

## INVENTORY OF THE MADI BOW LYRE MUSIC AND DANCE

GENERAL INFORMATION ON ELEMENT

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## 1. What are the modes of transmission of the intangible cultural heritage?

O'di is passed on from generation to generation by old men and women. There are currently twelve (12) o'di practitioners (two women and ten men). These O'di practitioners are based in both districts of Moyo and Adjumani. The O'di practitioners are considered by the community to be knowledge bearers. The bearers are clan leaders, the Madi youth and women interested in o'di.

## 2. What is the importance of the intangible cultural heritage in your culture?

The Madi Bowl Lyre music is composed on specific themes or topical issues and performed for various reasons:

Some of the songs are played in the evening when children gather together with the elders in a homestead at the fireplace (*lange*) meant for teaching children cultural norms, values and histories of their clans and instilling in them the spirit of hard work, mutual understanding and respect for elders. Through such songs, children are able to tell their origin and fore fathers. Moreover, some songs are used for resolving conflict between two individuals or clans to find solutions for resolving such conflicts. An example is the conflict between two communities in Ciforo Sub-County in 2013 that was articulated using o'di performance.

The songs are also used to strengthen and build relationships. The male youth in most cases play o'di to convince girls for romantic relationships, as the sweet melody of the instrument captures the emotions of girls and accentuates the boy's creativity and 'beauty'.

Of recent Odi music is used to pass messages during socio-political functions or at ceremonies. When one has a very good harvest, or very good livestock production, they compose and perform o'di to express happiness, praise the healthy animal and celebrate good yields. Other songs are for lamenting about deceased persons and for consoling the relatives of the deceased. Specific songs are also played for entertaining people during beer parties and marriage.

## 2. Briefly describe the practice of element in your culture.

Ma'di Bowl Lyre music and dance (O'di) is a cultural practice comprising of playing the instrument by plucking it, singing and dancing to the music in a limping and sliding style, gently wriggling waist by women.

It is one of the oldest cultural practices of the Madi initiated by their ancestors and has been passed on from one generation to another by the practitioners through teaching the skills (of making and playing) to the children. O'di is performed at harvest times, during courtship, beer parties, and other social functions like marriage ceremonies, political rallies, cultural lounges and during leisure time with children.

The term o'di is used to refer to the instrument, its music and the dance of the Madi people. Its English name, 'bowl lyre', is coined from the bowl-like shape of the turtles shell laced to a non-sonorous animal skin, forming the sound bowl of the instrument. The strings made of either sisal fibre or nylon are tied to a piece of wood and inserted into the sound bowl near the points where the two arms of the lyre meet. The horn of a dyker or an aluminium bar is fixed at the ends of the two arms for defence, in case any conflict arises between the player and his/her audience during performance.

The five stringed O'di musical instrument is tuned in a pentatonic scale and plucked producing poetic melodic sound. Each string produces different pitches following the tuning of the pentatonic scale. O'di is played either as a solo or in an ensemble, in a poetic style for accompanying songs and dances specifically referred to as o'di, or other Madi traditional songs and dances such as Mure and Kore (love dances), Lubu (women dance) and Jenyi (death dance).

3. Are there special places where ELEMENT IS performed? If yes please mention some places where ELEMENT IS performed.
- i. In homesteads in the evening at fire places called Lange, in Madi.
  - ii. At drinking joints or in this case homes where people gather to drink alcohol.
  - iii. At social gatherings.
  - iv. Over the radio.

5. What specific name describes the practice of the element in your region?

The element is called O'di (Madi Bowl Lyre Music and Dance).

6. Who invented the idea of the element?

The Madi ancestor called 'Madi' invented the idea.

a) Where did the practice of element in your region originate.

It originated among the Madi people.

7. Which materials are used in the practice of your element?

Tangible Materials used are:

- i. Mobio Hard wood for making the arms of the o'di instrument.
- ii. Turtles shells.
- iii. Nylon, or sisal strings.
- iv. A skin of either alligator lizard, or cattle or an Elephant. The Elephant skin was commonly used before the law on preservation of the wild animals was passed. But currently, the people mostly use cattle skin.
- v. Pieces of a grinding stone or brooms picked from a talkative woman.
- vi. A piece of metal for decorating o'di.
- vii. Fire wood and fire for heating the metal.

Intangible Materials:

- i. Skills for making and playing o'di.

a) Who identifies and makes the element?

It is identified and made by skilled men and women among the Madi, who know how to make and perform o'di.

b) Where are the materials for making element got from?

The Mobio is a wild tree obtained from gazetted forests in Adjumani and Moyo districts, while the turtles shell is obtained from the turtles that live in the River Nile.

c) Are the materials always available or scarce?

These materials are scarce now. The turtles have become very rare because people also consume them as food, while the Mobio tree is one of those almost being extinguished because of deforestation for charcoal business, firewood and to clear land for cultivation.

d) Which measures have been taken to safeguard and protect the practice of the element in your culture?

- O'di practitioners have played key role in preserving the o'di culture. They have been gathering the turtle's shells and the relevant animal skins for assembling the instrument. But the sustainability of their activity has never been guaranteed.
- In the present Madi Community, there are 13 active o'di practitioners still imparting the o'di knowledge to the children during their leisure time. However, most of the children are not enthusiastic to learn and practice and this has been a great challenge to the practitioners.
- O'di has been introduced in few primary schools such as Homing Dove, Moyo boys among others, to make children excited about it. However, it is challenging to teach many children since the instruments are very few and it has become very hard to get the turtles shells for the sound bowl.
- The Madi Elders Forum in conjunction with the cultural leaders and the local FM radios has also designed a cultural program on Radio Amani to help boost the Madi knowledge and Morale on cultural issues. This program, very much appreciated by the community happens once every week and during it, o'di practitioners are invited to play and talk about o'di. However, such programs are only accessed by people who have radios. Moreover these elders and the cultural bearers lack the necessary logistics to effectively carry the program.
- The department of Forestry Adjumani and Moyo Districts have passed an ordinance to safeguard hardwood trees such as Shea butter tree, the Mobio, and others that are vehemently being destroyed by the community for charcoal; however, this law is yet to be respected by the community.

8. Who is involved in the practice of the element in your culture?

Those involved in o'di practice are the Madi communities consisting of the elders, youth, women and men interested in o'di performance.

9. Is there special training conducted for the community to acquire knowledge on the practice of the element? If yes,

Yes

What are they?

1. Involving children and interested persons to participate during the process of making the o'di instrument.
2. Teaching children or interested persons the art of playing o'di instrument during leisure times by the o'di practitioners.

a) Who conducts the training?

O'di practitioners. These are skilled persons, men and women who play and make o'di. Most of them are peasant farmers, and they play key roles in the Madi communities as clan leaders. These people are considered by the Madi to be knowledgeable about the History of the Madi.

10. Kindly explain the values and beliefs attached to the practice of element in your culture.

O'di practice is of a great importance to the Madi, as it is used to pass on their history from generation to generation. O'di instrument is believed to be an instrument for peace and unity among the people that is why when making o'di, the practitioners eat food without salt, as salt is associated with bitterness.

11. Are there special skills and languages needed in the practice of element in your culture? If yes, Yes.

a) Explain them.

1. The teacher should know how to pluck the instrument and make music from it bearing in mind the knowledge of the Pentatonic scale.
2. This is the cultural practice of the Madi people, so the songs are in Madi language; teaching of O'di is also done in Madi language for the children to understand some of the deep cultural expressions. So the teacher and the learner should both know Madi language for effective learning.

b) Who is responsible for passing on the skills to the community?

The skilled men and women who play o'di and are able to teach it to their children or interested persons

12. Apart from the community, who else is involved directly or indirectly in the practice of element?

- The business people who would wish to promote their products through o'di music.
- Politicians who often invite o'di practitioners to play for them o'di songs during political rallies.
- The Media.

13. Explain if any, customary practices governing the practice of the element in your culture.

Four rituals are embedded in o'di practice including: 'the cooking and eating' o'di, 'the naming ritual', 'insertion of brooms and pieces of stone taken from a talkative woman into the o'di sound bowl', and the 'shaking of o'di before and after playing'.

'The cooking and eating' ritual is done while making o'di instrument. A special meal comprising of ground peas pasted in simsim without salt and millet bread is prepared and eaten by the participants for blessing the new o'di. For the men, the millet bread is served in a winnowing and the sauce is served in clay bowl. The women eat from the clay cooking pot. The peas are prepared without salt, because salt is sour and is associated with anger. It must therefore, be eliminated from the source, lest, o'di will be used to insinuate anger and bitterness among people. For this reason, o'di is an instrument of peace.

Next in line is the naming ritual. Before the sound bowl is completely covered with the skin of either a cow, or alligator lizard, o'di is named. In this ritual, the owner utters a name belonging to his or her clan. The o'di is then referred to by that name, even after the death of the owner. And after the death of the owner, his or her child inherits it and passes it on to the next generation. So the name identifies the o'di with a particular clan, hence tracing the history of a particular o'di strengthens family ties and clan unity.

The third ritual is 'the insertion of pieces of broom and stone' taken from a quarrelsome woman into the sound bowl. This amplifies the o'di sound loud. O'di practitioners insert the piece of broom

and stone while praying to the ancestor to make the o'di sound loud like the quarrelsome woman. Indeed, o'di that sounds loud is enjoyed by the listeners.

Finally, there is the ritual of shaking o'di before and after playing believed to avoid testicle distension in men. However, this is mythical and is intended to draw respect for the o'di before and after it is played.

**14. Explain the ways in which the practice of the element is being transmitted/passed on to the future generations in your community?**

It is passed on by the o'di practitioners through teaching their children the art of playing and making o'di instrument.

**15. What are the threats to the practice of the element and its transmission?**

Before 1979, o'di was popular among the Madi since the people commonly practiced communal alcohol drinking, dancing, and storytelling in the evening at fire place. Moreover, o'di was also performed on Radio Uganda as interlude during Madi language program. Children gathered to listen to o'di being played on the radio, enjoy the melody and ask elders to explain the songs, enrooting their interest in learning the instrument and music. However, exiling the Madi to Sudan in 1979 caused considerable dwindling of O'di practice since many experts died and Madi social lifestyle of communal leisure times and spending evenings around fire places with children was disrupted. People became individualistic, spending most of the time looking for food for survival. Even the Madi who remained in Uganda spent most of their time hiding from the enemies. In fact most of the children born during and after the 1979 war do not know o'di. Most of them confuse o'di for bowl harp (Adungu) which they see commonly performed in churches.

When the Madi returned to Uganda in the mid-1980s, few practitioners that survived the war returned with the instruments and continued practicing it in their homes, mostly in the rural settings, and for remembering the past. However, most of them practitioners also lost interest in performing o'di because it ceased to be played in common social functions such as Marriage ceremonies, weddings, etc because these functions are organized by the post-modern age group that such for the 'modern entertainment taste in preference to the traditional'. It's only when the practitioners take personal initiative to perform o'di during Madi cultural program on the local media such as radio Amani and Trans Nile Broadcasting Service, that o'di is heard. At the time of this research, many practitioners had non-functional o'di.

Although some practitioners have taught o'di to their children, the children are hardly seen practicing. They feel shy to play o'di before fellow youth for the fear of being teased and associated with the 'old fashioned music'. One youth said during a discussion that "the problem with o'di is that it is really old fashioned, even while dancing, the style is old fashioned, people limp here and there...it makes one become lazy to dance, it is really not enjoyable like the modern disco.." (FGD, Agojo Village). Indeed, from the late 20th to the 21st century, popular music has become youth preference to traditional performances such as o'di. Many youth view o'di as outdated, unamplified traditional entertainment fit for the old people.

Moreover the youth hardly interact with such knowledgeable practitioners, as such; they are green about their clan histories, the cultural norms of the Madi, all which are embedded in the historical o'di songs. In a typical Madi clan setting in Adjumani District, only one or two children are knowledgeable about o'di. In Moyo District, it is only in Metu where at least five to six children know about o'di and play it. These children too, could easily give up the practice if driven away by their peer. This poses a big threat to the continuity of the Madi history, since children determine the fate of the posterity.

Further still, o'di is made of unique tangible materials. The sound bowl is made of the shell of turtles that live in the river, the arms are made of a specific kind of hard wood called mobio in Madi, and the decoration at the tip of the arm is made of the horn of a dyker. These elements too are endangered species. First, the communities hunt the turtles for food. Secondly, the turtles breed once in a year, in specific spots where there is sand on the river bank after a heavy rain. However,

these spots have been tempered with due to the population increase in Adjumani and Moyo Districts. People cultivate the wet belts of river Nile, causing the water level to go down and the sandy river belts are slowly disappearing. So it has become hard for the turtles to breed. There are now very few turtles left in the river and most of which are small, not fit to make presentable o'di. Equally so, due to poverty many people in Adjumani and Moyo districts have resorted to charcoal burning for earning income. And the charcoal that is considered good is of hard wood such as the mobio, which is also used for making o'di. This tree species has become rare in Madi land because of charcoal business. One has to move into the thickest forests towards the border of South Sudan to find mobio. If the trend continues, there is likelihood that mobio might be extinct, endangering the culture of o'di. Much as the dyker horn can be replaced by a piece of aluminium designed in a similar shape, the turtles shell and the mobio are irreplaceable, since they are key elements that differentiate the Madi bowl lyre from the rest of the bowl lyres in Uganda.

16. In your own simple explanation, how important is the practice of the element to you, your culture and community as a whole?

O'di is important for the Madi to keep their history alive and it enhances clan unity and family ties, since o'di is inherited.

17. Would you like to share this information with other communities and cultures?

Yes

18. Who else can we ask about this topic?

The Madi cultural leaders,

1. O'di practitioners,
2. The District local leaders from Moyo and Adjumani Districts,
3. Community leaders such as the Community Development officers in Moyo and Adjumani Districts.

17. Date included in the Ministry Inventory; 3 May 2014

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