

THE EMURWON - DIVINER/PROPHET - IN THE
RELIGION OF THE ITESO

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by
Bette J.m. Ekeya

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Samuel G. Kibicho

Dec. 4, 1984

DR. SAMUEL G. KIBICHO

and

John S. Mbiti

24 November 1984

PROFESSOR JOHN S. MBITI

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my deepest thanks and appreciation, first of all, to my supervisors, Dr. Samuel Kibicho and Professor John Mbiti, for their untiring efforts in helping me to bring this study to a conclusion. Their corrections, suggestions and enthusiastic encouragement have been of great help. I appreciate the time they have given to make this study a reality.

In the course of collecting data, I had to travel to Uganda several times, when the economic and the security situations meant a terrible burden and risk to any guest and host. Despite this, several families gave me shelter for days at a time and even assisted me in the actual field research. In this regard, I would like to thank the families of Joseph Ssenyonjo of Kampala, Rev. George Olupot of Pallisa, John Gerald Eberu of Madera, Rev. Omodoi of Toroma and Rev. Donatus Mulabya who was then at Toroma. Mr. Eberu, although he is physically disabled, took me to places and did the actual interviews, as the Ateso dialect of Soroti differs from that which I speak.

I would not have managed to carry out all the interviews which I did on the Kenyan Iteso without the help and dedication of certain persons there. I would like to thank first of all, Mr. Stephen Omuse who not only assisted in most of the group interviews, but carried out a number of interviews on his own. Mr. Pancras Otواني offered the free use of his car, and with it we were able to interview a...

number of persons in North Teso. For several weeks, Rev. Roberto Villilova of Amukura Mission shared his hospitality as well as his own love of the Iteso culture. From time to time, I had to have clarification and explanation of unfamiliar terms and aspects of Iteso culture which I was discovering but whose significance was not apparent. Mr. Atanas Oluku, of Amaase, helped me to understand many of the difficult items.

Without the wholehearted cooperation of the many Iteso elders who were interviewed, most of the information would not have been collected. It is not possible to name them all, although I acknowledge my indebtedness to them. I hope that the effort I have made in recording and interpreting correctly all that they have taught me will pay part of my debt of gratitude to them.

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to the two ladies who typed the manuscript: Misses Rosa Abukutsa and Priscilla Peru. They laboured with concern to produce an accurate text. I found this most encouraging.

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the role of the diviner-prophet, that is, the emurwon, in Iteso religion. It investigates the presence, origin and ~~the~~ functions of the diviner-prophet in Iteso society.

The Iteso are found in both Kenya and Uganda. Their language is called Ateso. The Ateso language has two main "variations" or "dialects": the version which is spoken by the Northern Iteso and that spoken by the Southern Iteso. Although the two versions are virtually the same language, there are differences in spellings, accent and meanings of seemingly similar and identical words. One of these words is emurwon which is given the English equivalent as "diviner-prophet". Emurwon is the Southern Ateso spelling, while Northern Ateso prefers emuron. The Northern Iteso are found mainly in the former Teso District of Uganda. The Southern Iteso are found in former Bukedi District of Eastern Uganda and in the Amagoro Division of Busia District.

In the course of this study, it was found out that the ^{word} emurwon seemed to have two meanings. Some Iteso elders interviewed said that emurwon means "prophet"; others said "prophet" is ekadwaran and others still reversed the meanings of the two words. Further investigations revealed that often emurwon was both prophet and diviner. After a careful reflection, I decided to adopt emurwon as the most appropriate term and to translate it as diviner-prophet. This difficulty is discussed in the fourth chapter of the study.

The historical origins and ethnic affiliations of the Iteso are discussed in chapters one and two. Although they are numerically the second largest ethnic group in Uganda, for a whole district is practically

are hardly known in Kenya and the tendency is to confuse them with the Abaluhya with whom they are neighbours.

Studies which have been done on the Iteso have been mainly anthropological historical and general, the most notable of which are by Ivan Karp Lawrence and Webster. A study on their religious beliefs and on the importance of the prophetic leaders to the Iteso as such has not been done. This study is an attempt to fill this gap. The literature review on pages 11 - 15 points this out.

Iteso religion is closely interwoven into the fabric of the whole way of life of the Iteso people. Although they did not have written doctrines about God or a highly structured liturgical life centred on priests and sanctuaries, nevertheless, God was very real and dear to the people. The way ^{the} Iteso understood and worshipped God and what they called him is discussed in chapter three.

The emurwon was a central person in Iteso society and religion. His importance and functions as prophet, priest, healer and religious leader are treated in the fourth chapter. The importance and influence of emurwon underwent some decisive changes during and after the subjugation of the Iteso by the British. The coming of Western missionary christianity into Tesoland further changed the role and status of the emurwon in Iteso Society. The encounter of the Iteso with the British colonial administration and with Christianity is discussed in chapter five.

The concluding chapter, chapter six is an analysis of the present status and significance of the emurwon in a predominantly christianity-converted Iteso society. There is a need for the christian churches to change their understanding of emurwon in view of the continuing influence they have on the people. Recommendations as to the possibility of what can

more

This study is ^{more} descriptive ~~rather~~ than analytical, historical rather than purely theological. Iteso religion falls under the description of "religions of structure." In order to discover the contents of these religions, one needs to investigate their "entire world of events." This world is simply everyday events. It is a world which integrates all of life into a concrete whole. Ritual symbolism plays an important part in this integration. It is hoped that, since it is the first study of this kind that deals with Iteso religion, the ordinary Itesot who comes across it will be able to understand it.

The historical aspect of the study situates the Iteso into a particular time and place. The anthropological aspect gives the social and cultural structure of Iteso society. Iteso religion cannot be described in isolation from these aspects.

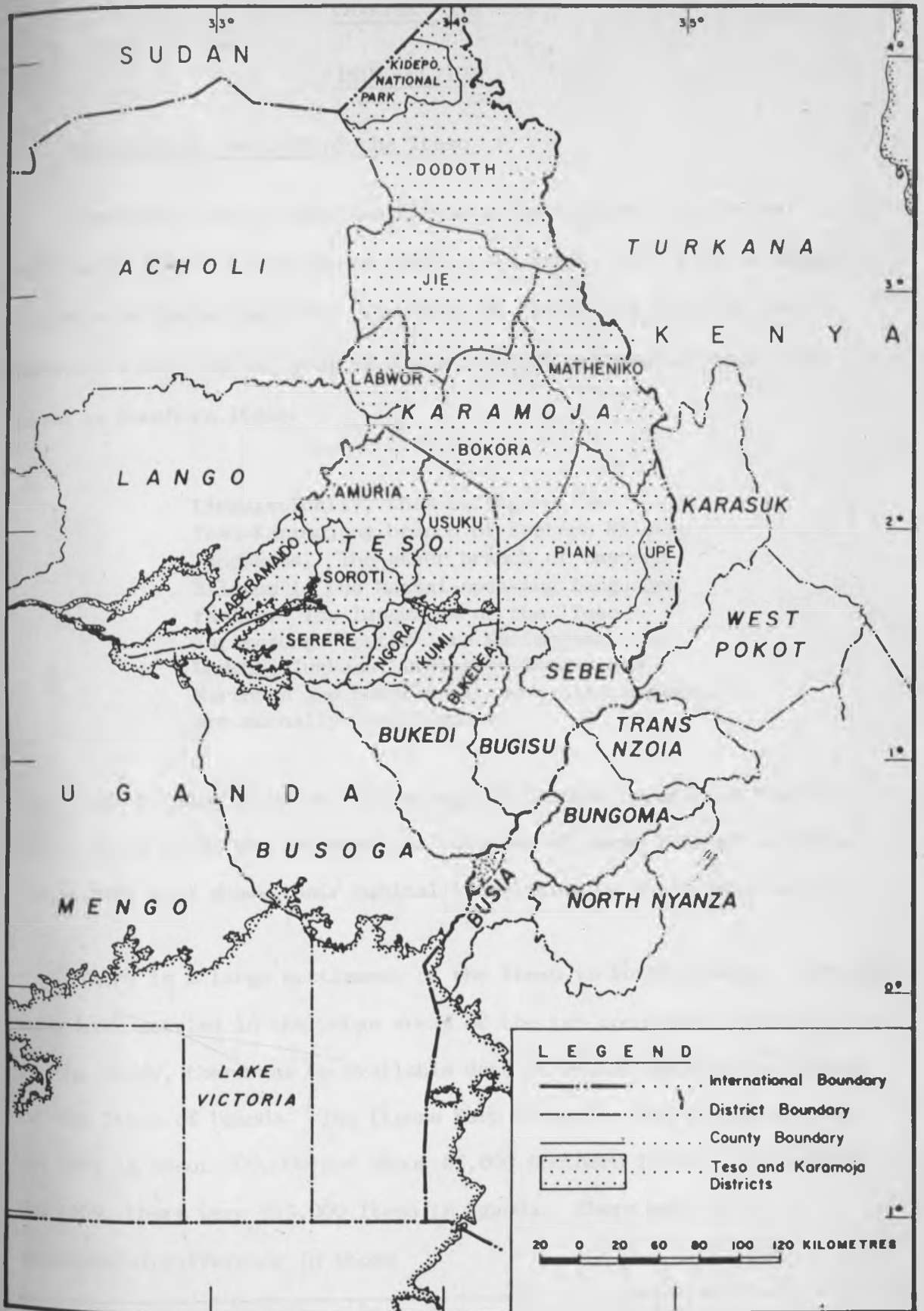


Fig.1 MAP OF EASTERN UGANDA AND WESTERN KENYA SHOWING TESO AND KARAMOJA DISTRICTS AND PART OF TURKANA

1. Geographical Location of the Iteso

The Iteso live in what was formerly Teso District in Central Uganda and Bukedi District in Eastern Uganda. In Kenya, they live in Amagoro Division of Busia District. The Iteso of Uganda are known as the Northern Iteso, while those of Eastern Uganda and Western Kenya are known as Southern Iteso.

Linguistically, they belong to the Teso-Karimojong branch of Eastern Nilotic languages. The other branch of Eastern Nilotes is the Maasai-speaking languages family. The languages of the 'Teso-Karimojong Cluster' are Karimojong, Jie, Dodoth, Turkana, Diding'am Toposa and Northern and Southern Iteso. All languages are mutually intelligible.¹

Fig. 1, page XB above, is the map of Eastern Uganda and Western Kenya which gives the geographical location of these related peoples. The dotted area shows their habital in relation to their neighbours.

There is a large settlement of the Iteso in North Busoga. A great many have settled in the urban areas of the two countries. At the time of the study, there was no available data on recent population figures of the Iteso of Uganda. The figure Karp gives for the Northern Iteso in 1969 is about 600,000 and about 65,000 Southern Iteso.² Altogether, in 1969, there were 665,000 Iteso in Uganda. There must be a substantial difference in those

¹ Ivan Karp, Fields of Change Among the Iteso of Kenya. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978, p. 9.

figures at present. The Kenya Population Census of 1979 gives 132,487 as the number of Iteso in Kenya. The number given at the 1969 census was 85,800.

The Iteso of Uganda are the second largest ethnic group in Uganda. Those of Kenya are a minority group. It was not possible to do any extensive study of the Iteso of Uganda mainly because the study focuses on the Iteso of Kenya; but also because of the prevailing situation. Time and capital alone would be required in immense quantities, for

Teso District alone occupies some 4,300 square miles of land area... The country is...marked by a vast network of swamps and rivers, especially in the south. The topography of the district is characterized by long, low gently undulating slopes. The altitude ranges from 3,500 feet to 3,700 feet; though isolated rocky granite outcrops and inselbergs attain a height of up to 4,500 feet.³

It was therefore possible to speak to only a small group of Iteso elders in Ngora, Pallisa, Soroti, Arapai, Madera and Toroma. It was particularly unwise to even attempt to do any interviews around the Tororo area. Despite the small number of persons interviewed, the material gathered from them was invaluable.

³ Victor C. Uchendu & K.R.M. Anthony. Agricultural Change in Teso District, Uganda. Nairobi, East African Publishing House, 1975, p.13.

The Kenyan Tesoland falls in what is technically called high-rainfall savannah, with an average rainfall of between 50 and 60 inches annually. Geographically, the land is

a series of hills running north and south. The altitude varies between 4,000 and 5,000 feet. The Iteso have occupied these central hills and flatlands surrounding them. Geologically,⁴ the area consists of a granite base with volcanic overlays. Granite outcrops are to be found in all parts of the Teso hills. Soils vary from sandy to clayey loams which are generally well drained but only moderately fertile. The depth of the topsoil is shallow.⁴

Eleusine, a variety of sorghum and cassava are the staple diet. Other food crops include a variety of peas, simsim, groundnuts and sweet potatoes. All of these foods are used also in one way or another for domestic religious rituals. From eleusine is made ajon, the Iteso traditional beer, without which life would probably grind to a halt. No domestic or other religious rituals can be performed without beer. No Etesot feels properly welcomed as a guest if ajon did not form a prominent part of his welcome and entertainment. The joint effort of cultivating fields is done largely by means of ajon. After the hard work, people gather from early afternoon round a well-earned pot of ajon.

Maize, cotton, tobacco and in some places, rice, are the chief cash crops. Subsistence farming is the chief occupation of

⁴ Karp, Op. Cit. p.11.

the Iteso who live in Tesoland. The mean income from the sale of these crops is still £12 per year.⁵ This very low income accounts for the failure of many Iteso youth to complete even primary school education.

There is a high rate of mobility of Iteso males to the urban areas. They go to the urban areas in search of employment. For the uneducated ones the jobs they end up getting are those which do not require skill or education: construction jobs, hotel waiters, barmen, shop assistants and vendors. Most educated Iteso are in the teaching and nursing professions. These can afford to educate their children.

* Cattle are still a very important value to the Iteso. Traditionally, cattle meant wealth and prestige. A man who owned many herds of cattle could attain the much desired ideal of being a polygamist. He could be an influential political leader. Cattle were the bridewealth. For major communal sacrifices and ceremonies bulls were killed. The rinderpest epidemic of 1925 depleted Iteso cattle herds. They have never recovered the large herds they used to own. Traditional bridewealth was between 20 and 30 head of cattle. Now the average is between 3 and 10 head of cattle. Cash is augmenting or replacing cattle as bridewealth.

Cattle circulate through many different hands as a result of marital exchanges, kinship obligations and stock contracts. In a stock contract (akipukor), a man negotiates to give a number of cows to another man to keep for him. The cattle and their offspring may be taken back at

⁵ I. Karp, op. cit. p.13.

any time less a fee for good care. The milk of the cows belongs to the household in which the cows are kept.⁶

Grazing is still unrestricted. People feel free to put their cows to graze on any uncultivated land. As land is becoming more and more scarce, occasional conflicts have risen because of this. Not many Iteso can afford to fence their land.

The Iteso still live according to clans, even though the need to sell and buy land has mixed up the clans. Each clan lives in the area in which its clan founder lived. It usually is the lot of the oldest boys to move away and find land away from the family plot if it is not large enough to go round. Traditionally, the oldest boy inherited the father's position as head of the home or ekek, but it was the youngest son who built his home ameje ka papkeng, that is, in the former compound of his father.

The Iteso are patrilineal, and after marriage, residence is patrilocal. The clans are for the most part exogamous, if they have not split up permanently. Witchcraft, interclan quarrels and the inability to share the same sacrificial meat - anyama - could split up a clan. In traditional Iteso society, all the kin of one's mother to the second generation were blood relatives; they did not marry one another. Before a man married a woman he had to ascertain the clan of her uncles, that is, lu ebusiete nes. Uncles were all the brothers, clan brothers and first cousins of one's mother. A man did not marry those uncles' daughters.

⁶ Karp, op. cit. p.13.

The aunts were all the sisters, clan sisters and first cousins of one's father. These did not marry one another.

The Iteso still love large families, despite the reduced land resources and the prevalent low income. A woman did not and does not, inherit property in Iteso society although all domestic rituals revolve around the woman and her children. These rituals

concern the symbolic role of a woman as an agent of fertility. It seems that the major symbolic theme of traditional Teso religion is a ritual emphasis on the role of women as agents of fertility and abundance through the production of children. If Teso religion has any efficacy at all women are continually enjoined to fulfil the role that is expressed in the ceremonies.⁷

2. The Significance of the Study (Objective)

Iteso traditional religion is still living and active in Iteso life. Traditional beliefs are practised alongside the Christian faith. "Except for a few of the oldest people, almost all Iteso are nominal Christians. This means that most of them have been baptized but very few attend church. The majority are Catholics."⁸ A few Iteso are Anglicans, members of the Salvation Army, or members of indigenous churches.

⁷ Ivan and Patricia Karpin A. Molnos, Cultural Source Materials for Population Planning in East Africa, Nairobi, EAPH, 1972/73 p. 386

⁸ Karp, op. cit. p.14.

The archconservatism of the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches find an echo in the still very traditional souls of the Iteso, in the sense that the average Itesot does not experience a real conflict within his or her being by remaining attached to certain aspects of Iteso religion while at the same time professing to be a Christian. One of these aspects that continues to have a tremendous influence to the ordinary Iteso is amurwoot - divination.

Prophecy and divination are closely related realities in the minds of the Iteso. Nothing of significance has been written on the subject. The Iteso who profess the Christian faith and those who have had some formal education have ambivalent feelings towards amurwoot. It has been condemned as diabolical, in the way in which akicud- sorcery and witchcraft are, with the result that whatever was and continues to be good in it has been obscured.

The study was undertaken with the firm conviction that there is a felt need, not only by the present writer, but also by fellow Iteso, as well as by fellow Africans in general, to have a correct understanding of what amurwoot - divination and prophecy - meant to the people in the olden days and what it means to the people of today. It is hoped that the findings of this study will serve as an important background knowledge to any serious African student of other religions. When such a

student studies other religions with a more sympathetic knowledge and understanding of the prophetic aspect of the religion of his own people, the prophetic aspect of those other religions will become even more meaningful.

The writer hopes that the findings of this study will stimulate others to go to the field and investigate the prophetic aspect of other African religions, and that as more and more students of African culture and religion become aware of and appreciate the positive aspects of African values, they will be inspired. It is also hoped that those Africans who have assimilated other religions and who have made them part of their consciousness will be encouraged to find in their African culture a positive contribution to their total growth as people.

3. Problems Encountered in the Collection of Information

In order to collect information on prophecy in Iteso religion, the methods used were:

- a) personal interviews;
- b) participant observation;
- c) library research.

It was necessary to gather information from Iteso elders in both Kenya and Uganda. The relatively small area of North and South Teso locations of Busia North, Kenya, was covered on foot, on bicycle and on occasion in the private car of a kind friend. Iteso elders are fast dying out and they are

scattered all over Tesoland. Getting to them often required difficult journeys to inaccessible areas of the land. Not a few times, after trekking for miles looking for the home of a particularly knowledgeable elder, on arrival, the writer was shown a recent grave of the said elder; and so the search had to start all over.

Those elders who were interviewed were extremely cooperative. They were eager to part with their knowledge of the values, beliefs and culture of their ancestors, because they realized that the information was going to be recorded down for the upcoming generations of Iteso children, who might not otherwise have any other way of learning about the ways of their own people.

This cooperation was even more evident in the few elders interviewed among the members of the Ugandan Iteso ateker.* The writer had to find few persons there who were willing to locate the elders and to help in interviewing them. The Ugandan Ateso dialect differs considerably from the Kenyan one. The willing assistants who undertook the task of aiding the writer had on occasion to act as interpreters.

Due to the prevailing difficult conditions in Uganda at the time of the research - between 1979 and 1981 - it was not possible to cover large areas of Teso District.

* Vide Infra, p.12.

Few elders were interviewed in Kumi, Ngora, Pallisa, Soroti and Toroma. It was not possible to openly display oneself as a researcher as this was tantamount to unnecessarily endangering one's life as well as the lives of the willing assistants and elders.

Apart from the difficult security situation in Uganda, the journeys from one place to another had to be undertaken when transportation was available. On one occasion the writer and an assistant had to walk some twenty-six miles or so to return home.

The research, moreover, had to be undertaken only during vacations, as the writer had to give lectures when the university was in session. Lack of adequate finances also limited the amount of research that could be carried out.

There was one particular difficulty encountered in trying to interpret informants' words. More often than not, whenever informants were asked to explain why certain rituals, for example, were performed in a certain way, the response was: "That is the way ikapolok - the elders - did it, we don't know why they did it that way." Other informants who had a deep Christian bias would dismiss information by saying that it had no particular significance, because the elders acted out of ignorance and stupidity before the Europeans brought acoa - intelligence and wisdom. A great deal of common sense as well as an intimate knowledge of the Iteso has had to be used in interpreting informants' words.

4. Literature Review

The bulk of literary information on the Iteso is found in three major works. Two of these deal with the Iteso of Uganda and only one deals with the Iteso of Kenya.

Lawrence, J.C.D. The Iteso: Fifty years of change in a Segmentary Society in Uganda, London, OUP, 1957.

This has been a basic textbook on the Iteso of Uganda. The book deals with the socio-political changes which had occurred in the Iteso society of Uganda from the beginning of colonial domination in 1897 to the 1950s. Lawrence was stationed at Soroti as District Commissioner and so was in a position to observe and record aspects of Iteso culture which had not been destroyed by western civilization.

There is a section of Iteso historical migrations which gives the land "beyond Abbysinia" as the direction from which the Iteso originated. Lawrence says that the migration of the Iteso lasted six generations, the last of which is the period of asonya. Iteso religious beliefs are given a brief description.

Webster, J.B. The Iteso During the Asonya. Nairobi, E.A.P.H. 1973.

This is probably the first historical work on the Iteso in which Iteso students participated. The study was directed by J.B. Webster, a Professor of history at Makerere University,

Kampala, Uganda. The book investigates the migration history of the ateker⁹ from Karamoja and demonstrates that they came into contact with Luo people during their search for new lands to settle in. This contact influenced Iteso culture in a number of ways. The book also gives a useful political and social structure of the Iteso during asonya,¹⁰ the sixth migration period.

A brief mention is made of the emurwon: "he could make rain, foretell the success or failure of a hunting expedition or stop a war by predicting failure ..."¹¹ Other aspects of Iteso religion, such as belief in God, rituals, and so on, are not discussed in any great detail. The book is useful for the historical background it gives of the Iteso of Uganda. It only briefly touches on the Iteso of Kenya by mentioning how they might have migrated there.

Karp, Ivan. Fields of Change Among the Iteso of Kenya. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978.

This book is a first major anthropological study on the Iteso of Kenya. It investigates the changing patterns of social organization among these Iteso. Their religious

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Ateker refers to the groups of peoples who are ethnically affiliated with the Iteso: the Turkana, the Karamojong (sometimes spelled Karimjong) the Jie, the Dodoth, the Kuman and the Joposa. In this study, ateker will be used to refer mainly to the Iteso unless otherwise specified.

10

Asonya migration period can be dated as approximately between 1600 and 1920. This period was preceded by Karionga, The age of migrations which also overlapped into asonya. The two periods ended at different times for the various parts of Teso. The approximate date is inclusive of the differing times.

11

Webster, J.B. The Iteso During the Asonya. Nairobi E.A.P.H. 1973, p.36.

beliefs are only mentioned briefly. It is a challenging view of the Iteso society in that it sees the Iteso in a way they do not always see themselves.

Gulliver, P and P.H. Central Nilo-Hamites. London, International African Institute, 1953.

This is a brief historical survey of the Iteso and their ethnic affiliations. Of their religious beliefs, only a short dismissive paragraph appears. The Gullivers give Edeke as the name of a popular god, the god of calamity. It will be shown that Edeke is an unfortunate misnomer for God in the **A**teso language.

Nagashima, N. "Teso Cultural Text." 1979. These are unpublished notes of a research which Nagashima carried out among the Iteso. He studied various aspects of Iteso culture and presented those unpublished notes to the Iteso Cultural Project at Amukura. He has published a book on his findings in Japanese, which at the time of a personal interview with him in 1981 had not been translated into English. Iteso religion was not a specific area of interest in Nagashima's cultural investigation.

Other works dealing with African religion in general have been consulted. Among these are the following:

Idowu, B.E. African Traditional Religion: A definition. London, SCM Press Ltd., 1973

In this book Idowu discusses in great detail what religion is and is not. He points out how western anthropologists have tended to approach the study of African religion - not as religion but as a set of taboos. The book is valuable for the general understanding it gives on African religion.

Mbiti, J.S. African Religions and Philosophy. London, Heinemann, 1962.

Mbiti has given a general survey of African religions and philosophy all over Africa. It was a pioneer work of its nature and scope by an African scholar. It serves as a useful and basic text of general aspects of African religious beliefs and thought.

Lindblom, J. Prophecy in Ancient Israel. Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1962

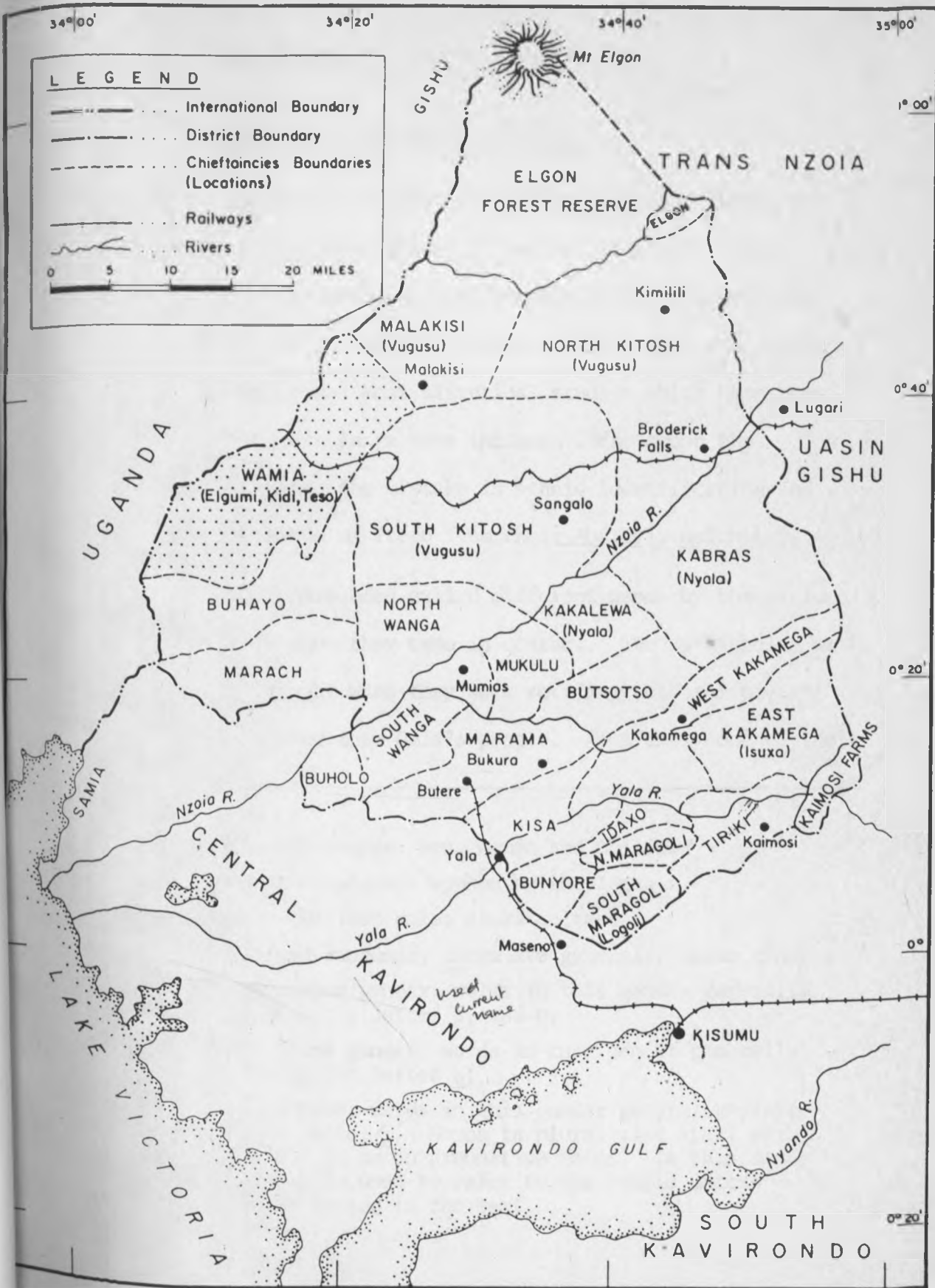
In the first chapter of the book, Lindblom has given an interesting psychological analysis that prophecy is a universal aspect of the world of religion.

Bernardi, B. The Mugwe: A family Prophet. London, International African Institute, 1959.

This is a detailed study of the Mugwe, the prophet among the Meru. A few similarities between the Mugwe and the Emurwon could be detected. The most important of these similarities is that both the Emurwon and the Mugwe

carried out a prophetic function in their respective societies. Both were the accepted religious leaders of their people. Their chief function was to safeguard the welfare of their people. The methods they used in fulfilling this function differed from society to society..

Other works consulted are given in the bibliography at the end of the study. Each one, to a certain extent, deepened the researcher's understanding of African religion. None of the works consulted had Iteso religion as a main focus of study. Further investigations in the libraries of the Universities of Makerere and Nairobi and other libraries, such as Macmillan library of Nairobi and the Kenya National Archives did not yield any works on Iteso religion. One other place remained to be investigated: the Iteso people themselves. The bulk of information on Iteso religion and the part the emurwon plays in it has therefore been gathered from a number of Iteso elders who were interviewed. This information is incorporated into the study and indicated accordingly.



MAP 2 THE CHIEFTAINCIES OF THE NORTH KAVIRONDO DISTRICT

CHAPTER TWO

ITESO ORIGINS AND ETHNIC AFFILIATIONS

1. Nomenclature and Ethnic Affiliations

The Iteso¹ of Kenya are perhaps the least known of the minority ethnic groups of Kenya. It is not unknown for non-Iteso residents of Kenya's urban areas to assume that all Iteso are in and from Uganda; or that they are a branch of the Abaluyia. Most historical studies which have been done on Western Kenya have included Iteso among the Abaluyia, hence the mistake in ethnic identification and differentiation of Iteso from their Abaluyia neighbours.

Iteso have been called different names by the various people with whom they came in contact. The Jo-Padhola, with whom they fought when they were settling into the present habitat, called them Omia's people. Apparently one of their

¹ Iteso - the people: men, women and children

Ateso - the language spoken by the Iteso

Etesot - the Teso male; plural: Iteso

In the Ateso language, there are generally three genders:

- the masculine gender: words in this gender generally begin with the letter e, and o;
- the feminine gender: words in this gender generally start with the letter a;
- neuter gender: words in this gender generally start with the letter i. Nouns in plural also start with the letter i, as do diminutive forms. In this study Iteso will be used to refer to the people unless otherwise stated in the text.

Warrior-leaders was called Omia.² When the Europeans first came into Western Kenya at the end of the 19th century, they found the Iteso being called Wamia, and this was their designation in the early colonial records.³

Map 2, page 15B above shows the locations of the various tribes of North Kavirondo district. The dotted area is Tesoland, then designated as "Wamia". Other names for the Iteso are given in brackets.

The Iteso found this name to be derogatory and so Iteso was adopted. The name Iteso has had variations in spelling: "Itesyö or "Itesio. According to Fedders, the difference in nomenclature between "Itesyö or "Itesio and just "Teso" is to distinguish the Teso of Kenya and the Teso of Uganda. The difference denotes nothing else.⁴ Perhaps so, however, some older Iteso do pronounce the word as "Itesio." "Teso" without the vowel "T" as first letter is used by Iteso themselves to refer to the homeland of Iteso rather than to the people.

Wamia as a name for Iteso has an interesting, though somewhat legendary origin. One tradition among Iteso has it that Iteso were first called Wamia by the Ikudamasa, that is, the Basamia. It was a nickname the Basamia gave to their Iteso neighbours because of the latter's manner of hunting. When Iteso hunters went hunting, they would surround an animal, and when they were very close to it they

2 Ogot seems to think so too. See: History of the Southern Luo, Vol. 1, Nairobi, EAPH, 1967, p. 115.

3 The Kenya National Archives: The Political History Record of Elgon Nyanza District 1913 - 1962 DC/EN3/1/2

4 Fedders, A. People and Cultures of Kenya, Nairobi, Transafrica, 1979, p. 77.

would shout "Amoori! Amoori! Amoori! Amoori!" Some Basamia heard this yelling, and not understanding what was meant, thought the hunters were saying "Amia! Amia!", and so named them "Wamia."⁵

When the first European explorers passed through Eastern Uganda, the name Wamia was common. Johnston explains the name as follows:-

Between Elgon and Bukedi however, though the land is under cultivation by the fine tall naked tribe of the Elgumi, a race speaking a language closely allied to the Suk, Elgumi is the name give to them by the Masai. I believe they call themselves Wamia.⁶

It is most unlikely that the Iteso of Kenya and of Eastern Uganda ever called themselves Wamia. Iteso tradition has it that it was the Abawanga who popularized that name. The Iteso were renowned for their fearlessness in war. Shiundu, the father of Mumia, from whom present day Mumias gets its name, came to hear of the Iteso. Apparently he married an Atesot wife, thus establishing an affinal relationship with the Iteso. This relationship the Iteso call ekamurake. Iteso tradition obligates a man to come to the aid of his ekamuran, that is, affine,

⁵ Oral interview, Auk, Catechist, Chakol Mission, December 29, 1980

⁶ H.H. Johnston, The Uganda Protectorate, London, Hutchinson, 1902, p.66.

whenever the latter is in need, for example, in battle. In fact Iteso elders say that a man will first aid his affine before his own blood brother if need be; so seriously is this relationship taken.

Shiundu appealed to Iteso to aid him in the war against the Luo. Accordingly, a consignment of Iteso warriors went to Shiundu in response to his appeal. Just as they reached Shiundu's compound, one of his wives gave birth to a boy child. Shiundu decided to name him "Mumia" in honour of the "Wamia" warriors who had arrived at his home.⁷ "Many Wanga deny this story"⁸ Karp asserts. Be that as it may, *it is as* plausible an explanation as any, as to how the name was popularized. The British subjugated the Iteso from Mumias and through the Abawanga on the one hand on the other through the Baganda from Jinja.

There may, indeed, have been an interaction between the Iteso and the Wanga and even with the Luo in their migrations. Ogot seems to affirm this when he states,

It is worth noting that in the Asembo Location in Central Nyanza there is a Luo clan called Omia who usually refer to themselves as the 'Omia of Wanga' and who claim to have migrated from Wanga about three to four generations ago.

⁷ Interview with Auk, Catechist: Chakol. December 29, 1980

⁸ Ivan Karp: Fields of Change Among the Iteso of Kenya, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1978, p.16.

They are regarded by their Luo hosts as of Iteso extraction. If this is correct, then they would be one of the splinter groups that moved away inland from the Wanga area.⁹

Another name for the Iteso which was widespread was Bakidi. This name was preferred by the Baganda and the Luo. Of this name, Lawrence has this to say:

When Speke reached Uganda in 1862, this name Kedi or Kidi was known throughout the western Lake Victoria region as applying to the subdued and unclad tribesmen who lived on the East side of the Nile opposite Bunyoro; and in course of time the Baganda used the name to cover the whole of similarly unclad peoples who extended eastwards to Mt. Elgon. The Iteso, however, claim that the name comes from Ikedea, the people of the east (kide = east), the inhabitants of modern Bukedea.¹⁰

The name was most likely known among those early Iteso pioneers even around Tororo - Busia, Kenya area, but no recollection of it seems left among the elders there. It is unfortunate that nothing like what Lawrence wrote on the Iteso of Uganda was written about Iteso of Tororo-Busia as well. One of the few

⁹ Bethwell, A. Ogot: A History of the Southern Luo. Vol. 1
Nairobi, EAPH, 1967, p.116.

¹⁰ J.C.D. Lawrence: The Iteso: 50 Years of Change in a Segmentary Society in Uganda, London, Oxford University Press, 1957, p.3.

descriptions left covering these people is Johnston's rather amusing remarks:-

The people inhabiting these settlements (the Victoria Nyanza) will be probably for a year or so still a source of goguenard amusement to the excursionists, whom the Uganda Railway will bring from the east coast of Africa to the Victoria Nyanza; for they will see before them coal-black, handsomely formed negroes and negresses without a shred of clothing, though with many adornments in the way of hippopotamus teeth, bead necklaces, earrings and leglets of brass. As the figures thus exhibited are usually models for the sculptor, this nudity is blameless and not to be discouraged. Moreover, it characterizes the most moral people in the Uganda Protectorate...¹¹

These "coal-black, handsomely formed negroes and negresses" are today called Iteso.

There are several explanations as to the origins of the name Iteso. The most popular one is that of the corpses and the tired old men. The story has been handed down to generations of Iteso that when the pioneers of Iteso ancestors reached Karamoja from the Sudan, the elders wanted to settle there. The younger warriors, however, were for pushing on afield. The elders warned them saying: "If you go on you will be reduced to atesin", which means

¹¹ H.H. Johnston, Op. Cit. p.68.

corpses. The younger warriors retorted: "You who have been overcome by - (Iukikar) old age - (amojong), stay behind. We shall go on nevertheless." From that time the tired elders were called Ikaramojong, those defeated by old age, and the younger warriors were known as Iteso, corpses.

Webster records another variation to the origin of the word Iteso. There was a back movement of ateker¹² from Tororo into northern Usuku in the period between 1783 and 1835 when that part of Tesoland was being settled. One of the leaders of this settlement was called Etesot and he may have given his name to the village in which he settled. It appears that in Uganda the ateker retained the local names given to them by fellow pioneers with whom they came into contact. Apparently, the name Iteso was agreed upon for all the ateker after a dance competition.

The confusion (as to what name to give to Iteso ateker) deepened when in the early colonial period, a traditional dancing competition was held by which a name was to be chosen for all the Iteso people.

¹² In Ugandan usage, ateker also means clan. In Kenyan Iteso usage, clan is called ekitekere. In this study the term ateker will be used to bring out these two meanings.

See Webster, J.B. The Iteso During the Asonya, Nairobi, EAPH, 1973, p.xxi.

Since the people of Abela and specifically of Teso village performed their dance more like the Karamojong than most others, for precisely the opposite reason, that they had more recently left Karamoja than most others, one might say they were the least Iteso of all judged by the length of residence in Teso. However, historically, Iteso, even if accidental, was probably the most sensible choice especially if one accepts the possible dual origin of the word, for it would mean that Teso was applied at one time or another to the ancestors of all the modern Iteso people.¹³

Despite the diverse units of people who formed the present day Iteso ateker, the feeling of solidarity has been present even from those earliest times. These diverse units will be discussed below. Webster's comments on the terminology ateker themselves used in referring to one another is an appropriate conclusion to this section.

The terminology which ateker used to describe different branches of the family indicate their feeling of oneness, and their awareness of being part of the same historical migration process. For example, Iseera means pioneers ahead living in a sparsely populated region. It was used by the Karamojong and Jie to refer to a forward section of Imiro ateker moving towards Labwor. It was also used by the people of Magoro to refer to the people of Toroma. Later when Toroma and Magoro had passed the pioneer stage it was used by their peoples to refer to Soroti, then on the

¹³ J.B. Webster, op. cit. p.45.

fringe of settlement. By the time the colonial period opened it was being used for the people of modern Serere which had been the most recently settled. Another example is the word Kuman from akumokin, to leave in disgust never to return. The Karimojong called Iteso Kuman while the Iteso used the word for the people of Kabermaido, Soroti and Amuria. Only with the colonial period did the term come to be fixed exclusively on the people of Kabermaido. A final example is that the Iteso and Jie and a number of others refer to their forebearers who did not migrate as Karamojong, the tired old men who remained behind, while the modern Kuman and Langi refer to their old men as Dum. Thus the terminology throughout tends to be that of the family, not that of distinct ethnic groups.¹⁴

What is interesting here is that Iteso of Kenya refer to the Iteso of Uganda as "Ikumam." Very few Iteso of Kenya know that there is a branch of ateker in Uganda called Kuman.

Among the Iteso of Kenya there is a rather interesting distinction between what was formerly the northern branch and the southern one. The Iteso north of the Eldoret-Kampala Road are called Ikuleu. They used to form most of north Teso Location. The Iteso south of Kampala Road are called Ing'elechomo. Iteso elders explain the meaning of the two names this way:-

Ikuleu are people who are told something but never take heed. When the Iteso came from

¹⁴ J.B. Webster, op. cit. p. xxii.

Jewai (Uganda) they came as two parties. When they reached a certain place (possibly Malaba) others were for halting there, but others continued on ahead. Those who went a head: were named Ikuleu - a term which means to march on stubbornly. Those who remained behind were said to have angelor, to separate themselves from the others. Those who went forward said of these ones: Ingelechomo Ngul, those are Ingelechomo.¹⁵

Up to this day Ikuleu are characterized by their unwillingness to leave any matter alone. They will go on arguing long after all arguments have been exhausted.

The Iteso of Uganda and those of Kenya, as will be shown in section II, "Migration History" of this chapter, have a common migration and ethnic history as well as a similar language. This study will touch on both branches of the Iteso ateker and where differences in language and interpretation of cultural beliefs and practices occur, these will be pointed out accordingly.

During a research carried out by J.B. Webster with three students, C.P. Emudong, D.H. Okalany and N. Egimu-Okuda for the Department of History, Makerere University, the team decided on the term ateker to describe all the related people who were formerly called Nilo Hamites. According to this study, it was found that:

The Iteso belong to a family of people which may be called ateker (people of one language).

In the past they have been called Nilo-Hamites which means nothing to the people themselves, or Itunga (in the vernacular meaning 'all people') or Teso dialect cluster, Karamojong cluster or, Lango family, which inaccurately suggests that they spring from the Iteso, Karamojong or Langi. The ateker are composed of nine major peoples: the Iteso, Karamojong, Jie and Dodoth in Uganda; the Turkana, and the Iteso of Kenya; the Toposa, Jiye and Donyiro of the Sudan. The ateker speak mutually intelligible dialects of the same language. They recognize a common origin and dispersal from Karamoja and they possess numerous cultural, social, political and military features in common.¹⁶

II. Migration History

Deep within the consciousness of an Etesot is the desire to know "nukokolong k'asonya", that is, things of long ago, particularly those things concerning where the Iteso came from and what life was like then. In the mind of an Etesot, asonya was a period in history full of enchantment and mystery, a period when animals, birds, fishes, reptiles and even insects could talk ^{with} ^{and} people lived in close collaboration with nature.

Asonya, to the average Etesot, was also the period when ikapolok, the ancestors of the Iteso, migrated to their present habitats. The elders of the Kenyan Iteso say that their ancestors came from Soroti, Kumam,

¹⁶ Webster, op. cit. p.xxi.

Karamoja, Sudan, Kairiri, Abyssinia. Those of Soroti say their ancestors came from Karamoja and beyond.

The first recorded history of the Iteso was by J.C.D. Lawrence who wrote his monumental work on the Iteso in the nineteen fifties. According to Lawrence, Asonya was the sixth and last migration period or generation or age of the Iteso. Lawrence was stationed as DC in Soroti during the colonial period and was able to gather a lot of information on the Iteso of Uganda. He traces their migration history in the following way:-

The ancestors of the Iteso came from the direction of Abyssinia through Karamoja district. Their travels lasted through six generations or ages:

- a) Ojurata's tadpoles - These were men of short stature with large heads who lived among swamps and lakesides.
- b) Okori - 2nd generation - first began to till the ground and grow crops.
- c) Onyangaese - 3rd generation - first began to keep livestock, and to take names from the cattle people owned.
- d) Otikiri - 4th generation - people first learned crafts, for example, bead making, tanning and making musical instruments.
- e) Arionga - 5th generation - people were established in Karamoja and were known as Iworopom. Their centres were at Mt. Moroto and Okong. They were subjected to a steady pressure from the Turkana to the east. Grazing grounds and water were insufficient for the increased herds and so the tribe split

up into three groups:

- A first group led by Okong and Angisa penetrated into what is now Teso district at Angisa and Magoro. From this first group, a subsidiary group went further afield and settled near Tororo.
- A second group colonized the slopes of Mt. Kamalinga (Napak) and Mt. Akisim. One of the colonizers was Alekilek.
- A third group stayed in Karamoja. They are the tired old men who stayed behind. (Aikar = to stay; amojong = old men.) Perhaps the name Iteso is derived from the word ates, meaning child.* Teso is the land of the children who left the old men behind. Other traditions, however, assert that the name of the tribe comes from the name of a leader of one of the early expeditions, who was called Etesot.
- During the 6th generation, Asonya, the Iteso spread further westwards and occupied most of modern Teso district. Each age lasted about 100 years, and it may therefore be surmised that the four generations each correspond approximately to a century span.¹⁷

By simple arithmetic, the Iteso apparently started their southward-westward migration sometime in the 14th century, though Lawrence places it in the 17th century. Of particular significance to this study is the sixth generation or migration period, asonya, which started in the 5th migration period, karionga. According to one informant, Asonya was the name of a pioneer who led the Iteso to settle in their present habitat*. This study touches on both the fifth and sixth migration periods.

* Ates, means dead person or grave. Lawrence here is in error when he translates ates to mean child. The word for child in Ateso is Ikoku, not Ates. Information given by Mr. Atanas Oluku, Amaase, Kenya.

¹⁷ J.C.D. Lawrence, op. cit. p.7-8.

Somewhere in Karamoja was old Woropom¹⁸ where the Iworopom were settled. Lawrence says that these were the ancestors of the Tororo - Kenya Iteso. "In 1830, the Karamojong drove out Iworopom from Woropom. Some Iworopom were captured and absorbed by the Karamojong, but others fled along the Eastern side of the mountain to Wamia, the country of the Kenya Iteso."¹⁹

Wilson, who lived among the Karamojong in 1952, and again between 1962 and 1970 has observed that among the Karamojong in Matheniko and Pian counties, and around Kacheliba, the boundary between Karamoja and West Pokot, there are people who call themselves Oropom. They have distinct physical characteristics which differ from those of the Karamojong or Pokot. Wilson classifies them as Bushmanoid, being people who have,

a comparatively light pigmentation of the skin, reddish brown in appearance. Many possess what might be termed pedomorphic features with prominent rounded foreheads, small upturned noses with fine bones and slant eyes. In some individuals, a further factor which is generally associated with Bushmanoid peoples and is referred to as peppercorn hair, was apparent...²⁰

¹⁸ Woropom was the homeland of the people who are variously called Iworopom, Oworopom, Oyoropom, Oropoi.

¹⁹ J.C.D. Lawrence, op. cit. p.7-8

²⁰ J.G. Wilson: "Preliminary observations on the Oropom people of Karamoja, Their Ethnic Status, Culture and Postulated Relation to the people of the Last Stone Age." Uganda Journal 34, 2, 1970, p.126.

These peoples were probably the earliest, if not the original inhabitants of where they now live.

By tradition and archeological evidence, they appear to be descendants of a large group which occupied Karamoja and much of the neighbouring parts of Kenya, prior to the arrival of the Karamojong, Kalenjin and other peoples of these areas.²¹

Around about 1830, a battle took place near Kacheliba, involving a large group of Karamojong of Bokora, Matheniko and Pian Sections. In this battle the Oropom were vanquished.

Many individuals and families fled from the scene, some going in a westerly direction to Teso, and others south, seeking refuge among the Nandi and Vukusu, but many went further, joining those who were seemingly relatives, and the Uasin Gishu Maasai. A few made their way to what were then intact Oropom settlements in Pian county particularly between Lolachat and Namalu. One old man, a Pian of Oropom extraction, related that as late as 1897, these refugees were still to be distinguished from the people in whose area they had taken refuge.²²

In this war, many Oropom were taken prisoner by the Karamojong, and confined into Karamojong enclosures. They were allowed to live but not express themselves culturally.

²¹ Wilson, op.cit. p.142

²² Loc. cit, p.127

They had to adapt themselves to Karamojong ways.

The reason for this magnanimity on the part of the Karamojong was that the Karamojong feared the Oropom as witches who had the power of bringing famine and disease to those who afflicted them. So by absorbing them, they averted this and at the same time might benefit by their absorption. These groups of prisoners gave rise to the many people of Oropom descent that can be found at Lorengedwat in Pian county and other places.²³

The presence, today, of peoples who can be identified as Iworopom among the Karamojong and their neighbours, as Wilson discovered, could be explained by the reverse migrations that took place. "From the mid nineteenth century there was an Iworopom movement back from Tororo - Bukedea area into Magoro."²⁴ It is also quite probable that some fleeing Iworopom found their way to Mt. Elgon and Bugishu and possibly passed into western Kenya.²⁵ If these were indeed in any way connected with the Iteso of Kenya, they may be the group Iteso elders say fought a battle with the Bagisu in Mbale and settled near Kitale.²⁶ What is strange is the complete absence or lack of trace of any Iworopom elements among the Iteso of Kenya. They are not remembered either as a clan name or place name. This is all the more unusual since western Kenya was one of the last areas the Iteso settled, not more than six generations ago.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Webster, op. cit. p. 30.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 30.

²⁶ Obasie Palinyang, a modern day composer of lyrics in Ateso, has composed and sung a lyric describing the migration of the Iteso. He mentions the battle at Kitale.

Another interesting fact which remains unexplained is why the Ateso dialect that is spoken by the Tororo *and* Western Kenya Iteso differs so much from the Ateso spoken in Teso District in Uganda. It is possible that the fusion of the Iworopom with the Southern Iteso may have contributed to the formation of the Tororo-Western Kenya Ateso dialect. If that be the case, why is there no trace of Iworopom at all among these people? A partial answer may lie in the nature of the Karamojong - Iworopom war of 1830.

Apparently the war had been bloody and exceptionally violent. While earlier migrations had consisted of numerous small groups motivated by the desire for economic gain and personal freedom the flight of the Iworopom was one of hordes of people in great confusion rushing away from annihilation. Families and clans were broken. There was no going back and this may explain why other people's traditions speak of fierce and warlike hordes in sharp contrast to earlier ateker migrations.²⁷

This account of Iworopom migrations may explain a few ambiguous facts. One such fact is that Iteso elders on the Kenya side of the border do not recall any association with Iworopom. Whereas there is an Iworopom clan among the Karamojong, such a clan is non-existent among these Iteso. It was not possible to interview Iteso elders around Tororo area so it was not possible to verify the statement that Iteso around Tororo at one time called themselves Iworopom. There is a closer affinity between the Iteso of Tororo with those

²⁷ Webster, op. cit. p.29

of Kenya than either of these two groups with the Iteso of former Teso District in Uganda. It would seem that because of this close relationship in both language and customs, something as important as Iworopom migration should form a never forgotten aspect of the history and traditions passed on.

This disappearance could also be explained by the practice Iteso pioneers had of adopting completely new clan names and taboos, on merging with host clans whenever they settled in a new place. Webster maintains that they settled "in every part of Teso" a fact attested by the presence of Isureta and Ilogir clans in Teso, clans which are of Iworopom origin.²⁸ Perhaps it was not safe to be known as Iworopom lest they be followed by their enemies. These speculations do not correspond to the more usual practice of retaining the original clan names and of naming the new settled areas after the old ones left behind. This ambiguity could also explain the confusion that arose in colonial times as to whether the ateker around Tororo and Busia Kenya were Iteso or not. The elders are however emphatic over the fact that their ancestors as well as themselves are Iteso and not some other ethnic group.

²⁸ Webster op. cit., p.32.

Okalany gives another version of the early migrations of the Iteso. He maintains that the migrations of the early ancestors of the Iteso originated some time around 1517 to 1544 when the Koten dispersal took place at the foot of the Turkana escarpment. At this dispersal groups of what have been known as Para-Nilotes migrated South-west and South-east. Their migration was first prompted by a dispute over grazing grounds, and then later on in the 1580's, by the Nyarubanga famine.²⁹

These ateker ancestors were of mixed groupings. Okalany studies their history by following up the existence and movements of their oldest clans. The Luo, the Jiro and the Iseera, who were Iteso pioneers, all have several clans in common. As they migrated and later settled in new homelands, a fusion of clans took place.

In the Ateker-speaking area from Koten in the North to Moroto in the East, to Tororo in the West and Napak in the South, three quarters of the people belonged to either Atekok, Ikarebuok or pastoralist Irarak. The Luo speakers were much fewer, represented by only the Ikomolo, had spread south of Napak along the northern shores of Lake Bisinia, and by 1600 had already begun the settlement of what was to become Kumi in southern Teso. They were the pioneer advance guard of what was to become the Iteso people. It is possible that they arrived in this area in time to meet the Omolo Luo on their way to Masaba.³⁰

29

D.H. Okalany. The Western Migration of the Iteso during the Pre-Colonial Period. MSP/29 1971/72, Makerere University. p. 31 (unpublished paper) See also Fig. 3, page 54B which gives the possible locations of the various Iteso clans prior to the Koten dispersal.

30

Okalany, op. cit. p.34.

It is difficult to imagine any pioneering group of people venturing anywhere to unknown places without some kind of organization or leadership. This advance guard always migrated under a clan or sub-clan leaders, as Iteso elders say. When asked who their pioneer ancestors were, they always replied by citing the name of a particular clan with a specific clan elder. It is most improbable that the earliest and even later pioneer ancestors of the migrating ateker were as leaderless as Ogot claims when he says that "the Teso infiltration was thus unorganized and the leaderless bands were united only by bonds of consanguinity."³¹

The area today known as Teso-Lango districts in Uganda was occupied by Luo settlers, as Webster affirms. The Ikuman ateker and Iteso ateker began to move into it from the direction of Karamoja through Magoro to settle first in Toroma and Kapujan, later moving on to Gweri and Soroti. Modern Usuk, then, according to Webster is the first homeland of Iteso, a fact which seems to contradict Okalany. The Luo ateker fusion caused a major modification in language and the emergence of the modern Ikuman.

"It was Luo settler influence which helped to make Ateso the furthest removed of the ateker dialects from that spoken by the Turkana and the Karamojong."³² To know that at least the Iteso

³¹ Ogot, op. cit. p.116.

³² Webster, op. cit. p. 5.

are not pure ethnically should create a feeling of kinship and possibly eliminate such derogating terms like "hordes." In fact distinct ethnic boundaries based on the purity of any tribe is "a product of the colonial period when imperial administrators were often pre-occupied with 'tribe' amenable to drawing district boundaries on an ethnic basis within the limits that economics would allow."³³

This fusion, of the Luo and ateker also produced the Langi, and the Labwor. (A cursory knowledge of certain Iteso names around Soroti area reveals this Luo influence of Iteso, for they have similar names for twins and children following twins. Thus we have Apio/Opio - Adongo/Odongo - Akelo/Okelo. Around Pallisa they are called Ebangit/Abangit meaning twins. Among the Iteso of Kenya they are called Imai/Ija in North Teso and Emu/Amwatok in South Teso.)

In summary, the migration of the Iteso appears to have been as follows:-

The first migration (to Magoro) extended over a hundred years or more (1700-1800) and overlapped the subsequent migration from Usuku to other areas of modern Teso District.

The second migration occurred in three parts:

- a) to the North to Magoro to the area of the present day Usuku

³³ Webster, Ibid, p.7.

- b) across the Komolo River into Soroti, Serere and Amuria counties; and
- c) across the Lake Salisbury water system into the southern counties of Ngora, Kumi and Bukedea.³⁴

The Iteso were the latest arrivals into these regions, and their advent closed the "long process of filling up the ancient migration corridor."³⁵ From the middle of the 19th century until the close of the asonya, more and more people settled in southern Teso in Uganda, around Bukedi and some pushed their way into Tororo through Bugwere. The population increased and with it,

an acceleration of Iteso military pressure on the Bugisu. It was in this area that the Iteso military generals created the most efficient war machine in Teso, fashioning a system of alliances which drew warriors from Ngora, Kumi and Bukedi. The most famous of the generals was Malinga, succeeded in the late asonya by Okoce whose sphere of influence was reinforced by the famous woman foreteller, Amongin. Okoce and Amongin were related and together created a powerful team. The destruction of Woropom set in motion a chain of violence which reverberated until the close of the asonya from Woropom to southern Teso, Bugisu and Bugwere, south into Tororo and across into Kenya.³⁶

IV. REASONS FOR MIGRATING

The search for more and better land is one of the major reasons Iteso elders give for the migration of their

³⁴ Ogot, op. cit. p.14.

³⁵ Ogot, op. cit. p.114.

³⁶ Webster, op. cit. p.30.

ancestors. Besides this there were also other social reasons for the migration. There was the search for peace and security. Often they settled into areas where so much warring prevailed that people had to migrate elsewhere.

Family and clan disputes, jealousy and the escape from justice could cause one to migrate. Often brothers quarrelled over the inheritance of a father's property, or the failure of brothers to share with their younger brothers the cattle from their sisters' marriages. Men have been known to move away from the home and even from the clan to avoid ritual uncleanness or to flee from justice. In the former case, an example would be if a man was accused of incest, an act which rendered one too unclean to participate in the normal life of the community, he was ritually ostracized from the clan. This often led to the formation of a subclan. An example of the latter case, of fleeing from justice was of a man accused of sorcery. If he was not killed as traditional law demanded, he could migrate elsewhere, never to return. It was rare that the rich migrated; they were probably too settled for that.

The average pioneer was poor, with no cows and a few goats or one to five head of cattle. The groups who went away together were also small; from single

individuals to groups of twenty, counting men, women and children. Seldom did you find a man who had two wives as a pioneer. Often it was the small family, the family of the mother - the ekek - led by the eldest boy with his wife and children and his mother's children, his brothers and sisters... The average or typical pioneer was a man of about thirty years of age with his wife, two small children and less than half a dozen cows and a few goats.³⁷

V. SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

In order to better understand the social organization of the Iteso ateker during Asonya, it is necessary at this stage to define some of the Ateso terminology which will be employed in the description. The Ateso terminology differs according to the diversity of dialects, but since I feel that this diversity adds to a deeper understanding of the wider Iteso culture and subsequently of Iteso religious rituals and observances, I will discuss some of the terms here. There is a marked difference in the overall Ateso dialects spoken in Kenya and in Uganda; and even in Uganda there is a difference between Ateso spoken in northern Teso and that spoken in southern Teso. Some of the terms differ in spelling, though the similarity of the words is recognizable. Some describe ritual organizations which existed in only certain branches of Iteso society, as will be indicated below. Perhaps it is true as Webster says that "the Iteso social organization

³⁷ Webster, op. cit. p.14.

appears to be and have been based on ritual and descent groupings."³⁸ If so, all the more reason why these terms should be known at this stage.

Ateker - In both the Ateso dialects of Kenya and that of Uganda, ateker, used in the widest sense means people of the same language, as already indicated. Most Iteso do not know their non-Iteso ethnic brothers like the Jie, so the word is used to refer to the Iteso people. In Uganda the word also means clan. The Iteso of Kenya call clan ekitekere.

Etem - The first basic meaning of the word etem was fireplace, that fireplace that was outside in the centre of the homestead, be it that of an ordinary person or that of a political leader. Among the Iteso of Uganda "it meant a ritual group, that is, an age - set that had already undergone the initiation ceremony known as aijaun ewoye, in south Teso, and abwaton in north Teso."³⁹ These ritual groups took on the names of particular animals as described by Lawrence. A third meaning of etem was the locality, particularly that in the homestead of a political leader where elders met to discuss politics and settle disputes. It was also used to refer to the people of that particular locality - luk'etem.

Auriat - In Kenya auriat was used as an alternative term for etem. The basic meaning of auriat was the enclosure where cattle rested during the night. "It also acted as the venue of the judicial court in which matters affecting relations between members of a neighbourhood were discussed and resolved."⁴⁰ Ugandan Iteso called it aurianet.

Ekitela - What today could be called village (parish in Uganda). Several of these could form an

³⁹ Ibid, p. 168

⁴⁰ Webster, op. cit. p. 169

alliance or a confederacy in matters of war and defence. Each had its own leader, sometimes referred to as lok'ebuku - of the shield or lok'auriat.

- Ekek - Lineage, that is, the family of one man consisting of his wives, children grandchildren and other dependants.
- Ekale - Household of one woman with her children within a polygamous or monogamous home. Also called etogo.
- Etale - Taboos of a particular clan or subclan. Also understood to mean ritual.

3. The Clan System

The Iteso pioneers who settled into their present habitat of Busia district retained their segmentary type of socio-political organization. Iteso elders say that they came as clans under clan leaders and when they settled into their new home, they retained their clan names and taboos (etale). It is possible that the new clans as differentiated from the original ones left behind, came into existence in the following way:-

A poor man belonging to a certain clan pioneered an area where none of his clan members had been before; he would therefore become the founder of his clan in that new area. He would find land, work very hard and prosper, marry many wives, each wife producing a number of children. The whole group would form a new ekek, which remained bound together by a common ancestry and the observance of a common taboo - etale system.⁴¹

⁴¹ Webster, op. cit. p.92.

In many instances after staying together as described for some time, due to various reasons such as disputes over land or more often the elders say, because the sacrificial bull was too small to go round, several ikalia - (plural of ekale)-headed by the elder sons within such an ekek would decide to move away and establish their own ekek. In doing this they would sometimes retain the same clan taboos as well as the original clan name. More often, however, they retained the clan name but adopted a whole new set of taboos, the most distinguishing difference being the type of animal used for ebwasit.⁴²

Sometimes the original clan and the subclan will retain the usage of even the same type of sacrificial animal, yet they can intermarry. When asked why this is so, the elders say that they can intermarry because "mamu bobo kenyamasi" that is, they no longer eat the same sacrificial meat. For example, the clan Ikarebwok has very many branches which are no longer exogamous. There are two branches of Ikarebwok which have the same name,

⁴² Ebwasit is the ritual performed on a woman and her children which serves two purposes. First, it is performed to cleanse and heal a woman and her children who are sickly. The cleansing is done in case the woman has broken some of the taboos of her husband's etale. This could be causing her and her children ill health.

Secondly, it is performed as a final ritual of incorporating the woman into the clan taboos of her husband. Among the Iteso of Uganda the ritual is called ekonyokoit from aikony akoit, to bite a bone. Before this ritual, the woman was not allowed to eat bones on meat or even to stir it when cooking.

Ikarebwok luk'emerekek. One branch lives at Ocude, the other at Goría - Ngelechom. Both use emerekek - a male sheep - for ebwasit, but they can and do intermarry.*

Originally, their pioneers from Uganda were brothers of the same ekek. So "the fragmentation of not only the original ekek but also of the emerging ikekia-(plural of ekek), occurred frequently so that after centuries there were scattered throughout Teso, numerous ikekia called after various branch-clan names but retaining the names of their original main clans."⁴⁵

The Iteso had no kings or chiefs but they had a very effective organization based on the clan system. As Webster so correctly puts it,

"The basic political unit of the Iteso in the nineteenth century was the clan. Every clan had its leader or elders, who were the spearhead of the organization of society. They combined social, ritual and judicial power in settling intra and inter-clan affairs. Larger units based on military alliances were temporary or fluid in nature."⁴⁴

* The older members of these two subclans object in principle to inter-marriage between their members. The younger members do not adhere to the principle of not inter-marrying between the two.

⁴³ Webster, op. cit. p.93.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p.103.

The court of elders consisted of the first clan leaders who were normally the founders of the clan. Attached to this court was the emurwon - diviner - prophet, healer and wise man of the clan. This court was charged with a variety of responsibilities "the most important of which was the settlement of individual disputes within the clan and keeping the members of the clan united."⁴⁵ Apart from the maintenance of law and order, the elders were also responsible for protecting the clan from external aggressors. Among the Iteso of Kenya, the chief external aggressors were not so much raiders from other Iteso clans, but rather the Bukusu with whom they carried on war raids from the moment they arrived here until the coming of the British.

Mention here will be made concerning the functions of emurwon although he will be discussed in great detail in a later chapter.* The natural environment of the Iteso was harsh both in terms of wild animals, uncleared woodlands and not too friendly neighbours. The need for vigilance was obvious. Each etem had its own leader in whose etem, elders met to settle disputes. It was from the etem of the leader of ekitela that warriors set out for raids or to engage an invading army or ajore - war. Before they set out, certain amurwok - women diviners - would

⁴⁵ Webster, op. cit. p.103.

* Vide infra, Chapter 4.

prepare special earth to anoint them with, i.e. akijuk.

The emurwon would first be consulted in the case of a raiding ajore setting out. If the emurwon thought it unwise to go out and engage in an ajore, that is, war raid, he would stop them by predicting defeat for his party.

The elders are emphatic over the fact that no ajore, that is, company of warriors, went out on a major war engagement before first consulting emurwon.

In order to facilitate the defence of the women, children and cattle, the Iteso built fences of living euphorbia trees around their homesteads forming an enclosure. There was only one main gate called erute into such a homestead. The enclosure was often the homestead of the entire ekek of one man with its numerous ikalia. Members had a smaller secret gate which only they used in case of emergencies. Within each enclosure was the ever burning etem fire. The younger men of the homestead often spent the night around this etem fire watching and listening for raiders. In the evenings, it was at this etem fire that the elders sat and told tales of long ago to the children. Nowadays this etem fire is only constructed and lit when an elderly man dies. The homesteads are no longer grouped together inside a euphorbia fence, but are scattered and built on each man's personal land.

The clan elders, called ikapolok were entrusted with the preservation of the Iteso ateker. In order to accomplish this very important function, they had to be men of particular characteristics.

"The ideal clan elders were men of understanding and impartial judgement who saw themselves, not as rulers but as arbiters and mediators of their people. The leadership of their atekerin fell originally into the hands of the clan founders who thereafter came to be regarded as apolok ka atekerin (clan leaders). The political life of a clan centred on their elders. When the clan founder died, he was normally succeeded by one of his sons who in most cases was his first born. But if a son lacked qualities of leadership, another among the sons, fulfilling the requirements of leadership, was chosen to take over. Courage and generosity, coupled with a sharp sense of good and impartial judgement were the major qualities of an ideal leader.⁴⁶

The clans during asonya, as now, although they could be considered autonomous political units, did not operate in total isolation and disregard of other clans. As has been mentioned already, part of the functions of the clan leaders was to arbitrate in inter-clan disputes. The clan Isureta in Kumi had the main function of promoting justice. An example of how such a clan promoted justice could be as follows: two clans would gather at a special meeting place, usually outside the etem enclosure where they sat facing one another with a space in between them. From each clan was a chosen speaker - ekeraban - who presented the case for his clan. Elders of arbitrating clans were present to help solve the problems. There was complete silence when each speaker presented the case for

⁴⁶ Webster, op. cit. 164.

his side. The speaker of the offended clan spoke first, usually vehemently, spear in hand and swinging it as he spoke to emphasize the seriousness of the offence and demanding compensation. When he finished, the accused clan's speaker would also get up, and if his clan was in the wrong, would assume a more calm and apologetic manner, pleading with the offended clan to accept a reduced compensation. Bitterness often accompanied such disputes, and if both sides became equally bitter, the impartial speaker from an arbitrating clan would calm the situation. It appears that the elders in asonya thought it very important to find a settlement in each dispute:-

It was very important to note that however serious an issue was it did not completely sever or destroy the relationship between the two clans. The opposing clans always came into good relationships again. Even if they took to arms and fought each other, there was always reconciliation and a return to good understanding.⁴⁷

Good understanding was important between clans in the face of an attack by a common external enemy when collaboration between neighbouring clans was so necessary. This good understanding also served a ritual purpose.

47
Webster, op. cit. p. 131.

The elders say that each clan had an awoke and luk'etem. The reason why a supportive clan in ritual matter was called awoke - literally meaning small grasshopper - is not clear. During epunyas rituals,^{*} luk'etem were the ones who opened - nes luk'angarak - the ceremony. They were the ones who came to step on - akicak - the etem fire that was kept burning and at which fowl such as chicken had been roasted during the epunyas rituals. Each clan also had its awoke. When a person was seriously ill, a member of an awoke clan should never pass anywhere near the sick person. Their presence there could cause death to the sick one.

Marriage was always an interclan affair, since each clan was by definition exogamous. Once a marriage took place between two clans, the relationship of ekamurake (affinity) was established. This relationship was so strong that in times of war, a man could go to the defence of his ekamuran - in law - before that of his own brother. The blood of ekamuran was regarded as somewhat sacred and could not be spilled carelessly.

There were certain clans who performed special functions for the community by virtue of the mystical

* Epunyas was the exhumation of the bones of the dead elders and placing them under a specific tree. This was performed between 3-15 years after death or whenever the emurwon was directed by the departed elders to request it. The dead did not wish to be buried too long underground, as that separated them from their living relations.

power they were believed to possess. For example the clan Ikamarinyang were believed to have healing powers as well as the power to perform ritual cursing. Inomu clan in Uganda was believed to be able to heal. Igoria clan was famous for administering trial by poison ordeal. Ikomolo were believed "to have bitter mouths" - to have the power to curse.

In all the functions of the clan, the emurwon was normally included as one of the elders, particularly in maintenance of social order where ikacudak were involved. Their verdict on the guilt of a suspected ikacudan determined the kind of punishment a person was likely to get. Although akicud has a wider meaning than just witchcraft, for the purpose of this paper, Webster's explanation is as good as any:

The word acudan (ikacudan in Kenyan Ateso) or witch, involved (and still does) different persons who behaved in a variety of ways which were believed to be inimical to the well-being of society. There were many types of acudak for example, night-dancers, rain-killers (ikapelok), poisoners and several others. Anybody who was suspected or proved to have an acudan was to be killed by another clan, preferably a neighbouring one.⁴⁸

4. Values Iteso Observed During Asonya

Not only was "the search for justice and good understanding within a clan and among clans a very important

48 Webster, op. cit. p. 131.

political aspect of Iteso society during the nineteenth century,"⁴⁹ but values and practices which were designed to achieve this atmosphere were enjoined upon each member of society. These practices could not be separated from the religious beliefs of the people. At this juncture, some of these values will be discussed as part of what kept Iteso society strong and on-going during asonya.

Life was highly regarded. Despite the fact that the Iteso engaged in constant war-raids, the life of a person was not something disposed of lightly. The high regard for life was observed even in the case of a person killed because of akicud - sorcery or witchcraft. The person whom the council of elders convicted of akicud was usually killed.

The man who was authorized by the clan elders to kill ikacudan had to sacrifice a sheep in order to cleanse himself of the blood of his neighbour. He could not resume normal life without this cleansing. The executioner took some of the victim's blood and smeared it onto the victim's own mouth, he then return-home and slaughtered a male sheep. Blood was never shed without propitiation. The executioner was further anointed with ikujit - the offal in the stomach of the sheep.⁵⁰

49 Webster, op. cit. 131

50 Interview with Africanus Opama, Aburi, S. Teso, June 20th, 1981

Smearing the victim's blood on the victim's own mouth was a way of asking pardon of the dead person for having taken his life. Failure to perform that simple ritual was to risk the dead person's anger. The executed ikacudan might retaliate by returning to haunt the executioner.

During ajore - war raid - women and children captured were seldom killed. In fact one of the aims of ajore was to abduct young girls, who later became wives of the clan.

If for one reason or another, during an inter-clan conflict a clansman was killed, the clan responsible for it had to give a young girl to replace the killed clansman. The immediate brother or kin of the dead man would marry this girl so that the name and blood of the dead man did not die off. Such a wife was called aberu nak'asurup, the wife of conflict. In this way a life was paid for by a life.

All the regulations, observances of discipline and taboos that were instilled into the minds of the people from youth were designed to safeguard and maintain life, for life was the highest value. The life of the elders was highly regarded.

Children's discipline involved respect for elders.

Whether in family or clan ceremonies of whatever kind, no child was to begin eating before the elders or parents. If a child made the mistake of touching food first, he was beaten severely. It was after the big people had started eating that the children would be allowed to join, or the children ate on their own after the adults had finished.⁵¹

Many prohibitive laws centred around the protection of the community from those negative elements in human nature that could threaten the life of the people. These negative elements appeared in acts of witchcraft, sorcery, bestiality, evil magic, theft, incest, adultery, sloth, cowardice and even canibalism. For acts or suspicion of witchcraft, sorcery, incest, evil magic and bestiality, if found guilty, a person was even killed and consigned to what would be called the nether world, that is, he/she was cut off from the community of the living by the manner in which they were buried. Such offenders were normally speared to death in a deserted place, like near a swamp, (osamai), and left for vultures to devour. Iteso value a good burial perhaps more than most rituals. To be left unburied was to be symbolically cut off from the land of the living as well as from the community of the departed. To be left unburied was the ultimate penalty.

⁵¹ Webster, op. cit. p.124.

Yet it appears as if the measure in which Iteso value life drove them to play about with it in what they call imusagoi. (The word is not of Iteso origin.) Life always compensated for life.*

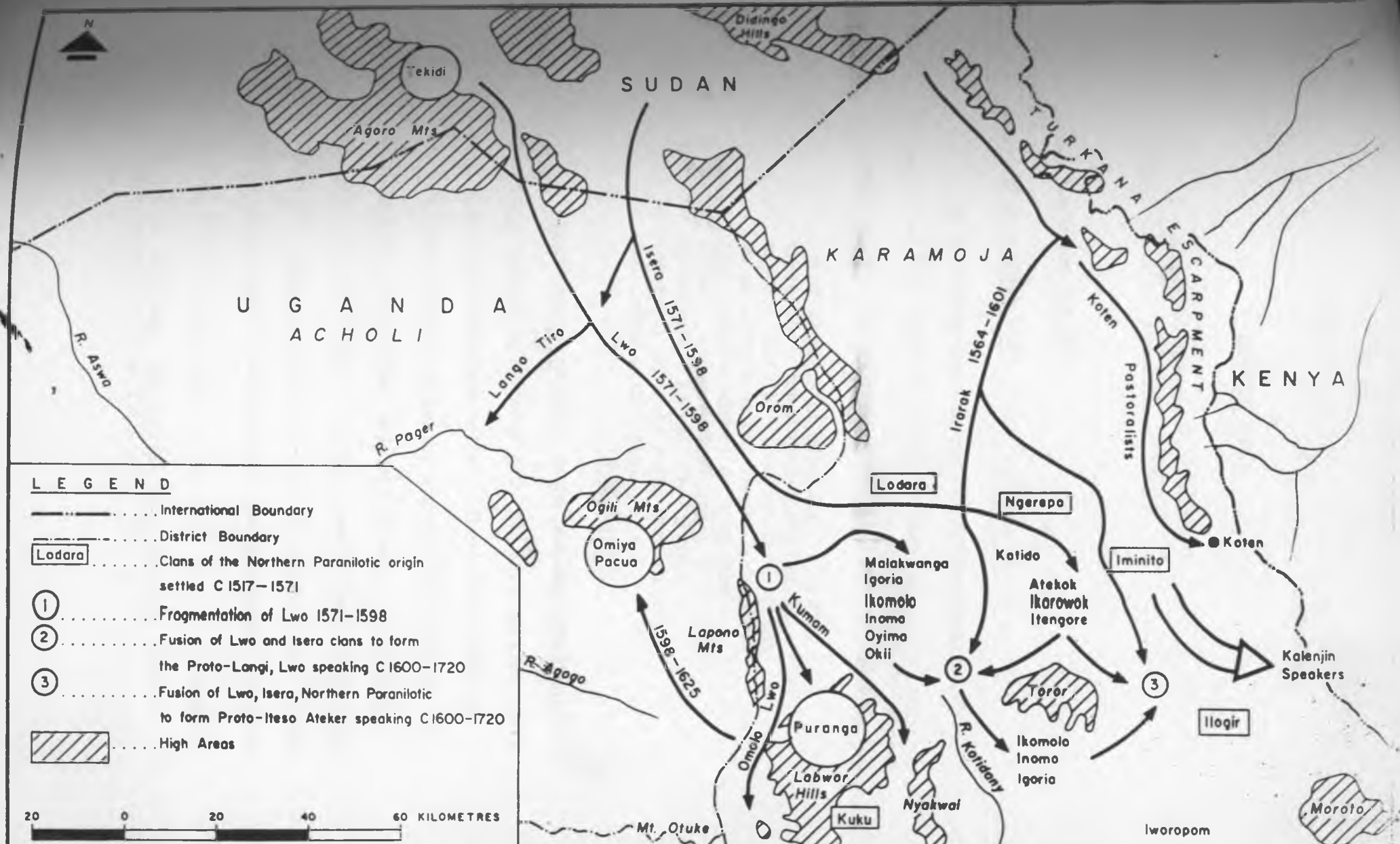
Generosity and hospitality were highly valued. Oftentimes a man combined generosity with being an elder in the community. A man who became very rich in cattle and livestock had quite a number of retainers attached to his household. It was expected of an elder to be generous towards his clansmen especially towards those who were of his ekek and those of his aturi, that is agemates, especially those who were initiated with him. I would call this good neighbourliness between them, ipaduko, (plural of epaduko). This was maintained in cases of an attack. Epaduko was not necessarily a clan member, but rather a neighbour. Perhaps generosity among Iteso best manifested itself in the extended family. The extended family among other things, provided a home for the otherwise would-be destitutes like the fatherless, the motherless and the widows. It absorbed these persons thus enabling them to continue normal life, as all adults in the extended family could give a father's or mother's care to a bereaved one.

Apart from generosity and hospitality, a man was also respected for upholding the clan taboos or etale.

* Vide infra, Chapter 3, section 4.

The observance of etale most directly affected women as did most of the rituals. It was women who were more directly involved in the nurturing and bringing up of new life into the community, processes which involved many clan italosinei (plural of etale). Women on being married, were incorporated into the etale of their husbands' clans. So the good woman, among other things, was the one who knew and observed the clan taboos.

From the brief description of Iteso social organization above, it can be seen that Iteso were a corporate society despite the fact that egalitarianism characterized a person's attitude towards his fellow men as regards to dignity and social standing. Individualism, as is becoming evident today, was discouraged. Religion was something that arose out of the consciousness of the people and gave a deeper meaning to their life as a people, as will be explained in the discussion of the religious rituals and beliefs in chapter three.



LEGEND

- International Boundary
- - - - - District Boundary
- Lodara Clans of the Northern Paraniotic origin settled C 1517-1571
- ① Fragmentation of Lwo 1571-1598
- ② Fusion of Lwo and Isera clans to form the Proto-Langi, Lwo speaking C 1600-1720
- ③ Fusion of Lwo, Isera, Northern Paraniotic to form Proto-Iteso Ateker speaking C 1600-1720
- High Areas



Fig. 3 THE ATEKER PRIOR TO THE KOTEN DISPERSAL

CHAPTER THREE

ITESO RELIGION - ITS BASIC ELEMENTS

1. The Names For God

a) Akuj - 'High God'

In an ethnographic survey of Africa submitted by Pamela and P.H. Gulliver on the "Central Hamites", this is what appears on religion among the Iteso of Uganda:

After 40 years of missionary activity there are a few pagans left, but it appears that the Iteso believe vaguely in an omnipotent but remote god named Akuj (the one above) or Apap (the Father), and more fervently, in a god of calamity, Edeke. The diviner (emurwon) can make rain, cure disease and combat witchcraft.¹

"Pagan" here apparently means one who still holds to that vague belief in a remote god, the fact is that there hardly was any such vague belief. There is no word in Ateso - (the language spoken by Iteso) - for religion as a collection of doctrines and beliefs about God and as something one does once or twice a week. When Iteso elders are asked, "What religion did your forefathers have before Christianity came?" one receives the inevitable response

¹ P & P.H. Gulliver, The Central Nilo-Hamites, London, International African Institute, 1953, p. 26.

"Ai kejai Edini epede?" Where was there any religion? The word "Edini" is the Tesoized form of Dini, a term the missionaries adopted when they first introduced Christianity to the Iteso.

The Christian Dini is something one does at certain times like on Sundays, feast~~days~~ and in times of crises like death; that which one puts on and off as the need arises. So, according to the way Iteso understood Christianity, it was the real Dini, and prior to its coming, there was no Dini, no religion. Iteso elders claim moreover that it was this Dini which revealed God's existence to them; before that all they knew and worshipped were amusabwan - spirits - (the word is of Luyia origin).

A different approach and questioning yields a different result, however. The Iteso, like other African peoples, have a deep sense of religion as "an ultimate fact of human nature,"² involving the whole person as both a physical and spiritual being. And like other African peoples, for the Iteso religion was and still is "part and parcel of the whole fabric of cultural life... closely interwoven with social, psychological and moral dimensions."³

² Bolaji Idowu, African Traditional Religion: A Definition London, SCM Press Ltd., 1973, p. 73.

³ Benjamin C. Ray, African Religions Symbol, Ritual and Community, London, Prentice Hall, 1976, p. 16.

The Iteso have known God under different titles; the "names" for God are really descriptions of his abode and activities rather than of His person. Gulliver's Edeke is significant in that it is the name the missionaries preferred and adopted as the God and Father of Jesus Christ. This was unfortunate because edeke is derived from adeka, which means sickness, plague, and more popularly among the Kenyan Iteso, venereal disease. The concept of Edeke was known by Iteso. Rev John Eneku, an elderly Etesot priest as well as musician and translator of the Bible into modern Ateso, explains the usage of Edeke in this way:

People took that name Edeke from the fact that when lightning came, they said that it is sickness. Adeka means sickness. And they came to learn that Edeke was the god of calamity who sends calamities to the earth... God insofar as He sent bad things, punishment, was Edeke; but as soon as He sent good things He was Ejok, Ejokit, the Good one.⁴

This informant goes on to explain that the Iteso had a name for God which differs from the one in current usage.

But in those days, in the real traditional idea of God, they had their name, though the missionaries called it the name for the devil, which I consider a mistake on the part of the missionaries. They should have adopted that name, kept it and then

⁴ Interview with Rev. John Eneku, Madera, Uganda.
July 20, 1980

told the people that that was the name of God who created them; but they did not take it not take it that way. They called it the name for the devil - Ejokit - that was the name, Ejokit?

Ejokit is derived from ejok, which means good, goodness. In the Christian catechism and in the Ateso version of the Bible which is still in use, the devil is called Ajokit as the entity that tempts people to commit sins and would cause them to go to hell. Such an entity, with that sinister function, and hell as a place of eternal torment were nonexistent in the minds of traditional Iteso. It is not quite clear how the missionaries mistook the name for God and gave it to the devil. It seems that in their total condemnation of certain elements of Iteso religion, particularly divination, in which Ejokit (Ajokit) features very prominently, they did not, and perhaps could not, stop to wonder how anything as noble as God could have anything to do with divination. If anything, imurwok - diviner/prophets - were to their minds, agents of the devil. Iteso imurwok attribute their call to practice divination and to prophesy, to God's choice, often revealed through the mediation of ajokin, here meaning spirits. The gift is understood to be a share in the goodness of God. As one informant expressed it: "Ajokun aloasuban ebuni namakeng."^{*} "The goodness of God comes to him." (to the emurwon)

It is difficult to reconcile

5 Ibid

* Information given by Kevina Among, Toroma Mission, during a group interview.

the error of the missionaries with this last statement.

The error was a tragic one.

It is my conviction that now Iteso are less Christian because the missionaries changed that name and thought it was the devil's name: Ejokit. If they had kept to that word of Ejokit and told them that that is God who created them, they would have been better Christians than they are now.⁶

Be that as it may, in the minds of Iteso today, Ajokit is the devil, not God. Edeke, which the missionaries preferred, is the god of vengeance, of calamity. The particular calamity that people immediately associated with God was lightning, especially lightning when it struck and caused death. As Eneku goes on to say:

... it is a pity that things were explained in the way they were at that time. We might say that Edeke is the wrong name for God altogether,⁷ but it is the god of vengeance...⁷

Probably because the people could not philosophize about evil in the world, they personified it, although it is doubtful whether Iteso placed lightning in the same category of evil, as sorcery, for example. Lightning was understood as a manifestation of the negative aspects of God. There was even a ritual performed during a heavy thunderstorm which was

⁶ Oral interview with Rev. John Eneku, Madera, Uganda, July 20, 1980.

⁷ Ibid.

designed to subdue thunder and lightning. It was called atikokin edeke, to subdue lightning. An axe or spear was thrown into wood. This was believed to keep the lightning away from that area. Other names for God are:

Akuj: The One Above. This name indicates God's dwelling place. God was believed to dwell beyond the sun, hence the practice of spitting into the palm of the hands and then raising them in prayer facing the sunrise and sunset.

Arubang'et:

One who holds the whole world. This name is very rare and known by a very few elderly Iteso around Kumi, Uganda.

Loasuban or Lokasuban: (Nakasuban - feminine):

The Creator. The feminine is preferred by the Iteso of Kenya; while the masculine is the commonest form used in Uganda. Christianity prefers the masculine form.

Eloim: Invisible One, like the wind. This name is also very rare, and known by a few elderly Iteso around Toroma, Uganda. This name sounds biblical, but is not biblical in origin. The elders who know the name do not know the biblical Elohim.

Apaap: The Great Father. Known and used by elders,
hardly known by the younger generation.

Eparait Lokapolon:

The Great Spirit. Known by elders.

Atoda or Katoda:

from "Katonda" - Luganda. This name was adopted and introduced to Iteso by Roman Catholic missionaries who Christianized the Iteso from Buganda at about the same time that Semei Kakungulu was being used by the British to subjugate the Iteso. The name found its way to Kenyan Iteso already changed to Katoda. Edeke was preferred by Protestant missionaries.

Amusabwa:

From "Misambwa" - Luyia - meaning Ancestral Spirits.
This name is very popular among Kenyan Iteso.

Nakajan: The one who weaves.

Perhaps Rev. Eneku is right when he claims that Iteso would be better Christians today if the name Ejokit had been retained. What is perhaps more likely is that Christianity would have been less foreign. It would appear that the worship of a god of calamity which the Gullivers refer to*

* Vide supra p. 55.

is the ritual known as aipore edeke which is performed in certain parts of southern Teso, Uganda. Several other parts of Teso visited, namely Toroma, Soroti, Kenyan Teso do not seem to have known such a ritual. It would appear to be a ritual peculiar to only a few areas of southern Teso, Uganda.

Unfortunately for the Iteso, the missionaries picked up this one local ritual and applied it indiscriminately to the whole of Teso. From a purely linguistic point of view, it is rather difficult to see the Christian loving, compassionate and redeeming God in Edeke who causes only calamities. Such a god, Edeke, remains foreign to the people's life involvements, and becomes someone who must be pacified with rituals lest his anger destroy them completely.

For the purpose of this study, the word Akuj is preferred as it is still known by many Iteso, even to those of the younger generation. It is known also to all branches of ateker. Controversial issues are, moreover, avoided, and all ateker are agreed that God lived kuju - up above the sky.

b) The Presence of God

Akuj was an ever present reality to the Iteso even when they were migrating in search of better and more spacious lands to settle. Akuj was understood to dwell up above, though the possibility of his dwelling in certain

places among the people was not entirely overruled.

Informants around Toroma, Uganda say that God was thought to live on Mt. Abila nearby. It was early Iteso ancestors who used to go to this mountain to offer sacrifices to Akuj.⁸ The small altars found in the homes of imurwok are called abila. This is probably reminiscent of the sacred mountain, Abila.⁹

Akuj was believed to be near people, though invisible. His presence was sometimes felt in certain awesome natural phenomena like the darkness which accompanies a thunderstorm, drought and heavy rain. The darkness was referred to as etoil and it filled the people with dread. Iteso seemed to have taken Akuj's benevolent presence in their lives for granted. It was when Akuj manifested himself negatively that people felt anxious enough to seek to appease him. Everything in life, both good and bad was understood to come from Akuj, although as will be seen below,* some calamities were seemingly attributed directly' to akicud - sorcery and drought.

⁸ Group interview of Iteso elders in Toroma, Uganda. Due to the circumstances in which the research was done it was easier to interview groups, usually in the mission compound rather than individuals in their homes.

⁹ The sacred mountain probably got its name from one, Abila, "... who was from Iworopom and after whom Abela was named." Abela was one of the earliest leaders to emerge from the new settlers who retraced their steps from Tororo to Usuku.

See Webster, pp. 34-44.

* Vide infra Chapter 4. ..

The Iteso have no creation myth as such, despite what has been said about Mr. Abila. Iteso elders say that it was Akuj who created the original ancestors of the Iteso and gave them their land and its produce and animals, both wild and domestic. Akuj gave them the knowledge that enabled them to till the land and to domesticate animals, especially cattle. There are no specific stories of how God did this. In the migration story recorded by Lawrence,¹⁰ Iteso seem to have had an evolutionary myth. The first migration period or age, Ojurata's Tadpoles, seems to imply that the earliest ancestors of the Iteso evolved from men of short stature with large heads who lived in swamps. No trace of this myth was found among the elders interviewed by the writer. What did emerge very clearly is the fact that in creating ateker, Akuj endowed certain persons among the people with special powers and knowledge. These were imurwok - diviner/prophets. Eneku echoes the mind of Iteso elders when he says of emurwon:

Iteso firmly believed in a man called emurwon... He is the one who revealed things to men. And that was the way in which God revealed himself to men. Emurwon gave them what to follow. For example, if they wanted anything at all, he (emurwon) himself said, you must do this and that, then you will be cured. Whatever emurwon ordered them, they did it. That was their form of religion,

¹⁰ Lawrence, op. cit. p. 7.

to listen to emurwon, who was a prophet. He spoke for God just as it was in the Old Testament. They would go to the one who was a prophet. He did things for them...¹¹

Iteso did not have any religious doctrines about Akuj, his nature, his commands to people: they had no "organized religion." They knew Akuj in their daily struggles and joys. The idea of a remote unconcerned God somewhere up in the sky does not apply to Iteso understanding of Akuj. To put this kind of interpretation into people's minds is altogether wrong, because,

What emurwon told Iteso they believed and that caused them to be with God. You cannot say that he was far away from them. How can you? Something spiritual, how can they measure its distance, the physical distance, who could do that? I know that people believed what emurwon told them. They believed that their God was near them, because they consulted him and he told them this is that... through emurwon.¹²

Emurwon was consulted only if the matter was very serious and very difficult. Ordinarily, people had a personal relationship with Akuj which was natural and spontaneous. They addressed Akuj in short ejaculatory prayers whenever the need arose: Okwe Akuj, kitimoi." "Oh Akuj, have pity on me." When Akuj spoke to them directly and not through the intervention of emurwon, they said that Ibore spoke to them.

¹² Eneku, interview, Madera, Uganda, July 20, 1980.

Ibore here means something mysterious.

Ordinary Iteso prayed to Ibore. They used to call it Ibore; yes, a thing. It is that which spoke. 'Arai ibore alimokin eong akiro.' It is something which spoke words to me. When one's conscience was speaking, they said, 'Ebala Ibore otau.' something is saying in my heart. That was their idea of God. They referred to that Ibore, and we know from our history that God was known as Res and that means Ibore; that is a Thing by itself, the Existing Being...¹³

*2) Worship of God:

St. Paul's message to the Romans would fit Iteso as well when he said: "For what can be known about God is perfectly clear to them since God himself has made it plain. Ever since God created the world his everlasting power and deity however invisible, have been there for the mind to see the things he has made." (Rom. 1:19-20) Their knowledge that God existed led them inevitably to worship him, and this they did by prayer and sacrifices. As has already been said, life was regarded very highly in Iteso society. Accordingly, the most meaningful sacrifice the people could offer was life, the life of animals, fowl, and in very rare occasions, human life. Iteso called these sacrifices Isuben - rituals/sacrifices.

¹³ Ibid.

Isuben were offered in order to obtain some favour from Akuj or when there was a felt need. Some were offered for no other purpose than to rejoice and give thanks for continued health and prosperity.

A man could, in his own homestead, kill a bull or a goat or a sheep and invite his neighbours to rejoice with him, that is akinumunum and call it, asubanakin amusabwa ang'i' - celebrating my God...¹⁴

Sometimes this kind of sacrifice was made in response to "a request" from God expressed through emurwon. Akuj would reveal to the person that he should asubanakin idwe keng, that is, celebrate and rejoice with his children. The phrase asubanakin connotes doing that which is right and proper. It carries with it also the sense of praying for protection and blessing. Iteso elders say that when a man did this, Akuj was pleased.

When Akuj sees a man esubanakin idwe keng - celebrating this sacrifice for and with his children, he is very pleased. Akuj does not forbid happiness. It is Akuj who sends pains, frustrations and happiness as well. Akuj knows what brings those sufferings. He himself it is who also shows people how to alleviate suffering. Wherever there is any sacrifice, Akuj is there present, there participating.¹⁵

¹⁴ Interview with Etyang Emukawot, Asinge. June 16, 1979.

¹⁵ Interview with Emukawot, Asinge, June 16, 1979.

Perhaps the most devastating of these sufferings were those which threatened to exterminate the society. Three will be discussed here: childlessness, drought and sickness including epidemics. These affected the entire community and so offering sacrifices in times of these calamities involved the whole community.

a) Childlessness

It was a terrible thing for a man or a woman to die childless. A woman who failed to bear children, felt forever unfulfilled as a person and bore the brunt of responsibility to her husband's clan for having incapacitated her husband in achieving his personal immortality. Iteso believe that a man continues to live on in his offspring. A man who died without ever having produced a child or without leaving behind someone who could carry on his name risked being completely forgotten. A man's personal immortality was first and foremost assured in his offspring. A woman too risked being consigned to oblivion but she felt it as a double responsibility; for through her ability to bear children and to raise them to full adulthood, that is, to the stage when they also had children of their own, her husband's personal immortality was assured. She consequently assured hers as well.

Several remedies, not involving animal sacrifices were first tried. One such remedy was the buying of children

from Imo - non Iteso. Webster records incidents when the Iteso were reduced to selling their children, too, for food.

In the early 1890s a cattle disease known as omilimili reached epidemic proportions. Informants claimed that many people lost all of their cattle, only the wealthiest had three or four heads left. By about 1894, a terrible drought and famine called ebeli created hunger and starvation... The sale of children, either those captured or one's own, into Kabermaido and Serere in return for food became a flourishing business.¹⁶

Another way of getting children for a barren woman was by going far and deep into a foreign village and kidnapping children. The writer's own paternal grandmother was kidnapped from deep inside a village in Busoga and raised an Atesot woman. When she was kidnapped she was **about eight** years old. She never went back, because she was raised up just like any of the children of the home.¹⁷ Whether bought or kidnapped, these children were treated in every way as full members of the clan. Their origins were not hidden from them, but their upbringing was so natural and thorough that they never once, on becoming adults, tried to trace them. Women who gave birth to only one sex of children were given children of the other sex in the same way.

¹⁶ Webster, op. cit. pp. 177-178

An alternative method was to perform a ritual called akiturtur. In this ritual a young girl from the clan or ekek of the barren woman was brought and given to the barren woman's husband as a second wife, second to the barren one. The first child born was named after the barren woman so that her name would not die out. Akiturtur was done also when such a barren woman died. If she died and no akiturtur was done, she would in spirit form, visit that home and demand for a child saying, "Give me also a child. Why should I be the only one without children?" This meant that a child would die. This could repeat itself. The spirit of a man who died childless, too, was appeased by naming a child after him soon after his death. No bridal wealth was exchanged for the woman of akiturtur and her coming was not discussed.

If the cause of childlessness was either sterility or impotence of the man, during igaten ritual, the matter would be referred to proverbially thus:

Ikoku, icakit etome?

Did the elephant step upon
the child?

Kayaasi aberu na arara.

Let us escort this woman
to collect firewood.

Kicakit ikoku yen etome,
mamu ijo kite ng'oli?

If the elephant has stepped upon
the child, cannot you see
that one?

The woman married to a sterile or impotent husband was thus tacitly given the encouragement to go elsewhere to any man she chose to conceive a child. The unfortunate husband did not put up a fuss when this happened.

Mention has been made of igaten ritual. Iteso believed firmly that children were a gift from Akuj. They thought that if a woman did not give birth Akuj may have closed her womb, in this case they prayed to Akuj to open the womb of a barren woman. Igaten or amook ritual was done. The barren woman was escorted to the home of her father by her husband's clan. Usually the whole clan participated in this ritual. Her father alone or with the help of fellow clansmen would contribute a bull which was ritually killed by an emurwon. The men of both clans would skin it and all present would eat it. The woman was anointed with ikujit - the contents of the stomach of the bull - and prayed for that she conceives. Most often, the elders say, after this ritual, if Akuj willed it so, the woman conceived. The prayers uttered were simple:

Okwe Akuj, King'arakinai so	O Akuj help us
Ere ka muta konyou konyou!	So and so's home rise up!
Eee! eee! iboia amoru, iboia akiria!	The grinding stone is sitting on the flour! (signifying abundance)

b) Drought and Barrenness of the Land

Barrenness of the land and drought also threatened the well being of the community. Communal sacrifices and prayers were performed to arrest this. Among the Iteso of Uganda, particularly those in the south, there was, and still is, a ritual performed called aipore edeke, literally, to cook the sickness/calamity. This ritual was organized and carried out by women, usually when there was a plant disease or an abundance of harmful weeds which threatened to choke the crops.

One woman in a neighbourhood, usually an amurwon (feminine of emurwon) would inform the others of the coming ritual. Each woman would take whatever foodstuffs she had in the house and gather with the other women at an agreed place. This place was usually in a grove near a swamp. There, each helped in the cooking of the foodstuffs, which all would eat ritually. Along with that, prayers and invocations for rain would be said, accompanied with song and dance. These prayers were for an abundant harvest and were usually led by the amurwon who called the gathering. In the prayers the worshippers invoked Edeke to spare them and not destroy their crops. Edeke here was that aspect of God that was responsible for the plant disease or abundance of weeds which threatened to destroy the crops. The prayers were designed to rid the land of these calamities and were addressed to Akuj so that he may remove the plant disease which threatened to destroy

the plants. After the ritual each woman returned home in silence and without looking back.

In the case of drought, elalai was done. Iteso of Uganda called it elelekeja. The ritual was more or less the same. Perhaps next to the cattle, the land was valued very highly. Rain is a most necessary thing to this land. It was, as it still is, of the utmost importance that rain fell in due season and in abundance. Anything which interfered with the rain was not taken lightly; and anything which could be done to facilitate the coming of the rains was done.

Among the things which were believed to interfere with rains was the cutting down of ekaereret tree - (ekure among the Iteso of Uganda). These trees are full of sap and were believed to be rain trees. When cut they "wept" a lot. In Uganda, the man who cut down ekure was called acudan edou - one who bewitches rain. The culprit was taken to the swamp and plastered with edoot - the swamp mud. In this way the clouds holding the rain were appeased.

The action of the person who cut down an ekure tree was believed to have the adverse effect of withholding rain. As long as the ekure tree stood in its sacred grove, people felt assured of the rain. To cut it down was to anger in some way Akuj, who was believed to have given the sacred tree to the Iteso as an assurance that rain would fall. The swamp mud was

believed to have some sort of mystical power capable of cleansing the person who had committed the sin of cutting down the ekure tree.

Eutut - esukusuk in Uganda - that is, the ground hornbill, was believed to be an emurwon k'edou - the diviner of rain. It was a sacred bird and was not killed for any reason or for any purpose. People used to feed it with seed as they did chickens. Killing the ground hornbill was tantamount to interfering with rain and was therefore an act which was equated with akicud - sorcery and witchcraft. Here akicud , by killing the eutut was an act which was felt to be as detrimental to society as sorcery was.

There were also certain persons who were believed to have the power of akidup edou - that is, to prevent rain from falling. Among the Iteso of Uganda they were called ikapelok. When asked just how a person could withhold the rain, the elders do not say because somehow no one quite knew how. When discovered such persons were asked to release the rain, under pain of being beaten up or even burnt to death.

Despite the possibility of things like the above interfering with the normal season of rain, the Iteso nonetheless believed that it was very necessary to pray to Akuj for rain. The Iteso of Kenya gathered together in certain places for elalai the "rainmaking ceremony." Normally, emurwon would divine the proper time for elalai by watching out for the ground hornbill. As soon as it was sighted or heard, elalai

was announced. A number of neighbourhoods would gather at one place for it. (One such place is the present Aterait village in South Teso Location.) Participants went draped in full ceremonial dress: men wore a feather headdress, leg bells, a piece of elephant tusk; and in their hands they carried a spear and a shield. The women wore a kind of headdress called esibong'ololot and beads round their waists called itesur. The elephant tusk had to be dipped into the mud in the swamp first. All healthy adult men and women were expected to participate.

Informants are not agreed as to the duration of elalai. Some say it lasted for as long as a week, others say until the rain came, however long it took, and some say all day. What they all agree to, is the fact that, elalai seldom failed to result in rain falling. Elalai was accompanied by a dance full of vigour, supplication as well as jubilation. People prayed with expectation and in anticipation of what they were praying for, happening. It included dancing to the beat of drums and the chanting of women. Killing an animal was not usually part of elalai though in some places animal or even human life was known to have been offered if the drought was exceptionally severe.

The chant went something like this:

Eeeee Elalai je!
Eeeee Elalai je!
Elalai je, eng'oli ebwoi ko too!
Etiapu kisiau kojang'ori!
Eeeee Elalai ng'oli!
Ejaasi imo kaerere; Ejaasi!

The words of the chant defy translation as the Ateso used here is very archaic. The sense of it is that the supplicants anticipated rain falling in abundance and so sang and danced as though they could already see it standing like welcome strangers under the ekaereret tree.

The counterpart of this rain ritual among the Iteso of Uganda was called elelekeja. As has already been indicated the ritual was more or less similar to elalai. The difference being that elalai was a ritual of the past which very few people remember at all, elekeja is still a present reality. One or two months before they were interviewed, three practicing "rainmakers" at Arapai near Madera in Uganda, had successfully conducted elelekeja.¹⁷

I was not able to witness elekeja as it had been performed a few months before I arrived on the field. Wright has given an interesting account of elelekeja which was performed in April, 1940 in Teso, in Kakuja, Kyere. The full description is quoted. Permission for the rain dance to be formed had to be secured from the colonial government administrator, who happened to be the writer of the article.

The rainmaker was a woman amurwon called Akoli and her assistant was another woman amurwon called Sabrina Achute.

¹⁷ The amurwok who performed this ceremony were Anna Maria Acaloi, Anna Akemo and Colonia Asiyu. They were interviewed by the present writer on July 19, 1980.

They were followed by a gathering of people which swelled to three hundred men and women. Wright described the ceremony as follows:

The people were swarthed in greenery, the creepers, ebomo, emoross and asimesam being used, as well as banana leaves. Garlands were bound round their brows, chests and waists. Everyone was carrying a branch of greenery in his hand, either cape lilac (alira) bamboo (emakada), or a type of bush used for fencing (elakas). A few boys carried the decorated dancing sticks (esyepet) and wore bead armlets (apel) and leg bells, (ichirin). Many of the older women carried gourd rattles (akaen).

The rainmaker (amurwon) of this group happened to be a woman, Akoli. She carried a small drum (idetet) which she beat monotonously in regular slow time - bam! bam! bam! Her assistant and leader in the singing was Sabrina Achute. She carried a calabash full of water with a switch of herbs and leaves lying in it. With this, from time to time, she asperged her neighbours. The herbs were elakas, ekodep and the gloriosa lily echaut, whose red and yellow flowers are thought to resemble the rainbow (etaluka).

The people processed in close order, dancing and singing as they went round the rock Agiro, an insignificant granite outcrop in a country where outcrops are common. The songs were recorded as they were sung by Stephano Okurut (the district office interpreter). It was later explained that they all belonged to the Ikaalen (flood) age set and formed part of their initiation dances (eigworone). They were as follows:

1. Ipolon Oo akosikweny linga Oo iririt ipolon. The pied -
wagtail, oh, oh, our bird is speckled. Oh, oh, it
balances on the edge of the flounce.

Ipolon Oo akasikweny meri, Oo iririt ipolon. The pied -
wagtail, oh, oh, our bird is striped, oh, oh, it
balances on the edge of the flounce.

2. Oo oyoyaa oyoyaa kimonyi isoda akiru.

Oh, oh, we supplicate, we supplicate, we cry, we also
for rain.

Oo oyoyaa oyoyaa, kimonyi isoda edou.

Oh, oh, we supplicate, we supplicate, we cry, we also
for clouds.

3. Akimat alot aide imare.

The old woman has gone to pick the beans.

Akimat, akimat, etoro bo nat ai?

Old woman, old woman, where has she gone?

Alot aide imare.

She has gone to pluck beans.

4. Okanyum atepe akiru k'okanyum.

Okanyum's rain has fallen on the simsim.

Okanyum edonidon akiru k'okanyum.

Okanyum's rain drops on the simsim.¹⁸

After singing this song near the rock the party moved to a special part of the rock which was lustrated ceremoniously, more and more people joined in the dance and prayers. The whole congregation then moved to a sacred rock at a placed called Atoi, three miles' distance. Apparently this was the rock which former rainmakers used to climb. It was quite a steep rock. When the party reached this rock, they danced round it three times singing:

Emiria idelelei kochori Ee emiria.

The hippo floats on the surface of the lake,
Eh, eh, the hippo.

Emiria idelelei kokido Ee emiria.

The hippo floats on the sudd, Ee, ee, the hippo.¹⁹

The next place to which the rain dancers proceeded, was a rock called Emoru Angiro, half a mile's distance. In this rock was a cave, the traditional place where prayers for rain were said. Nearby was a swamp to which most of the

¹⁸ A.C.A. Wright, "A Rainmaking Ceremony in Teso" Uganda Journal 10, pp. 25-26.

¹⁹ Ibid, P. 26.

congregation run to cut aladoi - papyrus, ekorom - water lilies, and amakadan - reeds, and to dab themselves with mud. Then in a great procession, they went to the sacred cave, holding their papyrus erect. As they went along, they sang:

Akebakou achoe ebala cheu-cheu k'aboro k'ikorom.

He wears the crest, the lily-trotter,
he glides lightly on the leaves of the lily.²⁰

At the entrance of the sacred cave, the two amurwok stood while the people arranged themselves in a circle around them. A third amurwon, well known and revered in the neighbourhood led in this part of the prayers. After making a bundle of the various reeds and roots brought from the swamp, she placed them in the cave and led the congregation in a prayerful chant:

Amurwon

Akiru jelel!

The rain, let it descend.

Kodou!

Let it drop.

Jelel eito, jelel!

In descending, let it descend

Congregation

Jelel!

Let it descend.

Kodou!

Let it drop.

Jelel!

Let it descend.

²⁰ A.C.A. Wright, op. cit. p. 26.

Kwape kwana kodou!

Kodou!

Now at once let it drop!

Let it drop.

Kodou!

Kodou!

Let it fall!

Let it fall.

Kwape kwana kotep!

Kotep!

Now at once let it fall.

Let it fall.²¹

The congregation then sang the song they had previously sang, Oo oyoyaa oyoyaa kimonyi isoda akiru and then went in a procession to the graves of Otuke and Egole, renowned rainmakers. The graves were about a quarter of a mile from the sacred cave. As they marched, they sang:

Ijangari aladot ekosidou.

They are shaking the papyrus our rain.

Alodot ijangari ekosidou.

The papyrus shakes our rain.

Alodot k'oBisima, k'o Par.

The papyrus of Bisima, of Par.

Ijangari ekosidou.

Shakes our rain.²²

²¹ A.C.A. Wright, op. cit. p.27

²² Ibid, p.27

On reaching the graves of the two rainmakers, Otuke and Egole, which were on opposite sides of an enormous fig tree, the amurwon put grass and papyrus on the graves. The congregation meanwhile stood all around the fig tree. The amurwon once more led in chanting, first in front of Otuke's grave, then in front of Egole's:

Amurwon

Congregation

Edou kotep!

Kotep!

Let the clouds fall.

Let them fall.

Koteputo edou kotep

Kotep!

In falling, the rain, let it fall.

Let it fall.

Akiru jelel!

Jelel!

The rain let it descend.

Let it descend.

Akiru jelel akou k'Otuke

Jelel!

The rain let it descend on
the head of Otuke.

Let it descend.

Edou kotep

Kotep

Let the clouds fall.

Let them fall.

Koteputo edou kotep

Kotep!

In falling, the rain, let it fall.

Let it fall.

Akiru jelel akou k'Egole

Jelel!

The rain let it descend on the
head of Egole.

Let it descend.

After the chant, everyone threw their papyrus and reeds on to the grave. The green decorations which had been

worn during the prayers were torn off and also heaped upon the graves. The amurwon then sang a final song and the women ululated - aikereikin, after which all went away facing west for some distance before breaking off and returning to their homes.

Wright concluded the description of the rainmaking ceremony by saying,

The service apparently proved disconcertingly successful as the next day an extremely heavy storm took place with heavy rain and such hail that many Abdim storks were killed and a lot of damage to cultivation done. This was followed by a week's steady rain.²³

Wright's account is a valuable description of communal prayers for rain which have been largely abandoned by the majority of the Iteso. His remarks concerning the ceremony are informative.

Iteso elders have always said that whenever² the people gathered together and performed elalai or elelekeja, the rain fell either the following day or as soon as the ceremony was completed, giving the worshippers barely enough time to return to their homes.

Wright's account brings out several important aspects of Iteso communal prayers. First of all, everyone participated

²³ A.C.A. Wright, op. cit. p. 28.

and the leading priest could be a woman or a man. His or her role was not dependent upon his or her sex. Whether man or woman; the diviner-prophet's role was respected. Secondly, the praying was done with enthusiasm and joy. Song and dance were an integral part of it.

There was an element of hope and anticipation of that for which the people prayed in the words of their song and in the rituals performed. The people first went to a rock, (perhaps reminiscent of the sacred mountain Abila) and then went to a swamp, a place associated with rain. Here they dabbed themselves with swamp mud, thus making themselves one with an object closely connected with water. The mud became the fitting vestment to be worn during the prayers for rain at the sacred cave.

The Iteso associated the swamp with something else other than rain. When an acudan - sorcerer, witch, was tried, it was to onyunyur, near a swamp, or to amagoro, a wooded area near water that he/she was taken to be tried. When found guilty, the acudan was killed and left there unburied. A swamp was understood as a wilderness, where the supernatural dwelt, where justice was enacted and where supplication was made for rain.

The people garlanded themselves with creepers, herbs and leaves, products of the earth. In order to pray for rain, Akuj was approached and shown what the rain did, it

caused the earth to produce plants, without which, the people could not live. There was a tremendous affinity of the people with the land. They threw every atom of themselves into these prayers, never doubting for a moment that their prayers were effective. These prayers were seldom directly addressed to God, instead God was made aware of how normal life went on when there was rain. This is evidenced in the formula of the prayers. "Let the rain fall... Let it fall!"

Wright was disconcerted by the success of this ceremony because from his vantage point and with his background of a salvation centred religion, the whole thing may have appeared very secular and crude; yet for the Iteso, it had been a profound religious dance. This ritual of dancing in order that rain may fall had brought together "the personal egoistic sphere, the social sphere and transcendental cosmic one,"²⁴ into a unified whole. The simple things in life had been integrated into a religious ritual. The complexity of many Iteso rituals lie in their very simplicity which "elevates" ordinary, everyday mundane things into symbolic ones.

Ludger records another rainmaking ceremony which was performed in quite a different way from the one described by Wright. The officiating emurwon was a man and the people

²⁴ Evan, K. Zuesse, The Ritual Cosmos: The Sanctification of Life in African Religions. Athens, Ohio, Ohio University Press, 1979, p. 7.

were not led to a swamp in song and dance. The ritual was more cut and dried and at the end included the killing of sacrificial animals. This ceremony is given in full as Ludger describes it:

One emuron* (rainmaker) goes through the village towards evening, shouting:

Kopote moi kere, kanuk alosit amood edou.
Next morning the people, on advice of the emuron, gather at the grave of an emuron who is known to have been a great rainmaker. The crowd of people go round the grave all the while singing: Kobala edou totep ece kiyari yeke, yeke, yeke. The emuron in the meantime gathers a handful of earth from the grave and puts it into a calabash. The people then proceed to a swamp where there is water, often singing and dancing during the journey. The procession moves slowly. Having arrived at the swamp the crowd stands still and the rainmaker, undressed, throws himself into the water. A junior emuron is ordered to bring a milking vessel (elepiti) which the senior emuron fills with water and into which he puts a frog. He then holds it up and shouts: wee, wee, wee, edou, yeke, yeke. The people answer: edou eapun siri ebu ededeng imonyete so ijo. The emuron orders the people to wash and, when this has been done, all go to a big tree pointed out by the emuron, in which there is supposed to be a big snake. He then climbs up this tree with the filled milk pot and throws the water in all directions, chanting edou lokide, and the people answer, edou. Emuron: edou loenyaki, people: edou, emuron: kobu, people: kobu.

The emuron next puts his hand into a hole in the tree and mutters unintelligible words to the supposed snake inside the hole. After this all sit down and the emuron appoints several men to fetch goats or sheep. These animals are killed and roasted over a fire.

* Emuron: Ugandan Ateso usage prefers this spelling. The Kenyan Ateso usage on the other hand prefers the spelling emurwon.

The emuron then speaks as follows: edou ibwaitai akipi. If no rain follows quickly the emuron then points to certain people, mostly those whom he dislikes, and accuses them of withholding the rain. These men are seized and thrown into the water with the accompaniment of much heavy pushing and blows. Although they were sure to deny the accusation, this will not help them. After their bath they will have to climb up into the tree and throw imaginary water over the ground. These accused have to go home and do not partake of the meat which has been roasted.

The emuron then starts to eat the meat, but only the goat meat, not the mutton. The others may eat either. The meat of which the emuron partakes must be cut by someone else. After the eating of the meat all go home.

Translation of Ateso words:-

The emurwon summons the people saying:

"Come tomorrow all of you because we want to pray for rain."

At the grave of an emurwon the people sing:

Let it say totop! (the sound the rain makes)

Let it say yelele!

Elepit - the wooden mortar for milking.

As the emurwon holds the frog he says:

Wee, wee, the rain! yelele, yelele.
(the frogs make this sound in the water)

The people answer:

Oh rain draw near
do not come in anger
we cry to you.

edou lo enyaki - a lot of rain
edou loto - the rain walks
kobu - let (the rain) come

Edou, ibwaitai akipi

The clouds have hidden the rain.

If the rain comes soon, the emuron will be a celebrated man whom other villages will soon employ, but should there be no rain he covers himself by saying "My head has not found the rain because evil men are still hiding the rain." He orders the community to catch these men and to beat them. Big fights may result. I have had many cases brought into hospital on account of such a fight.²⁵

In both ceremonies, that of Wright and that of Ludger, the people gathered at the grave sites of known imurwok in the course of the supplication for rain. The significance of this is that the Iteso believed, and still do, that the departed still form part of the living community.*

The power of a former emurwon did not end in death. It would have been unthinkable to leave out the departed imurwok in prayer which formed part of their lives. This would have been to risk their anger, and thus risk having no rain even at the end of their prayers.

Childlessness, the barrenness of the land,²⁶ drought and sickness were understood to happen at the will of Akuj. Indeed all that happened had two causes: a primary cause, Akuj, and a secondary cause, created agencies. Iteso felt the need to plead with Akuj to remove a certain calamity,

²⁵ K. Ludger, "Rainmakers in Teso" Uganda Journal 18, 1954, pp. 185-186.

* Vide infra Section 4 of this chapter.

yet they also felt that they had to try and do whatever they could to deal with the calamities. Because all that happened had a cause, in the mind of Iteso, nothing was ever accidental, though certain inescapable realities like death were inevitable. Everyone at one point or another fell ill, yet the Iteso had to have an explanation for sickness, especially very serious sickness. This paradox is perhaps best explained in the words of one elder who said:

When a person has been sick for a very long time until his heart desires to die, Nakasuban (God) comes and speaks to this one who desires death saying, 'It is I who formed you in the womb of your mother. It is good for you to live out all the years which I decided for you. It is I who made you and not another. The death which is killing you I know it too. I assist that which is killing you. If I want to show you that you should die, you will die; but if there is some medicine you are wearing by which you wish to heal yourself, I also smile and am happy because you are also with intelligence.²⁶

The medicines referred to in the above statement, could be those given to the sick person to protect himself from harmful forces. According to this same informant, who was a renowned medicine man and healer in his life time, and who at the time he was interviewed had been bedridden for years, both from extreme old age as well as sickness, it is unwise to rely on only one type of treatment for sickness.

²⁶ Interview with Etyang Emukawot, Asinge, June 16, 1979.

In fact death should not be too much in a hurry to come for a sick person. Instant death deprives people of the opportunity of trying out their knowledge and skill at healing. It also does not allow a person to prepare himself to depart properly. When sickness strikes a person, each known healer's skill should be consulted and the results awaited. If all fail, then several rituals may be tried. One of the rituals was called ekiworone:²⁷ - the calling. It was performed when an elder was very sick and there were signs that recovery might not be possible. All members of the clan participated in it.

A general meeting of all the clan was called and all gathered at an akalapatu - a kind of clearing which was no man's land. Sometimes emurwon led in the calling. At this gathering even ilong'au - non relatives - were included, especially if they lived among the clan. The aim of the gathering was to ascertain the cause of the sick man's illness. When all had gathered, the leader called out:

Okwe! Ng'ai be ecudakit muta? Oh! Who has caused this
person's illness?

Ejei aduket nepene! He is right here in
this neighbourhood!

²⁷ Oral interview with Sebastiano Ekeya, Akites,
February 15, 1980.

All looked at one another and at themselves in a kind of self examination. The criterion for guilt here was abstention from the gathering without any justifiable reason. The absent kin was fetched there and then and confronted with the crime. A fresh and bitter gourd was opened, filled with water and taken to the sick person. All would then dip some emuria - cynodon dactylon - into the gourd and sprinkle the sick person, while disclaiming any responsibility for the illness. The strange thing, according to the elders, was that as soon as the person accused of causing the illness sprinkled the sick one, the latter would take in a deep breath and thereafter recover. If no deep breath was taken, the patient usually died. No one wanted to carry the burden, the guilt, of having caused another to die.

If there was an epidemic or continuous illness or death in a home, a ritual called igaten was performed, officiated by emurwon. The whole clan participated. On the day agreed upon, the clan gathered at the afflicted person's homestead. A bull for the sacrifice had already been chosen. The helpers of emurwon got hold of the bull by its horns and legs and held it firmly on the ground. The emurwon then got hold of its tail and went round and round the bull chanting, while his helpers responded in chorus thus:

Leader

Ere ka Muta, konyou!
Anyou?
Angaleu?
Ajokunari?
Apaka amusenu?
Apaka?
Adeka kore ka lo kobongo too

The home of so - and - so
get up!
Has it got up?
Has it been healed?
It is alright?
Is the digging stick broken?
Is it broken?
You sickness of this home,
go westward!
(or, let the sickness that
afflicts this home go west).

Chorus

Konyou!
Anyou!
Angaleu!
Ajokunar!
Apaka!
Apaka!
Eeee kolot too!

Get up!
It has got up!
It has been healed!
It is alright!
It is broken!
It is broken!
Yes let it go west!

After chanting this way for a while, the emurwon killed the bull ritually by thrusting a spear into its backside and sliding it in and out until it died. Some of the meat was roasted and eaten by all, the rest was divided according to the portions each group should get. In this way the bull in some way died so that the people might be healed.

The Iteso considered, and still do to a large extent, their cattle as one of the most important gifts Akuj gave them. Next to the land they say Akuj gave the Iteso cattle. Before they learnt agriculture, they used to depend on the cows in the way their fellow Karamojong ateker depended on them for life. From the cattle they used to drink blood and milk and eat their flesh and this was the staple diet.

Cattle sustained life in almost every way, and except for the really large bones, no part of the cow was useless. The hide provided bedding and clothing, the meat provided food, cow dung was used for smearing houses, granaries, baskets as well as for fuel in the rainy season. For fuel, the dung was dried. Perhaps the most important function of the cows in Iteso society was to enable a man to marry. Without cattle a man could not marry and so remained immature and in danger of dying off altogether. Without a certain number of cattle being sent to her father's house, a woman never felt properly married. These cows helped to stabilize marriage after making it possible and legal according to traditional Iteso understanding. In moments of crises, stress, or even when he wanted to celebrate an important event in his life, that is, asubanakin, a man felt that the biggest and highest possession he could use was a bull. The immolation of the bull linked the life of the bull with that of the people. By dying, the bull was, so to speak, making it possible for the people to be healed and to live.

The Iteso of Uganda had a ritual called aigat from the same root as igaten. For the Kenyan Iteso, aigat meant ritual blessing: but for the Uganda Iteso, aigat meant ritual blessing as well as ritual cursing. How and where this rather radical difference came of the meaning given to the same word, remains to be explored, possibly

by future Iteso students of Ateso. In Kenya any emurwon would perform igaten, but in Uganda, opinion is divided as to who could perform aigat. Some informants say only the clan Isureta could perform aigat, but others say any emurwon could do it. Cursing was taken very seriously by both sections of ateker, whoever did it. Blessing was taken more lightly in Uganda than in Kenya.*

In the foregoing pages, an attempt has been made to show that God, Akuj was very central to Iteso religion; he was a present and important reality. Akuj as sky, was the symbol merely^{of} God's nature, for God was over and above creation and should not be confused with the sky. Akuj as the Creator was invisible though ever watching over what he had made. Perhaps the most visible representation of God besides thunder and lightning was the sun - akolong. The sun could also dry up rivers and crops. It was not unusual to invoke the sun in blessings. When a person was setting out on a long journey a common prayer was: "May this sun be kind to you." The sun was also addressed directly thus: "O Sun You Know."

Individuals worshipped Akuj spontaneously anywhere as the need arose. An elder within this ekek (homestead) faced

* Vide Infra Chapter Four, section III (b).

the rising sun, spat into the palms of his hands, raised them towards the sun and prayed for blessing upon his home for the day. In the evening he repeated the same gesture facing the setting sun and thanked Akuj for the good things that had happened in the day, he also asked for protection in the coming night. Others went outside the homestead enclosure and prayed while raising both hands skyward, then to the four directions of the compass.

Another way of praying was one in which a younger person would go to an elder to akibaanakin akanin, that is supplicate him with palms facing upwards asking for his blessing and even intervention. It was to one's advantage to show kindness to elders. A person who showed kindness to elders merited a spontaneous blessing. In a short ritual the elder would take the kind person's right hand and nibble at the index finger saying:

Uh! Atoroma pu! Uh! mini Kuju!

This is impossible to translate literally; but it was a prayer for prosperity and a long life.

3. Rituals of Incorporation

The rituals of incorporation which will be discussed in this section are those which the Karpis call "domestic ceremonials."

All these domestic ceremonies concern the symbolic role of woman as an agent of fertility. Men have no role in these ceremonies except occasionally to kill and skin a sacrificial cow. The ceremonies occur when it is necessary to dramatize transformations in the woman's role.²⁸

What the Karps describe as "transformations in the woman's role" are what I prefer to call rituals of incorporation. They are more than just dramatics for the woman; they are her proper ritualistic actions as a most important member of an Iteso clan. The Karps are indeed correct when they say that these "domestic ceremonials have survived since pre-colonial times. There is no evidence of any decline in importance in these rituals in Teso life."²⁹ They have undergone some alterations as a result of changes in Iteso life. The younger generations, particularly those who have completed their education up to the acquisition of some academic certificate, do not look upon these ceremonials with the same understanding as do those who have had little or no education. In fact many have abandoned them altogether.

Whether educated or not, Iteso women have retained in their hearts "the major symbolic theme of traditional Teso religion - a ritual emphasis on the role of women as agents of fertility and abundance through the production

²⁸ Ivan and Patricia Karp. "The Iteso of Kenya - Uganda Border" in A. Molnos, Cultural source Material for Population Planning in East Africa. V II, P. 385.

²⁹ Karp, op. cit. p. 386.

of children... Women are continually enjoined to fulfill the role that is expressed in the ceremonies."³⁰

The age set system, strictly speaking, did not extend to women in Iteso society. The rites of passage, that passage into adulthood or into a full membership of a particular airiget,* which marked a significant change of status in the life of a young or adult man, did not exist for the woman; instead, for the woman, marriage was composed of a series of rites of incorporation into the clan of the husband, which ended in the final rite of passage that people went through, that of death. The most important of these rites of incorporation will be discussed here.

In traditional Iteso society, the highest aspiration of the Atesot girl was one day to marry and have children. There was no dream more sublime than that. Towards the attainment of that goal, the Atesot girl was carefully trained by her mother, grandmother and aunts. She learned the basics of home building, child care, industry, mostly by doing. From very early, she progressed from being sent to do errands for mother and other adults around her, to babysitting younger brothers and sisters, to heavier tasks and duties, such as, being able to feed the family during those times when mother was away, sometimes for weeks.

* Vide Infra p. 166.

The Atesot woman, by birth, is a member of her father's clan since the Iteso are patrilineal. She remains a member of her father's clan until death, in the same way she remains her father's daughter until death. She learns from her mother the set of taboos binding on women in that clan, (clan taboos seem to be more binding for women than for men, hence the rituals surrounding these taboos), and for as long as she remains in her father's household, she will honour these taboos.

When she marries, she will adopt the clan taboos of her husband, although strangely enough, she will never swear by those taboos! In order to incorporate her into her husband's clan, she had to undergo a number of rituals of incorporation.

a) Akibwan Ateran: The Anointing of the Bride

The first of these rituals of incorporation which has been largely abandoned, was the anointing of the bride. The bride spent the first three days, after having been brought³¹ into her new home, in the house of her future mother-in-law. During those three days, she was closely guarded by the clan sisters of her future husband. Some girls refused to eat

³¹ Iteso traditional marriages always had the outward appearance of forced marriages. The bride was abducted from her home by the age mates of her future husband and taken to his home. It was hardly ever a random abduction, for all due observances had been seen to ensure the willingness of the girl to the marriage. A girl who had any amount of self respect at all, had to put up a fight about being married, thus the abduction; even after reaching her future home, she was closely guarded during the first week lest she escape and return to her parents.

during those three days and sought every chance of escaping and returning to their parents' home. It was also during these three days that the clans people of her future husband came to view her, and each was ready with a comment about her appearance, some of which were not very complimentary. The new bride saw and heard all in silence. It was all part of her initiation into a new state in life, the married state.

On the morning following those three days, the mother-in-law, accompanied by the older women of the lineage, sat the bride on a cow hide in front of the house. A boy-child about two to four years old, was placed on the bride's lap. She was clothed in a front apron called ababaa. She was made to sit with her legs stretched out and her back to the doorway. Flanked on either side by the women of the lineage, each facing the doorway, the mother-in-law anointed the bride's back with butter or shea butter in which the scrapings of the back of an esas tree had been mixed. She then slapped the lower back - eng'abet-of the bride with the flat of both palms in unison and said:

Akinyet kosi na, na, na! Kokeria okito!
Akinyet kosi na, kolosia kware!
Kinaminam ekatapan nama itorit ijo,
kobala tiaa!

Literally:

Here is our oil!
run with it onto trees!
Here is our oil,
run with it at night!
May the termites eat your footsteps
saying tiaaaa!

Meaning:

Do not be unfaithful, do not be a witch, otherwise barrenness, and even death will follow you.

While the anointing was going on, one or two young men stood near, with flexible rods - aboloji - in their hands, ready to beat the bride with them as soon as the anointing was over. The bride had to quickly try to run back into the house while the rods were aimed at her. One of the younger women of the lineage valiantly guarded her and received most of the beating. Once the bride entered the house, she was safe. The young men could not follow her inside. The boy-child had been quickly snatched from her the minute the anointing was over.

Sometimes it was not so easy for bride to escape the rods. Some young girls of her future clan would enter the house and bar her way by closing the door so that she could not enter. Brides have been known to take to their heels, closely pursued by the eager young men with the rods.

In traditional Iteso society, that night, the parents of the young bridegroom moved out of their house and the two newly marrieds slept in their house on the parents' bed. The parents returned after the father, with the help of his brothers or/and clansmen, built for the young husband, his own house. This honour was accorded to the oldest son of

the home, but all first wives were thus anointed. These anointed wives were called aberu nuk'aparik, literally "the wives of the rod," that is, the first wives. They occupied very exalted places in the home, for they in their turn, became the custodians of the clan taboos and the priestesses of the clan etale - taboos.

The next morning, the bride was escorted to the river by the younger married girls of the husband's clan or lineage. On the way to the river the bride carried the same boy-child who sat on her lap during the anointing. One of the women with her, carried a small gourd. On reaching the river, she was ritually bathed. The boy-child was placed on her back while she bent down in the attitude of one who takes a bath, and water was poured over both her and the child. She was then allowed to complete the bathing herself.

After the bathing, each woman filled her pot with water. On the head of the bride, all the women together placed the small gourd and the bride was told to lead on the walk back home, and the others followed her. After walking a very short distance from the river, one of the women knocked the gourd off from the bride's head - she had been carrying it balanced on her head without any support - and when it fell and shattered into pieces, all the women said in chorus:

Eeh! abwang' ateran amot!

eeh! abwang' amot!

that is: Eh! the bride has broken the pot!

(A warning, to be careful with waterpots.)

Everyone then picked up their own pots and returned home with the bride leading as before. The bride had to walk all the way home in silence and without looking back, while her companions chatted and laughed away, probably recalling their own experiences as newly marrieds.

For as long as it took to do so, these women would ceremoniously initiate the new bride into the normal household chores, which included, collecting firewood, grinding grain, lighting the fire, sweeping the house. After these ceremonial initiations, the women companions left her alone with her mother-in-law, who then trained her in all matters concerning the running of a home. For a number of years, the new bride would live out her married life under the close tutorship of her mother-in-law, who, besides teaching her how to be a housewife, also taught her the taboos of her husband's clan.

The ritual of akibwan ateran, the anointing of the bride, marked a very significant step in the life of a young woman. It marked the end of her girlhood and the beginning of womanhood. In Iteso society an unmarried woman is forever a girl in the eyes of society, no matter how old she gets. To remain unmarried was to have somehow

stopped growing in stature and maturity. The anointed bride was in fact addressed by the honoured title of aberu - meaning, woman or wife. She was now the wife of the lineage.

The anointing also assured her the place of leadership in the lineage. Subsequent brides had to look up to her, and if she crowned her womanhood by producing sons and daughters in proper proportion, her place in the clan was assured. She could hold up her head among other women and before all men. The woman so anointed was never divorced.

The words which accompanied the ritual of anointing warned her to remain faithful to her husband and to the clan. Should she start hopping around, the curse inherent in the ritual would catch up with her. She would remain barren, a terrible misfortune, or she might even die. So, the anointing bound her to the lineage.

A boy-child was placed on her lap to symbolize the children she would bear. It was a wish for her that she be fruitful. Marriage in Iteso soociety was never the affair of just two people, in fact it was more a woman's involvement than a man's. From the moment the new bride arrived until the time she was left alone to continue her new life, she was accompanied. Thus Iteso society

realized that for a young girl to leave her parents and her age mates, who had formed such an important part of her life was not easy. That is why, for the first weeks, she was surrounded by persons who were later to become her new community. These companions initiated her into her new community, even though her own sisters were usually with her for the first few weeks as well. Marriage was therefore never an abrupt and traumatic break with the past and a plunge into a new life where only one person formed the whole of a person's life. In Iteso society the bride saw her husband for any length of time only at night. During the day-time men kept company with other men and the women with other women.

After the initiations, the bride settled down to a normal life. Within the first year of marriage, she was expected to become pregnant. Different clans had different taboos which a pregnant woman had to observe. A description of these would be beyond the scope of this present study. The event that everyone waited for with much anticipation and hope was the birth of a young woman's first child. With the birth, the young woman was further incorporated into the clan.

b) Aipuduno - The Bringing Out of the New Baby

In traditional Iteso society, the birth of a baby was assisted by the traditional midwife called nakesidoon aberu.

As soon as the baby was born and everything had proceeded normally, the umbilical cord was cut and the name given to the baby. The grandmother (paternal) dipped her fore-finger into a calabash of water, and, mentioning a name already chosen, she would say: aso cabo konak. Here, suck. Usually the child sucked the finger, thus consenting to the name. The first child was always named after a great grandparent.

Occasionally this sucking may have been misunderstood for consent, while in fact only one party had consented, that is, the baby and grandmother, whereas the other party, the departed ancestors, had not. A name had to be chosen which the ancestors also agreed to.* If the ancestors rejected the name chosen the name was changed. To discern this as the cause of the baby's distress, an emurwon was consulted.

For three days following the birth of the baby, the new mother had to remain indoors. If she went out to attend to nature's necessities, she had to leave the baby indoors. During those three days, she ate only sorghum porridge brought from her mother's home and a certain plantain called epiakol. She was not allowed to wash her hands or the baby. She ate the food using pieces of bark. The Iteso of Uganda had a more elaborate ceremonial for this ritual. The description below is the Ugandan ritual.

* Vide infra pp 133-134.

Three days after the birth, the child was officially brought outside. Beer had been brewed for the purpose. Food too had been prepared. On this morning, the new mother was made to sit outside of the house, in the morning sunshine, with her legs stretched out before her. Her mother-in-law anointed her forehead, shoulders and chest with beer in a calabash. Some atap - the stiff porridge prepared from sorghum - and edia - vegetables - were mixed and she was given some to eat. The baby too was given some to taste. There then followed jubilation and feasting of the women of the clan.

Part of the proceedings consisted of levelling all kinds of abuse and ridicule on the new mother. If she had not been behaving properly, that was when her conduct was pointed out. The new mother had to endure all that in silence. If she had been stubborn, the women would retaliate by delaying her aipoduno - bringing out. The anointing was a prayer for long life and health for the mother and baby.

c) Akinyama Edia/Abalang ; Eating Vegetables/Salt.

Shortly after the birth of the baby, probably what the Iteso of Uganda called aipudun, a third ritual of incorporation took place. On the morning of this ritual, the new mother's head and as well as her baby's was shaved by razor. The heads were first made wet with milk and then shaved. The hair was put into a lump of cow dung and then thrown away.

If the baby was a boy, fresh blood was taken from the neck of a live bull calf, and if the baby was a girl, the blood was taken from a young heifer. This was done by piercing the jugular vein of the neck and catching the blood which flowed, in a calabash. This blood was later cooked mixed with milk and fed to the new mother with atap, the stiff porridge from sorghum.

A number of the women of the clan went to the house of the new mother. The leader would carry a long stick of elephant grass in her hand. At the home they were given, a bunch of plantains - epiakol -, a basketful of unthreshed sorghum, some simsim, isuku, groundnuts, three varieties of peas, a piece of cowhide, on which her mother sat when she was anointed, called akapet, a three pronged stick used for stirring food cooking in a pot, called ekipiret.

The foodstuffs were cooked by the women. When the food was ready, the new mother was made to sit on the cowhide, akapet, with the baby on her lap facing the doorway.

The mother-in-law anointed her with a piece of atap - stiff porridge - which she dipped into the blood-milk mixture called ekidomocere. She anointed her on the forehead, chest and shoulders. She did the same to the baby. The new mother was then asked to bite pieces of the food, a piece at a time, and spit them out to her right and left and the rest she ate. She then completed eating the food apportioned to her. By spitting the food first to the ground, she was inviting the departed ancestors too to participate in the ritual.

A mixture of herbs and water were put in a mortar. The other women as well as the mother were garlanded with strips of bark. An elder woman then pounded the mixture in the mortar singing:

Eeee tetere ekoko, eeee tetere ekoko
eutut, eutut, iyalama kapel
eutut, eutut, iyalama kapel
kokilenikeng, iyalama kapel

Defies translation, but the sense is
one of rejoicing.

She then anointed the new mother and the baby with the pounded herb mixture, wishing them long life and good health. The women then ululated the new mother.

Beer and jubilation followed. Later in the day the mother of the new mother, with a few companions, came to join in the ritual. They always returned to their own homes after nightfall.

The second part of this ritual was what was called akinyam abalang - to eat salt. In traditional Iteso society, salt was got from the ash of a variety of plants burnt in a particular way. The finest salt was what was known as aserot. It was obtained by first burning a plant called esamai, which grows near swamps. The ashes were placed in a special container called akisiet and water added to it. The akisiet had holes at the bottom which enabled the water to drain clear and clean. This water contained a

solution of the salty element of esamai. The solution was boiled until all the water evaporated, leaving behind a concentrate of salt. It was this salt which the new mother was not permitted to eat in food, until the ritual of akinyam abalang was done. It was believed that if she ate that salt before the ritual, the baby would die.

The mother of the bride as well as the mother-in-law, each in their separate homes, prepared a dish cooked in aserot. The dish usually consisted of smoked and dried beef cooked in aserot to which simsim and milk were added.

On the day of the ritual, the mother of the bride with some women companions journeyed to the home of her daughter, carrying a pot full of that specially prepared dish, a basket or several baskets full of atap - stiff sorghum porridge, six or seven pots of beer. The mother-in-law also prepared similar foodstuffs with the help of the women of the lineage. The meat dish prepared by the daughter's own mother had to contain amaran nak'ecicikwa - a piece of collar bone.

When the two parties of women assembled at the home of the daughter, the new mother was again ritually fed as at the ritual of akinyam edia. The food for this was placed in a clay bowl. She first tasted that which her mother prepared and brought. In the course of the meal she was made to bite the collar bone, and as she bit it, the women exclaimed,

Eeee! Eeee!
Anyama ateran akoit!

That is: Eh! Eh! Today the bride has eaten a bone!

This was called, akibel akoit - to crush the bone. Before this, she had had to avoid eating meat bone, for to do so, was to risk having her own bones ache. Meat on bone was considered the tastiest part of beef. The women then ate the food prepared, each party eating the other's food-stuffs. No men were permitted to partake of these foods. They were invited only during the drinking of the beer, the final act in these rituals.

Only at the birth of the first children, boys or girls, were Itcso women required to observe these two rituals. Her status as a married woman rose after these two rituals. She was still considered a young woman, or a bride until after she set up house separately from her mother-in-law. She could ^{do} this soon after she had cultivated a large enough garden of cassava and sorghum.

For the occasion of setting up her own house, she brewed beer for her husband and prepared a meal for him and his friends in her own house, and without the supervision of her mother-in-law. As soon as she gave birth to a son, she was called aberu nak'ekitekere, the wife of the clan. The birth of a son assured her place in her new clan, for then she had produced an heir for her husband, thus fulfilling her role as wife and mother.

d) Ebwasit ; Ritual of Final Incorporation

The ritual of final incorporation of a woman into the clan of her husband is ebwasit - sometimes spelled egwasit. The Iteso of Uganda around Soroti area call it ekonyokoit. What usually necessitated this ritual was the continued ill health of a woman and her children, particularly if the illness was chronic and no treatment brought about any change for the better.

The woman was escorted to her father's home with all her children by the women of the clan. A few men accompanied them in order to help slaughter the sacrifice. On arrival at the gate - erute - of the homestead, the party was met by the mother of the sick woman. There at the gate, she sprinkled or asperged (abwatakin from which ebwasit is derived) her daughter with water from a calabash using the grass emuria. She then led her into the enclosure to her own house. At the door of the house, she was again asperged with the same water before entering the house. Once in the house, she sat down.

Her father provided a bull which was killed. The skinning was done jointly by her father's clansmen and her husband's clansmen. It was dismembered, leaving the back - ang'a bet intact. The large intestine, alitibor was left attached to the back. Her father's clansmen then split open the intestines carefully, from one end to the other.

All present spectating were expected to keep still and be seated while this delicate operation was going on. This was done to wish a long life to the woman and her children. The stomach was opened and the woman along with her children were anointed with its contents. The intestines and pieces of meat from every part of the bull, was cooked together in a large pot. These were then eaten by everyone present. The sick woman was made to bite on the collar bone.

The rest of the bull, except the back, was divided according to who should receive what portion. During sacrificial rituals involving the killing of bulls, the men, the women, the younger women, the children, all had their own special portions. The sick woman was made to carry the still intact back piece with the large intestine dangling down her back. Carrying one of her children, she then led the way back home that way, in silence and without looking back the whole way. The men would help her to carry it if the distance back home was long and if they were inclined to be kind. That piece would then be cut up and cooked for all the women of the clan to eat. Whatever chronic illness had troubled the woman was now dispelled for good.

The Iteso explain that the cause of the ill health of the woman and her children was the breaking of the clan taboos by the woman. As long as ebwasit had not been

performed, there were certain clan taboos the woman was expected to observe. Failure to do that caused her illness, for in violating those clan taboos, the woman had placed herself outside their etale, thus making herself ritually unclean, an easy prey to the malevolent influences of the clan etale. Her father, by contributing a bull for sacrifice, enabled her to be ritually purified, thus removing the curse of the violated taboos. After ebwasit, she could now abandon all the taboo prohibitions which had been imposed on her. Her father, by enabling ebwasit to be performed on her, released her completely from his own clan taboos, thus making it possible for his daughter to be fully incorporated into the clan of her husband.

As the children grow up, a woman's status increases, to reach its ultimate position when her sons and daughters marry. The marriage of a son elevates the woman to the status of one who can incorporate new women into the village and clan. The birth of her first grandchild earns her the name of Tata - grandmother. She could now "sit back" and officiate in her new capacity as initiator of domestic and clan rituals. Other public rituals that made up Iteso traditional worship have disappeared. These domestic ones remain largely because women will always be charged with the responsibility of nurturing life. Somehow, some form of ritual is involved in this very important task. On this

domestic plane, women assume the role of "ritual specialists... the servants of the community (with the role of mediating the sacred to the people..."³²

Women are the custodians of the etale which are the embodiment of the ritual process surrounding the mother and the new born baby. In these rituals, the baby is incorporated into the human society (naming) and the woman is incorporated into a new clan community, as has been described in the foregoing pages. When emurwon is called in, he works in conjunction with the women, for he is called in to perform those functions which require a higher, more concentrated degree of charisma.

The rituals of incorporation are probably the most steady characteristic of Iteso religion. They have survived the changes which have affected the basic elements in all other characteristics. They are still living and functioning today, though with slight modification.

4. The Spirits and the Spiritual World

Mbiti recognizes two categories of spirits which he says inhabit the African spirit world, spirits which he says,

"belong to the ontological mode of existence between God and man. Broadly speaking we

³² Ray, op. cit. p. 17.

can recognize two categories of spiritual beings: those which were created as such and those which were once human beings. These can also be subdivided into divinities, associates of God; ordinary spirits and the living-dead.³³

Besides these two categories of spiritual beings, Mbiti speaks too, of another class, which he says are mythological in character and are associated with God.³⁴

The Iteso did not have a pantheon of supernatural beings. This is not to say that the world as the Iteso knew it was devoid of spiritual beings. If anything, it is full of them. The nearest of any divinities are the sun, lightning, thunder and edeke, the god of vengeance. These natural phenomena are more personifications of God's nature and activities than personalities. There was no separate cult for them as divinities. There is moreover no tradition of deified heroes. Spiritual beings for the Iteso could be referred to as "pure" spirits and ipara, the departed ancestors.

Spirits who are not the departed ancestors are of the benevolent as well as malevolent type. The Iteso called them variously, Isapire, Isabira or just plain Ibore. The names suggest the unknowable. These spirits occupy

³³ John S. Mbiti: African Religion & Philosophy, London, Heinemann, 1969, p. 75

³⁴ Mbiti, op. cit. p. 77.

the same geographical area as people, but prefer the uninhabited areas such as dense woods amonieik, thick bushes and caves. When they want to communicate with people, they assume visible shapes like diminutive human beings, wild animals or dogs. As diminutive humans, they put on large heads with wild bush hair, hence the name isapire, which means bushy haired. They usually appear to people when they have some kind of message or knowledge to impart, or just so as to be mischievous. Several imurwok who were first interviewed said that these spirits appeared to them and imparted to them the gift of divination. One traditional midwife said,

I was in the bush collecting firewood. I was just a young wife then. Then I saw Isabira. She was with her children. When she saw me she said, "Oh dear, who will take care of my children? Who will I show how to heal my children?" When I saw Isabira and heard what she was asking of me, I became very afraid. I was too young. What did I know about healing people? Young wives do not do such things. But I had no choice. I had to agree. So she showed me all the trees and herbs and taught me which could heal and how. From that time I became amurwon.³⁵

It should be noted that midwives are also called amurwok.

In the mind of this old woman, one of the oldest still alive, there is no doubt that she saw these spiritual

³⁵ Interview with Mungau, Asinge, May 3, 1979

beings and that they taught her the art of healing. She did, however, add that she learnt some of the techniques of midwifery from her mother who was an amurwon also.

A practising diviner said that he attributes his call to become emurwon to an initial contact he had with beings from the spiritual world. He said that as a young man he had gone far away from home to look for a job where Europeans were hiring Africans. One day while he was resting, spirits took him to a strange place. They showed him secrets of things he had never even dreamed existed, and took him to places he had never seen. After they left him, he began to speak strangely. There was in him this irresistible urge to return home. On reaching home he began to practise divination. He has been a diviner ever since.

When the spirits mean to be mischievous, they usually come into people's houses at night to make noise, to revel or just "akicikik itunga" to press on people like a cold, dead weight. Their coming is heralded by a strange coldness and those in the house fall into a kind of lethargic sleep which sort of paralyzes them so that they are unable to move or cry out or even breathe properly. On entering the house, the worst they can do is sit at the head of those

sleeping. When they do that they are experienced as a very cold and heavy weight right on the head which is akin to being strangled by icy hands. Their unwelcome presence is not felt by all in the house, however. Only those who can feel them can also "see" them. This "seeing" usually happens when a person is in a state of suspended consciousness. Their presence causes a person to feel that way.

If they came just to revel, they would cook and feast amid a lot of noise. Again only those to whom they mean to be visible can see them, smell their food and hear their noise. Those who have seen and experienced these iboro, (plural of ibore) say that they usually come into the house at that moment when sleep is just beginning to touch on the eyes; so their coming is like half dream and half wakefulness. Elderly people see them more often than younger ones at night, and in the daytime they are more often heard than seen, especially near rivers where women draw water. These rivers are usually in wooded areas. Those who have heard them in the daytime claim that they make noises like people weeping. These sounds are so eerie that people flee in terror. If they do not wish to be heard or seen, they may wish to be smelt. When passing places where these spirits are likely to be, one's nostrils may be assailed by very strong smells which are "out of this world." A group

of people who smell these peculiar smells are seldom unanimous in their descriptions of them. People are, however, so familiar with this latter experience that they often dismiss them as being caused by ikulepek akwap - the rightful inhabitants of this world.

The Iteso of Uganda speak of ajokin who could be categorized as pure spirits. It is ajokin who call those destined to become rainmakers, priestesses and diviners. A person often could combine all three functions. One rainmaker at Arapai near Madera in Uganda described the coming of the ajokin this way:

They(ajokin) come to a person and disturb her for a long time, and even cause her to be sick for a long time. They come because they want you to be their special person, one through whom they can speak to others. So then, if you do not want to die or go mad, you must agree to do what they want you to do. You must build an abila - shrine, in your house and then you can start to heal, to practise divination and ailelekeja (to make rain).³⁶

The shrines which ajokin commanded these chosen ones to build for them contained things like gourds, herbs, an assortment of shells, stones and foodstuffs, as directed by ajokin themselves. The priest/priestess had to pray at that shrine quite frequently. This involved rhythmic

³⁶ Interview with Anna Maria Akemo, Arapai, Uganda, June 19, 1980

chanting accompanied by aiyek akaye - shaking gourds containing certain potent seeds and bits of stone and shells. It was while praying at the shrine that often the priest/priestess received knowledge concerning the work of healing or message of divination.

It is matter of interest that ajokin - (the plural of ajokit) is the word Rev. Eneku says was the proper name for God in Ateso. One can only speculate on the connection or relationship between Ajokit, God and ajokin, spirits. In the Iteso conception of God, there was no multiplicity of gods. They knew of only one God, Akuj or Ejokit, from whom came all ajokusio - goodness. To express the concept of God as the source of all goodness, they used the praise name Ejokit, the one who is full of goodness. Ajokin who came to impart special powers to people, were therefore believed to be imparting some of God's goodness to these chosen ones in order for them to help others. In using these powers for the good of others, they were carrying out God's will for the people.

In whatever capacity spirits appear to people, either for mischievous purposes or commission someone to carry out a particular function, they are feared by the people. When they choose people for a particular mission, they have to be obeyed; failure to do so could result in the loss of one's vitality and even one's life. When spirits enter a house, it fares well for that house if they return

from whence they came by the same direction or passage, otherwise it is believed death will result. When people discuss them, they refer to them as ibore, strange thing. There is again an interesting similarity here between the way Akuj was referred to and the way spirits too, are referred to. The same word is used. When God spoke to people in their consciences, people said, "Ebala Ibore eong"- Something says to me - the same expression as when a spirit speaks to a person.

➤ Both God and spirits are feared because they are strangers and outside the normal sphere of human interaction. Both God and spirits are feared because they are invisible and full of power, though it is understood that the power of the spirits is subordinate to, and comes from God.

➔ Spirits have their own time in which they are particularly active. Hardly any one wants to unnecessarily court the attention of spirits, so "their times" are respected. Children are taught to be quiet between dusk and dawn. At these hours people should not call loudly, anyone by name, lest spirits learn the name and come in the dead of night to call. When one is called by name from outside at night, one does not respond in the normal way saying, "I am present"; one says, "Who is that calling people at this time?" The caller then responds, "It is I." Identification is made by the voice of the caller. Spirits are said to be particularly present and active when akima - eleusine - is ripening.

Spirit possession is a common occurrence in Tesoland; more so now than during asonya. It seems to have been "imported" from Luyia neighbours as the name of the possession suggests, at least the most popular form of it - emuseebe. Women are more affected than men. Emuseebe takes the form of severe illness which does not respond to ordinary treatment. Emurwon or amurwon usually treats such a person in a ritual called akiram emuseebe, an exorcism involving the use of hypnotic drumming, gourd percussion, chanting and potent herbs which the patient smells and drinks. This treatment is believed to succeed if the patient responds by dancing wildly and then passing out in a dead faint. The spirits which possess people this way are believed to be ancestral spirits. To these spirits and the other ways in which they come to people, we now give our attention.

5. The Ancestors: Death and Imortality

A very important element of Iteso religion is the ancestral cult. The Iteso did not and do not worship their ancestors, but remember them in meaningful rituals. The departed ancestors continue to be regarded:

as heads and parts of the families to which they belonged while they were living human beings: for what happened in consequence of the phenomenon called death was only that the family life of this earth has been extended into the after life or supersensible world.

The ancestors remain therefore spiritual superintendents of family affairs and continue to bear their titles of relationship like father or mother.³⁷

The custom of giving everyone a decent burial attests to this. The dead are buried in the homestead regardless of whether they die in Mombasa or in Tesoland. The Iteso realize that at death a real separation has taken place between those who have died and those still alive. They know that the dead

have become spirits whose sphere is the spirit world reserved for good ancestors and in consequence of which communion and communication with them is possible only at the spiritual level... Because they have crossed the borderland between this world and the supersensible world, entering and living in the latter, they have become freed from the restrictions imposed by the physical world. They can now come to abide with their folk on earth invisibly, to aid them, to promote prosperity or cause adversity.³⁸

The communion and communication that is possible at the spiritual level is made possible through a cult of the ancestors, which among the Iteso is quite elaborate, during the first one to three years after death. What is of paramount importance is that the departed should be remembered in very concrete ways, and not only in the private memories of the

³⁷ Idowu, op. cit. p. 184.

³⁸ Idowu, op. cit. p. 184

living relatives. It is possible that Mbiti's linking time and remembrance of what he terms "living-dead" applies to Iteso as well; for he says,

After physical death the individual is remembered by relatives and friends who knew him in this life and who have survived. They recall him by name, though not necessarily mentioning it, they remember his personality, his character and incidents of his life. If he appears (as people believe) he is recognized by name. The recognition by name is extremely important. The appearance of the departed and his being recognized by name may continue up to four or five generations, so long as someone is alive who once knew the departed personally and by name. When, however, the last person who knew the departed also dies, then the former passes out of the horizon of the SASA period, and in effect he now becomes completely dead as far as family ties are concerned. He has sunk into the ZAMANI period.³⁹

Iteso do not understand the past, the present and the future in quite this way. Even long after the last person has died who remembered the departed by name, the person is still mentioned by name, if only in stories.

Those of the Iteso elders who have a long memory are able to cite their geneologies up to twelve generations. This is in contrast to Karp who claims that Iteso have a

³⁹ Mbiti, op. cit. p. 25.

shallow geneological memory.⁴⁰ The majority of Iteso elders interviewed were able to cite their geneologies up to the fifth or sixth generations, that is, backwards in time to the middle of karionga and the close of asonya migration periods. In their recitation they often go beyond the pioneers who brought ateker into Kenya, and in naming their children they remember ancestors as far back as four or five generations. Not even karionga, the fifth migration period would fit Mbiti's description of Zamani. The important thing was to be remembered for as long as possible.

The most important way of being remembered immediately after death was by being given a proper burial. As soon as an elder dies, all his children are informed, all his relatives and friends come to mourn him. The burial ceremonies are quite elaborate, for death is understood as the final step a person takes in life. Death is announced by saying, "So-and-so is lost from us; he has defeated us." That is, "Awolio muta, kilanya siong muta." It is the final step which paradoxically causes a person to disappear from his people as well as uniting him to all his departed relatives and friends. The mourning, burial and death rituals which follow are designed to send him off properly to the land of the departed.

⁴⁰ Karp, op. cit. p. 22.

A man who could afford it usually indicated that an animal from his herd should be slaughtered on the occasion of his death so that his clan would eat in order to amonyia nes - mourn him with. Meat is eaten as part of mourning the departed because as elders say,

If you arrive there empty-handed, how will you face the others? They will castigate you for being mean and stingy. They will say, with whom have you come to stay? Who has eaten your meat? So, it is well that at the time of death, people who come to mourn you should be fed. 41

Several interesting points are implicit in this statement. First of all for the Iteso, as Idowu attests for Africans in general, death is not the end of a person; the person disappears from view but does not cease to be. At death a person goes to ng'ina - there where others who have died go to. Life continues there, though in what form the Iteso do not know for certain. The assumption is that they become ipara - disembodied spirits; but as spirits they continue to live and so to eat and to drink in order to go on living. This eating and drinking according to the above statement is not just a tasting of the portions put aside for them, but it appears that the eating that their relatives do in their honour or remembrance symbolizes their own eating. It is as if the eating takes place on two planes

41 Interview with Obiriko Otiengi, Asinge, February 15, 1980

simultaneously; in the land of the departed and in the land of the living. Food is eaten with and for them. When food is put aside for the departed, it is believed that they really do eat that food; the same is true for the drink that is put aside for them. No one will eat that food any more because it is substance, ajijim, savour has been taken out of it by the departed.

Drinking and eating is the way in which the Iteso best show their solidarity. To eat and drink with another is to enter into deep fellowship, that is why it is a serious thing indeed not to offer a guest a drink or to let him depart without "wetting his hand", that is, sharing a meal. This is what was meant by communion and communication above. Since this was how the departed participated in the common life of their relatives while still alive, and since that life does not cease with death, although its nature changes, the accustomed sharing and participation is expected to continue after physical death. This pleases the departed very much and makes them feel like members of the living community.

Another interesting point that the statement of the elders raises is that of generosity. During asonya, and more so than today, generosity was one of the most valued assets of a person's character. A generous person was praised by everyone. This extended into life after death as well. A person who showed generosity to his people at death

assured himself of companionship in the after life. The departed welcomed his company because he shared with them what he had. What he had was usually the meat, drink and other foodstuffs that those mourning him ate for and with him.

Besides the bull which those who can afford it leave for their relatives to eat, there are certain practical considerations which ensure a proper burial. First of all, as has already been said, all of a person's offspring must be present at the burial, or failing this, they must make an effort to view the grave. That is, either to see the body of the departed before burial or, if this proves impossible, to come at the earliest opportunity to see where the departed is buried. This will enable the departed to be at peace where he has gone, and those left behind will also be at peace. Failure to see the departed off properly will cause him such unhappiness, that, he will be restless there and so will return to complain.

The departed prefer to be buried near the homestead. During asonya when iron hoes were not known, the work of digging the graves was given to women past child bearing age. These dug shallow graves at akadapau - a sort of verandah. The dead were folded up like atunu k'akima - bundle of eleusine - placed in the grave and covered up with grass and earth.

After a few years the bones were exhumed and placed under a tree in a ritual called ekutet. Burial was called aking'adakin, to store away. Lepers, the childless and lunatics were thrown into the bush. Sorcerers, witches and persons of that nature were left unburied if their death came about after being convicted of these crimes. The vultures devoured them and they were not mourned.

It is now a common practice to place the dead in coffins and dig very deep graves (4-6 ft). This has become the work of men, usually a person's brothers in the case of a man or clan brothers-in-law in the case of a woman. Some elders have been known to object to their remains being placed into coffins. They say that, that so confines them in one place that they will be prevented from freely visiting their people. They would much rather be buried in the traditional way. The idea of digging deep graves was introduced by Christian missionaries who also stopped the Iteso from throwing away the dead into the bush and recommended that the grave site be moved some distance away from the verandah.

The dead are very sensitive to what happens to their remains while in the grave. Care must be taken that no large trees are near the grave, lest the roots grow over the bones. The dead will complain of being smothered by roots. When they have been exhumed, care must be taken so that the

skull does not shift and the teeth bite the ground. This will displease the departed and they may cause death in the home. Termites must not be allowed to build a nest over the bones. The departed will complain of being eaten up by termites.

Some have been known to complain of being left too long in hot graves, they had to be exhumed. The graves become uncomfortable, stifling even, almost as if the departed actually need the atmosphere outside the graves to breathe.

In recent times it has become a common practice to bury people in wooden coffins. One Etesot, an elder, specifically directed his sons not to bury him in a coffin because that would prevent him from akilanakin itunga keng - visiting his people.

Being buried in a six foot grave makes the departed feel isolated and even punished. The Iteso obviously considered it better to be left above the ground after exhumation than to be buried for too long under the earth. Above the ground was where their people still lived. It is where they could be with their people. A coffin would definitely be a very hot grave.

An effort must be made to return home the bodies of those who have died far away so that they can be reunited with their people. At one time or another, those who have

died far away from home will communicate this fact to their people. They have been cut off.

Once the departed join the others in the land of the departed, Iteso elders say that their sense of solidarity widens. They no longer associate only with fellow clansmembers or with only the Iteso; they join up and form a wider community. They may often wish to visit a relative in order to request that a particular ritual be performed for them. "If they come to you one or two accompanied by a person who is still alive, it is a good visit; but if as many as five or even ten departed visit you and repeat these visits several times, then they mean to come for you."⁴²

→ It is common for the departed to visit their people in dreams. No one is alarmed by them. They may wish to convey some message, or as the elders say, "It is natural for them to visit their people. How else will they eat? When they come they wish to be fed." In such a case a chicken, or goat, or sheep, or even a bull, is slaughtered for them. Their visits may not always be for harmless reasons like wanting to be fed; the departed can be capricious.

One of the ways in which this capriciousness becomes evident is the way they can cause a succession of infant

⁴² Interview with Aronota Atyang, Akites, June 17, 1979

deaths in a family. A woman may lose three or five babies one after another. To arrest this process, the next child is ignored for some time after birth. This means that he is not named immediately after birth in the usual way, but instead mother and child are kept indoors for nearly a week after birth. On the day of akipuduno - of bringing mother and child outside, a breach is made in the wall of the house and through this breach the child is taken outside by two old women. The child is "thrown" away onto the wayside, where it is "accidentally" picked up by one of the old women. She comes back with it and finds the mother seated in the sunshine in front of the house. As she comes, she speaks to herself saying:

I have picked up my small animal.
I wonder who will raise it for me?
Good woman, (to the mother)
Will you feed this small animal for me? 7

After saying this she hands the baby back to its mother. Such children are given one of the following names:

Etyang Atyang'	- wild animal
Oporia	- one taken out through a breach
Echakara	- one who was thrown away
Ekirapa	- one who was picked up
Okitwi	- from the bush
Alukudo	- from the road

They do not usually receive any other name. The ritual is meant to confuse whatever ancestor has been causing the

death of previous infants. That particular ancestor is not to consider this child a person he should bother about. Hopefully when the child is so ignored, he will have a chance of surviving. They usually do and so do subsequent children born, such is the firm belief of mothers who have had to perform this ritual.

Perhaps the most popular way of remembering the ancestors is naming children after them. The Iteso name the oldest boy child of the oldest son after the paternal grandfather and the oldest girl of the same after the paternal grandmother. These may be alive or dead, it makes no difference. These first grandchildren symbolically allow the older members of the family to be "born again." The Iteso do not believe in reincarnation in the strict sense of the word, though it often happens that a child may adopt or inherit some behaviour patterns of the person he is named after. This may explain why children are not usually named after a person who was notoriously wicked, lest the child be infected by similar traits.

In the naming ritual, both the baby and ancestor in question concur over the choice of name. It may happen that the grandparent officiating in the naming misnames the child. The mistake will come to light in several ways. The child may cry and refuse to be comforted until the name is changed. The child may die soon after naming.

A diviner may inform the sad parents that one of the ancestors who wanted the child to bear his name was upset enough to take the child. Some names are so "bitter" - edwaraka - that they are never pronounced. A child who receives such a name is usually called by a nickname rather than the given name. The explanation given is that the ancestor of that name was such a harsh man that calling him too often in calling the child may cause the child some harm. Children named after the parents-in-law are usually referred to by nicknames. Daughters-in-law have such a deep respect for their husbands' parents that they never call them by name - instead they call them father and mother.

Spirit possession is another way in which the departed visit their people, for it is the spirits of the dead who possess people, not the "pure" spirits. Possession is a widespread occurrence in Iteso society, women being the most frequently affected.

There appear to be two types of spirit possession, the mild and severe forms. The mild form may come as a dream which disconnects a person for some time after dreaming or it may also come in the form of a lingering illness which will not respond to treatment. A person may be on the verge of death or experience hallucinations. An emurwon is consulted. The diagnosis is usually that some

relative is complaining of being neglected or abandoned. It could be some ancestor trying to reveal a burial place if he was buried outside the home.

Waking up, the person may not know where he is or who he is. When spoken to he does not respond, instead he stares unseeingly into space. Emurwon prescribes a ritual which usually involves some kind of living sacrifice such as killing a chicken or a goat. Once this is performed, the possession stops, and in the case of illness, the sick one recovers.

A severe form of spirit possession may cause madness or even instant death. When lunacy results from spirit possession people say 'Etyang'asi ipara akou' - the spirits have confused the head.

In this instance too, an emurwon is consulted, who may prescribe a ritual to be performed by himself or by the nearest relative of the affected person. He may perform an exorcism and the person may or may not recover. The spirits who cause this kind of possession may be those of persons who died of leprosy, lunacy, childlessness or akicud. These, as well as the spirits of nephews and nieces (icenin), who were not buried properly are said to be very harsh. Nephews and nieces should never be buried in the homes of their uncles (in the homes of their mothers' brothers). If they die there, they are buried outside the

homestead, usually in an anthill. Children were usually not named after these people.

Despite the widespread practice of Christian burials, the ancestors are still a very strong aspect of Iteso religion. The one drastic change is the scant care and respect given to living elders at present. During asonya it was with envy that people looked at someone who had lived so long that chickens came to look at him as he basked in the sun under the shade of edula - granary. The very old were respected and cared for. It is sad to hear old women and men, mothers and fathers of sons whom everyone longs to beget, lamenting the fact that even giving birth to sons is no special blessing; because they seem to care so little for their aging parents. Extreme old age and even moderate old age is a curse and not the blessing it used to be. The paradox is that the Iteso have a fear of the dead that is almost a phobia. The very few elders they neglect in life will be given very elaborate burials. The old man or woman who went half naked and nearly starved to death will be piled with blankets on the day of the burial and mourned with overflowing pots of beer. It would be interesting to hear how the neglected elders react to such treatment in the land of the departed.

In this chapter some of the basic elements of Iteso religion have been described. It has been shown that

Iteso religion first of all consisted of the belief in the one supreme God, Akuj, also called Ejokit or Ajokit. Akuj was understood to be the creator and source of all goodness, the one who held the whole world in His hands, the great Father of all the people. Akuj was prayed to by individuals at any time in any place as the need to invoke Him arose. He was also worshipped formally by the community in rituals involving communal sacrifices when the need to do so touched many people.

A second basic element of Iteso religion involved the etale rituals, particularly those rituals of incorporation of the woman into the clan taboos of her husband. These rituals centred around the woman and her ritual role as nurturer of new life and as one whose part in the stability of the family was indispensable.

The veneration of the ancestors was a third basic element of Iteso religion. "In the everyday life of the individual, the presence of the spirits of the ancestors (was) much more felt than the presence of God."⁴² It was therefore necessary to placate them by remembering them through proper rituals.

In the next chapter, a fourth element of Iteso religion will be examined, the role of the diviner-prophet, the emurwon. In the examination, the origin, functions and importance

⁴² Interview with Aronota Atyang, Akites, Kenya. June 17th, 1979.

of the emurwon - diviner-prophet in the socio-cultural and religious life of the Iteso will be looked at in an attempt to determine the part prophecy played in the life of the Iteso.

CHAPTER FOUR

EMURWON-EKADWARAN: DIVINER-PROPHET

1. Prophecy in the World of Religion

In the last Chapter I have tried to establish certain elements which are basic to Iteso religion, namely knowledge and belief in God, worship of God, belief in the spirits and belief in immortality. There is still one very basic element to be discussed, namely, the diviner-prophet, that is emurwon-ekadwaran. In this chapter emurwon will be discussed. The emurwon played a very significant life of the Iteso during asonya. The emurwon will be discussed in his complex role as a political leader, priest, judge and healer; but first a brief look at prophecy in the world of religion generally might be appropriate.

There are two words in the Ateso language which mean prophet and/or diviner. These words are EMURWON, also spelled EMURON and EKADWARAN, also spelled ADWARAN.

In Kenyan Ateso usage, emurwon strictly speaking means diviner, one who arrives at hidden knowledge by manipulating material things. Ekadwaran means Prophet. In Ugandan Ateso usage, emurwon is used to mean both diviner and prophet. In popular usage, emurwon is preferred. When an emurwon prophesied, that is, foretold events yet to happen, people described his activity as "akidwar", although they still preferred to refer to him generally as emurwon. In this study the word Emurwon (Emurwon) will be used to mean diviner-prophet. Where the meaning differs, it will be pointed out in the context.

According to Mbiti, "in the strict sense of prophets and prophetic movements, there are no prophets in traditional African societies."² This he attributes to "a lack of a long dimension of the future in Africa concept of time."³ This would be using biblical prophecy as a standard measure of prophecy the world over. I am inclined to view the matter in the manner in which Lindblom does when he says that in the world of religion, and Africa, qualifies as a world of religion, there are persons, men and women, "who can be characterized as 'homines religiosi'" and from this group can be distinguished what he calls the "prophetic type":⁴

The prophetic type of 'homines religiosi' is not confined to specific religions or special races. It is represented in all parts of the world and in all religions... The prophetic endowment is deeply rooted in human nature; what may be borrowed from other quarters in the behaviour and forms, in a world, the external manifestations.⁵

The fact of the universality of the prophetic phenomenon is collaborated by other writers, one of these is Mackay Haliburton who in his study of the prophet Harris says that "prophets and prophetic movements are

² Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy, London, Heinemann, 1969, p.190.

³ Ibid, p.190.

⁴ J. Lindblom: Prophecy in Ancient Israel, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1962, p.13.

⁵ Lindblom, p.32.

apparently universal phenomena."⁶ Each society has, at one time or another, felt the need of persons from within itself who were endowed with certain characteristics which enabled them to be prophets. It is necessary at this stage, before examining those characteristics which are found in the prophetic persons, to define the term prophet. There are many "definitions" of what a prophet is, however, Haliburton's is given here and adopted as relevant for the purpose of this study:

Prophets, as seen in the Old Testament and as defined by social anthropologists of our time, are not seers of the future in any specific sense, though in common usage we tend to assume so. Rather, a prophet is a man who feels more keenly and who preaches a course of action which should be followed if his people are to over-come their problem. Since the connection between what he preaches and the desired result may not be clear even to himself, (because his solution is found intuitively or by revelation rather than rationally) It is important that he should have charisma, a supernatural attractiveness and power that bends people to his will. Without it, he is a preacher, with it, he is a prophet.⁷

6. Gordon Mackay Haliburton. The Prophet Harris: A Study of an African Prophet and his Mass Movement in the Ivory Coast and the God Coast. London, Longman, 1971 p. XV.

7 Haliburton, op. cit. pp. Xiv-xv

The ability to feel "more keenly than anyone else the problems facing society" in order to preach "a course of action" to be followed is a gift the prophet receives because of his deeply religious nature. It is a gift which enables him not only to communicate in a special way with the divine, but which causes him to stand in a special way for the welfare of his people, for their safety, their continuity, their integrity.⁸

The prophet does not choose the path of prophecy. He is utterly convinced that he is chosen to become a prophet. He can usually point to a specific experience in his life through which the deity impressed upon him the fact that he had been set aside for this special mission. From contact with the supernatural world, he receives the power which enables him to become an intermediary "between the human and divine worlds... a channel through which divine messages reach the ordinary world and through which humans can gain direct access to the divine."⁹ The supernatural power takes such control over the prophet that he becomes as one constrained. He can no longer be as free as other people are. He has to follow the orders of the power that compels him.

⁸ Bernard Bernarchi, The Mugwe, A Failing Prophet: A Study of A Religious and Public Dignitary of the Meru of Kenya. London, International African Institute, 1959, p. 62.

⁹ Robert Wilson. "Early Israelite Prophecy." Interpretation xxxii, January, 1978, No. 1, p. 8

It may happen, as in the case of the Agwe (prophets) among the Meru, that the vocation to prophecy may be hereditary, a family patrimony, yet,

it is not a power that can be inherited collectively by all the members of that lineage. Only one is the heir and only one can be elected to take over the family's heritage by becoming the Mugwe. It is therefore in the nature of the Mugwe, as a form of authority that it should be an individual power...¹⁰

From his birth, the man destined to be the Mugwe was not like other men, some physical characteristic set him apart and the people regarded him as a man of wonder, a man who was not born like other common men, for all his power came from God. A power which was distinguishable from the person who held the office of the Mugwe.¹¹

The supernatural nature of the vocation of the prophet enables him to have a much keener insight into the ills that afflict his people, be those ills spiritual, social or physical. His primary duty therefore is to assist his people in finding remedies to those ills. It is not strange therefore that most prophets are healers at some time or other during the course of their prophetic career. The healing powers they receive may authenticate

¹⁰ B. Bernardi, op cit. p.77.

¹¹ Ibid, pp.73-74

their prophetic call, as in the case of a modern prophetess, Wangari Margaret, of Limuru, Kenya. At the time of her call to prophecy, it is reported that

she heard the voice of God calling her and when she looked and answered she saw a vision. (In her vision), her grandmother, Afigael Kanyi, who was lame since 1938, and Waiya, the lunatic, knelt down in front of her and were looking up to her. She was filled with certain strong power and told them that they were healed. Then many people gathered around her and this ended the vision.¹²

When Margaret, after receiving the power and seeing the vision to heal, started her prophetic career, it was characterized by her ability to transmit supernatural healing power to the people who flocked to her. It was not only physical healings which she performed, she preached to the people as well:

She became a channel through which God's blessings (flowed) to his people. She began curing many who repented and believed. The central theme of her message, therefore, is repentance and faith, singled out as the only requirements (needed in order) to get God's blessing.¹³

We have seen that the person chosen to be a prophet to people is a person who is of the people's own society.

¹² S.M. Kimithia "Wangari Margaret: 1974 Prophetess who heard God's voice, Saw a Vision and Acquired Healing Power" Occasional Research Papers in African Religions and Philosophies. Vol. 29, p.2.

¹³ S.M. Kimithia, *op. cit.* p.4.

The special power received through supernatural calling convinced people to accept him as their healer, foreteller of future events and leader. We will now examine the prophet as he was understood in Iteso society.

2. The EMURWON-Diviner Prophet in Iteso Religion

a) The Presence of Emurwon in Iteso Society

We have seen in the preceding section* that the words for diviner-prophet in Iteso society are either emurwon (emuron) or ekadwaran (adwaran). Properly speaking, ekadwaran was a seer, a man who foretold future events, one who spoke words directly from his head, words which were revealed to him. The act of predicting is therefore called akidwar.

One person often combined in himself the functions of diviner (emurwon) and prophet (ekadwaran). In Iteso understanding of prophecy, the element of foretelling or prediction was very strong. This was so probably because prediction and foretelling appeared to be more sensational and gripping of the people's imagination than messages about the current state of affairs. People tended to remember better what the emurwon predicted would happen than his judgement, if any, on the current social order.

Neels' discussion of prophets in traditional as well as modern African religion may further provide a working

* Vide supra footnote I, p. 139.

understanding of what prophets were in the context of Iteso religion. Neels says

When African prophets appear on the traditional religious scene, they are considered to be supernatural power - endowed individuals, not by virtue of natural or hereditary qualities in the first place, nor of any conferred religious office, but by virtue of a gratuitous supernatural initiative.¹⁴

The emurwon in Iteso society could never claim to have chosen the path of diviner-prophet himself. Imurwok say that supernatural beings visit them and call them to become diviner-prophets. The call is an irresistible one. This call may come to a person very early in life, as the case of one informant who says that when he was still very young, he started to see events which had not yet happened.

I saw, and it was not a dream, things which had not yet happened... People were about to come and attack the homestead. I saw it quite clearly. But when I told my father what I had seen, and how I was seized by some irresistible power when I saw these things, he became very upset. He severely scolded me and forbade me ever again to see such things... Later on people did come to attack the homestead just as I had seen it happen.¹⁵

¹⁴ Marcel G. Neels W.F. "The Relationship Between Priest and Prophets in African Religious Systems." Cashiers Des Religions Africaines, Vol. 8, No. 15, Jan. 1974, p. 29

¹⁵ Interview with Petero Inya, Gorio, Kenya. May 3, 1979.

This informant went on to say that from that time, he stopped seeing things. What is interesting about this particular informant is that, his grandfather was a seer or emurwon. Later, when Christianity came and the people of his village adopted it as their religion, he became their leader. This opens up an interesting possibility of the new form prophecy could take.* The informant's story is one of the few instances when a call to prophecy was resisted. The youth of the informant may have had a great deal to do with the success of this resisting. In traditional Iteso society obedience of one's father was strictly adhered to.

The ability to see things and hear strange words which no one else saw or heard came to emurwon from a power outside of himself. He was able to experience the supernatural in a way no ordinary Iteso could. Once the supernatural seized one destined to be an emurwon, he entered into a state of psychic exaltation. The Iteso say abwang'aa amurwot, that is, he has been seized by the spirit of divination or prophecy. When this happened, the diviner-prophet-emurwon behaved in strange ways.

Whenever the emurwon was in this state, he would withdraw from the people and sit by himself, motionless, under a tree, insensitive to the world around him. People

* Vide infra, Chapter 6. This informant admitted during a later interview that he still sees future events before they happen. He saw the current drought of (1984) some years back.

would recognize the state and leave him alone. When that state passed, he would start uttering words from his head, words of which the people listening, claimed he had no prior knowledge, words revealed to him and whose origin were not with himself. He felt compelled to speak and could not keep the words to himself.

When the emurwon in Iteso society prophesied, that is, edwari, he was aware of the fact that his akiro - words - were given to him by Akuj. It is said of Ekidipat, for example, (a renowned diviner-prophet of Gorias South Teso Location) that he would sit motionless for a long time, whenever Ibore (supernatural being) seized him. When he came out of such a deep reverie, he would start to prophesy. The words he uttered were incredible to his hearers. The most famous of these words were when he said that he had seen the coming of the Europeans. He uttered this prophecy in the following words:

Eponito itung'a kama eperia akolong
Itunga lu epoloko;
Konye itunga ngulu ejesete pu
Kwape bala imirio luk'otogoi
luebekuno kanenipe .
Irumito itunga ngulu ibore ice...
Itoruto akipi
Nama elomunana akolong. 16

16 Group interview with Amoit, a granddaughter of Ekidipat Obukwi, and Emongura, both of the family of Ekidipat, Gorias, December 30, 1979.

That is:

People are coming from where the sun sleeps.
People who are grown up.
And yet these people,
their skin resembles that of house rats
newly hatched.
They carry a strange thing in their hands...
They are coming from the direction of the water
from where the sun rises.

At Aturete village, less than ten kilometres away from Goria there was another well-known diviner-prophet called Omunyongole. He too foretold the coming of the Europeans but in different words. He said:

Elomuuto itunga lukakwangak
Itorito akipi.
Enapito ikapelepelen. 17

That is:

There will come forth people who are white
Following the water.
They are wearing butterflies.

The emurwon could not in any way verify the truth of his words, particularly when the pertained to future events. He "was totally dependent on the fact that his message really came from God,"¹⁸ and he depended upon the people for the effectiveness of his words. The people believed that he was God's messenger and that the words he spoke to them, in whatever capacity he spoke, either as foreteller,

¹⁷ Interview with John Okout; Aturet, Kenya, June 25, 1981.

¹⁸ Clans Westermann. A Thousand Years and A Day, London Fortress Press, 1962, p. 192.

healer, priest or prophet, were from God and they respected his words. It was:

natural that the (African) leaders whom people trusted and followed should have been prophets, men who believed that supernatural power had been placed at their disposal and who led their followers towards their special visions.¹⁹

The supernatural power that comes upon the prophet is that which gives him his "essential characteristics," and it is this that

he feels himself commissioned, by virtue of his gratuitous call, to utter and, in most cases, widely proclaim, a message on behalf of the spirit world.²⁰

The message which the prophet proclaims may vary in intensity, Neels describes three such degrees of intensity:

In its least outspoken form, the message may appear rather like an oracular utterance, made within the local society, without causing considerable stir. Such messages are occasional and situational and are very similar to medium-oracles, the difference being that in this case they come from an unattached, free charismatic person, and therefore, take on an unexpected character...²¹

¹⁹ G. M. Haliburton, op. cit. p.xv.

²⁰ M. G. Neels, op. cit. p.29.

²¹ Ibid, p.30.

A second level of intensity is that of

"the missionary prophet who still acts within society but upsets it by the movement he unleashes and the reform he inaugurates. In his case the divine commission is not restricted to the utterances of messages but implies a real mission, i.e. a task to perform which entails consistent action, in view of introducing a change in existing situations.²²

A third and highest level of intensity of the prophetic message is one proclaimed by "messianic prophets" who Neels says evolve from the missionary prophet. The messianic prophet essentially proclaims a message revolutionarily in nature.

In this case the saving quality of the prophet is not merely attached to his message nor to his missionary activity but even to his very person - which in some cases is seen as a quasi -
incarnation of the transcendental.²³

Iteso prophets were neither missionary nor messianic in the sense in which Neels terms the levels of prophecy. They were rather of the first category, a category he describes as "low intensity prophets, oracular or visionary,"

²² M. G. Nee-s, op. cit. p.31.

²³ M. G. Neels, op. cit. p.30.

prophets who fulfil the basic characteristics of prophetic figures yet are not the type that cause the great stir attributed to prophetic figures studied by most scholars.²⁴

Iteso prophets, moreover, combined in themselves the function of priest one which was essentially "mediatory", which endowed him with the function of interpreting the deity's will to the people and of conveying the people's disposition towards the deity.

b) Origin of Emurwon

During the periods in their history, karionga and asonya, the fifth and sixth migration periods of the ateker, when they were finding new homelands to settle in, the emurwon was with them. The Iteso elders of Kenya are unable to say just where or when the emurwon originated. Webster who investigated the migration of ateker during the asonya has this to say about the possible origins of emurwon

Evidence seems to point to the Suk hills as the place of origin of the institution of the foreteller (emurwon). From here there was a diffusion in all directions which possibly among the Masai evolved into the laibon.²⁵

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ J. B. Webster, op. cit. p.36.

If, as the elders say, the Iteso were at one time settled in Karamoja, it was there that this charism manifested itself. Old Woropom, though not remembered by the Iteso of Kenya, was important. The Iteso around Usuku remember Woropom.

From Iteso evidence it seems clear that the emurwon was a powerful individual in Old Woropom. There is a possibility that the Iworopom refugees carried the institution of the emurwon to a number of neighbouring societies. Since the Jie also have possessed foretellers before the dispersal of the Iworopom if we accept that no Iworopom settled among the Jie.²⁶

I am inclined to think the ateker did possess foretellers (imurwok) even before the dispersal of the Iworopom since there are no Iworopom remnants among the Iteso of Kenya. It does not seem unacceptable to say that since the Iteso have always had a knowledge of Akuj, the emurwon as Akuj's special messenger to the Iteso has always been a present reality. Viewed in this way, the emurwon was more than just a foreteller. Webster himself corroborates this view when he says that the emurwon is probably older than the period of the dispersal of the ateker from Karamoja:

²⁶ Ibid.

The emurwon therefore may have been in Iteso society before the Iteso left Karamoja, it may have been introduced or reinforced by the Iworopom or it may have come from elsewhere. For example Nyero, Kumi was dominated by a great military and political figure, Amodan, who in the 1890s was succeeded in the chieftaincy by his son Ongodia or Amodan II. Both of these chiefs used foretellers who were foreigners to Iteso society. Amodan II patronized Ongodia who was a brother-in-law to Odakara.²⁷

Webster does not say whether these foretellers who were used by the above named Iteso chieftains were resident in Iteso society or whether the chieftains used to seek their services from outside Tesoland. Whatever the case may be, it is still a current practice among the Iteso to do both. An emurwon who has won renown will be in great demand, be he an Etesot or emoit (foreigner). He will either be called in to come to Tesoland to perform his amurwoot - divination - or Iteso clients will consult him in his own homeland. This does not rule out the fact that the emurwon originated within Iteso society. He need not necessarily have come from elsewhere, for "the prophetic phenomena are not peculiar to particular races, peoples, countries or religions. They are to be found everywhere in the religious world and at all stages of religious development."²⁸

²⁷ J. B. Webster, op. cit, p. 37.

²⁸ Lindblom, op. cit, p. 32.

c) Call and Training of Emurwon

There were also other persons generally called imurwok, plural of emurwon, whose functions slightly differed from those of imurwok proper; these persons were called:

Lokaroan - seer - one who was able to know, either by means of divination or supernaturally, evil things which ekacudan - sorcerer - had planted in the homestead. He was a kind of consultant on such issues. It was he who recommended that lokasupon be called to remove such evil.

Lokasupon - His chief work was to remove any kind of evil which was planted in or near a person's homestead. This evil could be bad medicine, snakes and any evil magic. With his spear he would point at a particular spot, be it a river bed, a tree top, the roof, or wherever, and usually evil things were found there.

The call and training of these persons will be discussed in this section of the study. It will become evident that a person often combined all these powers or charisma within himself.

Most Iteso elders of Kenya agree that lokadwaran was a prophet; that is a person, usually a man, who received revelations

supernaturally. He did not employ any kind of instruments to arrive at the desired knowledge. They express this by saying "adwari akiro k'akou keng alongu" that is, he prophesied words from his head. One elder who was interviewed in Kumi, Uganda agreed with this understanding of ekadwaran. Iteso elders of Toroma, Uganda however said that adwaran is a person who uses instruments of divination to arrive at hidden knowledge, whereas an emurwon is one loisisianakinit Loasuban, who is taught by God. These are opposite designations for the same people. Elsewhere in this study other discrepancies arising from different or opposite meanings given to the same words in Ateso have been pointed out.²⁹ For the purpose of this study as well as for simplicity's sake, the word emurwon or emuron will be used to mean diviner-prophet. Whenever emphasis is placed on the prophetic aspect of emurwon, the word ekadwaran will be used.

Whatever their designation, the Iteso understood the institution of emurwon to have been supernaturally ordained.

²⁹ See for example the seeming opposite meanings of Igaten in the two dialects, Kenyan and Uganda Ateso Pgs. 193, 198

Among the Iteso of Kenya, no trace of women prophets were found. It is not clear why this was so. A possible explanation could be the nature of Iteso society. It is strongly patriarchal and leadership is understood to be a men's prerogative. The prophet occupied a key leadership position in the social structure, a position no woman could occupy comfortably. Iteso of Uganda tell of Amongin, the Ugandan woman foreteller. She seems to have been a rare exception. See J. B. Webster, pp. 127

There were several ways in which a person became an emurwon. It is said of Ekidipat, a renowned emurwon from Goría village in South Teso location that he was taught to be an emurwon. A still practising emurwon, Obwana, from Amaase village in South Teso location, denies that an emurwon could ever be taught to know what he knows. He says that a person had first to be called.³⁰ The supernatural calling as well as being trained to become an emurwon were not unusual or strange, in fact both were very often the case.

In the case of Ekidipat, several incidents in his life seemed to have conditioned him to be called an emurwon. When he was just a child, he witnessed a wholesale slaughter of his family. Raiders of Elgon Maasai origin burned down his father's homestead. He and a sister and several others escaped. He was raised separately from his sister, and apparently they never met in their growing up years. He was able later on, when they had both become adults, to pick her out from a crowd and identify her as his sister. He was also able to recall very clearly how his family was killed. He also started to speak strange words which no one had ever told him before.³¹

³⁰ Interview with Obwana, Amaase, Kenya, November 15, 1982.

³¹ Interview with Amoít. Goría, Kenya, December 30, 1978. Apparently, no one had told him how his family was killed or where his sister had been taken, or even that he had a sister. That is why when he identified her out of a crowd, without ever having seen her before; people wondered how he knew her.

It would seem that the trauma of seeing his family killed predisposed him to receive supernatural revelations. Prior to his beginning to speak strangely, a whirlwind caught up his abongut, a type of clothing people used to wear, and carried it far away.

When the whirlwind - etapiro - blew the abongut-clothing - of Ekidipat up into the air, he started running around wildly every which way - "abulori akerite konginide." People wondered what was happening to him. He was taken to an emurwon to "amurwoun amusabwan nu akotosi akikamun nes," that is, to divine what spirits wanted to possess him. As soon as the spirits were identified, they were given cause to rejoice when Ekidipat was initiated and started to practise divination.³²

Another informant on Ekidipat said that when the spirit of divination possessed Ekidipat, he disappeared from home and went to live in the forest by a rock called "Amoru k'Ekidipat." The general position of this rock could be seen from in front of the speaker's house. Pointing to that rock, he said,

There is the place where Ekidipat went kebwanga amurwoot. When the spirit of divination possessed Ekidipat, he went into the forest near Moru Ka Paade (near Tororo rock) and stayed

³² Interview with Zabulon Emaide, Ngelechomo, Kenya, February 13, 1980.

there for one month. His people were looking for him everywhere, yet all the time the fellow was living in the forest like a wild animal. My father found him there in the forest. He had grown very thin - "kamana akooki ogura." My father went and informed his people: Your person is there in the forest. They went and brought him home.³³

The informant could not say what happened to Ekidipat during that month he was in the forest. Ekidipat himself has not left any record concerning it. The rock which apparently sheltered him became a sacrificial ground. Bulls used to be slaughtered there.

Another emurwon near Kocholia village in North Teso location had a very mysterious call:

A whirlwind carried Oote (the emurwon) away moding i.e. into the wild bush. There he stayed for a month. Even before he went away into the bush he used to amurwoot, that is, to practise divination.³⁴

An unnamed emurwon, was also lifted up and carried by a wind - ekuam - to the heavens for a year. After that time the wind returned him and placed him in front of the homestead - kalapatan.

³³ Interview with Oboo Ocuura, Amoni, Kenya, December 1, 1978.

³⁴ Interview with Saferio Idewa & Group, Kocholia, Kenya, October 5, 1981.

People found this man sitting there kokicolong kalotesot - upon a traditional Teso stool. The funeral rites had already been performed for him because he was believed dead. When they found him thus seated, he was surrounded by white chickens. People feared to go near him. He finally managed to tell one person that a white bull, a white he-goat and a white cock should be provided for him for sacrifice so that he might re-enter the homestead.³⁵

One thing is common in the manner in which these three imurwok received their call to become diviner-prophets: the whirlwind played an important part. The wind here was understood to be a manifestation of God, or at least as a messenger of the supernatural. When pressed for details or explanations, the elders simply shrug their shoulders and say "Ngai konye ejeni?" - Who knows? Such mysterious happenings were accepted without question as genuine. Their other-worldly nature was not a matter for abstract speculations. The authenticity of the powers of the people who were visited with these happenings, convinced people of their genuineness. One of the ways the imurwok manifested the powers received this way was by predicting future events.

From the time that an emurwon was designated, he became a man of deep thoughts. The elders distinguish the powers of divination from those of prophecy, often present in the same

³⁵ Nobuhiro/Nagashima, Teso Cultural Text, No. 2, 1977, Unpublished Research Notes made available to Iteso Cultural Project, Amukura. pp. 60-61.

individual as follows:

Lok'adwaran (prophet) just spoke from his head. He would sit for hours by himself on a rock, an anthill or under a tree. Afterwards he would speak out what came into his head... Sometimes he would receive his knowledge through dreams. It would happen that an emurwon (diviner) would approve of a war expedition for example, and people would prepare to go to war - but if lokadwaran (prophet) objected, the expedition was dropped. Emurwon got his abilities either from God or from the spirits (of the ancestors).³⁶

Prophet and diviner here were understood to be two separate individuals. Apparently the word of the prophet was superior to that of the diviner. That separate persons existed, each different in function and designation from the other as these informants suggest, was rare. It was more common to find one individual combining the art of divination with the gift of prophecy. People distinguished the two charisms in the manner in which akiro - the word was delivered. When a diviner-prophet prophesied he did not use any tools or materials. Knowledge and messages came to him then in a process Lindblom calls inspiration proper; "a more or less conscious process."³⁷ When these inspired messages were delivered, they came from the mouth of the diviner-prophet as spontaneous and without anyone from the people soliciting them. They were never paid for. It just so happened that

³⁶ Interview with John Okout, Aturet, June 25, 1981.

³⁷ Lindblom, op. cit. p.34.

most of the messages were about events of the future affecting the whole people as when they foretold the coming of the Europeans and of the Baganda.* The messages could also concern the well-being of one individual. An example of this type of prophesying is still done by the diviner-prophet Acabet who lives in Toroma in Uganda.³⁸ Elders and neighbours around Toroma said this about his messages:

Acabet gets his messages at night in dreams. These could be concerning many people or just an individual. When they touch on an individual he calls for such a person (iworoori). Those who hear of a person whom Acabet calls this way inform the one called about it. Usually he has a word for the person which, if obeyed, is to the advantage of the person. The one called may be asked to perform a certain sacrifice (isuben). Acabet does not ask for any fees for his messages, he delivers them freely; even though people have started to tell him to charge some fees. He may sometimes ask for as little as ten shillings.³⁹

It has been indicated that the art of divination and the gift of prophecy were supernaturally received hence the absence of speculation about them. Of interest is the belief that although prophecy and divination were supernaturally given, agents other than God were also responsible for a person becoming emurwon. Iteso elders say that a person could be chosen by the ancestors to become emurwon often through

* Vide infra pp. 181, 182 and 188

³⁸ Group interview, Toroma, Uganda, October 28, 1981.

³⁹ Ibid.

illness or an encounter with spirits.⁴⁰ A person so destined would, if through illness that is, be ill for a very long time. All attempts to find a cure would be fruitless. An emurwon would diagnose the illness as a call to become an emurwon, that is, a particular ancestor was trying to tell the patient to become a practising emurwon. Usually the ancestor desiring this was an uncle, a father or a grandparent who had been himself an emurwon while still alive. (Uncles played a very important role in the upbringing of children in Iteso society during asonya).

The consent of the patient to the call to become an emurwon was necessary, and once the patient consented he would be cured of his illness. He was then first initiated by an emurwon and only later trained in the art of divination. If the patient was unwilling, the ancestral spirits would plague him until he consented. The aspect of constraint that Lindblom spoke of is shown here. People seldom solicited the gift or the art of divination or of prophecy; it was too taxing. Iteso elders say that the powers of divination were hereditary, some deny this. Those who deny it say that it was a gift from God which no other human being could pass on to another. One Karamojong elder said of emurwon: "Ebuni ajokus Aloasuban namake"⁴¹ - that is, the goodness of God comes to him. The gift of prophecy could never be inherited properly speaking.

⁴⁰ Interview with Obwana, a practising emurwon, Amaase, November 5, 1982.

⁴¹ Group interview, Getom, Uganda, October 27, 1981.

A prophet is really one whom elders in Toroma say loisisianakinit Loasuban⁴² - one whom God instructs.

Prophecy could be inherited only in the sense in which one informant expressed it when she said:

God cannot create a child without having put within that child the seeds, perhaps those of his father.⁴³

Heredity here could be understood as present in the continuity of that which makes the human race what it is. No child is born without inheriting something of and from its progenitors.

Among the Iteso of Kenya, as soon as a person *was* chosen by the ancestral spirits to become an emurwon, he *was* initiated or anointed in a very simple ceremony. An emurwon officiates at this ceremony. Obwana, the present emurwon at Amaase village described his initiation this way:

On the day I was initiated, a bracelet was put into the fire where it stayed the whole night till morning. In the morning, a bull was slaughtered and the bracelet was cooled in the stomach of the slaughtered bull. Then my father and my uncle took the bracelet in turns and placed it round my arm. As they

⁴² Group Interview, Getom, op cit.

⁴³ Group interview, Toroma, Uganda, October 28, 1981.

did so they admonished me to be true and not to lie or practice sorcery or witchcraft or cause people to be ill, but heal all who came. All this while, the emurwon was seated aside, watching. After the bracelet had been placed on my arm, the emurwon gave me the wooden boat and stones and the other tools of divination and said to me: If you are indeed an emurwon, divine such. I did so. He divined the same matter, it agreed with my divining. Another emurwon was told to divine as well. He did and still his divining agreed with mine... The bull and the goat were eaten by the clan.⁴⁴

Other Iteso elders say that at the initiation of a new emurwon, the initiate was also anointed with the ikujit, the stomach contents of the sacrificial animals. Obwana could not verify this. For him the most important part of the ceremony was the putting on of the bracelet; his was of copper. After the initiation, the initiate could be taught the art of divination by an emurwon. The animals for this ceremony included a he-goat, a bull and a cock. All had to be white or at least of one light colour. The emurwon could indicate what animal was to be killed. The animal was one the initiate could afford.

In Usuku, Uganda, the art of divination was often linked with the individual initiation of Iteso youth. Before an entire age group, aturi, underwent the group initiation called abwaton,

⁴⁴ Interview with Obwana, Amaase, November 15, 1982.

a young man first underwent an individual one called asapan. To undergo this asapan, a young man first approached an elder from his own clan or airiget - the organization or ekodet of initiated men - who in turn found him a sponsor. The elder arranged for the initiate to stay in the home of the sponsor for a period of two to four weeks. On the day of the departure, the elder escorted the initiate to the home of the sponsor at a run.

The two people had to race the whole journey singing:

ELDER: E e -je, Lemukol Kobwoto
E e -je, Lemukol Kobwoto

Lemukol (the initiate) is migrating

INITIATE: E e -je Lemukol, e e -je Lemukol.
(Echoing the above chant.)

ELDER: Ejeni amuget icorin, ezen. Ejeni icorin.
The pumpkin knows the rivers, it knows.

INITIATE: Ngupekiropei
That is so.

ELDER: Aremere Adikan papake pelel
The initiate is urged to run faster.⁴⁵

On reaching the home of the sponsor, the initiate and his companion were lodged in a house of their own. On the following day the elder returned home. At the beginning of his asapan the wife of the sponsor brought food to the initiate.

45 P. Otim. "The Initiation Dance of the Iteso." BA Paper March 20, 1980. Makerere University, Kampala, Africana Uganda. pp. 34-36. The last line of the chant was not translated in the manuscript.

To invite him to eat, she called him by a new name, and if he liked the name, he would consent to eat, if not the hostess went on trying out names at him until he heard one which pleased him. He would henceforth be known by that name. The name had to belong to the initiate's etem or airiget.

For the next two to four weeks, the initiate helped the sponsor and his wife. Whatever work he was given, he performed with a cheerful heart. Some of the tasks he was asked to perform were quite menial, according to Iteso tradition. Such tasks as fetching water from the river, collecting firewood, grinding grain into flour, sweeping the house, tending the fire are normally women's jobs, and Iteso men think it is demeaning to be asked to do them. The initiate was expected to perform all the tasks without complaining or showing any resentment. All this time he was expected to maintain a certain amount of silence, though he could sing.

On the day of the initiate's return home, he was dressed in the full regalia of a warrior: beaded headdress with feathers, spear, shield and ebela (the walking stick of an adult man). He was then chased by the helpers of the emurwon who trained him, to his home through esamai (swamp) and he had to do this return journey at full speed, too, as when he started out to do his asapan.

At his home were gathered his agemates and family members ready to welcome him. On reaching home, the initiate had to

run round the homestead three times before entering his parents' house. At the doorway he was sprinkled with water, mud and ash, presumably by his parents. A bull was slaughtered which the clan ate. It was provided by his father or by the elder who sponsored him. Much jubilation and beer drinking accompanied this feasting. At the close of the feast the young man officially became a member of his etem. He was ready to undergo the group initiation into manhood called abwaton.⁴⁶ If a young man was destined to become an emurwon he could do his asapan initiation in the home of a practising emurwon. Marrying the daughter of his emurwon sponsor was a common practice. The elders of Usuku described how the art of amurwoot - divination - was passed on during asapan:

Okadaro was the first emurwon, followed by Orwatum who was succeeded by Okolimong. The art was learned during the apprenticeship period of asapan which lasted about four weeks. Orwatum got the art during asapan in Okadaro's home. Okolimong did his asapan in the home of Orwatum and he received his training as emurwon during that time. It was not automatic that those who went for training succeeded. Some would fail because after all the power of foretelling is from Akuj. Orwatum and Okolimong were of different clans... Okadaro had messengers. Orwatum was one of them. Okolimong was for a fairly long time the messenger of Orwatum who would send him to smear warriors with earth. Okolimong then took over as an independent emurwon when Orwatum died... During his

⁴⁶ Otim, op. cit. p.36.

asapan he met Orwatum's daughter and she became his wife.⁴⁷

It appears as if the power of the new emurwon was somewhat strengthened by marrying the daughter of the previous emurwon although the position was not strictly speaking, hereditary. It was not confined to any one clan. What was important was that the practising emuron must have been initiated, trained and given an internship by a previous emuron prior to starting his own independent practice.

In fact the succeeding emuron as a messenger was often sent to any area within the influence of the existing emuron to perform ceremonies on behalf of his master. It is tempting to assume therefore that the transmission of the power of foretelling from emuron to another person must have been linked with the succeeding emuron having both undergone asapan and acted as a messenger in the home of the outgoing emuron.⁴⁸

It is possible that the power was partially transmitted that way. Okolimong, the third in succession after Okadaro, rose to great prominence. Iteso elders in Toroma say that he was very powerful - aruoi noi. He even married before his asapan, something that was hardly ever done. Orwatum's daughter was his second wife.

⁴⁷ J. B. Webster, op. cit. pp.38-39

⁴⁸ C. P. Emudong, "The Iteso: A Segmentary Society under Colonial Administration, 1897-1912. 'M.A Thesis, Makerere University, Dept. of History, 1974, pp.30-31.

He (Okolimong) completed his abwaton initiation, took the name etuko (zebra) and was the leader of his age-set. It is believed that he fought under Okadaro against the Karimojong and under Etesot and Bila against the Imiro (Langi). Etesot and Bila died of old age during the Imiro wars and Okolimong took over as military leader and was credited with the final throwing back of the Imiro to Obalanga. He probably was a warrior until 1871-1881. He was heavily scarred. Okolimong was probably a messenger to Okadaro while he was a military leader... At Orwatum's death he became the emuron serving Abela, Usuku, Katakwi and Ngariam and with considerable influence over individuals in the Magoro/Amusia area... When the Baganda arrived in 1908, Okolimong was a very old man, too old for a Baganda style chieftaincy which was given to his son.⁴⁹

Several important facts about the life of an emurwon are touched upon in this version of the call, training and leadership of Okolimong. First of all, it seems that an emurwon was a military leader as well. Some Iteso elders deny this. Secondly, imurwok generally seemed to have been blessed with longevity. There are several still practising imurwok who are quite elderly. They have in fact outlived their contemporaries by more than the biblical ten years which those who are strong are granted over and above the three score years of ordinary mortals.*

In southern Teso, Uganda, one became an emurwon in a different way. In Mukongoro, Pallisa area for example,

⁴⁹ J. B. Webster, op. cit. pp.59-60.

* The Holy Bible, Book of Psalms 90:10

for one to become a foreteller one must have obtained mystical power from the spirit known as ajokit. Not until one had undergone different processes of suffering and not until a ceremony had been performed did one finally become an emurwon. It was another qualified emurwon who initiated the newcomers to the art. It is argued that the power of imurok rested with ajokit.⁵⁰

This source of the power of divination and of foretelling, ajokit, was also affirmed by two women rainmakers and priestesses interviewed by the writer at Arapai near Madera, Soroti, Uganda.⁵¹ It has been pointed out that the original name for God in Ateso was Ajokit or Ejokit. When Iteso elders say that the power of foretelling was after all from God, they are implicitly affirming the very close connection between the "spirit known as ajokit" with God; either it was from God or God himself. They can therefore speak of imurwok as those filled with God's goodness or as those whom God has instructed. There is therefore no contradiction in the two understandings as how imurwok got their knowledge of foretelling and of divination; that is, that the charism was God-given while the art was learned from other imurwok. This reflects the general African worldview that there is no clear cut distinction between the sacred and the profane, for all of life is sacred, is of God, and God can

⁵⁰ J. B. Webster, op. cit. p.127.

⁵¹ Interview with Acaloi & Anna Akemo, Arapai, Uganda, June 19, 1980.

transmit his power to people through the seemingly magical and ordinary acts of divination and of training emurwon.

One wonders if the performance of menial jobs during asapan, the individual initiation and the unnamed "processes of suffering" those in southern Teso in Uganda had first to be subjected to, were a necessary pre-requisite to receiving the divine power of foretelling. Something similar can be seen in the illness that the elders of Kenyan Iteso said that the signs of the call to become an emurwon. Whatever the case may be, Iteso elders would fully agree with Emudong that "the institution of emuron is a sacred one."⁵² It is therefore improbable that any ordinary person by his human power could pass on the gift of foretelling. The seed was already present in the ekirokone - heredity - passed on to children by the progenitors or else it was a direct unsolicited charism from God.

In Usuku where asapan, the individual initiation, was linked with the "learning" of foretelling the art and gift seems to have been given to men only (since only men did asapan). In southern Teso where asapan was not done, particularly in Kumi, a woman foreteller by the name of Amongin is remembered. She and Okoce, also a foreteller, were very active in that part of Teso prior to and after the invasion of the Iteso by the Buganda.

⁵² C.P. Emudong, op. cit. p.34.

What must not be underrated was the influence of imurok - especially Amongin - who almost unanimously warned against resistance (against the Buganda invaders). Had the fore-tellers advised in favour of resistance the whole military situation in southern Teso would have been vastly different...⁵³

Webster as well as Emudong seem to restrict the work of imurwok to just foretelling. This was in fact only a part of what they did. Perhaps foretelling is well remembered because it was not as negatively condemned by the colonial administration and Western Christianity as were the other functions such as ritual cursing and blessing of warriors. The work and pre-occupation of imurwok was centered on the welfare of the people rather than on contemplating God and what His will was. The welfare of the people was God's will. As one informant expressed it, the Iteso

believed firmly in a man called emurwon...⁵⁴ who must have been a prophet. And he is the one who revealed things to men... that was the way God revealed himself to men through Moses in the burning bush.

We will now turn our attention to some of the things the imurwok revealed to people and to some of the ways in which God revealed himself to people through the work of imurwok.

⁵³ J. B. Webster, op. cit. p.114.

⁵⁴ Interview with John Eneku, Madera, Uganda, June 19, 1980

III The functions of Emurwon-Ekadwaran: Diviner-Prophet

Several aspects concerning the functions of the diviner-prophet in Iteso society will have become clear in the foregoing discussion. First of all, the institution of emurwon was two fold: divination and prophecy, which one person often combined. Secondly, an attempt has been made to show from the sources available in writing, notably, Webster's The Iteso During the Asonya, and from oral interviews, that the most remarkable function of emurwon during the asonya was the foretelling of military expeditions, their outcome and the foretelling of events in the distant future which were likely to affect the whole of Iteso ateker. The English translation most favoured by Webster of emuron is foreteller. Thirdly, an attempt too has been made to point out that Iteso elders do distinguish between divination and prophecy. Despite the derogation that aspects of amurwoot - the practice of divination - have received since the irruption of western culture and Christianity into Iteso society, both aspects were well received and respected in Iteso society during asonya. One aspect of divination that has been terribly derogated is emurwon's practice of healing psychosomatic illness. This is discussed in detail later.*

a) Emurwon as Foreteller & Military Leader.

The functions of emurwon contributed greatly to the survival and well being of the Iteso. The asonya was the period in the

* Vide Infra Chapter Five, section 4.

history of the ateker when the people were mainly engaged in settling into their present habitats. Life was beset with many dangers arising first of all from a physically hostile environment. The world had not been opened, aroko akwap kengara, as Iteso elders are wont to recall.

Wild beasts such as rhinoceroses, lions, elephants, hyenas and poisonous snakes had to be reckoned with. There were dense forests and woodlands hiding terrors against which protection was necessary. There were also hostile neighbours. In the north of Uganda the hostile neighbours were mainly the Karamojong cattle raiders. In eastern Uganda the Jo-Padhola were not too friendly at first, to the new comers. In Kenya hostilities often erupted between the Iteso and their Ababukusu neighbours whom they had chased away in order to carve out a homeland for themselves. There was the necessity of keeping constant vigil, which involved training warriors in various tactics of warfare and techniques of hunting game. There was also the necessity of being ritually and morally clean and upright in order to avoid the wrath of the invisible world. In both of these aspects the emurwon played a very important role. He was, as Webster asserts,

probably the most influential individual in Iteso society. Besides prescribing or carrying out the ceremony to assist barren women to conceive, he was also either the rainmaker or he prescribed the ceremony to be carried out to bring rain.

He also foretold the success or failure of hunting or war expeditions. He could stop a war by predicting defeat. For those services he received a fee and free labour and as a result he was frequently the wealthiest individual in Iteso society.⁵⁵

In his person the emurwon combined the functions of prophet, priest, military leader, witch hunter, healer and judge. We shall examine these functions severally, ^{separately}

A segment, as we have seen, was led by lok'etem or lok'auriat, that is, segment head. Emurwon played a part in this leadership. In Iteso society "leadership was recognized not appointed or elected".⁵⁶ A segment leader was often a military leader also; in fact one of the qualifications of leadership was how well a man had distinguished himself in ajore or war raids.

Emuron too was recognized rather than formally chosen. His influence depended upon how often his foretelling was right as against how often it was wrong. There was often more than one emuron in each eitela (segment). The warriors might patronize either one of them, sometimes one sometimes the other. This might result in a division of labour as in Omiinya where one emuron foretold war and another hunting. In Kokorio and Omiinya the military leaders were also foretellers, an unusual combination because elders elsewhere in Usuku country either said that they had never heard of such a thing or it was impossible.⁵⁷

55 J.B. Webster, op cit p.36

56 J.B. Webster, op cit, p.70

57 J.B. Webster, op cit p.68

An emurwon could be a military leader, as well as a segment head as in the case of Ekadakada in Gorja, South Teso Location, Kenya. This latter combination seems to have been rare, however. Segment leaders and military leaders often patronized an emurwon as a personal advisor and guide. This was the practice in most parts of Tesoland both in Kenya and in Uganda. His presence at the commencement of a war expedition was necessary. Ekidipat of Gorja was also lok'asos - horn blower or bugler. He sounded his horn whenever a military expedition set out. Okolimong in Usuku led in war and participated as a fighter.

After giving a war party the go-ahead, emurwon had to anoint the warriors with red soil called ang'orom. He could also delegate someone else to do this. He then blessed them as they set out. It would appear that a blessing of some kind was implicit in the prediction of success. If he did not accompany the warriors to the battlefield, emurwon stayed at home at otem, the segment headquarters, to guard the place and to await the outcome of the war. When the warriors returned, he initiated the scarring ceremonies of the victorious soldiers. This ceremony is called aiger iburwo. It seems to have been done only among the Ugandan ateker as Kenyan Iteso elders seem not to have any recollection of it. The ceremony was performed as follows:

Between two and ten days after the return of the warriors, those who had killed during battle assembled in the military leader's home or any other large home for the scarring ceremony. In some areas the emuron took no

part in this ceremony, but in Orimai Oonya the emuron was present and opened the ceremony by placing a piece of bull's liver in the mouth of the first warrior who had succeeded in killing his foe. This ceremony was public - it was for the purpose of awarding military honours. The actual scarring was done by a man called the Igwalut using a needle and a knife. He made small cuttings on the body of warriors one cut for each man killed. When healed they formed slightly swollen scars called iburwo which were rather pleasant body decorations and were believed to make men more attractive to women. A type of leaf was placed over the wound until it healed. The Igwalut was given a quantity of sorghum for his services... Warriors could scar their wives as well... The scars were very prestigious and really prominent warriors such as Abonya, Orikimo and Opolot were scarred from head to toe including the penis. The quantity of scars determined a warrior's standing and prestige in the army. It was one of the major means by which a war leader was recognized.⁵⁸

The enemy in war were sometimes Iteso of another eite!a and confederacy as happened in the civil war of Usuku just prior to the coming of the Baganda. In such a case the services of emuron were generally not sought since it was an inter-Iteso conflict - yet in this particular case this tradition was broken. The imurok then in power, Okolimong in the north and Odokomeri in the south performed the smearing ceremony on Iteso warriors setting out against other Iteso. The angorom - red soil - used for this ceremony lay in an area between the two

⁵⁸ J.B. Webster, op cit p.72.

confederacies, northern and southern Usuku at a place called Angorom. Many a battle was fought to secure this soil until identification became a problem and those of Toroma turned to using white clay. The red soil was believed to have some kind of mystical power and a warrior felt stronger and surer of his fighting powers while he was thus decorated.⁷⁹

The outcome of the civil war was influenced partly by the foretelling of the emuron Okolimong, for when Omiat appealed to the Baganda (Omiat was from the southern confederacy) in 1904 to come to his assistance,

Okolimong, like the foretellers of Toroma and all of Teso, advised the people not to resist the butterflies and foretold disaster for those who did. He was undoubtedly aware of the Baganda victories in southern Teso and may have believed that resistance was likely to be futile and disastrous. On the other hand he may have seen the coming of the Baganda as an opportunity to end the civil war of which he may never have approved. Whatever his motives, his foretelling and advice produced confusion within the northern alliance and effectively weakened its will to resist. ⁵⁹

⁵⁹ J.B. Webster, op cit p.63

Apparently the emurwon Ekidipat of Gorja did not have the benefit of prior knowledge of the superior nature of the European gun. When William Grant, popularly remembered as "Apili,"⁶⁰ came on his mission from Jinja to restore peace in Kavirondo Province (the then Uganda Protectorate included the subjugation of the fierce Elgumi, as the Iteso of Kenya were then known) he, Ekidipat advised the people to resist the invaders. The evidence he gained first hand of this superiority of the gun caused Ekidipat to drop his asosi-war horn - and to flee to Amoni k'Otibine, somewhere near present day Angoram village, where he stayed for about two weeks.⁶¹

The best remembered messages that the Iteso recall the imurwok conveying to the people were their predictions of events to happen in the distant future. These events were more or less directly of a military nature, but involved a different kind of warfare altogether and encompassed people

⁶⁰ William Grant is popularly known as Apili by Iteso elders. He was the governor of North Kavirondo Province and was based at Jinja during the Colonial Administration at the beginning of this century. The name apparently means very bitter like red pepper, epilipil (piripiri). The activities of Grant were very bitter to the Iteso. He it was who subjugated the Iteso of Kenya with the help of Semei Kakungulu's armed Baganda forces and some Elgon Masai and Colonial retainers stationed at Mumias. See C.W. Hobley, Kenya, from the Chartered Company to Crown Colony. 2nd Edition. Frank Cass & Co. Ltd. London, 1970. pp. 76 - 108.

⁶¹ Interview with Zabulon Emaide, Ngelechomo, Kenya, February 13th, 1980.

other than Iteso. In these predictions they were foretelling because, as it has turned out, what they saw, what was revealed to them, has had an impact on the lives and destiny of the Iteso people in ways that not even the imurwok themselves may have dreamed possible.

Among the Iteso of Kenya at the village of Aturet there was the emurwon Omunyongole, lo adwari - who prophesied. He saw Europeans come as butterflies - ikapelepelen as has been indicated elsewhere.* Another version of his message goes as follows:

Okwe ejai ibore akipi
esiit bala ekapelepelet-
esiit itwan mere itwan
ekwanga bala ekapele-
pelet, ejai akipi.

There is something on the
water it resembles a
butterfly it is like a
human being, it is white
as a butterfly it is on
the water.⁶²

Ekidipat saw these coming strangers as resembling newly hatched house rats and coming from the direction of "where the sun sleeps," a direction which may be interpreted as west. Omunyongole lived earlier than Ekidipat and their respective villages were some distance apart. It is quite possible that they knew of one another's predictions. Omunyongole died before the Europeans came, while Ekidipat lived to see them come. Iteso elders interpret these predictions to mean that the not-so-human appearance that the imurwok saw in their visions of the white people was their whiteness, or more accurately, their pinkness of skin.

* vide supra, p.148

⁶² Interview with John Okout, Aturet, Kenya, June 25th, 1981.

The butterfly aspect was the clothes they wore and the coming over the water as the ship they arrived in. It is interesting that although the famous "iron snake" or railway does pass through Tesoland at the northern part, the imurwok did not see it in their visions.

The predictions of imurwok were received with skepticism. When the Europeans actually appeared in Tesoland then the people believed these predictions. In the former north Teso Location (okuleu), Nagashima records unknown prophets who not only predicted the coming of the Europeans but also that of their departure. The words of their prophecy go like this:

Ebuto itunga lukakwangak,
lu esiito bala ejaasi
akipi. Kitwakata sio de,
Epote kesi akirwenye
akwap. Epote adaun
akwap etubi... Pokolong
ebuni ikoku kokide
Loebuni akisuru itunga lu.

People are coming,
white ones. It is as
if they are in the
water. After we have
died, They will come
to clear the land.
They will come and cut
up the entire land...
Some day there will come
a child from the east,
one who will come and
chase these people away.⁶⁴

Informants said that the "one" mentioned in the prophecy referred to Jomo Kenyatta and his part in the departure of the Europeans.

⁶⁴ Information given unanimously by all the Iteso elders interviewed.

The predictions of Okolimong and Amongin among the Ugandan ateker seem to have been more pre-meditated than spontaneous; more a product of deliberate reflection upon current events than supernatural visions. Webster seems to suggest that the invitation and even prediction of the coming of the Baganda was originated by a man named Omiat, who fled his original settlement in Komolo to settle in Orungo where, after the initiation ceremony, he became the leader of his aturi - age group. In this new home an already prominent etem leader called Ocopo did not welcome Omiat and the two fought one another with the result that Omiat and his followers had to move away to Anyole which they renamed Komolo. (The Iteso often adopted the old name for the new places they settled, and this is a case in point). In this new settlement Omiat entered into trade with the Banyoro who brought him red hoes in exchange for sufficient property to marry.

Trade not only set Omiat on the path to prosperity but his trading contacts also widened his knowledge not only about important events taking place in Buganda and Bunyoro - events which in little more than a decade were to have important repercussions among the Iteso.⁶⁵

The predictions of Okolimong and Amongin may have been deliberate and premeditated, especially those predictions which spoke of the coming of the Baganda, and they may have based them on information received as Webster says. In

65 J.B. Webster, op cit p.177.

contrast, the predictions of Ekidipat concerning the coming of the Europeans were not premeditated or based on evidence of knowledge brought in by travellers. Ekidipat made his predictions around about 1800, and by that time, the Iteso had not even settled for a century in their new home.

Elsewhere in Kenya, African people had predicted the coming of the Europeans. The language they used differed somewhat from that used by the emurwon Ekidipat. Cege wa Kiburu prophesied concerning many things, among which was the coming of the Europeans and of the railway. He said that there would come a big snake (the railway) which would emerge from the east and would seem to have no beginning or end. Nobody would be able to cut it with a sword. Along it would travel a big smoking thicket, out of which would come people who have leprosy (mangu) or look like tree frogs and eyes with streaks and who would look like flies.⁶⁵

Iteso prophets who foretold the coming of the Europeans did not include the railway in their prophecy, although it was to pass through Tesoland. Iteso prophets of Uganda used the word butterflies when referring to the attire of

⁶⁶ D. Kinuthia Mugia, Urathi wa Cege wa Kabiru: "The Prophecies of Cege was Kabiru" Kenya Literature Bureau, Nairobi, 1979. Translation contributed by H. Kinoti.

the Europeans, so did Omonyong'ole of Aturet, Kenya. It is highly unlikely that these prophecies were borrowed from the Kikuyu mugo.

Although borrowing of a known prophecy should not be ruled out entirely, it must be stated that the interaction of the Iteso, at this stage of their history, with outside peoples was somewhat minimal. They did not, for example, have any contact with Arabs traders, ⁶⁷ who might have brought to them tales of other lands. There is therefore every reason to credit the Iteso imurwok with having received a revelation concerning an event as momentous as the coming of a race of people travelling on the water, with complexions like those of newly hatched rats. In fact, it would have been unusual if Iteso imurwok did not "see" the coming of the Europeans.

Prediction was a very important aspect of the power of emurwon. The prestige and authenticity of an emurwon was to a large extent dependent on the outcome of his predictions. If what he saw came to pass, people believed that he was a genuine emurwon, if his predictions turned out to be false his authenticity was questioned.

⁶⁷ 1 Karp, op cit in Fields of change, p.35

Iteso elders marvel also how the two imurwok, Omonyongole and Ekidipat could have "seen" the coming of the Europeans. They say that at the time when the prophecy was first heard, people did not believe that what was predictated would ever take place. It was only when the Europeans did come that the predictions were remembered and believed.

It does not seem strange that the coming of the Europeans formed part of the message of Iteso prophets, because their coming brought in its wake a great change in their social, cultural and religious structure. Because of the heightened calibre of their sensitivity to happenings in time, the imurwok received a vision of what was going to take place at some future date. The vision could not have been very clear otherwise the imurwok might have advised their people on the course of action to follow in the event of the actual coming of the strange beings. When the Europeans did come, the Iteso elders, headed by Ekidipat, misinterpreted their pale appearance for weakness. They attempted to fight them off with their traditional spears and arrows, only to be utterly confounded by the iron sticks of the Europeans which spat out deadly fire.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Oral interview with Zabulon Emaide, Ngelechomo, February 13th, 1980.

It appears that the ebeli, the great famine of 1894 caused people to adopt desperate measures to ensure survival, even selling their children born or captured in war, into places like Kabermaido and Serere in exchange for food. The famine was especially severe in Usuku. Raiding neighbouring villages in this way, Omiat came into conflict once more with his former enemy Ocopo - a confrontation resulted, which led in part to the civil war in Usuku. Omiat was forced to evacuate Kamolo once more and to settle in Kamuda and Kalaki in Kabermaido.⁶⁹

When in 1896 the Baganda established a stronghold in Bululu they were aided by an Ekumamait called Okwero in their punitive expeditions against influential Iteso chiefs who offered resistance. These expeditions involved burning down whole villages. One such village which was burnt down was at Anyara.

By the time of the Baganda intrusion, the ebeli had practically ended throughout Teso. The Baganda expeditions, especially the Anyara episode, may have had a great impact on Omiat's thinking. He may have realized that if he could befriend the Baganda by promising to guide them to those areas where resistance was likely to be strongest, then he would have access to their deadly weapons, that with Baganda help, he would overrun Ocopo and his western allies and at the same time be able to extend his powers over a large territory. Omiat

probably foresaw that with Baganda help at his proposal he might unify the whole of Amuria and possibly bring Usuku under his rule...

It was most likely that Omiat sought Baganda assistance privately, primarily, to defeat Ocopo so that his people might safely return to their own home.⁷⁰

Eventually, through the demonstration of the superior strength of the Baganda who were now on Omiat's side, the Iteso leaders came to terms with Omiat, including Ocopo his enemy. Omiat's people were able to return to their home. It seems, however, that despite the proven superiority of the Baganda weapons, Omiat still needed the support of the famous emurwon, Okolimong. One of the leaders who had entered into an agreement with Omiat was Ocilage, a former subcommander of Ocopo who was also a messenger of Okolimong. He probably communicated the terms of the agreement between Ocopo and Omiat to Okolimong. This knowledge, seemingly enabled Okolimong to foretell the coming of the Baganda in these words:

White butterflies would come to fill the world and they would come from Too (the west). The itanya (the boat-like pots from which our grandfathers ate) would become white. These people would be very fierce. They would have aporoceta - guns - and we Iteso would not match them.⁷¹

⁷⁰ J.B. Webster, op cit pp. 178 - 179

⁷¹ J.B. Webster, op cit p. 182.

By 1908 the occupation of Usuku by the Baganda was complete and Omiat became the main appointer of new posts of influence. This lengthy version of the prophecy of the coming of the Baganda is recounted mainly to show that an emuron's word did help to change the destiny of the Iteso people. It can be argued that the Baganda would have subjugated the Iteso without the collaboration of imurwok, yet the evidence seems to point to the fact that bitter as the cup of defeat was to the proud, warlike and egalitarian Iteso, it was achieved more peacefully than if the Iteso had been foolhardy enough to resist.

There is another kind of foretelling, another aspect of it, which imurwok did and still do and which concerned individuals rather than the whole of Iteso ateker. akin to what today may be called counselling, although the language used is prophetic.⁷² A person with a particular problem would approach an emurwon or ekadwaran concerning it. The latter would meditate on this problem the whole night and next morning would give the solution. Acabet of Toroma was still a prophet at the time of the field work (October, 1981). Information on him could be got only second hand because at the time of the field work he was away at a distant village.

72 The language is prophetic in the sense that the emurwon foretells to the individual what will happen to him in the future.

Informants who know him personally had this to say about what he does:

Emuron is a person whom God has taught. This knowledge is not inherited. God gave the gift as he saw fit. In the olden days adwaran had a special horn which he used to sound very early in the morning. When people came in response, he would tell forth the message which had been revealed to him in the night. He would tell them what God wanted them to know.

At this present time Acabet sometimes calls certain individuals (aiworoor). When these individuals respond he tells them certain matters relevant to their well being. He may instruct them, to sacrifice certain animals at certain places in order to ward off an impending calamity. Sometimes he will announce a warning to the whole people. He may, for instance, warn the people not to plant groundnuts a certain season. One time he gave such a warning and those who did not take heed lost because the groundnuts failed that year... Acabet is respected as an emuron who speaks what is true.⁷³

His word was convincing to the people because it seemed to have no ordinary source and, because he asked for no fees for his words of counsel or warning, he won the respect of the people.

In this section I have tried to discuss the emurwon/ekadwaran as a foreteller and counsellor. He spoke to the people's conscience and guided them in ways best designed for self

73 Group Interview of Iteso elders in Toroma, Uganda, October 28th 1981.

preservation. In this way, he was among the most influential individuals in Iteso society.

b) Emurwon as Priest.

Iteso religion did not have an organized priestly caste or temples constructed specifically for worship, although there were some sacred places used for sacred rituals. Each individual Itesot had a personal relationship with God such that one was free to invoke God at any time anywhere whenever the need arose. Because of the strong sense of solidarity Iteso had with one another and because of a deep sense of corporate consciousness instilled into every Itesot person, a consciousness that sometimes superceeded an individual's personal inclination, there were times and occasions when communal prayers were each person's essential duty. Elalai (elelekeja) the communal prayers for rain was one such occasion. It has already been discussed.*

Drought affected the whole of Iteso society and every-one felt obliged to do something about it. There were certain people who were believed to bewitch rain, that is akicud edou, or akitik akiru. This was a crime ranked with sorcery and if found out, one could be killed. Sometimes people claimed to have the power of withholding rain. When found out, another punishment was a good beating up. Beating up such offenders or plastering them with mud or even killing them were attempts

* Vide supra, pp 72 -88

to discover the causes of drought. It was believed that a person could withhold rain by the use of magic or witchcraft. Subjecting the offenders to these ordeals was an attempt to get them to confess to being guilty of withholding rain. The most important act the whole community did, however, and the most effective, was to gather at an agreed swampy place to pray for rain. The emurwon led in these prayers.

Both Gulliver and Lawrence called these prayers "Rainmaking", a term which somewhat misrepresented what actually took place. It is probably more accurate to say that the emurwon in his capacity as priest, and whom the community believed to have been endowed with the charism of effective mediator or intercessor with God, gathered the people together and exercised that role. The rain was not made by the emurwon since there were no magical or supernatural acts involved, but the emurwon's intercession and the need of the people expressed in gestures which portrayed their faith in God, resulted in God's sending rain. The presence of the emurwon was vital, without him, the prayers did not take place. One amuron (woman diviner-prophet) who had officiated at a recent prayer for rain had this to say about it:

We performed ailelekeja here at Arapai and rain fell. We prayed for rain and God heard our prayers and sent us rain. We did what God directed us to do. ⁷⁴

Igaten or egasit has already been referred to as one of the acts of worships which involved the whole community. In this ritual the emurwon acted as priest. What is interesting here is the way the two branches of the Iteso ateker understood this ritual. The words Igaten or egasit are derived from aigat which means to bless, in the mind of the Kenyan Iteso that is. It apparently means to curse in the minds of most Ugandan Iteso, as well as in the minds of some Kenyan Iteso elders. It has not been possible to ascertain the reason for this radical difference. One informant near Soroti did describe a ritual which resembled igaten as understood in Kenya. She did not know exactly what it was called.

Long ago when a person, usually an elder, fell seriously ill and would not recover, a sacrifice was performed for him called asubanit. A he-goat was killed near the doorway where the sick man lay. Its meat was roasted and eaten by all present. Afterwards each one washed their hands in water reserved for this purpose and each sprinkled agwatakin - the sick one with that water saying, "Ptu. Okwe Loasuban kitimoi sda."

Oh God pity us also.
If God wants to support you you would get well. ⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Acaloi, A rain maker and priestess. Arapai, Uganda June 19th, 1981. She was assisted by Colonia Asiyo, also of Arapai, Uganda.

⁷⁵ Interview with Acaloi, Arapai, Uganda, June 19th, 1981.

This informant did not say who officiated in this ritual. However, in the Kenyan version of the same ritual, the emurwon officiated. One informant described it this way:

When a person, an elder, was very ill and unable to recover, people (the clan as well as non clan members) gathered at the homestead. The emurwon was informed beforehand. The young men - itelepai got hold of the bull the clan set aside for the purpose, the bull which all who came for this igaten ritual would eat. The bull was killed ritually. The emurwon took hold of the bull's tail and walked round and round the bull saying, Ere ka muta konyou. So and so's home, be healed. His assistants would respond in the same words but in lower pitched voices. After he had called down blessings in that way he speared the bull in the heart. His assistants meanwhile held the bull down by its legs. The bull for igaten ritual was not tied by ropes as in other cases.⁷⁶

At this sacrificial praying for healing, the sprinkling was not done. It was done instead at the ekiworonte ritual already described. Igaten was the general name given for several communal prayers: praying for a general healing in an epidemic, praying for a barren woman to have children. In all these rituals the emurwon officiated as priest.

76 Interview with Obiriko Otiengi, Asinge, February 15th, 1980.

c) The Emurwon as Judge and Hunter of Witches

The judiciary in Iteso society asonya was composed of the clan elders. They were charged with

the responsibility of keeping their people at peace and in unity ... Family and clan problems and disputes were taken before them. Adultery, theft, incest, land disputes were some of the issues which affected not only one clan but interclan relations. Airabis and adieket were meeting places for discussions and negotiations with the ultimate aim of arriving at justice. If any crime or issue affected any member of the clan, it was first taken to the clan leader who arranged for a meeting of the whole clan.⁷⁷

The clan elder would ask the emurwon to help in his special capacity if the crime involved akicud - sorcery and witchcraft - in its various forms. One of these forms was akicud akiru - to interfere with rain. In such a case the clan elder called a meeting of the whole clan and a special speaker called ekereban "at first began to speak indirectly advising the clan at large not to practice such an evil thing. He would then direct his eyes to the suspected acudan advising him to reform."⁷⁸ If the suspected acudan denied the charge an emuron was consulted. If the emuron confirmed the charge the suspect was faced with the crime at once. Killing rain was considered a very serious crime and the offender was taken

⁷⁷ J.B. Webster, op cit p.129

⁷⁸ J.B. Webster, op cit p.132

to the swamp and plastered with swamp mud, edoot. This was believed to cleanse him of the offence.

If the brand of akicud was night dancing the offender was killed by another clan and his body left in the swamp for vultures to devour. He was never buried and very few people mourned him.⁷⁹

Among the Iteso of Uganda spreading leprosy was considered akicud. One who was suspected of it was charged with the offence. If she denied it an emuron was consulted. Culprits seemed to have been mostly women.

If the emuron confirmed that the woman was really guilty of spreading leprosy and if she denied it further the emuron performed a ritual to establish guilt or innocence. A very small pot was placed on the fire until it became very hot. It was then placed on the woman's stomach. If the pot stuck to her stomach it meant the woman was guilty. If it fell and broke it was believed that the woman had been blamed wrongfully. If found guilty she was sent back to her father's home and would never be allowed to remarry. Her original husband got back his dowry either from the woman's father or from her clan.⁸⁰

Leprosy was not so feared among the Iteso of Kenya so it was not considered a crime to be a leper. Webster does not

79 Ibid

80 J.B. Webster, op. cit. p.133

say what happened to a man suspected of spreading leprosy, or perhaps men were immune from the disease!

There was one act of judging that emuron performed which had lasting consequences. This was ritual cursing - ilami among the Iteso of Kenya and aigat among the Iteso of Uganda. There was another kind of cursing which was not ritual and which any elder could do against a younger person who was a very close kin. The Iteso of Kenya call this akiken while the Iteso of Uganda call it ailam. Among the latter atcker this type of curse

involved touching the private parts. If parents go to the extent of touching their private parts during quarrels with their sons or daughters then the issue becomes very serious. Accompanying the touching of such parts, bitter slogans and phrases follow, for example: 'if you are not bitten by a snake in a few days' time, a dog will grow horns.'⁸¹

A woman will akumokin - expose her buttocks to an offending child. It was and still is regarded as a very serious thing to do and is believed to have serious consequences. One whose parents had him cursed this way would either meet with immediate misfortune or with a series of misfortunes at a later date. These misfortunes included

⁸¹ J.B. Webster, op. cit p.140

what the curse stipulated, like being bitten by a snake, or things like impotence, barrenness and even death. Informants recall the case of a young man who neglected his mother to the extent of denying her a decent burial. Before she died she was known to have cursed her son a lot. Shortly after her death, her son, then his wife and son died in very mysterious circumstances in quick succession. Her surviving grandson has been reduced to mindless idiocy despite an uncle's efforts to give him the benefits of an education. Informants insist that it was due to the old woman's curse.⁸²

This cursing was not ritual. The ritual cursing which emurwon performed was done for various reasons. One reason was for the purpose of vindicating oneself when falsely charged with a crime. It was also a way of ridding oneself of one's enemies.

Elders in Toroma say that egasit - ritual cursing - was done by the clan called Isureta. It was the last thing resorted to in an attempt to ascertain the guilt of a person who had sinned against another in society. The person who felt wrongly accused would go to the leader of Isureta clan, most likely an emuron and request that they perform egasit. Through their special messengers, the Isureta secured the personal belongings of the person they had been requested to

curse. The accuser provided either a white hen or a he-goat. The Isureta then selected a certain anthill, either an angerep or emome. The personal belongings of the person to be cursed were placed inside the anthill along with the head of the animal or bird. The goat was killed by passing it back and forth over a blazing fire while chanting:

Leader:	<u>Muta, Otwana?</u>	he	chorus:	<u>Otwana!</u>
	So and so, should	die?		He should die!
	<u>Otwana?</u>			<u>Otwana!</u>
	Should he die?			He should die!

After calling down death upon the accused or the accursed, the whole party performed mourning antics as if for the dead. They would yell, weep and throw themselves down on the ground in imitation of actual mourning for the dead. If the accused was guilty, death visited his homestead and his relatives started to die off with terrifying regularity. The accused would die last. These mysterious deaths usually alerted the person concerned to the possibility of egasit having taken place. To halt the death the victim provided a bull to the clan Isureta for a cleansing sacrifice. They slaughtered the bull on the spot where igaten was performed. The personal articles were exhumed and anointed with ikijit - the contents from the bull's stomach - and the people ate the bull. If the accused was innocent, nothing happened to him.

The Kenyan Iteso version of the same ritual is called slami. The emurwon officiated, assisted by a few chosen

elders. The reason for the ritual was similar to the egasit described above: a last resort to establish one's innocence. In this case a special messenger called lokarotan - similar to a secret agent - was sent to secure some personal belongings of both the accused and the accuser. These personal items were buried near or under a sausage tree or an oak tree. The emurwon then climbed the tree backwards, and with his head facing down his feet fastened onto the lowest branch of the tree, he would call down curses first upon the accuser then upon the accused. His helpers positioned themselves under the tree and with certain gestures would echo the curses of the emurwon in a lower pitched voice.

Leader: Ere ka Muta, Peu! Chorus: Ere ka Muta peu!
 So and so's home,
 May it die off? Let so and so's home
 be utterly finished.

Ere ka Muta, kotwana? Ere ka Muta kotwana!
 So and so's home may
 it die? Let so and so's
 home die.

Adauni? Adaun?
 It is finished? It is finished. 83
 So and so's home,
 is it finished? It is finished!

After cursing this way, they would slaughter a goat ritually by passing it alive back and forth over a blazing fire while chanting similar words until it died. The cursing ritual was usually done early in the morning before dawn.

83 "Muta" translates "so-and-so." The Iteso would not supply a name even in interview for fear that the words may affect the person named. Interview with Mungau, Asinge, Kenya, May 3rd, 1979.

People had an implicit belief in the power of the spoken word especially one uttered in ritual. The offended person had to really feel the injustice of the accusation in order to resort to ritual cursing. If the accused was guilty, death would visit his relatives one by one and he would be visited last of all. If the accused was innocent, nothing would happen to him, but the curse would revert to the one who accused him. If the one cursed was guilty and his people died off yet he remained ignorant of the curses of their death, the emurwon would alert him to the fact that he was the victim of a ritual curse. The victim had to give the emurwon a bull which was sacrificed on the spot where the cursing was done and his articles exhumed and anointed with ikujit.

d) The Emurwon as Healer

A last function to be discussed which the emurwon performed and still does perform in Iteso society was that of healer. He healed people of both physical and psychological maladies. We have already seen that he diagnosed the cause of sickness which did not have any direct or obvious cause, as spirit possession. The emurwon usually received his call to become an emurwon through similar sickness. It can be said that his own call was an inauguration. He was placed in a unique position of being able to identify cases of visitation from the spirit world in others.

The emurwon was taught the healing qualities of trees, herbs, animals, shells and other inanimate objects. The supernatural experience of being commissioned to heal was facilitated by practical instructions by a healer. Regular practice made one a proficient healer. Different imurwok used different objects to arrive at the solution to a patient's problem. Some used pieces of leather thrown on the ground. The way they landed revealed the problem as well as the solution. Some imurwok slaughtered chickens and read the problem in the intestines. Others still used gourds with herbs and certain types of shells in them, a fly whisk made from the tail of a hippopotamus, a small wooded boat with some stones. To divine the problem as well as its solution when approached by a client, the emurwon shook the gourds silently or while chanting. Sometimes while chanting the emurwon would fall into a trance and in that state receive the required knowledge. The stones were moved inside the boat in a way which indicated the knowledge sought.

There is a very important aspect of these seemingly magical manoeuvres. To a large extent the success of an emurwon as a healer depended on his charisma and powers, but also on the confidence people placed in his abilities. He had to be thoroughly informed in matters pertaining to clan rituals and in matters pertaining to the world of the living

and of the dead. He also made it a point to acquaint himself with happenings in the lives of the people in his immediate environment and beyond. News and happenings travel among our people with amazing speed. No bit of information was ever ignored by an emurwon. He knew the fears, hopes, conflicts and backgrounds of the people for long distances. When people went to consult him he most likely knew the root of the problem from piecing information together. The client of course thought that the emurwon's knowledge of his problems was supernatural. This enhanced the confidence the client had in the emurwon, and because the client believed in him, healing did take place. The conflicts and fears that plagued and even sickened a person in the traditional environment arose from the disharmony which some actions or omissions had caused. Taylor puts it this way:

A man's well being consists in keeping in harmony with the cosmic totality. When things go well with him he knows he is at peace and of a piece with the scheme of things and there can be no greater good than that. If things go wrong then somewhere he has fallen out of step. He feels lost. The totality has become hostile and he has a run of bad luck, he falls prey to acute insecurity and anxiety. The whole system of divination exists to

help him discover the point at which the harmony has been broken and how it may be restored.⁸⁴

In order to enable emurwon to help restore this harmony, he asked a few questions, or sometimes he did not ask any questions but went right to the heart of the matter by telling the client those things in his life and relationships which had gone wrong. These may be omissions, especially omitting to sacrifice to the departed. The patient was given something tangible to do to restore the harmony. If, for example, a young man left home in anger, having violently disagreed with his parents on how his life should be lived, this separation might plague him very much. He might have been unable to settle down wherever ~~he~~ was. He may even have vowed to himself that he would never return home. All attempts to obliterate home from his mind might have succeeded, yet he remained unsettled. Unknown to him, other forces might have been at work to intensify his restlessness. 7

The young man might decide to consult an emurwon concerning his restlessness. The emurwon would tell him the cause of his restlessness and then direct him to perform certain acts. After he performed those acts, his restless-

ness would disappear and harmony would be restored in his life. Below is a concrete case which illustrates the point here.

A young man, the first born of his father, had a terrible disagreement with his father. They could never see eye to eye on anything. The young man left home and got a steady employment away from home. He vowed to himself that he would never return home.

In his home village, his family were the better educated ones. His father as well as brothers of his father before him had received a fairly good education and were therefore employed. There were some neighbours, particularly the clan brothers of the young man's father, who envied that family because they appeared to be prosperous. One of these clan brothers in particular, was quite happy when the young man failed to return home.

The father of the young man fell sick with an incurable illness. During his illness, he sent all kinds of messages to his son. The old man desired to see his son before he died. None of the messages moved the young man. Eventually the old man died without having seen his first born son, who was also his heir.

The mother of the young man, meanwhile, was doubly torn by the death of her husband and the failure of her first born son to come to his father's funeral. She became quite convinced that her son was being kept away by some power than his anger of many years. She made inquiries about whom she should consult and was told of a traditional healer living in another ethnic group, a distance of about fifty kilometres. She decided to go to consult this traditional healer.

On her arrival there, this mother said that the healer asked her questions concerning various people in her own home and mentioned happenings which no outsider could have known, happenings pertaining to the personal lives of the members of her family. The mother wondered how he could have known. Concerning the problem which had led her to him, the healer said to her,

Mother, do not say that your son refuses to come home. It is not so. There are forces which hold him back. Each time your son tries to come home the way becomes dark. A darkness settles in his way and he finds himself unable to travel. I am going to give you some things which you must do...⁸⁵

⁸⁵ The personalities in this life drama asked to remain anonymous. The case is authentic and has not been concluded as of writing of this study.

The mother took the medicine which the traditional healer gave her and went and performed the acts he directed. She had to perform these actions over a number of days.

While the mother was doing the tangible things as directed by the healer who had assured her of their effectiveness, the present student of these matters decided to check on the young man in question. Being known to the family as an intimate friend, it was not difficult to find the young man. At first it was very difficult to get him to talk. In the end, after much persistence by the family friend, the young man simply said: "I should like someone to tell me why each time I pack my things to go home, the world becomes dark - kirionari akwap, and I lose the way. I can even get as far as the bus park, then I forget why I am there and I do not know why I find myself at the bus park. What creates that darkness?" 86

The friend of the young man managed to get him to go home and see his father's grave, that is, to mourn his father and begin to be reconciled with his past. 87

This case illustrates the point that although emurwon does diagnose the problems which can create disharmony in

86 Informant wishes to remain anonymous.

87 The young man in question went to an emurwon on his own who diagnosed his problem in a similar manner.

people's lives, in order to be healed, the people themselves have, so to speak, to swallow the medicine that effects the healing. The young man in this case had to want to be reconciled to his past and to will himself to return home and be the heir his father had hoped that he might become. The writer observed that although there may have been truth about the alien forces keeping the young man away from home, the victim himself did not have a strong desire to bring about a reconciliation. His mother's desire and her willingness to perform the actions directed by the emurwon alone could not bring about the desired healing. The young man's full cooperation was also necessary.

The emurwon's healing powers are operative at another level of social life; that of asupun ikacudak, that is to hunt out witches and their acts. Akicud was one of the most serious of crimes, and those found out were killed in the swamp and left to vultures. Ikacudak were people who behaved in ways that society considered unnatural. These acts included bestiality, incest, sorcery, poisoning others, night dancing, killing rain and evil magic. There were also people who could be termed witches in the popular sense. Elders around Toroma describe them this way:

87 The young man in question went to a traditional healer on his own who diagnosed his problem similarly.

Long ago there were people who ran about in the bush. They would dig up graves and eat up the corpses. They would go to gravesites and lie on them, revel on them and dig them up. People would say 'ipieda ngoli bala ecwee' - that one is behaving like a wild animal... If caught they were speared to death or they were beaten with the sticks of akeroit - a thorny shrub, or an akeroit stick was thrust through their anuses. They were a menace to society. 88

It was the work of emurwon to divine who were witches in that sense, especially since these grave diggers did their business in the night time when no one was likely to see them. These grave diggers were witches in the sense that their akicud seemed to operate on the belief that "the spirits of the living human beings can be sent out of the body on errands of doing havoc to other persons in body or mind." 89 These witches did not confine themselves to eating corpses, they ate living human beings as well. A story was related by one informant who said:

A woman once passed through a deserted territory after it had rained, where she found some ikacudak dancing on an anthill. When they saw her, they caught her and put her in a small hut. Each day they would feed her on choice portions of meat to fatten her,

88 Oral Interview with a group in Toroma, Uganda, October 28th, 1981.

89 E. Bolaji Idowu, op. cit p. 176.

when she was fat enough they would eat her, but she played a trick on them and managed to escape from the hut...⁹⁰

The ikacudak of this story appear to have been members of a witches' guild. Iteso informants say that they used to meet in places unfrequented by other human beings, such as, dense woods, onyunyur - no man's plain or moorish area, and do strange things like sliding up and down an anthill after it had rained. This anthill performance was more than just a game; it was a test with sinister connotations. One who failed to get up the anthill was devoured by the rest of the group, if no victim passed by.

In their eating of human flesh, dead or alive, they expressed the belief that they were absorbing into their own constitutions the spiritual substance of their victims. This would increase their own mystical power and give them surer mastery over other people so that they could perform their akicud with even more deadly success. Their success in akicud was based on the belief that mystical power existed and could be harnessed. The ikacudak harnessed this mystical power for the sole purpose of harming fellow human beings.

⁹⁰ Oral Interview with Zabulon Enaide, Ngelechomo, Kenya, February 13th, 1980.

In witchcraft "we meet unmitigated evil in its essence: malignant, obstructing, spoiling, out-and-out diabolic." 91

Another form of akicud which Iteso ikacudak practiced is what is known as magic. Idowu defines magic as:

an attempt on the part of man to tap and control the supernatural resources of the universe for his own benefit... by means of spell and rite ... /it/ rests on the manipulation and enforcement of supernatural benefits ... Magic serves man's egocentricity and is for him a short cut to spiritual bliss... By its nature and definition, magic presupposes reflection and planning in order to secure an expected end.⁹²

The Iteso felt the need to contact as well as be protected from the supernatural world, because that world can be both benevolent and malevolent. In their worship of and prayers to God, their approach was one of submission to His will and appeal to His power to aid them in their inadequacy in dealing with the issues of life. The Iteso magicians made use of supernatural power, not for the purpose of helping others, but for selfish purposes. When they practiced good magic, the results were beneficial, but evil magic could cause harm.

91 I.E. Balaji, op. cit. p.176

92 E.B. Idowu, op. cit. p.190

It is this latter, evil magic, which the ikacudak in Iteso society practiced.

There were several forms of evil magic which were practiced in Iteso society. One of them was similar to what Idomu says "works on the principle of contiguity; that things once in contact with each other would continue to interact even when contact is broken".⁹³ In practice, a person's hair, foot print or even shadow could be taken. Evil medicine along with magical incantations worked over them to produce an adverse effect on the person in question.

Another very common type of magic was what is known as homoepathic magic. The Iteso called this anunuk itunga - literally to tie up people. This was performed by tying up into a bundle, the personal effects of a person: his/her hair, nail shavings, pieces of clothing, together with potent medicines. The belief was that the act of tying up a person's personal effects would also "tie up" the person; that is, would so incapacitate him that normal life would be halted or reduced to a minimum. If the personal effects of a woman were tied up in this way, she would never conceive or if she conceived, she would not

⁹³ Ibid, p.195

carry her pregnancy to the full term. A foetus would even disappear from the womb of a pregnant woman due to homoeopathic magic. If the personal effects of a man were tied up, he might become impotent, a lunatic or an idiot. Failure to "untie" these bundles might result in death.

In order to cure a person of this evil magic, an emurwon performed good magic. By employing supernatural powers, he would cause those bundles to "come" to him or be discovered by the patient or by his/her relatives. In their presence, the emurwon would untie the bundles. By this act he effected the release of the victims. His untying destroyed the magic. If he did not cause the patients to see the bundles, he might instead prescribe a process of healing with which the patient would counteract the evil magic.

It is possible that the magical ceremonies which emurwon had to perform to bring about a cure were unnecessary for the essential effectiveness of his medicines, yet the fact that they aided "the mind of the patient and thus enabled the mind to influence the body to respond favourably to treatment" ⁹⁴ could be said to be ample justification for them.

94 E.B. Idowu, op. cit. p.202

In Iteso society during asonya, the person convicted of akicud might be allowed to live instead of being killed. This could happen if his friends or relatives warned him to flee to another tribe. In that case, they often allied themselves with their host tribe and became informants against the Iteso in inter-tribal warfare. A culprit could be lured to another clan for a beer party and on returning home would be set upon and killed by unknown-persons. This was prearranged.

Akicud - sorcery and witchcraft do still exist in Iteso society. The older members of the society point out that akicud has in fact increased, rather than decreased. The witches of the traditional society, that is, persons who belonged to ikodeta luk akicud - witches' societies - have disappeared. What have increased are sorcerers and evil magicians and nightdancers. The sorcerers usually try to poison the foodstuffs, drinks, cigarettes and even non foodstuffs such as the beddings, chairs and clothing of their victims. They use all kinds of poison. They use poisonous herbs, roots and leaves. They also use modern poisons like drugs and insecticides. The people usually claim to know who has poisoned others, or whom they suspect has done so.

Government law courts do not seem to be able to deal with the many cases of this kind of akicud. All that the local chiefs and subchiefs can do is warn the people to be aware of those sorcerers whom the chief's or subchief's barazas have found guilty. If such a case goes to court, they are usually thrown out for lack of evidence. What the presiding judge wants is an exhibit or a doctor's post mortem certificate which would ascertain death by poison. This, the people cannot produce since no post mortem are performed on persons who die at home.

In such changed circumstances, the emurwon is proving to be quite important.⁹⁵ He will divine the cause of death. People do consult him also when they suspect that they are being victimized and the emurwon will usually give protective charms.

A last very widespread form of "witchcraft" that has become quite rampant is that involving married women and their husbands. Polygamy is still quite widespread. The modern Ateso woman feels threatened when her husband marries another wife. Some of these modern Ateso women resort to consulting imurwok in their capacity as herbalists, to equip them with love potions as well as poisons. The love potions are believed to make their husbands love only them and make them impotent when they try to go with other women. The poisons are for permanently getting rid of rivals.

⁹⁵ The continuing relevance of emurwon is discussed in Chapter Five.

The fact that imurwok can give deadly poisons to clients who ask for them makes one question the whole practice of amurwoot. An analysis of this problem will be attempted in the concluding chapter. What can be said here is that far from disappearing altogether, the emurwon is still a very present aspect of Iteso society.

In this chapter I have tried to point out the central importance of emurwon in Iteso society during asonya. He was foreteller, priest, judge, witch-hunter and healer. As healer he continues today despite his diminished credibility.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERACTION OF WESTERN CHRISTIANITY WITH ITESO

CULTURE AND RELIGION

1. The Subjugation of the Iteso by the British

a) Introduction.

In the preceding chapters, I have tried to establish various facets of the life of the Iteso prior to the coming of the Europeans. We have seen that the Iteso had migrated from around the Sudan/Abyssinia and carved out for themselves a home in both Uganda and Western Kenya. They had a segmentary type of political and social organization in which the etem leader - the segment leader and the emurwon - diviner-prophet-played a very important role in preserving the Iteso ateker.

The Iteso traditional religion permeated every aspect of the people's lives. Belief in the one Supreme God, Akuj or Ejokit, who was believed to have created all things and to whom people turned in moments of need in ritual and worship, was a main characteristic of this religion. The spirits and spiritual world, including the departed ancestors, were understood as important elements of Iteso religion.

Every one lived according to a moral code which was implicitly understood and explicitly passed on to the younger generation by means of instructions by parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. One who lived in accordance with the traditional values was rewarded with a good life in this world, and those who deviated from those traditional values were as well punished here and now.

The emuron was the religious leader who combined the functions of prophet, diviner, judge, hunter of witches, healer and priest in the lives of the Iteso. His position was revered and accepted without question. Life therefore was generally understood

as a continuous gamut embracing all nature, sacred objects and secular ones, material and non material, all forming a wholeness that is worthy of human respect, because it is potent, virile and alive. Moreover, because of the African closely knit family ties, personality is understood within the context of the community, the clan, and the tribe of which the family is a basic and integral part. Consequently, the life of an individual, his well being, activities, and decisions [were] regulated and moulded by the entire family, clan and the tribe.

There [were] no creeds, dogmas, and beliefs of his own choosing, but those prescribed by the entire group of which he [was] a part.¹

By the the time the Europeans came, the Iteso were fairly settled in their present homelands. Expansion was still possible, particularly on the Western Kenya side. Iteso elders say that the Iteso were still endeavouring to chase the Babukusu as far as Sang'alo Hill near present day Bungoma. One of the Iteso warriors, Okimaru had tried to halt these raiding excursions by making his people enter into a pact called akinyam ekingok - to eat a dog.²

Colonial influence on the area was exerted from two directions: first from Jinja in Busoga and second from Mumias in Wanga. The territorial transfer of Western Kenya to the East African Protectorate from the Uganda protectorate legitimized this situation. The Kenya part of the region had been conquered by Wanga who were acting on behalf of the colonial officials at Mumias around 1895-1900. The area tended to be administered by Wanga until the East African railway went through in 1920. At that point administrative interest on the border area increased, although it has never been very intense.³

¹ Erasto Muga, African Response to Western Christian Religion Kampala, EALB 1975 pp.54-55.

² Vide *Infra*, p. 177.

³ Ivan Karp, Fields of Change among the Iteso of Kenya. 1978 p.155.

From about the turn of the century until 1909 Tesoland formed part of the then Elgon district. It was later called North Kavirondo⁴ district and was still administered from Mumias until around 1920. In 1948 the district was again named North Nyanza. It was divided into two: North Nyanza and Elgon Nyanza in 1956.

Administratively, the Iteso were combined with the Ababukusu, their traditional enemies. In 1963, Iteso - Babukusu animosity reached such an intensity that the Iteso had to be separated from Elgon Nyanza, which, by then had been named Bungoma district. The Iteso were then joined administratively to the Southern Abaluyia to form part of the new Western Province of Kenya.

At the time that the British came to subjugate the Iteso, a process they completed between 1894 and 1895, there had been other historical developments among the surrounding neighbours of the Iteso, which, according to Karp, besides the administrative policies of the British,

predisposed the Iteso to adjust easily to radical changes that were thrust upon them. Iteso

⁴ Gale says that the word "Kavirondo" is a Swahili word derived from "Kurondo", the heel, and "kukaa" to sit, "because the women of Buluyia characteristically squatted on the heels."

H.P. Gale, Uganda and the Mill Hill Fathers, London Macmillan, 1959, p.261.

military successes were based on highly coordinated groups of men under the authority of a section leader or a notable aspiring to office. The replicate nature of Iteso territorial organization allowed for rapid duplication of social units capable of adequate defense.⁵

This flexible territorial organization enabled the Iteso to develop very strong military leaders. They could do this because they were a homogeneous group. The surrounding neighbours of the Iteso on the other hand,

were ethnic groups of heterogeneous origin who were organized on a segmental rather than a segmentary basis. These were primarily the Bantu Abaluyia with the notable exception of the Wanga Kingdom which was, in any case allied with the Iteso. The Nilotic Luo appear to have been better organized than the Abaluyia groups but they did not utilize the flexible tactics of the Iteso, nor were their administrative and leadership roles institutionalized in the person of one man such as the Iteso section leader.⁶

Towards the end of the 19th century, these groups recognized themselves militarily. Their improved military organization proved to be detrimental to the Iteso. The North West Bagishu were able to cut off the Iteso from

⁵ Karp, p.34

⁶ I. Karp, Fields of change, op. cit. p.34

their northern (Ugandan) brothers. The Jo Padhola had produced strong and able military leaders in the persons of Oguti and Majanga:

As a result of the wars of Oguti, many Iteso fled across the Malaba river to Kenya, those who remained were absorbed by the Jo-Padhola. It was only after an Iteso county was recognized in Bukedi (a district in Eastern Uganda) in 1949 that many of those absorbed began to claim Iteso identity again.⁷

To the east, the Nandi had emerged as a strong military power after the dispersal of the Uasin Gishu Maasai. The Nandi did not directly wage war against the Iteso, but their war raids upon the Babukusu caused the latter to unite against the Iteso, a weaker enemy. They were able to drive the Iteso out of a large piece of territory.⁸ The Iteso were forced to retreat into the present Kimaeti - Miyanga area. This reduced their homeland considerably.

This was probably the time when some of the Iteso leaders in this area decided to form a peaceful treaty with each other. Iteso elders interviewed by Nagashima say that one Etesot leader called Okiramu, decided to be peaceful with Inadi (the Nandi), Ikojo (the Sabaot), Iumoni (Tachoni?) and the Sing'oma (the Babukusu). He

⁷ Ibid, p.34.

⁸ I. Karp, op cit p.35

forbade those who wanted to continue warring from doing so. When he, Okimaru, saw that the Ipadere (a more popular name for the Babukusu) were making great inroads into the newly conquered territory and were determined to divide the Iteso ateker into half, he went and brought back the people. He persuaded the clans to form an alliance, with himself as their leader. Those clans who formed **this alliance** had to participate in a ritual ceremony which was performed at a place called Mabanga near Bungoma. The ritual was called to eat a dog, akinyam eking'ok:

A bull for sacrifice was provided by one or a group of participating clans. The bull was slaughtered and the aturub, the rib cage and chest, was opened up. The elders of the clans passed through this opened section. Later all ate of it. This signified the end of the hostilities.⁹

It is not clear from the interview why the ritual was called "to eat a dog" since no actual dog had been ~~slaughtered~~. The only plausible explanation which could be got from subsequent questioning of some elders in the same area was that it is probable that prior to the passing through this sacrificial bull and eating of it the participants had sworn an oath to stop hostilities. This oath may have consisted

⁹ Nobuhiro Nagashimu, Teso cultural Text No.2, op cit 1977.

of eating the heart of a dog, for traditionally, the dog was considered such a close friend of people that it was never killed, much less eaten. Killing a dog or eating it was a terrible taboo. To actually kill it for ritual purposes underscored the seriousness of the matter at hand.

Not all the Iteso agreed with Okimaru. Murie, a rival Iteso leader wanted to continue the hostilities, but at the instigation of Okimaru, Murie was killed in his own neighbourhood. Nevertheless, because of Murie, many Iteso fled to Marake (Marachi) and other places where they were absorbed by those people. From the time of Okimaru's covenant of peace, the Iteso began to live peacefully with the Babukusu. This happened just before the appearance of the Europeans.

The Iteso did not engage in any trade with the Arabs prior to the coming of the Europeans. Their neighbours, notably the Samia - Bagwe, had acquired firearms from the Arabs; an acquisition which enabled them to defeat the Iteso in war. So, from all sides, the Iteso experienced military reverses which weakened their position considerably.

At this period of Iteso history there was felt the need for the particular kind of reassurance that the prophet could give. Karp would have it that the prophet

emerged and attained significance at this period in response to the situation:

It is possible that the emergence and increasing significance of prophets among the Iteso at this time was a response to the changing military situation, but the sacred and eternal nature of the office of the prophet makes it difficult to evaluate Iteso oral tradition on this score. It is reasonable to assume, however, that the position of the prophet as a virtual leader of a number of otherwise discrete territorial sections made him a natural focal point of common organization.¹⁰

One would understand from Karp's remarks that the Iteso should have had a distinct view of prophecy as "sacred and eternal" and touching only a certain aspect of their lives. It has been shown earlier that prophecy is an element of the world of religion, the world of the Iteso not excluded. One of the significant tasks of a prophet is to give people a sense of continuity, particularly in times of crisis and national upheaval. Certainly, Iteso society was facing radical changes which brought about feelings of stress, and threatened an existing order. Prophets were needed to give voice to what was happening, to restore a sense of reality.

¹⁰ I. Karp, op. cit. p.35

b) Colonial Subjugation of the Iteso of Kenya

The British subjugated the Iteso initially by the use of the Bawanga. One, Murunga, of the house of Mumia was sent to do this job:

Murunga, the half brother of the Wanga King, Mumia, was sent by the British East Africa Company with a command of Swahili soldiers to the Iteso area. He rounded up a number of the section leaders and had them shot.¹¹

This shooting of the section leaders marked the end of that position in Iteso society. It became unsafe to be a section leader. With the disappearance of the section leader, territorial organization as a political unit also disappeared, and so did those ritual groupings and individuals connected to the section, such as, the warriors, aturi, (age set) okeju, (the section leader's messengers), lok'asos - (the war horn blower) and luk'arotak, (the spies). The etem, - the section leader's ritual and meeting place - also disappeared. The clan system remained more or less intact, however.

After the subjugation of the Iteso, nothing was done by way of directly administering them for the greater part of a generation. The Iteso were left in a political vacuum. Their subjugators, the British, were not particularly

¹¹ I. Karp, op. cit, p. 35

interested in administering them, since, at this stage colonial interests lay elsewhere. Their camps for administration were a long distance from Tesoland: Mumias and Jinja.

The Iteso were the society most distant from any administrator. The two officials with authority over the Iteso were Hobley in Mumias and Grant at Jinja. Both were concerned with the Wanga and Basoga or their immediate areas. Administration in the peripheral areas (and the Iteso were the most peripheral) were virtually non-existent. The main concern of C.W. Hobley at Mumias was to ensure the safety of caravans along the road to Uganda. He did not appear to be interested in bringing the outlying areas under his control, even if that were possible. ¹²

The aim of the British in "pacifying" the war-like Iteso was to clear a peaceful caravan route for the railway on its way to Kampala. The welfare of the people whose social and political life they had so abruptly and irreversibly changed was very secondary to the British. Whatever attempts were made to administer the newly subjugated Iteso between 1895 and 1910, did not utilize Iteso leaders; instead outsiders were used. The office of paramount chief was imposed upon the Iteso:

¹² I. Karp, op cit pp.36-37

... of the first three chiefs appointed over the Iteso, one was killed by the Iteso, another fled from office, and the third was removed for gross corruption and is said to have died in jail. Finally in 1910, administration was officially turned over to the capable hands of Murunga, the man who had originally pacified the Iteso.¹³

Murunga set up his headquarters, not in Tesoland but in Kimilili, on the eastern border of the Iteso and the Babukusu. His administration consisted of violent suppression of any large scale political and military activity among his "subjects", and forced labour to build roads and adhoc hut tax. In order to carry out all these, he had a number of retainers who were mainly Iteso. These kept him well informed of what was going on in Tesoland; yet as informed as he was,

None of this information, however, appears to have filtered to the European officials. Murunga's activities while successful, were viewed by the District administration as temporary. He remained in this temporary capacity for twenty years. By then the Iteso had developed leaders who had enough administrative credibility to enable them to make effective protests against the action of Murunga and his followers.¹⁴

¹³ I. Karp, op cit p. 37.

¹⁴ I. Karp, op. cit p.38

To the west of Malaba river, on the Uganda side, the main colonial agent was Oguti Paade. He seems to have been installed there after Semi Kakungulu had, with William Grant, carried out punitive expeditions in the area.

According to Iteso informants,

Oguti was an Etesot of Itengor clan. His father was killed and left him an orphan. He allied himself with Ipaala (Jo-Padhola) to avenge his fathers's death at Tororo ... when the Europeans came they made him a headmean over the Iteso.¹⁵

Oguti Paade had a knack for survival, for although he was hated by the Iteso just as Murunga was, he outlived Murunga and Semei Kakungulu as chief. He was immensely rich and because he refused to die, "he is supposed to have been poisoned by his sons who felt that they had been kept from their patrimony for far too long."¹⁶ His death was an occasion for great rejoicing for the Iteso. He is remembered as an amoral man.

During this period, the Iteso lived in terror and uncertainty from both the west (Paade) and the east (Murunga). Their traditional enemies too were not idle. They took this occasion to increase their attacks upon the Iteso.

¹⁵ Saferio Idewa and group. Interviewed at Kochalia October 5th, 1981.

¹⁶ I. Karp, op cit p.38.

Iteso remember this period as one of anarchy and uncertainty. In addition to such traditional difficulties as liability to vengeance because of enemies, there was added the very real chance of being victimized by one of the Murunga's or Oguji's well armed bands of agents.¹⁷

The arrival of the Kenya - Uganda railway at Malaba and the building of a station there in 1921 ended this early colonial anarchy. Iteso leadership was finally recognized and a new kind of leadership emerged. In the North, what was to become North Teso Location, that is, Okuleu as Iteso call that area, the house of Omudek distinguished itself in leadership. From this house came a succession of chiefs. At Ngelechomo, that is, South Teso Location, the house of Esembe produced a number of headmen.

With the help of Iteso headmen, the colonial administration based at Mumias, was able to curb any outbreak of internal feuds among the Iteso themselves and to halt attacks from hostile neighbours. Those Iteso headmen who attempted to exploit the people or who did not measure up to the standards of the colonial administration, were removed from

¹⁷ I. Karp, op cit p.39. Incidentally this harassment of the Iteso left a very deep feeling of inadequacy in the Iteso people. They are seldom assertive now.

office without any further ado, regardless of how Iteso themselves felt about it. Two such leaders who were deposed were Ilukoli¹⁸ of Ongariama and Enomeri¹⁹ of Aburi.

c) The Subjugation and Pacification of the Iteso of Uganda

A history of the subjugation of the Iteso of Uganda will be given here since they too feature in this study. The Iteso of Uganda were subjugated by the British between 1896 and 1927. Some Iteso leaders had, in 1896, gone to Kabaka Mwanga of Buganda to ask for protection against the Langi. Unknown to these Iteso leaders, Colonel Ternan had meanwhile commissioned Semei Kakungulu to go to Tesoland and "bring the unruly tribesmen under control and keep the region free of mutineer fugitives".²⁰

¹⁸ The late Ilukoli himself gave an interesting version of how and why he was removed from office. According to him, he was chosen to be paramount chief of the Iteso as successor to Odera Kangu, popularly called "Oderekong" by the Iteso but a man from Tanzania called Ali bin Haji worked some witchcraft against him which caused him to be deposed. (Interview with him in 1978)

The Kenya National Archives has it on record that he was deposed because he stole a large herd of cattle belonging to the people. A market, Lukolis, bears his name.

¹⁹ Iteso elders say that Enomeri was deposed because whenever there was a baraza, he would not show up; instead he would send one of his wives to officiate. The Iteso resented this and complained to the colonial administration and he was removed from office. Interview with W. Ajeko of Aburi, June 20th, 1981.

²⁰ G. Emwamu, "The Reception of Alien Rule in Teso: 1896-1927" Uganda Journal, vol. 31 1967, pp.172

When Kakungulu made his appearance in Teso, the Iteso elders who had gone to Buganda thought that he had come in response to their request for help. Kakungulu did remove the Langi threat but did not fulfil the Iteso elders' hopes. He did not help them to put their own houses in order; for as soon as the initial task of removing the Langi was done, Kakungulu and his Baganda soldiers "asked to be directed to all areas of possible resistance (within Teso) and moved from place to place building forts and enforcing orders on the local people".²¹

Wherever they went, the Baganda would first establish a fort then from there, on obscure pretexts, and sometimes with the help of a warring faction, would set out on more conquest of Tesoland. In this way, local opposition was overcome.

The Iteso resisted bravely, in groups and as individuals, but their bravery was no match for the gun with which the Baganda crushed any opposition with deadly finality. Those who fled their villages in the wake of Baganda attack, on returning, found only smouldering ruins instead of homesteads. In the end, many of the Iteso realized that the new order had come to stay. The local leaders of fortune who were originally

²¹ Emwamu, op cit p.173

associated with the invitation of the Baganda were the first to profit in this new regime because they were the ones utilized by the Baganda in attempting to communicate with the people, especially for purposes of public works. A number of others soon realized the futility of military resistance and the advantages of becoming subservient to the Baganda rulers. Within a short period there was a host of headmen, butlers and messengers to carry out orders among their fellow tribesmen.²²

Although Kakungulu was made paramount chief of Bukedi in which Teso was included, and which in 1912 was constituted into a district, local Iteso leadership was utilized. One great advantage of this for the Iteso was that it caused the Iteso to become united. Twice yearly Iteso chiefs used to meet to discuss ways of "more effectively carrying out government policies and developing the many services necessary for the well-being of the district as a whole".²³ The Iteso of Kenya were not so lucky. Iteso chiefs on the Kenya side were made use of long after the rest of the country was making great steps in progress and always the chiefs were subordinate to a local DO and DC who were non-Iteso.

²² G. Emwamu, op cit p.175

²³ G. Emwamu op cit p.177

One of the lasting effects of the Baganda conquest of the Iteso was that Baganda culture made deep inroads into Iteso culture which spilled over the border to the Kenya Iteso as well.²⁴ As for language, by 1908, Luganda had started to become a "lingua franca in Bukedi"²⁵

Along with a rise in prosperity which in Teso was so marked as to make the chief unusually amenable, came the adoption of Ganda material culture. Houses were rebuilt in mud rather than thatch; the white Kanzu soon became a mark of distinction among the men, while their wives began to discard beads and copper wire in favour of the fin-de-siecle of the Baganda.²⁶

The measure of a person's becoming "civilized" was how much one aped Baganda culture, particularly in speech and decorum.

²⁴ Luganda catechists were later brought into Teso, even into Kenya. Iteso catechists were trained in Buganda. The "Gomez" the dress so favoured by Baganda matrons, was adopted by Kenya Iteso women as well. They still wear it to this day.

²⁵ A.D. Roberts. "The Sub-Imperialism of the Baganda". Journal of African History vol. III, (1962) p.443.

²⁶ A.D. Roberts, op cit p.442. The Wanga left no such impact on the Iteso of Kenya. Their role was not as intensive or extensive as that of Baganda.

d) Changes in Socio-Political Structure as a Result of the Subjugation.

One of the first things the subjugators did to cripple the Iteso politically was to eliminate the age-set system. By the time the subjugators arrived on the scene, at least for the Iteso of Uganda,

the segmentary and decentralized society of the anthropologists had achieved a good degree of group organization based on the age set system and lineage that could be termed 'chief', and whose main duty was to lead their followers in battle.²⁷

Some of these leaders were: Okolimong, the renowned emurwon, who enjoyed an influence wider than his home country, Usuku; Omiat of Amuria, Okalany of Bukedea and Tukei of Pallisa.

A second measure which was adopted, particularly during the time of political uncertainty in the Kenyan Tesoland was the freezing of the frontiers. The Iteso could not expand outside these frontiers, although within the frontiers, a limited mobility was possible. In fact household mobility continued within the frontiers necessitated by the break up of the residential core of subsections.²⁸ As households moved in search of safe areas

²⁷ I. Enwamu, op cit p. 172.

²⁸ I. Karp, op cit p.39.

to settle, it was possible for those agnatic kin who had lived separated to move together. Some household heads sought to establish amiable relationships with other heads without any agnatic kinship ties.²⁹

With the disappearance of the traditional etem leaders, a new type of leadership emerged. Karp claims that "The position of a section leader was not politically viable and that the Iteso may have been losing faith in the institution", hence the rapidity with which "the Iteso abandoned ritual activities associated with territorial sections"³⁰ This may be so, however, there is a danger of minimizing the tremendous psychological impact of the colonial subjugation of the Iteso and its immediate aftermath. No advantage would have been gained by persisting in holding gatherings, ritual or otherwise, which the new political powers suspected and therefore forbade. It has already been said that the position of the section leader became too dangerous for anyone to want to continue in it.

The void left by the suppression of the traditional political order was filled somewhat. The chiefs were government appointees, but under them there were other leaders. Iteso called these leaders luk'auriat - the ones of the

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ I. Karp, op cit p.39

cattle resting place. Karp calls them "patrons" because "it implies a number of outstanding figures who were in competition for followers".³¹ In order to obtain followers, the patron had to entice them from other patrons, by being generous with his cows and by protection. In order to maintain his position he had to be a successful patron and this he achieved by protecting his followers from harassment by government chiefs and from attack by other Iteso. He also had to be wealthy enough

to sustain clients during a period of agricultural famine and also to be used by new clients during the process of establishing a household under his supervision. In return for this, the patron was granted authority, prestige and the tribute of communal labour on his fields.³²

When the followers felt he could not provide for them a safe enough environment they moved off under some other patron. This social reorganization meant that people were brought together under one head, not necessarily on the basis of kinship ties. There were some close kin under a patron but there were also others who were not kin.

The leadership of lok'auriat - or patron, as Karp calls him, differed from that of lok'etem. As he has been pointed out, lok'etem, was the segmentary leader. The term describing

³² I. Karp, p. 41.

his leadership was derived from etem, the hearth fire. The people he headed were those whose membership in an etem was acknowledged. He was a household head, and his authority was institutionalised and "backed by ritual sanctions".³³ He had specific rights and duties. There could only be one section leader, lok'etem, at any one given time.

Lok'auriat of the early colonial times was one who became a leader "by force of personality rather than any precisely defined rights".³⁴ The membership of lok'auriat's territory was made up of people who came together voluntarily. The power of his leadership was based "on the control of scarce resources,³⁵ and limited only by pragmatic considerations".³⁶ Among these pragmatic considerations were those already described above, including directives from the colonial administration which the people had to carry out. Some of these were agricultural in nature. It was the patrons who told the people what to plant and where. Land was still a free commodity at this time. The patron did not, strictly speaking, own the land which his clients

33 I. Karp, op cit p. 42

34 Ibid

35 Ibid

36 Ibid

cultivated, although his land was cultivated prior to theirs, by them. At the death of the clients the land was worked by his kin. Gradually a new form of territorial grouping, called a neighbourhood, emerged. This was "of mixed agnatic composition in which unilineal descent was irrelevant as organizing principle".³⁷

In 1921 the Kenya-Uganda railway reached Malaba. This gave the colonial administration the chance to establish its presence more firmly among the Iteso. Events and personalities in Tesoland could be better known, controlled and monitored. With the establishment of colonial chiefs, Esembe in the south (later South Teso Location) and Omudek in the north, (later North Teso Location), an effective administrative apparatus could begin to work. Other influential people, namely the mission catechists and local government officials, vied for influence from the people and the patron's influence declined. While the catechists could effectively distribute mission services, the government official could "reward his followers by not applying government demands as stringently to them as to others. Using his powers, he could also punish his enemies."³⁸

³⁷ I. Karp, op cit p.43

³⁸ I. Karp, op cit p.45

One who could combine the services of catechist with those of government official stood to gain maximum benefit from this combination. An illustration is that of Alexander Papa, the second Etesot chief. The first was his half brother Eunyisat who groomed him for chieftaincy:

When it became clear that his elder brother Eunyisat was grooming him for the position of chief, he made a dramatic appearance at the recently established Mill Hill Mission in Amukura in 1937 and converted to Catholicism renouncing all of his four wives and in a Catholic ceremony married a daughter of the government chief of Bukhayo. (In this way) Papa obtained the support of the Europeans most familiar with the Teso, the missionaries; established a progressive image of himself which contrasted strikingly with the traditional image of Eunyisat who was then chief and was regarded by the missionaries as an old beer-drinking marijuana-smoking reprobate. He reactivated the pre-colonial Iteso-Bukhayo alliance and used this tie as a basis for claiming to be the natural successor of Eunyisat. After chief Alexander was forcibly retired at Independence in 1963, he married three additional wives.³⁹

A similar case was that of Bartholomayo Oloo who was trained as a leader for the Anglican Church. He switched to the Salvation Army in 1925. Many people followed him there. When in 1930 he became a powerful leader in government, he resigned as a Church leader.⁴⁰

39 I Karp, op cit p.45

40 Ibid.

The new emerging leader's sphere of influence was wider. He had to be able to operate on both levels of local politics and the colonial/national sphere.

The neighbourhoods presently are no longer oriented to one particular person as during the early colonial period.

Under modern conditions, Iteso neighbourhoods have become less bounded and there is less agreement on the exact composition of the neighbourhood. Therefore, although there is an indigenous term for neighbourhood there is rarely any uniform consensus about who are the members of a neighbourhood or even on its name. There is, however, pattern and consistency in neighbourhood organization. If a network of relations between contiguous household heads were to be drawn, it would be seen that those were groups of households between whom social relations were particularly intense and frequent.⁴¹

In summary it could be said that the subjugation of the Iteso resulted in a violent suppression of a whole people's political consciousness, religious activities, social structure and cultural pride. With the shooting down of territorial leaders and the suppression of the age set system, the fighting spirit of the Iteso was incapacitated and it inevitably died. This had very serious consequences on the whole training of the young men as warriors. There was no longer any need to train them so.

⁴¹ I. Karp, pp.47-48

Ritual activities and religious gatherings which had been done communally, such as prayers for rain, for fertility and against plagues and sickness ceased. When colonial subjugation eliminated the etem leaders, these ritual activities were forever disrupted. It was the beginning of a dramatic change in the whole religious consciousness of the Iteso.

The position of the emurwon did not remain unchanged. He could no longer act as a military advisor since the training for ajore - war - had come to an end. He began to turn his attention more and more to those ills that resulted from a changed social order. Those ills arose from disrupted personal relationships, frustrated personal ambitions and the irruption of a new culture among the Iteso.

After violetnly suppressing the socio-political structure of the people, the colonial subjugators brought in foreigners with terrotist tendencies to colonize the Iteso on their behalf. These arms of the British colonial administration, that is, Murunga, Oguti Paade and Odera Kangu, had no genuine interest in the welfare of the Iteso. They intensified internal divisions among the Iteso by using their Iteso retainers as spies against fellow Iteso thus creating an atmosphere of fear and instability. The result was the demoralisation of the Iteso as a whole.

It was only when the railway reached the Malaba boarder town that some interest in the Iteso was shown by the colonists. Even then, it was a vested interest; the railway had to be guaranteed a safe passage on its way to Uganda. As a people, the development of the Iteso was not taken seriously. They were relegated to a peripheral status from which they have not fully recovered to this day. It was the missionaries who took a genuine interest in the welfare of the Iteso.

We will now examine briefly, the coming of the missionaries among the Iteso. In this examination, greater focus will be given to the Iteso of Kenya.*

2. Interaction of Western Christianity with Traditional Iteso Culture and Religion.

a) The Coming of the Missionaries

On the heels of the colonial administrators come both the Roman Catholic and Protestant Missionaries. The Roman Catholic Missionaries who pioneered in Western Kenya were the Mill Hill Fathers of St. Joseph's Foreign Missionary Society with their headquarters at Mill Hill in London. They had originally been invited to Uganda to help dispel the idea in the minds of the people that "Protestantism is the English and Catholicism the French religion."⁴² The decision was to be made to have them

* It was not possible to carry out an intensive survey of the missionary enterprise among the Iteso of Uganda due to lack of funds as well as to the prevailing situation of unrest in that country during the period of research: 1979-1981.

⁴² Gale, Uganda and the Mill Hill Fathers, p.85.

come into Uganda. As a result, the large vicariate of the White Fathers Missionaries, the Nyanza vicariate was divided into three parts. The Mill Hill missionaries got the North-eastern part which was named the Vicariate of the Upper Nile"⁴³ This was in 1894. Western Kenya was at this time, still part of Uganda. In 1901 the railway reached Kisumu and in 1902 Western Kenya was transferred from Uganda to British East Africa Protectorate. The arrival of the railway at Kisumu sent the missionaries rushing into Western Kenya. The Protestants were ahead of the Catholics and this created a fear in the latter that "the Protestants would have the area all to themselves".⁴⁴ There was also the need to give pastoral care to the Baganda and Goan Christians who were helping in the building of the railway.

The Kenyan Tesoland was pioneered mostly by the Mill Hill missionaries. The Iteso did not see the Mill Hill missionaries until long after the pioneer period between 1902-1924. The following period, 1925-1931 was one of consolidation and growth to maturity.⁴⁵ By this time the Missionary field of Western Kenya had been named by Rome

43 Gale, op cit p. 87

44 G.E.M. Ogutu: Origins and Growth of the RC in Western Kenya 1895-1952 Unpublished Ph.D.Thesis, Department of Religious Studies, University of Nairobi, 1981 p.85.

45 G.E.M. Ogutu, op cit p.173.

as Apostolic Prefecture of Kavirondo, a move which separated the Kenyan Mission from that of Uganda. The missions nearest to Tesoland were Nangina Mission which had been founded in 1927 and Kibabii, founded in 1931. The Iteso who wanted to "read" the Roman Catholic religion went to Nangina, Kibabii, Nagongera and Dabani. Kibabii was opened because the Society of Friends had begun missionising the Babukusu and the Catholics had to move in too. Nangina was opened in order to cater for the needs of the Abanyala and Abasamia Christians who had to go either to Mumias or to Rang'ala.⁴⁶

A large number of Iteso aspiring to Roman Catholicism and those already baptized went to Nangina. The steady increase in their number caused Rev. P. Coenen, the pioneering missionary of Nangina Mission, to make expeditions into Tesoland, then still called Wamia. Tesoland therefore became an out station to which P. Coenen went periodically. He soon realized that the Iteso were going not only to Nangina, but also to Kibabii, Tororo, Nagongera and Dabani. A separate Mission station was necessary.

In order to found a mission station in Tesoland, P. Coenen followed the procedure the Mill Hill missionaries had used in Kisumu. First, the Iteso headmen were approached and asked if their people wanted a mission

⁴⁶ G.E.M. Ogutu, op cit p.164.

station in their land. Having received their consent, the land office in Nairobi, through the district office was contacted, and finally, a plot of land was chosen. The plot was usually one with a lovely view, a supply of water and more important, close to the government camp.⁴⁷ An entry in Nangina mission diary has this to say regarding these initial stages of selecting a suitable site for mission in Tesoland:

Fr. Coenen left for Wamia (Tesoland) by car, slept at Buteba (border between Uganda and Kenya) Sunday to Akirtes, and climbed Akirtes hill from which a grand view shows you the whole of Wamia country except on the side, on top there is a marvellous formation of rocks enclosed forming a basin of about 40-50 feet in diameter in which the rain-water stands about 5-6 inches high which at that height at one side only flows over. The mountain and this reservoir of water (the highest spot) must be about 800ft high. The nicest spot for a mission station as far as I could find out is the next hill to Akirtes, on the top of hill on which there is built as well the Wamia dressing station of the medical department. Nearby there is good water, plenty of firewood, a good amount of sand - in a straight line the railway would be 6 - 8 miles - good land which comes with a stream of water from

[sic]

⁴⁷ G.E.M. Ogutu, op cit p. 164.

the hills and most probably would be coming down regularly in the rainy season. The soil is sandy on top but good underneath and on most parts at least 5 to 6 feet deep. The plot between government and Akirtes camp is good as there is a swamp between the main road and the slope of the hill.⁴⁸

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Nangina mission Diary. pp.77-78. Apparently P. Coenen did not agree with the account given in this diary because it was not his account of the founding of Nangina mission. On the front cover, P. Coenen wrote: "This diary up to December 1933 starting from July 1927 is deceiving the public who read it. To prove this, I need only to remind the readers that no one was here except myself, Fr. Coenen, who started this mission station. Fr. Kuhn, my first Assistant was appointed only in 1928 (according to Vicariate statistics) up till that time I was entirely alone. Many important items have been left out. No mention is made of many important parts which I recorded. Also, the first diary was wilfully destroyed by Rev. Fr. McElwee my second Assistant, and again as this diary clearly shows, many pages written by me have been torn out intentionally on instigation of Msgr. Brandsma who did not like some facts to be perpetuated and all this first part has been re-written by Brother Vincent who knew nothing as he was not even here; he came when Fr. Scholten was appointed elsewhere". Later in the diary he writes "Indeed a written word remains unchanged and is carried forward to the knowledge of future generations and this alone explains the fact why so many pages by my, Fr. Coenen's hand, who started this mission station halfway 1927 have been torn out intentionally as some of the information truthfully given were not exactly agreeable to his higher authorities. Hence I warn everybody reading those pages up till here (p.97) (and written moreover in extremely poor language) with suspicion as they have been re-written by Rev. Bro. Vincent who knew nothing about Nangina's opening and existence for a couple of years as he was not even living nor appointed here. The whole thing is a contortion of facts..." It is however, the only existing account available on how Nangina mission was started!

The plot to build a mission in Tesoland (Wamia) had been promised (by the chief and elders) as early as 1929 and the area near the government camp was eventually selected. There was some trouble over the plot on the part of chief Eunyisata. According to the Nangina Mission Diary, the chief had agreed to the plot at first but later wrote a letter to P. Coenen refusing because it was too near the government camp. According to P. Coenen, if that was the only objection, then it was an easy matter to settle since the government owned the camp. When the chief was told of this, he again refused saying that the elders had refused. The diary goes on to say:

This was a sure sign that they had other reasons which they did not want to state to me. As far as I can make out the objection is this the chief's brother Alexander Papa after having run away from the Yala school had got a job of Mulango and was anxious as well to become a member of the L.N.C. Captain Anderson then DC of Kakamega rebuked the chief to put in as Mulango such a young boy and moreover told Papa (having taken a third woman) that he had no chance of becoming a member of L.N.C. asking him, are you not that boy who ran away from Yala school? This I believe is the reason why the chief has turned against us secretly, thinking that I accused Papa about his running away from Yala. Papa lost his job as Mulango as well and hence is now our great enemy.⁴⁹

In the end, the colonial government authorities were asked to force the chief to grant the plot at Amukura. The strategy adopted by P. Coenen to acquire the plot is described in the following way:

Before the date appointed by the DC of Kakamega to ask the local baraza for a plot to build on, I made sure that the only reason for objecting to grant Amukura was that Amukura was too near the government camp. I pressed chief Eunyisata to give other reasons but he insisted upon it that his elders had no other objection.

Colonel Anderson, then DC of Kakamega told me that he would inform me when he would go to Wamia with me. He was prevented to do so but sent one of the ADC. I left for Wamia the evening before the baraza and had a long talk with the ADC who fully agreed with me that Amukura was the best plot. I told him that the only objection to Amukura plot which the chief and elders would bring forward would be that Amukura was close to the government. I kindly asked him therefore to inquire himself, leaving me out altogether. If chief and elders would state that the only objection was that the mission station would be too close to the government, he should ask the following question: who is the owner of the government camp? Naturally the chief would say: The serikale. Where upon the ADC would ask: who is the serikale? On their reply that the government official represents the serikale - he should tell them that serikale had no objection at all.

This happened as arranged before hand. I kindly asked the ADC to inquire if there were other objections. On their answer in the negative. I asked the ADC to make them sign in his book that they themselves had no objection at all and the serikale to whom the government camp belongs had no objection. Furthermore the ADC informed them that no other objections would be considered any more which they might bring up later as all had agreed to grant the plot.

All signed and all of us went home happy and content. By a very clever trick, Rev. P. Coenen got the chief to give away the plot to the mission. This is a clear example of one of the ways the missionaries and the colonial government worked hand in hand in acquiring choice land for the missions. Amukura mission commands a magnificent view of the surrounding area.⁵⁰

Amukura took shape slowly and at one time Father Coenen had to take drastic measures to speed up the process. For although the Iteso people were anxious to have a mission in their area, they were not too eager to help in building it up. P. Coenen wanted to build it as cheaply as possible, so all the prospective Christians (Catechumens and readers) as well as the full fledged

⁵⁰ P. Coenen in Amukura Mission Diary, pp.1-2. Apparently not all were happy and content, because as late as 1981, one of the elders near the mission was still bitter about their land being taken! This was old man Onacara.

He and his family had the small plot near present day St. Paul's Amukura High School. The school is next to the mission compound and was founded by the missionaries. Onacara himself died a bitter old man in December 1982. The elders were coerced into agreeing to give the plot to the mission.

Christians, had to contribute a share of materials and manual work.

Each Christian boy should bring 20 bundles of reedgrass. Those of Akites 30 small baskets of sand. Women only 10 bundles of reedgrass which would be brought as well by their beloved husbands, if there existed any love at all towards their sweet hearts. From Amukura and Buteba, I was promised to get each week 10 Christians to help me with cleaning the place and building temporary houses. It was agreed also that they should carry in from Malaba watering station 400 poles (eucalypti) which I intended to buy from Mr. Web at the forest department in Tororo. (Malaba is only about 5-6 miles from Amukura as the crow flies and the natives walk). 51

Apart from the fact that the Iteso were quite "anxious to build up the mission station within a couple of months", they themselves were not too enthusiastic about actually participating. "If only it (the building) could be done by looking at others working and slaving themselves out. Their motto is 'it does not matter who does the work as long as the work is done (in preference to others)". 52

Another reason it took so long to establish Amukura Mission beside the apparent sloth of the Iteso was that the majority of the Christians had been baptised at Tororo Nagongera, Dabani (Uganda) or at Kibabii and Nangina and

51 P. Coenen, op cit p.2.

52 P. Coenen, op cit p.3.

they felt they owed allegiance to those places which had given them "edini" (religion). Besides, the same process of hard manual labour had been demanded of them in the course of their catechumenate. It is understandable that they were not too anxious to go through that process again despite the proximity of the new mission station. They preferred to walk the long distances. Eventually P. Coenen had to take drastic measures to halt this process.

In order to come to an understanding with Dabani and Tororo mission, I went there but Dabani alone agreed with me only so far as to refuse them the sacraments until each of them would have a letter of mine on which would be stated that the individual concerned had at last done his share of work in Amukura. Unless something more is done to stop these Christians to go to Dabani, Tororo, Nagongera and Kibabii and to stop readers to go abroad, Amukura mission will never be a success. There must be in all about 1600 full fledged Christians but on the average only some 120 go to attend mass on Sunday at Amukura. 53

A further interesting difficulty the first mission faced in being fully accepted by the people was political. The Christians of Akites, Buteba and Kakemer in particular were tardy in lending their support.

53 P. Coenen op cit p.4.

The reason was that Msqr. G. Brandsma had promised them the mission to be built in Akites and not in Amukura ... it is true that there exists between the Amukura people and those of Buteba, Akites, Kakemer a terrible antagonism which has a political foundation, because the Eunyisat's (chief) clan is envied by a clan of their own who are ever striving to take away the chieftainship of Eunyisat.⁵⁴

The rival clan was that of Emomeri; the Ikaruwok, which is the largest clan of the Iteso. They had wanted their own elder by the name of Emomeri to be chief, but the government had not found Emomeri suitable and had unseated him.⁵⁵ However, despite these drawbacks, Amukura Mission was established. It soon expanded as a hospital, a boys and girls primary school and a convent were added to it over the next decade. By 1948 a necessity was felt for another mission station in Tesoland since Amukura could not meet the needs of the ever growing number of Christians. Chakol Mission was therefore opened to ease the burden of Amukura Mission. What later came to be known as South Teso was also Christianized by the Mill Hill Fathers.

54 P. Coenen, Amukura Mission Diary, p.7.

55 Kenya National Archives DC/EN/3/1/2, op cit, entry for February 1916

In north Teso, Kibabii remained the nearest mission station for most of the Iteso Christians. The Friends meanwhile also opened a mission at Kocholia and later built a dispensary and a school for boys and one for girls. They did not expand as much as the Catholic Christians. It was not until late in the 1950s that a mission was opened in that part of Teso - Chelelemuk Catholic Mission in 1958.

That the Iteso received the new Christian religion with willingness, if not with enthusiasm is shown by the long distances they were willing to travel in order to reach the mission stations nearest them. In order to reach Kibabii, Tororo, Nangina and Dabani they had to cross deep rivers and face the dangers of encountering unfriendly people and even savage beasts. Instructions, once in the mission stations, stretched for weeks at a time. The mission did not provide food, only shelter. This means that the aspirants to the Christian religion had to carry with them enough food to last for as long as the instructions period. This they did willingly. These early candidates recall: -

We had to travel in parties and we made sure that in these parties were armed men, for otherwise when

we encountered attacks from unfriendly people or from savage beasts, we women alone would not have been able to defend ourselves. There were more women than men in these parties. Women with babies had to carry along their babies ... River crossing was often an ordeal. Sometimes the boatmen were not willing to carry us across. If the rivers were in flood, we had to wait until the water went down... Religion was costly in those days. Nowadays it is so cheap...⁵⁶

The Western Christian faith as elsewhere in Africa was in Tesoland to stay. We will now examine briefly the method adopted by the missionaries to consolidate the Christian faith in Tesoland.

b) Missionary Education

Soon after establishing the mission station, the missionaries in Tesoland followed a pattern established in other parts of Africa: they turned their energies to the education of the natives.

The establishment of Christianity went hand in hand with the process of acculturation to the colonialist order. Christian missionaries may have believed they were merely converting Africans to the gospel of Christ, but in fact, they were converting them to a whole range of western values including literacy, medicine, clerical and

⁵⁶ Interview with Aronota Atyang, Akites, August 10th, 1981

industrial education, town life, wage earning and social mobility as well as instilling in them a distaste for traditional values. As a result, many African Christians adopted a new identity based upon the colonial Christian order.⁵⁷

The colonial administration had already investigated the need to take the education of Africans seriously and recommendations had been issued concerning this.

Missionaries had pioneered in the famous "bush schools", in which catechists were the main teachers. One of the recommendations of the colonial administration designed to upgrade this bush education was to give financial grants to mission schools.

The recommendation was timely because the missions had reached a point where they could neither control, nor finance, the bush schools which were being started all over the mission field by their catechists.⁵⁸

The first recipients of missionary education were naturally the catechists who were indispensable to the missionary in his labours.

... the native catechist formed the core of every missionary community. Catholic missionaries and Protestants alike looked forward to the time when their pupils, fully instructed in the

⁵⁷ Benjamin Ray. African Regions Symbol Ritual and Community. New Jersey Prentice-Hall Inc. 1976, p.193.

⁵⁸ G.E.M. Ogutu op cit p.125.

Word of God, would spread out into the villages and preach it with the full wealth of African metaphor and simile, to the millions whom they themselves could never hope to reach.⁵⁹

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The education which the catechists received was basic and sufficient just to enable them to read the lessons and prayers to the aspirants to the Christian faith in the bush schools. As the need became pressing for better educated Africans to fill government posts in the commercial sector after World War I, missionary education was up graded accordingly. Mission schools were established usually near the Mission compounds and education was offered to both boys and girls.

Candidates for the mission schools were usually those boys and girls who had the promise of superior intelligence. The learning of the three "Rs" - Reading, 'Riting and 'Rithmetic were followed by the learning of the fundamentals of Christianity. Those who remained to learn the three "Rs" escaped some of the heavy manual labour that was part of the daily life of the catechumens. After the three "Rs", the successful pupils were promoted to higher standards and if they persevered in school, they would eventually go to train

59 Roland Oliver, The Missionary Factor in East Africa
London, Longman, 1928, p.181.

as teachers, clerks, nurses and others. The aim always as to give the Iteso a good Christian education in which the doctrine of the Church was the chief subject taught.

In general Iteso parents were willing to send their sons to school, although some force was necessary to make the youth stay in school. Many could not bear the harsh discipline of school which consisted mainly of caning and manual labour, and ran away from school.

The education of girls lagged far behind that of the boys, a state which exists to this day. The need to provide Christian wives to the growing number of Christian young men probably speeded up the establishment of schools for girls in Teso missions. In the beginning, parents used to send their girls to boarding schools in Uganda where such schools had been established in Tesoland; thus Pallisa, Kidetok, Madera were favourite schools. .Amukura Girls Boarding School was established by the Franciscan Sisters for Africa, making it possible for Ateso girls to attend school near home.

Boarding school for girls had a very strict discipline where the emphasis was on religion. Many girls who pioneered in education became nuns, teachers and Christian wives and mothers. Practical domestic skills such as sewing, cooking,

hygiene and hand crafts were also taught. The missionary - trained girls took in more deeply the religious teaching they received in school than the girls who were the products of government schools.

By way of concluding this section, it can be said that, as elsewhere in Africa, the missionaries paved the way for a more intensive, idepth colonial infiltration of the native mind. The colonizing powers in the mind of the native were made to appear as God's act of benevolence, for they made law and order possible. So, both the colonizers and missionaries benefited mutually in their interests in the natives, "not because the missionaries were an auxiliary arm of the imperialist expansion..., but because neither agency had any idea of deviating from its own natural course in order to form a more powerful combination with the other".⁶⁰

3) Effects of Missionary Religion and Education on the Life of the Iteso.

(a) Religion and moral values

The foreign based subjugation of the Iteso by the British completely destroyed the traditional Iteso political system and ushered in a new one. The coming of

⁶⁰ R. Oliver, op cit p.179.

the missionaries with their western type religion, also foreign based, in its fundamental understanding of human life, and non-understanding of Iteso life, was a very powerful assault which wrought drastic changes in the socio-cultural and religious life of the Iteso.

The missionary brought to Iteso life a new religion with one fundamental and positive element it did not have before; the person of Jesus Christ. In their eagerness to convert the Iteso to Christianity, they did not take time to experience the Iteso as people with a wealth of religious traditions and beliefs. A cursory observation of one religious ceremony (aipore edeke - in Pallisa in Uganda) convinced them that the Iteso worshipped a god of calamity called Edeke.⁶¹ No adequate attempt was made to ascertain the real nature of this Edeke and why the people termed him Edeke, and more important still, whether that name was common among the whole of Iteso ateker or just a local version. It is not far fetched to say that the Christian missionaries did not envision a time when the divided denominations would ever seek to understand the fundamental unity of the much splintered Christian Church.

⁶¹ H.P. Gulliver, op cit p.26

Iteso converts to Christianity were taught that God was called Katonda or Atonda (from the Luganda, Katonda), while the Protestants taught their converts to call God Edeke. Protestantism has always emphasized the knowledge of **the** scriptures as basic to being a Christian, while Catholicism has emphasized the catechism containing basic Roman Catholic Doctrine. With their scriptural orientation, the Protestants undertook to translate the Bible into Ateso, from the authorized King James version and rendered Edeke as the Name of the Lord God of Israel. That version still exists to this day, a rather quaint rendering, but largely incomprehensible to present-day Iteso.⁶²

Not only did God come bearing a foreign name, the religion of this foreign - sounding God also came divided. In the period immediately following the subjugation of the Iteso, the "unity" among the Iteso was rather fragile. The division of Protestantism from Catholicism made this unity even more fragile, although the Protestant factor was not as strong as the Catholic one. Nevertheless wherever these

⁶² To date, the work of the United Bible Societies of updating the Bible in Ateso has reached an impasse over the name Edeke. The Protestants do not want to give up that name because "people have got used to it", and the Catholics who have never used it, do not want it. They prefer the neutral, Lokasuban, creator. The outcome should be interesting.

This information was supplied by a director of manuscript examinations at the Bible Society in Nairobi.

two versions of the new religion existed side by side, hostility and division were the result. There is the case of a marriage which had to break because the man and woman were of different Christian denominations.⁶³

The Iteso were told that what they had was not edini (religion) but worship of ajokin, asitanin (evil spirits, devils). Only the emusugut (the white man) had edini (religion). Being emusugut (the white man) was, in the minds of the Iteso, synonymous with being good, clean, religious, powerful, intelligent, cultured, civilized and privileged, that is, in right standing with God. Being an Etesot was synonymous with being a Kafir (religionless), wicked, without any kind of civilization, and unrighteous. Somehow the imusugun (white people) must be closer to God. When one became a Christian one also had to adopt the ways of imusugun, and these included, wearing clothes, being "clean", a new name - in short, aping the white men as much as possible. The mystery was that the white man remained an impossible ideal to reach because the missionary and the mission always "remained a thing apart from the local population" even though they "adopted the natives body as well as soul into a new way of life."⁶⁴

⁶³ Vide Infra pp 270-272

⁶⁴ R. Oliver, op cit p.59.

Nakedness, that is, the absence of dress, had never given the Iteso any moral qualms. In the new religion, it became identified with moral depravity. In fact, the Iteso, before European civilization irrupted into their lives, were as so much at home with their nakedness that when a young man married, he brought his bride into the hut of his parents. The parents eventually migrated from the hut, some to sleep in the enclosed akadapau, a kind of varandah; until a hut was built for the newlyweds by his father. The new edini (religion) condemned this familiarity as immoral and as a consequence, the Iteso adopted a much more strict set of taboos to regulate the behaviour of sons and daughters in-law towards the elders.

A new spirit was added to the world of spirits, ajokit, the devil. The misnomer is unfortunate as has been pointed out already* yet the devil as ajokit has come to stay. A Christian had to wage a constant battle to combat this very personal spirit which always tempted (akibok - the idea is one of digging down into the depth of one's being) to do evil things. The Christian must not lose heart, however, because an impressive array of saints was introduced into this new religious world, who were ever willing and ready to help one to overcome the temptations of ajokit - (devil).

* Vide supra, p. 58

At the head of these saints was Bikira Maria the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. The Catholic Iteso were taught to pray the rosary, the prayer of Mary. To many Iteso Christians, having the rosary put over one's head to be worn on the day of baptism or first Holy Communion was what one strove for. This investiture with the rosary was just as important in the minds of the new Christians as being baptised or receiving first Holy Communion. Saying one's prayers for these people meant first and foremost saying the rosary, a very important aspect of prayer.

Prayer became a very individual affair. The only form of community prayer which was impressed upon the minds of the new converts was going to Church to worship. If one happened to live with other Christians one would join with them to recite the prescribed prayers which had been memorized. In rare cases, a literate Christian elder might lead prayers using a Bible Prayer Book. Those very important aspects of community prayer which had characterized traditional Iteso religion were not permitted; these included dancing, jubilation, rituals and sacrifices. All sacrifices had been replaced by the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary.

When one resided in the mission compound or school, these forms of community prayer sufficed, but on returning to the village, where they were surrounded by pagans, Christians did not find it easy to stay aloof from that old village life.

Katonda, Edeke were foreign gods whom the missionaries brought to Tesoland and he remains foreign to this day to most of the Iteso. I say he was a foreign god, because, despite the length of time the catechumens spent reading the new religion, when later they received baptism, their lives remained basically unchanged. A real conversion, transformation into "a new creation" had not taken place in the Christian converts. The most visible sign of the newness was in the new name, the rosary around their necks and the clean shaven heads of the baptized.

In traditional Iteso life, heads were shaved on two occasions: first, a woman who had given birth to a first child had her head shaved as part of the ritual of akinyam edia - to eat vegetables. The baby's head was shaved symbolizing its acceptance into the clan. For the mother the shaving was a cleansing ceremony, part of a series of rites of transition she had to undergo in the

process of becoming married. A second occasion for shaving heads was after the burial of the dead. It was a sign of mourning. It is difficult to say what the shaving of the converts' heads symbolized. Possibly the shaving symbolized the "being created anew" in baptism. One wonders whether or not the Christian converts understood fully the significance of the ceremony of shaving their heads.

The most devout period in the life of a new convert was during the catechumenate and immediately after baptism when the new religion was fresh in the minds and hearts of the new Christian. The catechumenate lasted between one to three years during which time the converts journeyed to the mission compound and stayed in residence for periods of up to six weeks. During this time the converts were together in an atmosphere which encouraged practice of what the new religion had taught them.

Ivan Karp may be right when he says that the Iteso embraced the Roman Catholic religion wholeheartedly - because it left their traditional beliefs intact.⁶⁵ I would rather say that this wholehearted embracing of the Roman Catholic Church filled a vacuum, to a

⁶⁵ I. Karp, op cit p.14.

certain extent, which the banning of all public ceremonies, both military and ritual in nature, by the British regime left. I would also say that the terribly individualistic nature of the Roman Catholic religion as well as its ultra-conservatism appealed to the heart of the Iteso, and they felt no conflict at all within themselves in being Roman Catholic as well as being fully traditionalist. The youth who went through a more thorough indoctrination through a longer period of systematized education in schools, seminaries and convents experienced a more fundamental conflict with Iteso values. They understood the dogmas of the Christian faith better and even seriously tried to apply them to their lives. The ordinary people do indeed remain "unaware of religious dogmas" ⁶⁶ to this day.

(b) Marriage and the Family

The areas of the most pronounced conflict as a result of the interaction of Christianity with traditional Iteso religion were in marriage, training of youth and the role of the diviner prophet. The latter will be examined in a separate section.

⁶⁶ I. Karp, op. cit. p.66.

Marriage in Iteso society was potentially polygamous. Every Etesot man looked upon polygamy as an ideal, although only few could achieve it due to lack of means, particularly cattle. The more cattle a man had, the more wives he could marry. Christianity taught that the ideal marriage, the one divinely instituted and blessed by God was a monogamous one. In this marriage the man was the head of the family and to him the wife owed obedience as to Christ. A man who married more than one wife was a lapsed Christian and could not receive the sacraments or participate in the fellowship of the Church. A woman who married a man who was already married was not a wife at all but a concubine, a polite term for an adulterous woman. Such a woman could not receive the sacraments or participate in Christian fellowship. Her children were not received into the Church. Sons born of these women could not enter the seminary and daughters could not be received into the convent because they were conceived in sin. They were considered illegitimate children.

In Iteso society, marriage was a progressive affair which could take up to twenty years, or even the entire lifetimes of the marrying partners, to complete.

Christian marriage was consummated by the first successful act of coitus after the Church marriage ceremony. For the Catholic Christians, this single physical act created an eternal impediment which made the union binding for all time, permitting no divorce. Iteso traditional marriage was strictly speaking, consummated after several things had been done. First of all, the exchange of bridal wealth between the boy's family and that of the girl made it legally binding. Secondly and in conjunction with that, the successful birth of a son and daughter and the completion of those rituals which accompanied the birth of these children confirmed the marriage as a successful one. These together could be said "to consummate" an Iteso marriage.

The teaching on marriage and sexual morality are probably the few Christian dogmas that were drilled into the minds of the converts. Those who were chosen to become catechists and teachers of schools had to live according to the Christian understanding of marriage. The successful missionary-school trained teachers had to adhere to a certain code of conduct. First of all in order to retain their jobs, they had to marry only one wife. Their wives had to be Christian and the marriage had to be solemnized in Church. A male teacher who

deviated from this either by taking a second wife or displaying immoral conduct in relation to girls/women, risked losing his job. There were very few women teachers during the early years, but those there were had to live an even stricter Christian life. They had to enter Christian marriage as first wives and to be frequent at the sacraments.

The majority of women converts to Christianity were young girls. Married women aspiring to become Christians had to be first wives (aburu nuk'aparik). If they had been second or third wives, they had to convince the priest that they were no longer in that marriage. Those women who left their husbands in favour of Christianity were for a time housed on the mission compounds and given plots of land on which they could make a living. Every effort was made to encourage Christian girls to resist the custom of polygamous marriages. A case in point is described in the mission diary of Amukura.

Fr. Verhoef went to Machakus and visited a Catholic girl called Ifyemia Ityang (on Jan. 14th, 1942) who had been forced to become second wife of Solomon Enaga, scout of the veterinary department. The girl agreed to part with him but was prevented by Solomon. The following Saturday Jan. 17th the girl arrived at the mission.

On Sunday Jan. 18th the girl signed a document drawn up in her presence and in her own language. The document contained 3 parts and runs as follows:

- " Ong Ifuyemia Ityang, angerit amanyakin ka Solomon Enaga kunuk'akiro kaare: kesi nu:
1) Naarai eyei Solomon K'aberu Nak'aparik;
2) Naarai agelara edinikeng ka lokosi;
3) Bobo alosi ong akipoikin kanesi naarai akuriana ikinacana kang.

(Witnesses) Kitei Sio'ng Ifuyemia isirari lokapolon Verhoef akiro ngupengun. Siong luketok: Alexander Papa, Antonio Iluku."

The two witnesses signed the document and also Ifuyemia and Fr. Verhoef also signed. During the week of Jan. 18th - 24th Solomon Enaga turned up almost everyday trying to get back Ifuyemia. At last Fr. Verhoef sent Ifuyemia to Mumias to the sisters. Ifuyemia consented freely.⁶⁸

It is doubtful that although Ifuyemia may have consented freely to break up the marriage, she was fully aware of the implications of her consent. Once the cows for the marriage had been accepted by her family

67 Translation:
I, Ifuyemia Ityang, refuse to be married to Solomon Enaga because of these two reasons:

- 1) Because Solomon has a first wife;
- 2) Because his religion is different from mine;
- 3) Furthermore I married him out of fear for my brothers.

(Witnesses) We have witnessed Ifuyemia informing Fr Verhoef of these matters. We the undersigned...

68 Amukura Mission Diary, Jan 14, 1972. The Missionaries also fixed the number of cows for the marriage to about 10 cows.

in the eyes of the Iteso, Ifuyemia was married to Solomon Enaga.

For a while this strategy worked, but as the years went by more and more Christians fell away into polygamous marriages. When the schools were taken over by the government after independence and the pay check came, not from the missionaries but from the government treasury, a great many of these missionary educated teachers married second and even third wives. Those women who, for a while, lived in sort of colonies on the mission compounds returned to their own people and either married again or returned to the lineages of those men who had first married them according to Iteso custom.

A second area of conflict with far reaching consequences was in the education of the youth. The Christian Church, at least in Tesoland, did not have real colonies set apart for Christian converts to live in. As already indicated, the new Christians returned to their villages shortly after baptism and resumed normal village life. For a while there were limited but adequate facilities for those women who had resisted second marriages strongly enough to break away. These were given asylum in the mission compounds and were cared

for by the missions and/or the convents. This practice had to be abandoned in the end. Most of the women could not live fulfilled lives in the mission compounds separated from their kin. Educating their children became a problem, although few of those children entered the convent or went to the seminary. Eventually the women were remarried either by the original clans that married them or sought new places altogether, and their disrupted lives went on as before.

It was the youth who went to mission schools and later government schools whose lives were noticeably changed. The strategy of the missionaries was to remove the youth from their traditional pagan environment and place them where they could be civilized. These places were boarding schools, some which started as boarding schools as early as from standard one. The boarding schools were sexually segregated. The inevitable result was that the young grew up in ignorance of the other sex, or at least in erroneous understanding of how the other half felt or lived. Traditional Iteso society did not segregate the youth sexually. The schools gave them a western education using materials printed in books about western life. Being educated was drilled into the heads of the

young as synonymous with being civilized. Those who did not go to school and could not speak English, the language of western civilization, were dubbed primitive, uncouth, uncultured and backward. This education encouraged the youth to look down upon the ways of their parents and people and to dissociate themselves mentally from them. In mission schools, training in Christian values was carried on side by side with secular education. The moral youth was one who did not indulge in sexual relationships, did not steal or lie, and paradoxically obeyed and respected his/her parents. A dichotomy was intentionally or perhaps unintentionally created by this education in the minds of the youth. The parents they were made to look down upon were the very ones they had to obey and respect.

During the holidays the youth returned home to ^{live} in the pagan and "uncultured" environment, and were expected to maintain the values and the standard of life they had become accustomed to while at school. Needless to say, a conflict was created in the minds of the youth, and for those who wholeheartedly drank in this promise of higher level of existence, a permanent tear was left within them: on the one hand they could

never be Europeans, for the European culture did not exempt the newly "civilized" African in its negative view of African culture, and on the other hand they could not return fully to Iteso life as their parents knew it.

Perhaps the Iteso women who took this western Christian indoctrination too wholeheartedly suffered the most. Iteso culture, although it relegated women to "a lower" place, very definitely honoured that place that is, the home. Iteso religious rituals revolved around the woman as wife and mother, rituals which no man ever interfered with or even participated in. Women's place as wives and mothers was assured. Whether as first or second or whatever number - wife, a married Atesot woman's place was secure once the bride wealth had changed places. Her only sin in the eyes of society and in her own eyes was failure to be the mother of sons and daughters. In her traditional setting polygamy was not seen as destructive to her dignity as a person sacred to God.

Christian civilization with its stress on monogamy affected the women in multiple marriages and dislocated them. No adequate or longterm alternatives were offered. A woman had to live in the heart of a community in order

to be secure and fulfilled. Many young girls went to the convent, hoping that there, the higher ideal of the free and dignified woman would be realized. The religious life was placed on a higher level than marriage. For the men the priesthood was the highest ideal a man could aspire to, if he wished to serve God and his people. The women who did not enter the convent or marry but chose to pursue western education and so be filled with western civilization faced the reality of not belonging. They did not belong to the life into which they were born, they did not belong to the European world and the men, even the educated ones, stayed clear of them. If they persisted in living according to their acquired ideals, they faced a terrible isolation. Many gave up their ideals and married eventually, in order to assuage their need and hunger to belong somewhere.

(C) Concepts on Community Life

Religion became a matter of individual concern rather than ^{an} expression and affirmation of life shared in community. As said earlier, this did not noticeably bring about a transformation from within. Once a person returned to his/her own village, religion became something one did once a week on Sundays or in

moments of spiritual crisis, like death or when one was entering a new state of maturity, like marriage. The "new" commandments forbade all evil, yet because it did not radically change people's hearts, the evils which had been effectively controlled in traditional society like akicud (sorcery and witchcraft) stealing, dishonesty, seemed to receive a new atmosphere in which to thrive. Civil government forbade any one from being put to death in the traditional manner. The government had no effective means of ascertaining the guilt or innocence of one accused of sorcery. Moreover, even when the local council of elders found a person guilty, they could not bannish him from the community, an act which would have been an alternative to killing, because land demarcations and individual ownership prohibited it. These undesirable social evils surfaced and increased.

The traditional Iteso kinship system which encouraged good neighbourliness and the rendering of needed aid in trouble was weakened by an ever increasingly strong individualism. The clan as a community, had recognized loyalties which a member felt the obligation to fulfill. Social values had been propagated within the clan. Christian values were not something that elders could pass on to their children as they used to do with

traditional values because the elders were not included for the most part, among the earliest converts to the new faith.

The Christian religion could have provided for the proper atmosphere of upholding the fundamental values of Iteso society, particularly that of building a new Iteso community. It came at a time when that was a basic need. Colonial subjugation had disrupted the old social order which had given a strong sense of community to the Iteso. Into this disrupted community Christianity came with its over emphasis on individual salvation. It did not seek to heal broken relationships between persons. Had it sought to heal the disrupted community, it might have provided or prepared the people for transformation. Law and order were reinforced by the colonial government and so out of fear of severe punishment, the Iteso became law abiding citizens. The Iteso had an awe of Christianity because it came and manifested itself as edini which was

superior to traditional religion because it was preached by white men (who were seen to be superior to the black men), was based on a book (a higher wisdom than that of the elders) and was expressed

in a culture which was technically superior....⁶⁹

In this new superiority the elders felt they had no place. The Iteso contented themselves with mastering the basic and rudimentary facts of Christianity which were similar to their inherent knowledge of God's laws as they had always known them.

Building Christian communities was at the back of the missionary mind when they introduced Christianity to Africa. The Iteso as has already been described, had a defined homogeneous social organization based on kinship groupings. The etem leader was the one recognized as leader not because he was higher than any one else but rather because not all could lead. He led equals. The new faith arrived after this social order had been permanently disrupted. The natural eldership of a clan leader was still intact however. This eldership was totally ignored. The new religion instead, offered new social advantages.

⁶⁹ Aylward Shorter, W.F. African Culture and the Christian Church. New York, Obis Books. 1974 p.81.

Many embraced the new faith because it was fashionable as well as economically rewarding... It was certainly a ladder of social, political and economical advancement e.g. only Christians could become chiefs and the clerks and interpreters were recruited from among those who had been to mission schools and were therefore regarded as Christians ... It was also a sign of social status to have a Christian name or to have a Church wedding ... According to the new message, religion was a matter of personal decision: each individual had to make his own decision to take up his own cross to follow Christ.⁷⁰

4. The Christian Religion and the Emurwon

The question which is central to this whole study of Iteso religion and its interaction with western Christian religion is: what happened to prophecy and divination, to the role of the diviner prophet as a result of this interaction? In chapter four we saw that the functions of emurwon during asonya and prior to the coming of the Europeans contributed greatly to the survival and well being, both physical and spiritual, of the Iteso. He was a seer who discerned events, both immediate and future, concerning the whole people or individuals more

⁷⁰ Bethwell Ogot in Ranger and Kimambo. The Historical Study of African Religion. With special reference to East and Central Africa. London, Hermann, 1972 p. 133.

clearly, and was able to predict their outcome. The emurwon was also the priest, who officiated at certain communal rituals, intermediary between the departed and the living, a healer of diseases both physical and spiritual.

He gave expression to the prophetic consciousness of the people, and the people trusted him implicitly, both because his powers were believed to be supernatural and because his words and deeds were accepted as genuine. His success had depended on the society which produced him, for without the support of Iteso society, he could not have found a secure place within it.

The emurwon, particularly his role, was perhaps the most viciously attacked aspect of Iteso religion, largely because he and what he stood for were the least understood aspects of Iteso religion and culture. He and what he did was superficially tried, found guilty of the demonic and forever condemned. People were told to have nothing to do with imurwok as they were called witchdoctors, sorcerers and witches.

In their traditional community; hunting out and destroying ikacadak, sorcerers and witches, was something the imurwok did quite effectively: yet the new religion identified them with the very evils they had always been

against. Those imurwok who wanted to be received into the new religion were told to destroy their tools of divination and to stop the practice before they were received. Because of the prestige which one acquired by becoming a Christian, many imurwok burnt their tools of divination and were baptized. Some renounced divination for the rest of their lives, but others, after a while, went back to divination. Some were able to combine being a Christian and being an emurwon without any interior conflict. Some of those who destroyed their tools faced a terrible inner conflict of divided loyalties. One baptized and as yet practising emurwon has this to say:

Many imurwok burnt their tools when they were baptized. I was lucky in that the priest who instructed and baptized me recognized what I was and did not oblige me to destroy my tools. I put them in a safe place and spoke to them. I said to them, (the spirits of divination), you see, I have been made to embrace this new religion but I am still the same. I am still your person I have not abandoned you. After I spoke to them they left me in peace. Even when those tools were burnt down with the house where I kept them, I made others and the spirits came to live in them. Some of

my colleagues who burnt theirs were terribly punished. They were beaten severally by the spirits for abandoning them...⁷²

This emurwon is firmly convinced that the spirit of divination never disappears from the people. It is not too far wrong to say that as long as there are elements in people's lives which create mental strain and others which the people believe to have a supernatural cause and therefore to require a supernatural remedy, diviner --prophets will be needed.

In their endeavours to teach the Iteso the new religion, the mission^oaries did not make use of these religious leaders, the imurwok unfortunately, instead they trained their own helpers, the catechists. The catechist practically replaced the emurwon as religious leader.

It was the native catechist living in the tribal structure which the missionary in the station and the teacher in the select school for chiefs and princelings who remained the vital unit in the missionary machine. For that reason no training could be too thorough or more fundamental than that of the catechist... The reports of catechists to the mission

⁷² Interview with Mikail Etarukot, October 18th, 1983: a practising diviner, of Gorio, Kenya.

stations formed an invaluable source of information to the mission, while the catechist remained the front line soldier in the constant war of paganism. 73

And yet despite the importance which the catechist assumed in the new religion, he did not quite replace the emurwon. It has been pointed out that one of the most important functions of the emurwon in Iteso society was that of healer. He healed physical illnesses, he healed illnesses of the mind, those caused by spirit possession as the people believe. These illnesses did not disappear. The medical dispensaries set up as part of the missionary service to the people did introduce effective remedies for common illnesses like fever, malaria but did nothing to alleviate disease that the people attributed to supernatural causes. People still feared the world of the spirits, both malevolent and benevolent, for the Christian religion did not remove from the minds of the people the deep-seated belief in the relationship of the world of the living with that of the dead. The new faith neglected or minimized the ministry of healing.

This neglect is all the more remarkable especially since the gospels record the founder of Christianity as

73 H.P. Gale, op cit pp.248-249.

one who saw the connection between a person's physical illness and his spiritual oppression. This is recorded in various places in the Bible and demonstrated by the story of the paralytic whose friends had him lowered in front of Jesus Christ through the roof due to overcrowding. When Jesus saw the faith of the friends, he forgave the man's sins. When the teachers of the law objected to this supernatural claim of Jesus, for only God could forgive sins Jesus said to them,

why do you have those thoughts?
Which is easier, to say Get up
and walk, or Your sins are for-
given you? To prove to you that
the Son of man has authority on
earth to forgive sins, so he said
to the paralytic, pick up your bed
and go home. At once the man got
up before them all, took the bed
he had been lying on and went home
praising God.⁷⁴

The new religion did not remove the misfortune of the present life. If anything, the idea passed to the people was that they had to accept present misfortunes with perseverance because the real happiness and joy would be received in heaven not here on earth. Needless to say this orienting of the real significance of the Christian message of salvation to some heaven far away in the sky created in the people the idea that it did

⁷⁴ The Gospel According to St. Luke. 5:17-26.

not really matter what one did here on earth as long as one did not commit any major sins. The new religion became somewhat like a life insurance policy into which one invested a certain amount of good works, with the assurance that at the end of life one was saved from eternal damnation. People therefore returned quietly to their former belief in the powers and work of the emurwon. In moments of stress, it was not to the catechist or the priest that they went for help, but to the emurwon.

The remedies which emurwon prescribed were concrete and immediate and met the present need. The need in most cases was to pacify whatever ancestral spirit had been angered by any act of neglect, intentional or accidental, on the part of the sufferer. Roman Catholic religion had introduced an impressive array of saints who were presented to the Christians as friends who could help them in their needs. They were encouraged to pray to these saints. In particular, since they had been given a saint's name, henceforth that saint could help the new Christian to live a good Christian life. The saints were the Christian "ancestors" yet they did not replace the Iteso ancestors, the deceased who still wanted to be remembered and treated as part of the world, of life.

There was still the need for one who could mediate between the departed ancestors and their kin left in the world of the living. The new edini did not provide this need. The catechist would not, could not act as the needed mediator.

The present position of emurwon is an interesting one. In Iteso society, they seem to have become fewer in number and yet they are well known. *Elder members of the Iteso* society lament the fact that the ancient honoured position of emurwon has become one of deception. Nowadays any one with money can become an emurwon and deceive people. Even very young men are eagerly becoming imurwok, all in order to deceive people and rob them of their money and property. One can apprentice oneself to a medicine man, learn a few tricks which appear convincing enough to the gullible public and set up a flourishing divination practice. Some even claim to be taught ⁱⁿ far away places like Pemba. Being an emurwon is no longer a supernatural calling. It has become very difficult to distinguish between a genuine emurwon and a quack.⁷⁵

One would expect their popularity to die off or be diminished because of this deceptiveness, yet the contrary is true. People still consult imurwok especially over illnesses that the hospital cannot cure, like cancer,

⁷⁵ This is the general lament of the elders who still remember the power the traditional emurwok used to have. Obwana, a practising emurwon, in particular, bemoans the abuse of the power and ~~function~~ of emurwon.

convulsions and other chronic illnesses. These are still believed to be caused by ancestral spirits. There are several practices of modern burials which the ancestors do not like, one of these is being buried in communal cemeteries in towns far away from home. No matter how far away from home a person dies, the body will be transported many miles to be buried in the homestead. Failure to do this may cause the deceased unhappiness, a fact he will communicate to his kin through strange illnesses, including insanity.

Christian type burials sometimes do not allow people to asubanakin - to perform the correct rituals for their people properly. Those who leave out the needed rituals say it is unchristian to perform those rituals. Such rituals may include sacrificing a goat or a sheep for the deceased, (or even a chicken). One who feels this should have been done will be stricken with mysterious illnesses which only the emurwon can diagnose.

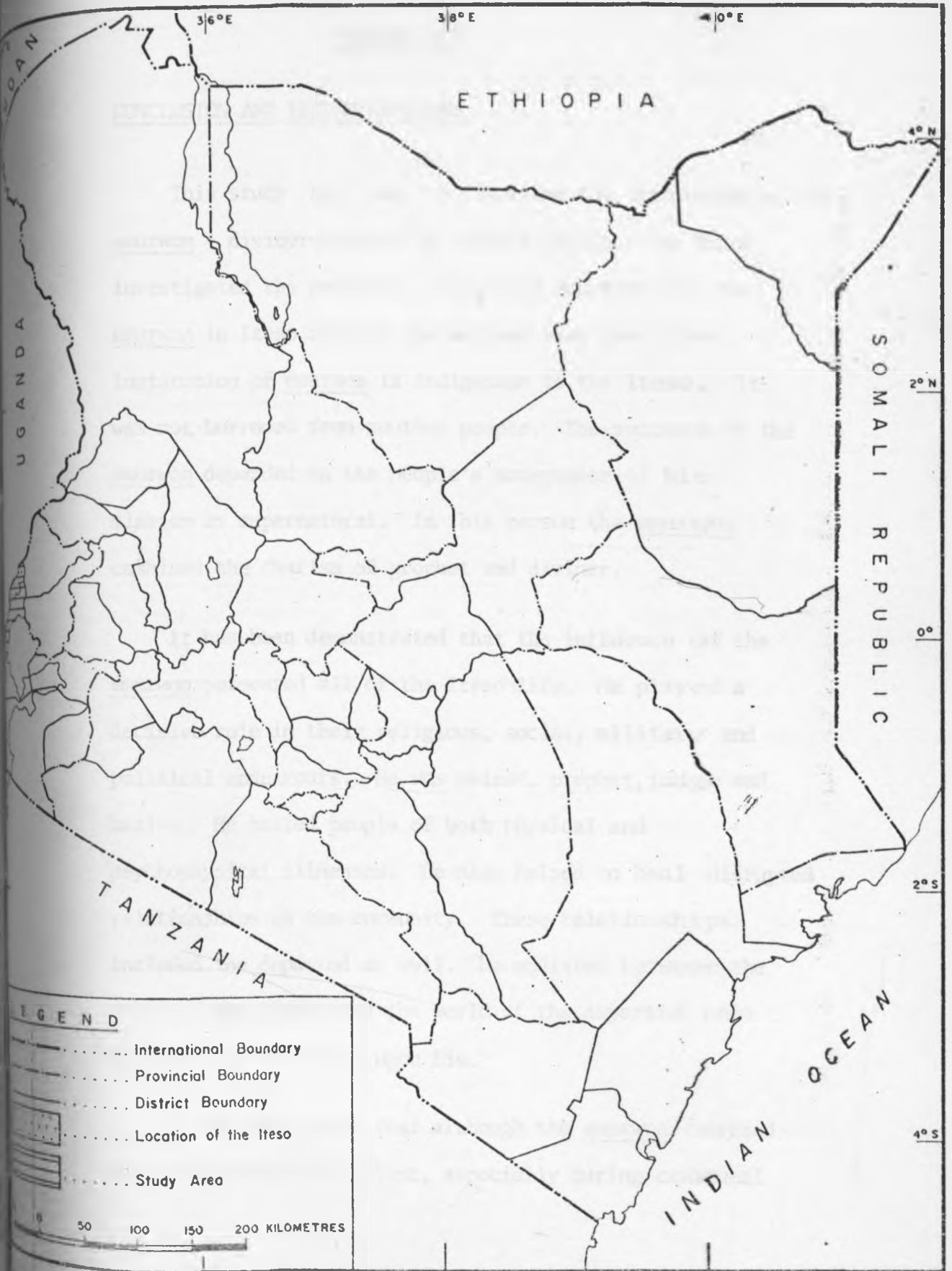
Women who are unable to conceive and bear children are perhaps the most frequent clients of imurwok. They diagnose the cause and prescribe a course of treatment, and in most cases, the women conceive. Medical science may have other explanations for this malady which all

African women dread but only a minor portion of them have access to the benefits of that science. The imurwok meet the need of the majority.

There is a prolific trade in love potions, even deadly poisons for women who want to hold on to the love of their men or to get rid of rivals. These are prescribed by the modern imurwok.

One other area in which they are sought after is in helping to "return" home sons who have refused to go home for years and whose whereabouts are either known or unknown. The modern imurwok are able to tell the anxious parents the cause of their sons' inability to go home and to prescribe the perfect remedy.

These are some of the functions the emurwon in Iteso society still carries on to this day. Unless the Christian Churches seriously take up an authentic and effective healing ministry, their adherents will always see the need of consulting the traditional imurwok whose role, and effectiveness though obscured somewhat, have proven to be the most to be relied upon.



ADMINISTRATIVE MAP OF KENYA SHOWING BUSIA DISTRICT THE HOME OF THE ITESO OF KENYA

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study set out to determine the importance of the emurwon - diviner-prophet in Iteso religion. We have investigated the presence, origin and function of the emurwon in Iteso society and we have seen that the institution of emurwon is indigenous to the Iteso. It was not borrowed from another people. The success of the emurwon depended on the people's acceptance of his mission as supernatural. In his person the emurwon combined the charism of prophet and diviner.

It has been demonstrated that the influence of the emurwon permeated all of the Iteso life. He played a decisive role in their religious, social, military and political endeavours. He was priest, prophet, judge and healer. He healed people of both physical and psychophysical illnesses. He also helped to heal disrupted relationships in the community. These relationships included the departed as well. He mediated between the world of the living and the world of the departed when the need was impressed upon him.

It has been shown that although the emurwon carried out the functions of priest, especially during communal

sacrifices, the religion of the Iteso was not centred on priestcraft and sanctuaries. The emurwon had a shrine - an abila - in his house, but it was not a centre for communal worship. It was rather the place where he held his personal communications with the supernatural world.

As prophet, the emurwon foretold events that would happen in the lives of the people. The authenticity of his predictions was borne out by events which corroborated them. If what he predicted did not take place, the people's faith in his words would be diminished and the genuineness of his claims to be a prophet was questioned. Prediction was an important aspect of his functions.

As diviner, the emurwon divined those factors which could have caused the illness of an individual or of the community. In this he was foremost a healer, one who sought to restore harmony between the sick persons and their world. People trusted the emurwon's diagnosis of the causes of their illnesses and faithfully carried out the course of treatment which he directed, believing that he knew what he was talking about.

The coming of the Europeans and of Western Christianity had a traumatic effect on Iteso religion and culture and on

the role of the emurwon. We have seen that the arbitrary subjugation of the Iteso by the colonial powers was designed to cause a complete disruption of the socio-political structure of the Iteso. The period of anarchy which immediately followed this subjugation demoralised the Iteso. The once fearless fighters were completely cowered. Their world was reduced and made very insecure, and they themselves as ^asociety was divided within itself. The position of the emurwon as military leader was irreparably destroyed. A new sense of direction was needed by the Iteso of this period.

The missionaries who came on the heels of the colonizers encountered a people who hungered for a message of hope, for a new vision of life, for a way of rebuilding their society along stronger, if entirely new lines. The Christian gospel that the missionaries preached was indeed pregnant with hope and the promise of a more ["]secure and peaceful life. The missionaries gave to the Iteso a new religion, a new culture, a different kind of enlightenment and to a large extent, a new sense of pride. The Iteso could stand up again and be a people. One does not wish to underestimate the achievements of the missionaries and of the colonial administration in impianting new values among the Iteso.

It must however be pointed out that in their endeavours to implant new ways, a new religion, a new sense of social consciousness among the Iteso, the missionaries overlooked certain aspects of Iteso cultural values. The consequences of this unfortunate oversight has determined the quality of Christian consciousness that the Iteso have developed.

Missionary attitudes towards the people and their customs as they found them in their natural environment could not have remained hidden from the people themselves.

An entry in the St. Joseph's Advocate, a Mill Hill Missionaries' journal is an adequate illustration.

F. Turnbull who was a missionary among "the Kavirondo" had this to say:

In a country where the light of God's truth is but beginning to shine, it is surprising to find how soon and how thoroughly religion influences the lives of those natives who are the happy recipients of Baptism. No sooner has sanctifying grace entered their souls than it manifests its presence and force in a hundred ways.

Their religion permeates all their actions and becomes part and parcel of their lives. During their instruction for Baptism they put off their former habits of heathendom and scorn the very idea that not

long ago they too were, as their poorer brethren, steeped in all the filth and horror of heathen practices.¹

Turnbull then goes on to paint in words, a picture of the horrors, of a heathen village. It was a place in which one was immediately assailed with dirt and filth; where cattle inhabited people's dwellings, giving one the impression that the human beings were "a little lower than cattle in respect of common rules of decency." Inside the hut of this terrible heathen village,

refuse of all sorts is lying about:
cattle, sheep and goats are tied
to the supports of the roof...
The hut itself is so dilapidated
that one expects it to fall upon
him any moment.

The conversation of the inhabitants
is the foulest, the most impure.
They do not speak to one another,
but rather yell at and abuse each
other in a shocking manner.

No one is dressed decently, a mere
sheep or goat skin is deemed
sufficient covering, and the
children who are not clothed at
all, have not the slightest respect
for their elders...

They eat like gluttonous dogs,
eating until they can eat no more
and then leave the remains to lie
about and rot...

¹ F. Turnbull. "Contrasts in Kavirondo." St. Joseph's Advocate, vol. 8. 1919/20, p.111.

Everywhere in the village one sees heathen charms, and men, women and children decked with armllets and various other charms against evil spirits. Fear haunts them night and day, fear of the spirits of their departed ones.

There is little distribution of labour in this village, the women are treated as the slaves of their husbands and are considered of no more value than the cattle with which they are bought...²

The "natives" were to strive to establish lives in a village that contrasted in every way with the heathen one. In this "Christian village", cattle were not to be tolerated near the dwelling place, huts were to be swept clean. Instead of heathen charms everywhere, there was to be a crucifix, an image of Jesus Christ, or of His mother. The Christian "apartment" was to be partitioned into sleeping and living quarters. The women were to be decently dressed, the children had to be well behaved and respectful, meals were to be eaten "without shouting and scrambling," and where "the fear which animated the converts from paganism was the fear of the Lord,"³ for all other fears had found their death in the waters of Baptism.

² F. Turnbull, op cit, p.112.

³ Ibid.

The Christian ideal was indeed desirable, yet the attitude of disgust that comes across in the description of "a heathen village" could not have left the people untouched. The new religion could so quickly permeate the actions of the people and become part of their lives in so short a time, not because it had come into a religious vacuum but because it had come upon a people who already had a very deep sense of religion. If indeed they did "scorn the very idea that not long ago they too were steeped in all the filth and horror of heathen practices," they could do so largely because their culture had been destroyed for them.

Among the heathen practices into which the Iteso were steeped was of course the belief in the power of the diviner-prophet. The heathen charms were indeed a protection against alien forces. In Iteso life, these alien forces were not always or even predominantly, the spirits of the departed ones. The departed ones were placated whenever the need to placate them arose, not by wearing charms, but by visibly remembering them as they wished to be remembered.

The protective charms were usually given to the people by the emurwon when consulted. In order to replace

these charms by Christian ones, the traditional charms were made out to be evil. Their manufacturers were described as demonic and Christian converts were strictly enjoined not to traffic in this demonic practice of consulting emurwon or to have anything to do with imurwok. Christians were to shun people who associated with imurwok.

In view of the fact that it was so ruthlessly attacked, the institution of emurwon should have died out completely. This has not been the case. In spite of the missionaries' hope and belief that the coming of Christianity had completely banished discord and quarrelling, and that all other fears had been buried along with the superstitions past of the Iteso in the waters of Baptism, facets of Iteso life and culture remained untransformed. Iteso converts to Christianity were not removed from their old world and put into another one which was free from the fears. Rather than completely eradicating the old fears, Christianity was superimposed upon the consciousness of the Iteso, leaving those fears as real as ever.

The emurwon had been able to adequately provide, if not a remedy for those fears, at least a way of minimising them so that people could live with the fears without being overwhelmed by them. The emurwon was the accepted religious

leader of the Iteso. Christianity made no attempt or effort whatsoever to know the emurwon and to ascertain his importance to the Iteso. Had such an attempt been made, the missionaries would not have failed to discover in him a deep spiritual sense. Instead, the emurwon and his world were summarily labelled diabolical and dismissed. The all important work of doctoring people against witchcraft was not taken into account. He was instead identified with the evil he had tried to fight against. While others, to whom the doors of the new religion were open received new "sanctified" names, the emurwon was dubbed "witchdoctor" , a name which designated him as a satanist, a worshipper of satan.

Undoubtedly, the missionaries needed helpers to help them in spreading the Gospel among the Iteso. They chose men whom they felt were well suited for the work and trained them as catechists. This was an important step in making Christianity take deep roots among the people. Iteso catechists would understand the mentality of their own people and deliver the message of salvation as effectively as possible.

The first catechist for Amukura Mission, Dominiko Kiwandika⁴ was not of Iteso origin. The first head

⁴ Amukura Mission Diary, p.9.

catechist, the late Petero Masai, although of Iteso origin was not sympathetic towards Iteso ways.⁵ As the accepted religious elder of the people, the emurwon should have been included in the choice of catechists. Instead of condemning him, the missionaries should have tried to secure his conversion to Christianity. Converted, he would have been the best evangelist for his own people. This would have brought the conversion of communities to Christianity instead of individuals. The elders would not have been left out of the new community which was emerging.

In their eagerness to save the people from "the horrors of their heathen world", the missionaries did irreparable damage to the communal consciousness of the Iteso. The Christian religion stressed individual salvation to the detriment of social solidarity which had existed to a large extent among the Iteso. A converted Itesot needed a community in which to live out his new religion. The traditional structure already had strong

⁵ Petero Masai was from Akites, of Ikarebwok Luk' Emomeri clan. He had migrated to Mumias as a young man, where he most likely learned his Christian faith. While there, he had married a woman of the Bawanga tribe. After his conversion and marriage, he returned to his ancestral homestead. For the rest of his life, he remained aloof from the Iteso whom he despised as backward. He taught the Iteso Catholic catechism, but with an air of condescension. His "students" remember him as being very harsh.

elements of such a community, the clan. An emurwon often ministered to one or several clans. The conversion of an emurwon to Christianity would have meant the conversion of an already coherent group of people through the influence of their own religious leader. A Christianity which found its way to the people via such a channel would, in a short period of time, have acquired an indigenous character. Such a Christianity would indeed have become

the light to chase away the darkness of ignorance in which the world is plunged... a way leading men to God... the salt of the earth... the haven for wholesome transformation of the whole world...⁶

Real and dynamic Christian communities in Iteso society are still mainly a dream of ecclesiastical authorities. When the missionaries disregarded the emurwon, they underestimated the depth of the involvement of the Iteso in the world around them. They certainly underestimated the extent to which fears arising from broken clan taboos and the spiritual world have a hold on the people. These fears

⁶ "Preamble: Guidelines for the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa in the 1980s" Statement of AMECEA Bishops in "Planning for the Church in East Africa in the 1980s." AFER vol XVI 1973. p.9.

and taboos did not vanish by minimising them or by merely telling people that they did not exist.

The missionaries could so readily disregard the emurwon, not only because of their lack of appreciation of Iteso culture, but more seriously because of their lack of the understanding of one basic aspect of the Christian Gospel; this was the aspect of healing which the founder of Christianity had already demonstrated as central. When Jesus Christ, returned to His own people after He had been filled with the Spirit of God in the wilderness, where the nature of His prophetic mission had been impressed upon Him, He began His work by reading a passage from the Holy Book of His ancestors:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
therefore he has anointed me. He
has sent me to bring good news to
the poor: to proclaim liberty to
captives, recovery of sight to
the blind and release to prisoners.
To announce a year of favour from
the Lord."⁷

After saying this, Jesus had proceeded to demonstrate His mission by healing the sick, casting out evil spirits, restoring sight to the blind and even raising the dead. He calmed people's fears and restored to them a profound

⁷ The Gospel of Luke. 4:18-19. New American Bible translation.

sense of their personal dignity. He sought to put them right with themselves, with others and with God. As Prophet par excellence, Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity, busied Himself ministering to the brokenness of His people. Furthermore, He passed on His own power to His followers and commissioned them to go to the whole world and do the same.

When the missionaries came among the Iteso, the people desperately needed just such ministrations. After the subjugation of the Iteso by the British, the anarchy that followed left the people hungering for a new vision, a new social order. As military leader and foreteller the emurwon had assumed a low profile. As healer, he was still much needed. The emurwon would have found in the person of Jesus Christ, in His work and in His message the fulfillment of his own longing and the natural perfection of his own labours. He would have become a powerful and dynamic recipient of the all encompassing power of Jesus Christ. Having received this power and message, the emurwon would have proclaimed it with conviction to his people.

His unique position as the person most intimately acquainted with the maladies which plagued his people prepared the emurwon for the ministry of healing which should have been central to the Christian good news.

The Christianity which the missionaries preached attempted to separate the sacred from the profane, the world from heaven and people into soul and body. It was the soul which had to be saved, not the body. This Christianity failed to make the people appreciate the fact that in order to save fleshly humanity, the Son of God became incarnate. As a man He took upon Himself the burdens of being human.

Christianity came as a foreign religion which presented to the Iteso a negative, exacting and vengeful God. This god could indeed properly be called Edeke, the god of vengeance. This is not the God who "so loved the world that He gave up His only Son that whoever believes in Him may not die but may have eternal life."⁸ This Edeke is not the "God who sent His Son into the world not to condemn it, but that the world might be saved through Him."⁹ In the eyes of the missionaries, the Iteso, were morally condemned unless they acquired a new moral code and a new "civilized, Christian" culture. This new moral code had heavily sexual overtones. In this morality, the

⁸ The Gospel of St. John, 3:16.

⁹ St. John, op cit. 3:17.

flesh, the body, was seen as a necessary evil, which by all means had to be covered up and tamed so that the spirit may be saved. The body which had to be covered up even more completely was woman's body. In their natural environment, the Iteso had no problems with their near nakedness. The women wore a front apron while the men went naked. There was no sexual promiscuity in traditional Iteso society. Sex was understood to be functional. Those who indulged in sexual play irresponsibly were severely punished. An honourable marriage for a girl meant such a great deal to her own personal dignity that sexual self-indulgence was a rare occurrence. Men who abused unmarried women sexually were heavily fined.¹⁰

It is doubtful that the missionaries ever acquainted themselves sufficiently with the sexual moral understanding of the Iteso. Women Christian converts were made to feel that their partially uncovered bodies were a sinful temptation to the men. Any kind of dances which involved a free physical expression were forbidden. Among these dances were akisuk imwatok - the twin dances and aloa - the recreational dances involving several neighbourhoods. A number of the rituals of incorporation for the women involved the anointing and cleansing of their bodies with oil or water, These rituals as well as other communal ones like elalai -

¹⁰ A man who made an unmarried girl pregnant had to pay a bull called among lok' eluk. By paying this bull to the father of the girl, the culprit declared himself as the legal father of her child. He did not have to marry her, although he could if he so wished. The child however, belonged with his clan. This gave the child a definite identity.

praying for rain and igaten - ritual blessing - were forbidden to the Christian.¹¹

The new sexual morality touched the Ateso women more deeply than men. We have seen that marriage was considered a lower state of life than that of celibacy. For those young men aspiring to be priests the greatest danger they were exhorted fervently to avoid was getting involved with women. Such an involvement would cost them their God-given vocations. Girls or women who caused young men to lose their priestly vocations by sexually tempting them were evil in the eyes of the Church. The burden of maintaining a high sexual moral standard was thus placed on the women. In such a sexual involvement the woman suffered grievous consequences while the men were sympathised with for having been led astray by the wicked wiles of a woman.

For Iteso women generally, the transforming healing message of Jesus Christ has not touched them as deeply as it should. The reason for this is that they have not personally encountered Jesus Christ who heals. Women are still burdened with the task of nurturing new human life. The problems which Ateso women encounter today in trying to carry out this awesome task are not radically different from those of their traditional counterparts. The fears are the same and the

¹¹ These dances were done with complete abandon. in the case of aloo, young men and women met and indulged in courtship and heavy petting. These activities were condemned as immoral.

need still exists of being fortified with protective devices from the hostile forces seen or unseen. Many of the problems the women still encounter are psycho-physical.

When faced with such problems, the most logical person the woman should go to is the priest or the pastor. Such is seldom the case. The average Atesot woman does not feel that the priest would understand her problems. Younger Ateso women fear to go to a priest with their problems because of the misunderstanding that might arise. Her motives for going to a priest may be entirely misconstrued and she would be the sufferer.¹² This leaves the emurwon as the one person who still fully understands the women's fears. The majority of the clients of the emurwon today are women.

The traditional society from which the emurwon sprang and which authenticated him, has changed from exposure to western culture and to Christianity. The Iteso traditional society had definite requirements which the emurwon had to meet in his work as healer. On the occasion of his being initiated as healer, he had to swear solemnly, not to use his powers to deliberately harm people. The power to bless and curse which he exercised whenever called upon to do so, was not seen by the Iteso as a contradiction. Whether blessing or cursing the people it was his responsibility

¹² Any time a priest is seen with a young woman, or any time a young woman is seen visiting a priest, people's suspicions are roused. Whispers go rapidly round that the woman and the priest are lovers. Young women would rather go to a person in whose presence they can be "safely" seen. Whatever guidance a priest might have given a young woman, cannot be received by the needy woman because of such suspicions.

for the welfare of the people that motivated him. He was strictly forbidden to practice sorcery, witchcraft and evil magic. His main task was to bring physical and spiritual healing to the people.

The Iteso society in which the modern emurwon operates in today is a society which has ambivalent feelings towards him. Those who have absorbed the ideas of western culture to some degree look upon him with embarrassment.¹³ Those who have absorbed the teachings of the Christian church to some degree also look upon the emurwon as an embarrassment. These latter may even condemn him. There are still few who respect the person and work of the emurwon and consult him openly. The others consult him only in moments of acute crisis.

The modern world is made up of individuals who do not have as strong a sense of social solidarity as the traditional Iteso world had. This world does not have a defined place for the emurwon. It cannot authenticate the genuineness

¹³ During the collection of material for this study, the researcher had to interview imurwok whenever possible. On one such occasion, after the emurwon had so generously demonstrated his technique, he said to the researcher: "When you came asking for me, my wife was so shocked that a person as learned as you should be consulting an emurwon. I told her that even the learned have problems which an emurwon can solve."

of an emurwon. He exists and stands for that order which has long been tested and accepted. In this world there are problems which Christianity has never fully addressed itself to and which it cannot or will not cope or become involved with. One such problem is that of interpersonal relationships resulting from the people's being overtaken by changes at a rapid pace.

One of the results of rapid changes arising from being thrust into a much wider world without adequate preparation as to how to live in such a world is a deep sense of insecurity. Had Christianity permeated Iteso communities rather than individuals alienated from their communities, the problem of insecurity might have been a communal one. The community might have evolved a communal approach to it. As it is now, individuals have an urgent sense of insecurity in the face of breaking up relationships. Individuals seeking remedies to make their world secure do not always have the community at large in mind. Such a community does not exist. So these individuals consult imurwok to give them power, prestige against competitors.

The majority of such clients are women. Their world is perhaps the most insecure at present. They would want to feel reasonably secure in their marriages. The men who

marry them for the most part if they are employed in towns, do not live with them in the village. It has become quite common for men in a town environment to marry town women and completely forget their wives at home. Traditional society would have ensured that a man takes care of his wife responsibly. That society no longer exists. Marriage has become more or less an affair between two persons. The woman stands to lose the most from an insecure marriage, so she resorts to consulting imurwok. She needs a magical device which can make her husband take care of her. These may not always be harmless charms.

Polygamy, far from diminishing, has rapidly increased. It is not uncommon to find very young men below the age of thirty years, an age in which in traditional Iteso society a man was not yet married, marrying two or more wives. Often the man may prefer one wife and neglect the others. The neglected ones resort to consulting imurwok to provide them with portent medicines or charms which will rid them of their rivals.

That the modern emurwon can give charms to persons in a marriage relationship which might cause death or irreparable harm to a member in such a relationship is indeed an indictment on the emurwon. This is possible

firstly because there are no recognized sanctions imposed upon an emurwon, because the society he operates in has no such sanctions. Secondly, this is possible also because Christianity ignored the emurwon as well as his function in society. The institution of emurwon has deteriorated from the traditional ideal. Only few modern imurwok try to be true to their calling of healing while the majority are quacks out for quick gain at the expense of the people.

The prophetic aspect of the work of the emurwon has seemingly disappeared. This disappearance can in part be traced to the still persistent practice of Christian leaders of condemning imurwok as traffickers in satanic cults. Not all of imurwok are a sorcerers or evil magicians. There are still authentic imurwok who try their best to heal the people who go to them for healing. Had the imurwok been included in the work of the missionaries, their prophetic calling would not have disappeared. If anything, they would have become the prophetic leaders of their basic Christian communities and the Christian religion would have taken root at the grass roots.

A few recommendations are here in order. One would like to see church leaders stop the practice of condemning

imurwok arbitrarily from the pulpits. Instead, the modern church leader can learn from the imurwok the nature of sicknesses, fears and shortcomings which oppress the people so as to cause them to go running to them for remedies. The traditional world though changed is still charged with age old fears of the demonic, of evil, and of the consequences of broken relationships. Some of these evils are not rooted out by a mere enumeration of sins to a priest or by an individual's direct confessing his/her sins to God in his/her heart. They require a programme of progressive healing in which the emurwon has some experience. A pastor or priest could become co-workers with imurwok in this all important work of helping to release people from the physical and spiritual forces which oppress them. Another recommendation is that the church should seriously re-examine the role of its leaders and re-affirm the original mission which the followers of Christ were sent to accomplish. For when Jesus sent out the disciples He

gave them power and authority to overcome all demons and to cure diseases. He sent them forth to proclaim the reign of God and heal the afflicted.¹¹

¹¹ The Gospel of Luke, 9:1-2

This power and authority lies dormant in the hearts of those commissioned to continue the work of the disciples. It is the reason people are not transformed and why they would rather go to an emurwon in their afflictions than to a priest. To continue laying emphasis on rules and doctrines which do not change people's lives is to continue to encourage the imurwok to proliferate. At present they genuinely attempt to heal people. People need to see a living demonstration of the power of God to heal and restore people's lives to physical, psychological and spiritual wholeness. This power the emurwon in Iteso society tried his best to demonstrate. There is no reason why he cannot continue to do so if the Christian church would affirm more courageously its prophetic mission and recognize potential prophetic channels in the persons of authentic imurwok.

GLOSSARY

- ABABAA - front apron worn by the bride during her anointing.
- ABALANG' - traditional Iteso salt.
- ABERU - Atesot woman who is married
- ABOLOI - flexible sticks used during the anointing of the bride.
- ABWATON - initiation ceremony performed in Usuku, Uganda.
- ACUDAN - sorcerer; witch
- ADEKA - sickness, pestilence
- AGWATAKIN - to sprinkle with water or with water treated in herbs
- AIGAT - to bless ritually - Kenya
to curse ritually - Uganda
- AIGER - to scar ceremoniously
- AIKAR - to be defeated by, to be overcome
- AIPORE EDEKE - to cook ^{the sickness}; a ritual performed to get rid of a pestilence
- AIPUDUNO - the bringing out of the new born baby
- AIRIGET - a sacred area where the elders and youth met for ageset and clan rituals
- AIYEK - to rattle gourds
- AJIJIM - sweetness, savour, taste

- AJOKUN - goodness.
- AJOKUSIO - much goodness.
- AJON - traditonal Iteso beer made from eleusine.
- AKADAPAU - verandah surrounding and African hut.
- AKALAPATU - court yard.
- AKAPET - piece of cowhide for sleeping and for rituals.
- AKANIN - hands.
- AKAYE - gourds for rattling.
- AKERITE - to run.
- AKIBAANANAKIN - to supplicate.
- AKIBWANG' - to break.
- AKICAK* - to step upon "1
- AKICUD - 1. to practice sorcery or witchcraft.
2. to behave in any way outside social norms.
- AKIDUP - to sink an object into the ground.
- AKIDUP EDOU - to bitwich rain by sinking an axe into wood and leaving it there with that intent.

- AKIMA - eleusine. Porridge made from the same and given to a new mother.
- AKILAANAKIN - to visit one's kin.
- AKINGADAKIN - 1. to hide
2. as used here, to burry the dead.
- AKINYAM - to eat.
- AKIRAM - to beat (drums)
- AKIRO - words, message, matter.
- AKISIET - vessel used for straining salt
- AKITURTUR - the act of a sister marrying the husband of a fellow sister who is barren in order to produce offsprings in her stead.
- AKOLONG - the sun.
- AKOOKI - the stomach; a pregnancy.
- AKUJ - God.
- AKUMOKIN - to go leave in disgust; to expose one's backside in extreme provocation.
- AKWAP - the world.
- ALOSITE - to walk; to go to.
- AMEJE - an old compound or homestead.
- AMOJONG - old woman; old age
- AMONIEIK - forests.
- AMONYA - to mourn with. The sacrificial meat eaten during the funeral of an elder.

- AMOOK [or AKITURTUR] - the ritual performed to open the womb of a barren woman.
- AMURWOK - women diviner-prophets.
- AMURWOT - the act of divination.
- ANG'OROM - read earth.
- APOROCETA - slings; as used in the prophecy, guns
- ASAPAN - individual initiation performed in Usuku.
- ASEROT - traditional Iteso salt.
- ASONYA - 6th generation or migration period in the History of the Iteso.
- ASOS - war horn.
- ASUBANAKIN - ceremonial celebration on behalf of.
- ATESO - 1. the language spoken by the Iteso.
2. girls and women of Iteso origin.
- ATURI - age set.
- AURIAAT - enclosure for cattle to rest in.
members of a traditional Iteso neighbourhood just after colonial administration. It replaced Etem.
- AWOKE - supporting clan in inter-clan rituals.
- AWOLIO (Awoliori) - has disappeared, used to mean, has died.
- BAKIDI - the name given to the Iteso by the Baganda.
- DINI - religion (swahili).

- EBELI - a devastating famine especially the famine of 1894.
- EBWASIT - a ritual performed in order to effect a final incorporation of a woman into her husband's clan.
- EDOOT - swamp mud.
- EDOU - clouds, rain.
- EDULA - granary.
- EGASIT - ritual blessing (Kenya);
ritual cursing (Uganda).
- EITELA (EKITELA) - neighbourhood - could be equivalent to a village.
- EJOK - it is good
- EJOKIT - literally: the one full of goodness. As used in the study, it is one of the traditional Iteso names for God. In Christian usage, it is the name for the devil.
- EKADWARAN/ADWARAN - prophet.
- EKALE - household of a woman with her children.
- EKAMURAKE - affinal relationship.
- EKAMURAN - a male affine.
- EKEK - 1. door 2. lineage
3. the extended family, containing many agnates and their wives and children.
- EKEREBAN - main speaker at an elders' court.
- EKIDOCERE - blood and milk cooked in meat or vegetables.
- EKIPIRET - three prolonged sticks used for stirring food in a pot.

- EKIWORONE - the calling of a sick person.
- EKUTET - done ritually.
- ELALAI (ELELEKEJA) - traditional prayers for rain.
- EMEREKEK - male sheep.
- EMOME - underground ants' nest.
- EMURWON - male diviner prophet.
- EMUSEEBE - exorcism ritual, of Luyia origin.
- EPARAIT - ancestral spirit,
- EPIAKOL - species of plantain.
- EPUNYAS - exhumation ritual of a number of ancestors as the final funeral rite.
- ERUTE - main gate into a traditional Iteso homestead.
- ESUKUSUK, [EUTUT] - ground hornbill.
- ETALE - clan rituals, clan taboos.
- ETAPIRO - whirl wind.
- ETEM pl. ITEMWAN - 1. fireplace in the courtyard where members of a homestead assemble, usually at night, on ceremonial or ritual occasions for group affairs.
2. A wider community consisting of a number of clan segments living in a given locality.
- ETOIL - the darkness which precedes and accompanies a storm.
- IBURWO - scars specially cut into the skin as a decoration.

- IKALIA - plural of Ekale. Households of women with their children.
- IKAPELEPELEN - butterflies.
- IKAPELOK - witches of rain.
- IKAPOLOK - elders.
- IKIJIT (IKUJIT) - the contents of the stomach.
- ILAMI - ritual cursing (Kenya).
- ITALOSINEI - plural of Etale. clan rituals and taboos.
- ITANYA - boatlike dishes into which traditional Iteso served food.
- JEWAI - across (the border).
- KARIONG'A - the fifth generation or migration period in the history of the Iteso.
- KENG'ARA - from ang'ar which means to initiate or open.
- KENYAMASI - from Anyam which means to share the same sacrificial meat.
- KILANYA SIONG' - has defeated us; expression used to describe death.
- LOK'AROTAN - spy.
- LOK'ASOS - the war horn blower.
- LOK'AURIAT }
LOK'ETEM } - segment head or leader.
- LOISISIANAKINIT - one whom has another instructed.
- LUKANGARAK - the initiators.

- MODING - the bush
- MUTA - so-and-so. used when a person should not be called by name.
- NGAI - who?
- NGINA - over there.
- NG'UL - those ones over there.
- OGURA - to the back from egura = backbone.
- OMIA - supposed ancestor of the Wamia, Iteso.
- OSAMAI - in the swamp.
- TATA - grandmother.
- TOO - west.

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APPENDIX A

ORAL LITERATURE: ITESO INFORMANTS

Several criteria were followed in selecting the persons to be interviewed for this study. The most obvious of these criteria was age. By age here is meant longevity of life and maturity of judgement. It has not been possible to ascertain the chronological ages of the Iteso elders interviewed in terms of years. In a few cases it was possible to arrive at approximate ages in that sense and this will be indicated in the short bibliographical notes below.

Another criterion which was followed in the selection of informants was their knowledgeability. Very elderly Iteso were not always the best informants. Wherever possible, efforts were made to interview imurwok themselves. When this was not possible, information about imurwok was sought from those who know them or about them.

Short biographical notes will accompany some of the listings of the chief informants. These were persons who were able to give the most comprehensive and comprehensible information as well as some interpretation of it. The rest of the elders interviewed will be listed as follows: Name, place of residence and date of interview.

I. Chief Informants.

1. Acaloi, Anna Maria. Arapai, Uganda, June 19th, 1980. An amurwon who, at the time of the interview had just led successful prayers for rain. She was also a practising Roman Catholic and did not feel any contradiction between being an amurwon and a Christian. From her view point, she was carrying out God's vocation and plan for her life. She was serving God's people.
2. Agwori, Paulina. Apegei, Kenya, June 21st, 1981. The informant is dead now. She said at the time of the interview that she had participated in elalai ceremony before it was discontinued. That was probably in the 1930s. She was an expert "maker" of aserot, the traditional Iteso salt.

3. Ajeeko, Wellington. Aburi, Kenya, June 20th, 1981. The informant was one of the pioneer mulango, local headman during colonial administration.
4. Amiedai, Naisenairi. Kumi, Uganda, May 26th, 1980. An elder.
5. Amoit, A. Ngelechomo, Kenya, December 30th, 1979; a grand-daughter of the famous emurwon Ekidipat.
6. Anyara, Ocudi Emongori. Apokor, Kenya, March 11th, 1981
A practising emurwon.
7. Atyang, Aronota. Akites, Kenya, June 17th, 1979.
8. Egoba, (Ekumamait). Madera Providence Home for the aged, Uganda, June 20th, 1980. He was the only one from Kumam who I was able to interview.
10. Ekeya, Sebastiano Eurat. Akites, Kenya. The writer's father. He was in fact my chief assistant. One of the pioneer missionary trained teachers, the late Ekeya died on September 2nd, 1982. Interviewed July 20th, 1980
11. Emaide, Zabulon, Ngelechomo, Kenya, February 15th, 1980.
12. Emukawot, Etyang. Asinge, Kenya. June 16th, 1979. He was probably the oldest of my informants. At the time of the interview he had been bed-ridden for a number of years. His illness was extreme old age. He said that when the first Europeans came to Teso land, he was already a married man with several children. In his time, Iteso men married at about the age of 30 years. Emukawot was a renowned herbalist and healer. He died in 1980, on the day of the eclipse of the sun.
13. Eneku, Rev. John. Madera, Uganda, June 19th, 1980. One of the first African Roman Catholic priests in Teso land, Fr. Eneku is blind. He has composed liturgical music in Ateso and is a translations consultant for the translation of the Bible into modern Ateso.
14. Etarukot, Mikail. Gorio- Kenya, November 20th, 1983. A practising emurwon. He sees no contradiction between his being a Christian and an emurwon as well.
15. Iluku, Antonio. Amukura, Kenya, March 9th, 1981.

16. Inya, Petero. Gorja, Kenya, May 3rd, 1979. He is a leader of the Christian community at Gorja. Inya does not see anything good about imurwok.
17. Mamai, Anton. Gara, Kenya, March 12th, 1981.
18. Masai, Petero. Akites, Kenya, June 18th, 1979. He was the first Etesot Catechist at Amukura Catholic Mission. He died in 1981.
19. Mawa, Manenia. Akites, Kenya, June 18th, 1979. One of the most knowledgeable old women on Iteso domestic rites and rituals in the area.
20. Mungau, Elisabeti. Asinge, Kenya, May 3rd, 1979. At the time of her death in February 1984, Mungau had seen her children to the third generation. She was in fact the oldest woman for miles around. In her life time she had been a herbalist and midwife.
21. Obaasie, Palinyang. Amukura, Kenya, March 9th, 1981. He is a musician, about middle aged, yet remarkably informed on Iteso history. He can recite his geneology back twelve generations. Obaasie's lyrics are about Iteso heroes and life in general.
22. Obiriko Otiengi. Asinge, Kenya, February 2nd, 1980. He remembers the time when he used to go to war raids, before the Europeans put a stop to them.
23. Oboo, Ocuura. Amoni, Kenya, December 1st, 1978. He remembered the time when he used to go to war raids with his father against the imo, foreigners. One of the oldest of my informants, Oboo died in December 1983, of extreme old age.
24. Obwana. Amaase, Kenya, November 15th, 1982. A still practising emurwon.
25. Okodoi, Victor Okiai. Machweet, Kenya, June 24th, 1981. A Church elder.
26. Okout, John. Aturet, Kenya, June 25th, 1981.
27. Oluku, Atanasi. Amaase, Kenya. A chief assistant in interpreting the information gathered from the Iteso elders. Mr. Oluku is a consultant for curriculum development for primary schools.

28. Omongo, Samuel. Apokor, Kenya, March 10th, 1981.
29. Opana, Africanns. Aburi, Kenya, June 20th, 1980.
30. Oshoromo, Yakobo. Kolanya, Kenya, October 1st, 1981.
A practising emurwon.
31. Orodi, Stephen. Kocholia, Kenya, September 9th, 1981.

II OTHER ITESO INFORMANTS

a) Individuals

32. Alena Aguti, Gorja, December, 1978.
33. Ilukol Inyait, Ongariama, May 3rd, 1979.
34. Okisegere, Adungosi Market, September 14th, 1978.
35. Igurakol, Madera Providence Home, June 19th, 1980.
36. Samson Obwala, Madera, Uganda, June 19th, 1980.
37. Kiligori Okach, Akites, Kenya, October 3rd, 1980.
38. Eenen, Morokamosing, Kenya, March 3rd, 1981.
39. Alexanderi Papa, Kwangamoru, Kenya, March 12th, 1981.
40. Petero Omacari, Amukura, Kenya, March 12th, 1981.
41. Christopher Obaraa, Karisa, Kenya, June 20th, 1981.
42. Jairo Opagala, Kolanya, Kenya, October 1st, 1981.
43. Nora Aanyu, Madera Providence Home, October 23rd, 1981.
44. James Emong)
) from Moroto, Karamojong elders interviewed
45. Asimani Akadom) at Soroti Market, October 24th, 1981.
46. Neriko Obarasa Ocudi, Akites, October 3rd, 1980.

b) Group Interviews

I At Ngelechomo, Kenya, December 1978, group interviewed:

47. Obukwi
48. Emongura
49. Esyalai, v.

II At Kocholia, Kenya October 5th 1981, group interviewed:

50. Saferio Idewa
51. Ismael Itori
52. Anderia Odikori
53. Agusitino Oreete
54. Wilidadi Odera
55. Filipino Mamai
56. Joseru Okapes
57. Lino Otwane
58. Osea Ibwali

III At Kolanya, Kenya, October 5th, 1981, group interviewed:

59. Stanley opili
60. Elunga Oteba
61. Benson Isiepai
62. Joyce Ameje Amusugut
63. Dorika Ikileng
64. Fejenia Alungat
65. Furida Ariangai
66. Wilidadi Olola
67. Elisha Alikidoli
68. Wilson Karani
69. Peter Otunga

V At Arapai, Uganda, June 6th, 1980

70. Coloria Asiyó

71. Anna Akemo

72. Maria Apolot

V At Providence Home Madera, Uganda, October 24th 1981

73. Alugeresia Akelot

74. Aisitina Itiren

75. Imakulata Apsiso

VI At Getom Village, Uganda, Group Interviewed, October 24th, 1981.

76. Remegio Otilo

77. Basilio Ocodit

78. Kolositika Iramit

79. Atanasi Ojoo

80. Yoana Opalam

81. Demirina Adiye

82. Maria Akiai

83. Rose Aanyu

84. Antoni Okwi

85. John Itiamat

VII At Toroma village, Uganda, Group Interviewed: October 28th, 1981.

86. Williamu Okiror

87. Patirisi Adwong

88. Wasidi Okware

89. Gesesemu Ojngale

90. Yoana Akali Iberut

91. John Okedi

92. Iunot

VIII AT Toroma Mission, Uganda, October 29th, 1981.

93. Antonio Okwi

94. Yafesi Ikedit

95. Nabos Etori

96. Elisabeti Adero

97. Salume Irido

98. Iyongat

99. Marita Abayo

100. Kiristina Ilingat

101. Puro

102. Kevina Among

103. Madista Amongin

104. Maria Iwalut

105. Feremi Emurwon

QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX B

THE EMURWON - DIVINER/PROPHET IN THE RELIGION OF THE ITESO''''

A. ORIGINS AND HABITAT

1. Where was the original home of the Iteso? When, how and why did they leave that home? Who pioneered in this migration? .
2. What is the relationship between the Iteso of Tororo and those of Kenya?
3. What is the Original Ateso Language like? What is the connection between the Ikumama and the Iteso? What about between the Iteso and the Jopadhola?
4. Who was Oguti and what role did he play in the subjugation of Iteso by their enemies?
5. Who was Apili? When Apili came to Tesoland, how did he relate to the ordinary people?

B. SOCIAL ORGANIZATION.

1. What are the clan names of the Iteso? How did clans originate? How were clans organized?
2. What was an ETEM? Who became members of an Etem? What were the main Etem rituals?
3. What was the importance of Etem in matters of defense?
4. Who were the leaders of Etem? What were their responsibilities?
5. What was Aturi among the Iteso? How did a person become a member of an Aturi? What were the responsibilities of Aturi? What was the significance of belonging to an Aturi?
6. What were: (a) EKIWORONE, (b) EKIGWORONE (c) EKIMWOGOR?
7. Were ASAPAN and ABWATON known among Iteso of Kenya?
8. What were: AKIGER IBURWO (scarring of warriors) and AKIJUK? Who performed these ceremonies? Where, when, why and how?
9. How were the young instructed in matters pertaining to ETALE? Who did the instructing? At what stage in the growth of the young did that happen?
10. What were the most important things which the young had to know in order to be considered as Iteso Lukabeit? (True Iteso)

11. What part did aunts and uncles play in the moral upbringing of the young?
12. What is EKIBUTONE? Who went/goes to ekibutone? May a person marry a member of one's mother's clan? If not, why?
13. What was the worst crime a person could commit in Teso Society? Why was it considered the worst crime? How were the culprits found out and punished?
14. What was the significance of women and children in Iteso society? What was their social standing?
15. What was the most widespread form of Marriage among the Iteso? What factors dictated to this form of marriage?
16. Describe the characteristics of an Iteso marriage ceremony.
17. What was ESASI? Of what significance was it to the wellbeing of the woman and children?
18. How widespread were IKACUDAK during Asonya? What about in the present time? Now? How did a person become an Ekacudan? How did society control them?

C' ITESO RELIGION.

1. What are the proper names for God in the Ateso language? What do those names mean?
2. How did the Iteso understand God? Where did they think God lived?
3. What myths did the Iteso have concerning the Origin of their Ateker Nak'Iteso? (The Iteso people)
4. When Iteso wanted to communicate with God, How did they do it?
5. Were there shrines specifically for worshipping God? Were there places which were feared as sacred? What about places which were taboo for certain persons? Why were such places taboo?
6. What was the attitude of the people towards God? Indifferent? Reverent? Was God a god who had long ago left the world alone?
7. Who/What was the prophet (EKADWARAN) in Teso? How did a person become a prophet? What in the life of an individual or in his family background could decide on a person becoming an Ekadwaran?
8. Who/What was the Diviner (EMURWON) in Teso? What was the difference between the Ekadwaran and the Emurwon? Name some of these individuals. Why did Ekidipat rise to fame?
9. Could the office of prophet and diviner be inherited?

10. What role did the prophet play in the life of the Iteso?
11. Did the prophet just predict the future or did he also speak God's will for the people of Iteso society? What did this mean?
12. What sort of instruments did Emurwon use in his divining? Why was Emurwon so important to the Iteso?
13. Was a medicine specialist different from an Emurwon? What were the responsibilities of a woman medicine specialist? How did she get to know how to cure people?
14. What was AKIKEN? Who performed these ceremonies? Why? How effective were these ceremonies?
15. What was ELALAI? Who performed this ceremony? When? Where? Why? Who participated? How long did it take?
16. An Ateso song says: "Ejaasi Imo Kaerere, Ejaasi." Who are the Imo? Why was it forbidden to cut down Ekaereret? What was the significance of EUTUTU?
17. There were individuals who could AKIAR EDOU (kill rain). How were they believed to be able to do this? How was the man or woman who killed rain found out and punished?
18. Who/What were believed to be the ancestral spirits? How did people relate to them? How was spirit possession believed to take place? How was it overcome?

D. CLAN RITUALS ETALE.

1. INITIATION CEREMONIES. Describe the ceremonies which accompany the following events in the life of an Itesot:
 - (a) When a bride is discovered to be pregnant. AKIRAP AKOOK
 - (b) The naming of a new born baby.
 - (c) Akipudor aberu.
 - (d) Akinyam Edia.
 - (e) Akinyam abalang.
 - (f) Akilong Ecom
 - (g) Egwasit
 - (h) Ceremonies accompanying the birth of twins.
 - (i) Ikoku yen Eporiaute.
2. RITES OF PASSAGE: DEATH AND BURIALS
 - (a) Aimuke Lokadekan ... the terminally ill.
 - (i) Treatment of the widow before and after burial.
 - (ii) Who digs the grave? Who (HOW) prepares the body for burial?
 - (iii) How is the body laid into grave? Facing where?
 - (iv) Who must contribute to the burial sheets?

(b) Burial rituals of an elder. What is immediately done?

- (i) Abaren - Akilong-
- (ii) Ageun Aswam
- (iii) Ajon nukakio.
- (iv) Epunyas
- (v) Ekutet.
- (vi) Akiwelwel Etogo.
- (vii) Akirum apuserut

3. MISCELANEOUS RITUALS

- (a) Aloa (b) Akirəm Emuseebe
- (c) Making a barren woman be able to conceive
- (d) The importance of nephew/niece (Can they be burried at their uncle's home?)
- (e) If a grown up woman does not marry where was she burried?
- (f) When two close relatives marry
- (g) Akinumunum - the harvest festival
- (h) Akitolom Etogo
- (i) Akicwe abalang

ANY OTHER???