

ENDANGERED MUSICAL HERITAGE

A CASE OF THE ALBERTINE
GRABEN IN UGANDA

2023







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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Music is generally defined as the art of arranging vocal or instrumental sounds (or both) to create some combination of form, harmony, melody, rhythm or otherwise expressive content, according to Wikipedia. The definitions of music, however, vary considerably around the world. In Africa, music can be better understood under two broad areas: traditional and popular music, and the focus of this publication is on traditional music. It is also important to note that music in the African sense plays a functional role. Songs, for instance, are composed for important events in society. Additionally, music was/is also repository of knowledge –used for education and learning. Since the ancient people could not read or write in a modern way, this was the best way of recording, keeping, retrieving and transmitting information.

In the Environment Social Impact Assessment (Vol. 4, Sections 17.7.5-17.7.8 and Vol.5, Section 24.3.12), TotalEnergies EP Uganda Ltd's Cultural Heritage Archaeological Management Framework lists cultural heritage and archaeology (including traditional craftsmanship, music, dance and drama) as aspects that are likely to be impacted by oil and gas activities.

Since 2006, the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU) has documented and implemented various interventions to situate culture at the center of contemporary development interventions.

In 2022, with support from TotalEnergies EP Uganda Ltd, CCFU embarked on the Culture for Livelihood (CUL) project aimed at safeguarding and promoting cultural heritage conservation in the Albertine region. As part of the project, CCFU has documented the musical heritage of Bunyoro, Bugungu, Alur and Acholi cultural communities.

The broad objective for the research was to document endangered traditional music of the Banyoro, Bagungu, Alur and Acholi people. It is based on the assumption that with the influx of immigrants in the Albertine and the exploration of oil and gas, chances are high that traditional music will be further endangered or threatened to extinction if not identified, documented and archived.

Data collected from both primary and secondary sources established that, music and dance reflects people's identity, since they are all a vital artistic medium through which they embody themselves, communicate and celebrate.

It was, however, observed that there are already existing threats to traditional music and dance that maybe catalyzed by oil and gas activities. These include: climate change that has resulted in the extinction of raw materials used for making music instruments and costumes, globalization, western culture & religion, limited appreciation of culture, insufficient



information about authentic traditional music, misinterpretation of traditional music such as the hunting dance for the Bagungu, politics, acculturation, and poor packaging and branding of traditional music.

Recommendations were formulated by traditional music practitioners, representatives of cultural institutions, academia, civil society and other respondents. These include: investing in research, documentation and archiving of endangered extinct music, creating more spaces to showcase traditional music, popularizing traditional music among young people, especially in schools, incorporating traditional music of indigenous minority communities in the national annual musical competitions, and

restoring places that used to provide raw materials for making music instruments and costumes.

This study contributes to the identification of traditional music, systematic documentation, safeguarding and promotion. Planners in the Government ministries responsible for culture, education, social development and extractives may use these findings in the planning of socio-cultural activities in perpetuating musical heritage and cultural heritage in general. Cultural institutions, traditional music practitioners and other civil society actors are encouraged to use the recommendation of this study to advocate for the safeguarding and promotion of traditional music.



Bugungu Heritage and Information Centre receives musical instruments and costumes, supported by the Culture For Livelihoods project



INTRODUCTION

The Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU) embarked on the “Culture for Livelihoods” (CUL) project aimed at enhancing cultural heritage conservation in the Albertine region. The project is part of TotalEnergies EP Uganda’s ‘Action for Sustainability’ Campaign aimed at showcasing concrete actions being undertaken towards sustainable development.

The one-year project started in July 2022 with a focus on the areas around Bunyoro, Bugungu, Alur and Acholi. It builds on CCFU’s previous work to empower young people and women to establish livelihood projects through cultural entrepreneurship focused on two sub-sectors of cultural heritage – handicrafts making and music (specifically support to traditional cultural troupes) and documentation of endangered music.

The project has four main objectives:

1. To identify, safeguard and promote traditional knowledge and facilitate value addition in crafts making and traditional music.
2. To build the capacity of traditional music troupes and crafts workers in organisation management, publicity and marketing.
3. To promote intercultural collaboration and diversity of goods and services in the creative industry.
4. To deepen awareness about the importance and role of the crafts

industry and traditional music in promoting the livelihoods of communities.

This publication is one of the key outcomes of the project aimed at contributing towards achieving objectives 1 and 4 above.

The publication has four major sections: literature review, research methodology, research findings and conclusions & recommendations. The literature review underscores the understanding of music in the African sense. It also attempts to define endangered music, pointing out some of the factors that endanger music. The research was conducted using qualitative research tools and an inclusive process, which turned respondents most intimately involved into co-researchers and facilitators. Snowballing and purposive identification was used to identify key informants from selected districts. These were people who are knowledgeable about traditional music either through practicing it or carrying out research.

The research findings indicate that almost all traditional music is under threat due to factors such as economic conditions, western culture, education and religion, politics and acculturation. This is reflected in the increased rate at which traditional music is fading away, with less number of groups performing or listening to it. Hence, the publication presents some of the music of the Banyoro, Bagungu, Alur and Acholi that is under threat of extinction unless there are deliberate efforts taken to safeguard it.





LITERATURE REVIEW

Music in the African sense

Music is generally defined as the art of arranging vocal or instrumental sounds (or both) to create some combination of form, harmony, melody, rhythm or otherwise expressive content, according to Wikipedia. The definitions of music, however, vary considerably around the world.

In Africa, music can better be understood under two broad areas: traditional and popular music, and the focus of this publication will be on traditional music. While quoting Agu (1990:80), Ibekwe, Eunice U (2020) defines traditional music as, "The folk music of a people, which evolves as a corporate communal experience." She, therefore, notes that traditional music is such a practice that reflects the people's tradition without the influence of other culture.

"It encapsulates virtually all indigenous practices, which are integral to people's life within a given culture. By implication, traditional music is the people's way of life-expressed in verbal and physical action through sound combination processes," she writes.

She discusses the indispensability of traditional music as an instrument of cultural transmission.



"Culture gives identity to a nation, and it is based on this (culture) that a nation's development is anchored.

Mangena (2009) asserts that you cannot develop a people outside of their experience and cultural ethos. Therefore, since the traditional music of a nation carries to a large extent every aspect of its cultural fabric, be it politically, philosophically, economically or socially related, it then provides a working guide to the developmental needs of the people," *she notes, adding that:* "Traditional or cultural practices range from the rituals of birth and puberty, marriage and death, cult activity, initiation, rituals of livelihood such as hunting, farming, gathering, recreation and parties to other aspects of life activities in a community. All these activities have music (either singing, dancing, playing instrument or in combinations) as their central pivot... In African societies in general, one can easily identify a given culture through their music."



In essence, traditional music is heritage and part of that cultural legacy that needs to be safeguarded. It is also important to note that music in the African sense plays a functional role. Songs, for instance, are composed for important events in society. Additionally, music in the African sense is also repository of knowledge. Since the ancient people could not read or write in a modern way, this was the best way of recording, keeping, and retrieving information.

Nketia (1974: 152) recognises music as an archive of history in an oral culture in the absence of modern media. He states that music is a vehicle “for expressing or recording a people’s history, their dynasties, migrations, hardships and sufferings, defeats and victories” as well as paying tribute to a ruler. One can add that it is also a vehicle through which social norms, behaviors can be nurtured and transmitted.

Traditional African music, therefore, goes beyond the idea of just the sound (vocals, instruments or both) to include dance, stories, poems and drama, with rhythms and melodies that last for hours or days until they are climaxed with a huge celebration. In fact, in the Ugandan context and Africa at large, music and dance are inseparable. Dance, according to the Oxford dictionary, refers to a series of steps and movements that match the speed and rhythm of a piece of music. African dance music is reported to be polyrhythmic, a term used to describe music that simultaneously blends two or more different rhythms, according to Musicgateway.com. Hence, African dance music is complex, with drums and drummers playing an important role. Dancers and drummers collaborate and function in dialogue with one another.

Even the audience may become part of this dialogue (Allen, 2021). This perhaps explains why music in Uganda is easily categorised or recognised by the dances and musical instruments and not songs.

Aning (1973: 16) defines traditional African music as “music which is associated with traditional African institutions of the pre-colonial era” and which has “survived the impact of the forces of Western and other forms of acculturation.” Samuel Kahunde (2012) agrees with Aning (1973) in regard to dating it before colonialism, but he is reluctant to agree on the issue of its “survival from the Western forces” because it may be difficult to find African music without external impact –an indication that African music is endangered. Yet for Allan Marett et al (2006), even in societies that are considered developed, traditional music is still endangered.

“...songs are considered by culture bearers to be the ‘crown jewels’ of endangered cultural heritages whose knowledge systems have hitherto been maintained without the aid of writing. It is precisely these specialised repertoires of our intangible cultural heritage that are most endangered, even in a comparatively healthy language,” *notes Allan Marett et al (2006).*



Africa is both a communal and oral society, hence, music is a major cultural and traditional archive of knowledge that is used as a soft medium to pass on key messages to different generations. Music

in Uganda is used in day-to-day life to promote the cultural identities of different communities and to pass on to children accepted cultural norms, values and behaviour (Mukasa (2018).

What is endangered music?

Whereas the issue of endangered music has recently gained prominence in ethno musicological discourse, it is difficult to come across scholarly work defining endangered music. Catherine Grant (2014)'s characterisation of "endangered musical heritage as a wicked problem" helps to highlight the complexity of this topic as "one with complex interdependencies, uncertainties, and conflicting stakeholder perspectives."

Indeed, this research and documentation is not premised on the fact that there is an all-embracing solution to the problem, but playing the part to highlight the problem by documenting our endangered music. We are aware that this may generate more problems, especially in a society whose knowledge systems have hitherto been maintained without the aid of writing.

Samuel Kahunde (2012) notes that threats to traditional music and dance in Africa have been of interest to both African and non-African scholars, revealing that a lot of literature was published in the 1950s and 1960s. It is, however, in the decade or so since UNESCO's Convention for the safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) came into force that scholarly work gained prominence on the loss of musical heritage. Ethnomusicologists and other researchers have explored with new interest various pressures that threaten music and these can be categorized into social, political, and economic conditions.

So, endangered music is music under threat of extinction unless there are deliberate efforts to safeguard it.





*A member of Mubaku Adungu Group
playing the African harp (adungu)*

Threats to traditional music

Industrialisation & Civilisation

Tracey (1959: 23-4) describes how traditional music has been affected by its removal from its cultural settings as a result of forces brought about by industrialisation. He declares, "African music had been attacked and undermined ever since communications had been opened up, first by the missionary and more recently through jazz and other forms of commercialised music" (ibid.: 24).

This resulted in the drawing away from the country of those craftsmen who in the past normally made musical instruments for their own and neighbouring villages. Thus, there were few people left in the rural areas to make musical instruments. Tracey cites examples from South Africa whereby many people were drawn from villages to work in mines and factories.

Hanna (1965: 15-16) argues that with improved communication and transportation systems and the development of urban centres, many new arenas of interaction, acculturation, and innovation were created. She further argues that Africans were able to interact with foreigners, especially in urban areas, and emulated European ways of life and despised their own. This argument is supported by Onwuachi (1966: 289)

who observes, "The impact of Western Civilisation in Africa has created many problems and changes. Among these are the problems of cultural adaption and the incorporation of Western laws and customs into existing tribal ones."

Ibekwe (2020), whereas civilisation such as modern technology has affected African traditional music in a negative way, it has also had positive aspects.

"Technology has boosted the music industry... [It has] made possible the storing and retrieving of musical works. Performances can be recorded and kept for future use or preserved for posterity, thereby ensuring greater longevity and continuity of our traditional music... Through electronic devices, our traditional musical performances can now reach distant places," she writes, concluding that:

"It is true that technology has severely affected [African traditional music's] mode of performance, yet adequate utilization of these technological appliances used in production, storage/ documentation and analysis of musical works can go a long way in revamping the longevity of these fast disappearing musical practices."



Influence of western religion

Mbiti (1975:16-18) and Malm (1993:342) argue that early missionaries were responsible for creating changes as they attempted to spread Christianity. Snoxall (1937: 277) provides an example when he points out that the coronation ceremony in Buganda, for instance, “was completely modified owing to the recent introduction of Christianity.” It is also apparent that the attitudes of the early missionaries discouraged African Christians from participating in ceremonies, which included traditional music and dance. Hanna (1965: 14) states that the early missionaries and Europeans negatively described African performances because they did not understand the African dances. She notes that later, many missionaries realised that the performances were not necessarily incompatible with Christianity. Kalu (2008) argues that modern creativity embodied in performing arts and Pentecostal church music also poses a threat to the mutilation of Uganda’s rich indigenous music.

On the other hand, there has been the issue of appropriation of African music and dance by some western religions. In his publication, “Transnational religious practices and negotiation of difference among Zimbabwean Catholics in Britain”, Domonic Pasura (2017) shares the interactions between Zimbabwean migrants and UK-based Catholics (non-migrants and other migrants) in a mixed congregation at Our Lady of Good Counsel and St Gregory in Birmingham. One of the highlights is the use of traditional African music instruments such as drums (ngoma) and rattles (hosho) for liturgy at mass, how it created tensions and opportunities, collaborations and conflicts.

Back home, it has been a similar trend with the Catholic Church taking the lead in integrating traditional music in their services. For instance, in Alur, the African harp (adungu) is a common instrument in the Catholic Church.

Influence of western education

Western education has also impacted traditional music and dance. Onwuachi (1966: 290-2) describes how the different colonial administrators managed the education of Africans without taking

into account the informal education that existed before they came. He points out that children were taken to school to study subjects, which did not include African ways of life.



Hanna (1965: 14) advances a similar argument that Western education affected traditional dance when the children were removed from their environment and taken to boarding schools. She argues that after leaving school, the educated Africans went to work in urban areas because there were no jobs in the rural areas. Thus, they

could not learn music and dance skills and transmit them afterwards.

There were efforts to introduce music, dance and drama in schools in Uganda to bridge this gap, but there has been concerns that music performed in schools falls short on authenticity, because of the music training and adjudicating process.

Political influence

Hanna (1965: 13) categorically asserts, "The imposition of imperial rule, the rise of nationalism, and the post-independence attempts to mobilise the fragile new nation-states are among the forces, which have profoundly transformed most traditional societies." According to Kahunde (2012), this assertion is fair with regard to the royal music and dance of Bunyoro. During the colonial period (1894-1962), some of the traditional ceremonies in Uganda were declared illegal by the colonial government. For example, Beattie (1971: 221) points out that traditional worship and foretelling were made illegal by the colonial government. By outlawing traditional ceremonies, the production and performance of traditional music and dance that complemented them were hampered.

In 1894, the British government declared Buganda kingdom to be a protectorate and two years later, the kingdoms of Bunyoro, Toro, and Ankole were added to the protectorate to form one country, Uganda.

This was followed by the rise of nationalism in the 1950s that led to independence in 1962, creating two systems of governance –a centralized and decentralized (of the cultural institutions).

Immediately after independence, a power struggle developed between the central government and the kingdom of Buganda, culminating in the 1966 crisis and the abolition of all kingdoms in 1967 (Mutibwa 1992: 11 and 58-9, and Uzoigwe 1983: 263-5).

Following the abolition of the kingdoms, royal music and dance of the different kingdoms was affected because it wasn't being performed. For instance, before the abolition of the kingdoms, the king of Bunyoro held coronation anniversary celebrations called the *empango* in which music and dance played a central role.

During this period, several skilled performers died, thus, creating a vacuum of knowledge and skills transmission. The younger



people had no opportunity of acquiring the skills because there was no avenue for the transmission of the royal traditions. The royal music and dance became obscure

to most people partly because it was not performed for twenty-seven years after the abolition of kingdoms until 1996 when the kingdoms were restored.

Acculturation and alteration of traditional music

Cakir (1991: 295-99), who argues for the protection of traditional dance, suggests that dance choreographers have impacted on traditional dance. He states that dance choreographers began to “adapt dance and its music to the stage to save them from monotony and excessive repetition and make them known and liked by large masses.” Cakir (1991: 296) notes that when dances were adapted to non-traditional stage, they lost their qualities and were forgotten.

He argues that traditional dance “gets corrupted when taken out of its natural medium and put in an artificial one where it has to obey the rules of the stage,” which sometimes ignore traditional choreography and costumes. Cakir, according to Kahunde (2012), may be right because in the theatre, performers may be encouraged to dance in linear formations (involving lines), which may be absent when the dance is performed in its traditional settings.

Efforts Aimed at Preserving Traditional Music

In 1930, the Odeon Gramophone Company of Berlin made records of 80 folksongs of Uganda arguing, “folk-songs are gradually dying out” (Duncan 1935: 314).

Scholars, including Alan Merriam, attempted to address the problem of diminishing traditional arts in the 1950s and 1960s. For example, in 1963, a conference was held in Kampala, Uganda to find a “practical way of passing on African musical art to the present generation of people before the people now in possession of this art disappear” (Merriam 1966: 341). The conference participants recommended the teaching of music.

Nabeta (1959: 41) in his article, “The place of a music school in Uganda,” advocated for the creation of “a strong music department in one or more of the teacher-training colleges, where music teachers could receive a full-time course for at least three years. The teachers would then teach music in the schools and musical education would gradually spread among educated people.”

A department of music, dance, and drama was established at Makerere University in Kampala in 1971 and taught African music and dance (Makerere University, 2008). Music and dance have also been



taught in several teachers' colleges across the country, and the syllabi include both African and Western music, according to Kahunde (2012).

Every year, the Ministry of Education in Uganda organises festivals for music, dance, and drama in primary and secondary schools as well as in colleges, in part supported by the private sector. But there are concerns about music festivals becoming a threat to traditional music.

In Natukunda (2015)'s interview, Dr. Mercy Mirembe Ntangaare, Professor of Drama at Makerere University notes that: "If we don't make an effort to transmit it (music) to future generations, then it certainly will die out with us. Where we make efforts, then it will adjust to our ways of living and exist in that 'new' form".

Through its Heritage Education Programme, the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU) supports cultural heritage clubs in Uganda. The Heritage Education Kit includes a theme on expressing culture, which places emphasis on folk songs and dances (CCFU, 2019). The Uganda National Museum preserves and displays the major musical instruments that were used and are still used in the music industry in Uganda. These include the traditional music gallery such as percussion, wind and string music instruments, Chris (2013)

This publication highlights the gaps that need to be addressed. It also gives the all-important need to preserve and promote, for posterity, the uniqueness of various indigenous genres of music, and an invaluable part of Uganda's music heritage.



Total Energies EP Uganda and CCFU staff handing over musical instruments to Mubaku Adungu Group, one of the groups supported by the Culture For Livelihoods project





THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY & SCOPE

Research purpose and objectives

The broad objective for this research undertaking was to document endangered traditional music of the Banyoro, Bagungu, Alur and Acholi. This was based on the assumption that the traditional music of these communities still exists amidst challenges of extinction, rendering it endangered and critical for safeguarding and promotion.

More specifically, the research set out to:

- a. Identify and document endangered traditional music of the Banyoro, Bagungu, Acholi and Alur communities with their associated values, principles and practices
- b. Assess the extent to which the indigenous music is endangered
- c. Draw conclusions, recommendations and the next course of action in safeguarding and promotion of the indigenous music of the cultural communities of the Banyoro, Bagungu, Alur and Acholi.

Research questions

The research questions were categorised into 3 parts: the music description, threats

to the music and mitigation measures suggested. The questions included;

Music description

1. What is the name of the music type?
2. Tell us about the music; how is it performed?
3. What is its historical background?
4. What makes it special/significant?
For instance when is it supposed to be performed? For what purpose?
5. Who are the parties involved in its performance? Of these, is there someone with a special or lead role? Is there a special clan in charge of this genre?
6. What are the gender and age dynamics related to this type of music?

Musical instruments

1. What musical instruments are involved?
2. What raw materials are they made from and where do they come from?
3. Who are the people involved in making them and how do they acquire the skills?
4. What rituals and norms attached to these instruments?



Costumes:

1. What costumes accompanies the music?
2. What raw materials are they made from and where do they come from?
3. Who are the people involved in making them and how do they acquire the skills?
4. What do the costumes signify or why did the authors of the music genre chose these particular costumes?

Dances

1. What dancing styles/moves are involved?
2. What do the moves signify?
3. How are the skills acquired and transferred from one generation to another?

Threats to the music

1. What are its threats?
2. How is the music endangered?
3. What could be the external factors, perhaps historical factors (for instance social inequalities, colonial power imbalances, political circumstances, etc) catalyzing these threats?

Methodology

Research design and process

The study was conducted using qualitative research tools and an inclusive process, which turned respondents most intimately involved into co-researchers and facilitators. The engagement involved

extensive consultations with a wide range of community actors directly and indirectly involved in the practice of traditional music.

The research exercise

The initial research phase involved undertaking a literature review followed by the designing of research questions. Pre-visits to the research areas were conducted (a) to introduce the overall project (b) to identify the interview sites and the key research participants who could not be identified through desk research and (c) to pre-test the research tools that had been developed.

Data Collection

Primary Data: Primary data was collected during the field study conducted in the concerned cultural communities where the indigenous music practitioners are located. The researchers administered questionnaires to the respondents. The interviews were categorised into two: one-one interviews and then focus group discussions.

Interviews by the researchers (aided by sometimes an interpreter) and participant observations were carried out. Audio-visual recordings were made to capture the various phenomena of interviews and indigenous music performances. Permission was sought from the various offices in charge of areas involved in the study. This was aimed at enabling the researchers to freely collect data in the area of study.

Secondary Data: Reference to and review of various relevant documents was carried out and used to corroborate the data collected.



These included: books, dissertations and theses related to the research topic, relevant journals and relevant websites.

Data collection was finalised and data validation was then conducted, giving voice to the narratives from the various stakeholders within the communities, groups and individuals interfaced with.

Finally, report writing and data analysis enabled knowledge and practices related to music derived from current and past lived experiences that have been mainly orally communicated and passed on over time to be systematically documented.

Leaders in the concerned cultural communities supported CCFU in the planning and implementation of the research by coordinating and mobilising music practitioners who participated in the data collection. District officials also provided information and participated in the identification of the most appropriate sample communities to engage with.

Research Validity

The overall approach maintained an interactive process that involved extensive consultation with a wide range of community actors in the chosen areas,

in open and inclusive communication. The various participants interfaced with, including men, women, and young people hailing from different cultural domains of the cultural communities, were drawn from the rural, peri-urban and urban areas. The academia was also consulted.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study was focused on documenting the endangered music of the Banyoro, Bagungu, Alur and Acholi, as seen from the lenses of the interviewees and as depicted from the literature review.

The study was conducted in selected districts of the Albertine region, covering Hoima, Buliisa, Masindi, Nwoya, Gulu, Packwach and Nebbi. This selective model prioritized districts where TotalEnergies EP Uganda operates and their neighbouring districts.

This study was limited to the indigenous ceremonial songs and dances of the marriage rites, funerals, partying, celebrations of the birth of twins, various rituals and coronations of kings and chiefs. They form the root or innate indigenous genre of music, which is an integral part of culture determining how and why the music and dance are made (Oehrle, 2001).





RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings indicate that almost all traditional music is under threat due to factors such as economic conditions, western culture, education and religion, politics and acculturation. Hence, the

publication presents some of the music of the Banyoro, Bagungu, Acholi and Alur that is under threat of extinction unless there are deliberate efforts taken to safeguard it.

BUNYORO

Introduction

Located in the western part of Uganda, Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom was one of the most powerful kingdoms in Central and East Africa from the 13th century to the 19th century. Today, the kingdom comprises of eight districts: Kagadi, Kikuube, Hoima, Masindi, Kakumiro, Kibale, Kiryandongo and Buliisa. The latter

is mostly occupied by the Bagungu people, whose endangered music will be treated separately in this publication.

There are generally six endangered music and dance in Bunyoro. These are: Orunyeye, Amakondere, Entogoro, Eiguulya, Engwara and Omunyonyi. This study focused on the Orunyeye and Amakondere because of the tight project timeframe.



A traditional troupe performs Orunyeye dance and music at a function





Hon. Matia Kasaija (R) joins a traditional troupe to dance to Orunyege

Orunyege

Description:

This is a functional dance and music of the Banyoro (and also for the Batooro, who were part of Bunyoro until the 1830s) that has evolved over the years -to getting referred to as a courtship dance performed by young people to enable them choose their marriage partners. The dance is named after the rattles (*binyege/ebinyege*) that are tied on boys' legs to produce sounds and rhythms as they stamp their feet rhythmically. The sound produced by rattles is more exciting as it is well-syncopated as the main beat is displaced. It is meant to blend well with

the song and rich ensemble of instruments: three drums (*engoma enkooto* -big drum, *engoma entaito* -small drum and *engaabi* -long drum), three tube fiddles, six pipes, the flute and the shakers (*akasekende*). The dance is performed by a rich ensemble, comprising of up to 18 musicians, dancers and instrumentalists. The female dancers are supposed to beautify themselves with appropriate makeup, including an attractive cloth or beads tied on their heads, complemented with a raffia skirt held around the waist with a ring. Women dancers are supposed to be decent with their breasts covered and with a long skirt



known as *ekikohi*, says 69-year-old Apuuli Karugaba, an artist and founder of Bunyoro Heritage Foundation.

What makes the dance more interesting is the vigorous foot stamping that characterizes the dance. According to www.bunyorokitarakingdom.org, the official website of the Kingdom, when Orunyege dance and music is being performed: "The ground crackles and reverberates with an unwavering mild tremor and the air tinkles with the sound of rattles firmly fitted to the feet of aggressive male dancers stomping to the pulsating rhythm of fervent drummers. The women, dressed in colourful costumes and sash reeds wrapped around their waists, stomp in gentler aggressive rhythm. Air rising, husky male voices meander through the drum rumblings and the nectar-sweet, feminine voices pitch in as if to mellow the uproar. The collective sum of the sound and sight is a compelling performance".

According to www.ugandasafariexperts.com: "The Runyege dance is performed with vigor and skill intended to impress the woman of interest to pick out the right man. He is joined by his family and friends to show the great family and supporting community she will be apart of."

It is no wonder that the dance and music is today popular at weddings and other social gatherings, which in itself has endangered the genre as shall be discussed below.

Mr. Nyegenya M. Vincent, a graduate of performing arts and filming, who works as a choreographer, musician trainer, songwriter, playwright and actor, narrates

that when the first pair of male and female gets exhausted, the second, third and fourth pair comes on stage in a row. Elders in Bunyoro say, in the past, young men and women would be picked at random and paraded in front of the community in a traditional ceremony to choose their future partners. This ceremony was a significant event, especially for the boys. Poor dancers would remain bachelors. The best female dancers would get the best male partners and poor dancers would miss out or get uninteresting male partners.

Origin of orunyege: It is reported that the dance started when a man and his wife, after a bumpy harvest, decided to be innovative and adventurous to find out what more could the yellow bananas be used for. They created a canoe-like vessel out of a tree log, peeled yellow bananas and covered them with spear grass inside the canoe. The man started squeezing them using his feet. But while stomping, he realised that it produced a sound. As the bananas produced the juice, his wife would provide a song to energise him. Before they knew it, the community had gathered to feast on the juice. They tied dry banana leaves around their feet to join into the celebrations by stamping their feet. Later, the community realised that there was a tree specie that would provide them with rattles to tie around their feet.

Over the years, the music was enriched with the invention of the drums: the *engoma enkoto* and *entaito*, which are curved out of a tree and covered with a cow skin, and the long drum, whose head is covered by the skin of a monitor lizard. Then came the shakers, tube fiddles, pipes and flutes.



Threats: Orunyeye faces several threats, including commercialisation. Authentic dance is meant to be rich, comprising of about 18 musicians, dancers and instrumentalists. However, due to commercialisation and a need to cut costs of hiring the full troupe to perform the orunyeye, Karugaba says that it is now normal to find minimalistic sets of 3-5 people doing the dance at a wedding or any other party. "The humming has also been adulterated. It is now faster than the slow and gentle pace it is supposed to be," he notes.

The other threat is deforestation that makes it hard to find tree species such as *markhamia lutea* (*omusambya*), *funtumia africana* (*omusanda*), *cordia millenii* (*mujuga ngoma*), etc. that are used in making music instruments. According to Karugaba, hunting of monitor lizards is also now restricted, which makes it difficult to find the skin to be used on the long drum. This has resulted into the improvisation of the monitor lizard skin with the cow skin. But this compromises the authentic sound of the long drum.

Additionally, traditional wedding ceremonies where this music and dance was popular are no longer the same. Where they still happen, they have been overtaken by recorded Western music. Some are conducted in modern settings. This points to the threat that Tracey (1959: 23-4) describes – how the traditional music has been affected by its removal from its cultural settings.

If programmed for a wedding function, the dance is allocated limited time in which the performers have to do things very

fast, compromising the authenticity of the music. There are also concerns about how the female dancers dress today, in short skirts that depict indecency.

With the growth of the oil and gas sector, there is worry that people will become more affluent. With more disposable income, they will be able to afford modern communication gadgets such as televisions and radios, exposing them to western music and alienating them from their traditional music.

Amokondere

Description

It is royal music named after a particular type of trumpets made out of gourds. In Bunyoro, there are other trumpets, which are side-blown; they are known as *engwaara*, and they are not regarded as royal instruments. It should, however, be noted that royal music in Bunyoro is also known as *empango* music named after the most popular royal function, the *empango* ceremony, which is held once a year to commemorate the king's coronation anniversary.

In an interview with Dr. Samuel Kahunde, who did his PhD research on *empango* royal music and dance, the music genre derives its name from the most important kingdom drums known as *empango*.

"In the palace, there are very many drums, and some are called *empango*. The *empango* drums include *tibamulinde*, *kajumba*, *nyalebe*, and *kanumi*, among others. The most important one is the *tibamulinde* drum, which is the largest. The ceremonies and festivities that involve the



empango drum are all called empango,” says Kahunde.

The other accompanying instruments are the amakondere (the royal trumpets – for which the music genre is today popularly known for), entimbo drums, the amagaija drums, and the amahuuru drums, all of which may sometimes be played together simultaneously. The music is also accompanied by the entajemerwa and the kaijwiire-timbeeta drums, which are played separately, and not played together with the above mentioned instruments.

According to Kahunde, the empango drum is positioned in the centre of other instruments, with the amagaija drums at its sides, and the amahuuru drums behind it. The amakondere are positioned outside the other musical instruments, and perform while surrounding them. Dancers perform while moving, surrounding other instruments. The movement is in a particular way and rhythmic manner too.

Thus, according to Kahunde, there are concentric formations: drums in the centre, followed by the amakondere, and then the dancers. This arrangement is maintained throughout the festivals. Maintaining this arrangement of instruments expresses the performers’ perspectives about authenticity in their performances.

He therefore suggests that the musical instruments represent the hierarchy of administration of the traditional Bunyoro society as follows: the empango drum represents the king; the amagaija drums represent the advisors of the king; the amahuuru drums represent the senior servants of the king; the amakondere represents the chiefs; and the dancers represent the general public.

Besides being in the centre, Kahunde notes that the empango drum always dominates other instruments. Despite being only a single drum playing against many others, its sound is prominent and appears to



Eikondere, played during amakondere dance and music



command other drums during dancing. Even Lloyd (1906: 43) observes that: "The leading drum, that is, the one that could always be heard, whether anything else were audible or not.... it had a deep resonant tone, and was beaten with such vigour than the other".

The amakondere is basically a set of seven trumpets, each varying in size, except the two high pitched pairs. According to Kahunde, there may be an addition of two pieces for producing lower or higher octaves.

"The smallest ikondere [singular for amakondere] is about a foot long and the longest may be about two feet long. From the smallest, the amakondere instruments of Bunyoro are named: entabya 1, entabya 2, eteru 1, eteru 2, orange, rukara, and rudyangi," says Kahunde.

When the amakondere are sounding, they are said to "*okwaana*," (the royal sound of the trumpets) and not "*okugamba*" (the sound of non-royal trumpets), says Kahunde. Before playing, the amakondere are moistened inside so that they resonate easily.

These instruments are not accompanied by voice, though the melodies produced by the amakondere may be well known by the performers.

According to Mr. Nyegenya M. Vincent, a graduate of performing arts and filming, who works as a choreographer, trainer, songwriter, playwright and actor, during the empango celebrations, music and dance is performed at specific times and places within and outside the palace.

Within the palace it is performed around the ritual houses, at Kyawairindi yard (royal courtyard), and in the Karuziika yard (royal palace). Outside the palace it is performed at the home of Omukonda (hereditary prophet of the king), and of the queen mother.

The people within this royal ring are meant to be traditionally dressed, complemented with pieces of bark-cloths worn across the shoulders. The men have long white tunics (*kanzu*), and the women wear long dresses, covering them with large shawls (*emyenagi*).

Another distinguishing feature in Bunyoro is that only the people of the noble clans dance at the royal hill (within the rings) when the amakondere are played, accompanied by the empango drum. Clans, including the Abapuhya, Abazira and Abafunjo, have special assignments in this dance. They especially dance to the irambi melodies and perform the irambi style. The rest of the people (non-noble clans) have a passive role as they are not privileged to dance at the royal hill because they do not belong to this high class.

Kahunde classifies amakondere into two categories: amakondere ga irambi (is slow and for the purpose of marching, since it provides the rhythm for the royal processions) and amakondere ga mujaguzo (the faster style).

During the irambi style, male dancers perform as follows: The arms are mainly positioned in a manner of a warrior who is holding a shield in the left hand and the spear in the right hand, ready to kill. The palms are closed, to symbolise the holding



of the protective shield and the lethal spear. This posture does not symbolise war or fighting as it may appear, but demonstrates self-praise or self-proclamation or a celebration (okwebuga), according to Kahunde.

According to Yolamu Ndoleriire Nsamba, retired Private Secretary to the King of Bunyoro-Kitara, the musicians use the amakondere music to deliver their messages to the king and his circle of royals. For instance, *Bamulagire Agenzere* was a song sang when the king's fighters lost a battle as a way of encouraging his men to be courageous and better plan for the next battle. Some songs were meant for the Nyabusaana (spiritual women) who were the Banyabwongo (the brain thinkers) for the king, according to Nsamba.

The origin of amakondere

There are two schools of thought as to the origins of the amakondere. One school argues that the amakondere are royal instruments that were brought by the Bacwezi rulers as part of their royal regalia. Dr. Nsamba argues that amakondere was associated with the monarchy. He, for instance, says that the king had ceremony where he celebrated the new moon.

"His chiefs came with gifts that would fill the king's coffers; that is how the monarchy taxed its subjects and it was obligatory for the chiefs to pay homage to the king, otherwise you would be regarded rebellious. During this ceremony, amakondere would be played to entertain the guests," Dr. Nsamba says.

The other school of thought, however, argues that the amakondere belong to the people outside the palace. They were "just borrowed" to be played in the palace, but eventually become royal music.

Referencing Christopher Koojo, amakondere player, who was one of his interviewees for his research, Kahunde reveals that one of the past kings ordered the amakondere to be played in the palace after being entertained (with the amakondere band) in Kibiro village.

The statement of Lloyd (1906: 44), "This is the Makondere band, and is always requisitioned upon great state functions," also suggests that the amakondere were not resident in the palace, and belonged to the people outside the palace.

Mbabi-Katana (1982: 28-9) states that the Bacwezi rulers came with three groups of palace servants for playing them. The first group was called the abapuuya (belonging to Abazaazi clan), and were responsible for performing during the coronation ceremonies. The abanyabyaara and abahaagya were responsible for performing during the empango celebrations and the ritual fetish respectively.

According to Kahunde, an analysis of the amakondere songs reveals that they have characteristics, which are not found in non-royal songs. The amakondere songs are very short cyclical (repetitive) statements. Sometimes the songs have brief sections with no lyrics, but vocables.



BUGUNGU



Bugungu Heritage and Information Centre (BHIC) troupe performs Muzeenyo

Introduction

Situated at the base of the rift valley escarpment west of Murchison Falls National Park, Bugungu is mostly inhabited by the Bagungu people, who are traditionally fishermen, pastoralists and hunters living on the shores of Lake Albert. Due to the decline in the fish stocks, the gazetted of their former hunting spaces into a national park, and the shrinking land for animal grazing due to increasing population and oil and gas activities, the Bagungu are getting more engaged in crop farming.

There are four endangered music and dances in Bugungu. These are: Muzeenyo, Kalihwa, Gwadda and Kikwele.

Muzeenyo

Muzeenyo means to play. The music involves a playful dance from which it is

named. It is a predominantly waist dance for both men and women. Dancers perform this dance by wriggling their waists. Muzeenyo is performed when a bride's family visits their daughter after an engagement with her partner.

The ceremony is a festival as it involves exchange of gifts, dancing competitions between the visiting and the host family. There is no gender disaggregation in the roles of men and women, they all dance the same, shaking the waist.

This music involves 2 long drums, 2 short drums, 2 tube fiddles, a thumb piano (adopted from other cultures) and a tube fiddle (borrowed from the neighbouring Alur community). The dance has become integral part of general entertainment at functions and celebrations.



Kalihwa

This dance is meant for the celebration of the birth of twins (mahasa). It derives its name from the short drums locally known as ndihwa, which is accompanied by the long drum (ngaabi).

The ndihwa drums are usually three (made out of cow skin) accompanied by the long drum (made out of monitor lizard skin). Over the years, the music has evolved and enriched with additional instruments such as the tube fiddle and thumb piano.

Bagungu believe that giving birth to twins is a special favour from God, therefore, there is a need to appreciate by making a special celebration. They also believe that the twins as toddlers speak to each other. There is a Lugungu proverb that when you punish the twins, punish them both. This has since been exploited to today's saying that when you are rewarding, reward both.

Gwadda

This is a teenage dance, with paired dancers, dancing as couples. With Gwadda, there are no special costumes, though its songs are related to Kalihwa. It is an

evening dance that didn't involve elders. It is reported to be a foreign or imported from the neighbouring communities, mainly because of the Butiaba port that brought in foreigners.

Kikwele

This is a dance that is staged to celebrate the prominent hunters. The festival was staged and it involved singing and dancing accompanied by the musical instruments. At the festival, the hunters were expected to carry animal parts such as a hippos' teeth and tails of animals that the hunter killed over the years. It was also an opportunity for the hunters to consult spirits on the reason as to why they were not killing animals since the hunters would get possessed.

It involved songs praising the most successful hunters who usually had the big stage. Even the dances would gesture the toughness of the animal one killed. The dance movements also symbolize hunting adventures including tricks of how the hunters go about their exploits. Sometimes the dance also involves imitation of different animal moves like "kugoda", meaning to bend like horns of a buffalo.



A Mugungu elder demonstrates how to play the tube fiddle, one of the musical instruments for the Bagungu



The two drums for the Bagungu: Endhiwa on the left and engaabi (long drum) on the right



ACHOLI



Members of Wamito Kuc Women's music group in Purongo Town Council, Nwoya District, perform Ajere dance and music

Introduction

The Acholi people are Nilotic ethnic group of the Luo peoples, found in Northern Uganda. They are descendants of Nyabongo/Labongo, the brother to Nyipir/Gipir.

There are generally 23 endangered music and dances in Acholi. These are: bwola, otele, laraka-raka, apiti, dingi-dingi, ajere, acut, okwil, lamuya, lacuku-cuku, okojo, aguma, akel, myel-lyel, rut, myel-jok anyodo, nanga, konge, obet, oling, oyiny, kwero merok and atoo-iraa.

Apiti

Apiti is a dance for women, organised to celebrate the accomplishment of a communal activity. There are no musical instruments involved; it is only singing, dancing and whistling. This dance is common around August-September, and December-January because these are harvesting periods; so there is a lot to feast on.

The dance gained prominence in the late 60's and early 70's when the Department of Community Development in the post-



colonial governments was very active in mobilising communities to engage in productive activities such as agriculture. Groups of women would get support from Government and politicians who would provide them with uniforms to wear while performing the Apiti dance and music.

Apiti declined following the loss of steam in communal activities as a result of the inactivity of the Department of Community Development. It wasn't surprising that the 2010 Acholi music festival attracted only two groups performing Apiti dance; it was Palabek and Padibe in Lamwo District, according to Ojara Lacambel, who was one of the festival organisers.

Apiti involves songs of praises for the hardworking men and women, and ridicules of women who run away from their families during seasons of hard work. The music has also been appropriated into politics to praise politicians. This music can be revitalized through the now popular Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisations (SACCOs), which is today the new avenue to mobilise people to engage in income generating activities.

Otole

Otole is a war dance; it also involves music that was used to mobilise and energise men into war. With security now a responsibility of the central government, this music is only still performed among clans with warrior instinct, those neighbouring Karamoja and South Sudan. They are the Agor, Madi-Opei and Lukungu in Lamwo District.

During this dance, men showcase their masculinity of defense and attack. Carrying spears and shields, the dancers' faces are

supposed to be mean to create fear among their enemies. The shields were made out of the buffalo skin, but with the introduction of conservation laws that prohibited hunting, it has over the years made it impossible to access the buffalo skins for making the shields. The dancers are today opting to curve the shields out of wood.

The music is meant to instill confidence and courage in the dancers/fighters to go face their enemy. It is organised whenever there is rumour that war is eminent to create the mood of bravery among the men. It is also organised after victory to celebrate success.

The musical instruments used are rattles, which the dancers tie on their feet and the drums. The songs are warrior songs. The dancing formation is with strictness not to break the chain/dance from the beginning to the end. This is intended to demonstrate that you are not supposed to create room for your enemies even when you go through fire or bush thorns, according to Lacambel.

The way the women dance is in praises of their brave and strong men, who are only equated to god. It is an imitation of a real war intended to scare away an imagined enemy, as it is locally known as 'uuc' or 'wuc'.

In 1977, the then president of the Republic of Uganda, Idi Amin, ordered for the abolition of Otole dance in the country. He had gone to Pakuba lodge when the dance was performed. As the dancers threw around the spears, he thought they were aimed at him and therefore ordered for the immediate abolition of the dance. An announcement was made on Radio Uganda to that effect. According to



Lacambel, even the British colonialists are reported to have been disturbed by this dance. The dance bounced back after independence under what is known as 'Coo-rom' (we are all men) and it was very popular between 1979-87 when people from the north of the country dominated the Uganda army.

"Most of our children were now soldiers. You would hear them singing the Otole songs as military trucks passed by," Lacambel says, adding: "Otole songs were used in the military training sessions."

Bwola

This is the most powerful traditional royal dance performed by Acholi community. The Ajali community in Patongo in the current Pader district is the first Acoli

community that studied the movement of a herd of antelopes around the anthill, and later on developed their movement into a bwola dance. In this dance, performers always make it so colorful and organise it in the way that one person (a man) must start the song, followed by a chorus, then women and men who sing along the rhythm, and follow with the dance moves.

Bwola is played everywhere and the rules of the dance are not strictly followed. The drum for Bwola dance is always found in the palace. It is only brought out for drumming by the chief (Rwot). Bwola has been politicised and it is performed for every politician for money.

It is no longer for the chiefs; it has become cheap, says Lawrence Okello, former secretary to the Acholi council of chiefs. All



A traditional troupe performs Bwola dance and music



chiefs are meant to have spiritual powers. In the past, when the chief brought out the Bwola drum for drumming, it would rain, Okello says.

Bwola's taboo is that you must not drum its bottom. It would bring you misfortunes of becoming impotent because it means you are hitting your testicles.

Myel Jok

If an evil spirit attacks someone, the spiritual leader will use Ajaar (supernatural being) to chase it away. In this ceremony, there are special songs sang, accompanied by drums and shakers to cause the spirit to possess someone and speak.

Hence, this music is usually performed when there is someone sick or attacked by an evil spirit. Every Acholi clan is said to have its own deities but work in unison.

The music is no longer performed because Christianity regards it as evil. The songs of this genre, however, have been appropriated and are used in the church, the shrines have been burnt. Today, one can hardly find the music played anywhere.

Myel Lyel

Myel lyel is only performed when someone dies. The longevity of singing Myel Lyel depends on how long one has lived. For elders or one with grandchildren, the singing will last the entire night. For young people, it is just four songs for female and 3 for male as it is the case at the time of birth where the mother and child spends 4 days for the girl and 3 days for the boy in the house before coming out of the house.

Funeral songs are mostly lamentation songs for the life lost. The dancing involves forward and backward movements signifying that if the dancers had known what was going to kill the deceased, they would have attacked it.

The Acholi believe that if a thought of a funeral comes into your mind, it means you are about to lose someone close. They also believe that if they are at a party and you happen to sing a funeral song, it means you are a witch.

Myel Lyel is under threat from the modern public sound systems (which are nowadays used for playing Christian music at funerals), Western religion and Western songs.

Myel Lyel music is accompanied by drums (1big and 2 small), with a calabash, rubbed against a log, to demonstrate that someone is lying dead. The calabash should however be left open; it should never face down. If it does, it means you want someone else to die and you would be fined a goat.

There are no costumes for this kind of music or dance. Because dance is usually sudden, participants of this music come the way they are dressed.

On the last funeral rites, which is after a year, the Myel Lyel dance/music is like Laraka-raka music meant to celebrate the deceased's life. But even the last funeral rite is threatened by Western religion that labels it satanic. The church today encourages mourners to finalise everything on the burial day, with no need for the last funeral rites. But the Acholi believe that if a funeral is not done in the right way, evil spirits attached to the dead will disturb the family.



Rut

The birth of children differs; some are born single, others twins, some come with their heads first, and others with legs first. Extraordinary births in Acholi are celebrated. It means these people are special. For instance, the twins and those who come with their legs first. There are ceremonies and traditions supposed to appease the spirits who enabled the birth to happen, but also to give the babies good health and to be successful people in life. Whereas for the normal births, when the mother and baby are ready to come out of the house, peas are prepared, for the extraordinary children, white chicken is slaughtered.

There are special songs and dances performed. For the twins, male and female participants are supposed to be half-naked, with the women revealing their breasts. The dance is done early morning and the nakedness is meant to show that they are open with nothing to hide.

Laraka-raka

Laraka-raka is a courtship dance, for people searching for partners. It involves love songs, praising songs for beautiful and well-mannered women, and ridiculing of women from 'bad' families. The instruments used are drums which are placed in the



Performance of the Acholi traditional Laraka-raka dance and music



centre of the group. The dancing girls carry whistles. The boys blow big horns (locally known as obute) or small horns (locally known as bila).

The horns are made out of calabash tips (these are locally known as kiliko) or the tips of the horns of wildlife such as antelopes (these are locally known as kilu). Each boy/man has a unique way of blowing the horns, which makes the girls/women easily identify them.

The Laraka-raka dance and music has a subgenre known as Oling, which is organised to celebrate an achievement. It was first popularized by returnees of World War II.

Ayije (Aijie)

It comprises the thumb pianos in different sizes, shakers and saucepans to provide the bass. The songs are composed by the best composers. Most of the songs are historical and eventful. It is the music genre that archives the Acholi's history.

It is, for instance, reported that all events during the LRA war are archived in this genre of music.

Lumeke music

The Lukeme music is reported to have been one of the most popular music in Acholi, and it was mostly music for the young people. It is said that, this music genre prevented the children in the 1960's and 70's from going to school. Every Monday, it was compulsory for students to be checked (their thumbs) to see if they spent their weekend playing Lukeme. Lukeme players are said to have been very popular.

"Those days, if you traveled say to Jinja, you were considered successful, but Lukeme boys were more popular than those who traveled to Jinja. Girls preferred a Lukeme boy even if he had jiggers," says Lacambel.

It is in the 1980s that parents began using derogatory words against Lukeme meant to discourage their children from being overtaken by the music. It was also overtaken by Adungu from the Jonam people. Lacambel is credited for having revived Lukeme by organizing people into groups to learn the genre in the late 80's.

According to Mr. Okello Quinto of Gulu Theatre Artists, Lukeme dance can also be referred to as Aije, Geppe or Aguma.



ALUR

Introduction



A member of Pakwach Art and Craft Association (PACA) who specialises in making music instruments



The Alur people are Nilotic ethnic group of the Luo peoples, found in North Western Uganda, commonly known as West Nile. They are descendants of Nyipir/Gipir, the brother to Nyabongo/Labongo.

There are two endangered genres of music for the Alur people; the Agwara music, which is popular among the Alur of Nebbi and Zombo districts, and the Njige, which is common among the Alur of Pakwach district (also known as the Jonam people).

Agwara

Popular among the Alur of Nebbi and Zombo districts, Agwara music, also known as Myena Agwara, incorporates two sister arts: music and dance to convey royal and funeral messages.

The royal Agwara music

The royal Agwara music accompanies rituals associated with accession to the thrones of the Alur chiefdoms or their royal anniversaries. Agwara music is performed with dignity to convey royal messages. Its musical instruments comprise of twelve transverse or side-blown wooden trumpets. The tuning is based on the traditional pentatonic scale, and the lyrics create a balanced ensemble.

Each Agwara piece produces a single note or chord and so the twelve pieces are blown in unison to produce the desired tune or melody. The trumpets are accompanied by drumming, singing and dancing.

The dance in the royal Agwara music is stately and elegantly choreographed and performed in a circular, mass, linear and serpentine formations. The dancing

techniques involve jumping and leaping with the exploitation of low, middle and high dance levels.

“The performance promotes social cohesion among the musicians such as trumpeters, drummers, singers and dancers instilling in them the spirit of discipline, respect, team work and concentration. It also develops in them a high sense of creativity, imagination, memory and artistic expression.

Costumes made of long animal fur, plant leaves, beads and armlets are worn to exaggerate body movement adding authenticity and beauty to the performance,” reads the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development inventory of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Alur people, for which Agwara music was one of the items inventoried.

Funeral Agwara music

Agwara music is also performed while performing the rituals of the last funeral rites of a very important person in society, for instance a chief. This is intended to commemorate his or her good deeds and depicts characters and traits of the fallen hero that deserve to be remembered. The funeral music is mournfully performed with moody emotions compared to the royal Agwara music performed in the palaces.

The funeral Agwara music is usually organised as a competitive game, and it attracts a big crowd, comprising of trumpeters, drummers, dancers, medicine men, local brew sellers, clan elders, opinion leaders, youth and people from all walks of life.



The idea to have a funeral Agwara event starts when two elders; one of whom must have lost their loved one or an important person, and the other desirous to show empathy meet and express their intentions to organize Agwara music and dance to commemorate their good deeds. Both elders exchange stones as a sign of commitment to organizing the event (funeral rites), with the one who lost their loved one offering to host the event and indicating the venue where it will be held. Each elder then returns to their respective homes to organise a meeting with his family members and clansmen to plan for the event. This is followed up with a series of meetings to mobilise resources to facilitate the organisation of the event.

Subsequently, the visiting team sends an advance team, comprising of drummers, trumpeters, medicine men, elders, opinion leaders and women to assist the host family in organising the venue and prepare food. It is mandatory that this team comes with a bull as part of their contribution to the event. The bull is given to the hired labourers to slash and clean the venue, which normally is not far from the graveyard of the deceased.

In the meeting between the advance team and the host family, both sides agree on the songs to be sung/played during the event and even rehearse together. They also agree on the programme and at what intervals each team is expected to be on stage.

The three-day event usually starts on Friday night, with the climax expected on Sunday. On Friday eve, fire is lit near the ritually hoisted pole. Medicine men from the host's

side sit back-to-back, leaning against the pole to guard it against the visiting team who aim to steal glowing firewood from the fire to advantage them to open the dance.

If the visitors grab such an opportunity before midnight, it is regarded their first victory. However, if the hosts manage to guard the fire so well to delay the dance opening until after midnight, they claim the first victory. Thereafter, points are scored on how well each team performs against the rhythm and tempo played on the big drum (*jangirikeng*). Whenever the drummer fails, the dancers ululate and it means his team has lost to the opponent because of his failure to maintain a steady rhythm and tempo accompanying the trumpets. A team can also lose points when their trumpeters and singers start a song but due to some reasons they suddenly pause or stop before starting all over again.

The last defeat is judged on the medicine man. He is supposed to climb the ritually prepared pole hoisted in a shallow hole (10 centimeters deep) in the centre of the venue. A chick is tied together with ritually-cut reeds, about 8-12 pieces, on the tip of the pole. If a medicine man falls while climbing the ritual pole, his wife or elder child may die unless a ritual to that effect is done. If he fails, his counterpart from the opponent takes over to climb. The medicine man climbs the pole amidst rituals performed by his compatriots from the same team. This process is repeated until one medicine man finally succeeds – to climb the pole to the top and untie the chick and the reeds to bring them down.

It is at this juncture that the medicine men from both sides sit together with



the two elders who have organised the dance to declare the winner of the dance competition. The winning team is declared on a Saturday. On Sunday, the dancing commences at about mid-day until 6.00p.m. It climaxes with the singing of a funeral song as both teams march to the graveyard of the deceased to pay their last respect and lay a wreath in commemoration.

Non-competitive Agwara

Agwara can also be performed for non-ritual events. The organizers may invite one team to provide entertainment to grace an occasion. Today, the music and dance is also performed during primary school music festivals, cultural galas in higher institutions and other public events.

THREATS TO TRADITIONAL MUSIC

The findings of this study indicate that traditional music still faces a number of threats. Among them is the issue of increasing effects of climate change. As a result of deforestation and settlement and cultivation of wetlands, sourcing for raw materials to make traditional music instruments and costumes is increasingly becoming a challenge. Also, conservation efforts such as the creation of national parks and wildlife reserves coupled with stringent measures against killing of wildlife has made it difficult to access items needed for music instruments and costumes. For instance, a long drum (ngaabi, as referred to by the bagungu) cannot be the same without the skin of the monitor lizard. Because of the difficulty in getting monitor lizard skins, makers of music instruments are opting to make ngaabi using the cow skin. This, however, compromises the authenticity and sound of the instrument.

The other threat is the misinterpretation of some traditional music genres by some government bodies, which has forced some communities to abandon them. For instance, kikwele for the Bagungu people is reported to be understood by Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) as a music that

encourages hunting. For Acholi's otele music faces also faces similar challenges from security bodies as music that mobilises and energizes men into war, given the long spell of insurgency that happened in the north.

For royal music, their survival is hinged largely on the stability of cultural institutions. Bunyoro kingdom's empango music, for instance, was at risk of extinction during the period of the abolition of kingdoms in Uganda. During this period, Mr. Nyegenya notes that several skilled performers died, thus creating a vacuum of knowledge and skills. The younger people had no opportunity of acquiring these skills because there was no avenue for the transmission of the royal traditions. The royal music and dance became obscure to most of the people partly because it was not performed for twenty-seven years after the abolition of kingdoms. With the revival of traditional kingdoms, the music has been steadily taking up its place. However, there are sub genres of royal music, which are extinct such as the music that was played at every new moon. Some musical instruments that were played to soothe the king to sleep and to wake him up. But Dr.



Nsamba adds that with the new centralised system of administration that takes away the collecting of taxes from cultural institutions, Bunyoro-Kitara kingdom cannot hold some of the royal functions because of limited resources. This certainly affects the music that is supposed to be performed at such functions.

As already note, the generation gap between the young and the old is a threat to traditional music. As skilled elderly people age, the skill of performing these music genres or even making the music instruments and costumes fades away with them.

In all the cultural communities surveyed in this study, western religion has been blamed for the reduced spaces to practice traditional music. For music meant to celebrate the birth of twins such as Bagungu's kalihwa music and Acholi's rut, their biggest threat comes from being undermined by especially Western religions taking over the celebration of twins. People are encouraged to take children to church to be baptized rather than celebrating the traditional rituals.

However, Rev. Can. Christopher Asiimwe, Lecturer, Bishop Ruhindi Theological College, Bunyoro Kitara Diocese says through their teachings in the African Traditional Religion and practice, they advocate for restoration of heritage and cultural values, intertwined with Christianity. '...we want to focus on the restoration of the African melody which is celebrational, rather than the English melody is meditational'.

This also applies for the funeral music. Funeral service companies are interfering

with the traditional way of mourning. Funeral ceremonies are modernised and the traditional mourning songs are no longer played. In the mourning songs, the Bagungu, for instance, are supposed to praise the greatness of their deceased persons, highlight their relationship with them and show their sadness or lamentation about the loss. These practices are fading, taken over by modern styles such as church hymns.

For the funeral agwara music that requires resources to organise an event for it to be performed, with increasing hard economic times, it is becoming increasingly hard to organise.

Most communities are faced with many survival needs and no longer regard organizing the last funeral rites as a priority. Organising an Agwara event for funeral rites requires a lot of resources: animals such as bulls to be slaughtered, chicken, food items and local brew.

The few medicine men and craftsmen who perform the rituals for agwara royal dance and make the agwara instruments and ankle bells are old and weak. The tree species used for making the agwara instruments have equally become scarce and are in distant places, and sold expensively to the craftsmen.

According to John Jolly Okumu, the curator of Ker Kwonga Panyimur Museum, it is also time consuming to organise agwara royal music and dance today. For instance, the last agwara dance ceremony was organized in 1998 in Penji Oryang, Parombo Sub-county, Nebbi District. Hence, most young people are not easily exposed to the music.





CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recognition and appreciation of cultural resources

Preserving and promoting endangered music should be a priority as it represents expressions, values and traditions transferred through generations of a community and provide people with a sense of continuity and identity, and consequently contributes to the survival of cultural heritage.

Some of the respondents met also underscored a need to strengthen cultural institutions in the Albertine region as gatekeepers of traditional knowledge by supporting them to identify knowledgeable resource persons and instruments related to endangered musical heritage, for documentation and promotion.

Transmission of authentic musical heritage

From the old to the young generation

From the study, there is an evident disconnect of the old and young generations, and how music is appreciated. Safeguarding measures for endangered musical heritage, therefore, ought to focus on the transmission of knowledge and techniques, of performing, playing and making instruments and strengthening the bond between the old and the young generation. As Prof. Mercy Mirembe Ntangaare of Makerere University notes, "...the good thing is that folklore is not static. It grows with the people. We are the ones who make or unmake it. If we don't make an effort to transmit it to future generations, then it certainly will die out with us".

According to Fred Lukumu, the LCV Chairperson of Buliisa District, whereas the number of musicians practicing Bagungu traditional music, for instance, is declining, whenever the music is played, it attracts attention.

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*Prof. Mercy Mirembe Ntangaare
of Makerere University*

Embrace technology

Young people receive information via a wide range of channels, especially digitally in urban settings and on the radio in rural areas. With the dominance of western related information on these platforms, they are therefore quick to absorb the essence of western culture and this has a profound influence on how traditional music is appreciated.



Thus, the urgency to strengthen transmission mechanisms that embrace and appreciate a shift in technology. However, respondents agree that modern dissemination channels, including YouTube, and Spotify, among others, should be utilised.

Promote musical heritage in institutions of learning

The National Curriculum Development Centre should incorporate musical heritage

in the lower secondary curriculum and encourage the adoption of appropriate teaching methods, such as teaching folk songs and traditional operas.

Clubs in schools, for example, cultural heritage clubs, wildlife clubs, music, dance and drama clubs, among others, should be supported to promote indigenous music in their activities.

Utilise endangered music in development interventions

Respondents pointed to limited spaces for demonstrating and promoting endangered music. Whereas music provides powerful means of connecting people, bridges linguistic and cultural divides, and is a vehicle for identity and expression, it has not been fully utilised in development interventions. Respondents vehemently felt traditional music is still relevant and attracts the attention of communities.

Development institutions (for example local governments, civil society, oil and gas companies, and the media) have a role to play; through a combination of traditional

music, dance and drama, development practitioners will build on a locally acceptable and popular tool to mobilise and promote various aspects of development.

Development institutions should also lead the way in bridging gaps in musical heritage documentation, production and practice (including supporting music festivals and exhibitions) so as to set the stage for communities to effectively protect, practice and conserve their music. Support for such initiatives shouldn't be a token gesture but should be embedded in the planning.

Documentation and publicity

Insufficient information about authentic traditional music, uncontemporary production packaging and branding have been blamed for contributing to less utilisation and promotion of endangered music. Transcribing indigenous music, live recordings, interviews, among others, will support the appreciation of endangered

music and put it at the same footing as western music to create its fair appreciation by the general public. Therefore, music scholars and institutions should undertake detailed research on endangered traditional music and archive it for the future generation.



Western religion should embrace traditional music

During the field interviews, that ‘... they [some born-again Christians] should stop harassing the Acholi community as they try to promote *Myel Lyel* [the funeral music]’. This statement points to the marginal connection between traditional music and western religion, as explained in this report. It is not surprising that, in most churches

in the region, there are many western religious hymns translated from English to the indigenous languages than traditional songs translated into English. Respondents called for dialogues and mutual respect, especially of the values and rituals associated with traditional music.

Supporting performers of indigenous music

Several challenges facing the actors and promoters of musical heritage in the Albertine region have been highlighted by respondents in this report. Traditional music performers recommend increased financing and recognition of traditional music, availing networking opportunities with successful promoters of endangered traditional music, sponsoring their music festivals and establishing spaces for production and performance. It is also crucial to create regulations that enforce intellectual property rights, so that artists can economically benefit from their work.

“We must professionalise our musicians and create occasions where our music is played. There is need to support festivals where traditional music is showcased, promote the music in schools and support groups still practicing traditional music, to use it as a source of income. We also need to record all funeral songs –to make sure that they are played using the music address systems at funerals,” recommends Lukumu.

Sustainability of raw materials that produce music

It was noted that most raw materials for the musical instruments are either endangered or extinct. For example, trees such as, *markhamia lutea* (*omusambya*), *funtumia africana* (*omusanda*), *cordia millenii* (*mujuga ngoma*), are scarce, have a slow maturity rate and grow in specific areas. Stakeholders, including Government,

development agencies and local communities should ensure strict measures to protect the natural environment, are adhered to and encourage indigenous tree planting. Specifically, a robust programme to plant these tree species that provide raw materials for the musical instruments is recommended.



Support exchanges among cultural communities

Most respondents in the research implored development entities to promote exchanges amongst communities. The exchanges themed on revitalizing musical

heritage could help in highlighting safeguarding gaps and measures so that promotion efforts are conducted collectively.

Further research on endangered and extinct musical heritage

Whereas the document highlights endangered music, during the validation of this publication, more endangered music and dance genre were identified. For example, Igulya, Engabu and Kagoma in Bunyoro, Ndala, Aliku and Osegu in Alur.

A call to further comprehensively document more endangered and extinct music and dance is recommended, so that a proper record is kept and musical heritage is revitalised.



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List of cited interviewees

Acholi

- Simon Peter Lakony, a music teacher
- Okello Quinto, Executive Director, Gulu Theatre Artists
- Ojara Lacambel, conservationist and former employee of Uganda Wildlife Authority
- Lawrence Okello, former Secretary to the Acholi Kingdom Council of Chiefs

Alur

- Rwoth Charles Ombidi Kwonga, Chief of Ker Kwonga Panyimur chiefdom and Jakom Kaal Ker Kwaro Jonam
- Mr. John Jolly Okummu, an artist, researcher, and secondary school teacher, and Curator Ker Kwonga Panyimur Museum
- Mr. Atya Richard Cwinyaa, an artist and founder of Alur Kingdom Troupe and composer of Alur Kingdom anthem Alur Kingdom

Bunyoro

- Dr. Yolamu Ndoleriire Nsamba, retired Private Secretary to the King of Bunyoro-Kitara
- Nyegenya M. Vincent, a graduate of performing arts and filming, who works as a choreographer, musician trainer, songwriter, playwright and actor

- Isingoma Tadeo of Tucana Cultural Troupe
- Samuel Kahunde, PhD in Ethnomusicology, University of Sheffield
- Mr. Joseph Karugaba Isimbwa, Director, Bunyoro Heritage Foundation
- Rev. Can. Christopher Asiimwe, Lecturer, Bishop Ruhindi Theological College, Bunyoro Kitara Diocese
- Dr. Milton Wabyona, Lecturer, Department of Performing Arts and Film, Makerere University

Bugungu

- Fred Lukumu, the LCV Chairperson, Buliisa District
- Wilson Kiiza, Founder of Bugungu Heritage & Information Centre (BHIC)
- Focus Group Discussion comprising of 6 experienced musicians, dancers and instrumentalists
- Dr. Milton Wabyona, Lecturer, Department of Performing Arts and Film, Makerere University



