

Iraqw culture and identity in a unified Tanzania

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GENERAL ISSUE

Preamble

- based on paper with Daniela Merolla
- workshop in Babati January 2020 on Iraqw – Gorwaa with Andrew Harvey and Richard Griscom

Is there room for African languages?

- African languages loose out in developments of education and information
- are becoming part of folklore
- restricted to the home and rural activities
- have no place in modernity of daily life
- are seen as inadequate and backward

Or

- African languages gain ground in the shift towards the spoken word in modern media
- are seen as part of emancipation
- are seen as valuable heritage

Local and global trends

- globalisation
- value of diversity
- nation building
- indigenous people and endangered languages

SPECIAL CASE TANZANIA

Swahili national language

- One of the few countries with African language functioning as national language
- high level of fluency of large percentage of population
- dominant language for the educated youth
- creeps into all 120 Tanzanian languages
- anti-English attitude has disappeared
- English is gaining grounds

SPECIAL CASE IRAQW

Iraqw within Tanzania

- Deviant from Bantu majority
- Large group and fastest growing
- “Only” farmers among other non-Bantu:
Maasai, Datooga, Sandawe, Hadza, Dorobo
- relatively far from main roads
- image of political opposition

ROOTS IN COLONIAL TIMES

Colonial favourites

“With the peace achieved under German rule, the Iraqw began migrating to the south. ... Efforts to induce these Iraqw to return to Mama Isara would prove fruitless and become one of the key issues that defined the scale of competition for spaces between the Datoga and Iraqw over the plains for decades to come. ... The organization of ethnic administration and areas under their authority followed a European construct of space that domesticated the ‘native,’ but also created conflicts and debates.” (Mhajida 2019:74)

“At the time, the British administration expanded policies that were connected to the ‘grow more crops’ campaigns, which favoured the Iraqw [Wambulu] over the Datoga pastoralists. This colonial economic policy, popularly known as “amalgamation,” was aimed at increasing the Iraqwization of the political landscape in Mbulu and led to a number of more subtle measures. ... The British viewed the Datoga’s neighbours, the Iraqw/Mbulu people, as a ‘model’ community that was hard working and developing. ... The Datoga were especially concerned about the increasing porosity of the once strict ethnic boundaries, which had begun allowing the Iraqw to further expand inside Datoga territory. Between 1918 and 1927, the Datoga lost more than 40 per cent of the territories bordering the Iraqw in the south of Central Mbulu.” (Mhajida 2019:18)

Colonial motivations

- ‘the majority must rule’ principle (6 out of 10 were Iraqw)
- Datoga leadership regarded as rebellious
- Iraqw hardworking and pursued modernity and development.
- competition between British policies of social engineering and Datoga claims of territorial rights
- **Colonial quarantine measures to counteract rinderpest were adhered to by sedentary Iraqw who had a tradition of quarantine in their culture, *meeta*.**

EDUCATION IN RURAL AREAS

Kindergarten and primary school

The rise of pre-primary school options in the rural areas takes children away from home and traditional games and activities (but small boys do still herd).

Primary school has no room for Iraqw; fear of breaking the law. This is different in some other areas in Tanzania

Home work and television sets (come with solar panels) replace traditional story telling and riddling.

Secondary schools

- Spectacular rise in secondary schools and education. Often local initiative
- Every village wants its school for prestige
- English is official language of instruction; school books are nationally selected, a major income for some British companies
- no longer need to move to town and board there
- but no internet in rural areas. Electricity and mobile network expanding

CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

Social media

2

Facebook and Youtube popular

FB: IRAQW GROUP has 42809 members.

YouTube:

37K visits Iraqw tribe song Tanzania:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2n2qa4ZOvV4>

Not very traditional, comment: “Remnants of Ancient Azanian Civilization. Nimrod's Soldiers while ruling Babylon were Ethiopians and Azanian. Now you know why their tribal name resembles IRAQW”

Our posts: 10k, 2.8k, Stories: 5-60

Iraqw spelling course #1 100 Later ones less.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qyexa8WPf8>

4CCP festival and centre

- <https://4ccp.org/four-corners-cultural-festival.html>



Safari channel

- <https://tanzaniasafarichannel.go.tz/>
- tourism, own country tourism, nature and culture
- including local folklore
- part of NBC National Broadcasting Cooperation

CULTURAL IDENTITY

a colonial invention? no

- “In contrast, the Datoga (in Mbulu and Singida), Iraqw (Wambulu), Mbugwe, Gorowa, and the Fiome seem to have built their identities and consciousness of being a cultural unit prior to the 19th century (Mhajida 2019:17)
- names reconstructable for proto West-Rift Southern Cushitic (Kiessling and Mous nnn)

Are Iraqw – Gorwaa an identity?

- In early colonial period no clear differentiation between Iraqw and Barabaig
- Currently tendency among Gorwaa youth to mention the Mbulu identity (Gorwaa and Iraqw) (Harvey nnn)
- Seen as one by outsiders (Stefano aqi Griscom 2019)
- Merge in one student organisation (Stefano aqi Griscom 2019)

- A saying that the Iraqw have about the Gorwaa. "My child cannot defend himself" or "My child cannot speak." This shows that the Iraqw appreciate how the Gorwaa are, that they can be independent. Basilisa aqi Griscom 2019

Iraqw about Gorwaa in Slufay

- When we look South
- the place of the Gorwaa
- let you disperse
- disperse
- let you be dispersed
- Mt Hanang watches you
- Hanang watches you
- Mt Kwara fosters you
- Kwara fosters you

Differences

- Female initiation among Gorwaa, Not (anymore) among Iraqw
- There are oral histories about the Iraqw-Gorwaa separation. Haymu was still in common to both.

other neighbours in slufay

Maasai:

let us love each other;

and the bracelet on his arm will be worn by our father
and the knife of the Maasai will fall into the ground

and the milk gourd of your house; the women of our house will drink from it

Nyaturu/Nyiramba/Nyisanzu:

The Bantu from the West let the girls from our house and the Bantu girls dance together
and let the boys of our house sleep with them and marry them
from our house, double birth water will flow

Datooga

let us share the vegetables, even the last ones

and the bracelet of my arm, the mother of our house, let her get it among the pumpkin vines

The milk gourds of the Datoga let our mother drink from them

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Thank you



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