

Questionnaire (put reference #:page # after each entry)

1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family:

- Names: Kavirondo Luo, Luo, Nilotic Kavirondo
- Language: Luo
- Language family: Nilo-Saharan, Eastern Sudanic, Nilotic, Western, Luo, Southern, Luo-Acholi, Luo

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): **639-3**

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): Nyanza Province. Also in Tanzania (Luo). Latitude/Longitude: 0.5000° S, 34.5000° E

1.4 Brief history:

- The Luo, an ethnic group of East Africa, inhabit a region on the eastern side of Lake Victoria. They trace their descent from people who migrated south from the Nile Valley region of southern SUDAN about 500 years ago. The majority of the Luo live in KENYA, but sizable numbers are also found in UGANDA and TANZANIA. (1. Pg 33)

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

- Many young Luo have left their home community in search of education in larger cities. Many have also left traditional religious practices in favor of Christian churches. Christianity is seen as a more modern way of life and is embraced by the newer generations (4)

1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

- Luo territory consists of flat dry country near Lake Victoria and hilly fertile areas to the north and east. The rural Luo live mainly by farming but also engage in livestock herding and fishing. (1. Pg 33)

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density:

- 4,044,000 in Kenya (2009 census), increasing. Population total all countries: 4,184,000. (3)

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

- Corn, millet (3)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

- Cattle and some goat (3)

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

2.4 Food storage:

2.5 Sexual division of production:

- “The primary division of labor is gender based. Subsistence agriculture, childcare, cooking, and domestic maintenance are all female tasks. Women are also the primary or exclusive contributors to several kinds of craft production (especially pottery), although men contribute to some crafts (e.g. basketry) and are the exclusive producers of others (e.g. iron working). Men are the predominant ritual, political, and oral history specialists. In the pre-colonial era they were also the warriors. External wage labor and cash cropping also tend to be predominantly male activities. Market traders, on the other hand, are predominantly women, but men are also involved in the selling of some items, especially goods coming from outside the Luo area.” (3)

2.6 Land tenure:

- “The traditional system of land tenure was one in which land was corporately held by patrilineages and was not individually alienable. This included farmland, pasture, water, firewood, and clay sources. Women received usufruct rights to agricultural plots and other resources by virtue of their husband's membership in a patrilineage. These rights were distributed among the women of a homestead by the husband or senior co-wife (*mikayi*), and they depended upon various dimensions of seniority relations.” (3)

2.7 Ceramics:

- Archeological studies have shown that ceramic styles are passed down from mother-in-law to daughter-in-law. (4)

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos:

- Some game animals must be avoided (1. pg 33)

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

- Known for long fishing boats with large sails. (3)

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

- 13 (1 pg. 33)

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

- age 18 for females (4)

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

- 2 years (4)
- 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):
- Age of first marriage for females is on average 17-18 years old (4)
- 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:
- Very low “Luo regard divorce as a grave misfortune, and if the breach is occasioned by the wife's misbehaviour or is due to her running away from her husband, her parents make every effort to maintain the alliance they have entered into with the husband's people by replacing her by a sister or cousin.” (5 pg140)
- 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:
- Nearly every older man has multiple wives (5. 143)
- 4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:
- “Marriage involves a protracted series of exchanges and ceremonies between the families of the bride and groom, and most crucially the payment of substantial bride-wealth to the bride's family. Formerly this involved cattle (and, in the pre-colonial era, iron hoes); now it involves cattle and cash.” (3)
- 4.9 Inheritance patterns:
- “Inheritance is patrilineal. Sons inherit cattle and other forms of wealth, as well as rights to the land of the father's gunda, from their father. A woman generally does not inherit wealth from her father or husband: the property of the husband passes to his brothers. Women do sometimes inherit small household items from their mothers-in-law.” (3)
- 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:
- The child has most contact with their mother, however males, especially new fathers, can take a large part in the caring of children (3)
- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:
- No form of homosexual activities are condoned, especially true now with the influence of missionaries (3)
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):
- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?
- No other fathers are recognized as sex outside of marriage is forbidden. (3)
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”)
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)
- Normally this would be someone from outside of your kin group or village (5. Pg 134)
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?
- During courtship women will often visit lovers in their simbas, or batchlor pads. During this time “The young men will not quarrel about her, nor will her father and brothers interfere in her love affairs. She may continue the practice throughout the stages of her marriage to another man right up to the riso, the final ceremony of marriage”. (5 pg. 132)
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring
- No because extramarital partners are forbidden once the final marriage ceremony has taken place (5. Pg 141)
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?
- Often the husband will marry a relative of his wife who will then step in and raise any children (5 pg 141)
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades
- none
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)
- Only in the case that a woman is widowed she will live with her husband's brother, however this is not remarriage. “No bride wealth is paid, and any children he brotheren ay beget by the widow are called after the dead husband and not after him. The dead husband is their pater” In this case the father is still seen as the deceased. (5. Pg 140)
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?
- Males are not allowed to speak their in-laws name (3)
- 4.24 Joking relationships?
- Often a wife will form joking relationships with her sister in-laws (5. Pg 129)
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations
- “When a Luo woman marries, she moves to the home of her husband, creating bonds that link various Luo communities.” (1. Pg 33) “Post-marital residence is patrilocal in the strictest sense of the term: that is, the wife goes to live with the husband in the homestead of the husband's father.” (3)
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules
- No solid rules, but men often try to marry outside of their community in order to avoid any possible ancestral relationships (3)
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?
- Yes. When the man has found a woman to marry the first stage begins with a wife abduction. “The young men of the bridegroom's home come to the girl's home in the early morning and wait outside the entrance to the kraal. The jagam enters the homestead and goes to the suwindhi, the girls' dormitory in charge of an old woman called the pim, and he shouts to this old woman that he wants their bride. After being promised a present the old woman opens the door. The girl at once begins to make trouble. She holds on to the old woman and screams and struggles as the jagam drags her away. The young men of the village come to her assistance and a mimic fight takes place between them and the youths from the bride-groom's home. It is seldom

that a bride is averse to going to her husband, who may have long been her lover, but she must resist with as much noise as she can to show that this is not an elopement but a proper marriage. Once she is out of earshot of her home she goes quietly with the young men. When they arrive at the bridegroom's home she goes straight to the simba, where his brothers and sisters entertain her. After the bride has been dragged from her home the girls of her homestead follow after her singing. This singing party of girls, called jodariyao romower, arrives at the bridegroom's home in the evening. Now takes place the defloration of the bride in the presence of her sister, called jadong, perhaps accompanied by another girl of her home, and one of the bridegroom's married brothers. The jadong lays an ox-hide on the floor of the hut and draws the bride and bridegroom, both naked, towards it. She puts out the fire and in the darkness the marriage is consummated, though without orgasm. The witnesses rekindle the fire and by its light examine the man's member for the ring ruok, the hymen. When the jadong sees it she shouts the news to the girls of the singing party outside, who then enter and beat the bridegroom, saying: 'You have killed our sister.' He gets out quickly and goes away. The visiting girls and the young men of the home sing together all night, the bride remaining with them in the simba. If the bride is found not to have been a virgin there is no singing because of the shame. However, it makes no difference to the validity of the rite" (5. Pg 134)

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?

- "The child is usually named between birth and age 2 after an ancestor appears in a dream to an adult member of the family. Actually this means that the person who does good deeds and is well respected will return in a dream to the living and thus begin the process of reincarnation again. When the child is named, he or she will take on some of the characteristics of the returned ancestor. Thus, if the ancestor was kind, the child becomes a kind person in life; if argumentative, the same. The named ancestor becomes the individual's guiding spirit throughout his or her life." (4)

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)

- "Frequently a man goes with a friend to look for a bride from the home of a distant kinsman in whose neighbourhood there are plenty of unrelated girls." (5 pg. 133)

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?

- These can be arranged, but normally they are not. The female often has the right to refuse a marriage even if her parents wish it to happen (5 pg 133)

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Warfare/homicide

4.31 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

4.32 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

4.33 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:

- "From the late fifteenth to the end of the nineteenth century, the Luo, in the course of their southward migration and intrusion into the territory of Bantu-speaking peoples, were frequently engaged in armed conflict. There was little to distinguish internal and external fighting since in the segmentary lineage system fighting could be directed at one time against other Luo lineages (such as the earlier settlers) and at other times it would be against Bantu speakers. Fighting mostly ceased with the imposition of British colonial rule. With the exception of occasional isolated skirmishes, territorial disputes have since been displaced into the court system and the legislature. A number of Luo men were also drawn into larger conflicts when they were conscripted into the British colonial army during World Wars I and II." (3)

4.34 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):

4.35 Cannibalism?

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

- 80-200 individuals (4)

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

- Luo are non-nomadic as they depend on agriculture for economic purposes. (4)

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):

- "Luo society is organized according to clans that trace descent through male relatives. Inheritance of land and cattle is also through the male line." (1. Pg. 33)

5.4 Post marital residence:

- One day the husband says to his wife that he wants her to cook for him instead of cooking in the hut of his mother, which up to this time she has used for the purpose, she and her husband making the simba their dwelling-place. The younger brothers of the husband have in the meanwhile built themselves a new simba. Now the husband-usually after the birth of his first child-begins to build an *ot*, a proper dwelling-hut (5. Pg 138)

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

- Younger people must always show respect for elders, but there are no formal divisions between individuals (4)

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

5.8 Village and house organization:

- Most older men have multiple wives and each wife has their own house in a cluster together. (4)

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

- Simbas are men's huts or considered bachelor pads (5 pg. 135)

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

- Sleep on sleeping platforms (5 pg. 132)

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:

- Although at the beginning of the twenty-first century they live with an administrative system of local "chiefs" imposed by the British colonial government and continued by the postcolonial Kenyan state, the Luo have traditionally had a strongly egalitarian political ethos and lacked centralized authority. They do, however, have an indigenous term, *ruoth*, that is used to refer to modern chiefs. In the precolonial era this term more likely meant something closer to "leader" or "man of influence" than to the institutionalized political role it has come to signify.(3)

5.12 Trade:

- "A system of regular periodic markets exists throughout the Luo area and serves as a focus for both trading and social activities. This system developed in the early twentieth century out of the prior practice of sporadic famine markets under the influence of the developing cash economy. Markets serve as centers for the exchange of local crafts and foodstuffs as well as for the distribution of imported goods (e.g. clothing, kerosene, salt, plastic and metal containers). However, they do not usually serve as major collection points for large amounts of local produce flowing out to distant urban or international markets. The Luo do trade with neighboring peoples at border markets, and they are, for example, major suppliers of pottery to the Kisii/Gusii and some other non-Luo groups. Moreover, some of these products are distributed further afield by middleman traders."(3)

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

- Throughout the year many ceremonies are focused around religion, many of the wedding and death ceremonies also take several weeks to even months. (4)

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

- . Traditional religious practitioners include several kinds of witches, sorcerers, or magicians and diviners. These go by various names depending upon their attributes. Those who use medicines are called *jobilo*. They are feared and respected for their powers of divination and their ability to use killing magic on enemies. *Ajuoge* is a more general term for witches or sorcerers, while *jopuok* is used for "nightrunners" and those (usually women) who have the power to cause sickness through the "evil eye" (*sihoho*). Witchcraft and magical powers can be inherited or learned, depending upon the circumstances and type of powers. The independent African churches have a range of parallel religious specialists (priests, bishops, popes, prophets, etc.) derived from the Christian tradition. Leadership roles in these churches tend to be predominantly male, while church membership is predominantly female." (3)

6.2 Stimulants:

- Elders have access to "banana beer" for ceremonial purposes (4)

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

- "The largest and most ostentatious Luo ceremonies are funerals. These can last for several days, during which time the host family must supply a large gathering of kin and affines with a steady supply of food and beer. The ritual involves a parade of the cattle owned by the deceased and a great feast accompanied by dancing and praise songs. A person's prestige can be measured by the number of people who attend his or her funeral. There are a host of other important ceremonies that are less elaborate than funerals, including marriage, twin-birth rituals, rites for establishing a new homestead, and harvest festivals. These all involve feasts with beer (and often chang'aa)." (3)

6.4 Other rituals:

6.5 Myths (Creation):

- "According to Luo belief, the Supreme Creator is called Nyasaye or Nyasi. Like other African societies, the Luo traditions are grounded in the relationship of the living with the ancestors. There is a strong belief in the idea that the ancestors can impact the life of the contemporary person. Thus, the rituals and ceremonies of the people are related to this belief. The *juogi*, which is the naming ceremony, is the first official act of receiving the person into the society." (4)

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6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

- The Luo of western Kenya paint geometric designs on fishing boats (2 pg. 67) "Luo artisans make a wide variety of crafts that are largely consumed locally rather than directed toward a tourist market. Pottery is a thriving craft performed entirely by women. Less than 1 percent of all women are potters, yet they manage to supply nearly all Luo homes with a diverse range of forms to serve a common set of cooking, serving, and storage functions. Potters live in clusters of homesteads centered around clay sources scattered throughout the Luo area and they sell pots at local markets. Other local craft products sold at markets include baskets (for storage, food-processing, eating, and fishing, etc.), forged iron goods (agricultural tools, ornaments, etc.), and such things as ropes, brooms, reed mats, wooden tool handles, and oil lamps made from recycled cans." (3)
- "The Luo are known for their music, and their traditional music is functional. Nothing is done just for the sake of doing it. People make music for ceremony, religion, and political reasons. Music has to be performed for all occasions. For example, during funerals, one has to praise the departed, comfort the bereaved, and cleanse and chase away spirits. Music was played during beer parties welcoming visitors, during wrestling performances, and so forth. Music was also used for rituals like chasing away evil spirits (*nyawawa*)." (4)

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

- It is mostly women who are accused of witchcraft, and only men who have access to banana beer for RCR (4)

6.8 Missionary effect:

- “Both Catholic and Protestant missions of European and American origin have been active in the area since the end of the nineteenth century. Even more numerous are the independent African churches (of which over 220 are officially registered in Kenya) that have splintered off from the Euro American churches. Many of these independent churches actually originated among the Luo and they are extremely popular. Nearly 90 percent of Joluo are professed adherents of Christianity in one or another of these manifestations. The charismatic independent churches, such as Roho and Legio Maria, often incorporate traditional Luo beliefs in such things as spirit possession with Christian symbols and practices. However, even adherents of the more orthodox Euro American Christian churches often see no contradiction in maintaining or adapting traditional beliefs and practices. On the other hand, churches of both types sometimes target specific traditional elements (e.g. drinking) for prohibition as a way of positioning themselves as a force capable of, for example, liberating people from witchcraft. Traditional beliefs include various forces called *juogi* (spirits), *tipo* (shadows), and *kwere* (ancestors), which can act positively or negatively, as well as a creator or life force god (Nyasaye or Were).” (3)

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

- “The ancestors are a strong force in the life of the living. The spirits of the dead can be very dangerous if they have died under troubled circumstances or if they have been offended by the behavior of the living. However, they can also be a positive force. Children are often renamed after an ancestor who appears in a dream or who is invoked by a diviner.” (3)

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

- No, in fact many infants get their names from deceased ancestors (4)

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut:

- Many women keep their hair very short or even shaved (4)

7.4 Scarification:

- Traditionally there has been scarification, however this has largely fallen out of practice (3)

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

7.8 Missionary effect:

7.9 Types of clothing:

- Today many Luo have stopped wearing traditional clothing due to western influences. Many people today are wearing very western styles, jeans and t-shirts (3)

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

- Only immediate siblings (from biological mother and father are recognized). (4)

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

- “When a wife dies she ought to be replaced by her sister. The counterpart of this custom of the sororate is the levirate, the raising up of seed to a dead man by one of his brothers. A widow is normally taken by one of her dead husband's brothers, though if she chooses to live with a more distant kinsman of her husband her wishes will be respected. Occasionally she is taken by one of her husband's sons by a different wife, but this is rare and although not *kwere* (forbidden) it is not encouraged because it is thought that the union will not be fruitful” (5. pg 144)

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

Numbered references

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