LANGUAGE & CULTURE

According to Luo mythology, a warrior chief named Ramogi Awang led the Luo into present-day Kenya about 500 years ago. A prime example of Luo culture represented in life in Luo land is the naming process. Luo names refer to forces that exist beyond the immediate presence of life on earth. When individuals are deceased, they are referred to as the spirit of the ancestors. The system by which children receive names is tied directly to the position of the sun in relation to the earth when they are born. Different names carry different personality characteristics. So, when meeting a stranger on a footpath, one gains insight into the character of that person simply by learning their name.

Luo name their children at the time of day that they are born, for example: Atieno would be the name of a boy born in the evening. Akinyi is then given during harvesting, and Apiyo and Adongo are twins, with Apiyo as the name of the first to be born. The first letter of a name also indicates gender: "A" signifies a woman, and "O" for a boy. For example; Otheno would be the name of a boy born in the evening and Atieno for a girl born in the morning.

Traditionally, the practice of wife inheritance was common to ensure the family's sustenance. This practice is on the wane in modern society. Around the sixteenth century, the ancestors of the Luo began to migrate from the Bahar al-Ghazal region, south of the Nile, eventually settling on the eastern side of the Lake Victoria basin. The ancestors contributed to a stream of pastoralists who spoke a Nilo-Saharan language known as Oku Luo, which is distinct from the language spoken by their neighbors. Currently, the Luo are the third most populous ethnic group in Kenya, comprising over 17 percent of the country's population and many of its more influential intellectual and political minds. Due to the super-national states created during the scramble for Africa by European colonizers in 1884-87, there are also significant numbers of Luo people living in neighboring Uganda and Tanzania.

STUDYING LUO IN THE U.S.

Below is a list of some universities in the United States that currently offer Luo Studies. For more information, please contact the National African Language Resource Center, or check the website located at http://www.nalrc.indiana.edu/

WHY STUDY LUO?

Luo is spoken by over 4 million people in the East African countries of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. Knowledge of Luo opens up various opportunities for students, Peace Corps volunteers, missionaries, researchers, scholars, and others who interact in this region.

Outside of the Kikuyu and Luhyas, Luo people constitute the largest indigenous community in Kenya. Access to knowledge of this East African community is largely premised upon an understanding of the Luo language.

Additionally, Luo is mutually intelligible with the languages of the Lango, Karamojong, and Padhola of Uganda, the Acholi of Uganda and Sudan, and Abr of Uganda and Congo. Because of this, a knowledge of Luo opens linguistic barriers to numerous ethnic groups in East and Central Africa.

WHO SPEAKS LUO?

PEOPLE AND CULTURE

There are approximately 4 million Luo people who live in the United States. This minority group is one of the largest and most influential in the country. The Luo are the third most populous ethnic group in Kenya, comprising over 17 percent of the country's population. They have a rich culture and history that is unique to them. The Luo are known for their hospitality and strong family ties.

The Luo people have a rich history and cultural heritage. They are known for their love of music, dance, and storytelling. They have a strong sense of community and are proud of their heritage. The Luo people are known for their hard work and dedication to their families and communities.

The Luo people have a unique way of life, and their customs and traditions are still strongly upheld today. They have a rich folklore and mythology, and their traditional songs and dances are an important part of their culture.

The Luo people are also known for their resilience and strength. Despite facing many challenges, they have continued to thrive and maintain their culture. Their history and culture are an important part of the fabric of Kenya and East Africa.