had already archived through my Akogo productions studio, supplementing it with Net-nography and online interviews.

It was also helpful that I was already well conversant with the topic of Iteso and their music. Becoming an auto ethnologist has been an enjoyable reflective process even getting into the bottom of origins of what really inspires my passion for Africa as well as the finding effective ways of facing societal disparities affecting Iteso and their cultural identity.

There is a lot of gaps to research on in this this topic of Iteso cultural identity. In the subject of Iteso music itself, I did not go deeper into transcribing and notating these traditional songs

in my archive, construction process of Iteso musical instruments, current popular trends, stylized use of language and influence of accents, the topic of Iteso Oral literature is large. I hope that I can proceed with a PHD topic related to Visual ethnomusicology of Ateker music, covering groups related to Iteso like the Karamojong, Nyangatom, and Turkana so as to get a deeper understanding of the Iteso cultural identity.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The oral traditions that embody the Iteso cultural identity are in jeopardy of extinction yet there is hardly any available epistemology on this topic, that is why this research is urgently needed.

Moreover, “The importance of studying oral Literatures is recognized by anthropological, linguistic, historical and literary research (Barber and Moraes Farias 1989, Boyer 1990, Finnegan 1992, Hamilton 1998, Hayward and Lewis 1996, Kashula 2001, Okpewho 1998). Mythical and epic narratives, folktales, heroic and love poems, funeral lamentations, ritual incantations as well as urban songs, popular theatre and many other oral genres are appreciated and studied as a cultural harvest of human and artistic worth addressing and giving form to fundamental questions and acquisitions of individuals and their societies. Nowadays, the study of African oral Literatures faces new research challenges due to expanding technologies of audio-video recording and their increasing popularization and mass-diffusion”¹. Even then, this new technological advancement has not yet benefitted the Iteso interests of sharing their authentic traditions, instead, in this new digital world, other well documented and popularized cultures are aggressively sweeping away those who are not visible in the media, it’s time for the Iteso to showcase themselves from their own perspective.

The artistic approach in my research utilizes modern recording technologies to facilitate accessibility of Iteso content hence countering the monopoly of foreign content in Iteso media industry.

Ruth Finnegan (1999) et al, says that “the audio-visual recording technology affects documentation as well as theory and methodology of research in African Oral Literature and the way this knowledge is taught in an academic setting. Scholars and students have become

¹ (Beck and Wittmann 2004, Ricard and Veit-Wild 2005)

aware that collecting and analyzing printed transcriptions and translations only gives a faint portrait of oral poems and tales and their literary and social functions in Africa".²

For example, in "studying a live pop-concert or the written text of the songs: the pop-concert is a 'performance', i.e., an artistic, cultural and social event that constructs meanings and networks including but also going beyond the written text. What get lost in the written text are the intonation and the gestuality along with the eventual musical accompaniment, the interactions between performer and public, the clothing and scenography, and the context and politics of the performance"³, a gap which this research wants to cover.

Furthermore, "the necessity of new forms of documentation and research is strengthened by the changing conditions of oral production in the last decade, given by the increasing number of African "artists of the word" – storytellers, singers etc. – that make use of new media technologies to create and spread their songs and poems. These changes reopen questions about definition, interpretation, and research methodology in the field of orality and 'popular cultures' in Africa"⁴

"Currently, documentation and investigation of African oral genres are largely based on material accessible in written form (Coulet Western 1975; Baumgardt and Bounfour 2000, Görög-Karady 1981; Westley 1991), while only a handful of experimental projects offer a few examples of new technological documentation and research methodologies"⁵ This research pioneers the transfer of Iteso oral skills into new multimodal-mixed media that will outlast the human mediums of oral traditions.

For an aural musician and student like me, the use of audio-visual ethnology is an intriguing way of engaging the world with my topic. I enjoy interpreting the world through music or arts in general other than reading books. Visual ethnology is somewhat self-explanatory to my viewers especially my fellow oral Iteso

since it encourages them to use their sense of hearing and sight. I think that I have finally found a solution to the common joke that if you want to hide something from an African, you should put it in a book!

As a creative, I am experimental. I like trying out one other way of doing things, I have a consistent urge to see things improve. Daniela Vavrova, D. (2014) quotes Catherine Russel

² (Finnegan 1992, Okpewho 1992, Schipper 1990).

³ (Barber 1997, Cosentino 1987, Furniss 1996, Ricard and Veit-Wild 2005).

⁴ (Barber 1997, Cosentino 1987, Furniss 1996, Ricard and Veit-Wild 2005).

⁵ (Furniss 2006, Merolla's ongoing project 2006).

(1999;14) saying that “[e]thnography may even be considered an experimental practice in which aesthetics and cultural theory are combined in a constantly evolving formal combination”. My interactive multimodal approach is ‘Experimental ethnography’ in practice.

“While of course a video camera cannot record touch, taste, or smell as it does sound and image”, says Sarah Pink, “it nevertheless has potential to represent the multisensoriality of the research encounter” (2011: 608). According to *Observational Cinema*, by Grimshaw and Ravetz, “visual anthropology has begun to emerge as the critical site for a convergence of different perspectives around the visual” (2009: xii). They define observational cinema as a fundamentally phenomenological enterprise and see observational filmmaking as a mode of anthropological inquiry where the skill and sensibility of the filmmaker challenges new expressions of knowledge production (Grimshaw and Ravetz 2009: 130-136).

I could go on and on. I am impatiently waiting for a coming future where the marginalized ‘unknown, unheard’ Iteso Oral traditions are given a voice they deserve, and I hope I will trigger a new hunger for further research in this area by fellow Iteso academicians.

This research showcases me, the Iteso traditional music and performances as a true portrait and embodiment of the Iteso cultural identity.

WHO ARE THE ITESO?

At the heart of the Iteso think tank is the creeping grass (Star grass) philosophy “Emuria Koliai-Let the seed grow” which espouses their aspiration to grow, conquer, and enlarge their influence and values just as the star grass firmly hooks its tendrils to the ground while it decisively takes territory. When they make these chants, they are motivating each other to stick to their identity and roots while they advance. It also signifies the important concept of multiplication to occupy the world among the Iteso as the most popular Iteso song by Papa Atuude; Emaali⁶ signifies that children are a source of wealth. Everything is done in reverence to their omnipotent God, papa Elo’ima also referred to as Ng’akuj.

By the time of Ugandan independence in 1962, the Iteso formed the second largest ethnic group after the Baganda, however, current trends that call for further research show that they are the 5th largest ethnic group in Uganda, they extend to Kenya as well. Popular records show that they migrated from the area of Gulf of Aden, specifically the Djibouti area **via** Abyssinia where they were part of the larger group- IKatunga, a Habesham group whose

⁶ Papa Atuude (2020), Emmanuel Edulu <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQ-kTQIU1es>

ancestors later established the Abyssinian and Solomonian dynasties of Ethiopia. Motivated by their pastoral and warrior lifestyles and considered to be the wondering descendants of the original Jews, they constantly moved southwards. They interacted with Nilotic tribes like the Shiluk, Luo, Nuer, Dinka etc, soon regrouping into a cluster known as Ateker which included the Iteso themselves, Karimojong, Turkana, Jie, Pokot, Dodoth, Lango, Kumam and kakwa, who are by their literal definition, *Ateker* meant a group of people speaking similar dialects. Considered to be warm hearted with a dark, tall and handsome-black beauty, “the Iteso word ‘yoga’, means many things; ‘Good morning’, Goodnight, ‘How are you’, ‘Thank you’, Well done!’ and all you need to reply is Yoga”⁷.

Today the Iteso live in Uganda and Kenya in the districts of Soroti, Katakwi, Amuria, Kaberemaido, Ngora, Kumi, Palisa, Bukedia, Tororo, Malaba, Busia, and Bungoma where they all speak the same language -Ateso only distinguished by different accents influenced by their interactions with their neighbours mainly the Bantu and Luo.

ITESO VERBAL AND VISUAL ARTS

Visual and verbal expression is a daily part of the Iteso lifestyle partly demonstrated by the tonality of their language. For a word such as ‘akituk’ which means mouth, changing its tune will effectively change its meaning to; cows, tying something, or collecting things together. I view Iteso lifestyle as a nonstop musical performance which constantly evolves and generates new meaning and reality. My thinking is supported by Ngugi wa Thiong’o: when he says, “much of our relation to reality is negotiated through performance.” (2007:4).

By definition, the concept of “Oral traditions - also referred to as oral literature (or orature) – the first and widespread mode of human communications, is a dynamic and highly diverse oral-aural medium for evolving, storing and transmitting knowledge, art, and ideas. It typically contrasts literacy which it can and does interact with in myriads of ways, and also with literature, which it dwarfs in size, diversity, and social function”⁸

“Oral literature, then, consists of the songs and stories, and other sayings, that people have heard and listened to, sung and told, without any intervention of writing. The creator or transmitter did not write the song or the story but sang or told it; the receiver did not read

⁷Artiste Daniel Okiror (2016), Citizen TV Kenya <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZDMHbkSPVk>

⁸ Foley, John Miles. "Oral tradition". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 6 Jan. 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/oral-tradition>. Accessed 21 February 2021. See also: Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o (2007) *Notes towards a Performance Theory of Orature*, *Performance Research*, 12:3, 4-7, DOI: 10.1080/13528160701771253

the song or story but heard it. These stories and songs are, therefore, not only oral but also aural; they are not only told, but they are also heard.”⁹ That’s why I first recorded and created an archive of Iteso music and performances that now forms a basis of my analysis.

In this research thesis I define music as a combination of aesthetic elements such as rhythm, melody, timbre, sound, lyrics to communicate the emotion and intentions of the performer who may perform a history account, a celebration (i.e., wedding), praise poem, an elegy (i.e., funerals) etc. The aesthetic power of music and literature is made possible through tools such as clapping of hands, whistling, speech, and precise musical instruments, such as *adeudeu*, *akogo* etc. However, a full understanding of Iteso music would be incomplete if not involving also the non-verbal communication shaped by facial and body gestures: Dance is indeed the use of body movements to forge and complement the message in the music and satisfy the uniqueness of that moment.

Therefore, when I talk about the Iteso oral traditions of music and dance, I mean the knowledge of/about this music and dance that was transferred by word of mouth, including the musical instruments used, artifacts, purpose of this knowledge and its significance to the performers and the audience of different generations. I will hence make use of the term of performance as defined by Schechner and Appel: “A performance is a dialectic of “flow”, that is, spontaneous movement in which action and awareness are one, and “reflexivity” in which the central meanings, values and goals of a culture are seen “in action”, as they explain and shape behavior.” (cited after Schechner and Appel 1990:1).

⁹ Albert Bartes Lord (1995) http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.ebook:CHS_LordA.The_Singer_Resumes_the_Tale.1995.

CHAPTER 2

A THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK (LITERATURE REVIEW)

In this research, I deliberately stick to Afrocentric thinking in my methodology as an Iteso musician myself who has adequately emerged into this culture both locally and in the diaspora. The fact that I speak and perform in Ateso allows clarity since I can interpret Ateso quite well, eliminating the likelihoods of distortion of knowledge which normally arises from translation errors. Besides, it is important that Africans should become their own experts, owners of their narratives and destiny based on their own scientific research.

“In the predominantly Western-oriented academic circles and scientific investigations, the African voice is either side-lined or suppressed because indigenous knowledge and methods are often ignored or not taken seriously. To be meaningful and empowering, African-based research must, of necessity, include African thought and ideas from inception through completion to the implementation of policies arising from the research. In this way the work is both empowering and meaningful for context-specific lasting impact”.¹⁰

I have observed that the western media, Education institutions and multilateral organizations have propagated a negative perception of Africa as a continent full of problems for which it depends on the western world to find solutions. This attitude often negatively impacts western driven research processes and outcomes.

Moreover, most foreign researchers return home and publish expensive books which are not accessible to the community researched, even worse in the case of oral communities like Teso where people prefer orality to reading, my research solves this by delivering a multimodal thesis that combines, text with digital audio-visual archives uploaded on YouTube where the digitally capable Iteso can watch and review, but I also compiled an audio visual CD made available to all the participants in my study, office of the Emorimor papa Iteso (Chieftaincy of the Iteso) and the public on demand.

“The concept of oral literature is unfamiliar one to most people brought up in cultures which, like those of Europe, lay stress on the idea of literacy and written tradition. In the popular

¹⁰ (Owusu-Ansah, F.E. & Mji, G., 2013, ‘African indigenous knowledge and research’, *African Journal of Disability* 2(1), Art. #30 5 pages. <http://dxS.doi.org/10.4102/ajod.v2i1.30>)

view, it seems to convey on one hand the idea of mystery and on the other hand that of crude and artistically underdeveloped formulations. In fact, none of them is valid...There is no mystery about the first and most basic characteristic of oral literature-even though it is constantly overlooked in collections and analyses. This is the significance of the actual performance. Oral literature is dependent on the performer who formulates it in words on a specific occasion-there is no other way it can be realised as a literary product".¹¹

According to Karin Barber, 1991 in her book, *I could speak until tomorrow*, In Yoruba Culture oriki, or oral praise poetry is a major part of both traditional performance and daily life, and as such reflects social change and structure both past and present. This argument is supported by Ruth Finnegan (2012 page 242) quotes Osadebay while talking about the, "wealth of culture and fine feelings which find expressions in our music and poetry; We sing when we fight, we sing when we work, we sing when we love, we sing when we hate, and we sing when a child is born, we sing when death takes a toll".¹²

I discovered that indeed "identities tend to be fluid, unstable and relative since it is constructed by both the observer and the observed"¹³...further, "identity ...represents a society constantly redefining itself, through myth and tradition, language and dress, names and genealogy in response to the demands of the observer". This can therefore be turned into advancement of the Iteso cultural identity when this transformation is re-directed methodologically instead of leaving it to fate, this is what I intended to trigger with this research.

Allen, J. de V. Allen. (1981a) *Ngoma: Music and Dance*", (241) *The Customs of the Swahili People* tells us that to a very large extent, dances encapsulate that society and its culture; they form its paradigm, its skeleton and a good deal of its flesh as well. By studying the Iteso dance genres we will have understood, developed, and advanced the nostalgia of its original authors into a stable Iteso cultural identity.

But again, in which way do musicians declare a new genre of music, what determines this, is it just the playing technique, the scales of an instrument or the skill of the performer? This process explains a lot how the cultural transformation takes place. According to Barber K, *Anthropology of texts, persons and publics* "the formation of genres occurs in the zone of addressivity constituted by the mutual orientation of the text to the audience and the

¹¹ **Ruth Finnegan 2012(page 242)**

¹² *Ruth Finnegan 2012 (page 242)*

¹³ Jan Lindström (2019), *Muted Memories: Heritage-Making, Bagamoyo, and the East African Caravan Trade* (page 258), He also quotes mark Horton and John Middleton

audience to the text. These new forms of address are key to new genres. New genres take shape as composers or writers of text convoke new audiences (or audiences in new ways. At the same time, the people out there bring new expectations to bear on to texts, responding in new ways. Emergent genres and emergent constituencies come into being in response to each other.”¹⁴This literally means that cultural transformation becomes eminent when there are popular events that overtake the daily life of the population. This also shows how foreign cultures that are highly promoted in the media shape the Iteso cultural identity and equally informs us of the need to generate new popular Iteso narratives and push them through the same media that foreign cultures reach us, meaning, there is a deliberate need to promote Iteso cultural heritage.

The process in which the musical instruments were developed technically shows Iteso ancestors were highly technical and therefore the new Iteso generations merely need to rethink and pick up innovation from where their forefathers stopped instead of sitting and waiting for foreign trends.

My parents used a record player to play music, while I grew up dancing to music on a cassette tape, and by the time I began recording myself, I could only store my data in a CD before social media has taken over. The world is on a move, the Iteso should therefore also constantly develop their own artifacts and not just see their culture as an old and outdated museum. From the point of this research we should restore and use some of the lost materials like musical instruments which have been forgotten or rarely used e.g., Aluti, Amagarait,-Aleejaat, Akadongo-Akogo, adeudeu,adungu, ageregeret-Arigrigi, ayekeyeken, alamaru, Auleru, isiman, atenus, abole, epirigi, arupepe, etc.

According to; G.W.Z Senoga (1981) “the traditional music instruments fall into four major the categories.”¹⁵

- Chordophones which are played by vibrating a string to form sound.
- Aerophones-Instruments that permit a column of air to vibrate within themselves.
- Idiophones, self-sounding (Body vibrating to form sound)
- Membranophones, instruments with membranes vibrating to form sound”.

¹⁴ [Barber, Karin - The Antropology of Texts, Persons and Publics - 5 Audiences and publics \(1\).pdf](#)

¹⁵ [Professor senoga \(1981\)Folk Music of Kenya - George W. Senoga-Zake - Google Books,](#)

This research analyses and categorizes Iteso musical instruments in this category and emphasises the importance of keeping this memory using modern archival tools for the future generations to access them as well.

Karl Mannheim has written about 'fresh contact' arguing that "there is a certain distance in how each new generation approaches and assimilates shared cultural material. This means that there can be loss of cultural material or practices but also adoption of others. As Mannheim explains, generational change makes a fresh selection possible, it facilitates a re-evaluation of our inventory when it becomes necessary because it is no longer useful and 'covets that which has not yet been won' (1972: 294)." ¹⁶

It is impossible to talk about Oral traditional memory without emphasising the role that the language plays, preserving Ateso language is they key in preserving the Iteso cultural identity.

African scholars must break new ground by emulating bold writers like, Ngugi Wathiongo. In his book, *decolonizing the mind*, he decries the protection of African values and languages since foreign languages like English have been used to control discourse in the continent. It is popularly known that he who controls your language of discourse controls your reality, therefore, Africa cannot act upon her own destiny and creatively develop her values when she must interpret everything from an adulterated speech of a foreign language.

¹⁶ Mannheim, K. (1972) *The Problem of Generations in Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* pp: 276-320. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul
As already mentioned,

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY: (RESEARCH DESIGN)

My methodology is based on an archival collection which I conducted between 2017 and 2018 through my own organization <http://beatsofhopeafrica.org/music-festival/> plus my own auto-ethnomusicological contribution as an Iteso musician, outsourced data from my previous Television appearances, also from other emerging Iteso digital platforms, and some online interviews I managed to acquire in the corona context.

The corpus is made of 12 different genres with e musical instruments together. Note that this archive is not exhaustive of all Iteso musical genres especially those from Kenya since my travels were impacted by travel Covid travel bans.

The archiving part of this research has been ongoing since 2017. I partner with a team of colleagues on the ground in Uganda to organize Akogo Festival a grassroots-based festival that is reviving traditional music and performances nostalgia in over 10 districts of the Iteso (an area equal por larger than the size of the Netherlands). These annual festivals start from the village level where the best teams get featured in district level and if they make it to our National Festival in the Capital, Kampala, my goal is to collaborate this best groups, offering training, a recording deal, gigs and a tour with the possibility of featuring in our Netherlands based Africa Safari Festival.

This archive I analysed features the best groups we chose after our inaugural Akogo Festival of 2017.

At the time when I archived this material, I was purely focused on preserving the music since I saw that it is disappearing. Having joined Leiden University, I realized I had an opportunity to conceptualize the archival research I had been doing.

Now that I am academically stimulated, my plan is to continue conducting this research expanding it to Ateker cluster of which Iteso are just a small unit of Ateker.

I planned a 15-day trip to Uganda to get a new perspective with my new research tools, but this could not work out due to covid rules,

I was lucky to get some informants via WhatsApp, and thanks to the fact that I was already highly knowledgeable on this topic being an Iteso musician myself.

A multidisciplinary, multimodal methodology came in naturally based on my social science, project planning/management and music academic background and work. This influenced the way I solved problems that were limiting my extra data access.

On personal level, being a passionate creative full of emotion, audio visual ethnology inspired me in using my hearing and seeing senses to generate meaning in the raw content I had archived.

A good combination of different genres of ethnology especially auto-ethnomusicology, chareo-ethnology, audio-visual ethnology, with archival, oral literature and media studies has been used in this research.

Being a multimodal thesis, a link is provided in chapter 4 of both my findings and an inventory of the Iteso music traditions which I have archived online.

Archival research is very important because “He who controls the past controls the future; He who controls the present controls the past”! This archival theory by George Orwell (1984) propels me in this journey.

More concretely, I did the following tasks to achieve this thesis:

- I made and archive on YouTube and linked it to my personal and organizational websites using additional skills acquired from my research traineeship conducted at voice for thought in Amsterdam.

- I then Conducted online interviews with some elders and informants

- I then analysed the following Iteso music traditions as my major case studies: Ajosi, *Etida*, *Ekembe (Akogo atesot, ekata, Akembe-band)* *Adeudeu-*, my own *Afriteso (Afrateker Sound)*, , *Akisuk*, *Ebuda*, *Amongin*, *Ekira kira*, *Ekiry kirya*,

- I also analysed different music instruments i.e., *Aluti (Ebilo)*, *Amagarait-Aleejaat*, *Adongo-Akogo*, *Arigirigi*, *Adeudeu*, *Adungu*) which belong to four main categories (chordophones, aerophones-instruments, idiophones, membranophones)

- -I then made a music story and descriptive clips/podcasts and text, summing up with a multimodal thesis that I partly published on my personal website
- Crowning it up with publishing this methodological paper

CHAPTER 4

VIDEO STORY OF MY FINDINGS

As published in my websites:

My artist website: <http://www.danielokiror.com/research/>

My organization website: <http://beatsofhopeafrica.org/research-archive/>

YouTube;

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85ZV_yVVySQ&list=FLU5WwctGEoa3myrSyBw2vFQ

Please click on the links above to watch my thesis and as well enjoy the raw data of my archive

CORPUS IN MY VIDEO STORY:

- A zoom into my location and context of research
- My personal struggles with maintaining my Iteso cultural identity
- Evolution of Iteso cultural identity
- Origins of the Iteso
- How to greet in Ateso
- Basic characteristics of the Iteso
- Dressing styles
- Food
- Marriage customs
- Iteso political structure
- Characteristics of the Iteso music
- Different Iteso musical genres, instruments and how they reveal Iteso identity
- 1-Ajosi music
- 2-Ebuda music
- 3-Etida music
- 4-Ekiria-Kiria dance
- 5-Ekira Kira music
- 6-Akisuk music
- 7-Adeudeu music and instrument
- 8-Adungu music and instrument

9-Arigrigi music and instrument

10-Ebilo music and instrument

11-Akogo music and instrument

12-Afriteso/Afrateker Sound and instruments

SNIPPET DESCRIPTION OF FEATURED INSTRUMENTS

AKOGO, ADONGO AKA AKEMBE

I describe Akogo as a long distance instrument due to its multi-rhythmic upbeat sound that motivated youth when they were taking a long trip on foot to a faraway market or grazing pastures, it only came to be referred to as *Akogo* in the early 1950s when Iteso youth went to work in Kakira sugar plantations in Jinja where they got inspired by Congolese style of playing it hence developing a new sound now popularly known as *Akogo* music, dance and instrument.

BUILDING MATERIALS

It's made of a wooden triangular /rectangular shaped box in which metallic keys made from flattened bicycle spokes are fitted to this box with a wire tying these spokes between a wooden bridge at the peak of the box with a metal bridge below the wooden one.



A hole is pitched to the box to resonate sound.

TUNING

It adapts a pentatonic scale with doubled notes such that as you pluck with your right hand from the middle low keys to right higher keys you produce the melody

L .D .M.S. R .L

and with your left hand, from the lowest notes to the highest leftwards.

S . R . L .D .M. S

PLAYING TECHNIQUES

Is typically by playing arpeggiated low and high octave of each note after note to build pentatonic motifs and musical forms such that while your righthand plays the lower notes, the left-hand plays an octave higher and vice versa!

ADUNGU

Adungu is a modern version of the Iteso Adeudeu aka bow harp. A bow or boat shaped neck is fitted in a wooden box covered with a goat or cow skin with a wooden bridge fitted in the middle of the wooden box to hold nine nylon strings which are connected to the bow fitted with wooden tuning pegs. A resonating hole is pitched in the box to let out sound.

Whereas atypical *Adungu* plays Iteso songs in major songs, it's diatonic tuning makes it fit typically to a normal pop band that is why this instrument was easily accepted in catholic church than the pentatonic that the missionaries accused that they represented idol worship! The diatonic notes start from high to low as you play from close to the bow to your chest! In the form

d.t.l.s.f.m.r.D.S



Being diatonic, you can therefore create typical diatonic triads firstly; **-D.B.S.d** where your righthand thumb plays **D**. Second righthand figure **M** and the left-hand thumb **s** and the left hand second figure plays the higher **d**
Triad four; D.f.l.d, the Right-hand

thumb stays on D while second righthand finger plays f, left hand thumb l while second left hand finger plays the higher d

Lastly, the fifth triad; S.R.s.t where your right-hand thumb plays **S**, second righthand figure plays **R**, left hand thumb plays **s** and second finger of left-hand plays **t**.

AMAGARAIT- ALEJAT

This instrument is almost in extinction, apart from its best fit Iteso sound, not much is recorded about this instrument. Infact it is only musician Daniel Okiror who has re-introduced it to the Iteso collection having interacted with the Baganda- *entogoli* and Luo -*Nyatiti* versions to establish the 'tricks' around it.

It is typically made of a guard or a bowel shaped wood curving covered with cow skin and a resonating hole. 2 sticks which are connected to the resonating box spread outwards like cow horns connected to each other by a wooden pallet which is fitted with tuners.

The 8 nylon strings are then connected from the box to tuning pallet supported by a bridge made of bamboo sticks which make a pecking percussive sound when the strings are plucked.

This is a typical pentatonic instrument with a unique arrangement of notes.

Out of these 8 notes the middle upper note as you are holding the instrument with the skin surface towards your stomach is (**E**) while opposite note is an octave higher(**e**)

The left hand plays the upper keys while the right hand plays the keys below.

From the **e** downwards you add **d**, **b**, and **a**

(Solofa; l.s.m.r)

while from the upper E upwards, you add G, A, B



(The Solofa notation is L.D.R.M)

Typically fitted solfa (M.R.D.L.l.s.m.r.)

PLAYING TECHNIQUE

The first trick into playing *aleejat* is to identify the 2 pairs of similar notes that have been doubled, , pluck the (**E**) with your middle interchangeably thumbing (**M**) followed by (**m**) with the middle right figure

Now thumb the **e** with your righthand, followed by **a** with your second figure then **G** with your middle left figure

Repeat the first motif i.e., pluck the (**E**) with your middle interchangeably thumbing (**M**) followed by (**m**) with the middle right figure then add this new motif **s** with your middle right and figure, (**R**) **with** your left hand the complete by thumbing (**I**) with your right hand.

Basically, an easy way to get the rhythmic and chord progression is to pluck a combination of left-hand notes with righthand notes to a compony a specific Iteso tune. However, you can interpret it with your own mindset but that seizes to be Iteso music but a new hybrid form

though you are using Iteso instrument. Iteso language dictates melody and rhythm since it's a tonal language.

EBILO, ALUTI OR ALAMARU



This major pentatonic flute is made typically from a bamboo stem. (abole) though most Iteso flutes are made from 1.5 electric wiring pipes. My study of the plastic flute made by Gabriel Odeke of Odokochan jazz band in Ngora district revealed that the flute was

The plastic flute was 23 cm by 1.5 width. The distance between the mouth and the first hole is 11.7 cm while the distance from the last end of the flute to the last hole is 3.6 cm. There were four holes with 1 cm distance from each.

The all-closed note of the pipe is the ***d***
opening the last hole ***4*** closer to the end of the flute is the note ***r***

opening the 3rd hole with the 4th hole is ***M***

opening these, 4th, 3rd and 2nd hole is ***f***

and two holes with the first hole closer to the mouth is the ***S***

I observed that the tuning was based on part 3 notes of the major pentatonic scale, but it had an ***f*** note which makes it half diatonic so that you can play the ***diatonic triad chord 1- D.M.S*** and by closing these opened notes above one after the other from ***D.R.M.s.r.m.d*** ignoring the ***f***, you generate a major pentatonic scale which is popular in *Akogo* music.

Other Instruments require further research.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Firstly, since the authentic Iteso instruments which are traced back to the earliest civilization in the world are far older than modern instruments like guitar, Iteso ancestors should be seen as innovators who participated as authors of the global civilization. Their Iron smelting skills can be traced to the city of Meroe in the fertile crescent the so-called origin of civilization which allowed them to build varying parts of their musical instruments like; *Ikusia* (metallic keys of the *akogo*) and *Isiman* (metallic rattles).

Iteso young generations should advance the technologies initiated by their forefathers instead of abandoning them as backward and adopting those innovated by others.

A renaissance is now taking place but slowly. With my colleagues in Uganda, we are reviving the *Ekembe* (festival) nostalgia through Akogo festival which is awakening Teso to the need of developing their way of life, besides my efforts as early as 2006 when I started my music career and a Help Teso Initiative with the then popular Iteso gospel singer the late Eglas Dikan.

Again Personally, while performing internationally, I made sure my own Iteso instruments are all electronically amplified and equipped with modern tuning knobs other than the old wooden pegs that used to easily change pitch on stage while am performing. In a tour of a cold country like the Netherlands, tuning a freezing cold *Aleejat* would hurt my fingers so I had to find a solution.

I still have many innovative ideas of creating new multi-key-purpose *adeudeu* While popularizing my own re-invention of Iteso lyre *Amagarait* which I renamed after my other name, my father's name *Eleja*(dancer), I called it *Aleejat*.

Indeed, as revealed in my video story, Iteso have diverse musical genres and instruments which reveal Iteso history as well as philosophy in a unique way.

The way Iteso music is performed says a lot about their society; the communal life, the upbeat dancing, tonal, and rhythmic energy, the *poetic* and ***stylized use language*** (indirect words) to hide difficult subjects which makes sacred words lighter as a sign of politeness and respect.

For example, Iteso communal life meant that most of the instruments and genres were typically played in a group of 12 to 20 people in the band. And the festivals attracted several members of the community for a vigorous dance party together with drinking of *Ajon* (Millet brew)

The drinking itself involves many elders sitting around the *amot ajon*/pot. Each one putting a tube (*epii*) inside the same pot, sharing this tube with more than 5 people was acceptable since they trusted each other creating a strong cultural bond among them. During this

ematet/drinking and dancing spree, as people had fun and time to talk, new cultural trends and words took shape, like the new Ateso word *Ejuge* or “Kill me quick” its version in English emerged in my village to mean pure alcohol.

Similarly, I witnessed a trading centre emerge with the name *Abil Ikoku*, literally meaning, (She broke the child), coined and established by one of my grandfathers, Ocul. While in the *Akiba* drinking joints, a story emerged of a mature woman who convinced a young boy to become her boyfriend, the story says that the old woman carried the boy to her home since he was too drunk, unfortunately, the road across the river Omunyir was very slippery, she threw him down which broke his hand.

Iteso musicians then picked up such funny stories and words to create songs to ridicule, educate or praise their subjects etc. As already mentioned, they could sing about sensitive topics indirectly as a sign of courtesy.

In another example, there were some popular songs I was not allowed to sing as a child, for example, it was just recently when I understood the meaning in the Langi dialectic song “*Daktari Omiro*”, a song about an a popular Lango doctor who treats his patients while standing.

This indirectness was to affirm their cultural identity of respecting elders while being role models to their children by decoding their adult messages to appropriate audience, this is lacking in modern music where explicit words and content are used openly.

Today, the internet environment has removed most of the barriers set by Iteso oral traditions to prevent youth from accessing appropriate adult information. The Iteso cultural Identity of decent and ethical language is threatened and therefore needs to be re-enforced.

The constant transformation and adaptability of the Iteso to foreign cultures has been a major worry that threatens the extinction of their cultural identity however, there is no more need of fearing to lose these values if we take steps to use new audio visual ethnological and multimodal tools to archive oral traditions for the future generation to learn from.

The Iteso values which ethically resemble Biblical values may just be the same sides of this coin considering the theories and oral traditions that declare Iteso as part of the Biblical Hebrews as evidenced by my video story and appendix.

It is also important that new Iteso role models rise to inspire a progressive development or lifestyle within the Iteso context showcasing that it’s not only foreign things that are modern, but there are also modern ideas capable of rising from Teso.

By fusing my Iteso instruments with modern instruments in my music, I intend to make the global community easily relate with Iteso music and I hope I put Iteso music to the international map as well as inspiring fellow Iteso artists who are performing nonindigenous genres to re-invent their craft with the Iteso advancement context in mind.

The chieftaincy of the Iteso has a role to inculcate Iteso pride through organizing nostalgic festivals instead of too much English speeches in Iteso conferences hosted in big Hotels. They should support our effort to revive these festivals to the local people.

Also, they should abolish the brand Iteso cultural union that sounds colonial and portrays loss of authenticity instead they should adopt purely Ateso name like Ateker *Iteso* that provokes a sense of belonging to the Iteso roots or at least promote their translation, *Einos Iteso Kopitane*.

To overcome negative publicity, use new media to popularize alternative positive facts about the Iteso culture and African culture at large and promote Iteso values in school curriculums.

Basically, many African scholars and experts should rise, wake up and take on the mantle of showcasing the true African reality and demand all to respect it by distinction of its relevance to academia. This calls for a lot of boldness like that of, Ngugi Wathiongo in his decolonizing the mind where he decries how the western languages are being used to control the continent. The south African firebrand Julius Malema reiterated this in his address to the Pan African parliament in June 2021, when he expressed his frustration on how the Pan African parliament meant to advance the interests of Africa is deeply divided between Anglophone and francophone African countries. "The west African countries think they are French" he said, they even made silly jokes of taking the sitting of the Pan African parliament to France!

Albeit, unless Africans rise to tell their own stories and defend their own interest as one nation like china, or Russia, or Europe, greed will continue conquering Africa forever.

When Africans become their own scholars, the distortion of their history as foreign patenting of African knowledge will stop. We should not wait for foreigners to come and tell us who we are or what is good for us.

Personally, I have determined to make it part of my mission to work and speak for Africa instead of complaining about Africa and its problems. Of course, It is illogical to see that the richest continent is literally on her knees begging for help from the same places which contribute to her poverty in the first place, we should not sit and do nothing, do the little you can.

Doing our own research and implementing our remedies is in the spirit of inclusive and sustainable development. These kinds of local projects are realistic in helping us solve our own problems that foreign concepts that are not designed for us

Iteso should unite and support their own innovators like Professor Patrick Ogwang, having created a malaria herbal cure as well as Jena DS Xtra used to treat, rhinitis, Sore sthroat, dry cough plus an HIV supplement Artemune cough has now helped Ugandans combat Covid 19 with his invention Covidex.

We cannot sit and wait for donors to come to our rescue all the time, imagine, in a pandemic like covid 19, everyone is justified to save their own people first, how will Iteso and Africans generally wish to watch and die while waiting for solutions from abroad. We must be willing to pay the price for advancement of our own destiny, no one will truly do that for us unless it fits in their own ambition which normally is to be the priority.

The concerted effort to maintain a client-saviour Africa VS western/Chinese relation will stop once Africans rise to demand that enough is enough, we have what it takes to pursue our own destiny our own way, if we suffer, we suffer and again if we suffer, it is the price we pay for our future generations to enjoy equal status and recognition of their unique contribution in the increasingly digitized interconnected world.

APPENDIX

THEORIES OF ITESO ORIGIN

Complex as this topic may seem, according to Oral traditions, Iteso are part of Israel just like their counterparts the Igbo of Nigeria. As an inquisitive *Etesot*, there was often some identity gap between my missionary taught Christian theology and the Oral traditions, whereas the former taught that I descended from Egyptian a nation that oppressed Hebrews in the days of Pharaohs, the latter said I was Hebrew myself who settled in Uganda via Djibouti and Abyssinia. I refer you to my video grasp the oral traditions captured there and read an article by Ssalongo Jaffar Amin Son of the former president of Uganda Idi Dada,¹⁷

Personally, it occurred in November 2016, in Nieuwegein, The Netherlands (stitching Echo) when the Dutch prophet Rinke Van der Meer declared me (Daniel Okiror) a Hebrew descendant, linking this to my nature of constant wondering across destinations.

Since then, I began critically thinking about the Oral traditions I had been informally taught. For my research topic of forging cultural identity of the Iteso from the 'margins' it became inevitable to visit these claims.

My long research discovered the following possible paths to Iteso Jewish roots.

Firstly, one account states that the Iteso ancestors were **Habesham and Hama-Semitic people** perhaps of the tribe of Dan, one of the 10 lost tribes of Israel. When the Northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.E. Ten of the twelve tribes of Israel were exiled and assimilated into "oblivion" ... "Eldad ha-Dani, a 9th century Jewish traveller and philologist soon reported locating his fellow tribe of Dan beyond the rivers of Abyssinia "(Nile), far beyond the Sabaton river, having together with Naphtali, Asher, and Gad (Eri-Igbo), established a Jewish kingdom inside Kush." This Kingdom existed in various forms and segments as Aksum/Axum, Abyssinia, Saba (Sheba), Ethiopia, from 980 B.C. until September 1974 when Emperor Haile Selassie was overthrown by, Mengistu Haile Mariam, Marxist "Derg" whereas the Iteso ancestors went southwards towards East Africa, descendants of Eri fifth son of Gad, the Igbo went westwards towards Nigeria.

Furthermore, **the Solomonic theory** connects the Iteso to king Solomon through Makeda the queen of Sheba. It is said that having heard about the wisdom of King Solomon, Queen

¹⁷ Ssalongo Jaffar Amin 2019) <iframe <https://www.facebook.com/bashir.haroun.94/posts/1425691374255361>

Makeda of Sheba went on a curiosity adventure to the mainland Israel where Solomon reigned as king, this adventure was rewarded by a pregnancy of her Son Menelik 1 who inherited her throne. It is said that at 22 years, Menelik1 visited his father, having been offered the throne of Israel, he turned it down but, on his journey, back, his loyalists stole and rewarded him with the Biblical ark of the covenant. This ark is believed to be in the church of Maria of Axium to this very day. Perhaps this partly explains why Ethiopia was never colonized and, note that the word Axum sounds like Akisim a village in current day Teso.

The third theory has it that **the Biblical Joseph married a black Egyptian woman** whose descendants instead of going with Moses to Canaan chose to take a southern route into the hinterland of Africa from the area of Alexandria where they were formerly based. These “Habesham - Apiru/Habiru” were revered warriors whose descendants formed professional armies for hire. The might of these warriors was demonstrated in 1896 battle of Adwa where their remnants in Ethiopia showed the Italians a bloody nose, European explorers sent home terrifying accounts of these Habiru warriors who were masters of spear warfare.

Putting this into perspective, my observation is that the Iteso are courageous warriors, their uncles the Karimojong carry guns and raid neighbours for cows to this very day. Many of the less Educated Iteso easily work in security forces in Uganda as soldiers, police officers and private security guards, indeed, 1 in 10 security guards in Kampala belongs to the Iteso community. Another observation is their pastoralist lifestyle. In precolonial Teso, wealth was measured in terms of cows. One girl was worthy even a southern cow since dowery was determined by gathering hundreds of cows together thereby by having the strongest young man from the clan of the girl throw a shepherding stick. The furthest the stick went, all those cows were awarded to the family of the girl as dowery. Soon, socio-economic, political factors and climatic conditions changed this especially with the colonial structures preceding marginalizing coup de tats in Uganda.

Another distinction is that Iteso are also highly moral and spiritual people who like consulting God in everything, this sometimes goes offshores when their dead ancestors are also evoked to give guidance in the land

Iteso cultural values are very strong; Fidelity is emphasized, polygamy came from when many men were lost in war leaving behind many children and widows so the few surviving men had to take responsibility, divorce is abhorred, first fruits (Agwei) should be offered to God and the gods, care for extended family is the only insurance, respect for elders in a patriarchal society which highly respects the feminine role of women etc. Iteso values are very similar to the Hebrew values in the Bible.

Lastly, the popularized, ‘Hamitic hypotheses’ states that the Iteso are part of the Nilo-Hamitic descendants of Noah’s grandchildren Mizraim (Egyptus) and Kush (Ethiopia), who were

cursed negroes! The Oxford professor of poetry James Fenton as quoted in Braude Benjamin even alludes and I paraphrase, ... “Ham’s curse which begun when the flood subsided happened when Ham was accused of mocking his drunk father’s nakedness and hence became accursed into slavery” ...going forward, he writes... “in medieval times, Ham was again accused of using a magic demon to sleep with his father’s wife, that added him another curse of a black skin and when the world came to be divided up, Japheth received Europe, Shem got Asia and Ham was awarded Africa”!

This is quite outrageous! I totally agree with Braude Benjamin when he says, “what James Fenton writes is embedded in the propaganda and unbalanced scholarship of recent centuries that has constituted the standard justification of degradation, enslavement “and continuous neo-colonization of Africa.

Indeed, this James Fenton writings on canonistic theories raises questions for interested researchers on how one-man, Noah son of a black Lamech begot black African son, a white European son, and yellow Asian son when only him, his wife, sons, and their wives survived the flood, I found an answer in the book of Enock 105.2.10.11 when he writes, “after a time, my son Methuselah took a wife for his son Lamech, she became pregnant by him and brought forth a child, the flesh of which was white as snow and red as rose, the hair of whose head was white like wool...his nature not as that of man... is of a different (from ours), being all together unlike us...an account difficult to comprehend... when also he was taken from the hand of the midwife, his father Lamech feared and fled... believing not that the child belonged to hi...” . This child is Noah, suggesting the origin of white skin which doesn’t spell a curse to those who mainly had melanin in the boat of Noah.

The question of racial influence on cultural identity of the Iteso is a controversial topic that requires mature interpretation and further research. It is important that Iteso come out and re-write their own history to minimise any biased scholarship.

The reality is that Hebrews have constantly been destabilized and scattered all over the world to this very day. The idea that some of them migrated to the African hinterland and effectively assimilated into ‘Oblivion’ as claimed in the case of the lost tribes of Israel is a logical possibility.

Genesis 10:21-32 specifies that Sheba, Havilah, and Ophir, some of the grandchildren of Eber the protagonist of Hebrews through his son Joktan lived in Sephar which is the area around the Gulf of Aden, that (L) shaped corner of the red sea. which was on both sides of the red sea highlighting that Hebrews were on both side of the red sea connected by a boat ride across the red sea when they could visit each other.

The ancient Kingdom of AXUM/Sheba became a vast territory including present day Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia and Eritrea, Yemen, no wonder several Iteso elders like Obasie Palyang –

declared that Iteso came from Israel via Djibouti and Ethiopia, his song “Alomuni Kiteso Ko Djibouti ageun k’israeli– ...Iteso came from Israel via Djibiti and Abyssynia”. is featured in my video story.

Neil Singh (2020), decolonizing dermatology (2020), Guardian syndications; why black and brown skin need better treatment gives a common-sense approach in this issue of black colour, nothing else like a curse.

“... Melanin – which comes from the Greek word, melas, meaning dark – is a group of pigments found throughout the natural world, responsible for the brown spots on bananas, the ink of cephalopods such as squid, and even the colour of ants. Three types of melanin are found in the human body, but the most common is eumelanin: a brown-black pigment responsible for most of the colouring of human skin, hair, and eyes... It is made in specialised skin cells, melanocytes, where it is packaged into discs called melanosomes, which are passed on to other skin cells to help protect our DNA from sun damage. These discs surround the nucleus, guarding it like tiny parasols, blocking out ultraviolet rays.”¹⁸

¹⁸ Neil Singh (2020), decolonizing dermatology (2020), Guardian syndications; why black and brown skin need better treatment, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/aug/13/decolonising-dermatology-why-black-and-brown-skin-need-better-treatment>

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