

Epistemological Challenges of Conflicting Worldviews (Christianity & Lugbara) Among the Lugbara People of Uganda

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Abstract

The task of every philosopher and, or theologian today in Africa, is how Christianity should be at home among the people it encounters. This paper tries to explore the patterns that exist in the encounter between Christianity and the Lugbara people of Northern Uganda. Rather than producing an integrated Lugbara Christian, at the intersect between the Christian and the Lugbara worldviews, the author discovers that it produced a disassociated Lugbara Christian. The flow of meaning and language remain challenging for the Lugbara Christian. An appreciation of the positive dimensions from the worldviews, which facilitate better understanding of the new identity, calls for an “inside-towards-out” approach to knowing. The “copy and paste” approach is counterproductive and distorts meaning. There must be a real mature conversation between the Christian witnesses of faith and the existential Lugbara culture for Christianity to make a home among the Lugbara.

Keywords: Worldview, Lugbara, Christianity, missioning, evangelization

In this article, I would like to borrow a humorous illustration of the Coca-Cola Salesperson in Saudi Arabia.

*A disappointed salesman of Coca-Cola returned from his assignment to Saudi Arabia.
A friend asked, "Why weren't you successful with the Saudis?"
The salesman explained, "When I got posted, I was very confident that I would make a good sales pitch.
But I had a problem. I didn't know how to speak Arabic. So I planned to convey the message through three posters.*



*First poster : A man lying in the hot desert sand totally exhausted and fainting.
Second poster : The man is drinking Coca-Cola.
Third poster : Our man is now totally refreshed.
And then these posters were pasted all over the place.
"Terrific! That should have worked!" said the friend.
"The hell it should have!" said the salesman. "No one told me they read from right to left!"¹*

The illustration above points out the epistemological dimension of the interpretation of reality. The word *epistemology* designates that branch of philosophy that aims to discover the meaning of knowledge. How you may know and interpret reality depends on your location or standpoint. What happens in the communication of ideas when we step into the space and time of others calls for a consideration of the way a people thinks, organizes and express themselves. The way the Lugbara people understand reality is different from the way the Christian missionaries understand reality. The interpretations depends on the position of each one, the Lugbara people of Uganda and the Christian Missionaries, in terms of experience, culture and worldview. Ignoring the perspective of each group could lead to conflicts of worldviews.

¹ <http://www.hobotraveler.com/jokes-sent-to-andy/coca-cola-salesman-in-saudi-arabia.php#ixzz3K2rCWHP4>

The meaning the salesperson wanted to convey was that there was a man who collapsed in the desert dying of thirst. When he consumed the Coke, he is energized and then runs. Instead, the meaning for an Arab, who reads from right to left, was that: there was a man running alright; but when he consumed the Coke, he collapsed dead in the desert. For the Lugbara people of Uganda, they would say this coke kills¹; or the stuff of this people makes me run mad and run wildly². This makes an awful lot of difference in our perceptions and understanding of reality. When other people think differently, like the Arabs, the Lugbara people of Uganda and the Christian Missionaries conflicts are inevitable.

This article is about the challenges of conflicting worldviews on Christianity among the Lugbara people of Uganda. Although the Lugbara people of Uganda seem to have chosen Christianity,³ there remains a conflict of worldviews, namely, Lugbara, biblical/Christian and Western worldviews. The Lugbara Christians often times question some doctrines of Christianity. For example, for the Lugbara people interpret things using events. The name Jesus Christ makes no sense for them. They see him a foreigner born outside a Lugbara clan. This would make the Lugbara people hold him with suspicion because there is no event surrounding his birth.

There is no wonder, why the Lugbara women prefer delivering their babies at home rather than maternities or hospitals built by Christian Missionaries. The birth of a child is remembered events such as famine, wars, suffering. This explains the fact the Lugbara mothers are not satisfied with how the placenta and umbilical cords⁴ are treated by the hospital. The placenta and umbilical cord is so sacred that you cannot allow it to be incinerated with other dirty things of the hospital. The place where one's "umbilical cord" is cut, and religiously buried, is where one should be buried after death. The Lugbara people would say "You will be buried where your umbilical cord was cut and buried"⁵ This idea is close to the belief of the people of Cameroon where:

The placenta, the umbilical cord and the maternal breast are physiologically and intimately connected. Accordingly the placenta and uterine blood will be preserved from all evil influences, hidden or buried in some discreet and secret place so that no spells may be wrought on the mother or the newborn through them... the placenta is carefully wrapped up in leaves and buried deep underground within the village under a banana tree (a symbol of fertility) whose fruit is in the process of ripening (the mother cannot eat it). By this means the infant is linked with its father's land and symbolically inscribed in his filiations (BENINGUISSE, Gervaise and Vincent De BROUWERE, 2004)

Another conflicting worldview on Christianity of the Lugbara people of Uganda is the fact that, although Lugbara Christians plant a crucifix on the graves of their loved ones, traditionally they would plant the *laru*⁶ tree on the grave. Today some Christians prefer planting a cross made from branches of this same tree. For the Lugbara people of Uganda, this tree, called *laru*, is an indicator that, even if the person has died, he is still alive. The growth of the threadbare roots, which later grow into strong roots, symbolizes continuity of life. When this tree grows big, sacrifices are offered under it. The traditional ritual called *ori*⁷ are performed under it. It becomes meeting place for families to resolve conflicts.

Location of the Lugbara people

The Lugbara people are located in the northwestern part of Uganda and northeastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo. We have some of the Lugbara people who escaped into South Sudan after the 1979 war. They are settled within the area between Yei and Juba in the Republic of South Sudan. This latter group is a small and negligible portion of the total Lugbara population.

The Christian Missionaries came to Lugbaraland in 1910 and preached the Gospel, about Jesus Christ, whom the Lugbara people looked at as **JURU**⁸ [a stranger/foreigner]. They do not know where his umbilical cord was cut and disposed. The message of the Missionaries was logical to the Christian and biblical worldview as well as their Euro-American, at times called Western, worldview.

¹ Literally it is translated as "ba 'di ma afa 'do si 'ba odra odra

² The Lugbara language would render this as 'ba 'di ma afa 'do si 'ba aza aza ani 'ba nju badakaru

³ According to the statistics to the Secretariat of State [the central statistics office of the Catholic Church at the Vatican] by the Catholic Diocese of Arua where the Lugbara people are majority, as per 31 December 2012, the Catholics were 58%, other Christians were 36%, and other non-Christians especially the Aringa in Yumbe District were 6% out of a total population of 2,809,952. The high percentage that has embraced Christianity at times do not show actions which show the possession of the right mental *software* by a true Lugbara Christian.

⁴ The Lugbara people call this *otu bi*.

⁵ The Lugbara translation is 'Ba nga mi saa pari 'bani mi otu lizu ri a

⁶ The botanical name of this tree is *Ficus natalensis*.

⁷ The word *ori* can be rendered by the English expression *ancestral shrine*. The Christian Missionaries referred to it as *ghost shrine*. The *ori* was found in every adult's homestead. The concept of *ori* was central in the belief and worldview of the Lugbara people. The *ori* recalls the active, watchful, safeguarding, demanding and punishing aspect of the ancestors. The *ori* is not too humane; he casts a rather sinister light on the living, and he is always feared. He is not mentioned like the *a'bi*; instead he must not be disturbed, but left to "stay quietly". When the *ori* does something to manifest his presence, it is always in the form of some misfortune or other. His action is thus unfavourable, and the ideal *ori's* action is thus his "non-action". It is the *o'ri* which had its shrines under granaries, on compounds for sacrifices.

⁸ **JURU** is the Lugbara term for stranger or foreigner. This term is opposed to the Lugbara term of **SURU**, at times known as **ORI'BA**. **Suru** is a ritual group with common shrines built to ancestor spirits shared by that group.

In some parts of Lugbaraland, there were practices of throwing away one of the twins. One of these twins was regarded to be possessed by an evil spirit. Embracing the Christian faith later on put an end to this practice. Despite such negative elements in the Lugbara worldview, the Lugbara people who were comfortable with their lived experience, behaved and expressed themselves in a logical way to the Lugbara worldview. The Lugbara people expected the Christian Missionaries to come and look at their own reality, perceive and discover them from the point of view of Lugbara cultural, religious, political vision of the world. The expectation of the Missionaries, was for the Lugbara people of Uganda to turn away from their worldview. The Missionaries considered anything Lugbara as full of evil practices. They measured reality by the Western standards of the Christian missionaries. In the name of conversion, they wanted the Lugbara people of Uganda to embrace Christian/biblical worldview. Any Lugbara Christian who participates in a traditional funeral dance is not supposed to receive Holy Communion.

Study Challenge

During a research, I interviewed 402 Lugbara people in the north western part of Uganda. Of these 269 respondents were Lugbara people lettered in English and Lugbara and 133 were non-lettered in neither English nor Lugbara. An analysis along gender lines gave us a finding of Female 35 (26%), Male 98 (74%). In most church attendance women outnumber men. Yet there were fewer women willing to share their lived experiences freely. This might have been due to some “cultural shyness” where women are not supposed to talk in the presence of men.

Residence [106 live in the rural setting, meaning 80% in rural setting, 27 are in urban areas (20%), sometimes they are taken to urban areas for medical reasons since there is better medical attention in urban areas though it is more costly], 18 of those who live in the towns [for instance, Arua, Kampala, Jinja, Entebbe] 67% are female; 47 of those who in the rural area 44% were female. This situation could be explained by the fact many elderly females prefer to remain in the village, work on their fields than their male counterparts who become frailer than their female counterparts. The female adults think they remain consider themselves redundant in town areas where they cannot work much apart from being surrounded by the grand children that gives them joy in seeing the continuation of life in these children.

I set out to find out whether Lugbara Christians are more impacted by Christian worldviews or Lugbara traditional worldview, I sought to find their belief in the cause of death. The findings showed that most of the respondents (70%), believed that the cause of death in Lugbara culture was personified, that is, they believe a person never dies, except when he/she is poisoned or killed by other person/persons. 26% disagreed with this view. 4% were not sure. This belief was not significantly influenced by sex, age group, sex, education levels or area of residence.

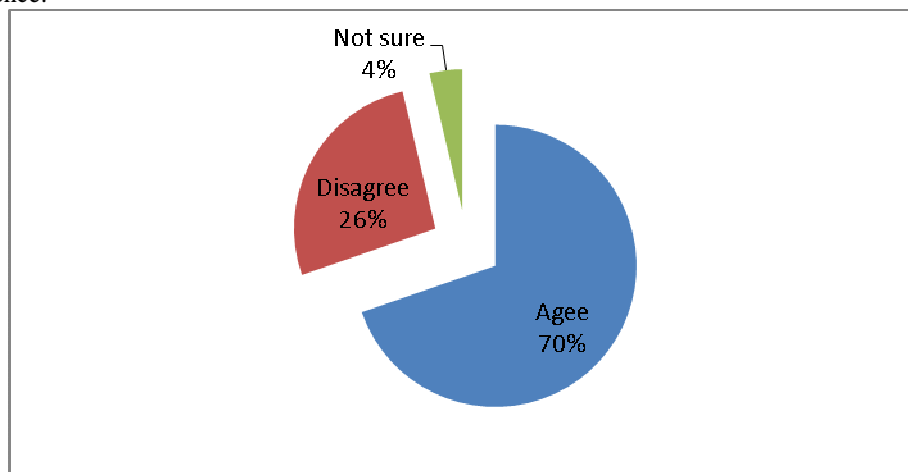


Table 5 The cause of death among the Lugbara is personal, caused others.

This made me to deduce that despite the large number of Lugbara Christians, they are challenged by the conflicting worldviews which might leave them more at an intersection. What worldview approach should the Lugbara Christian take into consideration for him/her to make of a meaningful encounter between Christianity and Lugbara culture?

i) Worldviews

The encounter of Christianity with Lugbara culture was an encounter of worldviews. The Lugbara worldview touches the soul, what Latin calls *anima*, of the Lugbara people to the core of their being. Actions which have points of reference in the Lugbara worldview makes the Lugbara soul vibrate more and give it better meaning from the Lugbara parameters of understanding. Worldview is key in shaping a people's mind and

heart, as seen reflected in the title of the book (HUFFMAN, 2011) and shaping various dimensions of a people's identity. What a people perceive or think, determines their action and behavior. Their actions define who they are as a people (their identity). Their identity determines their destiny. One who does not know where he/she is going causes a confusion in the destiny. This brings confusion as to where the person is going.

Many scholars such as (TURAKI, 2006) (HASKER, 1983) (STEYNE, 1996) (HOLMES, Arthur, 1985) (NASH, 1992) (WALSH Brian J. & J. Richard MIDDLETON, 1984) (RYKEN, 2006) have attempted to define worldview. Having the right worldview helps keep things in focus. If we agree that worldviews are like eyeglasses, then

The right eyeglasses can put the world into clearer focus, and the correct worldview can function in much the same way. When someone looks at the world from the perspective of the wrong worldview, the world won't make much sense to him. Or what he thinks makes sense will, in fact be wrong in important respects. (NASH, 1992, p. 17).

Viewing reality through the right worldview among the Lugbara people would be like putting on the right conceptual scheme and this can have important repercussions for the rest of the Lugbara person's understanding of events and ideas. Late Fr John Mary Waliggo (WALIGGO, 1990) helps us to see this situation clearer when he stated:

The long existence of Christianity in Europe, before it began to spread to sub-Saharan Africa, and the rest of the so-called Third World, had become over-inculturated into European thought patterns, world-views, cultures, philosophies and life-styles. When Christian missionaries set out in the nineteenth century to evangelize Africa and the rest of the world, the majority of them had come to equate Western culture with the essence of the message of Christianity. The mould in which Christianity was lived in Europe had become, for them an essential part of the message. But, such was only the human face of Christianity and of the church.

Christianity originated from the Middle East, not Europe or United States. While spreading to Europe it passed through Greece and picked some expressions, thought patterns etc. from the Greek worldview and philosophy of life. Later it was able to adopt some European lifestyle such as German institution of marriage etc.

The missionaries, to the Lugbara people, set out to replace the *ori*, the "ancestral cult practice", which was the center of the Lugbara traditional religious experience. They introduced Jesus Christ, the "One Unique Stranger" as the "center" of the life of the Lugbara Christian and as a consequence their culture was impacted. The Christian missionaries wanted the Lugbara people to then on, think like Jesus Christ. A Lugbara can state *Ma saa 'disi ma Mungu a*, meaning "I am now in God". It shows that the Lugbara person has now converted to Christianity but his/her lifestyle should also change accordingly. An elder remarked that the Lugbara people who became Christians were not, for example, allowed to drink alcohol. The Lugbara women, who would brew beer to generate some income, were not permitted to pass near Christian outstations with the beer [on their heads] while going to the drinking place to sell their local beer, etc. This, instead, opened the door to tensions in their worldviews and conflicts which showed themselves in the linguistic, metaphysical, epistemological sectors of life. As a result a Lugbara Christian who wanted to indulge in actions considered anti-Christian, for instance, going to a witchdoctor or herbalist, would say "*Ma nga Yezu ni tru 'ba kala a*" [I will take Jesus off and put him aside for the time being]. This implies that Jesus is just like a dress which you can change anytime and it does not leave an impact on your life. This practice does not spare the elite/educated. Some university graduates don't find security in their Christian faith alone. They go to consult witch doctors without any feeling of remorse or sin.

Lugbara traditional religious experience, which revolved around the ritual practice of *ori*, has slowly been eroded and replaced by a new experience which did not retain Lugbara cultural and religious roots. A strange belief system brought in by the Christian missionaries, whom the Lugbara sometimes regarded strangers, talked about the One Unique Stranger, Jesus Christ. This impacted the lived experience of the Lugbara people and their new status of being called Lugbara Christians. A new and a different worldview was ushered in. When a Lugbara tells another clansman: "*E'yo emidri mundu dri/ogaraba dri/ba inve dri ri iku 'dale*" it means that "Affairs of the Europeans/Colonialists/Whites leave it/them out there". This is said in order not to misinterpret reality as they seem to be better seen through the Lugbara glasses. This has led to a problem of superiority of cultures of the MUNDU, Whites, and an inferiority of the Lugbara culture.

ii) Where is the conflict

Viewing Christianity as a worldview, not as collection of theological bits and pieces to be believed or debated, the Lugbara Christians find themselves at crossroads faced with their own traditional Lugbara worldview, the biblical/Christian worldview and the western worldview of the Christian Missionaries who

brought Christianity in Lugbaraland. The real problem is there are clashes within these worldviews as they tend to compete for the attention and understanding of the Lugbara person.

In this article we note that the Christian Missionaries came to Lugbaraland, bypassed the Lugbara thought pattern and worldview, and went ahead and condemned the Lugbara worldview as evil¹. There is an imposition of a different worldview from “outside” towards “inside” which ignored the Lugbara thought pattern and opened a door for a shallow rooted Christianity². If “Jesus built His public ministry on the religiosity, faith, experience and tradition of those whom He encountered” (MUGAMBI, 2002, p. 2), then a different approach of appreciating the thought pattern of the Lugbara for a better understanding with Lugbara mental concepts would enrich the encounter with Jesus as the one who has replaced the center of life of the Lugbara Christian. Otherwise the Lugbara people would have remained stuck in the mix. Waliggo (WALIGGO, 1990, p. 34) had observed a similar situation with the missionaries when he stated that:

Among other failures of missionaries mention can be made of their mixing up the essentials of the Christian faith with non-essentials of European culture, world-vision, ways of doing and mentality; failure of many of them to overcome their superiority complex, when viewing and judging various aspects of African cultures.

iii) Result of the conflict

When the Christian Missionaries arrived in Lugbaraland, they had to learn the language, *Lugbarati*³. Many of them have to be commended for this effort towards learning a foreign language. There is more to just learning a language. It involves understanding correctly the concepts used in the worldviews of the people with whom we communicate in order to communicate effectively. Some of these Christian Missionaries never learnt the language, others spoke it with grammatical mistakes⁴ since they forced Lugbara words into American or European language grammars. David Hesselgrave in his book (HESSELGRAVE, 1991, p. 164) observes that to communicate Christ to the people one needs to communicate to respondents in terms of their (respondents) way of viewing the world (**worldview**); their worldview in turn influences their way of thinking (**cognitive processes**); the cognitive dimension influences their way of expressing themselves; their ideas in language (**linguistic forms**) are influenced by their expressive dimension; their linguistic forms influence their way of acting (**behavioral patterns**); the behavioral pattern in turn influences their response to media (**media influence**); their media influence impacts their way of interacting (**social structures**) and their way of deciding future courses of action (**motivational resources**). These dimensions are all interrelated that these realities need not to be separated for they “interpenetrate and impinge upon one another... they combine to form one reality” Hesselgrave maintains (HESSELGRAVE, 1991).

One who only ignores the Lugbara worldview or any other worldview paves way for a distorted meaning. Since they do not have the same mental concepts they end up with a misconception in the knowledge of a reality. The confusion, in linguistic expressions, meaning, action, behavior, show how deep the conflicts lie in the Lugbara soul.

iv) Situations of conflicting worldviews

a) Marriage

One area in which the linguistic expression shows the effect of the clash of worldview and eventually distorts meaning is the institution of marriage. In *Lugbarati* marriage is referred to as *aje*. The literal meaning is linked to *aje* is “buying”. With the Lugbara statement “*ama mu aje je/ama mu oku je*” [translated as “we are going for a marriage function”] literally it would mean “we are going to buy “buying”/we are going to “buy” a woman. Many people who are not deep into the Lugbara culture and the understanding deduce that the woman is considered an object who can be sold like any material property or object. This distorted/misconceived “meaning” might have been a result of the practice of bridewealth where the family of the side of the man give some symbolic objects to the family on the side of the woman. We don’t deny the fact that there have been some abuses by some greedy individuals. No price can be put on a human being. The gifts to the clan of the woman is a symbolic gesture.

¹ This can be seen from the articles sent by Italian Comboni Missionaries to NIGRIZIA Magazine, published in Italy. They use terms which labeled Lugbara realities as evil.

² This is what I also call *copy and paste Christianity*.

³ In this article I would refer to *Lugbarati* as the language, Lugbara as the people, and Lugbaraland as the territory.

⁴ They spoke what I would refer to as “Ecclesiastical Lugbara”. The Lugbara people knew that this was not grammatical right but they left them go ahead with it since they could guess what they wanted to say. There is a famous phrase by an Italian Comboni Priest “*Kristiani, eca enyia ogogo bo, Krismas*”. The correct expression should have been “*Kristiani, krismas eca enyia ogogo bo*”. Since in Italian grammar the subject of a sentence can be put at the end of that sentence, they kept speaking Lugbarati with Italian accent and grammar. This sounded funny to the Lugbara people and they would make fun of them. Another example is the way Jesus is written in Lugbara. The Catholics call him *YEZU* and the Protestants call him *YESU*. In reality this is the same thing. But in Italian grammar one “S” between two vowels is pronounced “Z”.

If we give *aje* the literal translation of “buying”, what literal interpretation would be given to the Scripture text in Isaiah 55:1-2 when the Prophet states:

*All you who are thirsty, come to the water!
You who have no money, come, buy grain and eat;
Come, buy grain without money, wine and milk without cost!
Why spend your money for what is not bread; your wages for what does not satisfy?
Only listen to me, and you shall eat well, you shall delight in rich fare.*

If money is used to buy, then these Scripture will have no logical “meaning” because today you cannot buy something without money. *Lugbarati* has some ways of expressing ideas which will have no meaning if taken literally. For example, “*ale mi onzi onzi*” is used to render “I love you so much” literally would be transliterated as “I love you bad bad”. We know that the meaning here is positive. Double negative in *Lugbarati* is emphatic to stress an aspect of speech.

Such literary forms of communication call for interpretations. For example, when a Lugbara person would like to state that ‘this young man sells in a shop’, they would say “*nva ‘di eri dukani ozi*”. Literarily would be translated as ‘this young man is selling a shop’. The real meaning is ‘he is selling in a shop’. Missionaries seemed to take things on literal face value when it came to local cultures. One of the expatriate missionaries once translated the statement *grave sin* as ‘*ezata nyadri ti a ri*’ which is a Lugbara way of saying ‘*a sin committed near the grave*’. This totally changes the meaning of the Lugbara expressions which reflect their worldview of interpretation.¹

b) Stranger

The concept of foreigner/stranger [*jurru*] is different in the Lugbara, biblical/Christian and western worldviews.

Many of the Christian Missionaries were motivated by the urge to go and ransom the Lugbara people from darkness, savagery, ignorance, inhumanity. Some of the early maps showing boundaries of European countries would depict Africa as a jungle where wild animals such as lions, leopards, crocodiles etc. dwelt. The Lugbara people instead considered those who brought Christianity as *outsiders or* strangers. This is because those who were not born within the Lugbara social boundaries of kins and neighbors were regarded as *inverted people* and or foreigners. The difference in the skin color, lack of mastery of *Lugbarati*, their behavior which reflected their western worldview, showed that they were strangers. During interviews among the Lugbara people of Uganda I came across a man who said he once asked the Italian missionary to give him a lift to the mission center. He wanted to go and assess whether these missionaries were *normal* people like the Lugbara or they were witches or exhibited *inverted behaviors*. He wanted to find out whether this *Jesus* man lived in the mission with the Christian Missionaries. The place the stranger/foreigner occupies in the Lugbara social category is clearly laid out by John Middleton as in (MIDDLETON, 1991).

c) Cause of death is personal

The Lugbara society is one in which people do not die naturally (see Table 1). Instead they are killed by *others* using poison, or by arrows/spears during feuds, or by the spirits, or witchcraft etc. The cause of death is personified. Modern post mortem, a practice appreciated by Western worldview to identify the disease that kills someone, will not mean much to the Lugbara people since it does not point to the person or spirit that has caused the death. This thought pattern of the Lugbara people makes them to lay blames of misfortunes at the foot of others. The Lugbara worldview believes that when a person is, for instance, knocked by a car, it is believed they might have administered poison first and then requested that the person be finished by a car crash or struck by lightning etc. The sense of personal responsibility in wrong doings is diminished. This conflicts with the western and biblical worldview of pointing to the fact that we are sinners since others will be taken as scapegoats and the blame laid at their feet. Jesus, the Savior of the Biblical and Christian worldview will be out of place for the Lugbara people.

¹ There are also some Lugbara people of Uganda who mess with translations. They start with English expressions and attempt to find out how the Lugbara people would say it. This article proposes an approach of starting from inside-towards-out. This helps people to avoid forcing translations which may end ridiculous and far from the Lugbara worldview. This same problem is found when many Lugbara people would like to copy and paste in Lugbara worldview practices such as kingship, or political organization which were not part of the Lugbara culture.

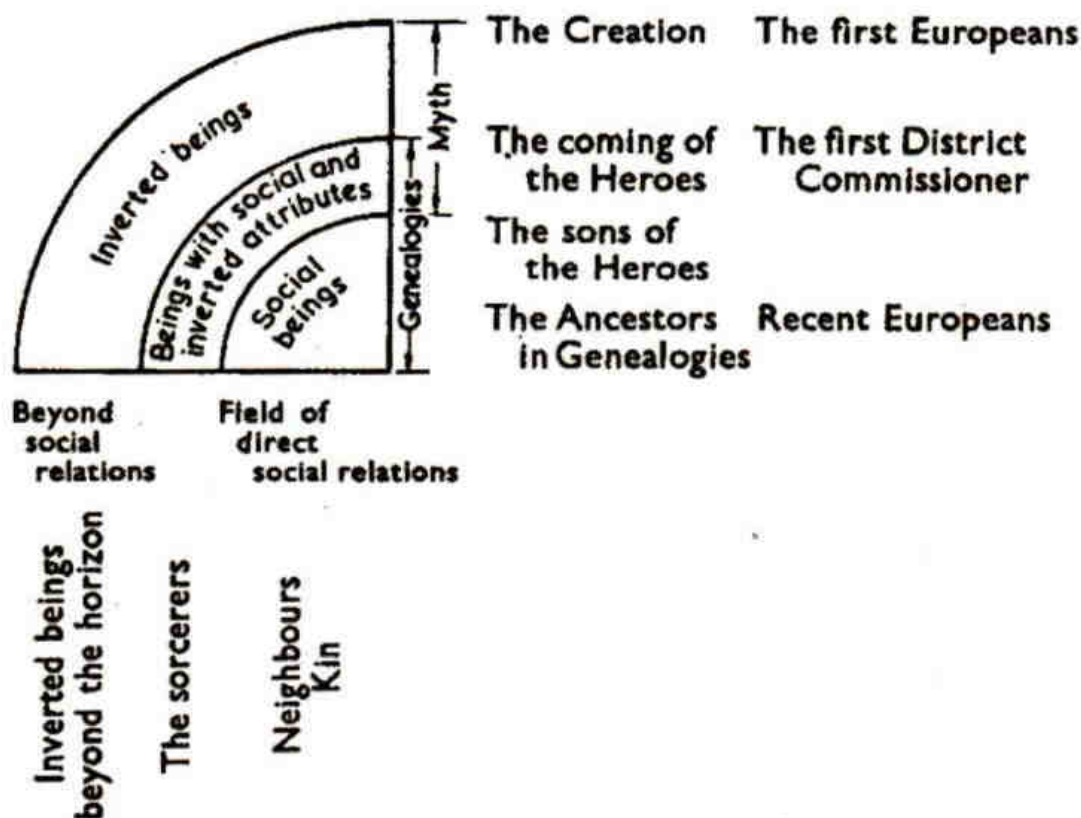


Figure 1 Lugbara social categories as elaborated by John Middleton

d) Rational intelligence versus emotional intelligence

The family, as the first unit of socialization, teaches the child the emotional, the feeling and intellectual systems. When Christianity came to Lugbaraland they focused on schools, and catechetical instructions which demanded intellectual grasp of things. The Lugbara people connect to each other strongly on the level of empathy that unites them and makes them feel one with those in difficulties and tough times.

Another area of conflict of worldviews is the intelligence outlook towards reality. Whereas Western worldview prefers applying reason in the interpretation of things, the Lugbara outlook, often, has space for emotions etc. The Missionaries judged things according to intelligence/reason and logic while the Lugbara used emotional intelligence. Using the words of Amadou Hampate Bâ (HAMPATE BA, 1983, pp. 97-98), we could say the Christian Missionaries, like the *Africanists*¹ looked at African realities, such as the Lugbara cultural, religious experiences, with foreign glasses. They “so often attributed their intentions which we don't have, they have interpreted our customs or our traditions in function to a logic which does not cease to be logic, but is not so for us”. An example of this conflict is the concept of time that has remained a baffling concept until today. The Christian Missionary measured things according to the time on his watch; the Lugbara measured his/her time according to the sun and traditional activities, as elaborated in these works (DALFOVO, 1996) (DALFOVO, 2007) (DALFOVO, 2005 (33)).

e) Names

Naming of Lugbara people is another area, which experiences clashes of worldviews. Traditional names for the Lugbara people could be compared to a document in a library in western culture where records of important events, happenings etc. were kept. Names were synonymous with the person, his/her reputation. Lugbara traditional names are summaries of concrete situations lived or derived from their lived experiences by members of the Lugbara society; and emphasizes the events that affect the life of the family or clan of this person before, during and or after the conception of the person. The tone of the event would be the tone of name of this person. If the event is a joyful one, the tone of the name will be joyful; if the event was a sad one, a negative tone is given to the name of that person.

¹ The people who show interest in Africa and African affairs and yet they were born *outside* Africa.

Viewing from the perspective of Lugbara worldview, one finds that Lugbara names are marked by events, which imply that despite all, God has been with us. In other words the Lugbara traditional names are not directly *theophoric*, that is, names derived from a god or invoking and displaying the protection of that deity. With what joy can a person accept to be called *Butele*, which meanings ‘waiting for the tomb’, *Atibuni*, ‘Born for the tomb’, in his later years if he thinks that he is as good as nothing since he should be in the grave? The names point to the protection God has given to this child all along the way that should animate this child. The implication of God’s protection is indirect. It is this indirect relationship with God which does not make some Lugbara people see the hand of God.

The meaning of names for the Lugbara is revealing, using words of Agossou (AGOSSOU MÈDÉWALÉ, 1987, p. 154), *le nom est révélateur de l’essence*, meaning “the name is an indicator of the essence” of a thing or a being. As it is each society, which linguistically assigns a meaning to a sound, in a similar manner, the Lugbara society assigns meaning to things or people. The unit of the Lugbara society that assigns the meaning of names to people are mainly the closest family: father, mother, grandparents or children of the clan or sub clan. The names which are common normally are the ones given by mothers, and, or grandmothers.

I do not argue that Christian names adopted by the Lugbara Christian at baptism be undermined. Not at all. “*The Christian name is, by consequence, the name of the new birth, the one of the new being born in Christ, at the same time it is the name by which the individual is associated to the body, the Church*” (AGOSSOU MÈDÉWALÉ, 1987, p. 163). This study laments the lack of respect, which in our case, is in the encounter between Christianity and Lugbara culture especially towards the adoption and use of Lugbara traditional names. The Catholic Church authority had sensed the positive value of local cultures in the nations of the world, like in Lugbaraland. That is why missionaries were forewarned by mentioning that:

the nations, despite a difference of development due to diverse conditions of life and of culture, are not destined to break the unity of the human race, but rather to enrich and embellish it by the sharing of their own peculiar gifts and by that reciprocal interchange of goods which can be possible and efficacious only when a mutual love and a lively sense of charity unite all the sons of the same Father and all those redeemed by the same Divine Blood.

The Church of Christ, the faithful depository of the teaching of Divine Wisdom, cannot and does not think of deprecating or disdaining the particular characteristics which each people, with jealous and intelligible pride, cherishes and retains as a precious heritage (PIUS XII, 1939) numbers 43-44.

The lack of respect towards the Lugbara worldview, where names are assigned to reflect meaning, according to events that surround the birth of the child, would have enriched the understanding of Christianity and made the Lugbara Christian seek for fullness in the new identity. With a high percentage of Christians among the Lugbara people, one would think that many of them prefer being called by their Christian names and give less importance to their personal names. They call the personal names with different expressions:

- *Ru aku dri i* Home name
- *Ru enyasa dri i* Name of eating the traditional food
- *Ru ‘bani mi osizu ri i* Name of your birth
- *Ru a’bi dri i* Name according to the ancestral line

When one gives a name, which does not fall within the Lugbara scheme of explanation, the person, is asked “*Ru ‘di ma efi ngoni?*” what is the meaning of this name? or *Ru ‘di ma lejiko ngoni?* What were the explanatory factors for this name? One cannot carry a name that does not have a meaning. Seeing that the Christian names do not have any meaning, known the bearer of the name or those who give it, this situation has given rise to a hunt of names that are pleasing to the parents or bearer. For example, Blessing, Hope, Patience etc.

There are Lugbara people whose names are nouns. Some of these people are named Faith, Hope, Peace, Mercy etc. Some names also double as adjectives. Happy [*Ayiko(ru)*], Precious [*Orodri, Faida*] etc. These nouns and adjectives can be translated into Lugbara *Aita* (Faith), *Yiki* (Hope), *Asianzu* (Peace), *Kisa* (Mercy). The question to ask is: do the Lugbara versions of the names qualify them to be Lugbara names more than the English versions of the same names? Or are these non-Lugbara names altogether?

When the Christian missionaries arrived among the Lugbara people, they introduced names of Christian Saints, all of them Western Saints as, what Americans call, *first names* and the English and Italians call *name*. In order to be a Christian, one had to start Christian instructions as catechumens and later move to the Mission or Parish center for a period of at least six months or more. This period was referred to as “*ru ‘biza*”, literally to “hold a name”, or “*ru ma azi nga*” (to work for a name). This gave the impression of the Christian names as being a social status factor. The acquisition of a Christian name showed one is a different person.

With the spread of Christianity, some names that the Lugbara people hold are derived directly from the Bible. Names like John, Jacob, Joel, David and others. In the process of translating the Bible into various to the Lugbara language, the names were also translated. Thus, John in Lugbara is Yoana/Yohana; Jacob, Yakobo; Joel, Yoweri; and David, Daudi. Do these Lugbara translations of the names thus qualify to be Lugbara names whereas the English versions do not?

The proselytism of most of the early Christian missionaries, who came among the Lugbara people of Uganda, also brought with it a concept of Christian names as opposed to Pagan names. Thus, people who already had traditional Lugbara names were, on baptism, given new 'Christian' names. This implied that the traditional Lugbara name was a pagan name. For a while, the definition of a Christian name meant a Biblical name or a saint's name. Later this evolved to actually mean given/first/other name as opposed to family/last/surname. Names that do not appear in the Bible and may also not be of any saint, such as Terry, Roland, Lily, etc. could not be taken at baptism. Eventually, names with a Godly/Christian meaning, even if in Lugbara language, rarely came to be accepted at times as Christian names, even if they do not have to be first/given/other names, at baptisms. Thus names like Adroni, literally meaning for God (as in Deogratias for Thanks be to God), could be considered Christian.

The effect of Christianity on naming can be said to have been Lugbaranized, whether through translation (form) or substance (concept). In my opinion therefore, a Lugbara traditional is one that follows a contemporary Lugbara naming method, hermeneutically, linking it to Lugbara/personal events, and indirectly pointing to God. Lugbaraness, which points to Lugbara worldview, is not one thing that is tied to and sealed in history. The pre-colonial, pre-Christian methods of naming have evolved and taken on influences from the colonial, mission-building historical periods, creating contemporaneous realities that are as Lugbara as anything else. Lugbara traditional naming methods obviously has its uniqueness.

Today conflicts in worldviews is seen when the Lugbara Christian think that almost all Lugbara traditional names are with the power of inflicting what they literally represent without seeing the real meaning. For the Americans what they call the *last names* or what the Europeans call the *surnames* remained the family names. For the Lugbara people a person will end up with two or three personal names. The only common denominator would be the name of the clan.

The Lugbara did not understand the meaning of those Christian names, neither did they understand how to pronounce them. These names end up being written differently each time and pronounced badly. The missionaries gave names of their relatives who sponsored them in their missionary activities. As Timothy Radcliffe, former Master of the Order of Preachers, highlighted: "*We saved up our money so that children would be baptized with our names. There should be hundreds of middleaged Timothys around the world.*" (RADCLIFFE, 2000). Many give names from films, and when you ask them the meaning of the names they do not know. This is a phenomenon found in towns since few people in rural areas have access to televisions and movies. Many of the Christian names among the Lugbara Catholics are Italian names. Even if these names have other versions such as in English, French, German their parents will prefer the Italian versions.

In all these situations, there is a tendency of going for literal translations forgetting the way meaning was hermeneutically established by the Lugbara people. It would be good to move outwards expanding the horizon of a better understanding of reality. Today the Lugbara people go on a name hunt, seeking/shopping names from other worldviews hence rubbishing the wisdom-filled names which gave identity to the Lugbara people, names given according to coordinates of the Lugbara worldview.

Lugbara names made one clearly to know and understand the meaning of the event that surrounded the birth of the Lugbara person. The Lugbara names were mainly given by the mothers and grandmothers. The name of the person gave an identity to the Lugbara person. It was an equivalent of the record of the event witnessed at the birth of the child. Becoming a Christian was linked to buying a foreign name as the Lugbara Christians would tell you that their *Christian name* is so and so. The Christian name is known in *Lugbarati* as name of baptism (*ru batismo dri i*) or the name of God (*ru Mungu dri i*). I saw how meaningless the buying of these foreign names was meaningless, though it is the preferred name as one introduces oneself. During pastoral ministry as a priest, I had to reject names such as Hitler since they did not carry any sense. May be the sound of the name was pleasing to one of the parents but the event had no relevance for child.

v) Proposal/Way forward

The Christian missionaries should have done the *inside-towards-out* approach of looking at realities keeping in mind the thought patterns of the Lugbara people. This would have helped them in proposing the Gospel, and the Person of Jesus Christ, and guided the Lugbara people to a better understanding of who God is, Jesus the Redeemer is, the Holy Spirit is. Instead they used a *from out-towards-in* approach which was a transposition style. This is like attempting to fit a cycle in a square hole. The Holy See saw the positives of people who have a different standpoint, such as the Lugbara, when the missionaries were to respect whatever is

positive. Propaganda Fide, the office that oversees the evangelization of faraway territories, such as Lugbaraland and other mission territories, stated in Fide 1659 quoted in (KIAZIKU, 2009):

Make no effort, use no means of persuasion to induce those people to change their rites, their habits and their customs, unless they are openly contrary to religion and good morals. There is nothing more absurd than transporting France, Spain, Italy or some other European country to China. It is not these that you must introduce, but the faith, which does not reject or infringe on the rites and habits of any people, as long as they are not bad, but seeks rather to safeguard and protect them.

This study indicates that what we think or perceive determines our actions and our behaviors. This in turn defines who we are. Who we are, that is our identity, determines our destiny. In other words, if we have different worldviews within our society and they conflict with each other instead of complimenting each other, it confuses where we are going or our destiny. This gave rise to distorted meaning as a growing number of the younger generation began to raise pertinent questions.

Another suggestion this study offers is the one of a process of “incarnation” or “africanization” and in our case, that of “Lugbarazation” for:

the process of africanization involves at least three different elements: the Christian tradition, as embodied in the life of the Church, a life that is still dependent on Western forms of expression; African cultural traditions, as embodied in the tribal and national rites and beliefs; and the present socioeconomic situation of Africa, which is rapidly changing and challenging both the past traditions and the Western forms of the Christian faith” (OKOLO, 1978).

Attempting to make the Gospel reach all corners of this universe/world was a concern for the Christian Missionaries. These missionaries - agents of transformation - penetrated virgin territories so as to take the Gospel of Christ to the people considered as savages, rude, sitting in the dark. Lugbaraland, and the Lugbara people, was no exception. As seen in *Evangeli Nuntiandi* (Paul VI, 1975) number 19, there was desire of “preaching the Gospel in ever wider geographic areas or to ever greater numbers of people”. Many of the Christian Missionaries were then interested in big numbers of converts. Others felt jealous to see the targeted population go to another Christian denomination. It is as if those *others*, especially the Protestants for the Catholics and vice versa, would make them fall short of their ever greater numbers which would have boosted their ego in front of the authorities of the sending Church back home.

In 1975 Pope Paul VI, after almost 50 years of the presence of Christianity on Lugbaraland, put it clearly that one of the greatest aims of taking the Gospel was “*also of affecting and as it were upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation.*” (Paul VI, 1975)

The Christian Missionaries looked at the Lugbara worldview, not as being in contrast to the Word of God and the plan of salvation but as being in contrast to the Western worldview and way of thinking. If the finality of the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus was making the thought pattern of the Lugbara people to change, the missionaries never believed in the Lugbara thought patterns. They by passed this thought pattern and went straight to condemn it. Yet there are many similarities in the many cultural realities of the Lugbara people to that of Biblical worldview, for instance, the power contained in saliva for blessing.

The Lugbara worldview, like many African worldviews, have many similarities and positive values. The Christian missionaries employed western parameters to justify themselves and judge the values of the Lugbara people. An attitude of humility would have served a better understanding of each other's goodness and value. Warren stated that we need:

a deep humility, by which we remember that God has not left himself without a witness in any nation at any time. When we approach the man of another faith than our own it will be in a spirit of expectancy to find how God has been speaking to him and what new understanding of the grace and love of God we may ourselves discover in this encounter.

Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion, is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on men's dreams. More serious still, we may forget that God was here before our arrival” (BEVANS, 1994).

When you are approaching a person, you are going to a Holy Ground. You remove your shoes and your pattern of thinking which have given you security. Putting on his/her lenses, feeling with him/her from *within* than *without* offers a better knowledge of reality. This spirit of respect during a meaningful encounter between Christianity and Lugbara culture was missing in the methodology of many of the Christian Missionaries. Those who knew that there were many other worldviews and had to study and appreciate the positive outlook of other worldviews asked themselves the right questions. The Christian Missionaries to Lugbaraland needed to ask themselves questions similar to that of Taylor (TAYLOR, 1963, p. 16):

Christ has been presented as the answer to the questions a white man would ask, the solution to the needs that Western man would feel, the Savior of the world of the European world-view, the object of the adoration and prayer of historic Christendom. But if Christ were to appear as the answer to the questions that Africans are asking, what would he look like? If he came into the world of African cosmology to redeem Man as Africans understand him, would he be recognizable to the rest of the Church Universal? And if Africa offered to him the praises and petitions of her total, uninhibited humanity, would he be acceptable?

Intersubjective dimension

The relationship with the other is not that of subject-object [like to say “I am here to solve your problems”]. Instead you see, accept the *others* as a subject too. It is the “I-I” relationship, intersubjective, not the “I-Thou/You” relationship. Like in a clinical pastoral setting, in order to bring a remedy, healing to the person, you have to enter the framework of the person, the thinking of the person and understand what the person is feeling. From here, you can begin to emerge with solutions to the person’s problem. This should have been the approach of the Christian Missionaries among the Lugbara people. In this way, you help the person by involving the person himself/herself. Saint Daniel Comboni, the great Apostle of Africa, employed the methodology of *Save Africa by Africa*. This means that you make the Africans the protagonist of their own human development and spiritual growth. By going deeper into the Lugbara thought patterns, the Missionaries would have been just like a midwife, facilitating a new way of thinking, a new of acting, a new way of behavior.

Empathy, the ability to enter into the person’s life, would have been the right attitude, which would have made Jesus to feel as one of the Lugbara people. The missionaries came, from another culture and worldview. They just judged the Lugbara thought process by stating that this and that way of doing things does not agree with the new belief without feeling what they Lugbara people felt. The Missionaries embedded Christianity in their culture and thought as if this was the correct thing to offer to the Lugbara people.

This research set out to resolve the challenging situation of the conflicting worldviews for the Lugbara Christian today. Otherwise, they would remain in the sad description Shorter offered (SHORTER, 1975) when he maintained that:

At baptism, the African Christian repudiates remarkably little of his former non-Christian outlook. He may be obliged to turn his back upon certain traditional practices which, rightly or wrongly, have been condemned by the church, but he is not asked to recant religious philosophy. Consequently, he returns to the forbidden practices on occasion with remarkably ease. Conversion to Christianity is for him sheer gain, an "extra" for which he has opted. It is an "overlay" on his original religious culture. Apart from the superficial condemnations, Christianity has really had little to say about African Traditional Religion in the way of serious judgments of value. Consequently the African Christian operates with two thought systems at once and both of them are closed to each other. Each is superficially modified by the other.

The missionaries were encouraged to respect the worldview of the people among whom they go to evangelize. Getting to have similar concepts would have promoted a better understanding and communication of values. This would have permitted mutual respect.

The traditional worldviews of many African societies contain positives to understand reality differently. With the Christian/biblical and Western worldviews, the European society is disintegrating. Why not allow traditional African worldview give its breath to realities in the world in which Africa is part of a new need to looking at reality? The *inside-out* approach would have helped the Lugbara Christian to avoid “mono-cultural Catholicism” or Christianity (CHU ILO, 2015) where Catholicism for those outside of it, and more so for those inside of it, remains a cultural heritage which can never be contained in one vessel, historically, theologically, spiritually, and otherwise. ILO brings out this conviction when he observes that “Catholicism is much more than a single narrative because it is like a deep ocean, with many tributaries, canalizing through different channels”.

We do not need *copy and paste* attitude of a belief system but a critical, conscious approach. *Copy and paste* approach does not proudly make us to be creator(s) of original culture but just *vultures of knowledge*. This makes people to value others more than oneself as expressed by proverbs such as ‘*Lugbara le juru ndeni*’ meaning ‘*the Lugbara love strangers more than themselves*’, we feel inferior with anything Lugbara.

vi) Conclusion:

In the encounter between Christianity and Lugbara culture one comes across two meaning systems which should use the positives of each other to build a better understanding of the new realities in our knowledge system as Lugbara Christians. In the Lugbara culture you are able to find what Paul describes as “*whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*” [Philippians 4:8]

In this article, I found out that there is a growing number of Lugbara Christians who are neither well-versed with Christianity nor rooted into the Lugbara thought patterns. This is mainly among the younger generation. True dialogue helps us overcome dangers that early missionaries encountered when they:

were accused of having acted as disruptive forces which have rocked traditional society to its foundations... that they (missionaries) neglected or even despised local culture, and that their work made a person a stranger from his society and background and that it confused people when they were torn between two values, two societies, two culture (OKOLO, 1978, pp. 39-40).

This article is an attempt for a Lugbara person to dialogue with Christianity to employ thought patterns, it be from Lugbara or biblical/Christian or Western worldviews, to embrace meaning which touches wider horizon of reality. I concur with Mbiti who clearly sees that acceptance of Christianity... in Lugbaraland, like in Africa, means that an African may “*come out of African religion but they don't take off their traditional religiosity. They come as people whose worldview is shaped according to African religion*” as quoted in (MAGESA, 1997, p. 17). The changes during this process are seen by Mbiti to be “*generally on the surface, affecting the material side of life, and only beginning to reach deeper levels of thinking pattern, language content, mental images, emotions, belief response in situations of need. Traditional concepts still form the essential background of many peoples...*” (MAGESA, 1997).

Appreciating the Lugbara epistemological approach helps both the Christian Missionaries and the Lugbara people to grasp reality more passionately so that “*meaning*” is more profound than being distorted or misconceived.

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