

# LUO ORIGIN OF CIVILISATION: TOWARDS A POSITIVE IDENTIFICATION OF THE ANCIENT ITIYO-PI-ANU PEOPLES

Dr. Terence Okello Paito – Abstract

After the Second World War, Henri Frankfort, an eminent Egyptologist, suggested that there are distinct groups of Africans surviving today, whose ancestors can be traced back to the ancient Egyptians. A couple of decades later, at a symposium on the peopling of ancient Egypt and the deciphering of the Meroitic script, C.A. Diop, resolved to carry out a comparison of the languages of ancient Egypt and those of contemporary Africa. Both Diop and Frankfort believed that there are people alive today in Africa who speak the very same language or one very close to the language spoken in ancient Egypt. The identification of such a people would add a linguistic dimension to the conventional study and better understanding of ancient Egyptian history. This paper presents an argument in support of the contention that the survivors of the ancient Egyptian culture are the Nilotic people now commonly known as the Luo (or Lwoo). It is suggested that the Luo were the founders of the ancient Koch or Cushitic kingdom at Napata, which had expanded into Egypt. It will be further argued that the Luo pledged collective loyalty to the god Anu and were the very Itiyo-pi-anu peoples.



## Introduction

The identities of the earliest settlers and builders of the great ancient Itiyo-pi-an and Egyptian civilisations have been a subject of protracted debate that has largely remained in abeyance for sometime. At the height of the early 19th century Euro-imperialism and colonialism in Africa, the ‘civilisation/barbarism’ dichotomy was a construct and an ideological tool to explain the justification for colonialism. Throughout the colonial and early post-independence period, the

imposition of a euro-centric curriculum plus western anthropologists' sustained denigration of the African personality and culture, deterred Africans from considering, 'The African Origin' of civilisation. Nevertheless, Henri Frunkfort (1948), one of the Western scholars whose attention was drawn to the achievements of the early Egyptians wrote, "... There are alive today in Africa groups of people who are the true survivors of that great East African substratum out of which the Egyptian culture arose ...." (Henri Frunkfort, 1948, p.6). Resistance to the contradictions inherent in colonial policies, curricula and the distortion of African history, later produced a generation of African scholars who were prepared to examine facts on ancient Egyptian history. It was in that light that C.A. Diop (1974), stood out and published 'The African Origin of Civilisation: Myth or Reality'. In the preface of that work, Diop advocated a linguistic approach to link the history of black Africa to that of ancient Egypt. Following the symposium on 'The peopling of Ancient Egypt and Deciphering of the Meroitic script', he repeated the call for the application of the linguistic approach to analyse ancient Egyptian history. So far, from the literature on ancient Egypt, three main observations can be made. First and foremost, the literature suggests that much ground has been covered towards the reclamation and linking of ancient Egypt to African history thanks to the efforts of African-American and other diasporan scholars. Secondly, despite the great strides made, most of the diasporan scholars continue to confuse ancient Itiyopianu with modern Ethiopia. Thirdly, and most importantly for this paper, Diop's lead in which he identified Osiris race with the Nilotic Luo has not been followed, despite Simon Simonse's (1992) assertion that Luo antecedents have relevance for the reconstruction of the past. Similarly, J.B. Webster's (1979), call for a linguistic approach to reconstruct and expand Crazzolara's work on the Luo has been largely ignored.

In this paper, we argue that the people referred to as the Luo were the very builders of the ancient Itiyo-pi-anu civilisation known as Koch (Cush, Kush). The Koch (Cush) kingdom expanded into Egypt, Arabia, Mesopotamia and Phoenicia. The paper is divided into five sections. In the second section, we review the attempts by some scholars to de-link the Luo from ancient Egyptian civilisation; section three presents a discussion on how the identification of Luo Cradle-land became such a contentious issue in the historiography of the Great Lakes region. In section four, the Luo will be identified as the ancient Itiyopianu peoples. Luo presence in ancient Egypt is discussed in section five, followed by conclusions.

## The Luo

In the opening statement of his work 'The Lwoo', Fr. J.P. Crazzolaro (1950), wrote, "The Lwo racial group of people has had a past so full of exciting adventures that their history – once it were fairly completely written up – would read like an absorbing novel" (Crazzolaro, 1950,p.1). Fr. Crazzolaro, an Italian Catholic Missionary, linguist and historian had lived, worked and conducted field– work amongst the Luos for over thirty years. Most importantly, he had access to the Meroitic scripts. Apart from the three volumes on the Lwoo, Crazzolaro (1938) wrote 'A Study of the Acoli Language'. For the composition of the Luo racial group who are scattered across thousands of miles in Eastern and Central Africa, Fr. Crazzolaro, noted that,

"The tribe into which the original group of the Lwo divided after leaving their country of origin, are as follows, 1. Boor, 2. Jo– Luuo, (Thuri, Bwodho, Jur), 3. Collo (Shilluk), Anywaa, 5.Paari (Lokooro, Ber, Nyorro), 6. Acholi, 7.Alur, 8. Jo–Pawir (Jur), 9. Lango, 10. Kumam, 11. Jo– Pa– Wiir alias Jo–Ka– Weer, 12. Jo–Pa– Adhola, 13. Jo–Lwo, 14. Barabaig". (Fr. J.P. Crazzolaro, 1950: 5).

Thus, the Luo group of peoples are found in the Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and the Congo. Though Crazzolaro was ecstatic at the prospect of reconstructing Luo history, he had underestimated the opposition towards such an endeavour. Before looking at attempts by some Africanist to de–link the Luo from ancient Itiopia and Egypt, the question that arises is, what is meant by the very term Luo or Lwoo?

### What is Luo or Lwoo?

According to Nalder (1937), the word Luo derives from the evening fire around which people sat. He suggested that, "A feature of the village life is the 'O', men's sitting – place, rather like a club ...". (Nalder, 1937, p.147). Nalder was particularly aware that, amongst some Luo groups such as the Acholi, 'Lu' is a plural prefix (sing. 'La') which means 'those who....', and denotes a group in relation to some activities, profession or general behaviour. On the other hand, the one letter word 'o' means the evening fire around which a family or friends sat in an open court yard to chat, discuss, educate, gaze into the clear sky, and enjoy the fresh evening air, before retiring to bed. By combining 'Lu' and 'o', Nalder claimed to have explained the identity of the Luo people.

Nalder's explanation is not particularly satisfactory when it is considered that some members of the same group refer to themselves as the Lwo. In any case, sitting around the evening fire is not

peculiar to the Luo, as many African peoples share the same habit. A clue to an alternative explanation was provided by the Rev. Fr. Crazzolaro who observed that “The name Lwoo (the meaning of which is unknown) is still widely used, as I have shown elsewhere ....” (1938, p.xiii). However, elsewhere, he also noted that, the “the morphologically interrelated terms: Luuo – Lwoo – (Loh), Lao – Loo –Lowi –Lowoi – Looi, Luui and Luu do certainly suggest an original unity” (Crazzolaro, 1950, p. 338). According to Fr. Crazzolaro, the above were the various ways of spelling the same word but he did not specify the correct one. The original word that was to be spelled in different ways can best be identified when Luo spirituality and world– view is looked at more closely.

According to S. Santandrea, “The Luo are by far the nearest in ‘royal’ traditions to the great homonymous tribe of the Nile. They too, maintain that their chiefs are (or rather were) possessed of a divine power, inherited from their great ancestors” (Stefano Santandrea, 1968, p.48). In other words, the Luo believed in a supernatural authority through whom their kings ruled. For example, the great god of the Nile was known as ‘Hapi’ (Wallis Budge, 1994, p, cxxiii). The Luos are familiar with this divinity whom they refer to as, ‘Lhapi’. The word, ‘Pi’ in Luo means water. ‘Lha’ or ‘La’ is a singular prefix. Thus Lhapi means ‘of water’. The Lango Luos would simply omit the ‘L’ and call it Hapi. The Nile was described as “.... the type of life giving waters out of the midst of which sprang the gods and all created things” (E.A. Wallis Budge: cxxiii). In a reference to Lhapi, an Acholi historian wrote,

“Lok, cik maber twotwal ma wan wanongo bot Ludito mewa me Acholi, en aye Lam nyo Lapii. Acholi pe gidonyo i lweny ata labongo Lapii nyo labongo lam mamit....” (L. Okech, 1953:22).

“We have inherited from our Acholi ancestors the idea of consulting Lapii or obtaining a blessing from him. The Acholi will not get involved in a war without consulting Lapii or obtaining a blessing from him” (my translation).

In ‘Customs of the Acholi’, Capt.Grove (1919) presented a Luo spiritualist world view and wrote,

“The man in trouble addresses a prayer not only to his deceased father and grandfather but to ‘Everything that went before or begot him’. He addresses himself to God and the sun and moon and “my ancestors spirits, and all you who begot me” throwing a sort of general responsibility for his being there on the universe at large, and pointing out that as they were responsible for putting him there they ought to do something about it” (Capt. Grove, 1919, p.174, My emphasis in italics)

From Capt. Grove's account, the Luo man believes that some supernatural being caused his very presence on earth and together with ancestors, could help ease his problems. In other words, the man was suggesting that he was simply a product of creation and was at the mercy of the creator. Any casual observer familiar with the Luo or Lwo language will note that the morphologically related terms that were presented by Fr. Crazzolaro refer to the story of creation. Rev. Fr. Alfred Malandra (1956) actually pointed out the original word when he wrote of the Acholi dialect, "There are a certain number of words, mostly monosyllabic, which end in a long or stressed vowel, which is here written double. In this standard orthography doubling is recommended in only a selected list of nouns viz. aluu (vapour) (Malandra, 1956, p.9). Elsewhere, Fr. Malandra pointed out that 'Kuto aluu = exhale (Malandra, 1956, p.132). Thus, the original term that Crazzolaro failed to identify was 'Luu' (pronounced as in Lhuu) - means God's life-bearing-exhalation. On the other hand, in the same language, Luuo, (pronounced as in Lhuuo), - means, 'of God's life-bearing-exhalation, the product of creation, the created beings. Thus 'Luo' is the word variously spelled as Lou or Lwoo and which became the collective identity of the Nilotic group variously known as the Lwo or Luo.

Interestingly, in the Acholi - Luo version of the book of Genesis, the word Luu is used to describe the breath of life breathed into the nostrils of the first created man. It is also in the same context that the people call themselves 'Joo-Jok- Amalo', meaning people of the high god. In texts related to the story of creation, the word Luo is clearly distinguishable despite serious distortions. For example, according to Jacob H. Caruthers (1999), "The creator then, after having impregnated himself, sneezes and Shu comes into being (Shu is pronounced shwoo, like a sneeze" (Caruthers, 1999, .287). Caruthers was referring to 'Lhu', i.e. 'God's life bearing exhalation', pronounced as in, 'Lhwoo' or Lhuo' or 'Lwoo'. Cf. "Shou = sou = space, the first divinity created by Ra" (Diop, 1991, p.359). Having defined the meaning of the term Luo, the next task is to look at how some Africanists viewed the relationship between Africans and ancient Egyptian civilisation.

## **2.0 Attempts by some Africanist scholars to de-link the Luos from ancient Egypt.**

In 1911, the attention of the Egyptologist E.A. Wallis Budge (1911) was drawn to the similarities he saw between the myths and rites of ancient Egypt and those of sub-Saharan Africa including Buganda. Subsequently, he concluded that ancient Egyptian beliefs "are indigenous in origin,

Nilotic or Sudanic in the broadest significance of the word”(Budge, 1911, p.vii). Wallis Budge’s assertion came against the back- drop of concerted efforts to de-link Africa from ancient Egypt. Attempts by some western scholars to de-link Africa from ancient Egypt had been going on well before the advent of the 19th century colonialism. In ‘The Wealth of Nations’, Adam Smith (1776) noted:

The nations that, according to the best authenticated history, appear to have been first civilised, were those that dwelt around the coast of the Mediterranean Sea .... Of all the countries on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, Egypt seems to have been the first in which either agriculture or manufactures were cultivated and improved to any considerable degree (Smith, 1776, p.124)



George Wilhelm Freidrich Hegel

Smith attributed the early economic success of the ancient Egyptians to a well-developed inland navigation network similar to what existed in Holland during his time. While Adam Smith features highly in the history of economic thoughts, ancient Egypt, a source of his inspiration, is never mentioned. Smith then went on to de-link ancient Egypt from the rest of

the continent and wrote, “All the inland parts of Africa, .... seems in all ages of the world to have been in the same barbarous and uncivilised state in which we find them at present”(Smith, 1776, p.125). The portrayal of Africa as barbarous was widespread amongst European scholars. In his discussion on Africa, George Wilhelm Freidrich Hegel (1956), remarked; “It .... surprises to find among them, in the vicinity of African stupidity reflective intelligence, a thoroughly rational

organisation characterizing all institutions and the most astonishing works of art" (Hegel, 1956, p.199). Hegel, who showed enormous contempt for Africa, added:

At this point we leave Africa not to mention it again. For it is not a historical part of the world; it has no movements or development to exhibit. Historical movements in it – that is in the northern part – belong to the Asiatic or European world. Carthage displayed there an important transitional phase of civilisation; but, as a Phoenician colony, it belongs to Asia. Egypt will be considered in references to its western phase, but it does not belong to the African Spirit. What we properly understand by Africa is the unhistorical, undeveloped spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the world's history. (Hegel, 1956, p.99)

Hegel was dismissive of any contribution Africans had made towards the world's development. For him, any exhibits that existed pertaining to the developments in Carthage or Egypt were largely Asiatic or European. It is worth noting that the essential notion in Hegel's work was 'dialectics'. He had borrowed the term 'dialectics' from Plato's Republic. However, it is known that the latter was, mocked by his contemporaries as having borrowed the 'Republic', from the ancient Egyptians. Marx for instance pointed out that, "Plato's Republic, in so far as division of labour is treated in it, as the formative principles of the state, is merely an Athenian idealisation of the Egyptian caste system, Egypt having served as the model of an industrial country to others of his contemporaries, e.g. Isocrates. It retained this importance for the Greeks even at the time of the Roman Empire (Marx, Capital I, pp 488–489). Thus if Marx found Hegel upside down and put him upright, the latter needed to be sat upright on the African origins of Greek Philosophy. Christopher Arthur (1993), a proponent of 'new dialectics' suggested that 'a direct appeal to Hegel' be made as 'the standard move' to understand the Hegel–Marx connection<sup>1</sup>. An analysis of dialectics is beyond the scope of this paper. However, for a complete understanding of dialectics we suggest that there is a need to go beyond Hegel and Plato into its origins in Egypt. Yet the influence of Hegel was widespread amongst some Egyptologists. In 'A History of Egypt: From the Earliest time to the Persian Conquest', James Henry Breasted (1937) argued that there was no link between ancient Egypt and Africa, "The conclusion maintained by some historians that the Egyptian was of African Negro origin is now refuted .... at best he may have been slightly tinctured with Negro blood" (Breasted, 1937, p.36). For a long time, prejudices as discussed above, contributed significantly to

the concealment of the truth about the history of Africa. Attempts to separate Egypt from Africa and deny the latter its past was widespread. The de-linking of ancient Egypt from black Africa is still tempting to some scholars such as by Benjamin C. Ray (1991) who, quite recently wrote,

“Archaeological research has not turned up a single object in the inter-lacustrian region or elsewhere south of the Sahara that derives from the lower or middle Nile valley. Nor is there any decisive evidence that there were contacts anywhere between Egypt and Africa south of Meroe” (Benjamin C Ray, 1991, p.196).

However, Ray did not engage with ancient historiography in which contacts between ancient Egypt and modern day Uganda were fairly well documented. For example, Rev. Fisher (1904), found, artefacts in Uganda, from ancient Egypt about which he wrote,

“In the extremely delicate and diverse forms of string and baskets working peculiar to the Batoro tribe, one notices marked similarity to Egyptian design. Then, again, among the tribe of the Bakuku is another suggestive point: whilst staying in their vicinity for a period of six weeks, I made a strong effort to collect together a selection of their war-horns, which consist of minute ivory tusks shaved down and scooped out. It was not an easy matter to procure them, as they are regarded as the heirlooms of the family, and have been handed down from ancient times. Offering, however, high and tempting terms in the shape of goats, I succeeded in procuring six or seven. I then found that each had its own peculiar mark: one resembled most clearly the planet Saturn, another, the Pleiades, others various hieroglyphic designs. Questioning the folk as to the significant meaning of each, they expressed total ignorance beyond that they were intended for ornamentation by their early fathers ....” (A.B. Fisher, 1904, p.250).

In any case the ancient Egyptians did look to Uganda as their home of origin. The ‘Papyrus of Hunefer’ and the ‘Book of the Coming Forth by the Day and Night’, contain the message which the ancient Egyptians recorded about their origin and which read, “We came from the beginning of the Nile where the god Hapi dwells, at the foothills of the mountains of the moon” (Yosef ben-Jochanannan and John Hendrik Clarke, 1991, p.5). In a desperate attempt to reinforce the de-linking of Africa from ancient Egypt, a construct, the ‘Hamitic theory’ was developed to distort the identities of the ancient Egyptians.

## 2.1 The Hamitic Theory

In its original formulation, the 'hamitic theory' stipulates that, " .... The divine kingship of ancient Egypt derived from a pre-historic Caucasian/Negro culture called 'Hamitic'. .... This culture had given rise to many East African societies, including the kingdom of the Shilluk in the Southern Sudan and the Kingdoms of Bunyoro and Buganda further south" (C.G. Seligman, 1966, p.100). On the contrary though, the Shilluk, who are portrayed as Hamites do actually belong to the Luo racial group. The same Luo group had indeed founded the Kitara empire in the Great Lakes region. For example, Onyango ku Odongo and Webster (1976) specifically wrote,

"Bunyoro sources suggest that the man who founded the Lwo Bito dynasty of Bunyoro-Kitara was called Isingoma Mpuga Rukidi. Even a layman can easily see that the two names have no etymological affinity to Lwo ones, but the last one might have been Lakidi or Lukidi. The first two names, Isingoma Mpuga, are typically Bantu. It is possible, however, that these were the names given to the Lwo rulers by his subjects, not his actual names. ...." (Ku Odongo, Webster, 1979, p.118)

Consciously or unconsciously, Ku Odongo and Webster have suggested that the Luo were the very founders of the Kitara empire in the Great Lakes region. Thus, two competing models, the 'Nilotic-Luo' versus the 'Hamitic' have been advanced to explain the origins of the state builders in the Great Lakes region on the one hand, and that of the ancient Egyptian civilisation on the other. Seligman, a proponent of the Hamitic model, further claimed that, "The in-coming Hamites were pastoral Europeans- arriving waves after waves - better armed and quicker witted than the dark agricultural negroes" (Seligman, 1966, p.100). Whilst ecstatic about the Hamitic theory, the proponents were deeply divided on the true identities of the Hamites. For example, Driberg (1923), a British colonial administrator who for seven years lived and worked amongst the Lango of Uganda, described the 'Hamites' as ".... Latuka, Taposa, Dodotho, Karamojong, Iteso, Akum, Turkana, Suk, Masai, Nandi, and the group of tribes contained under the general heading Langu, viz. the Ajie, Olok ...." (Driberg, 1923, p.9). Despite the confusion over the identities of the so-called Hamites, some western anthropologists and colonial administrators continued to lend tremendous support to Seligman's theory. Margaret Trowell (1943), a curator of the Uganda museum during the colonial period was one of the 'Hamitic' enthusiasts. In the 1940s she reignited the hamitic debate and posed the question, "Who are the Hamitic people, known to us chiefly through the Bahima of Ankole but comprising also many other groups in the Belgium

Congo and down south and west of the Lake? They are light skinned, long faced, fine featured people of Caucasian stock coming from the North; but how they arrived is a problem upon which work has yet to be done”<sup>2</sup>. The Bahima of Uganda and the Tutsi of Ruanda, Burundi and the Congo may have some Caucasian features described by Margaret Trowell. However, they are of Somali descended migrants, who settled in the Great Lakes region well after the arrivals of the Luos in the region (Karugire, 1971). In any case, the Kingdom of Koch (Cush), in the upper Nile region of northern Sudan developed largely out of sedentary agricultural activities, rather than pastoral nomadism as enjoyed by the Bahima and the Tutsis. Besides, the ancient Egyptian divinities are unknown amongst the Bahima and Tutsis. As no historical evidence has ever been uncovered that linked the Bahimas to the Nile Valley civilisation, interests in the ‘Hamitic theory’ begun to wane. One of the enthusiasts later admitted the flaws surrounding the theory and confessed that, “The place of the origin of the hamitic invaders is uncertain and the route they followed to Uganda still unknown .... There has been some considerable sympathy for the suggestion that they ultimately derived from Egypt”<sup>3</sup>. But the last nail in the coffin of the theory was hammered by Evans-Pritchard, Seligman’s own student who wrote, “No one today would uphold the hamitic theory that was held by Seligman. .... Seligman would always muddle up the categories of race and language, an error, which can only lead to confusion. He was also a firm believer in Nordic superiority (as his student, I had to read a lot of literature in support of his belief)”<sup>4</sup>. As will be discussed further below, Seligman contributed to the identification of the Anyiak of the Sudan and Ethiopia with the Osiris’ race.

The ‘Hamitic theory’ reveals serious ambiguity and needs to be examined closely. More precisely, the origin and meaning of the term ‘hamite’ needs to be laid bare. According Dr. Finch (1991), “Our name ‘Ham’ comes from the Hebrew Cham which in turn is derived from the Egyptian word KAM, meaning ‘black’....” (C.S. Finch, 1991:133). The word ‘Ham’ may be Egyptian but as for the meaning, we beg to disagree with Dr. Finch. For the original meaning of the concept ‘Ham’, we have to turn to the Old Testament. After one of Noah’s sons showed disrespect to his drunken father, he was supposedly cursed. This was what he father said, “Cursed be Canaan!....” (Genesis 9:25). The key word here is ‘curse’. Interestingly, the Shilluk people mentioned by Seligman, together with the other Luo groups use the word ‘Laam’ or ‘Lham which, is similar in meaning to the context used in the Bible. Therefore, it is likely that the word ‘Ham’ is a distortion of ‘Lham’ or ‘Laam’, which in the Luo language means ‘Curse’. Accordingly, Crazzolaro (1938) defined the

transitive verb 'Laamo', "Laamo .... To wish ill to, curse, cast a spell on one .... " (Crazzolaro, 1938, p.279). Amongst the Shilluk and the Acholi, 'Lham' or 'Laam' remains a common name. The Luo basis of the biblical story of the 'curse' becomes apparent when we look further, at the identities of the Ham's brothers who were blessed and bestowed with luck. Here again, the Old Testament offers a useful clue and indicates that their names were Luo in origin. For example, 'Japhet' or 'Laphet' means, a loiterer, a wanderer in the Luo language. Coincidentally this is how Noah's Japhet is described in the bible. Similarly, the Old Testament tells us that Shem's grandsons were named as; Joktany, Obal, Ophir (Genesis 10: 26– 29). Interestingly, these are all Luo names still in use today. According to one of the experts on Luo history, Ophir or Opiir was the leader who brought the Luos to Uganda. Fr.Crazzolaro (1950), who supports this view-point, specifically wrote,

"Owiny, Labongo and Opiir, were the three men that came from Misr (Egypt). After traversing several river tributaries they reached the Kuku, Moyo, Arua and finally Pubungu. ....Opiir remained and begot many children but in the end he left too and moved in the direction of the Logbara. One of Opiir's sons was Wiir." (Crazzolaro, 1950:256).

Thus, the so-called Semitics were in fact Luos. Therefore, the medieval European mythology on the multi-genetic origin of humanity, which links Shem as the ancestor of Jews, Japhet to the Europeans and Laam to Africa was baseless and must be discarded. This is simply because they all were from the same race, the Luo people. A discussion on the Luo presence in the bible is reserved for a later work

Thus, the 'Hamitic theory', as discussed above, was not only a flawed attempt to present in an unscientific manner a theory about the origin of races, but was also intended to deter the Luo people from laying credible claims to their heritage and to ancient civilisations. Jacob Caruthers (1999) has observed that the liberation of African history was a war being fought against intellectuals bent on fabricating facts that would deny Africans their rich heritage. As the 'Hamitic theory' was gradually discredited, attention turned to the distortion of Luo history.

### **3.0 Luo history as a battle-ground;**

From the time the Nile Valley came under the Turco-Egyptian and European colonial subjugation, the history of the Nilotic Luo, has come under intense scrutiny, and subjected to distortion and denigration. For example, according to I. Richards (1969), "None of the Nilotes and Nilo-hamitic

people of Uganda had achieved a centralised system of governance by the time of Speke's visit in 1862. They were organised on a clan and lineage basis ...." (Richards, 1969, p.41). For Richards, the Nilotic were incapable of developing any social institutions, including that of the state. Richards' ideas emerged as part of an anthropological paradigm known as the 'Lineage theory' that was being promoted by E.E. Evans-Pritchard (1940). The basis of the lineage theory was that there was a dichotomy between societies with states and those without. Further more, the latter were considered to have had no history and could at best be studied from the perspectives of kinship analysis. The anthropological approach was seized upon by neo-Marxist writers such as Mahmood Mamdani (1984) who on sheer speculation argued that, "When colonised in the early part of this century, the people of Northern Uganda were just at the threshold between primitive, but egalitarian, tribal democracies and the state-governed class divided societies. Communal form of life, then prevalent, continued to exist as remnants today"<sup>5</sup>. The point Mamdani was trying to put across was that a major element of civilisation was lacking amongst the Nilotics. However, both Richards and Mamdani did not offer any explanation as to why the Nilotic Shilluk and the Anuak, from whom the Acholi separated, had well established state organisation, while the latter allegedly, did not. Yet much earlier, after careful observation, Evans-Pritchard (1940) noted, "The Anuak are linguistically much more akin to the Acholi of the south than to the Shilluk in the north, and they are probably, also much more akin to them in culture and social organisation generally. On the other hand, the Anuak kingship is undoubtedly very similar to that of the Shilluk, and is quite unlike anything recorded among the Acholi (Evans-Pritchard, 1940, p.133).



Acholi dancers, 1954 (Otole dance)

While similarities existed between the Anuak and the Acholi social organisations, the State organisation of the Acholi differed from those of the Anuak and the Shilluk. Even more explicitly, Girling (1960) insisted, "The antithesis between 'state' and 'stateless' societies in Africa has become a common place of contemporary social anthropology, but in my view this distinction is meaningless. .... In the case of the Acholi they were certainly not 'stateless' in 1860, and there is no evidence that they ever had been" (Girling, 1960, p.3). Meanwhile, Onyango Ku Odongo and Webster (1976) suggested that the Kitara kingdom was indeed founded by the Luos. Quite recently, Simon Simonse (1992) concluded that, "Since the Lwo are known to have played an important role in the pre-colonial processes of state formation in the interlacustrine area, .... Luo antecedents in our area of research have relevance for the reconstruction of the past over a more extensive area" (Simonse, 1992, p.53). Once it became apparent that lineage theory was not useful in the denigration of Luo history, attention focussed on re-examining the identities of the Central Luos in Uganda.

It was in the recent work of R.R. Atkinson (1995) that the distortion of Luo identity took a new twist. Atkinson had come to Uganda as a member of the American Peace Corp, but later carried out research under Makerere University's Oral history project that had been spearheaded by J.B. Webster. In his earlier work, 'State Formation and Language Change in Westernmost Acholi in the 18th Century', Atkinson (1984) had provided a useful account of state formation in Acholi during the 18th century. In his latter work, *The Roots of Ethnicity, The Origin of the Acholi of Uganda Before the 18th Century*, Atkinson embraced the lineage theory and had wanted to apply it to the analysis of pre-colonial Acholi society. Faced with difficulties, Atkinson then sought to portray the Acholi as distinctively non-Luo after all and wrote, " The independent but mutually interacting communities of early Acholi were made up of speakers of three major language groups: Central Sudanic, Eastern Nilotic, Western Nilotic Luo" (R.R. Atkinson, 1985, p.71). He added that, " .... I challenge one of the most common themes of East African historiography, which attributes the origin of kingship or chiefship throughout the region, including, Acholi, to early Luo-speaking migrants from the Southern Sudan circa 1500 ...." (R.R Atkinson, 1995, p. 18). Atkinson was aware that a number of states in Acholi were founded by fugitive Luo princesses and followers from Bunyoro and never questioned the Luo-ness. However, he later wanted to label Luos who passed through Central Sudanic and the so-called Nilo-hamitic regions as non-Luos, just to distort Luo migration into Acholiland. Amongst the Central Luos, (Acholi, Alur, Lango), the Alur dialect and

that of the Lamogi of Acholi are quite close to that of the Kavirondo (Kenya & Tanzanian) Luos and differ slightly from the main dialect spoken in wider Acholi. Two main factors could have brought about the differences. Firstly, if Crazzolarà's (1950) work is taken seriously, the Acholi region has to be seen as the convergence point of all the Luo groups migrating from lower and Upper Egypt, Arabia and Mesopotamia. While the migrants may have traversed Eastern Sudanic Nilo-hamitic territories, they were Luos who had set off from the regions that the Cushites or Kushites (Koch people) had once settled and had diverse backgrounds. Secondly, the priestly and court language of Nilotic Kingdoms differs from the commonly spoken versions. (cf the corresponding 'hieratic' and 'demotic' scripts in the ancient Itiyopianu and Egypt). Thus, in Acholiland, there was a fusion of the two spoken Luo dialects. The above factors necessarily led to the development and simplification amongst the Acholi of the very Luo dialect, which is still spoken by the Alur, Lamogi and Jo-Luo. Crazzolarà (1938), specifically noted that the Acholi did not adopt foreign words, "The Acooli, on the other hand, have probably been less influenced in their vocabulary, but have changed and simplified the forms of the words, dropping nearly every kind of stem modification, as in noun plurals, &c., to a much greater extent than the rest" (Crazzolarà, 1938, p. xii). Elsewhere, Fr. Crazzolarà, (1950) wrote, "If an Acholi in ordinary conversation wants to assert that he spoke in plain intelligible homely language, he says: aloko lok Lwoo do! << I spoke in plain Lwoo!>> ...."( Crazzolarà, 1950, p.4). Thus, contrary to the assertion of Atkinson, the Acholi are pure Luo and spoke a dialect that was a product of internal development. Atkinson (1985) wanted to disregard linguistic, archaeological and written accounts of Luo history and revert to anthropological approach in order to downplay, denigrate and deny the Luo, any contribution to civilisation.

If Atkinson questioned whether or not the Acholi were a Luo group, other writers focussed on the distortion of Luo cradle-land. J. B Webster (1976, 1979), a Canadian Africanist and a proponent of the oral historical tradition had taught in Ibadan and at Makerere Universities and was aware of the nature of distortions about the Luo that some of the Africanists were engaged in and with Onyango Ku Odongo, had this to say,

"The question of the origin of the Lwo, their migration and settlement in many parts of East Africa, has already been examined by many historians of integrity. The location of the Lwo cradle-land has, however, remained an unsolved historical problem. So far, two versions have been given of

the probable location of the original homeland of the Lwo. The first version came from Westernmann, Hofmayr and Seligman,<sup>1</sup> who have all postulated a common Nilotic cradleland somewhere to the east of some unidentified great lakes. ....” (Webster & Ku Odongo, 1976, p.25)

Westernmann, Hofmayr and Seligman did not identify the location or identify of the Great Lakes from whose vicinity the Lwo were purported to have originated. All they wanted was to obscure the cradle-land or at least manoeuvre it away from the confluence of ancient civilisations in Upper Egypt. There was no point on their part in suggesting an easterly direction of a place, which remained unidentified. For the trio, an origin of the Lwo should be left to speculation but anywhere, away from the Sudan and Egypt would do. J. B. Webster and Ku Odongo (1976) added that,

“ The second version came from Reverend Father Crazzolaro<sup>2</sup> who placed the original homeland of the Nilotes to the west of the Nile, in the Bahr-el-Ghazal, near Rumbek. He came to this opinion after a very exhaustive and painstaking collection of oral traditions from the Nilotes. But it would appear that the oral traditions, which he collected, did not extend back far enough to cover the whole period of Lwo evolution. What he collected seemed to refer only to the events, which took place after the first dispersal of the Nilotes from the legendary home of the Lwo, known as “Dog Nam” or the Lake Shore Settlement”.(Webster & Ku Odongo, 1976, p.25)



Rev. Fr. Crazzolaro’s collection of oral traditions were detailed enough to cover most of the period of Lwo evolution. For example, he suggested that, “There may be found a number of people in

Africa with a past equally as chequered as the Lwoo, but with most of them there remain only slight traces, a few historical fragments here and there – one can hardly speak of ‘a people’ any longer. Of such fragments there remain many in the present habitat of the Acholi as will be revealed” (Crazzolaro, 1950, p.1). However, he was not keen to uncover aspects of Luo history which he knew impacted on the development of Western philosophy and religion. Most importantly, Fr. Crazzolaro and other missionaries were not too keen to dispense with religion as a tool and wanted to impose the western version of Christianity in order to control the colonised. Thus, Fr. Crazzolaro remained evasive about the original home country of the Luo. His claim that Bahr-el- Ghazal was that original country was the same old strategy so often employed by some Euro-centric scholars to de-link Africa from the ancient civilisations. Most aspects of the period of Lwo evolution has been well documented in both the oral traditions and written sources. The identification of the Cradle-land would uncover the region formerly known as Upper Egypt (modern Northern Sudan). The region is rich in archaeological materials that are related to the ancient Koch (Cush) kingdom. It should not be a surprise that those scholars keen to deny an African link to ancient Egypt were equally determined to restrict the Luo cradle-land to Southern Sudan. J.B. Webster (1979) who was not at all satisfied with the two versions, pointed out that, “As other historians have suggested, perhaps a more useful approach in searching for a correct answer to this difficult question of the Lwo cradle-land would be through the fields of linguistics and archaeology. For the moment we look into the traditions of the central Lwo who are known today as the Acholi” (Webster, 1976, p.25). Ironically, as will be discussed below, the oral tradition of the Acholi contained all the information one needed to identify the Luo cradle-land.

### **Luo Cradle-Land at Tekidi (Napata), the Grand Court of Koch (Kush)**

During the colonial period, indigenous scholars in Northern Uganda were keen to present their own history and expose as fallacies, the accounts presented by colonial scholars. Girling (1960), an anthropologist, witnessed the activities of the indigenous writers and noted that, “.... In many parts of the district I found men with small exercise books in which they had written accounts of the past, taken from the lips of their grandfathers and other old men” (Girling, 1960, p.202). One such man was Onyango ku Odongo (1976) who wrote,

“It was in 1942 that I first developed an interest in oral traditions and begun to make some notes on them. As I did not then know that these notes would become useful in future, in writing a

book, they were carelessly and disorderly scribbled in a school exercise book. The stories were mixed up with old proverbs, songs, rituals and many odd things related to every Acholi life. The chief contributor was my grandmother, Alunga Lujim. Unfortunately, the Second World War interrupted my stay with Alunga Lujim, and I could not record more notes which might have been useful in throwing some light on the dim past of the central Lwo. ...." (Onyango ku Odongo, 1976, p.27)

Ku Odongo's collection and documentation of Luo history was interrupted as he was conscripted into the King's African Rifle of the British army that fought in the Second World War. After the war, he resumed the documentation of oral history and travelled to the Sudan to do field work amongst the Shilluk and the Anuak. Unfortunately, the Anyanya civil war broke out in 1956 whilst Ku Odongo was in the Sudan. Subsequently, the valuable historical data that he had collected from his field trip was confiscated and destroyed by the Sudanese soldiers. However, through sheer determination, he was able to put together the accounts passed to him by oral historian, Alunga Lujim.

According to Ku Odongo, the Luo had developed a prosperous kingdom with the capital or grand court at the foot of a mountain. Ku Odongo specifically pointed out that, "The central Lwo people, who lived in a settlement known in the legend as Tekidi or " on the foot of mountains", had a great kingdom which was making steady progress in many fields of human endeavour"(Ku Odongo, 1976, p.80). Though unaware, Ku Odongo was referring to the Koch (Kush) kingdom at Napata. He added that, "This great kingdom was destroyed by the first brown men to meet the Lwo. The last ruler or king of this kingdom was called Owiny wod Pule Rac Koma" (Ku Odongo, 1976, p.80). Interestingly, archaeological work has unearthed the ancient Kushitic kingdom at Napata, in Northern Sudan. According to G. Mokhtar (1990), "Taharqa's name is found on numerous monuments throughout the whole length of the Nile Valley. He built his sanctuaries at the foot of the holy mountain of Djabal Barkal, a kind of sandstone table formation, which dominates the large fertile basin of Napata. ...." (Mokhtar, 1990, p. 163). It was considered to be the land of the Gods. Thus, contrary to the assertion of Westernmann, Seligman, Hofmayr and Fr.Crazzolaro, the Luo cradle-land was not east of some unidentified Great Lakes or Rumbek in Bar-el-Ghazal, but Napata in Northern Sudan. The main reason for misrepresenting the location of

the Luo cradle-land was to de-link the Luo from and deny them any claims on the ancient kingdom of Kush (or Koch).

Chancellor Williams (1987) observed that the greatest dream of all the great kings of the Nile Valley was the consolidation of the southern and northern regions, hence the constant wars between upper and lower Egypt. Tekidi, the grand court of the kingdom, the land of the gods also bore the brunt of military incursions from lower Egypt. According to Onyango Ku Odongo & Webster (1976),

“ .... the people of Rwot Owiny wod Pule Rac Koma of tekidi lived peacefully for some years. Later, their peace was interrupted by a strange people who were thought to be jok or super-natural beings. These strangers invaded the Lwo settlement from the north. They shattered the formerly invincible great Lwo kingdom of Rwot Owiny. Some old men in Acholi said these strangers were white but others believe that they were brown, red or yellow. It was generally agreed, however, that these first white, brown or red invaders had long black silky hair and untidy beards. ....” (Ku Odongo & Webster, 1976, p.131)

Coincidentally, an incursion for the control over Tekidi is still recalled in songs by musicians and royal bwola dancers in Acholi:

Lakila oywaro mony me lanek Oyuro do! Oyuro do! I Tekidi  
 Tong pa Oyuro odong, I Tekidi!  
 Iyee Lakila oywayo mony me lanek Oyuro ye! I Tekidi  
 Oyuro ye!  
 Nok rac ocera lweny!  
 Oneko Oyuro ye! I Tekidi  
 Nok rac ocera lweny ....!7

*Lakila mobilised an army to annihilate Oyuro! At Tekidi  
 Oyuro's spear was abandoned at Tekidi  
 Iyee, Lakila mobilised an army to annihilate Oyuro ye!  
 Oyuro ye!  
 Poor state of conscription made the war difficult  
 Oyuro got killed at Tekidi!*

*Poor state of conscription made the war difficult.* (The writer's translation in Italics)

The Agoro State of the Acholi, do recall Lakila as one of their great kings. Interestingly, the Acholi use the word Yuro or Yuru to describe the densely silky haired which fits the description of the untidy bearded invaders who vanguarded at Tekidi. Once deconstructed, the proper name Bwo-moono that exists amongst the Acholi, does reveal the wars that were fought between the Luos and the white/brown invaders. The word 'Bwo' in the Acholi language means to overcome or defeat. On the other hand, 'Moono' is an Acholi noun meaning, " .... the white man, ...." (Crazzolaro, 1938, p. 310). Thus the name 'Bwomoono' is a call for the defeat of the white.

Recent research findings have confirmed the invasion of Napata by a mercenary supported Egyptian military force led by Harmachis or Amasis. According to G. Mokhtar (1990),

"Aspelta was a contemporary of Psammetik II. This is one of the few really secure synchronisms, almost the only one in a thousand years of history. In - 591, or the second year of the king's reign, the land of Kush was invaded by an Egyptian expedition, reinforced by Greek and Carian mercenaries, under two generals, Amasis and Potasimto, and Napata was captured. ...." ( Mokhtar, 1990, p.164).

Amasis, one of the leaders of the invaders, succeeded and became the last indigenous Egyptian Pharaoh. He became a hate figure amongst the Luos and his humiliation at the hand of Cyrus, which has been captured in an Acholi song and 'folk-tale' will be discussed further below. Suffice to mention that Napata was indeed the grand capital of the ancient Koch kingdom, which was also known as Cush or Kush. Constant threats and incursions from lower Egypt led to the relocation of the grand court of Koch, from Tekidi to Meroe as noted by G. Mokhtar (1990), when he wrote, ".... It is undoubtedly to the Egyptian raid, whose importance has long been underestimated, that we must attribute the transfer from Napata to Meroe, much further south, at no great distance from the Sixth cataract. Aspelta is in fact the first attested Meroe sovereign. ...." (Mokhtar, 1990, p.174). Ample evidence exists to show that the Meroitic kingdom was of Luo origin.



Historian Chiekh Anta Diop

Diop (1974), who laboured so much and convinced the world that Meroitic State was of Nilotic origin, showed a lapse of judgement when he suggested that, “The name Meroe does not seem to derive from an African root. It is probably what foreigners used after Cambysis to designate the Capital of Ethiopia (in the Sudan)” (Diop, 1974, p.143, 288). Yet in his article ‘Origin of the Ancient Egyptians’, Diop also noted that in ancient Egyptian, “mer = love”(Diop, 1990, p.29). Coincidentally, in the Luo language, the same word ‘mer’ = harmony, or to be friendly with, while “mar = love”. The writer is inclined to believe that the name Meroe derives from a Luo word Mero (or Meru) which means, ‘cultivate an harmonious relationship’. Linguistic evidence exists to show the affinity between the Luo language and the Meroitic script. According to A.A Hakem (1990),

“The rulers of Napata and Meroe used traditional Pharaonic titles in their inscriptions. Nowhere in their titlature do we encounter a Meroitic word for king. The title kwr (read qere, qer or qeren) appears only in Psammetik II’s account of his conquest of Kush when he mentions the king Aspelta. Though this title must have been the usual form of address of Kushite sovereigns, it was not allowed to intrude into the monuments of Kush. ....”(Hakem, 1990, p.174).

In the Acholi – Luo dialect, Ker (Qer) means royalty or Kingship. For example, Reuben Anywar (1954) wrote, Acoli ki ker megì, which translates as Kingship of the Acoli. Similarly, Lacito Okech (1953), another author also wrote, Tekwaro ki Ker Lobo West Acholi, which translates as, History

and Kingship in West Acholi. Meanwhile, in the same Acholi dialect, Ot Ker denotes the royal family or household. Thus the Meroitic title – Ker is a Luo word. On the other hand, the title used by the sovereigns of Meroe was Reth, or Rwoth, or Rwot. According to A.C.A. Wright (1940), “Reth is a frequent title in Demotic and is translated as Inspector or ‘Agent’ (Cat. Of the Demotic Papyri in the Ryland library III p.367). Demotic ‘rt’ is Egyptian ‘rwd’ – agent found also in Coptic”<sup>9</sup>. It is worth noting that ‘rt’ (Reth) is the title of the Shilluk King, while rwd (Rwot) is the title of an Acholi King. Amongst the Luos, women participated fully in governance. In a further scrutiny of the title of Meroe’s female rulers, A.A. Hakim (1990) added that:

“The title is derived from the Meroitic Ktke or Kdke meaning queen mother. Another title – qere – meaning ruler was not used until the Meroitic script appeared. As a matter of fact we have only four queens known to have used this title, namely Amanirenas, Amanishekhete, Nawidemak and Maleqereabar, all by definition being candaces. ....” (Ahakim, 1990, p.174).

Coincidentally, amongst the Acholi, the queen mother occupies a special place, and was (is) referred to either as Min Rwot or Dak ker. Kdke in the Meroitic script simply refers to Dak ker. The best known of whom was Daka. Just as threats at Napata forced the location of the Koch Kingdom to Meroe, the destruction of Meroe led to the decline and fall of the greatest civilisation of the Nile Valley, forcing the Luos to move to great Lakes region and other parts of Africa. In the Great Lakes region, the Luos soon begun to build themselves up and founded the Kitara empire. In a description of the elaborate state organisation reconstructed by the Nilotics, the Rev. B. Fisher wrote,

“Then as regards government, if they had not modelled it after a higher example shown them, how can we account for the intricate and highly developed form of native administration which we found existing in these parts, and which the British Government was not able to improve upon for these people” (The Geographical Journal, Vol 24, No.3 A. B. Fisher, 1904, p.250)



Royal drummers of the Luo-originated Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom

The Kitara Kingdom was not pristine or Bantu in origin. Curiously enough, the Nilotic rulers who founded that state still had fond memory of Meroe. For example, the Meroitic origin of Kitara was, revealed to the British explorer, Major John Hannington Speke, by Rumanika, the 19th century king who ruled Karagwe as a satellite of the Kitara. In a conversation with Major Speke, King Rumanika pointed to the ancient kingdom of Meroe or Meru in the Sudan as the origin of the Kitarans:

This conversation diversified by numerous shrewd remarks on the part of Rumanika, led to his asking how I could account for the decline of countries, instancing the dismemberment of the Wahuma of Kitara, and remarking that formerly Karagwe including Urundi and Kishakka, which collectively were known as the kingdom of Meru governed by one man (Speke, 1863, p.226)

Rumanika suggested that, Kitara had fragmented and was no longer a powerful empire as it once was. Most importantly, he also confirmed that Kitara was the successor of the once powerful state known as Meru or Meroe. The Meroitic State was also described as Ethiopian. Therefore, of interest to us here is the link between Meroe and Itiyopi-anu (Ethiopia).

#### **4.0 The Luo and dedication of service to Anu – the Itiyopianu people**

The Egyptologist who contributed so much to the identification of the earliest settlers in the Nile valley was the Frenchman, Abbe Emile Amelineau, As an archaeologist, he was also credited with the discovery of Osiris' tomb at Abydos (Diop, 1974, p.76). It was Amelineau who identified the early settlers as the Anu people and wrote that in their migration down the Nile, the Anu peoples founded cities such as Esneh, Erment, Quoch and Heliopolis, pointing out that, "All those cities have the characteristic symbol which serves to denote the name Anu. It is also an ethnic sense,

that we must read the term Anu applies to Osiris” (Amelineau, 1916, pp.124–125). Quoch later became the most famous as it expanded into lower Egypt, Asia and the Aegean sea. It was also variously known and written as Kush, Cush or Koch (Drussilla Houston, 1985, p.222). Following Amelineau, Diop made further revelation about the same people when he wrote,

“These Anu .... were an agricultural people, raising cattle on a large scale along the Nile, shutting themselves up in walled cities for defensive purposes. To this people we can attribute, without fear of error, the most ancient Egyptian Books, The Book of the Dead, and the Texts of the Pyramids, consequently, all the myths or religious teaching. I would add almost all the philosophical then known and still called Egyptian ....” (Diop, 1974, p.77).

According to Diop, it was the Anu people who authored the various books and scripts associated with Egyptian religion and philosophies. The Anu people were also referred to as the ‘Agu’. According to Houston (1985), “This was the aboriginal race of Abyssinia. It was symbolised by the great Sphinx and the marvellous face of Cheops .... The ‘Agu’ of the monuments represented this aboriginal race. They were the ancestors of the Nubians, and were the ruling race of Egypt (Houston, 1985, p.35). D.D. Houston added that, “This old race of the Upper Nile, the Agu or Anu of the ancient traditions spread their arts from Egypt to the Aegian, from Sicily to Italy and Spain (Houston, 1985, p.49). Up to the 1960s ‘Agu’ was still worshipped amongst the Acholis in Uganda and the Sudan. It was offered a sacrifice on a mountain known as Got or mount ‘Agu’, “1. Keny, son of Ocak came from Lepfool to Got Agu, where he died. 2. Obaak, son of Keny, died at Got Agu. 3. Atanga, son of Obaak, died like wise at Got Agu. (Crazzolaro, 1950, p.177). Though Amelineau, Diop and Houston all identified the early settlers as the Anu, they neither explained nor defined the meaning of the word Anu.

#### **4.1 What is Anu and who were the Anu peoples?**

The ancient systems of philosophies are recorded in the Egyptian Book of the Dead. In order to understand the emergence of the philosophical systems, one has to look at the economic problems at the time. The most serious of which were droughts and floods, all of which posed serious threats to land, an important means of production and livelihood. The Nile along whose valley the Anu people descended was regarded as the source of prosperity and honoured as the life – giving waters out of which the universe and all it contains emerged. Droughts, floods and threats to the means of livelihood were attributed to a supernatural force or god that played a

reconciliatory role between humans and nature. Thus in the Anu peoples' cosmogony, it was held that the universe developed from a primordial watery matter known as 'Nu'. " represents the primeval watery mass from which all the gods were evolved .... This god's title are "Father of the gods" ...." (E.A. Wallis Budge, cvii). The prefix 'A' means 'of'. Thus 'Anu' means, 'of the father of gods'. Anu was considered to have the properties of self- development known as Khapere. Amongst the Acholi, Khapere or Lhacere is a common name, which, signifies 'unstable-ness' or one who never settles down at all. Through the process of self- development, Anu or Lhapi was transformed into Ra, the Sun god. The Acholi are the only people in the Eastern Africa region who recognised 'Ra'. Writing about the arrival and settlement of a central Luo group under one named Ocaak, Fr. Crazzolaro noted, "Paari mythology tends to indicate that he was killed by some evil Jwook (spirit); that is why they call this people Parajook (para jwook, they dreaded this spirit or disease) .... (Crazzolaro, 1950, p.174). As a matter of fact, the name of an Acholi state in the Sudan is known as the Parajok. Once deconstructed, the true meaning of the state comes out as 'Pa-Ra-Jok' ('Pa' is a possessive preposition of, Ra is the Sun god and Jok is spirit). Thus, Parajok means 'Of the spirit Ra', and a dedication to the Sun god, which completed the creation of the universe.

The terms used to describe the metamorphosis of the Sun or Ra, have bearings with the Luo language. For example, Horu (Oru) in Acholi means the 'sun has arisen' and the 'day has broken'. In the same language, Hru-piny means, ".... Dawn, when the sun breaks through and drives away the cover of darkness and night ...." (P'Bitek, 1980, p.155). It is simply the 'coming forth by day'. Today, a Luo language weekly news paper in Uganda is known as Hru-piny. To the Acholi, the setting sun at dusk is said to be dying. 'Too' or 'Thoo' is a neuter verb meaning 'to die'. Amongst the Acholi, a goddess known as 'Atoo or A'tho' (read as in Hathor) is worshipped on a Got Atoo mountain. Writing about the migration of the Bwobo peoples who had retreated from the Kavirondo Luo and rejoined the Acholi, Fr. Crazzolaro pointed out that, "Later, they moved south-west across the Acaa to Ureet, Odac, Lovaa and Got Atoo, (Pa-Icoo), where Ongoom is mentioned as their Rwoot. Could A'thoo be the Hathor the goddess that reproduces life? Interestingly, Horus the king, was said to be the son of 'Hathor', the mother of his incarnation. Fr. Crazzolaro also noted that, Jo-Lamwoo were in charge of Jook Lacic, whose abode was on Got Lacic, called also Got Lamwoo. They had to offer sacrifices to Jook Lacic on this mountain, ...." (Crazzolaro, 1950, p.175). The goddess the Acholi refer to the 'Lacic' is the ancient Isis. Amongst the Luos, the word

'Cier'(Cyer) is a verb, which means, to rise from the dead. Similarly, 'Ciero' (Ciero) is another verb meaning to raise from the dead. On the other hand, 'Ocier' means, has risen. Coincidentally Ausar (or Osiris) was the Egyptian god who had passed through death and had the power of bringing to life, out of death. In linking Osiris with the Luo people, Henry Frankfort (1948) wrote,

".... We should consider for the moment a very similar god worshipped by the Shilluk, modern Nilotes who are related to the ancient Egyptians. We have referred above\* to Nyakang, who like Osiris, counts as a former king. Like Osiris, too, he is credited with having given to his people the element of culture. Both are permanently concerned with the well being of their people and influence it from beyond. .... Nyakang is the equivalent of both Horus and Osiris in this respect (Frankfort, 1948, p.198-199)

The relationship between the Nilotic Shilluk that Frankfort referred to above was confirmed by Fr. Crazzolaro who wrote about the death disappearance of Nyikango following his murder, as was the case with Osiris,

"Nyikango .... became tired of their unending disputes. One such contender went one day and threw a spear at Nyikango hitting him in the chest. <> Nyikango said to his people. He was taken to a hut. Its roof opened of itself, and Nyikango went into the height - into heaven, in the shape of smoke, keta mal a iiro. The important chiefs were called. ....the members of Nyikango's family said to the chiefs: <> - turning to the gazing people Nyikango said reprovingly: <> ...." (Crazzolaro, 1950, p.126 -127).

Nyikango was like Osiris, a god of the dead. As a royal, Nyikango had rivals and there were feuds similar to that encountered by Osiris with his brother Set. In Nyikango's case, the main rival was a Dowaat as noted by Fr. Crazzolaro who wrote, "Nyikango was driven away by his half-brother Dowaat, because he aspired to take his place ...." (Crazzolaro, 1950, p.130). Without doubt, there is a strong affinity between principal characters in the Shilluk tradition and those in the philosophy of ancient Ethiopians/Egyptians religion.

Besides Frankfort's observations, the link between ancient Egypt and the Luos did attract the attention of Chiek Anta Diop. In identifying the Anu people with the Luos, Diop (1991) wrote, "The Anuak of the Sobat River (Evans-Pritchard, p.253) recall the proto-historic tribe of Anu (of Osiris's ethnicity), who originally occupied the Nile valley" (Diop, 1981, p.121). To recall means to have

knowledge. Thus the Anuak have knowledge about the first and the original inhabitants of the Nile Valley, Osiris's tribe the Anu. As for the identity of the Anuak, E.E. Evans-Pritchard (1940) noted,



A young Anyuak girl

“The Anuak belong to the Shilluk-Luo group of the Nilotic peoples and this monograph provides further data for comparative study of their political systems. The group comprises the Shilluk, Anuak, Acholi, Luo of L.Victoria, Luo of the Bahr-el-Ghazal and the closely related Dembo, Shat, and Mannangir, Alur, Lango, Jo-Pa-Dhola, Kumam, Bor, and Fori....” (Evans-Pritchard, 1940, p.5)

Both Diop and Evan-Pritchard confirmed that the Luos were the very Nilotic peoples who first settled the Nile Valley and founded the ancient Kingdom of Koch (Cush, Kush, or Quoch). In the Luo language, i- means, thou and ‘tiyo’ is a verb to work or dedicate service to, pi- means, for. ‘Anu’ was the primordial watery mass, the god of gods. Thus, itiyopianu means people who dedicated services to Anu. The Koch kingdom of the Itiyo-pi-anu expanded into Egypt, Arabia, Chaldea and the Aegian peninsula (Drussila D. Houston, 1985). The Luo presence in Egypt is discussed below.

## 5.0. The Luo in Ancient Egyptian history.

### Luo expansion into Egypt.

Koch (Kush, Cush, Quoch) was the original and powerful Itiyopian kingdom that first emerged in the Nile Valley in the modern Republic of the Sudan. The sovereigns of Koch extended Itiyopianu rule into the Lower Nile region, which later became known as Egypt. More specifically, it was the

Thebban priest/kings from the Upper Nile Valley of Koch that established theocratic rule in ancient Egypt. The first king of Dynasty I, was Menya (Mena, or Menes). Speakers of Indo-European languages have difficulties in pronouncing African words with the consonant 'ny' as in Kenya or Nyerere. In the case of Menya, the letter the 'y' was omitted altogether so that Menya is spelt and read as Mena and quite often distorted as Mene. This distortion and the omission of the letter 'y' was pointed out by E.A. Wallis Budge (BOTD: xii). Thus the first king of Egypt was not Mena or Menes as has been depicted in many texts but Menya, the Thebban and originally, one of the Itiopian priests (Dunjee Houston, 1985:69). Menya is a Luo name and a common one amongst the Acholi today. The name 'Menya' means 'shines on me'. Amongst the Acholi, Menya is still remembered as a rich and powerful person, in the following proverb; "Tong gweno oloyo Menya"- translates as 'Menya failed to get an egg' (Okot P'Bitek, 1985:86). For such a powerful figure, nothing was beyond his reach. However, on one fateful day even an egg was not affordable. It was beyond Menya's reach. Menya's clan, the 'Pa-Menya' are today affiliates of the former Payira state of Acholi.

It was Menya who built one of the first temples in Egypt. One of the temples, 'Ptah' was so named in honour of the solar god. The solar god illuminates the world by the fire of its eyes. Thus it was the illuminary that 'shines on him'. Coincidentally, Tah is also a Luo word meaning bright light or an illuminary. 'Ptah' means 'of the illuminary' or 'of the light'. The prefix 'P' means 'of' as in Okot of Bitek above. A-gy-ptah or Ae-gy-ptah means 'I am of the light'. Thus the name Egypt is not 'Kemit', but comes from the term 'AEGYPTAH' and was a construct of Menya, the first king. Menya went on and instituted the first dynastic and theocratic monarchy. Menya saw himself as the solar god that has descended amongst men.

He was succeeded by one 'Aha'. Interestingly, this is a familiar common Luo name. In the Luo language, this name is an expression, which means, 'I have risen'. He was succeeded by 'Djer'(H. Frankfort, 1948:xxiv). His name means 'set back'. Meanwhile, 'Dimu', the last ruler of the first dynasty is the ancestor of the Shilluk. In acknowledging Dimu as the ancestors of the Shilluk, Fr. Crazzolaro wrote, "Nyikango fled to Dhimmo (Collo spelling), who is said to have been a Reth, king, whose country was distinct from that of Dowaat ...." (Fr. Crazzolaro, 1950, p.123). The second dynastic ruler 'Nacca' still carried a Luo common name and this trend continued. The Fifth dynastic ruler who assumed power around 2340 B. C. was 'Tet-ka-Ra'. The word 'Tet' or 'Teth' is

Luo meaning, 'forge, design, mould, construct or create'. The name meant 'the creation of or the hand work of 'Ra''. In the sixth dynasty, which ended in 2180 B. C, the first Pharaoh carried the name 'Teti' meaning 'design and make' in the Luo language. The 18th dynasty rulers included 'Ahmose', whose name translates in Luo as 'I hail him/her' and 'Akhena-tuon', meaning 'I am the one and only bull'. He was succeeded by, the boy- king, 'Tute-ankh-amunu'. The word 'tute' in Luo means, strive, endeavour or struggle. On the other hand, 'ankh' is the eternal life (Ben-Jochannan, 1972, p.362). Thus, the boy king who was likened to the life giver was urged, 'struggle patiently like that the life giver'.

In the late period 750 BC Kabaka or 'Pi-ankh' reasserted Itiyopian rule over Egypt. Do these titles have any significance amongst the Luos? According to Kabaka Mutesa, the king who ruled the Buganda kingdom at the dawn of British colonialism in Uganda, 'Kabaka' the king's title means "the glorious messenger of Baka"<sup>10</sup>. As for the meaning of 'Baka', P'Bitek provided a useful explanation he wrote, " I swear in the name of Baka, the Jok of Patiko Chieftom, that I shall speak the truth, without hiding anything from you, or tell a lie, but all the truth as I know it" (P'Bitek, 1989, p.69). Okeca Ladwong, an Acholi native from Patiko and the main character in P'Bitek's satirical novel 'White Teeth', was swearing in a British court in colonial Uganda. Patiko was a pre-colonial Acholi State in Northern Uganda that was destroyed by Turko-Egyptian and British colonialism, and Baka was the State Deity. The point here is that through Luo migration and relocation, the use of the titles 'Baka' of the Koch ruler continued in the post Meroitic States in the Great Lakes region. Meanwhile, 'Pi-ankh's influence in the Great Lakes region and Central Africa is seen in the recognition of the supreme being amongst the Bantus. For example in the Luo founded Bunyoro- Kitara kingdom, the supreme- being became known as 'Ru-hanga'. Today, the existence of common names such as 'Lu-anga', and 'Mu-anga' are a direct outcome of the influence of the ancient ruler of Koch in the great Lakes region.

In the Nile Valley the magnificent seats of government such as Thebbes and temples at Karnak and Luxor still carry Luo names. For example, in the first place the word Thebbe or Tebbe is Acholi for 'seat of government'. For example Rwot (King) Olya of the Atyak city state of Acholi described his headquarters as his "Tebbe" (Lacito Okech, 1953:87). Meanwhile, Karnak is a distortion of Luo word 'Ka-naka' which means, 'the place of the everlasting'. Luxor on the other hand comes from the Luo word 'Lu-kwor' meaning, 'the living'. As lower Egypt increasingly came

under foreign domination, the people of Lukwor (Luxor) retreated to Koch, at Te-Kidi, the grand capital, where Onyango-ku- Odongo (1976), noted, "Here the people of Lukwor prospered and made progress in many fields" (Ku Odongo, 1976, p.80). The last indigenous Egyptian Pharaoh was Amacic (Harmachis or Amasis) who was put to death by Cambysis in 525 BC. Amasis is still remembered in Acholi today and was a hate figure, having participated in the destruction of 'Tekidi', the grand capital Koch. He was derided as a traitor for colluding with foreigners and more so for his inability to stand firm, in the face of flagrant aggression by Cyrus and his son Cambysis. Cyrus had wanted the service of an Egyptian Oculist (Herodotus, 1954:203). However, the expert selected was resentful and in revenge, suggested to Cambysis to demand Amacic's daughter for a wife. Amacic's humiliation has been captured in an Acholi 'folk tale' and a song passed down to me, and which in part says,

"Got Amacic yee! Got Amacic ni immii dako, Got Amacic! Man rwot ma ocwala got Amacic ni imii dako got Amacic!"<sup>11</sup>

"Oh Amacic the mountain, please provide a bride. Amacic the mountain I am the king's messenger sent to collect the bride!" (My translation).

Amasis' humiliation by Cambyses is well documented in Herodotus' 'The Histories'. Through sheer coincidence, the story was passed onto the writer, as a 'folk tale' by Safira Anek, a native of the former Acholi State of Alero, who trace their origin to Egypt. Fr. Crazzolaro (1950) gave a brief account of the origin of the Alero peoples and noted, "Owiny, Labongo, Opiir were the three men that came fro Misri (Egypt) (Crazzolaro, 1950, p.256). Safira's narrative further shows that oral tradition remains relevant particularly if backed by written sources. Without doubt, the demise of Amacic sparked a frantic migration from Egypt down to the Sudan and later to the great Lakes region and beyond.

## 6.0. Conclusion

The reclamation of African heritage from ancient Egyptian civilisation has been a daunting endeavour. This has been due a great deception about the identity of the ancient Egyptians and also to the obstacles placed by some euro-centric scholars to deny Africans their historical heritage portraying them as a people without history. From the advent of colonialism till now, the history curriculum in most African education institutions was based on the experiences of Europeans and their world-view. The false perception of the colonialism as a civilising mission led

Africans to embrace a euro-centric curriculum. Though the ancient Egyptians invented writing through which they documented their history, the very loss by Africans, of Cush, Egypt, Akum, (Axum), and Meroe culminated in migration and the gradual loss of their ancient art of writing. The inability of Africans to read ancient scripts remains a big obstacle in their quest to re-discover their past.

The historical analysis in this paper is a contribution towards the reclamation and linking of Luo and African history to that of ancient Itiyopianu and Egypt. We have argued that the conception and development of the 'Hamitic theory' was undertaken to thwart such an effort. Attempts by some western historians, Egyptologists and missionary scholars to conceal the Luo cradle-land, distort the identities of some Luo groups of peoples and their migration patterns, were part of a strategy calculated to rob not only the Luos, but Africans of their historical heritage. Using linguistic, oral and written sources, we have presented an argument to support the contention that the Itiyopianu kingdom of Koch (Cush), which expanded into lower- Egypt, was indeed founded by the Luos. From Napata, the people of Koch migrated and settled in Arabia, Mesopotamia and Phoenicia. The Luo presence in those areas will be a subject of future discussion.

Notes.

1. Chris Arthur (1993), 'Review of Shamsavari's Dialectics and Social Theory', *Capital & Class*, 50 (1993)
2. Margaret Trowell, (1943), 'Who are the Hamites?' *The bulletin Of the Ugandan Society*, No 1, December 1943.
3. Ingham Kenneth (1957), 'Some aspect of the History of Western Uganda', *The Uganda Journal*, Vol 21, No. 1, The Ugandan Society, Kampala.
4. see Benjamin C. Ray (1991), *Myth, Ritual and Kingship in Buganda*, Oxford University press, New York, p 191.
5. Mahmood Mamdani (1984), 'Forms of Labour and Accumulation of Capital: Analysis of a village in Lango, Northern Uganda, Mawazo, Vol 5, No.4, Dec 1984, Makerere University Kampala
6. Some of Ku Odongo's contemporaries neglected the recording of the Oral Historical traditions of the Luo. Consequences, valuable historical information was lost. Ku Odongo lamented:

“It is regrettable that modern central Lwo scholars have preferred to study European history.

Many to whom I spoke told me that it was not possible to study what was “non-existent”. Apparently, they had cut themselves from the old folks and were not aware of the living oral traditions amongst their own community. Although there is wealth of conflicting stories, traditional, linguistic evidence and place-names which make the study of the central Lwo’s past very exciting ....” (Onyango ku Odongo, 1979, p.28)

7. Also in ‘Exile’, a track in Luo, by Goeffrey Oryema (1990), A Womad Production for real Sounds, London, Virgin Records Ltd. The song is popular with entertainers and artist who perform the ‘Bwola’ royal dance. In London the Luo Cultural Group regularly sing the lyric during their ‘Bwola’ dance performances.

8. Koch in the Acholi dialect refers to, ‘solitary, gigantic and formidable’.

9. Mrs Griffith, quoted in A.C. A Wright (1940) who reviewed J.P. Crazzolaro 91938), – ‘A study of the Acholi language, Uganda Journal, 1940, Vol VII no 4.

10. see Wilson C J. (1878), Letter to a Mr. Wright dated , G 3 A6/ C.M.S archives, University of Birmingham

11. See Herodotus, (1972), ‘The Histories’, p.203–205. During, his second year at Mary Knoll primary school, (Purongo, Acholi district), the writer narrated the same story to fellow pupils as part of ‘role play’ and ‘confidence building’ learning strategy that had been adopted by Ms. Magdelen Labol who took that class. Safira Anek, the writer’s mother had passed the story, on to Him.

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1. [#1](#) by **luounite** – April 4th, 2009 at 12:40

Good article, it's time for Luo intellectuals to sort out their history, civilization, leadership, and more importantly, a unified language which meets linguistics global standards. Luo young generation rely on their elders intellect & education to reach a common written language for all Luo.

Thanks,

Lwanyo

Awang,

Luo, Sudan

2. [#2](#) by **Domnic Okello** – April 4th, 2009 at 17:22

In fact, I agree with Mr. Lwanyo's concern about our historians to sort out by researching the history of Luos pre Nyakango and Dimo. The Luos seemed to have lived in Egypt at one time.

The knowledge of natural political administration in Luo seemed to be inborn. The level of organisation for a general purpose to fight for people's rights is universal to Luos. Can any historian explain to us the people who formed Alwa Kingdom of the lower Egypt?

Source: [www.luounite.net/2009/04/03/luo-origins-and-history](http://www.luounite.net/2009/04/03/luo-origins-and-history)