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ORAL LITERATURE AND ITS SOCIAL BACKGROUND  
AMONG THE ACHOLI  
AND LANGO

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PREFACE

This thesis is based on literary texts I collected in Acholi and Lango Districts of Uganda between April and October 1962, and those found in the published works of the following authors: J.P. Abe 'Ododo Acholi (Acholi Folk Tales in verse) in Acholi Magazine No. 4 1953. Mr. Abe also lent me his tape recordings of nanga songs; R.S. Anywar, Acholi ki ker Megi 1948; R.M. Bere 'An Outline of Acholi History', Uganda Journal Vol. II No. 1, 'Land Tenure among the Acholi' Uganda Journal Vol. 19 No. 1; Miss C.B. Cave 'Cardok Acholi' (Acholi Proverbs) in Acholi Magazine No. 3 (1952); T.L. Cox 'Lango Proverbs', Uganda Journal Vol. 10; J.H. Driberg The Lango (1923); Rev. H.E. Lees Gang Fables (1930); Rev. Fr. A. Malandra Tekwaro Acholi (1946), 'The Ancestral Shrine of Acholi' Uganda Journal Vol. 7; Rev. Fr. P.A. Negri 'La Tribu nilotica delgi Acioli' La Nigrizia 1932, 1933, 1934. D. Oceng 'Land Tenure among the Acholi' Uganda Journal Vol. 19 No. 1. L. Okech Tekwaro ki ker Lobo Acholi

(1953). D. Ongo 'Buk pa Kwari wa' (The Books of Our Ancestors - songs) Acholi Magazine No. 3.; Rev. Fr. V. Pelligrini Acholi Macon (1949); Rev. Fr. Tarantino 'The Origins of the Lango' Uganda Journal Vol. 10, 'Notes on the Lango' Uganda Journal Vol. 13 No. 2. A.C.A. Wright Fifteen Lango Folk Tales(1958), 'Lango Folk Tales - an analysis' Uganda Journal Vol. 24, 'The Supreme Being among the Acholi' Uganda Journal Vol. 7. A select bibliography is appended.

The Introduction consists of brief descriptions of Acholi and Lango Countries, and the political, social and economic organizations, and the recent history of the two peoples. There is a critical examination of Dr. F. Girling's claim that the Kings of Bunyoro had Suzerainty over Acholi. In chapters 2 - 5, I examine Acholi and Lango myths and the historical songs of two Acholi dances: otele and bwala, and the mwoc - praise names, and also Lango Age - Sets songs. An attempt is made to give a sociological explanation for the striking contrast between the Acholi and Lango "in the conspicuous presence in the former and the no less conspicuous absence in the latter, of native history

and tradition' (Codrington, R.H. The Melanesians, (1891), p. 47).

Chapters 6 - 9 consider Acholi Funeral Dirges, the Lango do not have special funeral songs; chants at ancestral spirit shrines in Acholi and Lango; and songs sung at spirit possession dances. Chapter 6 consists of a critical examination of views put forward by other students of Acholi and Lango religious ideas; and a classification of Acholi and Lango spiritual beings. A table of Acholi chiefdom Joks is appended.

In Chapters 10 - 12, I consider songs of the Orak dance of the Acholi, Acholi and Lango proverbs and Folk tales as social sanctions and means of inculcating moral ideas.

Throughout I have tried to discuss the texts within their proper social contexts, paying attention to the performers and the audience whether in dancing, singing or telling folk tales. Due to shortage of funds (the Acholi District scholarship was terminated in March 1962, and my field work was financed from personal loans and part time jobs) I was unable to do much work among the

Lango. For most of the Lango texts I have therefore  
 relied on the available literature.

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## INTRODUCTION

1. ACHOLI

Acholiland extends over 15,000 sq. miles to the East of the Albert Nile (Approx. from 2° 30' N. to 4° N. latitude, and 31° W. to 33° W. longitude). The greater part of this (11,176 sq. mls.) is within the borders of Uganda; the remainder forms part of the Equatoria Province of the Sudan Republic. This thesis deals mainly with the oral literature of the Acholi in Uganda.

In the south and west, the Victoria Nile and Albert Nile, respectively, form the boundary with the Jo-pa-Luo in Bunyoro, and the Alur. There are no physical barriers between the Acholi and the Lango in the south east, as with the Sudanic Madi in the North. A number of hills are found in the north east: Lukung, Lututuru, Labwor, Orom. The highest is Agoro, whose peak reaches 9,932 ft. Beyond these hills are the Nilo-Hamitic Toposa, Dodos, Karamojong and Jie. The Labwor speak a Luo dialect.

Near to the Nile the average height of the land is 2,000 ft. above the sea level, in the central area,

it is above 3,000 ft.; and further east it rises to 4,000 ft. River Aca (mis-spelt Aswa on the maps), a tributary of the Albert Nile, roughly bisects the territory. Its tributaries Pager and Ayago drain the drier eastern half of Acholi. River Onyama, also a tributary of the Albert Nile, flows through the more fertile and better watered west Acholi. The average rainfall is over 50" per annum.

Isolated hills (inselbergen) made of hard granite rocks, rise suddenly above the surrounding undulating plains. Mount Kilak forms a prominent landmark in the west; and like the other hills, plays an important part in Acholi myths and traditions. Some of these hills are covered with forests, but a great part of Acholiland consists of rolling grasslands, interspersed with coverings of trees and small bushes.

The wet season is from April to October. The rains fall in short heavy showers which drains quickly, washing quantities of soil with it. The streams are swollen with red muddy floods; and the countryside is lush with vegetation growth. During this period the people grow cotton and tobacco as cash crops, as

well as finger millet and sorghum, sesame sweet potatoes, beans, peas, cassava etc. Mechanical agriculture is on the increase. (Acholi District leads all other districts in Uganda in the number of tractors it possesses ) and there is a considerable number of ox-driven ploughs; but the traditional forked hoe is still the most widely used agricultural implement.

In the dry season, from November to March, the grass is burnt or dies down. The days are hot dry and windy, and the streams dry up. Until recently, this was the season for hunting and fishing and holding dances. But these are now giving way to other forms of economic activities and recreations: such as harvesting and selling the cotton crops, watching football matches and field sports. The shortage of drinking water during the dry season is now greatly ameliorated by the water pumps sunk in many areas.

Some areas of Acholiland are still infected with tse tse flies, which until recently reduced the cattle population considerably. Goats and sheep are also kept, but today agriculture is the dominant sector of the Acholi mixed economy.

Arab slave-and ivory dealers operating in Acholi for at least forty years. Khartoum was established in 1823, and soon became a great centre on which several companies were based. One of these, under Amabile de Bono set up a post in Palaro in north Acholi. There was also another post at Pabo. The post at Magungo on Lake Albert, however, belonged to Arabs from Zanzibar and the east coast of Africa. The slave and ivory trade continued with breaks, until 1899, when British administration was firmly established in the area.

The result was serious depopulation and <sup>in</sup>impoverishment of Acholi, especially of the chiefdoms to the west. Baker estimated (Ismail 1879) p. 265) that a station sent 1,000 loads of ivory to Khartoum, and consumed up to 5,000 head of cattle annually. By 1873, a good deal of Acholi cattle had gone. In that year Baker, as Governor-General of Equatoria, insisted on the withdrawal of the slave and ivory trading companies from Acholi. But its chief representative Aboud Saoud was unable to transport his ivory, as there were no cattle with which to pay the porters.

Sin s.  
(Baker Ibid. p. 266).

The population of Acholi, according to the 1959 census is 267,898. The District is administratively divided into six counties, each comprising of between three to five divisions (1). A division corresponds to the traditional Acholi chiefdom, and is under a Jago - (which traditionally was head of the clan). The chief, Rwot is the head of a county. Today, none of these posts are hereditary, although a few chiefs come from the old chiefly houses. Rwot and Jago are servants of the District Council, and have administrative powers to carry out decisions of that body, which is directly elected. A division is further divided into muluka (2).

(1)

County	Divisions	Population
Acwa	Gulu; Paico Patiko; Atanga	47,211 (Madi 1,125 Sudanese 1,328).
Lamwo	Padibe; Palabek; Agoro, Madi Opei	35,195.
Agago	Adilang; Pader-Palwo; Paimol; Parabongo	40,773 (Lango 1,777).
Kilak	Lamogi, Anaka, Alero; Pabo, Atyak.	54,657 (Madi 947).
Cua	Nam-Okora; Obyen, Pajule, Labongo, Orom	50,397.
Omoro	Awere; Koc; Koro; Bobi; Lalogi	36,638 (Lango 6,154)

(2) from Miruka - luganda for a sub-chief.

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A number of lineages constituted the clan, that is the largest group of agnates who trace their descent from a common ancestor and between whom marriage is forbidden. (E.E. Evans-Pritchard, The Nuer (1950) p. 192).

Each clan has a name, that of its founder, a totem, a mwoc, or praise name. The lineages of one clan did not occupy one stretch of territory, but were separated by large tracts of country, and sometimes by lineages of other clans. But members of a clan, or at least their representatives, came together for funerals and other ceremonials such as the inauguration of a spirit shrine in honour of a won gang, or when a member had killed a dangerous animal such as an elephant, buffalo, lion or leopard. Dancing teams from the different lineages of a clan combined under one Jago during the war dance, Otole.

A number of clans were brought together under one chief, Rwot to form a chiefdom. In chapter 3, I trace the history of four Acholi chiefdoms, using the songs of the war dance and the royal dance bwala. I also discuss the relationship between the Rwot and the Jago.

The name Acoli by which the people are now known seems to have been given by Arab speaking slave and

ivory dealers from the North. It is likely that they gave the name Shuli because of the affinity of their language with that of the Shilluk who were already known to the Sudanese and whom they called 'Shuli' also. The Lango and Banyoro used the name Lu-Gang (or Ogangi, or Gani), 'people of the homestead'. The Madi and Alur called them 'Lango' a term which indicates hostility. The Acholi themselves do not seem to have had a name for their tribe as a whole. The question did not arise seriously, since at no time in their history, as far as I know, were they united against an outside threat under one leader.

Descent is reckoned patrilineally and marriages are patrilocal. A man usually built his household, consisting a hut for himself, and each for his wives, a bachelors hut - otogo, the granaries etc., near to that of his father on the dwelling site occupied by his agnatic kinsmen - his lineage.

Members of the lineage co-operate in activities which provide for their daily needs and guarantee their survival. The awak, work parties, cultivate the fields of its members and harvest the crops, construct houses and in the past for security purposes, they erected

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stockaded fences around the settlement, and the men defended it with their spears. The head of a lineage is called won gang (or paco), father of the homestead, after whom the settlement is called. He is responsible for the shrine of the lineage, and officiates during sacrifices. To some extent also he is in charge of general well-being and peace: to whom women take complaints about their husbands ill-treatment, and he represents the settlement at the gathering of elders.

Clan membership and attachment to chiefdoms however, is still an important factor today. Loyal sentiments are aroused in emergencies such as deaths, demands for services such as a local school or dispensary, during political elections and competition for jobs. It is interesting also to see the pattern which is clearly emerging, of permanent buildings being put up by the educated and higher income group of Acholi. The tendency is to gravitate towards the traditional clan territories.

Recent re-unions of clan groups which separated or were supposed to have split, over a hundred years ago, further illustrate the strength of clan sentiment. In November 1961, ceremonies were held to mark the

re-unification of the Palaro - a commoner clan in the Puranga chiefdom, with the aristocratic clan at Labwor-Omor. Thus ended a separation which has been in existence since the reign of Okelle - the third chief of Palaro. Cwa broke off and led his lineage to Puranga, after a struggle with his brother over the succession (see p. 99 below).

In August 1962 similar ceremonies were held among the Panyagira, a commoner clan of the Patiko chiefdom, with the Panjera, another commoner clan in Puranga. I helped compile the genealogical tree of both groups. After six long meetings with elders of both groups, both separately and in joint sessions, we could not establish the link between the two lineages, both which had now much increased in numbers. But this did not affect in any way the preparations which were already under way, and when the day arrived 're-union' was duly celebrated with great enthusiasm. The moving spirit behind this movement was Mr Erisa Lakor, an ex-headmaster of a secondary school, graduate of Makerere College, ex-county chief, and now Treasurer of the Acholi District Council.

Yet in both these cases of re-union, there was no

*Chop in  
Chigoma  
2/2/62*

mass-migration to re-join the parent clan, back to the old clan territory: nor were they accompanied by demands for secession and desire for the groups to manage their own affairs. These were 'spiritual' reunions, leading to the visits and inter-clan assistance that members now enjoy. The separations had cut off clan duties and privileges, these were now restored.

Speke and Grant were the first Europeans in Acholiland. Earlier in 1860, Giovanni Miani, the Venetian traveller almost reached the northern edges of Acholiland ( $3^{\circ} 12'$  north latitude). He carved his name on a large tamarind tree, and recorded some names of the chiefdoms and mountains which are found in present day Acholi. They include chiefdoms such as Atyak, Patiko, Palabek and Payira; and hills like Ajulu, Agoro and Cua. This indicates that these chiefdoms have been in existence at least over 100 years. Some of the texts discussed below, some of the songs which are still sung today are equally old, some perhaps older.

In November 1862, Speke and Grant met Cong Alwala chief of Koc, who claimed that his grandfather was a Muhima and was appointed chief over the area by a

Mukama of Bunyoro. This point is discussed fully below.

Baker met the two travellers in Gondokoro the next year, and although disappointed by the news that the source of the Nile had already been "discovered", he pushed on southwards, through Acholi into Bunyoro where he saw the lake Mwitanzige, and he renamed it Albert. In May 1869, Baker was appointed Governor General of Equatoria, charged with the task, among others, of suppressing the slave trade, and to introduce a regular commerce. He finally left Patiko in 1873. He did much towards that end. To him Rwot-Camo, the chief of Payira was ruler of all Acholi, and in March 1872 'Rot Jarma' as Baker called him is alleged to have "offered his allegiance and that of all the adjacent countries" to the Egyptian Government in return for protection and justice (Baker, Ismaïlia (1879) p. 265).

Gordon succeeded Baker as Governor General of Equatoria, and he in turn was succeeded by Emin Pasha in 1878. Emin Pasha also recognized Rwot-Camo as the "Chief of all Shuli" (Acholi, Okot).

In 1893 the Uganda Agreement was signed between Sir Gerald Portal and Kabaka Mwanga of Buganda. The Protectorate comprised of Buganda, Busoga, Bunyoro and

Koc - (the Acholi chiefdom of Chief Cong), four years later Macdonald toured the eastern borders of the Protectorate and got thumb-marks of a number of Acholi chiefs, on his forms: Cua, Kiteng and Padibe. Chief Awic of Payira refused to sign. In 1901 he was captured and exiled for 8 years in Buganda. Women of Payira sing the following Ogado (women's dance) song to commemorate the episode. The composer was the mother of Awic. (L. Okech, Tekwaro ki ker lobo Acholi (1954) p. 24).

Rwot okum tim, kilwongo nyinge  
 Rwot okum tim Aca Layaa  
 Eiyee! Awic dwogo na paco ku  
 Rwot dwogo na paco ku  
 Obalo wod Ayari  
 Obalo wod Labwor  
 Obalo wod Ayari  
 Rwot dwogona paco ku.

Chief in anger, has gone to the wilderness\*  
 They call his name (in vain)  
 Chief in anger, has gone to the wilderness  
 Aca, my beloved\*\*  
 O behold, Awic will not come back again to me  
 The chief will not come back again to me.  
 Ruined is the son of Ayari\*\*  
 Ruined is the son of Lion

\* The bush, or any place other than home or the homestead. In this case, the place of the exile.

\*\* The names of the mother of Awic.

Ruined is the son of Ayari  
Chief will not come back again to me.

Acholi District came under regular British administration between 1912-14, after the last Acholi resistance was broken in 1911 at Lamogi. 54 men, 28 women and 30 children were killed in the battle of Guruguru caves in which the Lamogi had barricaded themselves.

Protestant missionaries of the C.M.S. came into Acholiland in 1904, and after experiencing a number of difficulties finally established a mission in Gulu in 1911; and two years later in Kitgum, East Acholi. Catholic missionaries established a mission in Gulu in 1912, and in 1914 in Kitgum. Today mission schools and churches are to be seen in all parts of Acholiland.

The effect of about 60 years of British rule and missionary activities have been the breakdown of the old order political, economic and social. Hereditary chiefship has disappeared almost completely; the Acholi are no longer living in isolation of self sufficiency, but are an integral part of a world economic society which processes their cotton and from which they receive consumer goods in return, brought to

their villages by Indian and other Acholi traders.

With the decline of the functions and solidarity of the chiefdom has come also the decline of the activities in which members of the chiefdom took part as one group. Thus the war dance (otole) is now almost defunct. The last of the great otole dance that old men still remember took place about 1893: when Chief Owiny Ayaro of Bwobo, led his chiefdom dancers, first to Lamogi, and then to Payira. (Anywar R.S., Tekwaro Acholi p. 127). The royal dance bwala is still performed, but mainly encouraged by the Central Government. Olila, another dance which used to be performed on the eve of battle is now completely unknown.

II Acholi and Bunyoro

In his book The Acholi of Uganda (1960), <sup>Dr. F.</sup> L. Girling claimed that the Bakoma (pl. of mukama, King) of Bunyoro-Kitara had suzerainty over Acholi. Earlier in 1938 Fr. Gazzolara wrote that the absolute independence of Acholi chiefdoms "from each other and from outside influence e.g. Bunyoro (Bunyoro, Okot) must be stressed in face of some sporadic assertions from certain interested parties who wish to glorify themselves at the expense of the Acholi. (A Study of the Acholi Language, p. VIII). I now examine critically, the evidence on which Girling based his claim.

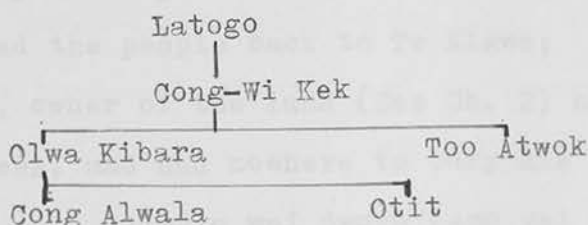
The travellers Speke and Grant spent two months at the court of Kamurassi, Mukama of Bunyoro, "They heard rumours of visits to the King by natives from many interesting countries round about whom to their annoyance they were not allowed to meet" (my italics) (R. Girling, *Ibid* p. 133). On 1st October, however, Grant recorded, "some more, Gani (Acholi) men, twenty-five in number, had arrived, and given him (Kamurassi) a lion skin, several tipet monkey skins and some giraffe hair as well as a stick of copper or wire brass", and two days later, "some Gani officials arrived to inform him

that there were two white men in the vessel spoken of as at Gani ... a carnelian was shown to me which the Gani people gave to Kamurassi many years ago." (J.H. Speke Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile (1863) p. 530-2).

Dr. Girling commented that whatever might have been the situation later, it was clear from this that there were close and intimate contacts between Acholiland and Bunyoro: adding, "It is likely that the gifts that Speke saw being brought to Kamurassi were forms of the tribute or tyer ... It is possible also that in return for their tribute the people received gifts of cattle and expected protection from attack". (Ibid p. 134). Speke, Grant and <sup>Dr.</sup>/Girling do not say what part of Acholiland the alleged delegations came from; were they ambassadors from one Acholi chiefdom? were these representatives from all parts of Acholi? There is no mention anywhere of the "gifts of cattle" that the Mukama gave to the "people"; and throughout Girling's account as will be shown there is not a single instance of "protection from attack" given by any mukama of Bunyoro to any one or more of Acholi chiefs.

In November 1862, Speke and Grant entered Acholiland, and met Cong Alwala, chief of Koc. Cong, according to Speke (Ibid. p. 576) considered himself "the greatest man in the country, and of noble descent, his grandfather having been a Mhuma (Muhima the aristocratic race in Ankole, Okot), born at Ururi in Unyoro (Bunyoro, Okot) country, and appointed by the then reigning King to rule over this country, and to keep the Kidi (Bakedi, Okot) people in check".

Dr. Girling confessed that it was impossible to reconcile this claim by Cong with the traditional genealogy of the rulers of Koc. According to this Latogo was the eighth chief in the line of rulers from Koc the founder of the chiefdom. He died at a place called Lacani; and was succeeded by:-



Cong Wikek, Alwala's grandfather. Cong Alwala was born at a place called Te Kigwe. His father Olwa Kibara died when Cong was a junior, and so Too Atwok,

brother of Kibara acted as regent. During the regency there fell a bad famine which drove the people of Koc to seek food among the Jopalwo in Bunyoro. Cong came of age while in Bunyoro, and was installed as chief of Koc. It was he who led the people of Koc back across the Nile to Te Kigwe when the famine was over.

The immediate cause which signalled the homeward journey was the death of Otit, brother of Cong. The Jopalwo refused to give land on which to bury the body unless payment of brass armlets were made. Traditionally land was never sold or bought among the Acholi, and the people of Koc were, as the bwala song below records, amazed that they should be asked to buy land on which to bury their prince. The song requests Cong Alwala to lead the people back to Te Kigwe; the chief, "wongon", owner of the land (See Ch. 2) had found himself landless, and had nowhere to bury his own brother.

Alwala wai dwoka paco ye!  
Alwala (cong) please take me (us) back home oh!

Piny ma kany kiwilo awila  
The ground (land, earth) here (in Bunyoro)  
has to be bought.

Dwoka paco Te Kigwe  
Take me back to Te Kigwe

Alwala do, ngom oloyo  
Alwala behold, land he has none

Alwala ngom oloyi ye  
Alwala land you have none oh!

Ngom pa nga ma luwilo ki ogul mola?  
Whose land was ever exchanged for (bought  
with) brass armlets?

The corpse was ferried across the Nile. On the eastern bank of the River, at a place called Otada, there stands to this day a giant bark-cloth tree, kituba, marking the grave of Otit. (L. Okech Tekwaro ki ker Lobo Acholi (1953) p. 47.

Dr. Girling wrote, "There is nothing unlikely, however, in Cong's account of himself as the guardian of the northern marches of Bunyoro" (my italics). (Ibid. p. 134).

As shown above there was nothing true in Cong's alleged statement. But if it is remembered that Speke and Grant entered Acholiland from Bunyoro where for two months they were entertained at the court of Mukama Kamurassi, it is likely that Cong might wish to associate himself with the ruler of Bunyoro. His reported account of himself would then be diplomatic hoodwinking: at which game the Koc chief was apparently quite good. Speke (Ibid p. 588) reported that while he and Grant were at Palaro, the headquarters of de Bono's slave and

ivory trading company, Cong came and persuaded the traders to join in an attack on the Payira who had "immense stores of ivory and an endless number of cattle". Cong alleged that these had been stolen from him originally. Dr. Girling remarked that this was not a very likely story (Ibid. p. 134-5).

Although Cong, allegedly represented himself a military governor of one of Kamurassi's provinces, Girling noted that at this time Koc was supporting the cause of the rebel Rionga against Kamurassi. Had Cong perhaps become another rebel? "There are signs", Dr. Girling wrote, (Ibid. p. 134-5) "that the dynastic quarrels in Bunyoro were at the bottom of the rivalry between Koich and Payera ... who were, presumably Kamurassi's chief representatives in Acholiland. (my italics) ... in all the incidents which took place between this time and 1899, Koich are to be found consistently on the side of the rivals of Kamurassi in Bunyoro and against the Payera".

The first of these "incidents" was the raid Cong made against the Payira, mentioned in the last paragraph: in which some of Rionga's men as well as the traders took part. Speke reported that after six days the raiders returned "laden with ivory and driving in five

slave girls and thirty heads of cattle". (Ibid. p. 588).  
 As will be amply illustrated in Ch. 3 inter-chiefdom  
 raids and warfare were quite common. But in order to  
 connect this incident with the dynastic quarrels in  
 Bunyoro, <sup>Dr.</sup> Girling stated that when Cong raided "the  
 Payira were apparently sending their ivory to Kamurassi  
 for transmission to the Zanzibari traders", (my italics)  
 the implication probably being that in attacking the  
 Payira, Cong was also acting against Kamurassi.

The only other "incident" mentioned by <sup>Dr.</sup> Girling as  
 proof that the Koc were consistently against Bunyoro  
 and Payira was that "when Kamurassi's successor,  
 Kabarega, was fleeing from the British invaders of  
 Bunyoro, he sought refuge amongst the Payira, and the  
 then ruler of Koich, Lagony, was among the first to  
 offer his support to the British Commander, Delme-  
 Radcliffe". (<sup>F. Girling. Ibid p. 136</sup>  
~~p. 135~~).

In 1897, Kabarega fled across the Nile, a fugitive,  
 outlawed by the new colonial administration. He moved  
 from place to place with his supporters and cattle; and  
 in Acholi he stayed not only among the Payira at Alokolum  
 (see Anywar R.S. U.J. Vol. XII p. 76), but also with

Chief Olya of Atyak (See L. Okech, Tekwaro ki ker Lobo Acholi p. 21). Later they moved into Lango and surrendered in 1899. Often fugitives seek refuge among friends. Dr. Girling would have us believe that in this Kabarega sought refuge among his 'subjects'. But we do not hear of any preparations among the Payira "who were presumably Kamurassi's chief representatives in Acholiland", to fight for their "King." Paradoxically, Kabarega hoped for assistance from the Arabs - from Khartoum. (L. Okech, Tekwaro ki ker Lobo Acholi, p.22: Anywar U.J. Vol. XI, p. 75).

Nor does <sup>Dr.</sup> Girling explain the nature of the "support" that Lagony, the ruler of Koc was alleged to have offered to the British Commander. Major Delme-Radcliffe, known to the Acholi as Langalanga, arrived in Acholiland to carry on the work began by Major Macdonald; to round up the remnants of Sudanese Mutineers, and to extend the sphere of British influence. Macdonald had signed so called treaties with several Acholi chiefs, but Awic of Payira refused to sign. Radcliffe, "by regular military patrol "carried out "routine pacification of the country". "He made useful contacts with many chiefs, and his recommendation, even in those early days, of

identifying the chiefs with the administration shows his wisdom and foresight". <sup>B.M.</sup> (Bere U.J. Vol. XI, p.7). Lagony, in fact was just one of the Acholi chiefs who put his thumb mark on the so-called treaty.

Holding firmly to the belief that Acholi, or at least Payira was a province of Bunyoro, <sup>Dr.</sup> Girling interpreted the revolt of the Acholi against the Egyptian garrisons at Patiko and Pabo in 1888 as the work of the Mukama of Bunyoro. "It is not difficult" he wrote (Ibid. p. 145) "to trace the changed attitude of Kabarega to the Egyptians and the Acholi rising. During all the previous years, while Kabarega had maintained friendly relations with Emin, there had been no trouble among the Acholi".

<sup>Dr. Girling</sup>  
 On p. 143 <sup>(Emin)</sup> he <sup>L</sup>wrote that throughout Emin's governorship he complained of the indifference of the Egyptian authorities to his demands. "His staff consisted of Sudanese soldiers mostly Dongolani, or former slaves, with little training and no discipline. The officers were Egyptians sent to Equatoria as a punishment for misdemeanours at home, the civilians were Egyptians, and Copts, and most of them were dishonest also."

*Girling's original admission*

Hawashi Effendi, Emin's deputy as Governor of the Province had, by 1888 acquired 3,200 dollars, 700 heads of cattle, and 11,000 goats as a result of raids on the native population of the area. (my italics) (See also A.J. Mountney-Jephson, The Rebellion at the Equator, (1890) p. 216).

Anywar stated (U.J. Vol. 12 p. 75) that the Nubis (Acholi for Egyptians, Sudanese, Copts etc.) at Patiko and Pabo gradually got into difficulties. The Acholi had grown tired of supplying them with food daily for so many years, with the result that the Nubis started seizing it, burning villages and killing their inhabitants in the process". In 1888 the Payira gathered and fought the Nubis in the valley of Akworo killing many of them, and captured their women, guns, cattle, goats.

Emin, was unwilling to believe that Kabarega was behind what <sup>Dr.</sup>Girling called "the Acholi rebellion", and preferred to think that it was entirely due to the excesses of his garrisons. Dr. Girling commented "He (Emin) underestimated the diplomatic skill of his supposed friend" (p. 146).

In 1887 Rwoth came Labwor of Payira was killed by

a Padibe man called Cakai, who earned the title Lukira-moi for the deed. The chief was on his way back to his home from the ancestral shrine at Pawatomeru, and he and his party were attacked by Padibe warriors assisted by some Arab traders whose headquarters were in Padibe chiefdom territory. His head was cut off. To Girling this was an expression of defiance of Payira and Bunyoro, by the people of Padibe (p. 147)!

The feud between Payira and Padibe and the circumstances of the death of Rwot camo are dealt with at length by L. Okech (Tekwaro pp. 41 - 43). R.S. Anywar (Acholi ki ker Megi, and U.J. Vol. XI p. 73); R.M. Bere (U.J. Vol. 10 No. 2 p. 77). The brother of Abwor, Chief of Labongo eloped with the wife of Abara, son of Rwot camo of Payira. Whereupon the Payira, in retaliation captured Ato, the wife of Abwor. Abwor, the chief of Labongo then called on Ogwok the Chief of Padibe and the Arab traders to join him in an attack on Payira (See L. Okech Ibid. p. 42).

It is amusing to read the report of Major G. Casati, according to whom Rwot camo was killed during the Acholi "rising". The passage is also quoted by <sup>Dr.</sup> Girling.

"and the Shuli arose: but defeated at Fadibek (Padibe, Okot), Patiko and elsewhere by the soldiers, who were also ardent and ready for a fight, they paid for their unfaithfulness with many victims. Protshamma (Rwot-camo, Okot) the soul of the insurrectionary movement and of the insane attempt, fell also".

(Ten Years in Equatorial Africa, II 1891, 30)

"Baker", <sup>Dr.</sup> Griling wrote (<sup>ibid.</sup> p. 141) "may perhaps have

taken the place temporarily of the Mukama of Bunyoro-Kitara as the protector of Acholi and the arbiter of their disputes, but he could not replace him completely".

Not a single instance is given either by <sup>Dr.</sup> Griling or any of the authorities on which he seemed to rely, in which any Mukama of Bunyoro-Kitaro ever gave protection to any clan, chiefdom or a group of chiefdoms in Acholiland. Arab slave and ivory traders operated in Acholi territory undisturbed, until Baker arrived. Battles were fought by different Acholi chiefdoms against Lango and Madi invaders, but in none of them did any Nyoro King intervene on the side of the Acholi.

Similarly, like Speke, Grant, Mounteney-Jephson, and Casati, <sup>Dr.</sup> Griling refuses to illustrate his statement that the Mukama of Bunyoro was an arbiter in Acholiland. As will be seen in Chapter 3, Acholi clans and chiefdoms engaged in many battles among themselves. There were

plenty of opportunity for the Mukama to arbitrate.

Emin withdrew from Acholiland in 1889, and soon all traces of the Egyptian administration disappeared. It was ten years afterwards that <sup>Major</sup> Macdonald arrived. "During the interim period" <sup>Dr.</sup> Girling wrote (Ibid. p. 148) "it seems from traditions that Kabarega reasserted his authority over the area. He punished those guilty of having supported the Egyptians by attacking them, burning villages and removing their cattle". (My italics)

Characteristically, <sup>Dr.</sup> Girling does not name the chiefs who were punished, nor does he tell us the people whose traditions he relies upon. The traditions of the western Acholi chiefdoms and especially those of Payira, Atyak, Koc and Patiko among whom Kabarega moved when he fled from Bunyoro, are utterly silent on this issue. (See L. Okech, Tekwaro ki ker Lobo Acholi; Anywar <sup>Q.S.</sup> Acholi ki ker megi). During this period, <sup>notover,</sup> Kabarega was fully occupied in his struggles against the combined forces of the British and Ganda invaders. In 1893 a force of nearly 15,000 men invaded Bunyoro and quickly overran the country. Kabarega resorted to guerilla warfare which continued until 1896 when he was driven out

of the country into Acholi; a fugitive. (<sup>Dr.</sup>J. Beattie, Bunyoro (1960) pp. 21-22).

It is true that there were much movement and contact between Bunyoro and Acholi. Acholi clans and chiefdoms migrated to Bunyoro during famine, as was shown above in the case of Bwobo. In Chapter 3 more examples will be given. Certain Acholi chiefdoms such as Payira, Patiko, Koc, too, share the myth of Labongo with the royal house of Bunyoro. And as <sup>Dr.</sup> Girling quite rightly pointed out (and this is supported by Anywar R.S. See p. 202 <sup>below</sup> ~~above~~); the Mukama of Bunyoro always sent a delegation on the occasion of installing a new chief in Payira. Trade relations also existed between Bunyoro and Acholi, and as will be shown in Chapter 9 there was a strong 'religious' influence from Bunyoro. Nevertheless, the claim that Nyoro Kings ruled over Acholi seems to be without foundation; and must therefore be rejected.

### III The Lango

The 339,392 Langi (1959 Uganda census) live in the marshy low savanah country north of Lakes Kioga and Kwania. The land is intersected by numerous rivers whose sluggish currents are almost blocked by the thick vegetation. 536 of the 5,000 square miles of Lango territory is under water.

In the west the boarder with Bunyoro runs through the middle of the Victoria Nile, and it continues through Lake Kioga to seperate Lango from Buganda. As mentioned above, there is no physical barrier between Lango and Acholi to the north; this is also the case with the Karamojong, the Iteso, and Kumam in the north-east, east, and south east. There are substantial numbers of Acholi, Iteso and Kumam in the border counties of Lango District. (See Counties Chart, below p. 32 ).

There are a few outcrops of rocks in the south-east, the Maruzi Hills; and in the north of the country Erute, Ngeta, Amoru etc. None of them rises to above 1,500 ft.; and are not covered with forests. Indeed there are no natural forests in Lango: only small bushes may be found here and there. The hills do not

seem to play any role in the traditions and myths of Lango, as is the case with the Hills in Acholi. Nyara Hill which is mentioned in a number of age sets songs, is in present-day Teso District - in the north west. This area was in fact part of Lango territory, before 1900, but the Lango were forced backwards by Somei Kakunguru, (the Ganda general in the service of British imperialism), and later the Kuman settled there (Driesberg The Lango (1923) p. 35)./

The dry season lasts from December to the end of March, during which burning of grass takes place. In the recent past, as was also the case in Acholi, this was the season for hunting, fishing and raiding. Now the Lango occupy themselves in similar economic pursuits and entertainments as were mentioned earlier. Cotton is harvested and marketed during December. Lango cultivators produce over 1,500 tons of cotton annually (Lango District Plan (1953) Entebbe, Government Printer)

In good times rain falls between April and December with a dry spell in July, when finger millet is harvested. This is the time of much economic activity in the gardens, which traditionally were cultivated on a co-operative basis. The wang tic, corresponds to the awak - work party of the



Acholi. Modern co-operative societies have been set up recently, mainly for marketing of cotton, grown by its members. But much of the economic and agricultural endeavours of the Lango today, are on an individual, subsistence basis.

The rainfall, although plentiful on average (50" per year) is highly irregular. Anxiety about rain, was, as it still is, a feature of Lango life. Traditionally this was expressed in the ritual concern of the age sets with ~~(rain making ceremonies and)~~ rain dances, myel kot, which were organised and performed simultaneously in all the four areas into which Lango territory was divided. The age sets and the rain dances are now defunct. Today great emphasis is laid on the planting of much cassava - a famine relief root crop. The Lango grow the same crops as the Acholi.

Tse-tse flies (*glossina morsitans*) is found to the west of the country, and there are constant threats from Acholi and Karamoja; but the cattle population is still quite high 291,627 heads (Compare with over 40,000 heads in Acholi). 7,000 are exported annually into Bunyoro and Buganda, (Lango District Plan 1953).

It seems that although the slave and ivory dealers operated in Lango, the effect of their activities were not as disastrous as it was in Acholi. This may have been due to better defence organizations of the Lango. <sup>Sig. S.</sup> Baker recorded (Isma'lia p. 101) how a dawn attack on a Lango village mounted by Ali Hussein a slave trader based on Patiko, and commanded by Lazim was completely coushed. Of an invading force of 250 men armed with 100 sniders, only one man escaped. Dricberg commented that "after Lazim's sound defeat the Lango lived unmolested by the slave traders with the exception of a few sparodic and innocuous visits from the Nubi post in Bunyoro. (The Lango p. 34).

The District is divided into seven counties and thirty seven divisions:

County	Population
Oyam	64,817 (843 Acholi)
Maruzi	22,169 (1,254 Nyoro)
Kwania	27,596 (553 Bakenyi)
Erute	91,126 (677 Acholi; 510 Nyoro)
Moroto	70,264 (2,193 Iteso)
Kioga	23,571 (2,193 Kumam)
Dokolo	30,805 (3,543 Kumam; 1,347 Iteso).

There are 74 sub-divisions, muluka, and 226 villages ateker. The clan, there are 158 of them, is not of much political significance. This is in vivid contrast with the situation among Acholi. The tendency in the past was for the clan to scatter and subdivide, and the groups joined different villages headed by a Twon Lwak, bull of the people, who organised defences and led men in battle. There are no hereditary chiefs and there has never been. The District Council which was established in 1946 is today a wholly elected body. The Won Nyaci- a constitutional and ceremonial head of the Lango was established a few years ago.

The name 'Lango' now being used exclusively to mean the inhabitants of present-day Lango District, was a title which generally referred to the Nilo-Hamitic group of tribes (Goldthorpe, Elements of East African Society (1958) p. 84). Acholi called the Karamojong, Jie and Dodos together 'Lango Dyang' - cattle Lango. The Lango of Lango District called the same group-Lango Olok - "on account of the horned ornaments attached to their head-dress" <sup>Dr.</sup> Gulliver, 'The Name Lango as a Title for Nilo-Hamities. U.J. Vol. 15 No.1 (1951) p. 145).

The Kumam call themselves 'Lango'.

'Lango Omiro', was the term used by the Acholi when they referred to their hostile southern neighbours; probably derived from Nimiro, the title used by the Karamojong and Jie for the same group: Professor Southall has suggested (~~the~~ <sup>Society</sup> Alur pp. 98-99), that the name Omiro may have been derived from the Lwo word miro, a slave, a person of low status. It may be said, however, that the attitude of the Lwo groups towards the Lango was not that of respect arising from a sense of superiority, but clearly that of hostility and fear. (Dr. G. Lienhardt in personal communication says that the word lang in Diuka or Anuak means a servant).

In 1897, a military expedition commanded by Major Macdonald marched into Lango with the aim of destroying the Sudanese mutineers who had taken refuge in the swamps around Lake Kioga. In the operations the Lango suffered heavy casualties. In the same year, Mwanga the deposed Kabaka of Buganda, and Kabarega, deposed Mukama of Bunyoro fled into Lango, for two years they moved from place to place, and stayed for some time with Chief Olya of Atyak in Acholi. They finally surrendered

in 1899.

During the two years parties of armed Ganda and Nyoro warriors crossed the Nile into Lango territory, ostensibly to help capture the monarchs, but perhaps allured by the hopes of loot. They inflicted considerable damage on Lango villages in the Lake Kioga region and captured some cattle. Lango warriors also caused heavy losses on the invaders. In a battle near Aber, the Lango led by Owiny Akulo killed 70 Ganda, and chased the rest across the Nile. Etik, another Lango Twon Lwak won an even greater victory over a Nyoro army which lost 250 killed, and many sniders captured. Another Lango general of this period whose name stands out was Otwal. (~~Dri-hong~~ The Lango).

Some Nyoro, however, settled on the east bank of the Nile and along the north shores of Lake Kwania. They strengthened their settlement by regular migrations from Bunyoro. This accounts for the substantial number of Nyoro in Maruzi County (See footnote above P. 32 ).

Shortly after the surrender of Kabarega and Mwanga, Semei Kakunguru, a Muganda General who was in the service of British administration, was appointed in charge of the

Kakunguru's B.Q. at Dabala was used as a district

Baganda  
is a  
B.Q.

territory north of Lake Kioga with orders "to bring unruly tribesmen under control, and to keep the district free from fugitive mutineers" (K. Igham, The making of Modern Uganda (1958) p. 77). At the head of a large army of Ganda followers, he established his H.Q. at Bululu, from where he launched many 'pacification' operations against the Lango. He drove them back from the R. Manyala and Mt. Nyara region, and the Kumam settled there.

Kakunguru set up a form of administration on the Ganda model with Baganda acting as county (Saza), Division (Gombolola) and Miruka (village) chiefs. (The offices are known by Luganda terms). In his day he was one of the most potent enemy with whom the Lango had to deal. Old men still remember and vividly recount of the atrocities and difficulties they suffered. Kakunguru and his administration are also blamed for the destruction of much of Lango traditional institutions. He was withdrawn in 1903, and his successor Kazama was killed by the Lango in battle in the same year. (H.B. Thomas 'Capax Imperii, The Story of Semei Kakunguru' U.J. Vol. 6 pp. 125-36).

Kakunguru's H.Q. at Bululu was used as a district

centre for sometime, and then it was transferred to Nabieso; Lira the present administrative and commercial town was opened in 1911.

The history of Acholi before contact with Arabs and Europeans in the later half of the 19th century, is the story of the clan (S.M. Muru, 1953, pp. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000.

## Chapter 2

## MYTHS OF SOME DOMINANT ACHOLI CLANS.

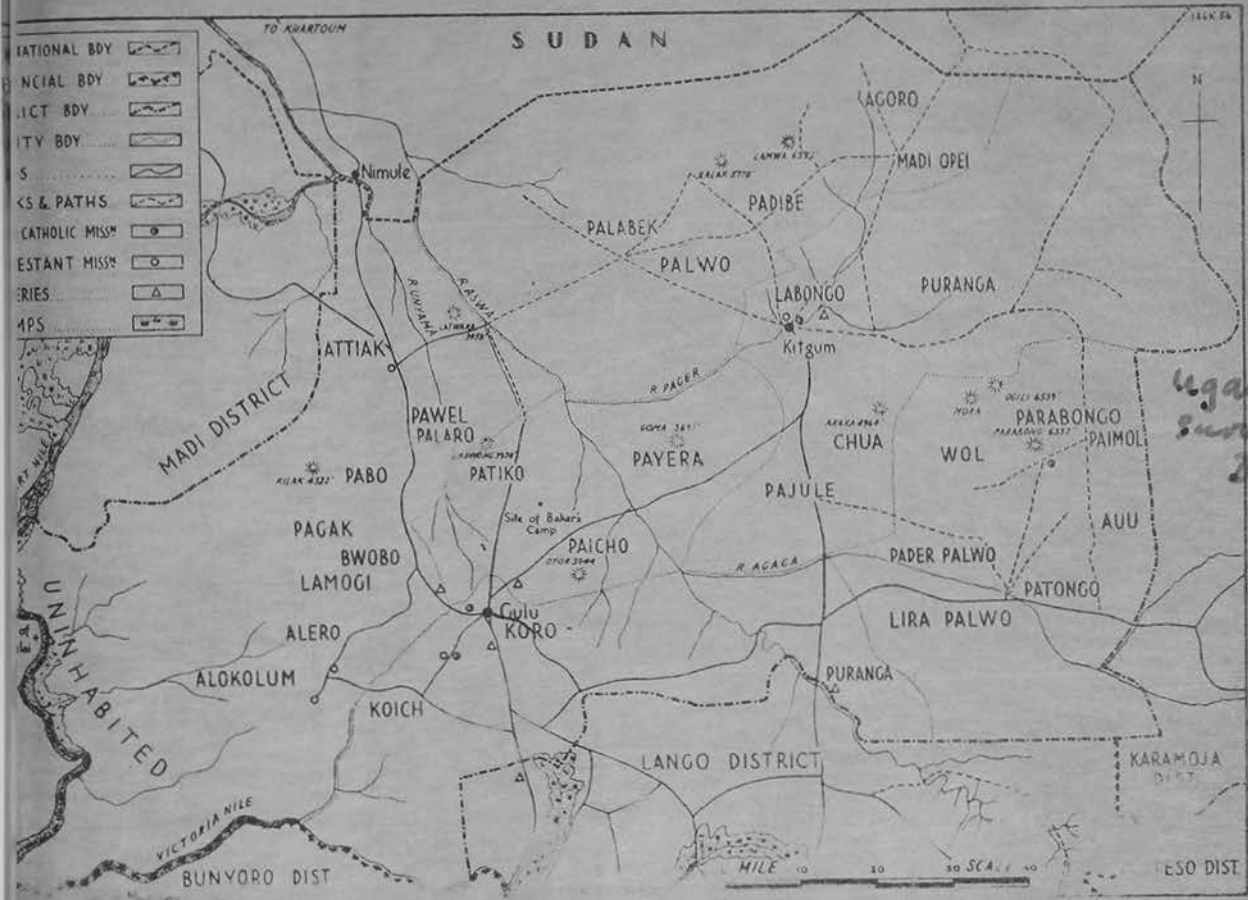
The history of Acholi before contact with Arabs and Europeans in the later half of the 19th century, is the story of the clans (R.M. Bere, U.J. Vol. XI, p. 1; F.K. Girling The Traditional Social and Political order of the Acholi (D. Phil. Thesis, Oxford University 1952; Acholi District Plan (1953) p 2-3. Fr. J.P. Crazzolaro A Study of Acholi Language (1948) Ch. 8.) Their traditions tell of how the different clan groups came to occupy their present territories, of combinations and splits, of alliances and inter-clan strife. It is a story of the <sup>rise</sup> ~~visit~~ of the dominant clans and the founding of chiefdoms. A clan set itself up as a nucleus, and other clan groups became attached to it. It became the lu-kal the 'aristocratic' clan which provided the line of rulers, the other 'commoner' clans were called lu-bong - those without the chiefship (from bongo - without, absent). Some of these, at times transferred their allegiance to other chiefs, or even set themselves up as nuclei of independent chiefdoms.

Each clan had its own traditions of migration from one place to another under its rwot, whose genealogy was remembered and cited. (See Appendix C. F.K. Girling The Acholi of Uganda (1960)) Each had its totemic taboo, kwer, a clan spirit shrine, wang jok its praise name mwoc, and a named royal drum, bul ker.

But as a dominant clan established itself, its tradition of migration, totemic taboo, spirit shrine, praise name and royal drum gradually superseded those of the commoner clans attached to it. The rwot of a commoner clan became a jago, who, although he still remained the hereditary head of his own clan, was no longer completely independent. Together with the heads of other commoner clans, and other important elders such as war leaders, 'hunt owners' etc, the jago attended the chiefdom council presided over by the rwot, who continued to be head of his own royal clan.

The clan groups entered Acholiland from different directions and at different times. It is difficult to determine exactly when and in what order each of the clan groups settled where it is today. But the matter merits consideration, and we can at least classify some

# ACHOLI DISTRICT : Some Chiefdoms.



<sup>of the</sup> after dominant clans according to the direction from <sup>to</sup> which according to their traditions, they entered Acholiland.

- (Clan origin and structure)*
- (i) Those which claim descent from Labongo: Payira, Paico, Koc. They seem to have followed the Nile, southwards into Acholi.
  - (ii) A group that entered Acholi territory further to the East: Padibe.
  - (iii) Groups which crossed the River Nile from ~~Bunyoro~~ and are called Jo-pa-luo: Pajule, Alero, Pader, Paimol, Pamot of Amyel.
  - (iv) Groups from Lango and Jie: Adilang, Paranga, Koro and Patongo. According to Lango tradition, after the wars with Acholi, these Lango groups moved into Acholi, when the Lango began fighting among themselves. (Fr. Tarantino "Lango Wars" V.J. Vol. 18 No. 2 p.116).
  - (v) Sudanic groups from Madi and Bari, Atyak, Lamogi, Pabo, Parabongo. (A.B. Adimola V.J. Vol. 18 No. 2 p.116)

At the turn of the century there were several hundreds of these clans, <sup>D.F.</sup> (Girling estimated that they were 800 of them) grouped together under some 30 politically independent chiefs. These chiefdoms, as was shown above, formed the basis on which the British Colonial administration was established.

Under these circumstances of intense rivalry between chiefs and clans for allegiance of commoner

clans, of rival traditions and institutions for dominance, the role of myths to validate claims of a chief, to justify the pre-eminence of one institution over another is most significant. Myths, as Robert Graves and Raphael Patai aptly put it "are dramatic stories that form a sacred charter either authorising the continuance of ancient institutions, customs, rites and beliefs in the areas where they are current, or approving alterations ... (Hebrew myths' in Encounter, Feb. 1963)./

professor S.H.  
 L Hooke, who approached the study of Middle Eastern myths using the notion of 'function', has classified them into the following categories:

- (a) Ritual myth, comprising the spoken part of a ritual, the muthos, a story of what was being enacted, told in the form of a chant, incantations, magic formulas: its function being to secure efficacy of the ritual by magic force.
- (b) The Cult myth, describing the history of cults, religious festivals, etc. The function being to secure efficacy of a ritual by moral force.
- (c) Myth of Origin, imaginary explanations of the origin of a custom, a name, or even an object.
- (d) Prestige myth, which invests the birth, exploits of a popular hero with the aura

prob function  
 79 myth  
 related to  
 political  
 economic  
 vitality?

of mystery and wonder.

- (e) Myths which attempt to describe the final end of human existence, this is characteristic of Jewish and Christian thought. This category is called Eschatological myths. S.H. Hooke, Middle Eastern Myths (1963) pp. 11-17.

Categories (a) and (e) seem to be absent from Acholi and Lango myths. Certain chants used in religious ceremonies are discussed in Part II, but these seem to be direct prayers rather than stories of the rituals being enacted; moreover the problem of the end of the world does not appear to have vexed the Acholi and Lango. Categories (b), (c) and (d) which we may generally call religious, social and political respectively are found in Acholi myths, while the Lango myths are only of the (c) social category. An attempt to answer the question why this should be so, is made below.

The myth of Labongo and Kipir, is the most widely known of Acholi myths, (versions of which seem to be known also among the Alur and as far south as among the Lwo of Kenya). There are several reasons for this fact. Firstly, the group of Acholi chiefdoms to which

the myth belongs, are numerically dominant, as the following figures of taxpayers in 1946 show:

Payira	4,600
Koc	2,160
Patiko	1,300

Koro	800
Pagak	400
Parabongo	300

(Source: L. Okec Tekwaro ki ker Lobe Acholi p.33).

Secondly, during the period when Baker and Emin Pasha was in Acholi, 1872-1888, many western Acholi clans seem to have migrated and settled near Ajulu Hill in Patiko and Payira territory, for protection against the Arab slave and ivory dealers. (Okec, Ibid. pp. 7-9). Thirdly, Gulu the administrative headquarters of the new regime, was established in Patiko. The missions also built their first churches and schools there. Patiko and Payira dialect became the standard dialect for the whole Acholi. These conditions seem to have facilitated the dissemination of this myth throughout Acholiland. And writers about Acholi, notably Father P.A. Crazzolara and R.M. Bere have mistakenly assumed that the myth belonged to <sup>all</sup> Acholi chiefdoms.

The myth of Labongo and Kipir seems to have two

functions, first to 'explain' the separation between some of the dominant Acholi and Alur clans; second, by clothing the circumstances of the fact of the birth of Labongo 'with mystery and wonder', it enhances the status of those chiefs who claim descent from Labongo. Moreover, by showing the supposed greatness, extent and antiquity of the empire founded by the children of Lwo, the myth further validated and strengthened the authority of Payira and Patiko chiefs:

Lwo Rwot umkwongo otue ki i ngom  
Lwo Chief the first broke-the-surface from inside  
the soil (earth).

Lwo onywalo Ipiti  
Lwo beget Ipiti

Ipiti onywalo latin nyako Kilak  
Ipiti beget a daughter Kilak.

Nino mo Kilak ocito ka jen ci  
One day Kilak went to collect firewood but

Pe odwogo paco  
She did not return home

Oduru oko<sup>k\*</sup>  
The alarm was sounded

Kiyenyo Kilak kwe  
They looked for Kilak in vain.

Nino mo Kilak otuc paco  
One day Kilak broke into the homestead.

Kome onongo pek  
Her body was heavy (she was pregnant).

Kilak onywalo latin laco, Labongo  
 Kilak gave birth to a male child, Labongo.

Latinone onongo tangu  
 That child was a miracle

Kinywalo ki gara i tyent, ki kono i wiyt  
 He was born with bells on his legs, and feathers  
 on his head.

Ticce myel  
 His pre-occupation was dancing.

Cong mo lyec obino ka camo poto  
 One day the elephant came to eat the field.

Kipir otingo tong ocobo ki lyec  
 Kipir took a spear he speared with the elephant.

Lyec ocito woko ki tong  
 The elephant went away with the spear.

Tong onongo pa Labongo  
 The spear was Labongo's spear.

Labongo okeco matek  
 Labongo he was angry very strongly

Odido ominne pi tong  
 He posted his brother for the spear.

Kikelle tong mukere, Labongo degi  
 They brought him another spear, Labongo refused

Kikelle dyel, Labongo degi  
 They brought him a goat, Labongo refused.

Kikelle dyang, Labongo degi  
 They brought him a cow, Labongo refused.

Kipir okwanyo tongi ki kwot  
 Kipir took spears and a shield

Oluku lyec  
He followed the spoor of the elephant.

Oo i bunga ma col  
He arrived inside a dark forest

Onongo Min Lyec  
He found Mother of Elephants.

Min Lyec otugge i kom Kipir ki daa  
Mother of Elephants stormed Kipir with a quarrel

Kipir otito gin mukele  
Kipir explained the thing that brought him.

Min Lyec ocoko lwaki tongi  
Mother of Elephants gathered many spears

Kipir ayero mere  
Kipir selected his own (Labongo's lost spear).

Min Lyec omiye poke irgor  
Mother of Elephants gave him food for the journey,  
fried peas.

Orubu iye tiko bur jok  
She mixed in it bur jok beads (a rare type)

Kipir odwogo paco  
Kipir returned home

Odwoko tong pa ominne  
He restored the spear of his brother.

Nino mo acel Kipir obedo want myango ka  
One day Kipir sat in the morning sun

Rubbu, tiko-me.  
threading his beads.

Ywere obino ka nenno tiko  
His brother's (Labongo's) wife came to admire  
the beads.

Latin pa Labongo onwonyo tiko acel  
Labongo's child swallowed one bead.

Kipir okeco matek pi tiko-ne  
Kipir was angry very strongly for his bead

Odido ominne ma tek  
He pestered his brother (Labongo) very strongly.

I cet pa latin tiko pe  
In the child's dung no bead (was found).

Kikelle tiko bur-jok mukene, Kipir degi  
They brought him another bur jok bead Kipir refused.

Kikelle dyel Kipir degi  
They brought him a goat, Kipir refused.

Kikelle dyang, Kipir degi  
They brought him a cow, Kipir refused.

Labongo obolo pala imjim ominne  
Labongo threw a knife before his brother.

'Eno bar i latin, kwany tiko-in'  
'There slit the child's stomach, take your bead".

Kipir in "meno pe ticca"  
Kipir replied "That is not for me"

Labongo okwanyo pala oryeko i wode  
Labongo took the knife, ripped open his son's belly.

Okwany tiko, omiyo ki ominne  
He took the bead and gave it to his brother.

Labongo okwaoguge gin ki ominne  
Labongo he cursed and was cursed by his brother

Kipir okwanyo latong ogurn i dye nam  
Kipir took an axe (and) drove it in the bed of the  
wide River. (Nile)

Ongolo nam okato loka ca  
He crossed the River and went to the far side

Labongo odong ki Iwakke tung kany  
Labongo remained with his people on this side.

Near the ferry port of Pakwac on the River Nile is a little port still used by fishermen called Wang Wat Latong - the Port of the Axe; on the Alur side of the bank it is called Wang Wat Lei - the port of the Axe (Lei in Alur is axe). On the maps it is spelt Wade Lai. A little distance to the south of Wang Wat Lei, there is a small village called Puvungu, the inhabitants of which claim to be descendents of a lineage which was left behind by the main body of Nyipir's (Alur for Kipir) followers who moved inland into the highlands. They are in charge of a shrine, where sacrifices are still offered on important occasions by the Jo-Nam (Riverine Alur) and some of the highland Alur clans <sup>Rev. P.A.</sup> (Crazzolara The Lwoq (p. 66)).

This myth is well known among the Alur, the Jo padhola and Kenya Lwos, suggesting that it may be based on a historical occurrence at one stage in the Lwo migration, that is before the Jo-pa-dhola and the Jo-pa-Owiny pushed on south-eastwards into Kenya. But the story is also told by the Bari (Juba Sudan) and the people of Pajok. *Fr.* Crazzolara says that it is a common story among many southern Sudan tribes and suggests that

it is of Madi origin, but he gives no reason for this suggestion. The Nuer and Dika know it (Dr. G. Lienhardt, personal communication) and a version is known as far south as <sup>among the</sup> Luapula (Cunnison: The Luapula Peoples)

In the next myth the Patiko aristocratic clan ensure their connexion with Labongo, by having him as father of their first chief Tika, who had two brothers Kijok and Tere. He was made chief, because he defeated his brothers in fair competitions. His cow produced a black bull-calf with a forked tail; and he was able to suck beer using a stick which was not hollow. These feats, his brothers had failed to achieve.

#### TIKA KIJOK AND TERE

Labongo onywalo awobe adok Kijok Tere ki Tika.  
Labongo bore three boys Kijok Tere and Tika.

Ma dong gudoko co, won-gi olwongo gi:  
When they had become men (grown up) their father  
called them.

Omiyo ki ngat acel acel roya acel.  
He gave to each of them a cow.

Owacci, 'Ngat ma dyangnge onywalo twon ma  
He said 'The one whose cow will produce a bull-  
calf

Yibe akara  
with a forked tail

En aye bileyo ker  
He will inherit chiefship.

Awobe gucako kwong ni:  
The youths began to invoke thus:

Ka an aye a-rwot, in dyongnga  
If I am the (chosen) chief, you my cow

Nywal twon ma col ma yibe akora  
Produce a bull calf which is black and  
has a forked tail.

Dyang pa Kijok onywalo roya ma col,  
The cow of Kijok produced a black cow-calf.

Pa Tere onywalo twon ma kibor  
Of Tere produced a bull calf but was white.

Pa Tika onywalo twon kicol ma yibe akara  
Of Tika produced a bull calf which was black and  
had a forked tail.

Kijok ki Tere pe igi obedo yom  
Kijok and Tere were not pleased.

Labongo wongi otero-gi wi got  
Labongo their father took them up on a hill.

Oceke ma kimu iye oculu  
The beer-sucking-tube plant there is not hollow

Owacci-gi in: Yat ma ocwiyo kongo pong doge  
He told them: Who will suck a mouthful of beer

Aye bicamo ker  
He will eat chiefship (will be made  
chief).

Kijok oporo kwe  
Kijok struggled in vain.

Tere otemo kwe  
Tere tried in vain

Ento Tika ocwiy<sup>o</sup> kongo pong doge ki ocolet ma  
But Tika sucked a mouthful of beer using the stick

iye oculu  
which was not hollow.

Kijok ki Tere guwacci Tika onongo okano  
Kijok and Tere said Tika had hidden

Kongo i leme  
beer under his chin.

Wongi Labongo okelo kweri aryo  
Their father Labongo brought two hoes (blades).

Owacci: ngat mabigoyo kweri aryo-ni moko  
He said: who will strike these two hoes so that  
they

kacel, aye bidoko rwot  
stick together, he will become the  
chief.

Tika ogoyo kweri ci gumakke ma tok  
Tika struck the hoes and they stuck together  
strongly

Tere ki Kijok gutemo poko kingi kwe  
Tere and Kijok tried in vain to separate them.

Tika opoko kin kwari ci omiyo ki omegine  
Tika separated the hoes and gave them to his  
brothers.

Kijok ogoyo kweri kwe pe omoko  
Kijok struck the hoes in vain they did not stick  
together.

Tere bent otemo kwe  
Tere too tried in vain.

Tika dok otimo ma yot ayota.  
Tika did it again very easily.

Kijok odok malo ocako te ker Pajok  
Kijok went to the east and founded the chiefdom  
of Pajok.

Tere orweny ata  
Tere got lost

Tika ocamo ker pa wonne Labongo  
Tika ate the chiefship of his father Labongo.

The message of the myth is clear. Tika became chief not by any unfair means, but having proved himself the chosen one. It was not necessarily his own physical or mental prowess over his brothers that led to his being chosen, but the mysterious forces of nature were definitely behind him. Who then should doubt the rightness of his claim to the royal stool? or that of his descendents?

The myth of Tika Kijok and Tere deal with one aspect of chiefship, the important question of succession within the aristocratic clan. It does not validate the Patiko chiefs' authority over the commoner clans. The next myth, also of Patiko, 'explains' how through generosity of the rwot commoner clans of Pakwaca, Pailim and Pageya accepted the rwotship of Patiko, and also how the present Patiko spirit shrines were taken over. It starts with the story of separation of two brothers both of whom founded a chiefdom.

ATIKO AND THE TWIN LIONS

Mama wod pa Tika onywalo awobe aryo  
 Mama son of Tika bore two sons

Atiko ki Weli.  
 Atiko and Weli

Dako pa Atiko anywalo rudi ngu  
 The wife of Atiko produced twin lions.

Atiko ocito bot ominne Weli, olege ~~dyel me~~  
 Atiko went to his brother Weli and asked him for a

kwero rudi  
 goat for sacrifice in the twin-birth  
 ceremony.

Weli okwero  
 Weli refused.

Rudi ngu gudongo, gucako mako lee  
 The twin lions grew up, they began to catch animals.

Atiko mwodo kene, twono ominne Weli  
 Atiko ate alone, giving no meat to his brother Weli.

Ni Weli yam otwone dyel me kwero  
 That Weli once refused to give him a goat for the  
 twin-birth ceremony.

Weli okun woko odok tung piay  
 Weli went away to the west in anger

Ocako le ker Pawel  
 He founded the chiefdom of Pawel.

Atiko odok tung got Goma  
 Atiko moved towards Goma Hill

Ogony nge gang jo Pakwaca  
 He encamped near the village of Pakwaca.

Kicwalo kwena ni odony i paco  
 They (Pakwaca) sent a message that he (Atiko)  
 may enter the village

En owacci lwakke dwong  
 He said, his followers are many

Lupaco gubimote ki i gony  
 The hosts should come and greet him in his camp.

Jo ma nok gucito ka moto welo  
 A few people went to greet the guest

Atiko opoko ringo ma fudi ngu omako.  
 Atiko distributed the meat (of the animals) which  
 the twin lions had caught.

Jo ma pol gunito, duai gunongo ringo.  
 Many more people went (to atiko), all of them  
 received meat.

Jo Pakwaca guwacci Atiko odok rwotgi  
 People of Pakwaca said that Atiko should become  
 their chief

Pien iye yom pito lwak  
 Because he is generous, he feeds people.

Lapunu lated jok onyutu wang Baka  
 Lapunu the celebrant of the jok shrine, showed

ki Atiko  
 the shrine Baka to Atiko.

Ki wang Dako-ne Alela  
 And the shrine of his (Jok Baka's) wife Alela  
 (see p. above)

Ki kit me tedo kot  
 And how to make rain.

Jo Geya, ki Ilim bene gudonyo bot Atiko  
 Peoples of Geya and Ilim also joined Atiko's  
 (chiefdom).

Rwot won ngom  
Chief 'owner of the land (earth, soil).

According to the next myth some brothers went on a hunting expedition and discovered a herd of wild cattle. There was a scramble each of the brothers acquiring as many beasts as his ability and strength permitted. The eldest brother was a cripple and he got nothing; but he claimed the land. His younger brothers recognised this claim as reasonable and fair and each gave the "owner of the land" a few heard of cattle. He then decreed certain rulers. He had become chief, and all chiefs enjoy the title "owner of the land".

Awobe mogo yam gucito i dwar apet  
 Some youths went on a hunting expedition.

Onongo gin omego  
 They were brothers.

Gutugu lacek i cula  
 They started a duiker in a bush

Guryemo naka naka, lacek odonyo i kin kit jobi mo.  
 They chased it long, the duiker entered among a  
 certain kind of buffalo.

Ludwar guwaici myero gimak kit leeni ma kwo  
 The hunters said they should catch these beasts  
 alive.

Awobe gumako ngwec ka taaro lee  
 The youths ran and scrambled for the beasts

Gupoko woko i kingi niwent  
They divided everything (the beasts) among them-  
selves nothing remained.

Gucallo lokko dyang gudok kwede yo pace.  
They began herding the cattle towards home.

Ento ngat acel ikingi onongo langolo  
But one of them was a cripple.

En okeng dyang, pien ngwec oloye  
He had no cattle for he could not run.

En oito i wi bye, ocaoko lok ki omegine  
He climbed on top of an ant hill, and began to  
address his brothers.

'Wun ngat acel acel ikin wu onello nek.  
You all, each one of you has killed a kill

Ento au dyangnga mo pe  
But I have no cattle

An amako mera ngom tu  
I have 'caught' this land.

Mia tin wukwayo dyangwu ingomma.  
From today you herd your cattle on my land.

Ka ngatti oneko twon ingom ma, kella apika  
If anyone kills a bull on my land, bring me  
the stomach (of the beast)

Ka ngatti onoko bee ki tong nyo ki obwo,  
If anyone kills an animal with a spear or in his  
net

Eme acel mera  
One hind leg is mine.

Ka ngati oneko lee ki bur, meno lee pa mon  
If anyone kills an animal in a pit, that is

pe aninto,  
animal for women I do not want it.

Ka cam ocok amito tyer  
When food ripens I want "official gift".

Ka ngatti oonyo re<sup>m</sup>o i lobo-na, culu twon  
If anyone spills (human) blood on my land, he pays  
a bull,

Ka ngati onedo lyec, lake acel mera  
If someone kills an elephant one tusk is mine.

Ka ngati oneko kwal i ngomma, ll-ne mera.  
If someone kills a leopard on my land, the skin is  
mine.

Ka wucito i mony wukelo lim an aye apoko  
When you go a raiding and bring wealth, I will  
distribute it.

I ngom ma kwo - obed poke  
In my land let there be no theft

Ka ngatti okwalo dero culu ki dyel  
If someone steals from a granary, he pays a goat.

Awobe weg<sup>i</sup> dyang guye lok mau  
The youths, owners of cattle agreed to these  
words (claims)

Ngat acel acol okwanyo dyang omiyo ki won ngom  
Each one of them took some cattle and gave them  
to the 'owner of the Land'.

Won ngom odoko la lonyo, odoko Rwot  
The owner of the land became rich, he became Chief.

The main functions of this myth seem to be to show firstly, that chiefship and law or custom, came not as a result of force or mighty feats on the part of the chief, but of public recognition for the necessity of those institutions. The chief's wealth, moreover, was due to

voluntary contribution. This is the second function of the myth. It 'explains' the 'origin' of the tye, tribute. Other minor functions are that it shows how cattle came to be domesticated, and the privileges and respect that is enjoyed by elder brothers.

The term "Won", owner or father, in the title requires some explanation. In some agricultural communities land owning is often used to strengthen the authority of the ruler. In Buganda chiefs hold "official land titles" from the Kabaka, but only as long as they hold office; a peasant's titles to land was derived from his subjection and loyalty to his chief. (Mukwanya, Land Tenure in Buganda (1958)).

But the situation in Acholi and Lango differed considerably from this. The Acholi chiefs so-called ownership of the land, was not an economic or legal conception. Land purchase, sale, lease and inheritance as they are known in English law were irrelevant and never existed in Acholi and Lango traditional system. (Goldthorpe Outlines of East African Societies (1958) p.82). So that Oceng's statement that the Acholi chief had "personal ownership over the land" is only misleading and incorrect (U.J. Vol 19 No 1. p. 57).

The claim to ownership over the land in this myth, and in the chief's title, is a claim to jurisdiction over the people within the territory. It is a similar kind of jurisdiction that a father won latin has over his children, a husband won-ot has over his family: a won paco head of a lineage enjoys over all persons within the village: to adjudicate in certain matters. In the case of the chief his jurisdiction was not confined to land disputes, but all serious matters that could not be dealt with by heads of the clans were referred to his council. The wars that Acholi chiefs led against each other or other tribes, were not wars for the acquisition of territory.

Myth of the Beyo Tree (1) and the Okongo Bird (2)

This myth which 'explains' the origin of the use of two objects as totems, is of special interest and significance, in that it belongs to one of the commoner clans of Patiko: the Pacua. A totem functions as a unifying factor, it is a focus of interest, a means of communication and a common ground of understanding and sympathy among those to whom it belongs. (Maciver and

- ~~(1) Beyo, *clorophora excelsa*~~ 1. Beyo, *clorophora excelsa*  
 (2) ~~Okongo, Hartlaub's *tauraco*~~ 2. Okongo, Hartlaub's *tauraco*.

↓ x  
Totem

↑

Page Society p.153). All the commoner clans of Patiko: Pakwaca, Pailim, Pageya, Panyagira, Parangaa, Paburo, Pugwenyi and Pacua, share most of the emblems of the Lukal - the aristocratic clan. Their own traditions of migration are in various stages of decay and have been mostly superseded by that of the Lukal. (Revival of interest in traditions among the Panyagira was discussed above on p. 9 ). The two royal drums 'Oloya' and 'Ocorobiya' of the chiefly clan are recognized throughout the chiefdom. Jok Baka and Alela whose shrines are on Hills of the same names are Joks of all Patiko. All the clans shout the mwoc, praise name "Ngu Ye" Lions - in memory of the Twin Lions born to Atiko the chief of Patiko after whom the chiefdom is named. (Pa - Atiko - (the chiefdom) of Atiko)

But this myth underlines the unity of a commoner clan, and so operates in an opposite direction from the other myths of chiefdoms we have discussed so far. In 1937 the solidarity between members of the Pacua clan found expression in a tragic clash with the Lukal. Four men were killed, and chief Cira LakwoNyero was hanged a year after, for his part in the fighting

(L. Okech, Tekwaro ki ker Lobo Acholi p. 73).

Beyo tree and Okongo bird are sacred objects to the Pacua. No one may use the tree for firewood or building, kill or eat the bird. According to the myth a Cua warrior who was being hotly pursued by enemies was saved by a beyo tree which bent down and picked him up. And because it was so large and tall his pursuers could do him no harm. And when they decided to lay ~~siege~~<sup>siege</sup>, the Okongo bird whose cry is like the war alarm, frightened them away.

The story was first told to me by my father when he presented me with a bow and set of arrows which he had made for me. I think I was about 8 or 9 years of age. He said that I should never use the bow and arrows or indeed anything to kill an Okongo bird. And it was in answer to my question why not, that the story was told. In June last year he repeated it again for me.

Kwaru yam ocito i libu. Ma dong  
Your ancestor long ago went on a lone raid.  
After

Onoko merok ma pol, merok ocako oyemme  
Killing many enemies, the enemy began to pursue  
him.

Kwarn oringo matek nio ka ocako ool  
Your ancestor ran a long distance when he began to  
tire.

Olo ki kec ki oryo odoko dwong  
Exhaustion and hunger and thirst became too much  
for him.

Ngwec ongayo kwaru woko  
To run, your ancestor could no more.

Kwaru ocung i te beyo ma olu mabor ma dit  
Your ancestor stood under a tall and large beyo  
tree.

Ocako lok, kun kok kwede kuman  
He began to talk, praying thus:

Ayaa! in beyo ni  
A'. you beyo

Nen merok neka woko do  
Behold the enemy will surely kill me

Ka in beyo pa wora  
If you are my father's beyo (planted by  
him long ago, or growing in his land)

Lara do, bi piny, tera malo  
Do save me, bend down, take me up.

Beyo owingo koko pa kwaru, onalle piny  
The Beyo tree heard the cry of your  
ancestor, it bent down.

Kwam oito i jange  
Your ancestor climbed onto its branches

Beyo oille ocung atir  
The beyo tree raised itself and stood  
upright.

Ka quo i te yat, gungeng ata,  
When the enemy reached the foot of the tree they  
were lost completely.

Guuru ma tek  
They marvelled strongly.

Gutongo gony i te beyo.  
They struck camp under the beyo tree (to lay seige)

Otyeno me ceng dong opoto  
In the evening after the sun had fallen:

Wuuk! Wuuk! Wuuk!  
(Sound of the war alarm).

Wuuk! Wuuk! Wuuk!

Ocakke ki kama bor, mot  
It began far away, faintly.

Wuuk! Wuuk! Wuuk! Orumu piny dyere!  
" " " It came from all directions!

Woto ki diire, woto ki diire cok cok.  
It sounded near, it sounded nearer and nearer.

"Biyu" Kwaro gamo ki i wi yat.  
"Come" Your ancestor answered from the top  
of the tree.

"Biyu mony Pacua, bicoku tokgi woko  
Come army of Pacua, come finish them up.

Merok oduny ki ngwec  
The enemy scattered and ran away.

Beyo ogom ocibo kwaru i ngom  
The Beyo bent down and put your ancestor on the  
ground.

Kwaru ojako jang beyo, okwanyo kono okongo.  
Your ancestor broke a small branch of the beyo,  
he picked a feather of okongo

Ka eo paco ocako lok ma tek:  
When he reached home he began to speak strongly:

"Yatti en, ki winyo-ni gulara  
This tree and this bird saved me.

Nia cengtin dako mo pe obar beyo  
 From this day no woman shall split beyo  
 (for firewood)

Dako ma otedo ki beyo kang woko  
 Any woman who uses beyo as firewood shall  
 become barren.

Latin mo pe ocel okongo  
 No child shall shoot okongo

Latin muneko okongo wang minne to woko,  
 Any child who kills okongo, his mother's eyes  
 will die out. (She will become blind).

As soon as a girl has accepted marriage proposals of a Pacua youth, she is told about this taboo, which until recently was very strictly observed. Often, the diviner pointed to its breach as the source of barrenness in women, as well as other illnesses.

The pre-occupation of the Acholi in the unity of the clan and the chiefdom is further illustrated by their interest in the history of their clans and chiefdoms. This is the object of the next chapter.

## Chapter III

## HISTORICAL SONGS AND MWOC OF ACHOLI CHIEFDOMS

This chapter examines Otole and bwala dance songs and mwoc - the so called praise name or war cry of the following chiefdoms: Bwobo, Palaro, Puranga and Paimol. The songs sung at these dances refer to important events such as wars and famines in the history of the chiefdom.

traditional  
satire  
Xerox  
to  
p19

Otole and bwala songs are historical only in a special sense. They are not full narratives of great happenings. They are short simple songs by unknown poets, singing praise to victorious chiefs, hurling abuse, insults and sarcasm at enemies and cowards, and moaning over a lost battle or merely cautioning patience at the battle front.

In the main, these songs are concerned, not with describing an entire episode, but only some aspect of it. Thus, at the end of a fierce famine which drove certain Acholi clans from the East to seek succour among clans in the West, the chief of Pajule came to persuade his people to return to their homes: and someone in reply composed the following song:

Kong i ciom ma i lalur

First you go and bring those entombed in the stomach of hyenas (who perished with hunger and were eaten by hyenas).

Ki ma oto i pi

And those who died in the rivers (because too weak to swim across River Acaa)

Ka dok inyat dero bel

And then you show millet granaries (from which supplies will be obtained)

Ka wek wadok malo

And then we shall return to the East.

Wan pud wacamo lumone

We are still eating sweet potatoes (from Bautu, Lumonde, introduced into Acholi recently from Bunyoro, and for some time could only be found in West Acholi).

The causes of the famine, how long it lasted, the leaders who brought the people westwards in search of food, the total number of victims who perished, the names of the clans among whom the hungry wanderers found assistance, all these issues which are of interest to a historian, are not dealt with in the song. It is not meant to answer such questions. But because the song is by an eye witness or a contemporary, and it is about a historical event, it is of historical interest. Like other otole and bwala songs, it acts as a point of reference, and helps in recounting traditional history. When discussing genealogies, an activity which Acholi

elders often indulge in whenever they gather together during funerals, marriages or work parties, awak, these songs are sung, and around them a fuller story of the period is built up.

Otole and bwala songs of a chiefdom are generally used only by members of that particular chiefdom; because they are either irrelevant or only provocative to members of other chiefdoms. At times however, dancers from a chiefdom may 'borrow' a provocative song and sing it to express hostility against, to challenge the chiefdom against whom the song is directed. For instance the following Labongo chiefdom 'spear song' - (that is, the most popular otole song of a chiefdom) was also often sung by the Puranga. The song, which invariably provoked fighting with the Payira hurls abuse at Alikor a Payira chief. A state of hostility also existed between Puranga and Payira:

Eliya Alikor Agwe Mulaji, chief of Payira was placed in charge of Labongo by the new colonial administration against the wish of the Labongo. In 1918 he was attacked by the Labongo and he had to run for his life. Now anyone who runs away is considered a coward,

Yad Okot  
Uses the song  
to ridicule a  
whole nation  
in 1918.

a woman, a hyena (see under Folk Tales). The Labongo were attacked by Captain Wagstaff an officer of the new colonial regime: and they withdrew, leaving their cattle behind. These were confiscated and kept at chief Aliker's palace. The song laughs at the cowardly chief running away like a woman, and challenges the army of the white man (Gala) for a battle at Lamola. (R.S. Anywar, Acholi ki ker Megi pp. 51-3; Fr. Pellegrini Acholi Macon p. 133).

Aliker kel dyanga ka ilwor!  
Aliker return my cattle (in peace), if you are  
cowardly!

Mony Gala cung ikura  
Army of Gala, halt, wait for me

Waci waromo Lamola.  
We shall meet (in battle) at Lamola.

Iyo Iyo Mulaji lwor dako loyo  
O yes O yes Mulaji is cowardly (even), a woman  
beats him.

Mulaji lwor Mulaji lwor pyelo i kaki  
Mulaji is cowardly, Mulaji is cowardly, he  
excretes in his khaki (trousers)

Mulaji lwor, Agwe dako loyo  
Mulaji is cowardly, Agwe is beaten (even by) a  
woman.

Aliker kel dyanga, ka ilwor  
Aliker bring back my cattle (in peace) if you  
are cowardly.

Each chiefdom too, had a mwoc of its own: this

comprised of a proper, or place-name, phrases or a sentence that a person shouted at certain rare occasions: such as driving a hunt or spearing an animal: or in battle immediately one's spear has struck an enemy, and during the otole dance - as will be explained below.

Often mwoc consisted of names of chiefs of old, of names of mountains or rivers - sites once occupied by the aristocratic clan of the chiefdom, of a beast or some plant such as lions, hot pepper thorns - which are supposed to exhibit the quality or characteristic of the people, or it may contain a slogan, telling what the chiefdom has been, its strength and glory.

Consider the Mwoc of Atyak chiefdom which goes as follows:

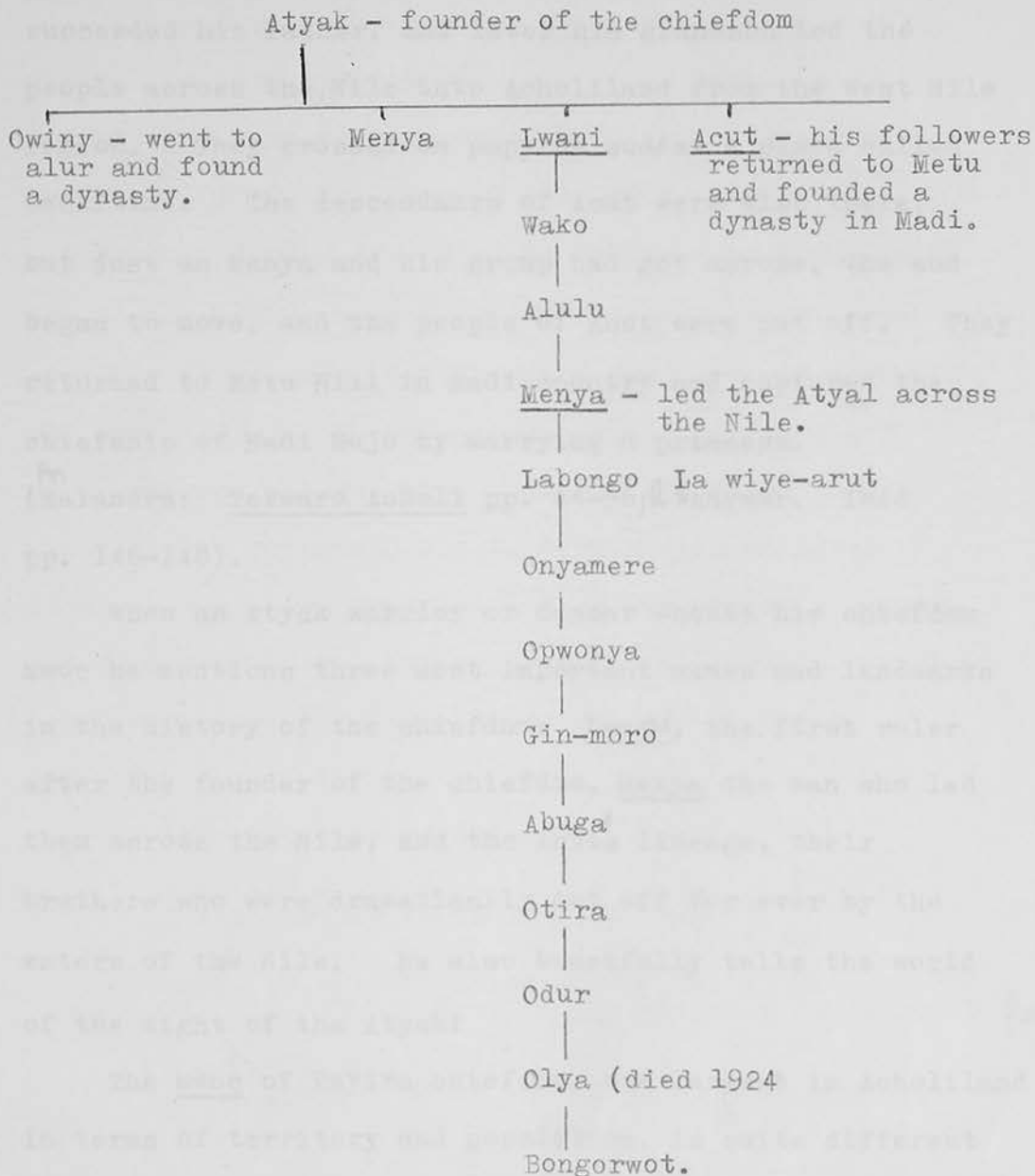
Lwani ye!  
 Acut ye  
 Manyago ye!  
 Nyaka cedo ye!  
 Ito nyong, aculi ku

You die unavenged, I will not compensate for your death!

The first three lines are names of ancestors; the last line implies that any attempt by others to avenge the killing inflicted by an Atyak, will be repulsed by the ever watchful, ever powerful Atyak warriors. A

→ see also p 74

genealogical diagram of the aristocratic lineage will show where most of the names were derived.



Atyak the founder of the aristocratic lineage after whom the chiefdom is named, had four sons. Lwani succeeded his father, and later his grandson led the people across the Nile into Acholiland from the West Nile region. They crossed on papyrus sudd at a place called Ceokitimi. The descendants of Acut were also there, but just as Manya and his group had got across, the sud began to move, and the people of Acut were cut off. They returned to Metu Hill in Madi country and captured the chiefship of Madi Mujo by marrying a princess.

<sup>Fr.</sup> (Malandra: Tekwaro Acholi pp. 44-56; R.S. Anywar. Ibid pp. 146-148).

When an Atyak warrior or dancer shouts his chiefdom mwoc he mentions three most important names and landmarks in the history of the chiefdom: Lwani, the first ruler after the founder of the chiefdom, Menya the man who led them across the Nile, and the Acut's lineage, their brothers who were dramatically cut off for ever by the waters of the Nile. He also boastfully tells the world of the might of the Atyak!

The mwoc of Payira chiefdom, the largest in Acholiland in terms of territory and population, is quite different

Payira

from that of Atyak. Size of population is the great pride and source of glory of the Payira. Its army is like the numerous brown ants, moro, which easily overwhelms, (drinks up) any opponent. The Ogom, an independent clan had plenty of food during a minor famine among the Payira, who were then settled at Angagura. Onguka II, chief of Payira sent for some food, and when he tasted pumpkins for the first time, he liked it so much, and so asked for more and more. The Ogom fed up with the endless demand for more and more pumpkin, one day sent green gourd, which looks exactly like pumpkins, but is very bitter to taste. Onguka's wrath was provoked and he threatened an attack. But Ogom surrendered before a spear was hurled. They were 'drunk up' as easily as water, and became a commoner clan of Payira.

Payira mwoc goes as follows:

Amata ye!

(I will easily drink you up! Oh!)

Olyero ye, Olyero pa nya Okomo ye

Clitoris oh, clitoris of the daughter of Okomo Oh!

Ka lungu mola ye

The land where women adorn themselves with brass armlets, Oh!

Ka bedo abeda ye  
(The land) of leisure oh!

Moro ye  
Brown ants oh!

Agwata matek mac ma puku  
Hard (brittle) gourd is softened by fire.

Amati woko koni  
I will easily drink you up now now!

"Lyer pa meni" your mother's clitoris, is the bitterest and most provocative term of insult. It invariably sparks off an immediate fight. "Lyer" in this mwoc implies that the Payira can afford to insult anybody's mother, for who dares start a fight against such a mighty army? (I have not been able to discover who Okomo was). Moreover, peace being assured by such a large and invincible army, women spend their time in leisure adorning themselves with the brass armlets brought home as part of the loot. There is also much wealth and so hard work in the gardens is not very necessary. And, any proud chiefs who dares an attack on the Payira will be humiliated, softened, as hard gourd is softened by fire.

Otole and bwala songs and the mwoc are all muemonics that the Acholi employ, and although no dates were mentioned, when the songs and mwoc were fully interpreted,

Use of  
Sex/La /  
Lam / most  
provocative  
in the (to) (to) (to)  
subject is  
and many  
exchange.

a reasonably full history of a chiefdom emerged. They are a kind of running commentary on the history of a chiefdom; more, they expressed what the people in the chiefdom thought and felt about themselves, their past and future. And, as may be expected, a people's views about themselves are usually biased in their own favour. Their failures are often minimised, and victories emphasised and exaggerated.

Here, we are interested not primarily in the truth or falsity of the historical accounts in the otele and bwala songs and the mwoc, but in their sociological function as unifying factors between the different clans that composed the chiefdom. It is helpful in order to understand how this "union of hearts" was effected, to describe briefly the two dances: paying attention specially to the organization, membership of the different groups that perform and the leadership. We may also note the psychological state of the dancers when they sing these historical songs and shout their mwoc: the sense of pride and confidence in self and the group, heightened by the sense of unity and power.

Otole - the 'spear' or 'war' dance.

This is the largest, and sociologically perhaps, the most interesting dance of the Acholi. Men, women and youths of a clan, all armed as though for war, men and boys with spears and shields, women and girls with battle axes lukile (or olayo - he (the enemy) has urinated), form one dancing team under their Jago; and the different clan teams together are commanded by the Rwot, who at the same time also heads the team drawn from the royal clan. Often such a chiefdom dance 'army' pays a visit to a neighbouring and friendly chiefdom, that is one with whom there is an alliance. Atyak and Palabek, Palaro and Alero have always exchanged otole dance visits.

The dance was performed rarely, usually once a year during the dry season after the crops have been gathered and stored. The organizational problems involved made it difficult to hold it more often. Moreover, one otole dance session may last many days, weeks or even months. A well known proverb, used by a person who has overstayed his welcome arose from such a situation.

Otole dancers from Palabek stayed in Atyak till the end of the dry season. When the planting season arrived, they still showed not the slightest intention of returning back to Palabek. The proverb in effect was a request by the hosts that the visitors should go.

Bedo abedde, Atyak rac ku, Palabek odok tugi.  
The <sup>visit</sup> ~~sojourn~~ is long enough, Atyak are not bad (in asking) Palabek to return to their homes.

'Platoons' of brightly decorated and fully armed warriors, representing the clans set out in single files. The chiefs platoon marches in front; and on reaching the village in which the arena is situated, there is a re-groupment, and general and final preparations are made for the 'entry'. This is both spectacular and provocative. The entire army of dancers form a solid block, with women and youths in the middle, and then advance on the village in a mock attack.

The war alarm, Oduru is sounded; and the 'invaders', their spears unseathed and shields at the ready, trot gently forward, destroying certain types of property on their way. Goats and sheep, calves and chicken are speared or clubbed to death; going through unharvested simsim field, the entire crop may be trodden under foot; simsim stacks drying in the fields are scattered;

granaries are riddled with spear holes.

All this is supposedly done in good faith and friendliness, however, and special care is taken to see that no persons are injured. Old women unable to move, toddlers caught playing about in the swept compound, are carefully avoided, and houses are never touched.

Women of the village yodel welcome 'goyo kijira', and shout the mwoc of the chiefdom. The men blow their horns bila or trumpets tum, and do the mock fight, uc, but are most restrained. They watch the destruction by the invaders with dignified calm. They must not allow themselves to be provoked, for the visitors are only paying back what they themselves did in their last visit.

An analysis of this expression of 'friendliness and solidarity' through the destruction of certain classes of property, is beyond the scope of this thesis. The important point to note is that the relationship strengthened by this act is not that between individuals, but between groups: between two clans, between two chiefdoms. Other relationships are established during the otole dance session, friendships between men, between youths, marriages are arranged etc., but friendship

social  
relationships  
✓

based on such personal relationships are expressed in other ways such as the ngala - joking relationships and avoidances (cf. Radcliffe-Brown, Structure of Kinship and Marriage Introduction to: African Systems of pp. 54-60)

On reaching the arena, bar - a large roughly cleared piece of circular ground as big as a football pitch, the dancers halt. Drummers, three or four of them, escorted by an armed patrol of up to seven men, advance to take up their position at the drum post. This is an anxious moment, since, if other teams are performing, the dancers have to force their way up to the drum post, and stop the dance by disturbing the rhythm being played on the drum major, diyo min bul. (Suppressing the 'mother' drum). Stiff resistance is put up by the armed men around the drum post, who try to prevent the drummers from reaching their objective. Often this sparks off a fight, and the organisers do everything to localise and extinguish it.

The 'mother' drum 'suppressed', those dancers now occupying the arena withdraw completely, and move off in a body towards the stream, blowing their horns and trumpets, and small groups break out to do the uc.

Someone from among the ranks of the visiting teams, calls out the first lines of their chiefdom 'spear song',

the most popular and most well known. The rest take up the chorus as shown in the following Atyak 'spear song':

Solo: Tonga romo iya  
My spear satisfies my inside (I am happy  
with it, have confidence in it)

Maya lwor  
Maya (or Palaro) is cowardly (Maya is part  
of the mwoc of Palaro)

Orobo tua camo Nyikwara kom Got.  
Our young men won battle honours on the Hill  
(Iute - on which the Palaro  
settled)

Chorus Hii! Nyikwara e ye!  
Hii! Battle honours e ye!

Solo: Ayelu luneko e! e! aya aya!  
Ayelu was killed e! e! Mother mother!  
(A Palaro war leader).

Chorus Ayelu yee! Tonga romo iya  
Ayelu yee! My spear satisfies my inside.

As soon as the singing is started, the drummers begin playing, giving a gentle trotting rhythm. The army of dancers now break up in their different clan teams led by the Jafo who dances a little distance in front. Married women dance in the same group as their husbands, but the girls move off with other clan teams. In a few moments the entire arena looks like one confused mass, as the different groups move in all directions, now stumping the ground in one position, now shields

waving in the air prancing forwards, now in single file, etc. each clan team performs the many movements corresponding to battle formations, in their own time.

The situation is further confused by groups of young men who break out from the main body of the clan team in threes or fours to perform the uc. They are followed by their girl friends, who when their men stop to do the mock fight, drive their battle axes into the ground, yodel, make ululations and shout the mwoc of the chiefdom. Often girls fight as they compete as to who among them should run after the most outstanding bachelor. (R.S. Anywar Acholi ki ker megi p. 211). The uc consists of confronting an enemy imaginary or real, and attempting, by clever moves and manouvres to "kill" him without being injured yourself. Now with his girl friend close behind him, the youth always does his best. The successful person in the mock fight (i.e. who "injures" or "kills" his opponent) shouts his mwoc and blows his horn or trumpet as he rejoins the clan team.

Bere commented "This dance, through very spectacular on account of the large number of armed men who take part, is not particularly beautiful, as it has no definite form, and there is more shouting than singing" (U.J. Vol. I

p.64). But in all this apparent chaos, there is some underlying order. The drum beats give the measured rhythm, and one song after another is sung; the breakaway groups engaged in the uc - (it takes 3-4 minutes) soon rejoin the main clan teams.

Care is taken to avoid contact with and provocation of either clan groups or members of other chiefdoms. The explosive situation calls for much restraint and strong leadership: especially as the occasion easily lends itself to aggressive expressions of valour, personal jealousies, and temptation to settle old scores.

After a number of songs have been danced to, lasting perhaps one hour, the dancers retire to the stream, clearing the arena for other dancing teams. Later in the night, after the feasts of meat and beer, while the older men continue drinking and discussing genealogists, wars and other affairs, the youths hold the moonlight dance, lamoko-owang which continues all night long. (~~See p. 64~~ )/

#### Bwala - the royal dance

This dance differs from Otole in a number of ways although the songs sung in both dances are similar, in

that they are all 'historical'. Bwala is normally performed in the chief's palace, but it may also be danced in one of the chief's enclosure, for instance, at a funeral of an important person, a jago, war leader, oteka etc. whose memory the chief wishes to honour.

Other occasions when the bwala is performed are: during the chief's coronation, the chief's funeral - when it is done instead of the usual funeral dance; during celebrations for 'opening' a new settlement; on the occasion of building an abila, ancestral shrine, at the chief's homestead; among the Paimol (and probably in other chiefdoms as well) during rain-making ceremonies, or when the chiefs jok is being worshipped, and lastly, during the harvest moon at the end of the year.

All these are either state occasions or those in which the interest of the entire chiefdom is involved. It is a solemn dance and as A. Latigo commented "the dancers show great respect throughout" (Acholi Magazine No. 1 p.30).

Only men and women of about 30 years of age upward, take part in it. Dancers come from all parts of the chiefdom and usually form only one team. The dancers are completely unarmed, but carry a small drum and a

drum stick. Women too carry no offensive weapons. The chief's royal drum is played as the drum major.

Each bwala song differs from another not only in the tune and words, but also in the style and movement of the body etc: which is very complicated. But during the performance of a song, each dancer hits his little drum at the same time as other dancers, and the synchronization expresses a high sense of rhythm, timing and unity.

We are now in a position to show how Otole and bwala songs may be used in the reconstruction of the history of Acholi chiefdoms. As I mentioned before Acholi elders often indulge in recounting genealogies, and as they do so they sing otole and bwala songs and make commentaries. The first chiefdom we shall consider is Bwobo.

Original for reconstruction of history

#### Bwobo

Lu-Bwobo, who today number about 2,000, are found in two groups, one in Kilak county called Bwobo ma Nam (or Rivering Bwobo) and the other in Omoro county.

They were decimated by the sleeping sickness which swept parts of Acholiland between 1906-1923. In 1911 there were only 300 tax payers in the chiefdom; by 1946 the number had risen to 600 (L. Okech Tekwaro ki ker Lobo Acholi pp. 33-34). Their last traditional chief, Musa Oryem died in 1917.

Lwo  
 ↓  
Olum Panya  
 ↓  
 Canya  
 ↓  
Obwogo (Famine - led people to Bunyoro and back to Omoro Hill)  
 ||  
 Takar  
 ↓  
 Lujibo (Floods and droughts)  
 ↓  
 Oceng  
 ↓  
 Abwor  
 ↓  
 Lagara (killed in hunting accident)  
 ↓  
 Ocaka-con (captured from Bunyoro)  
 ↓  
 Latigo Aburo  
 ↓  
 Oto Aburu (retired 1916)  
 ↓  
 Musa Oryem (died 1917)

The traditional history of Bwobo begins in Lango country. It claims that the lineage which later became the aristocratic clan broke off from a main body of a

southward moving Lwo group (L. Okech, Ibid. p. 74; R.S. Anywar, Acholi ki ker Megi p. 117). For a time the lineage settled on Otuke Hill, then led by Lwo, it moved to Ngeta Hill, where Lwo died, and was succeeded by Olum Panya. The following clans (Lango?) Lugwar, Lukoyo, Lami attached themselves to the lineage, and a chiefdom was founded.

We may regard some aspects of this account as being partly mythical. The myth of Lwo, and the attempt by aristocratic lineages to identify themselves with the great dynasty established by Labongo have already been discussed. Olum Panya, is another Acholi mythical figure. Although his story is not well known nor coherent. Father Pellegrini noted that Olum is sometimes said to be the father of Labongo and Kipir (Acholi Macon, p.16). It is also claimed that this was the father of Otira, the Arab wonder-worker. Olum Panya appears twice in Bwobo traditional history, in Atyak tradition and as we have seen in Lango myths as the first man on earth.

The new chiefdom experienced its first bitter war when the Alito and Pakwaca clans of Lango defeated and drove them out of Ngeta: pursued them as far as Jalabu Hill in East Acholi, and again defeated them there.

Perhaps the oldest otole song of Bwobo commemorates  
this sad episode:

Tongo gang oloya  
To establish a settlement I have failed

Kono adok wi obur ye!  
Or shall I return to once deserted site, oh!

Lweny ki Lango tek  
Fighting the Lango is difficult

Lweny ki Lango oloya ye  
Fighting the Lango I have failed oh!

Kany ma adok oloya ye!  
Where I may go to I do not know, oh!

Rwoda tin adok kwone?  
My chief today where shall I go?

The chiefdom returned and settled near Ngeta Hill  
in Lango country once again. Olum Panya was succeeded  
by Canya, who in turn was succeeded by Obwogo, whose name  
later became the name of the chiefdom (R.S. Anywar Ibid.  
p.117; L. Okeck Ibid. p. 74). A long drought struck;  
and this was followed by a famine. The people gathered  
and went to the chief, and asked him to do something  
about it. A diviner was consulted, and he prescribed  
that a leopard must be caught alive and sacrificed, then  
the rains would return and the famine end.

Obwogo made an appeal to all the clans to co-operate  
in catching a leopard for the sacrifice. Lugwar and

Lami clans declined. Obwogo failed to force his will over the chiefdom. No leopard was caught and the drought continued unabated and the famine grew fiercer. The following bwola song records the story. It blames the chief's weakness for the disobedient attitude of the commoner clans, and tells of the chief's loneliness: a chief without loyal subjects.

Ye! Obwogo mubalo paco  
 Oh! Obwogo it is who destroyed the settlement  
 (by his weakness).

Kadi camo kwon yo  
 Although he eats bread oh

Makko kwac oloye ye  
 To catch a leopard he has failed oh!

Eh, eh, eh an do  
 - - - me oh! (The chiefs moaning sighs).

An kena, obwogo do  
 I am alone, Obwogo oh!

Lumiou kwero dog Lwo do  
 Commoners (subject peoples i.e. Lukwar and Lami)  
 reject words from the mouth of Lwo (the  
 aristocrat, the rightful chief i.e. Obwogo;  
 refuse to catch a leopard)

Kadi imato kongo  
 Although you drink beer

In keni Obwogo do!  
 You are alone Obwogo oh!

Obwogo mubalo paco  
 Obwogo it is who destroyed the settlement.

Obwogo led his people across the Nile into Bunyoro

to seek food and succour. When the famine was over, there was a demand from the people to go back into Acholiland. It took the form of a request to be allowed to go and watch performances by Olum, the wonder-worker who was operating in Acholiland on Omoro Hill, at that time. This is contained in the following bwala song:

An alego rwoda yo, lyo  
I pray my chief oh, yes

Maa alego rwoda do,  
Mother I pray my chief oh!

Tera bot Olum ma layee  
Take me to Olum the hairy one! (Olum was said to  
be hairy all over his body).

Ee ee iyo  
- - yes

Alego rwoda yo  
I pray to my chief oh

Tera bot Olum ma layeeri  
Take me to Olum the hairy one!

This is the second time we meet Olum in Bwobo traditional history. The request was granted, and Obwogo brought back his followers across the Nile and took them to Omoro Hill. It was at this time that the title Lu-Bwogo (People of Obwogo) began to be used. In later years it was corrupted to LuBwobo.

There seems to have been a clash with the Payira when Lu Bwogo arrived, in which at least one Payira man was killed. This is recorded in a Payira otole song composed about 1902, after the burning down of a Bwobo village and killing two men. According to this song, that was in settlement of a long-standing feud. The song takes the form of a speech by an important elderly woman, who is asked according to Acholi custom to bless the warriors on the eve of battle.

Alamo olwedo ki jo Payira  
I invoke blessing with this lilac leaves for the  
Payira

Lubwobo Luloka mi woda  
Men of Bwobo, Bantus, give back my son.

Tong okwongo ki te Omoro  
Spear was first used (by the people of Bwobo)  
under Omoro Hill,

Bul kok kom kibu ye  
Drums shall sound on the kibu-tree oh! (to  
celebrate victory for Payira)

Lu Bwobo loko la-we-we aiya!  
People of Bwobo shall converse in whispers ah yes  
(mourning their dead).

The warriors of Payira, she says in effect, will be victorious, because they fight for a good cause: to avenge the death of one of them killed long ago by the Bwobo - Bantus, that is, those who have come from across

the Nile. The Payira poet is well aware of the migration of the People of Bwobo, hence the abusive reference: 'lu-loka'.

Obwogo was succeeded by Takar, and then came Lujibo whose reign is remembered because of the floods caused by too much rain which threatened the crops. Lujibo having consulted the diviner, removed the 'rain stone' kot amee from the cave where it was normally kept and brought it into the sun. Whereupon the rains stopped and the crops were saved. But this was also the beginning of a long drought which resulted in a bad famine. The following bwala song, a prayer to the Gods for rain and good harvest was sung at this time.

The chiefdoms spirit shrine had been founded on Omoro Hill, and was, like many others, called Omoro after the Hill on which the alter was. It was believed that Jok Omoro had a 'mother' called Ayugi, and a wife known as Ayomo, and two sons Bala and Kota. According to the song, the cause of the drought seems to be that Bala and Kota, for some reason or other were annoyed, and had gone away. The singer invites them to return so that the rains may fall again.

Ka kot ocwe  
When the rains fall

Litino Omoro odwogo paco  
'Children' of Omoro have returned home.

Wac ki Kota onoko piny  
Tell Kota he has destroyed the land (world, earth).

Wod Ayugi dwog paco  
(Grand)-Son of Ayugi come back home

Bala ma won piny, dwog paco  
Bala you owner (master, prince of) the land, come  
back home.

Wek kot ocwee!  
That it may rain!

The next chief was appropriately called Oceng (from ceng-sun, implying long drought); then came Abwor, then Lagara. Lagara was killed in a hunting accident by a slave boy Kitot, who mistook him for a buffalo calf. Kitot was executed despite the pleas of Lagara's mother Akelo, the 'queen mother'. Whereupon she made a curse kwong on any person who would succeed her son. It was believed that the curse of an aggrieved woman could cause harm.

This caused a succession crisis. Okutu Ayaru, brother of Lagara declined the Stool, and instead broke off with his lineage and followers and settled on the banks of the Nile in Kilak county where they are still

living today, as Bwobo ma Nam (River Bwobo). Search for a successor to the <sup>c</sup>ursed 'stool' continued. A delegation was sent across the Nile into Bunyoro, where it was believed, a male descendant of Obwogo might be found. When this hope was frustrated, the delegation on their homeward journey captured a Nyoro youth and kidnapped him across the River. He was named Ocaka-con meaning: "It (misfortune, suffering, failure) began with me long ago". Ocakacon was put on the Stool immediately, although he was still only a youth. It seems the new chief was not very healthy looking: his skin had spots. A man from Dolo - an independent clan made some rude remark about this fact. He was caught and punished by rubbing his mouth on the ground until it bled. The Dolo combined their forces with Pakwaca clan (Is this the same clan mentioned in Patiko myth? see p.54 above); and attacked Bwobo; but they were repulsed. In a counter attack the villages of Dolo and Pakwaca were completely destroyed. (This seems to be the only victory that the Bwobo warriors ever scored). There arose the following bwala song:

Wumakka Dolo  
Catch for me a man from Dolo

Kiree doge piny  
 Rub his mouth on the ground

Ka oyeto Rwot  
 If he insults the chief

Ka guyeto Rwot makka Dolo  
 If they insult the Chief, catch for me the men from  
 Dolo

Kiree doggi piny  
 Rub their mouths on the ground.

A new line of chiefs had been established. Latigo Abwo who succeeded Ocakacon, led the Bwobo to a new site on Okiga Hill. He re-named it Ato, I'll die; that is to say, if some enemy will follow him there, he will retreat no further, but fight to the death.

On Ato Hill, Bwobo warriors indulged in waylaying and killing "foreigners" who passed by the Hill; and many a man won titles - nying moi, names given to a person who has killed an enemy either in battle or in an ambush. (This type of hero title is also found among the Nilo-Hamites. Dr. Gulliver reported that "All ~~the~~ <sup>Teagiana</sup> wished to slay an enemy so that he could be known by a hero name, a word ending in moi, describing the deed". The Central Nile Hamites p.78).

Examples of Bwobo hero titles suggest the nature of their deeds::

Ladwe-moi (dwe - moon)  
He killed by moonlight.

Atula-moi (tula - owl)  
He killed at night when the owls fly

Tibo-moi (tibo - shades)  
He killed in the shades - the enemy resting?

Amula-moi (mulu - to crawl, go on knees)  
He killed crawling, enemy could not see.

Munga-moi (mung - secrecy)  
He killed secretly, the news of the death shall  
not be known.

Lumany-moi (same as munga-moi)

Latigo was succeeded by Oto-Aburu who was retired by the British colonial administration in 1916; when Musa Oryem was installed. Oryem died a year afterwards. In 1918 Bwobo was combined with Alero under chief Yocia Olwedo of Alero. The new colonial administration had arrived, and there ended the story of Bwobo chiefdom.

A small and weak chiefdom, it never had a strong enough chief who wielded overwhelming and effective authority over the entire chiefdom. The allied clans were not always loyal and rebelled or deserted as they pleased and with impunity. The Bwobo were pushed hither and thither by more powerful groups. Their bwala and otele songs record the sad story faithfully. Their mwoc:

Ager ye  
I am fierce oh!

Ngw ye  
Fierce beasts oh!

Labwor ye  
Lions oh!

Ka inyono yibe ci kai  
If you tread on its tail then it bites you!

Wang kong ye!  
(Name of the royal drum).

This is in part a camouflage, a covering up of fundamental weakness, by appearing and sounding fierce and strong like the lion; but in part it is also a sincere confession of a non-aggressive, retreating, battle-tired group. Latigo Abwo withdrew, as it were, from the arena of conflict and strife, to Okiga Hill. He called it 'Ato', who so follows me here, I will fight to the death. The lion of Bwobo is not aggressive, it does not attack but waits until you tread on its tail.

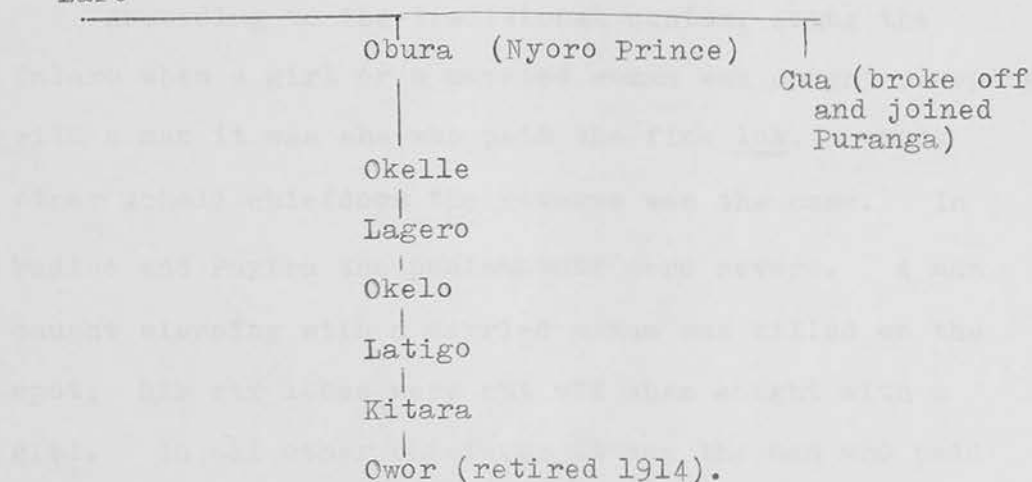
This contrasts sharply with the aggressive, almost blood thirsty character of Palaro, whose historical songs we consider next.

#### Palaro

Palaro had two royal drums, one was called Opimadur

the other Bedo-mot-lukwero, living peacefully is rejected. This is a fitting description of the small but aggressive clans which loosely joined to form the chiefdom of Palaro. Their tradition is silent as to when or where the eleven commoner clans associated themselves with the aristocratic clan Kal. They are: Agoro, Lamogi, (a breakaway from Lamogi chiefdom?), Paipeno, Lulango, Pageya (there is also a Pageya clan in Patiko), Bar, Panyagilo, Patwol, Pauma, Lagero and Pugola. The sleeping sickness of 1906-1922 played havoc with the Palero. In 1911, there were only 400 taxpayers, and by 1946 the number was up by a mere 100. Today they number about 2,000 and are joined with the Patiko under the Patiko Division of Acwa county.

Laro



Laro the first chief of Palaro led his lineage across the Nile and settled on Lapul Hill; from there they moved to Lute Hill. These two landmarks play an important role in Palaro historical thinking. Lapul is the shrine of the jok (spirit shrine) of the chiefdom, and both Lapul and Lute appear in the mwoc :

Lapul ye, Got ye!  
The Hill oh!

Lute ye, Maya ye

Lela ye, Lela Gelo ye  
Iron stone, iron stone of Gelo oh (Palaro are  
as hard as iron stone of Gelo(another hill)).

Aneki nyong, ito nyong  
I will kill you - you will die but your death  
cannot be avenged.

While on Lute Hill, what might be called a conflict of customs provoked a crisis which led to a coup d'etat.

According to the traditional custom, among the Palaro when a girl or a married woman was caught sleeping with a man it was she who paid the fine luk. Among other Acholi chiefdoms the reverse was the case. In Padibe and Payira the punishments were severe. A man caught sleeping with a married woman was killed on the spot; his ear lobes were cut off when caught with a girl. In all other chiefdoms it was the man who paid the luk.

The people of Palaro grumbled against this particular customary law. It is not clear from the accounts what actually happened; but apparently the chief failed to solve the problem. When Obura, a Palwo prince from Bunyoro called at Lute Hill, the Palaro gathered and asked him to give a ruling; and he ordered that from then on men shall pay luk. Obura then became chief of Palaro.

Obura was killed by another prince from Bunyoro called Olum Panya (see above p. 88) who is said to have crossed the Nile at the head of a large army and invaded Palaro. The people escaped on top of Lute. The invaders surrounded the Hill, and began digging all around it, with the idea, it is said, of "uprooting" it. But if this attempt failed, the ~~sie~~ge was long enough, and Obura surrendered and was executed. His son Okelle was arrested and taken back across the Nile to Bunyoro. It seems that the Palaro had become involved in the struggles for power among Jo-palwo rival princes. The trenches dug around Got Lute may still be seen today.

Auya was made chief, but he was soon deposed,

because his rule was bad. At that time Okelle returned and was installed in place of Auya. Okelle's rival brother Cua, broke off with his followers and joined Puranga chiefdom. After Okelle, Lagero Okelo, Latigo and Kitara ruled. The last traditional chief of Palaro was Owor, who was removed from chiefship by Postlethwaite, the District Commissioner of Acholi, and Iapir of Patiko was made jago of both Patiko and Palaro.

Palaro clans fought numerous battles against most of the neighbouring clans and chiefdoms: Padibe, Atyak, Parajok, Puranga, Payira, Koyo, Lukung as well as Lango. But because most of these battles were fought on clan basis, and often not as one chiefdom army, it is difficult to arrange the songs in any satisfactory chronological order.

Few in numbers the Palaro warriors compensated for this weakness by bravery and skill in battle. A number of their songs reflect their pre-occupation with this problem. The following otole song for instance, tells how Palaro fighters, so few that you could count them so easily, routed a much larger Lango army.

Palaro gin acel, aryo ...  
Men of Palaro one, two ... (of them).

Oyengo polo kom Lango  
 Shook heaven on Lango (~~by~~ <sup>by the</sup> struck terror/impact  
 of their spears)

Ee! Lango merok  
 Ee Lango the hostile (fierce, dangerous enemy)

Palaro gin acel, aryo ...  
 Men of Palaro one, two ...

Oyengo polo ki tere  
 Shook heaven from its base (struck so much terror  
 that the army of Lango scattered)

Lubai, Jago and war leader of Agoro one of the  
 Palaro clans, fought against an army of Parajok chiefdom:  
 who were assisted by Arab slave and ivory traders. The  
 next otole song records how, although completely over-  
 whelmed numerically, Lubai was undeterred.

Parajok obino rom mani?  
 Men of Parajok, they advance, how many are they?

Agoro pe!  
 Agoro are not there! (Agoro warriors are so few  
 you cannot see them against  
 the numerous Parajok army).

Lwak pare, Labai koko lwak pare bino ta  
 His people, Labai collects his people, he advances  
 on undeterred.

Ee! Parajok obino rom mani?  
 Ee! Men of Parajok, they advance, how many are  
 they?

Pal cwinya ye,  
 My breast oh! (it is painful with fear)

Alaro aya!  
 I run to my mother!

Gala obino!  
Arabs, they are advancing!

Parajoki obino rom mani?  
Men of Parajok they advance, how many are they?

How large is Oyaru's division? asks the next  
song. Oyaru commanded the army of Lukung, but was  
defeated in a battle fought among the thorn bushes.

Labuca pa Oyaru dwong rom mani?  
Division of Oyaru, how big is it?

Lalo i okiru  
(We shall) smash them in the thorn bushes

Lukung we! lal i okiru  
Men of Lukung oh! shall perish in the thorn bushes.

Labuca pa Oyaru dwong rom mani?  
The division of Oyaru how big is it?

Mony dong ran i okiru  
The army vanished among the thorn bushes

Lukung we! lal i okiro  
Men of Lukung perished among the thorn bushes.

Warriors of Paipeno clan chased an invading army  
down the Hill. The song does not say who the invaders  
were, but it is clear that they had planned a surprise  
attack. However, Obot the jago and war leader of  
Paipeno clan was ready waiting. The operation was  
abandoned, and Ongai, leading the attack, was seen  
fleeing down hill, his flag, no longer held upright, but  
slopping horizontally as the holder ran for his life.

Ongai ringo ki bere alunga do?  
 Ongai flees with the flag slopping horizontally,  
 why?

Paipeno oling kom Got  
 Paipeno is silent on the Hill (Lute, waiting  
 for the attack)

Ka ongeyo kome,  
 He (the jago) is fully aware (of the impending  
 attack)

Obot ka ongeyo kome  
 Obot is fully aware

Iu Paipeno oling kom Got  
 Men of Paipeno are silent on the Hill

Ka ongeyo kome  
 He is fully aware.

Ongai ruigo ki bere alunga do?  
 Ongai flees his flag staff slopping horizontally,  
 why?

The next two otole songs allege that the terror struck by the fighting might of Palaro warriors, prevented the Payira and Puranga from mounting their projected attacks on Palaro. Payira chiefdom, as we have seen, was the largest and numerically the most powerful; their army numerous as the brown ants moro, easily 'swallowed' up Ogom without a spear being hurled (see p. 72 above). The Palaro poet here challenges the Payira army to advance "come on, do not fear".

Payira mito lworo  
 Payira seems overwhelmed by fear

Abok aywayo mony tero kom Palaro  
 Abok (Awic see p. 12 above) leads his army to attack  
 Palaro

Payira wek lworo  
 Payira stop your fears

Payira, Palaro otoro komgi  
 Payira, (see) Palaro have closed their ranks

Payira mito lworo  
 Payira seems overwhelmed by fear.

The Puranga army, according to the next song, had gathered under Omoro Hill, but it melted away, due to their fears of Palaro.

Puranga wek yo obedi  
 Men of Puranga left the path clear (vanished away)

Lwak pa Lutara-moi peke  
 Warriors of Lutara-moi (of Puranga) is no longer  
 there (have run away)

Ee, cwinya mito lemma yo <sup>gall</sup>  
 Ee I feel like vomiting (~~poison~~, I feel like killing  
 a man, but there is no fee to fight  
 against).

O! mony oran te Omoro  
 Oh! An army (of Puranga) have vanished under  
 Omoro Hill.

Puranga mito nywaro jo  
 Puranga wish to insult the people (of Palaro by  
 not presenting themselves for a fight).

Puranga wek yo obedi  
 Men of Puranga left the path clear.

The last otole song records the defeat suffered by

Padibe warriors in a battle fought in a bamboo forest. Chief Agola Lumoi led the Palaro, and Pribong who commanded the Padibe was killed; the remnants of Padibe fled and left their chief in the "dust".

Kakare rac,  
The place (arena of battle) was awful.

Co olal i kor  
Men perished in the bamboo

Padibe, co olal i kor  
Padibe, men perished in the bamboo

Co olal i ker do nye  
Men perished in the bamboo, oh they did.

Co otum bot Piribong  
Piribong's men were finished.

Piribong odong i apulu  
Piribong himself was left in the dust.

Ee! aya, Agola Lumoi  
Ee! mother: Agola Lumoi

Kakare rac  
The place was awful

Co olal i kor  
Men perished in the bamboo.

It is interesting that all the historical songs of Palaro that I collected are otole songs. The Palaro on the whole are much better at the otole and poor at the bwala. An explanation of this phenomena may be found in the fact that the clans were not really united under a powerful chief to whom all Palaro owed allegiance

and loyalty. The bwala, after all is the chief's dance. The history of Palaro is primarily a history of the clans who fought most of their battles as independent groups, although some of them at times united against external threats.

We consider next the Paimol who are the best bwala dancers in all Acholi, their dancing teams have performed on many regional and national occasions, both within Acholi District and outside.

Paimol

Paimol forms a part of Pajule division (pop. over 10,000) in Chua county. Their history from the time of Omol the first chief and founder of the chiefdom to 1918 when their last traditional chief Lakidi was hanged by the British colonial officers, was turbulent. It is interesting to study the unity of the clans that comprised the chiefdom in the face of many and constant external threats.

Omol  
 |  
 Cua  
 |  
 Omuktho  
 |  
 Kicon

Omoko

|  
Okelo ceng

|  
Olemngok

|  
Okonya

|  
Otekere

|  
Okolngoleyang Lakidi (executed in  
Kitgum 1918)

Omol, from whom the chiefdom derived its name, (Jo-pa-Omol, people of Omol), crossed the Nile from Bunyoro (Palwo?) at Wang-wat-Pajao, present day Murchison Falls. It is said, in support of his claims to chiefly status, that he brought with him two royal spears, symbols of chiefship. After a short sojourn among the Payira, he pushed on eastwards until he reached Akwang Hill, where his people have settled ever since.

He found the Acut clan on top of Akwang; they had climbed up to escape from Jie raids. Omol invited them to come down and promised them protection. They in turn, agreed to be ruled by Omol. The following clan groups, some Lwo speaking, others Nilo-Hamitic, also attached themselves to Omol: Lokka, Karuke, Padwara, Abo, Karyangabur - from Orom, Kadwong - from Toposa, and Atura, from Turkana (but they later broke off and joined the Pajule chiefdom), and Kudeng from Karamoja.

The Kudeng became 'priests' of the chiefdom spirit shrine when it was 'founded' on Akwang Hill. Some Kudeng lineage broke off and joined Pajule, where they also established themselves as priests of that chiefdom's jok.

The mwoc of Paimol reflects this interesting mixture of different racial cultural and linguistic groups.

Kutukutu! Morogeno! Lalangatobong

Moro Laiberu

Aya medo kwon  
Mother bring some more bread

Moro laitoruk,

Moro kangatuk,

Cumatelo.

Only the third line is in Lwo, the rest are in some form of Karamojong language (I have not been able to discover what they mean).

Omol fought against his brother Okor to avenge the death of his son Aluka. Okor, according to the bwala song below, pleaded that Aluka was killed by a hyena, and he had nothing to do with his (Aluka's) death. Omol rejected this plea and took up arms against his brother.

Odyek otingo, Aluka woko do!  
Hyena has carried Aluka away behold!

Latin pa Omera  
Son of my brother

Omol miina tong, adyeri  
Omol give me spear (that we may fight) I'll leave  
you alone to fight with him.

Odyek otingo Aluka woko yoo!  
Hyena has carried Aluka away oh!

Omol miina tongwa yo  
Omol give me our spears.

The followers of Okor were defeated; because,  
according to the next bwala song, they were numerically  
inferior:

Lyee, atero oneko wod Omoko  
Oh, an arrow killed the son of Omoko.

Nok ocera lwony ye  
Numerical inferiority prevents me fighting back  
(in revenge).

Okor broke off after this defeat, and settled on  
Opella Hill, where some of his descendants Pukor (people  
of Okor) are still found today.

All the five Paimol historical songs that follow  
refer to events that happened during the reign of  
Lakidi; their last traditional chief. The first  
tells of wars against the neighbouring chiefdom of  
Kabala. Arab slave and ivory traders had arrived; and

encamped in Kabala territory. They sent a delegation to Paimol to demand for supplies of finger millet. These were sent away only with abuses and insults for the Arabs, who then decided to teach Paimol a lesson. In a combined operation Arab and Kabala forces inflicted heavy losses on the Paimol. Three Paimol war leaders, including Wangale fell.

The Paimol had to wait for a whole year before they could revenge. The younger men were impatient, but elders cautioned patience; they knew that an attack on Kabala when the Arabs were still there would be foolish, in view of the superiority in weapons that the enemy enjoyed. But as soon as the Arabs withdrew, Lakidi, chief of Paimol, sent a lapii (see <sup>below</sup> ~~above~~ p. 118) to their ally Omiya Pacua; and in a major combined invasion of Kabala slaughtered many people.

Paimol battle formation showed another Nilo-Hamitic influence of the age set system. In front were the tiria, the youthful, battle-honour-eager men between 18-30 years of age. Then came the seasoned warriors called Jo eleki, aged between 30-50. Behind these were the Jo ete old and aging men beyond 50. These surrounded the chief and carried no shields. The next bwala song

cautions patience to the tiria: soon the shield provided by the Arabs will be removed, and the enemy will be exposed, he will be much easier to deal with, and, says the song to the youths, you may be left alone to deal with them, since it will not be necessary for the seasoned warriors to take part.

Okelo kome

He (the enemy) has exposed his body (the Arab shield is gone).

Adyeeri ye

I (the eleki) leave him (the enemy) to you (youths).

Okelo kome te Akwang, do!

He has exposed his body under Akwang Hill, behold!

Wun tiria balo ki arima.

You tiria you spoil things with impatience.

Ee - lwak pa Wangale

Ee! people of Wangale (who was killed by Arabs and Kabala).

Ee - gwok wubal ki arima

Ee! do not spoil it (the revenge) by impatience.

Okelo kome

He has exposed his body

Atenynyi ye

I will leave him completely for you.

The next bwala song is a summary account of the battle. The cause of the fighting is given, the Kabala had killed members of Paimol when supported by Arabs. **W**angale was one of the people killed. During

the fighting, Paimol drove the Kabala out of their villages, and they (Kabala) spent nights in the wilderness, and no mercy was shown those that could not escape. The song blames Oryang, chief of Kabala for foolishly allying themselves in the first place with the Arabs. It also mentions the alliance between Paimol and Omiya Pacua.

Oneko woda ye  
He (the enemy, Kabala) killed my son oh (in the last war).

Kitino pa Onyang obutu i tim  
Children of Onyang slept in the wilderness

Ee! ngwec oremo ya Kabala ye  
Ee! to escape, the people of Kabala failed! oh!

Onyang ceng ajuki kwe  
Onyang I did stop you in vain (not to ally yourself with Arabs).

Kitino Omiya ovingo kop Paimol  
Children (people) of Omiya (Pacua) accepted the words of Paimol (invitation to fight Kabala)

Oneko woda ye  
He killed my son.

In the battle described above a man of Patongo who was on a visit to Kabala was killed. To avenge his death warriors from Patongo fell on Paimol women who were working in the fields, and killed some. The Paimol answered with two attacks, inflicting heavy

casualties on Patongo. Two otole songs tell the story. In the first, the Paimol poet posing as a Patongo warrior, complains that his general called Rungula Nyepur was leading the army to its death and asks him to stop.

Rungula Nyepur ye, tero wa do i to  
Rungula Nyepur oh! He leads us behold, to our  
death

Rungula, woda dong nguny tugu  
Rungula, my son will lie (dead) under the ~~hor~~assus.

Gwok ier ali-wa yo!  
Do not start a feud for us oh! (refers to the  
killing of Paimol women).

Rungula, woda dong nguny tugu  
Rungula, my son shall lie under the ~~hor~~assus.

Ii Akwang ma lakee  
Hii Akwang (the spirit shrine) demands meat!  
(for sacrifice)

In the second attack by Paimol the Patongo were surrounded by fire; and many people were killed by the fire, and those trying to escape fell by the spears: as is recorded in the next otole song:

Tong romo ki wedi ye  
Spear shall meet spear he!

Ilamo lapii kwe  
In vain you invoke your lapii. (see p.58 above)

Oboke olwedo, oboke olwedo mukonyi  
~~lilac~~ leaves, it was ~~lilac~~ leaves that saved you  
olwedo olwedo

Lweny ma Lengamoi ywaa ye  
 In the battle which Lengamoi commanded oh!

Opoo Awai oyango rwot a mt lee tim  
 Opoo Awai skinned the chief (of Kabala) just like  
 an animal.

In 1918 Lakidi was executed with three of his generals. Orom and Jie raiders had carried away a number of women, children and livestock from Paimol. And Lakidi immediately set afoot preparations for an invasion of Orom and Jie. The District Commissioner in Kitgum intervened, but his efforts to persuade Lakidi to accept a 'peaceful settlement' failed. Interpreting this as open rebellion against the new colonial regime, Paimol was attacked. By now the Paimol had acquired considerable fire arms from Arab slave traders. The battle raged for three days. Paimol warriors ran out of ammunition and surrendered. The chief escaped, but was captured and hanged. The following Otole song records the painful story.

Iyee! oduyo i Gala  
 Oh! he (the chief) has surrendered to the white  
 men.

Ngedamoi Rwot Akwang ngalo to  
 Ngedamoi chief of Akwang jokes with death.

Rwot Akwang, Ngedamoi we!  
 Chief of Akwang, Ngedamoi, listen (you people)

Odonyo i Gala ye iye  
He has surrendered oh yes!

Puranga

Two interesting aspects of Puranga history are the incidents of women chiefs, and their relationship with the Lango to the south. Today the Puranga form the dominant group in Omoro county, forming about one-third of its population of 44,000. They seem to have escaped the sleeping sickness plague of 1906-1923.

The genealogies of Puranga chiefs is as follows:

1.

Oranga

Beno

Jule (founder of Pajule  
chiefdom).

Owiny

Cua Agoda

Ogwang Omoro

Cunyu Agora.

2.

Ogwang Okot

Regency of Aroko  
(queen mother)

Lameny

Regency of Akongo  
(queen mother and Olunyi  
Acuga.

Ogwal (deported to  
Masindi 1914,  
died 1917).

3.

Okelo Mwakka (murdered 1914)

Olal (retired 1947)

Oranga, from whom the chiefdom derived its name (Jo pa Oranga, people of Oranga) led his lineage from Karamoja to Lakwar Hill, where he died. His son Beno who succeeded him, took the group to Otuke Hill. Jule, ~~one~~ of the sons of Oranga broke off from there, and set up his own chiefdom of Pajule (Jo pa Jule, people of Jule).

While at Otuke, the following commoner groups attached themselves to Beno's lineage which now became the aristocratic clan: Aywee - from Jie; Bobi, Bolo, Gem, Palaro (see p. 99 above) Parwee, Lukwor (both of which groups came with their own royal drums), Paikat and lastly Lukee.

Beno was succeeded by Owiny, then Cua Agoda and then Ogwang Omoro - who led the whole chiefdom to a

new settlement on Iwet Hill. The next chief, Cunyu Agora took the people to Olal Hill, where the chiefdom's spirit shrine, Olalteng was established.

Cunyu Agora died without an issue from his queen daa ker Kicaa Auru; but he had a son Olwoc, by another wife. It is said that Olwoc was rejected as a successor to the chiefship because he was mean. Instead Ogwang Okok, who was not a member of the aristocratic clan, was elected by the council of elders. His only relationship with the chief being that he and the chief married wives from the same village: Omaro.

Jealousy drove Olwoc to steal the 'royal object' or emblems. He hid them in a hole in the ground, and there followed a long drought and a fierce famine. When people began to die of starvation, Olwoc confessed to his theft. The royal emblems were unearthed, and rain fell. Olwoc was condemned and stoned to death.

Ogwang Okok died when his son was still a junior. So his daa-ker Aroko, whose village was near River Acaa, (and was often referred to as Aroko Nya Acaa, Aroko the girl from Acaa) acted as regent. During her regency Puranga carried out many successful operations against

the Lango. The following bwala song records how many decapitated heads of slain Lango warriors were brought before the shrine of Rwot Aroko.

Yee Aroko nya Acaa  
Oh Aroko the Girl from Acaa

Nen tok Lango en  
Behold scalps of Lango, here!

Nye lweny ki Lango tek  
Oh fighting the Lango is difficult (fierce,  
dangerous).

Nya Aca nen tok man en  
Girl from Aca behold more scalps, here

Omera wai dwogo paco ku  
My brother, I know, will not return home (He is  
killed by the Lango).

Lweny ki Lango tek macalo man?  
Fighting the Lango is difficult - like this?

Aparo pi lacede  
I keep thinking about small fishes (I rather stay  
behind and fish than go and fight with  
the Lango).

Lameny who became chief on attaining majority died soon afterwards, his son Ogwal was again still a minor. Once more a woman Akongo the daa-ker acted as regent, sharing the regency with Olunyi Acuga a man from the Palaro clan. This too is an interesting fact, for it shows that rulers could be chosen from outside the royal clan.

A notable victory over a Lango invasion during Ogwal's rule is recorded in the following otole song. Intelligence report showed that a large Lango army were encamped in a 'hunt' tim, which had been prepared for the arum 'fire hunt'. Ogwal, son of Lameny who was installed soon after attaining majority, ordered his troops to surround the tim and fire it. The Lango Omiro were burnt and killed as if they were wild animals.

Acholi and Lango war leaders never started or joined a fight without a good cause. If he wanted some ally, the chief would send a delegation to a friendly chief, the delegation would take with them a girl or a piece of stick. The girl or the stick were called lapii. After explaining the causa bella, acceptance of the lapii indicated willingness to join forces in an alliance. The mother of Rwot Awic, the famous chief of Payira was such a girl. Palaro invited Payira to ally with them in attack on Atyak, and Acan was sent as the lapii to Rwot-Camo Labwor (whom <sup>Sir</sup> S. Baker called Rotjarma). On the eve of battle, the leader would invoke his lapii. Holding the object in his right hand he says something to this effect:

"Here is my lapii; you (the enemy) wronged me first. I had a clean heart towards you. But you provoked me first. You first killed my brother. I will kill you now; but your spear will not touch me ..." This is called lammo dog, to invoke the Lapii.

The singer tells of how a few Lango warriors hid in the lilac shrubs to seek protection from the fire and were thereby saved. But the rest perished, in vain they invoked their lapii.

Lweny ma Ogwal Lameny ywaa ye  
The battle that Ogwal son of Lameny commanded oh!

Oweko Omiro owang i mac a me pura  
Omiro (Lango) were burnt in the fire like waterbucks.

Ee! Omiro! Oweko Omiro owang i mac a me lee tim  
Ee! Omiro! Omiro were burnt in the fire like  
wild animals.

Tong romo ki wadi ye  
Spear met with another spear, oh!

Ila<sup>m</sup>o lapii kwe  
You (the Lango) invoked your lapii in vain!

Oboke olwedo, oboke alwedo mukonyi  
Lilac shrubs, lilac shrubs it was that saved you!  
Olwedo (Lango's who escaped).

Ceng ki Ogwal Lameny nye ~~we~~we!  
In the days of Ogwal Lameny, you there!

Omiro otum i mac ame pura  
Omiro perished in the fire like waterbucks.

During the reign of Ogwal there emerged an outstanding

war leader Okelo Mwakka, from the commonor clan of Bobi. He was widely travelled. He visited Bunyoro, and when the new administration was being established, he became an interpreter and visited Mombasa and the Sudan. He became a serious rival of chief Ogwol, over whom he had certain important advantages. In 1913 the District Commissioner virtually recognised Okelo Mwakka as chief of Puranga. He was given 15 guns and to Ogwol only 5, to be used for preserving law and order. Okelo Mwakka was, according to Postlethwaite the D.C. "a chief who at once became a loyal supporter of my aims, who thereby incurred considerable unpopularity with a section of his people". (J.R.P. Postlethwaite I Look Back, 1947 pp. (63-65)).

This unpopularity resulted after a few months of the recognition by the new administration of Okelo Mwakka as chief of Puranga, in his murder. He was ambushed and speared to death in a little stream. Ogwol was arrested and deported to Masindi where he died in 1918. Four men were hanged publicly in Gulu for their part in the murder. The District Commissioner appointed Mwakka's son Olal to be the chief of Puranga.

He retired in 1947. Olal is still alive and has some influence in Acholiland. What kind of man he was, that is as the people he ruled over, saw it, are recorded in the following bwala songs.

Like his father, Olal does not seem to have been very popular. Not only did he come from a non-aristocratic clan, Bobi, thus earning the jealousies of those whose stool he usurped, but he was also an imposed chief, who had to derive support primarily from the foreign colonial administration. In the first song he is accused of being a foolish informer, a liar, a cheap gossiper and a traitor:

Yee kop ma owaco ma nok  
Oh! the little words (unimportant) I say

Rwot Olal ming  
Chief Olal is so foolish

Tero nyinga bot Munu ne  
He takes (reports) my name to his white boss

Ka doto an  
To accuse me.

Yee-laroro (nyo, lagoba, laming, ming, etc.)  
Oh-dangerous gossiper (or liar, the fool etc.)

Tero nyinga bot Orunya (nyo Bere)  
Takes my name to Orunya (nick name for the D.C.).  
(or Bere)

Ka cato ne  
To sell it (the information)

In the Otole song that follows, Olal is accused by the Ayago, a commoner clan, of stealing cattle from them. The song is a call to action, and although the action is not expressly stated, it is clear.

Wulwong pol Ayago obin  
Call all the people of Ayago to come.

Jo Puranga mito nywaro wa  
Men of Puranga desire to insult us (Ayago).

Olal okwalo dyang pa jo  
Olal has stolen the peoples (Ayago) cattle

Ribo ki nywaro co  
Now he adds insults to men (of Ayago)

Kayo wa ya  
It (the insult) bites us (it is painful)

Nye pol Ayago bin  
You there, all Ayago come.

In the last bwala song, men of Aywee clan, accuse Olal of extreme meanness and cruelty. Olal's brother Aliri had killed a man, and had to pay compensation, a girl. But Aliri had no daughter. It is alleged that when Aliri asked his brother Olal to help him. Olal told him "Go and produce a baby girl and with her pay the compensation": a cruel thing to say to a brother.

Ye abako doga kibwoya  
O I cry, I am defeated.

Jo Aywe yam kibwoyo  
People of Aywee are totally defeated

Nyara mo peke ma aculu ki kwor  
 A daughter I have none with which to pay  
 compensation

Nywallo nyakò tek  
 To bear a baby girl, it is difficult.

Olal okwero  
 Olal has refused (to give his daughter).

Aliri nywal nyari  
 (Saying) Aliri produce a baby girl.

All the songs about Olal are protest songs. Like his father before him, Olal was a foreign imposition and unpopular. He had to rely on the foreign authority, and although he was still called a chief, Rwot, Olal never enjoyed the full loyalty of the people over whom he was supposed to be ruling. Rather it was their dislike of him that brought them together.

Enough has been said to show the great interest of the Acholi people in history: the history of their chiefdoms. We may say that when they perform the otole and bwala the Acholi 'sing' their history. The organizations of those dances especially that of the Otole, as we have seen, stress the unity of the chiefdom. The different clans under their Jagi (pl. of jago) are under the general leadership of the rwot. The chiefdom team is further identified by its contrast with other

teams. Only one team occupies the arena at a time.

As the young man sings these songs, and while performing the mock fight, he shouts the praise-name, mwoc of his chiefdom mentioning names of ancient chiefs of his chiefdom and other slogans, the meanings of which are explained and well known to him, he expresses solidarity with all the other members of the kingdom. The otole and bwala songs and the mwoc inculcate in his mind a sense of unity with all those who belonged to the chiefdom in the past and are members in the present. And when he becomes a man, it is his turn to explain the meanings of those songs and the mwoc to his own sons. In this way the history of the people of the chiefdom is handed down. In these songs and the mwoc the Acholi folk historian has a ready and most effective 'aid' to the teaching of history.

But since a man could only sing the otole and bwala songs and shout the mwoc of his own chiefdom or clan, and was not expected to, and in most cases did not know the historical songs of the other chiefdoms (except of course, those directed against his people), his general knowledge of the history of all Acholi society could not be very extensive. In any case the Acholi did

historical  
function  
of the  
songs

not have a great King who ruled over the entire land: and so such general knowledge of all Acholi history was not sociologically very significant. History is concerned with tracing the evolution of human affairs; it is an account of the rise and development of institutions religious, social or political. ↑

The Acholi chiefdom comprised of various clans, sometimes of different racial, linguistic and other cultural groups. The degree of unity among these clans differed from chiefdom to chiefdom. Where, as in the case of Palero the clans were almost independent, the historical songs tell of the exploits of the clans rather than those of the chiefdom.

Among the Lango the clan does not seem to have been of much political significance. The Lango Rwot and Jago was, as we have seen, military rather than political figures in the sense of their Acholi counterparts. Their status, authority and tenure depended not so much on the clans to which they belonged, but on their personal qualities and good fortune. There are no equivalents of the otole and bwala songs in Lango oral literature. On the other hand, as in other Nilo-Hamitic societies, the age set system was a dominant institution among

the Lango. In ~~the next~~ chapter,<sup>5</sup> we examine the Lango Age Sets songs.

#### Lango Myths

Lango oral literature is almost devoid of myths as also of texts of historical significance such as the myths and legends of Amabil. Only three stories which may be called myths have been recorded. In an attempt to account for the apparent paucity of myths and the lack of interest in history among the Lango, which appear to be characteristic of other Nilotic-speaking groups (Dr. Salim Abdulla's personal correspondence), and also for a better understanding of the significance of the few known myths, we shall briefly further examine Lango society, paying attention especially to political institutions.

The Nilotic terms raai and jago, were also used in Lango. In Amabil, as we have seen, raai was the head of a chiefdom, and jago of a councilor clan within a chiefdom. The same raai and jago in Lango? Did they have similar functions, status, authority and tenure as those in Amabil? What forms of Lango operated to

## Chapter 4

## LANGO MYTHS

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The Nilotic terms rwot and jago, were also used in Lango. In Acholi, as we have seen, rwot was the head of a chiefdom, and jago of a commoner clan within a chiefdom. Who were rwot and jago in Lango? Did they have similar functions, status, authority and tenure as those in Acholi? What forces in Lango operated to

uphold or to threaten the position of the chief and jago? Were those similar to corresponding forces in Acholi?

In chapters II and III it was shown that the importance of political myths and historical songs in Acholi arose from a situation in which a small clan set itself up as a ruling group over a number of clan groups who together greatly outnumbered the aristocratic clan. The political myths and historical songs were factors which justified the existing political economic and social <sup>status</sup> quo, enhanced the dignity and strengthened the authority of the wot, and operated to unite the chiefdom.

Lango clans which were patrilineal and exogamous, formally expressed their unity through the clan war cry which extolled their founders, and observances of totemic taboos. But they had a strong tendency to scatter and subdivide. Wars and migrations facilitated this process, so that clan divisions from a common stock settled in different parts of Lango land. Drisberg recorded 10 such divisions of the Akarawok clan, 14 of Alekit, 11 of Arakit and 10 of Abako. The subgroups in the course of time became separate clans, and

inter-marriage was permissible (<sup>cf</sup> Dri~~z~~berg: The Lango).

This tendency necessarily weakened the position and status of a clan leader and the unity of a clan group; for no sooner than some clan loyalty was emerging than a clan split up and dispersed, different groups joining different villages.

A village comprised ~~of~~ a number of splinter clan groups: in one village, Dri~~z~~berg found four: Jo Arakit, Jo Akarawok, Jo Akodi and Jo Oki. In a village, a respected and successful cultivator became the won wang tic, leader of the cultivators' co-operative, and another won awi, in charge of the communal grazing lands. The head of a village was a Jago. Goldthorpe commented that "probably most jagi (pl. of jago) would be heads of dominant lineages within the village. (Outlines of East African Society). Dri~~z~~berg and Tarantino however, took the jago to be purely a military institution, a "leader of company, whose duty was to lead his detachment under a rwot". The office of jago as that of rwot, were not hereditary, unlike those of Acholi.

A number of villages, the number varying with the nature and size of the external threat, came together under a rwot during emergencies. "When the war was over",

Fr. Tarantino wrote, "their authority lapsed, and they returned to their clans and resumed ordinary occupations of cultivation and house building in which they were not entitled to the assistance of the people" (U.J. Vol. XIII p. 109). It would seem that the layout of a village was such that members of a clan settled on one site within the village.

The tenure of a chief or twon lwak - (bull of the people, commander of an army or a raid), was precarious; because just as success and victory in war inspired and attracted other war leaders to him, defeat brought disfavour and desertion. Thus Ngora Okubal, one of the most notable Lango chiefs, fell from power when his army suffered bitter defeat at the hands of Madi archers near Nimule. The following song records the complete desertion by his army:

Ngora, yi bino  
Ngora, the enemy comes

Wi nono  
Your head is uncovered (completely <sup>alone</sup> ~~about~~).

Pi jo meri ma gineko  
For your men have been killed

Ma gityeko oko  
Been utterly finished.

Likewise Ojungamweng, another twon lwak, who

successfully led the Lango into battle against the Madi, also near Nimule, lost his leadership because of a misfortune. Returning home with much booty, his army encamped for the night in the dry bed of River Nyangagot. Suddenly flood swept down upon them while asleep, and many warriors were drowned. (Compare - Swahili Proverb "Never build in a river bed even if it is dry".)

Again Akena, a well remembered general of Oyam, who with the assistance of Arab slave and ivory traders, defeated the Madi and returned to Lango in triumph, fell into disfavour when it was discovered that during the fighting he behaved treacherously to one of his men Wat-Kongo, whom he left to his fate in a scouting expedition. The following song portrays the once great twon lwak now crawling on his knees in shame:

Akena imulu amula ki piny  
Akena you crawl crawl along the ground

Ibwolo Wat-Kongo  
You betrayed Wat-Kongo

Akena imulu amula ki piny piny  
Akena you crawl crawl low along the ground

Imiyo ginedo Wat-Kongo  
You let them kill Wat-Kongo.

The position, authority and tenure of a Lango rwot

or jago, depended primarily on his personal qualities, merits and good fortune or luck. What clan he belonged to does not appear to have been of the same political importance as that of an Acholi rwot or jago. The history of a chief's clan was therefore not of much significance in the maintenance of the chief's authority and tenure. Similarly his lineage and family background ~~were~~ <sup>were</sup> of little help; and myths such as those that clothe the birth of a chief with wonder and mystery had therefore no place, no function in the Lango political system.

1. The Myth of Olum

Drisberg, as if to show the relative unimportance of myths in Lango society, recorded the myth of Olum as a footnote to his discussion on the Lango concept of a paramount chief. Having shown (The Lango p. 205) that the Lango had no centralised government, and that the reputed kings were nothing more than local war leaders on a large scale, he continued

"Mention should be made however of the Lango tradition that the first three chiefs to have entered the country which they now occupy were Ekangaro, Mugaicha and Obujamaro-kakare, of whom Ekangaro was paramount. It is not known whence they came, but it is

through this believed from the sky". Thus a place

fifteen miles north of Ibulu, on the way to Ibulu Hill.

Olum was the first man in the world. He descended to earth with his wife Awiny - the first woman, and both were equipped with tails. They subsequently cut these off, however, as they found them inconvenient when walking in bush country.

It is said that they were the first to see the sun.

When they reached the confines of the present Lango country, they walked very slowly, fearing lest the earth should give way and swallow them. But one day seeing a hartebeeste spring out of the grass in front of them and dash off at a tremendous pace, they conquered their fears of the unknown and resumed their normal gait.

There are certain marks inprinted on the rocks at

Ibuje the footsteps of a man and a dog and a hole in the rock made by a spear but which were made by Olum.

This myth with its striking evolutionary flavour is also known among the Acholi; and a version of it was recorded by <sup>Rev. H. E.</sup> Lees in his Gang Fables (1930). The legendary figure Olum Panya has been mentioned above when discussing the historical songs of Acholi chiefdoms. Imprints similar to that found at Ibuje which are attributed to Olum, are also found in Acholi but it is attributed to Otira, an Arab wonder-worker who passed

through this part of Africa around 1850. Thus a place fifteen miles north of Gulu, on the road to Ajulu Hill, where the imprints are found, is called Bungatira (from Bunga pa Otira, Otira's Woods). It is said that Otira camped in those woods for a night.

We shall not stop to ask whether or not this was originally a Lango myth, because it is well known that myths like other stories travel. (S.H. Hooke, Middle Eastern Mythology (1963)p. 16). The important point is that it was known among the Lango, and was according to Driberg, told in connexion with Lango chiefs. In view of the statements made earlier about the position. Status tenure and authority of Lango chiefs, what was the function of this myth? Can we classify it as a political myth?

It would appear that the myth of Olum had twofold function: first, it was an aetiological myth, explaining the origin of man, and also accounting for the strange imprints on the rocks at Ibuje. Secondly, since it invested the ancient heroes and chiefs with an aura of mystery and wonder, we may say that it enhanced the status of those who occupied chiefly positions, and in this indirect way, it may be called a political myth.

## 2. Myth of the Dowsry Cattle

The next myth 'explains' the origin of the different economic occupations of the Lango, Jie and Turkana. The Turkana live almost entirely on cattle. "Without stock", Dr. Gulliver wrote, "the Turkana could not live in their country". (The Central Nilo-Hamites, p.59). The Jie live partly on cattle, but also cultivate dura (*cerototheca sesamonides*) from which beer is made. And the Lango, district from the other two groups, will take meat when they can obtain it: from their cattle goat and sheep stocks or hunts; but their chief interest is in cultivation, mainly of finger millet and sorghum from which much beer is made. Fr. Tarantino has described the Lango as 'powerful drinkers', a statement which must however be compared with that of Rwot Yakobo Adoko of Lango (U.J. Vol. 21 No. 2 p. 189). "If I were asked to describe the biggest difference between Lango District when I started work and today I will give four ... Lastly, in those days the Langi used to drink very little beer to keep themselves ready for fighting but now they drink very much".

Lango had two brothers Turkana and Jie. Their father was not rich enough to provide a wife for each

and wished to pay the dowry for his eldest son, Turkana only. The other two sons protested strongly. After some discussion it was agreed that father should keep all his goods, and that each of the youths should provide for his own future.

Before they parted on their different ways, their father decided to give them a farewell feast. A big bull was slaughtered and the meat cut into pieces put in a heap on the skin. Some quantity of beer was then poured on to the flesh. The eldest son Turkana was then invited to take his share, and he carried away a great quantity of the meat. Jie, the next son in order of seniority, when called to help himself, took nearly all the meat that was left by Turkana. And for Lango there remained only some entrails and most of the beer.

### 3. Myth of the Quarrel between Lango and Jie

That Lango, Jie and Turkana are brothers in the last myth is of interest, in that it suggests that at least some of the Lango clans migrated from among them Turkana and Jie.

Long ago there was a bad famine among the Jie, but the Lango had plentiful supplies. The Jie therefore brought their children to the Lango to exchange for food. When the famine was over and the crops were ready for the harvest, the Jie held a

dance myel adonga<sup>x</sup> The Lango went to take part in the dance and took with them the Jie children. When the children saw their parents they ran away from their Lango masters, and went back to their homes.

This angered the Lango very much. They asked that the Jie make some other payment.

This request was rejected outright. Later the Lango held an Abal-kari dance (also now defunct), and the Jie came to join in. The Lango once more asked for the re-payment of their debts. The Jie answered by killing a dog and throwing it to the Lango, saying here is food for you in settlement of your debts. This incensed the Lango and a fight with whips ensued, in which the Lango were driven off.

The Lango organised another dance which the Jie again came to take part. When they (the Jie) were in the middle of the arena, the Lango attacked them (with whips and sticks and drove them away. The Jie later launched a serious attack in which spears were used; and many people were killed. The two brothers could not live together in peace so they parted.

Unlike the Acholi myths, these three Lango myths are not used to support any claims of political personalities.

<sup>x</sup> Now defunct in Lango, it is a typical Nilo-Hamitic dance; Teso call it edonga; Pokot, adonga; Suk, kedongo.

or institutions. Unity within the Lango village was effected through the inter-clan religious, military and economic institutions. The age set system which cut across clans and lineages, operated counter to clan and lineage unity and loyalty. Etogo groups met to celebrate funerals of their members at the Apuny ceremony, to exorcise evil spirits causing illness within the society, to bless the seeds at the rubo koti ceremony. Anxiety about rain found expression in the rain dance which took place simultaneously in all parts of Lango. These institutions and activities are discussed in the next chapter.

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## Chapter 5

## LANGO AGE SETS SONGS.

Drieberg's account of the Ewor or Eworon ceremony is the only source of information about initiation into age sets, by an eye witness. Hayley who worked among the Lango 20 years after Drieberg, accepted this account completely and faithfully reproduced it in his book, because he "could obtain no such detailed account as he (Drieberg) gives, though the gist of his description was confirmed" (The Anatomy of Lango Religion p. 243). Hayley had so much faith in Drieberg that although he obtained a good deal of contrary evidence about certain aspects of Drieberg's description, he rejected them outright, blaming lapse of memory of his informants and the rapid decline of the age set system. Dr. A. Butt and W. Goldthorpe did no fieldwork among the Lango, and relied exclusively on Drieberg and Hayley for their own accounts (A. Butt. The Nilotes of the Anglo Egyptian Sudan and Uganda, Chapter on the Lango; Goldthorpe Elements of East African Society, Chapter on the Lango).

In view of the importance of Drieberg's account

of the Ewor ceremony, it deserves a much more critical examination than it has hitherto received, both from the point of view of Dri~~z~~berg's approach to the subject, and its content - Dri~~z~~berg treated the subject primarily as a religious institution. It is dealt with under the general heading "Religion and Magic"; and even then, only as an introduction to 'Rain Making'.

"As a preliminary, however, an account must be given of a quinquennial festival known as the ewor or eworon ... its main motive is the instruction of the young in the mysteries of rain making". (my italics). (The Lango p. 243).

The four year period between the initiation ceremonies is explained in terms of rain making necessities.

"The eworon is essentially a quinquennial festival, but at the end of every 16 years there is a gap of nine years instead of four ... This is explained by the fact that for rain making purposes the initiates are divided into four named after certain animals". (my italics). (Ibid p. 243).

Dri~~z~~berg did not consider the ewor as an initiation festival, by which initiates become members of an age set. He did not examine Lango age sets as a political or military problem. He does not even mention the word age sets. His main pre-occupation was with religion and rain making. Of course, Dri~~z~~berg was aware of a similar ceremony among other Nilo-Hamitic peoples such

as the Karamojong and Iteso.

"Among these people the ceremony would appear to be more truly one of initiation to puberty with less emphasis on rain, and the initiates permanently take the name of the group as their own personal name". (Ibid p. 253-4 footnotes).

Driberg was strongly of the opinion that the Lango were a Nilotic people who came under Nilo-Hamitic influence: that the awor festival was of comparatively recent introduction, and that among the Lango it had become primarily a rain making institution.

One result of this approach was that there is no direct information on the functions of the age sets as a political and military system. Also certain important questions were left unasked; for instance, Driberg recorded a number of age sets songs, but their significance is not discussed. He is content with the following comment:

"These songs are sung at the ewor and have no bearing on rain making". (Ibid p. 245).

But this premise soon proved too limited and unworkable, and Driberg was forced to admit that much more was done during the ewor, than just the teaching of the art of rain making. He wrote:

"The old men return at night to sleep in the

Villages, but spend the days in teaching the awobi (awobe, boys, initiates (Okot) the duties of citizenship, the lore of hunting, the art of fighting and the traditions of the race; lastly they are taught the mysteries of rain making, together with the songs appertaining to their group". (my italics) (Ibid) pp. 253-4, footnote).

In fact no mysteries of rain making ~~were~~ taught to the initiates. If it were, all Lango men would become rain makers. The initiates were taught, apart from other skills, how to perform the rain dance, myel kot, and the litanies which were repeated at these public prayers for rain (see p. 246 below). Rain making was a different and highly specialized occupation. Only a few men called won kot, rain guardians or 'owners' of the rain, knew the mysteries of rainmaking, and this knowledge they passed on to their own sons. A famous won kot mentioned by Drieberg was Lingo of Aduku. He inherited the office from his father, Okelo, a Madi war captive. When Lingo died in 1937, his son Ogwang pa Lingo (Ogwang alias Lingo) took over.

In his account Drieberg seems to have confused myel kot, the public ceremony in which many people, belonging to all sets, took part; and the private and secret ceremony of tedo kot, rain making which was

performed by the won kot, and which consisted in manipulating of certain rain objects. (See Hayley The Anatomy of Lango Religion p. 71). Indeed the role of the age sets in the rain dance was very minor, as Drisberg himself commented:

*animals* "Each individual ewor is named after one of these ~~arrivals~~ animals, and the rain festivals for the next four years are said to belong to that group (though actually the initiates in the group have few special privileges and no duties) (my italics) (Ibid p. 246).

Drisberg also described the ewor as "the festival of honouring the aged and the men of old". He does not elaborate on this point, but Hayley wrote that by means of this ceremony "the ancestors were supplicated for rain and victory" (Ibid p. 50). But neither does he show clearly how the aged and men of old were honoured and the ancestors supplicated for rain and victory. There was no sacrifice of meat, blood or beer for the ancestors; the agat, the litany repeated at the myel kot does not call upon ancestral spirits or the aged for rain or victory. The words seem to be directed to the elements themselves, and this contrasts vividly with the Acholi litanies at ancestral shrines which are clearly addressed to spirits of the ancestors.

(See p. 236 below). The pupil-teacher relationship that Dri~~er~~berg described as existing between the <sup>i</sup>initates and the old men, whom they call 'father', cannot properly be described as honouring the aged and men of old. In any case it is meaningless to regard this as supplicating for rain and victory, since at the rain dance both teacher and pupil together prayed for rain.

It seems that Dri~~er~~berg's idea of ewor being a festival for honouring the aged and men of old arose from misinterpretation of the term ewor or aworon: which he wrongly thought was derived from the Nilotic word woro, to honour, to reverence. (Ibid p. 243 footnote). The word is in fact a Nilo-Hamitic technical term for the age set initiation. The Iteso for instance, use egiworone. (Lawrence, The Iteso p. 76). Since the age set system is a Nilo-Hamitic institution, it is more likely that the Nilo-Hamitic term ewor for the initiation is the term the Lango would use, rather than the Nilotic word woro, which is of doubtful meaning in the circumstances.

Hayley drew attention to one aspect of Dri~~er~~berg's account of the ceremony which we may briefly refer to -

Not a single one of Hayley's witnesses substantiated Drisberg's statement that Lango age sets were cyclical. "My informants were very emphatic that it was only older men who were given animal names, not the boys; and that the names were not permanent" (Hayley, Ibid p. 72). A person was first called jobi (buffalo), then he became lyec (elephant), and when very old he became kwac (leopard) and stayed away from ceremonies.

But Hayley completely disregarded these statements. "These accounts, which were typical of others from all parts of the country are sufficient to show how memory of the ewor and the Age Grades has become confused."<sup>(my italics)</sup> ("I think the explanation for this lies in a lapse of memory as to the principles involved").

"Had it not been for Drisberg's account I should have given a very different picture of the ewor and the Age Grade system. This shows how easy it is for an investigator to make serious mistakes in reconstructing a culture when relying on the memory of old men." (Hayley, Ibid pp. 72-3).

Thus, Hayley urged us to believe that the Lango age set system was cyclical and akin to the Kipsigis and Iteso systems, and not lineal as is found among the <sup>of</sup> ~~T~~wkana: because Drisberg wrote so; and that we should like him, reject the contrary but emphatic and typical

evidence of his (Hayley's) informants. Butt and Goldthorpe apparently accepted this argument. I would consider this question, like many others connected with the Lango age set system, as still open.

Drisberg's valuable contribution to the Study of Lango age set system was his full description of the ewor initiation ceremony, although he himself did not regard it as such, but treated it as a religious, rain making ceremony. All the texts considered below are taken from his book. Next, we examine Hayley's Anatomy of Lango Religion.

In this work Hayley was, as the title clearly suggests, concerned only with Lango religion, and he analysed the different groups which took part in the various religious ceremonies. His enquiries, like that of Drisberg does not, and indeed could not be expected to give direct answers to questions relating to political and military problems. We can, however, identify the Etogo group as the 'age set in power' in Lango villages. But because Hayley set out to describe religious groups, he concentrated only on the religious activities of the Etogo group.

"The Etogo" he wrote "was a grouping of certain clans, all of whom were conscious of their clans as belonging to the Etogo, and who met together primarily to eat a ritually killed animal". (Hayley, Ibid. p. 48). And again, "As a working institution the etogo was based largely on a locality, and united the people of a locality". (Hayley Ibid. p. 50). These two statements seem to show that the etogo operated within the village; and the next ones reveal Hayley's awareness of the close connexion between the etogo group and the age sets.

Like Driberg, Hayley held that the Lango were a Nilotic people who had been subjected to Nilo-Hamitic influence:

"The Etogo may be considered as an indigenous Lango institution, though it became associated with the Age Grade system, which was an importation from the Hamites" (Hayley, Ibid. p. 50).

"I believe that the Age Grade system was not very deeply engrained in Lango culture. The etogo group with its Apuny ceremony, was a genuine element of Lango culture, to which the Age Grade system became attached. (Hayley, Ibid. p. 72).

"At the tribal ceremony of Apuny and rain making the various etogo groups of the locality performed together. The Age Grades also linked up the Etogo groups (Ibid. p. 51).

The division of the Etogo groups into three 'dining' clubs Jo Ekori - who ate ribs and shoulder (Kor, chest); Jo Aboi - who ate the viscera (obo, lungs) and the Jo Oguru - who ate the back, loins and legs (oguru, back), corresponds to a similar division of Nandi age sets. Huntingford wrote "each set is divided into four permanent associating groups called mat, 'fire' which remains contact in each set at all times, they are: Two senior groups 1. Conginiek "the ostrich feathers" 2. Kipalkongek "we dig out the eyes". Two junior Groups: 3. Tetekatik "those who are greeted by the word fete" 4. Kiptoinik "the bull calves". For some time past numbers (3) and (4) have been amalgamated, so that there are now in effect three groups ... ". (G.B. Huntingford, The Southern Nilo-Hamites (1953) p. 31).

The three inter-clan ceremonies of ewor, apuny and rain dance become more intelligible when the etogo group is seen as an aspect of the age set system. The traditional of Lango territory into four regions: Jo Burutok, Jo Kidi, Jo Moita and Jo Aber, each (except the Jo Aber) with its centre for the ewor initiation ceremony and the rain dances corresponds

to similar traditional territorial divisions of other Nilo-Hamitic peoples for the same functions. W. Gulliver wrote of the Turkana:

"There were in the past certain well defined centres for initiation which corresponds to territorial sections ... with the expansion of the tribe, centres have become consolated with the most populous areas." (The Central Nilo-Hamitic (1953) p. 78).

The apuny, the final burial ceremony is better understood when treated as a part of the burial and mourning ceremony which begins with the Acuban me tweyo tol, when after the burial, the widow and the mother of the deceased tie strings around their waists and heads as symbols of mourning (see p. 204 below for a description of the Acholi equivalent). The apuny me gonyo tol, is performed some months afterwards, at the end of mourning, when the strings are untied (gonyo tol, to untie the strings). There is much meat and beer. The heir to the deceased is appointed, and his property and wives apportioned in accordance with custom, and if the dead man was a jago, his successor is appointed at this ceremony. Now since a village consisted of several clans, and as the issue of inheritance and succession might affect the whole village, especially

if the dead man was an important figure, it is perfectly understandable that members of other clans of the village should take part in the apuny.

Likewise, the clans came together to pray for rain during the rain dance, drought being a common external threat. Other causes for inter-clan unity was of course warfare. Defence and offence demanded unity. In all those activities the Etogo group, the age set in power, formed the basic of unity. At the ewor initiation ceremony, youths from all parts of the territorial division came together for a number of days, and they underwent instructions in various subjects, and they learnt their age set songs. These songs served a similar unifying role as the otole and bwala dance songs of the Acholi chiefdoms.

Hayley however, tended to overstate the significance of religious sentiment as a source of unity of the etogo group.

"A sentiment of awe was the binding link of the etigo. It was a religious group, and the magical control of the old etogo men over the tipos (spirits) of the dead was necessary for the members in order to allay their anxiety over malevolent spirits ... when a tipo seized the body of a man, it was impossible for him or his clansmen to do anything about it. The etogo

group alone could deal with the situation. By eating the animal in which the offending tipo was immanent as a result of preliminary ceremonial, the etogo drew the tipo out of the sick man. The tipo could not hurt the etogo, since they were not his clansmen." (Hayley, Ibid. p. 50).

In fact there were other means of dealing with such malevolent spirits. Hayley himself saw two performances by an ajwaka, diviner priest, by the name Omara, of 'catching the spirit' and wrote "if a man is ill as a result of what he believes to be a tipo visitation, instead of summoning the whole etogo, he may engage the services of an ajwaka to 'entrap' the spirit in a pot, (Ibid. p. 156: for a full description see below ch. 9. ).

Again Hayley thought that the word etogo might "be derived from togo, to ripen as being the agency through which the tipo matured into the status of an ancestor." (Ibid p. 51). On pp. 197-199 he gives a curious but most amusing explanation. The subject under discussion is Otogo, Lango and Acholi bachelor's hut. After describing the structure and uses, the author continues:

"It was the very grotesqueness of the structure that first drew my attention to the fact that it was extraordinarily like an enlarged womb which

I had once seen preserved in spirits in a hospital. The significance of the Otogo may rest on its representation of a woman giving birth. The Lango is not conscious of the similarity of the Otogo and the female organs of reproduction. If I am right, its significance would be symbolical and would form part of a latent content which acts by this process of symbolization as a psychological backing to the manifest content of the otogo ... "

Hayley asserted that the otogo was associated with two ideas, fertility and re-birth: two elements which were interdependent and inseparable. He does not directly tell us who associated the otogo with fertility and re-birth, the Lango certainly did not do this, as Hayley wrote:

"It must be understood that no Lango has explicitly stated that the otogo had these two significances. I take care to point out that these ideas lie latent in the whole otogo complex." (Ibid. p. 199)

But he considered that life in the otogo represented re-birth from the status of a child to that of a man; that every time a youth came out of his otogo, head first, he enacted perfect birth.

"Another fact that lends weight to my suggestion that the otogo is a model of a pregnant woman" he wrote:

"... is that the entrance wall above the narrow round hole of the entrance is decorated in a manner reminiscent of pubic hairs, the conical thatched roof of the otogo adds to this illusion." (Ibid. p. 199).

No attempt is made to relate the connexion between this 'explanation' of Otogo in terms of the latent content of Lango culture, and how the word etogo could have been derived from tego, to ripen. Instead Hayley confesses that such linguistic evidence is dangerous.

"I had compiled a paragraph of evidence based on linguistic usage showing how, like the word etogo ... otogo might be derived from the word tego (to ripen) as being the house in which the body 'ripened' or 'matured' into the status of manhood. But such linguistic evidence is dangerous and so I exclude it."

And so we are left with a suggestion that etogo might be derived from tego, to ripen, without any proof. Of course this can neither be proved or disproved; but the ordinary meanings of these words are simple and unconnected. The word otogo is a common word in Acholi and Lango for a bachelor's hut, and is in no way directly connected with etogo age sets.

What emerges from the literature available on the Lango age sets system is that its political and military aspects are not known. Driberg and Hayley described it only as a religious phenomenon and stressed only its religious functions. Moreover, both men held strongly the belief that the Lango were a Nilotic people, and

since the age sets system was a Nilo-Hamitic institution, its presence in Lango society was a result of recent importation. Our authors were primarily interested only in things Lango. Hayley, especially showed little patience with elements in Lango culture that he considered 'foreign'. Thus, writing about the ceremony of installing a new clan chief, he said:

"The accounts I give below are derived from the work of several educated Lango, who were asked by the District Commissioner to investigate the matter. In their account there was much detail obviously borrowed from the Acholi - leopard skins, stools etc. I have cut all this out."  
(my italics) (Ibid. p. 103).

The important question "who are the Lango?" is beyond the scope of this thesis. It is still an open question, and much work needs to be done before it is fully answered. It is regrettable that Drisberg and Hayley in describing the age sets system, were influenced by their firm belief, a belief based on mere speculation, that the Lango were a purely Nilotic people. Their valuable contributions would have been even more valuable, if they simply described the Lango institutions as they were, pointing, but not cutting out what they quite arbitrarily chose to call "foreign influences."

Describing Iteso age sets songs, <sup>J.C.D.</sup> Lawrence wrote:

"The songs sung at the egiworone dances concerned the age set totems and their associated objects. Most of the songs were about animals, and the singers imitated the movements of those animals in the songs. (The Iteso p. 80). (See Introduction)

This is also generally true of the Lango age set songs recorded by Driberg. The Lango age sets totems and their associated objects were as follows:

1. Lyec (elephant), with which were associated ekore, (giraffe) kul, wart-hog, and etuku (zebra), reedbuck and cob.
2. Kwac (leopard), with which were associated kworo (serval) and ogwang (merekat).
3. Amorung (rhinoceros) with which was associated alop (hartebeeste).
4. Jobi (buffalo) with which were associated engato (lion) and apoli (waterbuck).

The following points may also be noted. Some of the songs refer to historical incidents and famous war leaders of old; and there is also a recurrent theme about a call to the East and following Nyara Hill, a small outcrop in South West Teso, in Kumam territory. Their significance is not clear from the songs. Were these war-leaders members of the particular age sets in whose songs they appear? Were these wars those fought by the age set in question? Does the call of the East indicate the general direction from which at

least some of the dominant Lango clans came from? Has reference to Nyara Hill any connexion with the fact that the area around the Hill was once in Lango territory until they were driven back by Kakung<sup>u</sup>? (See Introduction p. 35 above).

Drizberg recorded the Lango age sets songs in two parts: the first he called "bird songs", which were sung by the initiates at dawn. The "Rhinoceros" and "Leopards" shared one group of 'bird songs' which are about awalu, crested cranes, acut, vultures and aluru, quail. The 'elephants' and 'buffalos' had another group of songs in common: these were about pigeons. But in fact these so called bird songs were not very different from the other age set songs. One of them which belongs to the 'Elephants' and 'Buffalos' sings of 'the spreading horns' of the buffalo, and of the dusky eland. We may regard them as songs about associated objects, which in this case are mainly birds. It is however convenient to group them differently, firstly because they are sung at daybreak by the initiate youths only, secondly, because they are much simpler and shorter than the others; and thirdly because the two groups are shared by different age sets as

explained above.

The fact that 'elephants' and 'buffalos' on the one hand, and on the other 'rhinoceros' and 'leopards' share these 'bird songs' is consistent with two other facts. Drieberg reported that jobi (buffalos) call lyec (elephants) their fathers, and the kwac (leopards) call amorung (rhinoceros) theirs; and that there are similarities in practice between the lyec and jobi on the one hand, and kwac and amorung on the other. (The Lango p. 244).

1. 'Bird Songs' of Rhinoceros and Leopards.

The first song is about the songs of Awalu, crested crane: that it sings all night long.

Awalu kit em i bai a! a!  
Crested crane starts at day break a! a!

Awalu oruk i bai a! a!  
Crested crane sings at day break

Awalu oruku biya  
Crested crane sings all night long

Oruk i bai  
It sings at day break.

The crested crane in fact does not sing all night long, it only feeds by day time. The singers identifying themselves as the crested crane, tell of their all night

singing, and also at daybreak. The next song is about Okukun (or Acut) vulture.

En ene okukun obuleny  
Here he is, vulture he alights.

Oruk i bai  
He croaks at day break

Em ene okukun obuleny  
Here he is, vulture he alights.

A powerful carnivorous bird, it croaks and lands where there is some carcass; and often leads people to it. Hence the proverb "Vultures do not land without a reason." In this song the singers again identify themselves with the vultures, and as it were proclaim: "Here we are the vultures."

A, a, aluru oya  
A, a, quail arises

Pape ociro kome  
His father branded his body

A, a, aluru oya  
A, a, quail arises

Pape okedo koro  
His father tattooed his breast.

Both Lango men and women had cicatrization marks on their bodies for decoration. In this song, the initiates calling themselves aluru, quails, show off the designs on their bodies, apparently made by their fathers.

2. 'Elephants' and 'Buffalos' 'Bird' songs, are, as mentioned earlier, not songs about birds at all. They refer to the buffalo's spreading horns, and to the elephant, the hornless one. Awele, pigeon is called 'father' of the buffalo, but the meaning is not clear.

Yei atula i! a! a!  
Carry large heads i! a! a! (elephant and buffalo heads are large).

Awele papo aluka ngoli  
Pigeon is father of the white-brow-and spreading horns (buffalos)

Iya! aluka ngoli. Alem a a  
Iya! dun brow and spreading horns. The hornless one a! a! (elephant)

A Komol aluka kore  
O dappled (buffalo) dun brown and spreading horns.

A! a! egwapeto kangiro  
A! a! dusky eland.

As the initiate youths of the Buffalo and Elephant sets sing this song, they spread out their hands to imitate the spreading horns of the buffalo, and put them down as they sing "the hornless one."

We now consider the Age sets songs proper; beginning with five Buffalo songs. The first tells of the buffalo, with the otyer, cattle egret, sitting on its

ear. The buffalo goes towards Amongolem, a small river south-west of Nyera Hill. It also mentions Oluk Alocit son of Apeta, who according to the song is a great hunter "a match for the buffalo". Oluk also goes towards Amongolem.

Jobi awot ayeyo wiye  
 Otyer tye i ite  
 Otyer tye i ite  
 Okemo Amongolem  
 Jobi awot ayeyo wiye.

Oluk amyere a jobi  
 Bala dok Anongolem  
 Jobi awot ayeyo wiye  
 Otyer tye i ite  
 Otyer tye i ite  
 Alocit Apeta, jobi awot ayeyo wiye  
 Akemmo Amongolem.

Buffalo goes carrying its head high  
 Cattle egret is sitting on its ear  
 Cattle egret is sitting on its ear  
 It goes towards Amongolem  
 Buffalo goes carrying its head high.

Oluk a match for the buffalos  
 He is going towards Amongolem  
 Buffalo goes carrying its head high  
 Cattle egret is sitting on its ear  
 Cattle egret is sitting on its ear  
 Alocit Apeta (Oluk), buffalo goes carrying its  
 head high  
 It goes towards Amongolem.

I was not able to discover who Oluk Alocit was. He might have been a general from the Buffalo Age set. The significance of the cattle egret becomes clearer in another jobi, song. Reference to Amongolem, that

is towards the general direction of Nyara Hill is discussed below.

The next song is about the trumpet of the Buffalo, which could mean either the rare cry of a buffalo bull, for instance when it charges, or the trumpets of the Buffalo Age set. It sounds, according to this song, in the valley of River Ayago, a tributary of River Moroto (or Acaa as it is known in Acholi). The same song mentions Ngora, the great Lango General who led the Lango against the Madi. (See p. 130 above). Ngora's mother was called Ajwang. Nweng was his maternal uncle. They are mentioned together probably to suggest that they fought together side by side. It may also be that they were members of the Buffalo age sets.

Ha, ye! ye! ye! bilo Jobi  
 Bilo kok i kulo, bilo Jobi  
 Ha, ye ye ye!  
 Bilo kok Ayago  
 Bilo jobi, ha, ye! ye! ye!

Ngora 'Ajwang  
 Nweng 'Adeker  
 Ekesan ka adwarau ebelebele ka tur.

Ha, he, he, he, trumpet of the Buffalo  
 Trumpet sounds in the river valley, Trumpet of  
 the Buffalo

Ha, ye, he, he!  
 Trumpet sounds in Ayago River  
 Trumpet of the Buffalo  
 Ha, ye, ye, ye!

Ngora son of Ajwang  
 Nyeny son of Adeker  
 Young man and elder of the people  
 Right on the far side (of the river valley).

The picture of the young man on one side of the river valley and an elder of the people on far side is a recurrent theme. It emphasises the gulf or difference between the old and young, and poses the problems of crossing over. It is further discussed below.

The next three songs can best be treated together. They contain historical elements built around Ngora's exploits against the Madi. The first one sings of the host of Ngora skirting the river (Nile?)

Mony'a Ngora ma dupo kulu-no  
 The host of Ngora skirts the river

Ai mai  
 O! mother, woe is me!

Mony'a Ngora ma dup kulu-no  
 The host of Ngora skirts the river

Ai mai!  
 O! mother, woe is me.

The next tells of the large number of white cows given as ransom for a Lango prisoner of war called Acuralem, who was captured by the Madi; in the battle of the Alabātu plains - near Nimule.

Kiyakiya a, a iya!

Dyangi yam tye kwene mu moyo piny?

It was Tye Alabatu. aggressive and most dangerous beast.

Kuja kuja a, aiya!  
Dyangi yam tye kwene mumoyo pii  
Dyangi yam tye kwene muneko piny?

The Tye Alabatu led a herd of buffaloes

in the Kok Acularem which whippers challenges in

the car Ribi ribi ka tur. and saying his is persistent.

When the Glistening whiteness a, aiya!

Where was your herd that covered the land (many  
cattle)?

It was at Alabatu. buffalo song, describing

Glistening whiteness a, aiya  
Where was your herd that covered the river? (Nile?)  
Where was your herd that destroyed the land?  
It was at Alabatu

Cry for Acuralem (the prisoner).  
Cry swiftly to the other side.

The next short song tells us more about the cattle  
egret sitting on the buffalo's ear.

Gin'a jobi oneno pe weko  
What buffalo sees (desires) it leaves not.

Dyong tye loka  
Cattle are on the other side of the river

Otyer tye ka ruppe  
Cattle egret is provoking him (to go ahead)

Otyer tye ka cuppe  
Cattle egret is challenging him (to go on).

When the buffalo is challenged, as when wounded,

it becomes the most aggressive and most dangerous beast. The 'Buffalos' use this fact to illustrate their determination to get what they want, whatever the cost. The cattle egret which sits on the head of buffaloes is taken to be the bird which whispers challenges in the ears of the buffalo, thus making him so persistent. When the 'Buffalos' see the cattle egret they are spurred on.

In the last and longest Buffalo song, describes a scene of battle, 'Buffalos' travel in herds, Ngora is at the head, leading towards the East, towards Nyara Hill.

Ngora awot yengo wiye  
 Kom ocal nadi? Ocal nadi?  
 A, a, amagoro mo  
 A ocal nadi? Ocal nadi?

Ngora awot ayeyo wiye  
 Kono ocal nadi?  
 E, e, jobi awot abwong ka abwong.

A, a, jobi awot awi ki awi  
 Awot aryong aryong  
 Jobi owoto kiwiye aturki atur  
 Apeta Alocit  
 Kara jobi ewoto awi ki awi  
 Odaco coto i wiye.

Ekesan a, a, ekesan  
 Owoto Amongotem

Kara otyer tye i ite  
 Ka rik otur ki atur

Odaco coto i wiye  
 Akosiwan, otyer tye i ite  
 Ekesan e, e,

Ewapo kidi, koko kemo kidi  
 Jobi owapo kidi, woto awi ki awi  
 Abelebele ka tur ekesan ki adwaran.

Ngora goes shaking his head  
 Now, what was he like, what was he like?  
 A, a, the wilderness where the enemy was,  
 Now, what was it like; what was it like?

Ngora goes carrying his head high  
 Now, what was he like? what was he like?  
 E, e, buffaloes, they travel in groups.

A, a, Buffalos they travel in herds  
 They travel in great companies  
 Buffalo goes with its head swaying this way and  
 that

Apela Alocit  
 Behold Buffalos travel in different Kral's  
 It has spatting mud on its forehead.

Young man a, a, young man.  
 It goes to Amongolem.

Behold the cattle egret sitting on its ear  
 And it sways its head this way and that  
 It has spatting mud on its forehead,  
 Young man, cattle egret is sitting on its ear.  
 Young man e, e.

It is looking for the East  
 The cry goes towards Nyara Hill  
 Buffalos they go to the Hill,  
 They go in herds

On one side the young man, and the elder of the  
 people on the far side.

It appears that the Jo Jwala were victorious. It  
 is not clear whether the fighting took place during the

Songs of the Lyec, Elephant Age Set.

The songs of the Lyec, elephants that Driberg recorded do not mention the elephant, only the associated objects; reedbuck and cob. The first is historical song about an alliance between a Lango chief Oluju, and an Acholi (called Alira) clan against the Jo Awalo clan at Abako. This happened in 1911 (Driberg, Ibid. p. 255).

Alira moro yam o Oluju  
 Piny oru, o, o.  
 Dong kuk jo Awalo  
 "Gin ene"  
 E, e, Alira moro yam Oluju  
 Piny oru a, a,  
 Wum, Jo Awalo,  
 "Gin ene"!

Oryang oruk atil  
 Oporo kar ekasan.

Some Alira conspired with Oluju  
 Dawn breaks o! o!  
 Then make alarm to the people of Awalo.  
 "Here they come!"  
 E, e, Some Alira conspired with Oluju  
 Dawn breaks a, a!  
 Congratulate yourselves, Men of Awalo (for your  
 victory)  
 "Here they are."

Reedbuck calls to the cob.  
 He (the cob) is like a young man!

It appears that the Jo Awalo were victorious. It is not clear whether the fighting took place during the

'elephant's year'. This would appear just likely. Driëberg stated that the last initiation festival took place in 1915, and that that was a Jobi (Buffalo) year. If we take 1915 to be the beginning of the Jobi year, then 1911 would have been the end of the Lyeç (elephant) year, and the beginning of the Kwac (Leopard) period. (Ibid. p. 244; Hayley Ibid. p.67). In this song, the recurrent theme of the elder of the people on one side of the river valley and the young man on the other is expressed in terms of the call of the reedback to the cob. This picture is elaborated in the next song, in which the reedback, the elder of the people stands on an anthill and calls to the cob, the young man, to follow the East, to go towards Nyara Hill.

Cokke unu  
 Onyang ocung wi bye  
 Ocung ni pim  
 E, e, onyang ocung wi bye  
 Ocung in kang.

Onyang oruk atil  
 Kare poron ekesan  
 Poro Ebelebele tur ekesan  
 Onyang oruk atil  
 Poron ki adwaran

Wapo Kidi ebyong  
 Kara iwapo Kidi  
 Ka iwek wappo Kidi ka tur a, a.  
 Wapo Didi, wapo Nyara

Koko okemo Kidi  
E, e, wapo Nyara,

Gather ye together  
Reedbuck stands on the anthill  
He stands motionless  
E, e, reedbuck stands on the anthill  
He stands firm.

Reedbuck calls to the cob  
Like a young man  
Just like a young man on the far side of the  
valley.  
Reedbuck calls to the cob  
Like an elder of the people.

Follow the Hill of the acacia  
For you, follow the East  
If you cease following the East to the other side  
a! a!  
Follow the Hill, follow Nyara.

The cry aims at Nyara  
E, e, e, it looks for the Hill.

#### Songs of the Leopard Age Set

The first of the 'Leopards' songs says it sleeps  
in the dry banana leaves of Olum. Which Olum is this?  
the legendary figure? It also mentions an Abongo (Labongo)

Acanya me Olum  
Erisa obutu i acanya  
En Erisa obutu i acanya me Olum  
Awot aren.

A, a, ka Olu, kare edoket  
Abongo, ibutu i Acanya  
Acanya en.

The dry banana leaves of Olum  
 Leopard sleeps in dry banana leaves  
 He, the leopard sleeps on the dry banana leaves  
 of Olum

Let me go and see

A, a, at Olum's homestead, at the ford.  
 Abongo, you sleep in dry banana leaves  
 Dry banana leaves are here.

This song corresponds to the Bwobo bwala song p. 68 above. The next one laments an elwa tree which was charred by lightening: it is spotted or like part of the leopard skin. The black and white of the charred tree represents the totemic animal to members of the Leopard set.

Elwa me apel tye Angung  
 Elwa me apel tye Angung  
 Akok elwa me apel  
 Epwonya dyang a Onango

The lightning charred elwa tree is at Angung  
 The lightning charred elwa tree is at Angung  
 I lament the lightning-charred elwa  
 Epwonya, the cow of Onango is at Angung.

The reference to Epwonya, and the cow of Onango is not clear. The elwa tree is the chlorophora exelsa, Bth.

The last Leopard song is about the Serval and the Merekat which are associated objects, both catch chickens.

Kworo mam  
 Ogwang owoto dyewor a,  
 Iaa, ogwang a,  
 Ogwang owoto dyewor a,

Kworo omako gweno  
 Ogwang pa Epwonya okwao gweno  
 Ogwang owoto dyewor  
 Kara kworo, kara kworo emunyuru  
 Kara ogwang omako gweno, kadi gwogi gu  
 Ogwang omunyuru kara ogwang kworo

E, e kara dyang pa onange ponya  
 Kara ogwang owoto dyewor  
 Kara ogwang kworo  
 Oleko dyang pa onango e, e.

The serval is not here  
 The merekat travels by night  
 I, a, a, merekat a,  
 The merekat travels by night.

The serval catches chickens  
 The merekat of Epwonya begs for chicken.  
 Merekat travels by night  
 It is merekat, it is merekat that swallows  
 It is merekat that catches chickens, and even dogs  
 It is merekat that swallows, it is merekat.  
 E, e, the cattle of Onangeponya,  
 It is the merekat that travels by night  
 It is the serval  
 That has driven away the cattle of Onange e,e.

The Lango like the Acholi sometimes use the terms  
 Ogwang (merekat) and kworo (serval) to refer to leopard.  
 During a hunt, in order not to frighten people, especially  
 young men, the person who first sees a leopard whispers  
 "Ogwang," or "Ogwang kworo". In this song play is  
 made of this. So that you can substitute "leopard"  
 for serval and merekat, and the true meaning of the  
 song emerges. After all serval and merekat because of  
 their sizes cannot catch dogs and cows; only leopards

can. But the other meaning is to the effect that "we the Leopards drove away the cattle of Onange".

There is no cry here that follows the East towards Nyara Hill which we again find in the 'Rhinos' songs. The Rhino, his horn at the ready, throws up the dust as he rushes towards Nyara Hill. Ngor is the "nick" name for Rhinoceros, normally called Amorung.

Ngor oling olinga  
Ngor ocung ngony yago  
Olong ni tii, ngor a, a,  
Ngor oling alinga  
Ngor obedo ngony yat  
Oling in tii, ngor, a, a.

Ngor ka rik duny apua kemo Kidi,  
Awapo Nyara  
Ka riki tur ka ekesan ebyong  
Ngor oduny apua ka ngo?

Ngor oling ingony yat  
Ebyong ka etiron a, a,  
Ngor ka rik duny apua alirok  
Ngor kaliro ka duny apua  
Koko ngor awapo Kidi ka ebyong  
Odunyo apua.

Rhino is silent silent  
Rhino stands at the foot of the Kigelia  
He is utterly silent, Rhino a, a,  
Rhino sits at the foot of the Kigelia  
He is utterly silent, Rhino a, a.

Rhino when he throws up dust towards the Hill  
He seeks Nyara Hill  
Where on the other side the young man is  
Rhino he throws up the dust, why?



We may, in conclusion, comment briefly on three aspects of Lango age sets songs, comparing and contrasting them with similar aspects of the otole and bwala songs and the mwoc of Acholi chiefdoms and clans. First, the use and significance of the animals and other objects as totems. In the Acholi mwoc as we have seen, the qualities of the animal totem: its size, ferocity, might etc. are taken to represent those of the chiefdom or clan. Thus the <sup>su</sup>numerically powerful chiefdom of Payira compare themselves with the numerous brown ants: Moro; and the Bwobo liken themselves to lions; Ngu. The Patiko say their fighters are hot like red-pepper, Kamlara. The totem objects of the Lango age sets are, in some way, also taken as symbolic of the might, strength determination of the age set. Thus the 'Buffalos' sing "what the buffalo desires it leaves not." But in the main, the animals of the age sets represented other 'religious' qualities. Dri~~e~~berg noted that Buffalo are said to ripen crops. (Ibid. p. 244). He does not say what the other age set totems represented as Lawrence did of the Iteso. Among whom, for instance, Floods had control over water and heavenly bodies;

Buffalos, over seasons and the division of the earth;  
Elephants, over fire, iron and wood; Rocks controlled  
supplies of food and beer; Warthogs, fertility and  
reproduction; Hawks, wealth particularly in cattle;  
Bushbuck, the soil; and Leopard had something to do  
with plunder and theft.

In the Lango age sets songs we also find mentioned  
historical and legendary figures such as Oluk and the  
famous General Ngora, in the 'Buffalos' songs, and Olum  
in the 'Leopards' song; Oluju in the Elephants song etc.  
In the otole and bwala songs and the mwoc, as we have  
seen, the historical figures were either chiefs or  
persons closely connected with or involved in the  
chiefship. By a chronological arrangement of these  
songs we were able to reconstruct a more or less full  
story of a chiefdom or clan. The figures that appear  
in the age set songs are, on the other hand, individuals  
who by military prowess or other skills and merit rose  
to positions of power and a few are remembered in some  
of the age sets songs. They are so few, and, in the  
songs as a whole, form such a small part that the age  
sets songs cannot be regarded as historical, in the

sense in which the otele and bwala songs and the mwoc.

It would appear that these individuals of great merit and achievement are represented in the songs as the 'elders of the people' who stand on the far side of the river valley and call to the young man. In the Buffalo song (p. 164) Ngora is seen at the head of a large army leading towards the East; towards the River Amongolem which flows close to the Historic Nyara Hill. The initiation ceremony of ewor, marks the passage from childhood to manhood; the gulf which in these songs represented by river valley. Once this is crossed, any Lango male with ~~tal~~ent could reach any social heights. (Goldthorpe: Elements of East African Society (1958) p. 88).

Lastly, a few place names are mentioned in the age sets songs: Alabatu plains near Nimule, where the Lango led by Ngora met Madi archers, ~~when~~ <sup>where</sup> a large number of white cows had to be paid as ransom for a Lango prisoner of war; Awalo in Abako, where men of Awalo defeated Oluju and his Acholi allies etc. But the most often repeated reference is to Nyara Hill. Nothing much is known about this region now in South-West Teso, in Kumam territory, except that it was once

occupied by the Lango. They were driven out after much fighting Ganda General Kakunguru and Kazama his Nyoro successor who was killed in battle by the Lango. (Dri~~is~~berg: Ibid. p. 35). I have not been able to ascertain the significance of Nyara Hill to the Age Sets; or whether or not the recent historical event had any connexion with it; nor have<sup>I</sup> been able to interpret the meaning of the call to the East; the call to Nyara Hill. Does it refer to a direction from which some of the Lango clans came into present day Lango?

It should be noted however that the mention of Nyara Hill in the Age Sets songs does not seem to be of the same kind of function as the place names in the otole and bwala songs and the mwoc of Acholi, where they act as mere ~~mnemonics~~<sup>mnemonics</sup>, points of reference in the traditional history of the chiefdom or clan. The role of the age set songs were to promote unity of the age set group; to generate within its members a sense of loyalty and to ~~imbue~~<sup>imbue</sup> them with pride in their age set. The historical songs of Acholi like their myths brought together members of the chiefdom. The emphasis in Lango society was on the age set whose history was not relevent or useful to its functions. This emphasis

on the lineage, the clan, the chiefdom by the Acholi,  
and the little interest shown to these institutions  
by the Lango is further illustrated in Part II, where  
we consider the Religious Songs.

Part II

Religious Songs and Clans

[Faint, illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page]

on the lineage, the class, the children by the school,  
and the little interest shown to these institutions  
by the State is further illustrated in Part II, where  
we consider the Religious Songs.

PART II.

Religious Songs and Chants.

## Chapter VI

Introduction to Acholi and LangoReligious Ideas.

## I

No systematic study has yet been made of the religious ideas and practice of the Acholi. The available material comprising of brief statements by travellers, administrators, and missionaries, is conflicting and inadequate. Baker thought that the Acholi believed in nothing.

"The curious fact remained, that without the slightest principle of worship, or even a natural religious instinct, these people should be free from many vices that disgrace a civilized community". (1)

Captain Grove wrote that Acholi religion consisted chiefly of ancestor worship, but that the world and the people in it were originally created by one God called Lubanga who was still supreme. This supreme God also created a parallel world of spirits, Jok, who were active forces for good or ill in men's lives.

"Unemployed joks spend their time in interfering in

in various ways with men's affairs". (2)

The Seligmans, who obtained most of their information from Fr. Crazzolara, stated that "the jok of the Acholi corresponds with the juok of the Shilluk; he is associated with the firmament and sends rain". They added, however, that Fr. Crazzolara was in doubt as to whether the cult of jok, or that of tipo - spirits of the dead, was the more important. (3) In a small paragraph of thirteen lines, Thomas and Scott dealt summarily with the religious ideas of Acholi, Lango, Jopadhola, Lugbara, Alur and Madi. The first four, we are confidently told "have essentially monotheistic religions. Jok, the supreme being of the Acholi and Lango being regarded with a reverence which appears almost Semitic". The authors admitted that jok was recognized in different manifestations, but explained "this does not detract from his one-ness". (4) Professor Boccassino, who had been consulted by Thomas and Scott, Father Crazzolara and Fr. Negri (5) (as he then was) all maintained that jok was the supreme being of the Acholi. Boccassino substituted the term Lubanga for Jok. (6)

Wright rejected the idea of a high God among the

Acholi, maintaining that this was of recent introduction. Partly, this was an attack on Boccassino's use of the term Lubanga instead of Jok, and the regard for Lubanga by the Catholic missionaries as the supreme God.

Wright proved that the cult of Lubanga was imported from Bunyoro across the Nile. (7) He then tried to explain Acholi religious beliefs in terms of the Mana principle; and stated that the world to the Acholi was one vast plain enclosed by the vault of the sky, and this is charged throughout with magical force. This force is released by charge from its static condition and then becomes fluid and powerful, as is seen in lightening, whirlwind, curious mountains and rocks. He admitted however, that some degree of hero-worship could not be discounted, although the reconciliation of such ideas was not easy. (8)

These short and general statements do not help us much. They do not tell us the nature of Jok. Are they spirits? Are they spirits of dead people, of animals or of innaminate objects such as rocks? What group of people worship which group of spirits? What is meant by monotheism and ancestral worship? What does

Wright mean by magical force being in a static condition?  
 How does force become fluid?

In a most revealing paragraph <sup>Fr.</sup> Crazzolara recorded some of the assumptions, methods and techniques used by some missionaries who were studying Acholi beliefs about 1910. As will be shown, in Acholi belief there are many categories of spirits cults known by various names but all referred to as Jok. Fr. Crazzola wrote:

"It was taken for granted that the generic term Jok could not mean something different from the particular jogi (pl. of jok) with their peculiar names. Based on such assumptions natives were urged with tiresome questions to make a choice as to which of the Jok among the many had created them. Such enquiries implied suppositions which probably never occurred to their simple minds; it puzzled them as they are still puzzled at such questions. With hesitation they answered that they did not know, which was more near the truth, but less satisfactory, or they decided that it was Lubanga or Rubanga". (9) *(my italics)*

One reason why the Acholi informants were so puzzled was the existence of a language barrier. The question put to them was "who has created things and men?".

There is no Acholi word which is the equivalent of the term creation. Various appropriate verbs are used for the activities that are creative e.g.: a blacksmith teto (makes) a hoe, a barbed arrow-head, or knife; a builder gero (builds) a house; a musician cako (begins,

composes) a new song, an artist goyo (draws or paints) a picture; parents nywalo (give birth to) a son; and a potter cweyo (moulds) a pot, jar or dish. Cweyo also means to weave, as in making baskets and mats. Pronounced with a short e cweyo means to fatten.

The rendering of the question "who has created things and man?" was "anga mucweyo jami ki dano?" Literally this could mean: who has moulded or woven or fattened things and man? a vague and meaningless and indeed puzzling question. The alleged answer "Jok mucweyo" is equally vague and meaningless, unless the word cweyo in the sentence meant to fatten. The imagery of man being moulded as it were from clay, or being woven into a human and living animal did not exist in the language, until the missionaries told the story of creation of Adam from dust. Today the word keto, to put or place, is also sometimes used to mean creation.

Generalizations about Acholi beliefs based upon information obtained in this manner and under such circumstances, are not the most reliable. A more correct description of Acholi religion must await a scientific analysis of data obtained in a more trustworthy

manner.

## II

As regards Lango religious beliefs, two works have been produced. (10) Dri~~o~~berg confessed, however, that his account was spasmodic and contained many gaps; he complained that the Lango were extremely reticent and secretive on matters of religion and magic, and were vague and uncertain about essential points about their religion. But inspite of this he collected much valuable material and information. Similarly in Hayley's The Anatomy of Lango Religion, there is a great deal of additional material. Hayley was in Langoland from September 1936 to May 1937. Unlike Dri~~o~~berg, he did not find the Lango reticent or secretive, and wrote that as soon as he could speak their language, when the Lango saw that he was living with them, dancing, eating and drinking with them, they eagerly invited him to all their ceremonies. Another merit of Hayley's book lies in its study of the different groups that take part in the various religious ceremonies.

Both Dri~~o~~berg and Hayley held that jok of the

Lango was a power permeating the universe. Drieberg wrote:

"It is known under a variety of titles corresponding with his different manifestations and activities, though actually jok is an indivisible entity permeating the whole universe". (11) And again:

"The conclusion therefore seems justifiable that this sub-division of joks activities in no way detract from his essential one-ness, and that there is neither a clear demarcation in these activities nor an absolutely general recognition of their separate existence". (12)

According to Hayley:

"Among the Lango Jok is the main spring of all religion and magic. It may be considered as the Mana principle of the Lango ... Jok is a neutral power permeating the universe, neither well nor badly disposed towards mankind, unless made use of by man". (13)

Drieberg seems to have formed the opinion that Jok was omnipresent from a description of Jok by a Lango who likened Jok to the wind:

"The only description of Jok obtained is bala yamo muwoto, like moving air ... He is most visible in whirlwinds and circular eddies (ajoru). Jok, then, like wind, or air is omnipresent (my italics); and like wind, though the presence <sup>is</sup> heard and appreciated, Jok has never been seen by anyone ... His dwelling is everywhere: in trees, it may be, or in rocks and hills, in some springs and pools, especially in connexion with rain making, or more vaguely in the air". (14)

It is not useful to dwell on some of the contradictions contained in the above statement, what is important

is to show that the premise that jok of the Lango was an indivisible power permeating the universe, was the source of much of the difficulties into which both Dri~~e~~berg and Hayley ran. Thus when faced with the question of the non-physical part of man and its relation to jok, Dri~~e~~berg resorted to a not very useful metaphysical speculation;

"Spirits of the departed appear to become eventually merged in Jok, and this belief is probably due to a growing confusion with a collatoral theory of an all high, all powerful and all pervading deity ... At any rate the idea which the word Jok now conveys to the Lango mind seems to be thus, viz. the sum total of the long departed merged into one pre-existing deity called Jok, a plurality of spirits unified in the person of a single godhead, a spiritual force composed of innumerable spirits, any of which may be temporarily detached without diminishing the one-ness of the force". (my italics). (15)

Another dilema Dri~~e~~berg had to face arose from the fact that certain manifestations of Jok could be vanquished by magic, as for instance, when cen, the vengeance ghost was laid. If Jok the creator was omnipotent, how could this contradiction be accounted for?

"It may be" Dri~~e~~berg asserted "that this contradiction is the result of a fusion of diverse rituals at an earlier period in the tribe's history, a system of magic being imposed (possibly at the same time

as ancestrolatry) on a pre-existing monotheism; but more probably it is due to the eternal conflict between religion and science, of which magic is the primitive representative ..." (my italics). (16)

Hayley suggested that the spiritual part of man might "be likened to a spark of jok power which enters the body of the woman at coition, and is the source of life ... I would go even further and suggest that the very conception of jok power arises from, or at least finds its vindication in, the sexual orgasm. During the orgasm the individual feels himself to be under the control of an irresistable, mysterious force, which is seen to have the power of creating life. This force which created the man, accompanies him throughout life as his tipo (spirit) and at death returns to the source from which it came, to the world of the unseen, the realm of the super physical power which must be the cause of all those inexplicable, unknown or uncontrollable happenings which occur in the land of the living". (my italics).(17)

These statements were not based on observation, they were not conclusions reached after the facts had been examined. They arose from a need to justify the position that Dri~~s~~berg and Hayley had taken (that Jok of the Lango was a force permeating the universe). Indeed it was when facts pointed in another direction that our authors resorted to these statements: to explain contradictions. The contributions of Dri~~s~~berg and Hayley lay chiefly in the observation and recording of religious ceremonies; but not in their analysis of

These developed communities had produced their contradictions

the ideas behind them. The failure of their analysis is due to the fact that, having quite arbitrarily taken a premise, they attempted so to arrange the facts that they could prove the premise. Perhaps a more useful approach would be to observe the religious activities of Acholi and Lango, and from this to formulate what their religious ideas are. In this approach the study of the texts form an important part.

### III

The texts considered below are songs and chants used at the following Acholi and Lango ceremonies: funerals, spirit possession dances, <sup>in</sup>au<sup>n</sup>ation of ancestor spirit shrines, blessing of war and hunt parties and rain dances. On these occasions the Acholi and Lango, faced with actual or threatened danger, turn to ultra-human powers for help. The threat of death, ill-health, ill luck, of natural calamities such as floods, droughts, hailstorm, lightning etc., and the interference of human conflict constantly hang over human groups, everywhere in all ages. In scientifically less developed communities such phenomena often contradict

the limited body of empirical knowledge, and so cannot be satisfactorily dealt with or explained through existing scientific theories and techniques. But there usually exist a complex system of belief in non-natural or mystical causal agents which may be propitiated by prayer or sacrifice, or used by proper techniques for the benefit of man.

Such beliefs provide intelligible and acceptable explanations and prescribe actions to be taken; and although the explanations are scientifically false and the actions taken do not in fact produce the desired clinical or natural end, the performers feel they are coping with the situation, and in overt behaviour express their pent up steam of anxiety. As J. Beattie aptly put it, these actions are socially, and psychologically if not clinically satisfactory. (18)

From what a people say and do at these ceremonies, what songs they sing, what litanies and prayers they repeat, we may learn something of their ideas about the ultra human powers which they believe affect or control their lives. To whom are the songs and prayers addressed? What do people ask for in their prayers?

What groups attend which ceremonies? Do they pray to the same powers at all the ceremonies? By asking such questions we may learn something of the nature of their spirit world as they see it.

A study of such texts, in my opinion, forms a vitally important part of a study of the religious ideas of Acholi and Lango. The texts are what generations of poets, priests, elders have composed and used. These are the small elite or intellectual class, who in any society, because of their special social position and mental and emotional equipment, lead and direct, express and interpret the thoughts and beliefs of their communities. It is essential that we should turn to them and their works first, ~~the~~ before we generalise about the beliefs of their people. Radin has quite rightly pointed out that in all recent treatments history has come to be the history of the intellectual class, and at all times it has been the history of the exceptional man.

"In ethnology, on the contrary, partly owing to its genesis, partly to paucity of material the emphasis has been quite otherwise, and it is group belief as such that are described". (19)

## IV

We may provisionally divide the spiritual world of the Acholi and Lango into three major categories according to the different modes taken to deal with threatened or real dangers, the causes of which are believed to be due to spiritual or ghostly activities: (The classification equally applies to the Alur)

(a) Jok Kaka (20) - chiefdom or clan jok: these normally have their altars on hills or rivers. The chief, rwot is the "owner" of these joks, although the celebrant may belong to another clan. Each chiefdom in Acholiland, and some clans also, had a jok kaka. The Payira chiefdom, the largest in Acholi had as many as seven. Others had one or two. Driberg tells us that the Lango (some Lango clans) used to make pilgrimages to Got Agoro in north-east Acholi. These were dangerous trips, as they had to pass through hostile territories of Acholi and Madi. At the foot of the Hill there was a small Lango village in which the guardian of the jok shrine lived. The last guardian was called Wot-Odur. He died about 1913. Another of

FOUR CHIEFTAIN CLANS OF ANILOS

Clan	Yak	Yak Offerings Made at Altar	Possesses Pardon	"Owner"	Prayer for	Sacrificial feast
1. Alaro	Fungu Clan (1) Lakaja (1) Lankyal	X X Hill	X	Chief Jago		
2. Atyak	(1) Xitong-Kongo (11) Ollaw	X X Hill		Chief	Childbirth, health Rain, blessing of seeds	Black billy goat or bull Black bull
3. Beobo	Ooro	X Hill				
4. Ee	(1) Lokka (11) Hinga-ber (1)	X Hill	X First possessed Ojala, son of Oll in Bunyoro (2)			
5. Eze	(1) Hinga-ber (2)	X Hill				
6. Labongo	Above (fell from the sky)	X Hill				
7. Jabo	Ellah	X Hill			Childbirth, health, rain, hunt, war	Black billy goat, bull or pig
8. Panabol	(1) Lapete-jete (1) Lamerete	X X		Copener	Rain Health, especially when there is a plague	Goat or cow milk
9. Padike	Patial Clan (1) Langoi (fell from the sky) (1) Bedi (11) (Rain)-Lot	X X X	X When a man is possessed he becomes barren.	Chief Jago Chief	Rain, blessing of seeds Rain	Black or goat and chicken
10. Palsol	(1) Akwang (11) Sereka	X Hill X Spot on bank of K. Lela Akwaka		" Celebrant Eze Peking clan	Rain, blessing of seeds Childbirth, hunt, war, good harvest	Each clan supply billy goats Billy goat, white chicken
11. Palra	(1) Katakanga (1) Hinga-ber (11) Nyeye (12) Nyook (13) Lasekol	X Hill X Hill X Group of tall Nyeye trees X	X When a man is possessed he becomes barren; a woman becomes infertile.	" Celebrant Palle clan " Celebrant Ogoke clan " (originated by Loni)	Childbirth, rain Childbirth, health, good harvest Rain, war.	Black or brown billy goat
	(11) Angweya (11) Gosa	X X Hill		" Celebrant Oen clan		
12. Palebek	(1) Ollil (11) Nyarobanga	X Hill X Hill		" Celebrant Oen clan		
13. Palaro	Lepul	X Hill	X	Chief	Rain, childbirth, health, war, good harvest, blessing of seeds	
14. Pambongo	Apto Koro					
15. Pansolt	Nywalu					
16. Patiko	(1) Baku (11) Alela (twice or Baku)	X Hill X Hill		Chief	Childbirth, health and rain	Brown or goat Goat, milk, sugar, eggs, butter
17. Patongo	Ayul	X Hill				
18. Parenga	(1) Alukon (11) Ooro (5)	X Hill (in Bunyoro) X Hill		" Celebrant Palso Pasiri		

1, 3, 4. Presumably the area around the hill was settled by the three chieftains at different times.  
 2. See p. 17 above.  
 5. Same altar as Beobo. See p. 17 above.

the Lango shrines was called Jok Atida, a large bunyan tree, north of River Moroto. The oracles were served mainly by women. (21) Jok Riba, physically associated with a small cliff above Lake Albert (Onek-bonyo) is generally recognized as the premier shrine in Alurland. To this chiefs of Mukambo, Panyikango, Angal and Jukoth offer sacrifices; the celebrant, however, comes from a Lendu (non-Lwo) clan. (22) It must be pointed out that the chiefdom jok was more developed among the Acholi and Alur than among the Lango.

The prayers offered at these shrines were for rain, fertility in women and crops, health and success in war, that is for threats that faced the whole chiefdom. The chief was the guardian of the people's welfare and interest among the Acholi and Alur, in operating these shrines enhanced the unity of the chiefdom as well as ~~the~~ <sup>his</sup> authority and status. Among the Lango, as we have seen, the position of the chief was different from that of the Acholi chief. Anxiety about rain found expression in the rain-dance in which a number of clans took part, and was organised by the otogo group.

In this category we may also include jok tim (23), to which ~~spirit~~ <sup>Spirit</sup> the owner of a "hunt" offered sacrifices

before and after the hunt.

It is almost impossible to find out what actually takes place, what the celebrant does or says when offering the offerings at the Jok Kaka shrine; because of the veil of secrecy that shrouds the proceedings. (24) And since the following chapters deal primarily with texts used in religious ceremonies, the chiefdom Jok remains outside the scope of the thesis.

(b) Spirits of known relatives: These may further be divided into three sub-groups: (i) Spirits of ancestors, who are believed to be benevolent and protective and shrines are dedicated to them. (ii) Spirits of relatives born abnormally, twins (rudi), those born feet first (odoc) etc. They are feared, and shrines may also be built for them. (iii) Spirits of relatives who died with grudges. They are believed to be hostile, all out for ghostly vengeance. In all two speaking nilotic nations they are called cen $\alpha$ (cieni, acyeni  $\alpha$ ).

(c) Spirits of unknown persons and dangerous beasts. These are believed to dwell in streams, rocks, bushes etc. They are all hostile and cause sickness. During the

spirit possession dance, these ghosts are induced to enter into the head of the patient, who then becomes a medium; and through him, the ghost says what it wants, why it has caused the patient to suffer. Its request is either granted, or the ghost is captured and "killed".

This classification of Acholi and Lango spiritual beings is not a hierarchical arrangement in order of importance, such as Professor Evans-Pritchard has made of the Nuer spiritual world. There is no attempt here to construct a model "by reference to which we can relate the bewildering variety of their spirits to some sort of order in our own minds". The Acholi and Lango themselves make the classification; they clearly differentiate between one category of spirit and another: appealing to the relevant category in appropriate cases. When attending the various ceremonies they use different songs and chants.

## FOOTNOTES

- (1) Isma'ilia (1874) Vol. II p. 460.
- (2) 'Customs of the Acholi' S.N.& R. (1919) Vol. II  
No. 3 p. 174.
- (3) Pagan Tribes of the Southern Sudan p. 122.
- (4) Uganda (1935) p. 96.
- (5) Rev. P.A. Negri "<sup>Nilotica</sup>La Tribu' Melica Delgi Acioli"  
La Nigrizia (1932-1933-1934)
- (6) Uganda Journal (1939) Vol. VI No. 4 p. 196.
- (7) See below under "Spirit Possession". p. 265.
- (8) U.J. Vol. VII No. 3 p. 130.
- (9) Ibid. p. 135.
- (10) Driberg The Lango Ch. VI - Hayley The Anatomy of  
Lango Religion; see also A. Butt. The Nilotes  
pp. 102-105, a summary of Driberg and Hayley's.
- (11) The Lango p. 218.
- (12) Ibid p. 222.
- (13) Anatomy of Lango Religion. pp. 2-3.
- (14) The Lango p. 216.
- (15) Ibid p. 223; Driberg's uncertainty as shown by  
the words probably, seems to be etc., contrasts  
with Butt's confidence: she writes "the tipo  
eventually becomes merged in Jok" - The Nilotes  
p. 105.
- (16) Ibid p. 225; <sup>Professor Evans Pritchard</sup> L.E.P. has described this tactic as  
"irritating manoeuvres", no evidence whatsoever  
is given for the assertions.

- (17) The Anatomy of Lango Religion. p. 12.
- (18) <sup>6.</sup> Lienhardt, Divinity and Experience (1962) p. 32.  
 "Dinka religion is the relationship between men and ultra human powers encountered by men".  
 Beattie Bunyoro (1959) p. 70; Malinowski Freedom and organization Ch. 9 "The role of religion and magic", E.E. Evans-Fritchard Azande Ch. IV.
- (19) Primitive Man as Philosopher (1956) p. ; E.P. Nuer Religion p. 121-2 "But in a study of religion, if we wish to seize the essential nature of what we are inquiring, we have to try to examine the matter from the inside also, to see it as the Nuer see it ..."
- (20) See Index <sup>Facing p. 192</sup>, Table of some chieftom joks of Acholi.
- (21) The Lango p. 218.
- (22) A. Southall The Alur <sup>Society (1953)</sup> pp. 370-379. (p. 121)
- (23) See Grove S.N. & R. Vol. II (1919) p. 165.
- (24) Same in Alur (see The Alur <sup>Society</sup> p. 371.)

important part of the conventionalized and dramatized  
 outbreak of grief and calling to sorrow, with which  
 the Acholi face the supreme and final crisis of life -  
 death. When a man is critically ill, his father and  
 eldest brother are called to his death bed, to hear  
 his last wishes. As soon as he is dead the women  
 start wailing. Some of the men in the household  
 straightaway begin preparing the grave; others, in  
 tears, blow their horns (bala) or trumpets (tun), and  
 stage the mock fight - ng. Responders are sent out

## Chapter 7

## ACHOLI FUNERAL DIRGES

Ah'. from what agonies of heart and brain  
 What exaltations trampling on despair  
 What tenderness, what tears, what hate of wrong  
 What passionate outcry of a soul in pain  
 Uprose this poem of the earth and air.

Henry Longfellow, Divina Commedia

There is no greater pain  
 Than to recall a happy time in wretchedness.

Dante, Inferno (canto v. 121)

The funeral dirges of the Acholi (1) form an important part of the conventionalised and dramatised outburst of grief and wailing in sorrow, with which the Acholi face the supreme and final crisis of life - death. When a man is critically ill, his father and eldest brother are called to his death bed, to hear his last wishes. As soon as he is dead the women start wailing. Some of the men in the homestead straightaway begin preparing the grave; others, in tears, blow their horns (bila) or trumpets (tum), and stage the mock fight - uc. Messengers are sent out

immediately to near by relatives, and other attracted by the women's wailing and the sound of the horns and trumpets come hurrying to the homestead struck by death, and join the general lamentation.

When the grave is ready, a brief ceremony (kwer) takes place inside the house where the corpse is lying. It is attended only by a handful of elderly men and women. The process differs from chiefdom to chiefdom, and even among clans, in certain minor details. The following is what the Payira do when a married man dies. The wife of the deceased - if he was a polygamist, then his first wife - lies over her dead husband and embraces him. (2) The father or eldest brother of the dead man covers them with a duiker skin, and with a bread-making wooden spoon oluto kwon, and a gravy-making stick, ogwec, he taps their heads. Then the hair on the head of the corpse is shaved off, and is smeared with red ochre, pala and oil. A piece of string is tied around the head and chest of the widow and the leaves of olwedo, ~~lilae~~ is hung on the string. This is called tweyo cola. (3) With her head covered with the duiker skin, she is then led off into the wilderness, and does not return home until the burial

is over.

The corpse is laid in the grave sideways (4) his head resting on his own stool-cum-head-rest. During burial all weeping and wailing cease. All present gather around the grave, and after the body has been lowered, and properly covered with skin, the mourners throw handfuls of earth into the grave, men three times, and women four times. The grave is then filled up, the earth well trodden, and a mound is made.

A goat slaughtered on that day is not cooked, but roasted on an open fire and cut up and distributed amongst those that have taken part in the burial: who then disperse to their own homes. But as they depart, members of the homestead do not see them off - lwoko, as is the case in ordinary visits. The general tidying up of the area around the grave is done the next day, and a fence may be ~~er~~ected around the tomb.

Two or three days afterwards the second stage of the mourning is marked by a ceremony called puyu lyel. The grave and its immediate surrounding is smeared over with black clayey soil. This is usually done by the dead man's sister, but in the case of a younger person,

any elderly woman his father's sister would do it. This is a local affair, but more distant relatives who came to attend the burial may also be found taking part. You may hear solitary wails and singing of funeral dirges.

The final ceremony of guru lyel (5) takes place at a carefully chosen period to ensure maximum attendance by relatives. A long time may elapse between death and this feast. Its size depends on the age, the socio-economic and political status of the dead man. No funeral dance is held for persons below about 20 years of age.

Shakespeare's "when beggars die there are no comets seen, the heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes" may be illustrated by the following two cases: In July 1962 death occurred in Gulu of an old woman (about 70) Obada Adwany, widow of the late Okelo Ayodo. Her son Odur, had two sons and three daughters, all of whom were married. Because of her age it would be expected that many people would come to the funeral dance. But there were only 18 persons.

One of Odur's sons told me that his great grandfather Oriya originally immigrated from Pajule, near the

Karamojong border, and settled at Alokolum. There Okelo Ayoko was born; and afterwards went to Pajule to look for a bride and married a Karamojong girl Obada Adwany, and took her back to Alokolum. On the death of Oriya, Okelo moved away and settled in Gulu where he died, leaving an only son Odur. Now Odur was not a rich man, and was unknown in the area. On further questioning, I found that an elderly couple attending the funeral had walked all the way from Pajule - about 50 miles. Two men and their wives came from Alokolum, one of them was Odur's mother's brother, and the other the husband of Odur's mother's sister. The rest of the people attending were Odur's sons and daughters together with their wives and husbands. Two goats had been killed, and eight pots of millet beer brewed. There were also some quantity of the illegal gin-warege. The funeral feast lasted three days.

A dirge that was repeated several times was a fitting commentary to this particular situation:

Omera lwenyo ki atero biri  
 Lwenyo bongo omin  
 Tin oweḡo paco odong ma lik  
 Awobi lakony kore peke  
 Bedo onyo kibedo bongo onim  
 Lakony kore peke  
 Omera lwenyo ki bur.

My brother fights with barbed headed arrows  
 Fights without a brother (beside him)  
 Today he has left the homestead (it is) fearful  
 The youth, no one to assist him  
 Today men live alone without brothers (beside him)  
 No one to assist him  
 My brother fights with the grave. (6)

Compare this with the guru lyel of Rwot Awic (7) in September 1946. All the clan heads of Payira, and all the chiefs in Acholi were there. The Patiko and Paico chiefdoms sent their royal drums. The Mukama of Bunyoro was represented by his own brother and the keeper of the Palace. The Nyoro delegation stayed at the feast for one week. Hundreds of goats and sheep and cattle were slaughtered and hundreds of pots of beer consumed. For the local people the feast lasted many months. Instead of the usual funeral dance, the bwala, the royal dance was performed.

On the morning of the appointed day the widow of the deceased is led into the wilderness and her hair shaved off; the strings around her head and chest are untied. (8) Everybody in the homestead is shaved off (lyelo cola). This marks the end of mourning. Later during the day groups of relatives and their wives and husbands begin to arrive, bringing animals and provisions - their contributions for the feast.

About 50 or so yards from the homestead, the dancers, who up to now were in single file, form up in battle formation, and storm the compound with spears unseathed, in a mock attack. The women running behind them make ululation and shout the mwoc of their clans. In a few moments, one of them starts leaping up and stamping the ground rhythmically, and sings the first line of a dirge. The rest of them leaping up and stamping the ground, take up the chorus:

Soloist: Yee mac owang Layima yee  
Yee fire rages at Layima yee!

Mac owang Kulu Cumu  
Fire rages in the valley of River Cumu

Chorus: Owango nginyi nginyi woko  
It destroys utterly utterly everything  
Kono ao pa Min To  
If only I (could) reach homestead of Mother  
of Death.

Soloist: Nyara kono ariyo raa ma bor  
My daughter I would make grass torch which  
is long

Chorus: Kono ao pa Min To  
If I (could) reach homestead of Mother of  
Death

Kono awango nginyi nginy woko  
I would destroy utterly utterly everything

Mac owang Kulu Cumu yee  
Fire rages in the valley of Cumu yee!

The dancing is accompanied by drumming and scrubbing of large half-gourds on planks - guuru awal. The group may dance 3 to 5 steps before another group of mourners replace them. Later on in the night there is a joint session. The drum and gourd accompaniments being played by men and women who during the day had proved themselves the best.

As in all other Acholi dancing there is much competition, not only between individuals, but also between the various dancing groups, in all aspects of the dance. There is ample scope for self display: the dress, the singing, the body movement, drumming, mock fight, the playing of the half-gourds on the planks etc. There is room for both individual exhibition and group performance. The following are some of the motives behind the intense competitive spirit that pervades the whole funeral dance.

The system of inheritance allows the widow considerable freedom in the choice of the inheritor and husband la-laku. The ceremony of yokko pala or ciddo pala (removing the mourning ochre) at which the widow is introduced to her new husband in the presence of the elders, takes place 2 to 3 months after the funeral

dance. During the interim period between death and this ceremony the widow indicates who among the dead man's brothers or elder sons she would like to take as husband and guardian of her children. Apart from other considerations to be chosen by a widow is a big scale up the social ladder. The more wives a person has the more highly he is thought of, and this is one of the cheapest ways of acquiring one. Moreover, to be chosen means taking over more responsibility. And responsibility and status go together.

This inter-family competition for the widow is recognized. It is remarked of a man who, during the funeral tends to over do things, for instance dancing for much longer than anybody else, or singing the most painful of the dirges over and over again, that he does this in order to show off to the <sup>widow</sup> ~~widow~~, that he may be chosen. Such a remark has a restraining effect.

Another reason for the competition especially between the groups is the fact that large numbers of in-laws - jo pa oc, are present:

- (a) Brothers and sisters of the dead man's widows, and also of his living brother's wives.

- (b) Brothers and sisters of the dead man's mother
- (c) Brothers and sisters of the dead man's son's wives
- (d) Brothers and sisters of the dead man's daughters' husbands.

Between these groups of in-laws and the people in the homestead there already exists a joking relationship, friendliness expressed by a show of hostility, hostile and dirty jokes, abusive songs about individuals belonging to the other group or the entire clan. At the funeral dance these groups compete with each other each trying to outdo the other in all the aspects of the dance.

The general atmosphere during the dance is determined by the age of the person being mourned. As mentioned above no funeral dances are performed for persons of about twenty years of age and below. But for those above this age, up to about 45, it is a restrained and sad occasion. You may hear the wailing of the women mingling with the singing and the drumming and the gourd playing. The nearest relatives e.g. father, mother, brothers and sisters, dance with tears on their cheeks. It may be said that the dirges have their fullest meanings and significance when sung for a man or

woman struck down by death at the peak of his life, when he is most active, most productive and responsible. This sense of tragedy and loss comes out clearly in the dirges.

At the funeral of a really old person, grey haired, deaf, toothless and perhaps even blind with age, the situation is very different. Before the death of such a person ma nyime Cok, (whose end is short) wives in the homestead joke with him or her and say Daa, (granny) why do you not die soon so that we may have a dance?" Some even make preparations publicly for the occasion. Children play with him or her like a doll. They give him earth instead of bread and burst out laughing as the old one puts the earthen lump in his toothless mouth. On announcing the death of such a person, women pretend to weep, but complain, much to everybody's amusement, that it is difficult to shed any tears. So that although the same dirges are sung at the funerals of the very old, they do not seem to carry the same significance. There is no real tragedy in the death of such persons; and at such a funeral, there is great amount of sexual activity during the nights. It is said that "So-and-so must be born again"; and children conceived at such funerals are sometimes named after the grand old man, or lady.

## TEXTS

1. Awinyo bila\* pa meya  
 Ato Cura koni bino  
 Bila mere kok ki odiko  
 Angujo kwe ki wanga-yo do!  
 A Cura koni bino  
 Bila pare kok odiko con

(cannot be seen  
 anymore although  
 is still felt)

I heard the flute of my beloved  
 Ato Cura will soon come  
 His flute sounded early in the morning!  
 I searched for him in vain on the pathway oh!  
 Ah! Cura will soon come  
 His flute sounded early in the morning.

\* Each man had a tune which he played on his flute (Kiliko) or horn (bila) or trumpet (tum): and by this he was recognised over a long distance. A man blew his horn during a hunt or in battle after spearing an animal or enemy; and also during the mock fight at the funeral dance or the otele. As the hunters or war party returns homewards the successful men blew their horns or trumpets, and people waiting at home make ready for welcome. In this dirge, the lover hears his flute of her beloved, but in vain waits on the pathway.

2. Akuru ki iyo kwe  
 Deg bino do  
 Acel, gin pa maa yo  
 Omera kodo ma yamo  
 Wi lobo\* obalo rwot awobi woko  
 Akuru ki iyo kwe.
- (cannot be seen  
 anymore although  
 is still felt)

I wait on the pathway in vain  
 He refuses to come again  
 Only one, beloved of my mother oh,  
 My brother blows like the wind  
 Fate has destroyed chief of youth completely  
 I wait on the pathway in vain.

Who can hear the drumming of my beloved?  
 Who knows the steps of my beloved?  
 The young men of going are like clouds there  
 The young men are gathered together.  
 Mother, steps I have searched for in vain.

\* Wi lobo, which I have interpreted as fate, literally means on top of, or outside of the earth; as opposed to inside the earth, the grave. Bedo wi lobo means, living on the earth, existence, being alive; and implies all the problems of life, "the human condition". Another phrase that is also used with a similar meaning is wi-woko, woko - outside.

3. Myel opong loka ca  
 Orobo<sup>\*</sup> tye Pa-cua  
 Orobo Aming<sup>\*\*</sup> otoro komgi  
 Anga ma neno aula pa meya?  
 Anga ma ngeyo bila pa meya?  
 Anga ma winyo bul pa meya?  
 Anga ma ngeyo wer pa meya?  
 Orobo Aming calo olango  
 Orobo tye Pa Cua.  
 Orobo Aming otoro komgi  
 Maa, Okoya angiyo kwe!

There is a big dance yonder  
 The young men are at Pacua  
 The young men of Aming are gathered together  
 Who can spot the swish arm-band of my beloved?  
 Who can recognize the sound of the flute of my  
 beloved?  
 Who can hear the drumming of my beloved?  
 Who knows the songs of my beloved?  
 The young men of Aming are like Olango thorns  
 The young men are at Pacua  
 The young men of Aming are gathered together.  
 Mother, Okoya I have searched for in vain.

\* Orobo is another word for awobe youths, young men.  
 Apwai, bulu, kaburi may also be used, as slang.

\*\* Aming is part of the mwoc of Patiko:

Ngu ye	Lions oh
Kweya ye	Softeners oh
Aming ye	Stupifiers oh
Otigo ma nok tyeko kwon	Small quantity of
Kamlara ye	otigo (ladies
	fingers) finishes much bread.
	(it is slippery). Hot peppers Oh.

4. Ai maa, anongo Lugica Kanyi?  
 Kono wiye luputu aduku  
 Anongo Lugica kanyi?  
 Wiye wok Alelu  
 Lugica, la-wi awobe  
 Wod Ayaru  
 Kono wiye luputu aduku  
 Maa anongo Lugica kanyi?

Oh mother. I should look for Lugica where?  
 Feathers of his head-dress fills a basket\*  
 I shall find Lugica where?  
 His head has reached Alelu\*\*  
 Lugica, leader of youths  
 Son of Ayaru  
 Feathers of his head-dress fills a basket  
 Mother I shall find Lugica where?

---

\* After a dance the feathers of the head-dress is removed from the "helmet" and stored in baskets. The amount of feathers in a head-dress indicates the status of the owner, the more, the more esteem.

\*\* Was he killed in a war the enemy cut off, and took his head away? I have not been able to discover where or what Alelu was.

In the following song, a lover speaks to the beloved  
 who being dead does not answer. She asks whether he is

5. Onera woto ki olayo latong lity to obtain bride  
 Gin pa wora  
 Onera yam woto kene great that if her beloved was  
 Kicikici pa jo pa Abal  
 Me pa maa odong kwene? buried in the same tomb.  
 Gin pa maa yam woto ki olayo  
 Laber pa Amo  
 Wi lobo gungu koma.

My brother goes with a battle axe  
 Beloved of my father  
 My brother used to walk alone  
 The beautiful one of the people of Abal  
 Where has the son of my mother remained?  
 Beloved of my mother used to walk with a battle axe.  
 Beautiful one of Amo  
 Fate has knelt on me\*

Sau Syang ki road ye  
 Lase vung ye  
 Chang ling doge  
 Larasa ka iyo  
 Opeoyo luyik wa koma

All mother, my beloved speaks not to me  
 Why? why?  
 My brother speaks not to me!  
 Lack of cattle and (our) friendship  
 Lack of cattle and friendship  
 My lover since (days of) youth and  
 First born, he speaks not to me.

My friend speaks to me please  
 My brother if you do speak to me  
 Let them bury both of us  
 Lack of cattle and (friendship oh)  
 My lover since (days of) youth on  
 First born he speaks not to me

\* See p. 209, footnote above.  
 fate has knelt on me means I have suffered much  
 ill luck.

In the following song, a lover speaks to the beloved who being dead does not answer. She asks whether he is silent and brooding over his inability to obtain bride wealth. She goes on to suggest that if her beloved was dead then both of them should be buried in the same tomb.

6. Ai maa, liwota ling doga  
 Pingo ka?  
 Omera ling doga  
 Cau dyang balo remo  
 Cau dyang ki remo ye  
 Lamo tino yo  
 Okang ling doga!

Larema lok kweda ba!  
 Omera ka ito  
 Pwoyo luyikwa weng  
 Cau dyang ki remo ye  
 Lamo tino ye  
 Okang ling doga  
 Larema ka ito  
 Opwoyo luyik wa dueu

Ai! mother, my beloved speaks not to me  
 Why? why?  
 My brother speaks not to me!  
 Lack of cattle spoils (our) friendship  
 Lack of cattle and friendship  
 My lover since (days of) youth oh!  
 First born, he speaks not to me.

My friend speak to me please  
 My brother if you be dead  
 Let them bury both of us  
 Lack of cattle and friendship oh!  
 My lover since (days of) youth oh  
 First born he speaks not to me  
 My friend if you be dead  
 Let them bury both of us.

7. Omera calo rwot ma kom kom  
 Myel mere pong wa i ocok  
 Kodi piny ma tin ruu-ni  
 Adok ka pa nga?  
 Omera ma won gang  
 Won paco to ata  
 Omera calo rwot ma kom kom

My brother he was like a chief enthroned  
 His funeral dance the compound is filled to the  
ocok bushes\*

The day that breaks today  
 Where shall I go, to whom?  
 My brother, head of the homestead  
 Father of our house died anyhow\*\*  
 My brother he was like a chief enthroned.

---

\* Ocok - solanum, these grow wild around homesteads.

\*\* without making any preparations or arrangements for those left behind.

Watching her brother at his death bed, the mourner  
hopelessly asks Abwong to assist the dying against death.

8. Oteka lwenyo ki to kene  
Twon kara to kene ada  
Abwong kony omeru ba  
En acel to woko do  
Obalo ngo pa jo pa Awic ye!  
Oteka lwenyo kene

The warrior fights with death alone  
The bull yes, he dies alone, true.  
Abwong assist your brother  
He has done what wrong to the children of Awic ho!  
The warrior fights with death alone.



The mourner blames the deceased for not listening  
to advice; for he might have lived.

10. Omera apwonyo ki i ot kwe  
Nyodo pa maa apwonyo ki i ot kwe  
Awobi yam angayo wi lunywalle  
Twon lwenyo kene  
Twon wiye rac  
Lutimo ning?  
Gira an apwonyo ki i ot kwe.

My brother\* I advised in the house\*\* in vain  
Child of my mother I advised in the house in vain  
The young man, *those who bore him, failed (to teach)*  
The bull fights alone  
The bull's head is bad\*\*\*  
What can be done to him?  
My beloved I advised in the house in vain

---

\* Son.

\*\* Privately.

\*\*\* Stubborn.

The next song arose from a battle (1930's) in which a Payira war leader was killed by the Puranga. The Payira warriors fled, and their captain's head was cut off. It is a popular dirge when the deceased is believed to have been deserted or neglected by his kinsmen.

11.   Mony ongolo Lucura ye  
       Puranga laro alara  
       Ki ikin oboke ye  
       Balo wod Alego, Lucura  
       Balo acel long  
       Latin pa min Aleda  
       Mony oneko woko  
       Mony oneko Lucura ye  
       Lutwa ringo aringa  
       Ki ikin oboke.

The enemy cut off (the head of) Lucura oh  
 Men of Puranga compete among themselves (who should  
                                   do it)

Among the bushes oh!  
 They destroyed the son of Alego, Lucura!  
 They destroyed an only one  
 Son of the mother of Aleda  
 The enemy have killed him  
 The enemy killed Lucura  
 Our clansmen ran away  
 Among the bushes.

Okelo Tingili was apparently killed by a lion; his  
 clansmen, Paibwo deserted him and ran away;

In the following dirge the woman who poisoned the  
 herself, saying "I have  
 Oketo oruku kol kwac  
 Wod Ayaro  
 Paiburo odyero Tingili  
 Lwenyo kene  
 Paibwo odyero gira  
 Lwenyo ki to kent  
 Lutwa laro dyeri ki ngu.

Leader of youth fights with death  
 Okelo he put on a leopard skin robe (as if a chief)  
 Son of Ayaro  
 Men of Paiburo have deserted Tingili  
 He fights alone  
 Men of Paiburo have deserted my beloved  
 He fights death alone (unaided)  
 Our clansmen compete among themselves in deserting  
 you to the lion.

The type of poison of these people  
 Not all who come to the funeral are sincere mourners  
 or sympathisers, and their wailing and signs of sorrow -  
 which may be exaggerated, is a put up show to veil their  
 inner pleasures. The next two dirges are directed  
 against such people: poisoners, sorcerers etc. Their  
 activities at the funeral are regarded as mockery - a  
 laugh when others are shedding tears.

In this song the "wailing" element is told, although you may believe now, she says she will be in tears next year. In the following dirge the woman who poisoned the deceased is seen congratulating herself, saying "I have done it". She had done it before, she troubles women with moaning for the dead.

Winy ka yaare  
 "Lok dong peke yo"  
 Yelo mon ki koko  
     Kodi kwir pa joni  
     Kec calo keno  
 Yelo mon ki koko  
 "Lik pe yo".

Listen to her congratulating herself  
 "There is no more matter now" (have achieved her  
     desire)  
 She troubles women with wailing  
     The type of poison of these people  
     Is bitter like gourd juice  
 She troubles women with wailing  
 "There is no matter oh!"

In this song the "mocking clansman" is told, although you may rejoice now, who knows who will be in tears next year. It may be you.

O lakaka nyer mono tunu  
 Kadi ibedo ni kiny kiny  
 Lukaka nyer mono tunu  
 Wang ca ma ruu ni  
 Mwaka maca  
 Bino ki wan ducu  
 Kadi ibedo li kiny kiny  
 Lukaka nyeru mono tunu

O my clansman you may laugh awhile  
 Although now you laugh laugh loud and long  
 My clansman you may laugh awhile  
 The next days that break  
 Next year may be  
 It will come to all of us (Death may visit you too).  
 Although now you laugh laugh loud and long  
 My clansman you may laugh awhile. \*

---

\* Compare with the crowing of the cock and the cry of the Ram.

Cock to Ram: Diki wang ca Romo neno pala  
 The day after tomorrow Ram will see the  
 butcher's knife (Be slaughtered).

Ram to Cock: In kono ibidok kwene ki abila  
 You also where will you escape from being  
 sacrificed on the shrine?

also the proverb Diki wang ca lokke  
 The day after tomorrow will be  
 different (from today).

This dirge refers to a widow bereft by the loss of her husband beside whom she used to sit closely, of whom she was very fond, and whose death was necessarily painful to her.

The vast majority of the dirges are about men, brothers, fathers, beloveds, the following four were the only ones I collected which referred to women. The emphasis on males reflect the patrilineal nature of Acholi society. But that recognition was also given to women may be seen in these dirges, and also in the shrines dedicated to certain outstanding women.

12. To owango kom anyaka

Wango ma mac  
Anyaka koko kome  
Gin pa maa yo  
To owango komi  
Tin olo oteri

Death it burns the flesh of the young woman  
It burns like fire  
The young woman weeps with pain  
Beloved of my mother oh  
Death burns your flesh  
Today it (death) has taken you.

This dirge refers to a widow bereft by the loss of her husband beside whom she used to sit closely, of whom she was so proud.

- i. Ceng pud bedo gikwed cware atena  
 Labar pa min Amo  
 Anyaka yaare ayara  
 Ni en aye
- ii. Kwany can ma ikoma do  
 Latin, wi lobo ogungu kome  
 Anyaka man wi lobo ogungu ikome yo  
 Ceng pud bedo gikwed aware atena.
- i. Only recently, she would sit close by her husband  
 Beautiful one of the mother of Amo  
 The young woman used to congratulate herself  
 That she was the only one\*
- ii. Remove the sadness from my body oh! (she now cries!)  
 The child, fate has knelt on her\*\*  
 This young woman fate has knelt on her oh!  
 Only recently she would sit close by her husband.

---

\* Having married the most eligible young man she was very proud of him, and others were necessarily jealous of her.

\*\* See p. 209 footnote above.

A mother mourns her beautiful daughter who married  
in the Hills.

Gira woto mubolo adyany  
Can-na do  
Can moto i koma  
Nyodo ger, ugol woko yo  
Anok wai ocito i Lugot  
Gira woto mubolo adyany.

My beloved walks throwing her buttocks\*  
My sadness oh  
Sadness sinks into my body (caused by her death)  
exume her, bring her out oh!  
Anok did go (to marry) in the Hills (of the East).  
My beloved walks throwing her buttocks.

---

\* Protuberant buttocks which shook as the individual  
walked briskly was regarded as a great beauty.



Nya pa Rwot myelo ki bere  
 Nya pa twon lugol woko  
 Nyaka man pwoyo luter Mucwini  
 Nya pa twon lugol woko  
 Nya pa Rwot myelo ki bere

Chief's daughter dances with a flag (in her hand)  
 The bulls daughter, exume her  
 The girl ought to be taken to Masindi\* (to dance)  
 The bulls daughter, exume her  
 Chief's daughter dances with a flag in her hand.

---

\* A dancing team from Acholi was taken to perform at Masindi in 1932, and, of course, only the best dancers were taken. According to this dirge the deceased was of such a standard.

~~Grand old man or lady.~~

Robert Hertz who attributed secondary mortuary rites to failure of people to adjust themselves, save over a long period, after the death of their kinsfolk, wrote "We cannot bring ourselves to consider the deceased as dead straightaway; he is too much part of our substance, we have put too much of ourselves in him, and participation in the same social life creates ties, which are not to be severed in one day. The factual evidence (of death) is assailed by a contrary flood of memories and images, of desires and hopes. The evidence imposes itself only gradually and it is not until the end of this prolonged conflict that we give in and believe in the separation as real"(9)

On the face of it, a number of Acholi dirges appear to support this view. They contain lines which suggest that the singer refuses to believe that the death has really occurred e.g. "I hear the flute of my beloved, he will soon come" "My beloved, will you not speak to me?", "Mother, where shall I look for Lugica"and "There is a big dance yonder, who can recognize the music of the flute of my beloved?"

But a close look at the songs, and the circumstances under which they are sung show that, far from any attempts to escape the reality, the dirges are a frank admittance of helplessness and hopelessness in the face of death. Thus in the songs from which the lines above are taken, we read the following. "I search for him in vain"; "In vain I wait on the pathway". "Beloved if you be dead, let them bury both of us in the same tomb". In some of the other dirges, the final struggle is seen as a fight between man and death, in which the parents, members of his family and clansmen cannot interfere; they cannot assist, and fight side by side with their son or brother or friend. They can only watch. "O, if I could reach the homestead of the mother of death I would destroy everything utterly!" But who can ever reach there? "My brother fights without a brother beside him". etc.

The funeral dance at which these dirges are sung, is performed to mark the end of the mourning between three to twelve months after the death. The songs in fact deliberately rake up the bitter memories of the survivors. The purpose of the funeral dance seems to be, not to forget, but to remember, to commemorate the

the departed. This is consistent with the emphasis on the clan that seem to differentiate Acholi from Lango thoughts. And since the Acholi society is patrilineal, most of the dirges are about men.

This final ceremony, however, is not a farewell feast to the spirit of the dead. At this supreme crisis the Acholi exhibit a clearly irreligious tendency. There is no blinking at death. It is faced squarely without turning to ultra-human powers. There is no heaven, no paradise, to which the souls of the faithful go to join a happy throng, nor a hell to receive sinners.

Death is not regarded as a gateway into some eternal ~~world~~ **existence** ~~existence~~ desirable or otherwise; but as a cruel monster which strikes down a member of a family and lineage, leaving orphans, widows, son-less mothers and fathers. The death of a man in his prime is most painful, because it causes tragic loss to so many people. The funeral dirges express this personal tragedy.

The crisis brought about by death is taken as an attack upon the lineage group, and this group is summoned to meet the emergency. The relationships thrown into relief in the rituals, ceremonies and dances are primarily though not <sup>exclusively</sup> ~~declining~~ kinship relationships. (10)

All the members of the lineage group both male and female together with their wives and husbands gather together at the homestead where death has struck. Together they weep and lament, bury the dead, work, eat and drink: each person and group playing an appropriate role. And after ensuring the well being of the dependents, finally comes the dance in honour of the dead. The result is that as the mourners return to their respective homes, the bed of unity of the lineage group as well as the tie brought about by marriage, between the wife group and in laws lineage groups, is strengthened by the crisis that has passed.

## FOOTNOTES

- (1) The Lango do not have funeral dirges, that is, special songs that are sung at funerals only
- (2) This is called kwer. It is similar to the kwer of killing a lion or leopard. The killer lies on top of the beast, and his buttocks are gently smacked. See under "Chants at Ancestral Shrines" p. 234 below.
- (3) This corresponds to what Driberg and Hayley called acuban me tweyo tol, among the Lango.
- (4) In Padibe the corpse is buried in a sitting position.
- (5) Corresponds to the Apuny me Gonyo tol among the Lango.
- (6) Although the deceased was a woman the song is not accordingly modified, this applies to most of the dirges.
- (7) For full description see Anywar Acholi ki ker Megi.
- (8) This corresponds to the Lango Apuny me Gonyo tol.
- (9) Death and the Right Hand p. 82.
- (10) Monica Wilson Nyakyusa Rituals ~~the~~  
Nadel Nupe Religion p. 131

## CHANTS AT ANCESTRAL SPIRIT SHRINES

"One has to buy the gods ... the gods know how to pay the price".

**Mauss**, The Gift, p. 14

When the Acholi wish to offer sacrifices to spirits of their ancestors, either for joyful events such as success in war and hunt, recovery from a long illness etc., or on sorrowful occasions such as deaths and illnesses especially epidemics, they gather before the abila or kac.(1) These are untidily made structures, which in pre-christian days were found in every homestead. They were the centres of religious worship of lineage groups.

The abila assume various forms and sizes: in some localities it is a miniature hut no higher than two foot, in others it is built of stones in the form of a small table. (2) Hunting trophies are hung on branches of a tree under which the abila is constructed, or on other structures erected for the purpose. Those also act as spear rests, when the spears are blessed, for instance, before a raid or on the eve of a big hunt. In some areas the "after-birth" is also buried in the area

around the abila.

A new shrine is built and dedicated to an old man or woman of the homestead, some time after his death.(3) There is more emphasis on the male line, and only a few shrines were dedicated to women. This reflects the patrilineal nature of Acholi society. The period between death and the inauguration of a shrine varies with conditions, but it invariably takes place some time after the funeral dance. The signal is usually given by the spirit itself through dreams or by sending sickness. When the ajwaka (diviner) is consulted by heir, the spirit makes his wishes known that a shrine should be built for him. It usually complains that he has been neglected too long, that he is hungry and thirsty for blood, and cold - that is he has no abode; that he is now tired of attending "ghostly feasts" in the abila dedicated to his "ghostly friends" who constantly tease and taunt him with the question "when shall we be invited to a feast in your own abila?" (4)

Among the Payira the inauguration of a new abila was called keto gango (from ketto - to scatter or destroy, gang-homestead). The custom was that when the eldest male of a lineage group, if the head of a homestead died,

the homestead was abandoned, and the entire group settled at a new site. There a shrine was dedicated to the recently deceased elder, the spirit is invited into the new homestead, now headed by a new leader. The ceremony strengthened the position and enhanced his status as head of the homestead.

On the appointed day, the ajwaka arrives, accompanied by men blowing their horn, and women yodelling and shaking the gourd rattles. It is said that the ajwaka's small party meets the spirit on the pathway, not far from the homestead, and accompany him into the new home; and into the house of the new head, where the elders have gathered.

Then through the ajwaka, acting as a medium, a joint council of the dead and the living takes place. All the dead that are remembered are called by name; greetings are exchanged between members of the family on either side of the grave. It is said that they recognize each others voices; that the spirits are so eager to talk that they all talk at the same time (gilaro lok alara); and cut into each others sentences. After order has been restored, the spirit to whom the new abila has been dedicated makes a short speech, <sup>in</sup> which he

tells of the "country" in which he now lives, complaining of its discomforts; he also tells of the manner of his death, if this is socially relevant, for example, if a feud need be executed; lastly he warns against any socially harmful conduct of certain persons.

This is followed by short speeches by the living, putting their own case: a woman prays for child birth, and a hunter for more success etc. If there is a bad spirit, there follows a very heated argument. The other spirits may join in on behalf of the living. If the hostile spirit refuses to be pacified by argument and offerings, it becomes a cen, and is dealt with in another way: he is regarded and treated as an enemy, and is exorcised, captured, buried in a live - ant~~ch~~ill, or "speared to death". (5)

At the end of this "joint council", - which is a replica of the homestead council attended by all married men, the elders and the ajwaka come out of the house, and join the crowd assembled around the abila. The ajwaka declares:

Kwaro <sup>t</sup>in dong oloko  
The ancestor today he has spoken

Wuyeny mjok kibworo, gweno ki kongo  
Bring forth billy goat brown, chicken and beer.

The new head of the homestead, "won abila", the "owner" of the abila leads a brown billy goat three times round the shrine, and pens it, and presents the sacrificial beast to the spirit:

Wora ceng ikoko cam  
Father (6) you have been complaining for meat

Cam tin dong en  
Meat today here it is.

Bin iye dong  
Come and partake of it.

Lwong omegi-in ducu  
Invite your brothers (ghosts) all

Cam mewn en  
Meat for you is here.

Then he addresses the living:

Win ~~bi~~kaka, an alwongo wu  
You my clansmen I have called you

Pi wego ma atedo  
On account of the feast of the ancestors.

Biyu ka miyo cam igi  
Come let us give meat to them.

Tin amako dyel en  
Today I hold a goat, here it is

Wamiyu ki wora (7)  
Let us offer it to my father.

The goat is held there for some time. If it urinates, it is a sign that the spirit has not accepted it due to some reason which has caused displeasure.

The ajwaka is re-consulted and he divines, using <sup>Sandals</sup> ~~sandals~~ -  
yero war. He would declare that some person was guilty  
of misconduct. A confession follows and sentence, usually  
a **fine** of a goat, is passed and executed. The goat is  
slaughtered and eaten by the people present. If the  
goat defecates it is a sign that the ancestral spirits are  
pleased and have accepted the offering. (8)

The won abila then continues:

Wuyee cam ma wamiyo iwn fin  
You have accepted the meat we offered you today

Cam wtwn dong tu  
Here is your meat, here it is

Walwero wu pi ngo?  
For what cause should we be afraid of you?

Wun ludito mewa  
You are our own elders.

Nyok wu tin en  
Your billy goat is here today, here it is.

Tin dong wumat vemo  
Today drink ye of its blood.

Gemo ma bino owok ki tenge  
Plagues that are coming, let them pass far away (9)

The elders consecrate the beast by spitting on it.  
This is then killed near the shrine, and its blood  
sprinkled on the abila. The bowels are scrutinized  
by experts (ngiyo i dyel) for any signs of misfortune.

If they find this, the bowels are pierced with thorns and thrown away into the bush. If there is nothing wrong, and only signs of good fortune, the bowel as well as the meat is cooked and eaten.

A tiny morsel and pieces of millet bread ~~are~~ taken by the won abila and placed on the abila saying:

Cam mewn dong en  
Your meat is here, here it is.

Weku kom kitino obed ma yot  
Let the children (10) have good health

Mon megi gunong nyodo  
Their wives, let them have children.

Wek ny<sup>o</sup>ingwu pe orweny  
So that your names may not be obliterated.(11)

After the meal, the "won abila" takes a white chicken (gwono kibor) and flutters it over the abila three times (four times if the abila is being dedicated to a female). Its neck is then cut, and the blood is allowed to flow freely on the shrine. The won abila says:

Gweno-wu en  
Your chicken is here.

Remo tin wamiyo iwn en  
Today we give you blood, here it is.

Kom wa obed ma yot.  
Let us have good health.

When the chicken is cooked, a tiny morsel of it,  
and some pieces of millet bread ~~is~~<sup>are</sup> thrown at the shrine  
by the won abila who says:

Wamiyo iwn cam dong en  
Now we have given you meat

Kom wa obed ma yot  
Let us have good health.

To obed peke i paco  
Let there be no deaths in the homestead

Kono yang wam wapeke  
If we were not here (if we all died)

Cam mewu bene bedo peke  
Meat for you would also not be there.

Beer is offered to the spirits by an elderly woman  
daa abila, the wife of "won abila". She sips a mouthful  
and squirts it, spraying the beer over the abila. The  
won abila says the following:

Kongo wamiyo dong en  
Now we offer beer, here it is

Komwa obed ma yot  
Let us have good health.

Two ma bino owok ki tenge  
Sicknesses that are coming, let them pass far away.

Tin ami dyel  
Today I give you goat

Tin anli remo gwono  
Today I give you chicken blood

Kongo en okee oryo-wu  
Beer is here to quench your thirst

Komwa obed ma yot.  
Let us have good health.

When the offering of the three things, brown billy goat, chicken and beer, prescribed by the ajwaka is over, there follows the Agat, a kind of litany, led by the won abila. The chorus is repeated by all assembled, the elders, women and children.

Won abila: Wuling eno ba!  
Let there be silence pray!

Wan tin watedo ngadi  
We today have cooked (a feast for) So-and-so

(Here he names the ancestor  
to whom the shrine is  
dedicated).

Tin wamiyo ire cam  
Today we have given him meat.

Ento wuling  
But let there be silence.

Kom dano obed ma yot  
Let the people have good health.

Answer: Kom dano obed ma yot  
Let the people have good health (12)

Won abila: Agu ci oto  
Lions and leopards let them be killed (13)

Answer: Oto! oto! oto!  
Be killed! be killed! be killed!

Won abila: Tong obed ma bit  
Spears let them be sharp (14)

Answer: Ma bit ma bit ma bit  
Sharp sharp sharp.

Won abila: Nyodo opot i kom mon ma ber  
Let the women have good child birth

Answer Ma ber ma ber ma ber  
Good good good.

Won abila: Cam ci otwi  
May food crops germinate (15)

Cam ci o~~e~~eki  
May crops ripen (16)

Answer: O~~e~~eki o~~e~~eki o~~e~~eki  
Ripen ripen ripen.

Won abila: Litino ci okoki  
Let babies cries be heard (17)

Answer: Okoki, okoki, okoki.  
Cries be heard, cries be heard, cries  
be heard.

Won abila: Gin ma racu ma tye i paco  
Evil things that are in the homestead (18)

Wang ceng oter  
The setting sun, let it take (19)

Answer: Oter  
Let it take

Won abila: Oter  
Let it take

Answer: Oter  
Let it take

Wang ceng otero  
The setting sun has taken them

Ci otero  
It has taken them.

The male celebrants ~~at~~ then break off to do the  
mock fight uc, and shout the mwoc of the clan or chiefdom.

The women may perform the ogodo dance. When the shrine is dedicated to the spirit of the chiefs' ancestor, there follows a bwala dance.

## II

When a man killed a dangerous beast such as an elephant, buffalo, leopard or lion, which beast of its size, strength, skill and ferocity, its ghost is believed to be a potential threat to the health and well-being of the killer and his lineage group, a ceremony called kwer is performed. The main purpose being to ward off the evil effects of the beastly ghost, which like cen is believed to seek vengeance. The ghost is confronted with reason and arguments, gifts and prayer. The ancestral spirits are invoked, given offerings of meat blood and beer, and asked for their protection of, and blessings on the people.

The kwer ceremonies differ with different beasts. Thus when a buffalo has fallen, the killer, that is, the first spearman mounts on top of the dead beast, blows his horn and shouts the mwoc of his clan or chiefdom. In the case of a lion or leopard, the killer is made

to get on top of the beast and to embrace it (as was described in the burial ceremony), and his buttocks are lightly smacked three times (four times if the beast is female). One informant who has killed three leopards told me that looking directly into the eyes of a leopard, although it was dead, was most frightening.

The head of the beast is brought home and laid on the abila. A few days afterwards, the time necessary for the women to make millet beer - a public ceremony takes place at the ancestral shrine. It is led by the won-abila. It takes the form of a litany, and the name of the beast is changed according to what beast is (being) having its ghost pacified.

Won Abila: Alwongo wu ka kwero lyec en  
I have called you to celebrate this elephant

Ka lyec obino ci obin mukwe  
As the elephant (20) comes let it come in  
peace.

Answer: Obino, ci obin mukwe  
It has come, but let it come in peace.

Won abila: In lakwor mewa, merok  
You are our enemy, you killed us (21)

Ito lakucel.  
Your death will not be avenged.

Answer: Obino, ci obin mukwe.  
It has come, but let it come in peace.

Won abila: Kit ma man dok oketo wiye kama con  
 As this has again laid its head where other  
 had laid before.

Mukene dok obin.  
 Let others again come.

Answer: Obin, ci obin mukwe  
 Let them come, but let them come in peace.

Won abila: In lakwor mewai merok  
 You are our enemy, you killed us.

Ito lokweol. To mot. Bin mukwe.  
 Your death will not be avenged. Die  
 harmlessly. Come in peace.

Answer: Bin mukwe.  
 Come in peace.

The won abila then addresses himself to ancestral  
 spirits thus:

An alamo doga, bot kwaro  
 I am invoking our ancestors

Latin tin okelo wi le paco  
 This child has today brought home the head  
 of a beast

Kit ma win ludongo ceng wutimo.  
 As you elders did long ago.

Latin kome obed ma yot  
 Let the child be of good health.

Gin ma yacu ma mito bino paco  
 Evil things that wish to enter our homestead  
 (22)

Poto ceng oter woko.  
 Let the setting sun take it away.

Yat ma itim ma latin mito coore i kome  
 Trees in the wilderness against which the  
 child might knock and hurt himself.

Yat onaece woko  
Let the trees bend away. (23)

Owek yo obed ma leng  
Let them leave his path clear.

Uyaa! ka tin watimo gin paco  
Behold! today we celebrate at the home shrine

Nyodo ~~le~~ obin.  
Childbirth let there be.

Litino ci okok mi ngwe! ngwe!  
Babies let their cries be heard, ngwe! ngwe!

Wun ludongo, nenu  
You elders, behold.

Latin tin okelliwa wi lyec.  
Your child today has brought us the head of  
an elephant.

Then he directs his remarks to the ghost of the  
beast and offer gifts to it.

Lyec!  
Elephant!

In i jok tim tin lukolo paco  
You are a jok of the wilderness today brought  
home.

Tin dong lukweyi ki romo en  
Today you are pacified with this sheep.

Dong ibed ma ber  
From now then, be good

Lwong dok wediwb gubin guto calo in  
Call your companions let them come and be  
killed like you.

Wi ocen wediww  
Let your head curse your companions.

Ami wee  
I give you chyme

Ami kongo  
I give you beer

Ami nyim ki peke  
I give you simsim and fried beans. (24)

Ajoli ma ber  
I welcome you well

Lwong luwediwu ducu.  
Call all your companions.

The ceremony ends with the agat (25) and this may be followed by dances.

### III

#### Lango Rain chants.

On the first day of the rain dance of the Lango, the agat I below is repeated. Driberg has, wrongly, called this the "consecration of the spears": misled by the fact that the participants hold spears in their hands. It is repeated only by the old men:

"The old men and awobi (awobe - youths. Okot), all with their spears ... wearing chaplets and necklaces of convolvulus (bomo) and with the agara or bells bound round their legs and their spears also festooned with bomo, proceed to the sycamore tree ... on arrival the men all stand under the tree, while the women folk stand apart, and the old men irrespective of their animal groups perform the agat ... each using one after the other the spear kept for that purpose. The men standing in a semi circle towards him, at each response to the consecrator's litany sway their spears forward towards him" (The Lango) (my italics).

- Solo: Waloyo yamo in  
We overcome this wind (26)
- Answer: Waloyo  
We overcome.
- Solo: Wan wamito kot ocwe, oony akirok cutok  
We desire rain to fall, in showers quickly
- Answer: Oony  
Let it fall.
- Solo: Omai! in kot, alaim cwe!  
Oh! you rain, I invoke you, fall!
- Ka icwe beber  
If you fall it is good.
- Answer: Baber  
It is good.
- Solo: Ka kot ocwe, cam wa ocek ber  
If rain falls and our crops ripen it is good
- Answer: Ber  
It is good.
- Solo: Ka mon gilelo ber  
If the women rejoice it is good.
- Answer: Ber  
It is good.
- Solo: Ka awobe giwero ber  
If the young men sing it is good.
- Answer: Ber  
It is good.
- Solo: Arya mita ka jigi jigi. (Non-lwo sentence).  
A drizzling confusion
- Answer: Aryam.  
Confusion.

Solo: Ka kalwa ocek  
If our millet ripens

Answer: Ber.  
It is good.

Solo: Ka monwa lelo  
If our women rejoice

Answer: Ber.  
It is good.

Solo: Ka awobe wero  
If the young men sing

Answer: Ber.  
It is good.

Solo: Ka odonge lelo  
If the old men rejoice

Answer: Ber.  
It is good.

Solo: Ilyec idula (non-lwo sentence).  
An over flowing of the granaries

Answer: Ilyec.  
Overflowing.

Solo: Kalwa opong dero  
Let our millet grains fill the granaries

Answer: Opong  
Let it fill.

Solo: Ka yamo odok Buntok ber  
If the wind veers to Buntok it is good

Answer: Ber.  
It is good.

Solo: Ka kot odok Buntok ber (27)  
If the rain veers to Buntok it is good

Answer: Ber.  
It is good.



Obille  
Stup~~e~~fied

Omwatong ki mwat  
May it halt and stumble

Mwat  
Stumble

Okwec! obille wi lee  
Ah! the animal is stup~~e~~fied

Obille  
Stup~~e~~fied

Ogwaro wi lee, leny.  
It (spear) grazes the animal's head it  
shines (with animal fat).

Wi lee  
Animal's head

Wi lee owil  
May the animal be bewildered.

Owil  
Bewildered.

Ka ineko alop, bebor  
If you (spear) kill haste~~e~~beast it is good

Ber.  
It is good.

Ka **i**neko kul, beber  
If you kill warthog it is good

Ber.  
It is good.

Apoli-in wuje owil  
May the water buck be bewildered

Owil  
Stup~~e~~fied.

Wi rudda owil  
 May the ~~black~~ be bewildered  
 Cob

Owil  
 Bewildered.

Ka ineko okal beber  
 If you kill reed buck it is good

Ber  
 It is good.

Ka ineko jobi beber  
 If you kill a buffalo it is good

Ber  
 It is good.

Ka inedo lyec beber  
 If you kill elephant, it is good

Ber  
 It is good.

Ka ineko amocing beber  
 If you kill a rhinoceros it is good

Ber  
 It is good.

Edolo amany, amany ohero opong  
 May the liver (28) be folded, may it fill  
 the winnowing basket

Opong.  
 May it fill.

Ibili wic ka lek  
 Stupify them as if dreaming.

Ka lek  
 As if dreaming.

Iryamo ki olwedo  
 May you drive them with lilac

Iryamo  
You drive them

Inek kanati  
May you kill them at once

Inek  
May you kill.

Okwe, wi jobi owil  
Let there be peace, let the buffalo be  
stupidified (29)

Owil  
Stupidified

Okwe, wi kul owil  
Let there be peace, let the warthog be  
stupidified

Owil  
Stupidified

Tongwa atir  
Our spears are straight (aims accurate)

Tir  
Straight

Ka tong opoto kome, ber  
If our spears strike home, (do not miss)  
it is good

Ber  
It is good.

Otyak i ohero ki tyak  
It (carcass) cut up in the winnowing basket

Otyak  
It is cut up.

Ka arum okwe, beber  
If the hunt is peaceful it is good

Ber  
It is good.

Ka ineko lee, beber  
If you kill a beast it is good

Ber  
It is good.

Iryamo ki nywat  
You drive them (animals) limping

Ki nywat  
Limping.

Ka iryemo lee ma ger tenge beber  
If you drive away cruel beasts it is good

Ber  
It is good.

Ka mon gilelo ber  
If the women rejoice it is good

Ber  
It is good.

Ngat ma balo tong wi ye owil  
Whoso wastes a spear (30) let him be stupefied

Wi ye owil  
Be stupefied.

In the Acholi chants the prayers are directed to the spirits of ancestors who are asked for their protection, intervention and blessings: and also to the ghosts of the beasts killed in the hunt: attempts are made to pacify them so that they may not haunt the killers and the homestead. In the Lango chants, however,

it is not clear to whom the prayers - if they can be so called, are supposed to go. In the rain dance chant, the people declare that they will overcome the easterly wind that drives away the rain clouds, and then proceed to ~~enumerate~~ <sup>enumerate</sup> their desires, for rain, health, childbirth and general happiness. In the hunt - chant too, the desire is expressed that the animals should become stupefied so that it is easier to kill them and also harmless to hunt; that their spears should be sharp and their shots accurate. But no spirits are mentioned, no ultra-human forces are asked to intervene.

This irreligious <sup>9</sup>tendency of the Lango in this particular circumstance is not easy to explain; and further work needs to be done before the question can be confidently ~~ly~~ dealt with. But that the Lango do not so much refer to the spirits of ancestors reflects the relatively unimportant role that clan or lineage membership played in Lango society, where more emphasis was laid on the village and age sets. This contrasts vividly with the Acholi pre-occupation with the lineage, the clan and the chiefdom. Acholi ancestor worship acted as a unifying factor between members of the lineage who gathered at the abila under the head of their lineage



## FOOTNOTES

1. The two terms are used interchangeably. Contrary to Father Malandra's suggestion, abila is not derived from billo - to taste, nor kac from kayo - to harvest.
2. For a full description see Fr. Malandra U.J. Vol. VII No. 1 pp. 27-43.
3. "Three months after his father's death the son builds the kac or altar to his father's spirit. The kac is a family affair in charge of the eldest brother".  
Captain Grove S.N. & R. (1919) p. 173.
4. A person is called la woro, who never invites people to share his food; and la wany who always invites himself to other peoples meals; both are highly derogatory terms.
5. See below p. 272. p.
6. Although the "won abila" (owner of the shrine) may be a brother of the deceased, in the chant he refers to him as father.
7. See ~~footnote 2~~ p. 233 above.
8. <sup>FC</sup> Among L Dinka the reverse is the case.
9. Plagues such as smallpox odyer, chicken pox, anyoo, etc. are believed to be caused by certain fiends called gemo, who move in great numbers, across the country, leaving a trail of sufferings and deaths. It is believed that they travel by night; that you can hear the wailings of their babies and the patter of their feet. If they ask you for fire for their smoking pipes, you give them black charcoal.
10. Children here means all the living: as ~~the~~ Christians say: "children of God".

11. Evans-Pritchards remark about the Nuer fits the Acholi equally: "Every man likes to feel that his name will not be forgotten so long as the lineage endures, and that in that sense he will always be part of the lineage" ... The Acholi however do not have the customs of levirate, widow-concubinage and ghost marriage as the Nuer. Children born by the widow and the new husband, are regarded as children of the inheritor, and are treated slightly differently from those of the deceased.
12. "The people" here refers to members of the homestead.
13. The killing of lions and leopards brings honour to the homestead.
14. Blunt spears cannot kill in war or hunt. Success in both brings food and honour and fame to the homestead.
15. May there be good rainfall.
16. May there be good weather.
17. When babies cries are heard it is a sign of good childbirth; for where there are no children no babies cries are heard!
18. Evil forces, diseases, evil thoughts etc.
19. Let all the evil things be buried with the setting sun, so that the morning should be without trouble. The agat litany is said as the sun sets.
20. The ghost of the elephant is asked to enter the homestead but to cause no trouble.
21. The entire elephant species is regarded as belonging to one elephant class; and there exists a feud relationship between the elephants and men. The killing of this particular beast, according to this sentence is justified since it is an execution of an old feud.

22. See footnote <sup>9</sup> above <sup>2</sup> p. 256
23. Any obstacles in the path of success.
24. Used on journeys as "packed lunch".
25. See p. 440 above.
26. The dry season wind which is easterly.
27. Burutok is to the South. The rain comes when the wind veers to the south.
28. Children are very fond of liver. The killer takes the liver as well as other joints; and this brings much rejoicing among the children.
29. A wounded buffalo is one of the most dangerous beasts.
30. Misses a target. Once you throw a spear at an animal and miss it, that spear is wasted.

## Chapter 9

## SONG OF THE SPIRIT - POSSESSION DANCE

"What is your business with me, Jesus son of God  
in the Highest?"

'I adjure you by God, not to torment  
me ... '

'What is your name?' Jesus asked him;

'My name is legion', he replied, for there  
are many of us'."

St. Mark, ch. v.

When, according to the diviner-priest ajwaka,  
ill health, or other misfortune is due to activities  
of ghosts of unknown persons or dangerous beasts or  
cen, the situation is dealt with by inducing the  
offending ghost to "possess" the victim, and then,  
depending on whether it is benevolent or hostile, it  
is given an offering, or driven off or captured and,  
'killed'.

The ajwaka, clad in full regalia (1) which makes  
her look quite frightening, arrives in a small party  
of assistants, carrying basketsful of aja, gourd rattles.  
At the entrance of the house in which the patient is  
waiting, the ajwaka trembles all over - an indication

that the ghosts troubling the patient do not welcome her. Water is sprinkled on the door posts before she and her party enter in. The patient is led round a stool three times, (four times, if the patient is a female) and then seated on the stool. He is then administered a certain mixture, the rough remains of which ~~are~~ smeared on his head. Then the rattles are distributed to those assembled in the house. The stage is set for the spirit possession dance.

There are a number of types of ghosts of unknown persons or beasts. They are recognized by the different kinds of illness or misfortune they cause. Each type is named, is believed to occupy certain localities, and each has appropriate songs and styles of dance. The following are some of them:

(a) Ayweya - These are hostile ghosts which dwell under big trees and in bushes. They cause various types of minor illnesses and also affect hunting.

(b) Orongo - These are also hostile ghosts which dwell in bushes and under the grasses; they affect mainly hunting. According to Drizberg, The Lango p. 229, tipo - the soul of dead persons "is intimately

connected with the manifestation of jok known as orongo, it may even be called Orongo." (2)

(c) Kulu -the most common type. They dwell in rivers and streams, and swamps hence the name (kulu means river). They are responsible for a number of minor sicknesses. The patient usually complains that when crossing a stream he met a person who disappeared, or heard a child wailing but could not see it. These are the river ghosts, who, says the diviner-priest, have caused the ill-health, because the patient knocked them down or trod on their children etc. When the ghost is being driven away, the patient runs towards the river or stream, falls into it, and is held under water for some time.

(d) Odani - These reside on hills and mountains, and cause a variety of illnesses. But they must not be confused with the chiefdom joks which reside on particular hills such as Kilak, Baka or Akwang. (3)

(e) Odude - (dud means buttocks - but I was unable to find the significance of the name Odude).

(f) Anyodo - these are benevolent ghosts which dwell around the homestead. They make it possible for women to have safe childbirths, when offered blood

and meat and beer. Nyodo means birth. These ghosts are also known among Alur and Lango.

(g) Ngu - these are ghosts of dangerous carnivorous beasts such as lions, leopards, cheetah, hyenas, serval etc. (4) It is also sometimes said that the ghosts are those of lion-men, that is of men who have the power to change themselves into beasts etc. The belief in lions etc. is widespread throughout the world, but among the Acholi and Lango, it is believed that only peoples from the West Nile District of Uganda, Madi, Kakwa and Lugbara can transform themselves. Lukya Williams tells how in 1926 four scared Uganda Policemen arrested a Madi woman and, with fixed bayonets, marched her to the District Commissioner's house at Gulu (Acholi District) by night. She was accused of having gone into a village <sup>near</sup> hereby, and changing herself into a lioness, seizing and devouring an Acholi child. (5) This type of ghosts are believed to eat up the embryo so that a pregnancy would suddenly disappear without any abortion.

(h) Olwit, Okwata, Abiba - these are spirits of carnivorous birds of the Kite family. The cult was widespread in Acholi and Lango between 1940 - 50, a

period of great tension and anxiety due to the second world war. The kites were believed to be ghosts flying at night with fireballs in their anus. When a victim saw this, he complained of sharp pains in his stomach and had bloody dysentery. The olwit and okwata live on rats, small birds and chicks. When being driven away from the patients head, a chick is placed at the door, and the following song is sung: persuading the ghost to leave the patient, take the chick and go.

Olwit do ceyo latin gweno  
Elelelele ceyo latin gweno!

Kites O! snatch the little chick  
O he O yes snatch the little chick.

When the patient is possessed, he dances about for awhile inside the house, then he runs, takes the chick and goes with it toward the wilderness.

(i) Ala (Allah?) - this group of ghosts was connected with the Arabs; as the song sung to them, also indicate:

Ala Obaca kulu caba  
Ngat ma nywaro Boi  
Ala! Ala! Ala!

Ala the general of river, seven!  
Who so abuses Boi,  
Ala! Ala! Ala!

The meaning of the song (like most of the other

spirit possession songs) is not clear. Obaca is derived from Arabic "Pagha" meaning leader 'caba', is corrupt form of saba, Arabic or Swahili for seven. The Arab slave and ivory dealers in Acholiland caused a great havoc until the arrival of <sup>Sir.</sup> Samuel Baker. Armed with firearms the Acholi were almost helpless against their numerous and bloody raids. These ghosts probably represented "Arab-ness" in the same way as the cult of "Empoladi" (Poles) represented 'European-ness' among the Nyoro (6) providing an acceptable way of coming to terms with such formidable and potentially dangerous kinds of power.

(j) Omarari - In 1915-18 a bubonic plague swept Acholi and Lango. According to Driscberg the cult of Omarari originated at this time from the Alira, an Acholi clan to the south east. It spread through Lango, and then again into western Acholi, and there the name became confused with Marini, the designation given to the King's African Rifles (the Marines). "Indeed, one Acholi practitioner affirmed that the King's African Rifles (who were then recruiting) were bringing a fearful and dreadful pestilence, and only jok Marini could avert it." (7)

(k) Rubanga - these are extremely hostile and much feared ghosts who are held responsible for hunchbacks - tuberculosis of the spine. Acholi say 'Lubanga oturu kore' Lubanga (ghost) has broken his back'. In 1910, the then head of the Catholic mission abolished the use of the term Jok in favour of Rubanga, as the equivalent for the Christian God. He had done a similar thing among a Nilotic tribe in the Sudan, replacing Juok by the Italian Dio. At that time the Protestant missionaries used the Islamic term Allah: but later took up Rubanga or Lubanga. (8)

This particular cult seems to have originated in Bunyoro, from where it has spread widely. The term is known among the Alur, Acholi, and Lango and Jo pa-Luo; but neither among the Northern Nilotes (Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk and Anuak), nor the Southern Nilotes-Jopadhola and the Kenya Luos. Yet it is used by non Nilotes such as the Madi, Lugbara (9) and Bari.

In Lunyoro the two terms Ruhanga and Rubanga mean God and the Omuchwezi of twins respectively. (10) In his article "Group Aspects of the Nyoro Spirit Medium Cult" (11) <sup>Dr.</sup> John Beattie described Rubanga as "the most important and powerful cwezi spirits, and is especially concerned with twins and other forms of unusual or

abnormal birth, and also with household matters generally. In 1955 it cost £30 to be initiated into the cult.

A medium of the Rubanga spirit cult plays an important role in ceremonies connected with twins in Bunyoro. At birth: the mbadwa as the medium is called, is the one who cuts the umbilical cord, and stays with the mother and the twins in the special hut until the fourth day, when she brings them all out. If either or both of the twins are born dead, or if they die soon afterwards or at any time during their childhood, the Rubanga medium is called and two pots are obtained. "The medium bends, or breaks (hendeka) the bodies and squeeze them into the pots which are then sealed with clay. Four days later, while possessed, the medium bores two small holes near the top of each pot. Some days later the pots are deposited under a special tree in the bush." (12) (my italics).

Wright relates how in Acholiland, he came across a shrine of jok rubanga, which differed from all others, there being a four mouthed pot (13) set up as a result of an affliction in the clan of a disease which sounded like tuberculosis of the spine. It had caused the death of two children and a hunchback in a third. The local

doctor having failed to effect cure, advised that a Jopaluo or Choape doctor from Kiryadongo (Bunyororo) be called in. The Choape (Nyoro) doctor announced that the trouble was a visitation from Jok Rubanga, the great spirit of Jopaluo. A feast was held and beer was drunk from the curious pot. Later the child was killed by the Choape doctor, and buried in a newly prepared pot, and the shrine was built over the grave. (14)

Wright adds that similar stories were known among the Alur at Mahagi, and that more distant Luo tribes to the North and South do not know the word Rubanga. Rev. A.O. Latigo wrote of the jok Rubanga dance; (15)

man kit myel mua bot jo Palwo jo Mucupe  
 This type of dance came from the Palwo, the Mucupe  
 Me niyubu lubanga muturu kor dano.  
 To propitiate lubanga (Rubanga) which has broken  
 back person.

Professor Southall tells us that among the Alur, some of the political or chiefdom joks are called Rubanga, but "the most current manifestation of jok in the everyday life of the society at large are the semi-trance phenomena of the dance of the spirit possession seances ... they are ascribed to numerous jok of different names"; one of these is rubanga. He continues: "In the Highlands all these possession jok are regarded

as a recent intrusion from the lowlands. The Alur of the lowlands to some extent reinforce this by claiming that they too were invaded by these jok from further East" (16) that is from Acholi and Bunyoro areas.

The Lango put the phenomena of possession by ghosts in the province of jok Nam, which is contrasted with jok Lango. (17) Nam refers to peoples of the River Nile, Lake Kioga, that is, the Nyoro, and other Bantā<sup>u</sup> tribelets. Dri~~z~~berg wrote that the ajwaka (diviner-priest) who dealt with diseases caused by jok Nam were called abanwa (corruption of mbandwa pl. abani); and were themselves men and women who had been possessed by jok Nam. Father Crazzolara, in his "A Study of Acholi Language" defined the word abaani as: "a person chosen, and at times possessed by jok; adding that the ajwaka belonged to this group.

All these evidences seem to show that the cult of jok rubanga was imported into Alur, Acholi and Lango from Bunyoro. One important difference, however, between the cult in Bunyoro and elsewhere, is that in Bunyoro members of the cult formed an exclusive and secret society, a body of professional or semi professional mediums. (18) The spirit possession dance or ceremony

served two equally important functions, to cure the patient, and to initiate a new member into the Society. Elsewhere, no such society appears to have been formed. The spirit possession dance was primarily only a means of curing a disease.

It may be recalled how the early missionaries urged their Acholi informants with tiresome questions to choose which from among the many joks had created them, and someone in order to avoid further questioning and out of sheer exhaustion said that Rubanga was the creator. The missionaries, instead of exorcising and sending them among the pigs, proceeded to elevate these hostile ghosts which cruelly break people's backs, to the level of the Christian God. And having thus raised rubanga, not only above the category of ghosts of unknown persons or beasts, but also above ancestral spirits, and spirits of chiefdom joks, the missionaries then began to argue and preach that the Acholi believed in one high God called Rubanga!!

The procedure of spirit possession among the Acholi, Alur and Lango are almost identical, and these have striking similarities to the Nyoro Cwezi initiation ceremonies. (19)

A patient might be suffering from a number of complaints; this is interpreted by the ajwaka as an indication that a number of categories of ghosts are attacking the patient simultaneously. It is necessary, therefore, that each type must be dealt with at a time: following appropriate methods for each, and singing the right songs. Hostile ones are driven out first.

The ajwaka strikes out with a well known song, shaking vigorous rythm on his rattle-gourd. The rest of the people present respond in like manner, joining the chorus and shaking their aja. Those without a rattle clap their hands. The drummers join in, so that the rythmic movement is terrific. (20) The drums are supposed to play tunes for the following songs:

Mon pyelo kana leng                    D.C.  
Women excrete in the open!

Co pyelo i bunga                        D.C.  
Men excrete in the forest.

Mugal camo otigo                        D.C.  
Who delays eats otigo ("ladys finger" a kind of  
green vegetable).

Jok oyelo jo ki cam  
Jok bothers people with food.

For a short while nothing happens to the patient. (21)  
The ajwaka prances and makes gestulations and says:

Biyu wun jogi, bigonyu tol man woko  
Come you joks, come untie this knot

Pingo pe wubino oyotoyot wek wugony latwo?  
Why not you come quickly that you may release  
patient?

If the jok ghosts refuse to come at all, that is, if the patient remains unaffected by the <sup>low</sup>rythm and other suggestions, this is interpreted to mean that the ghosts are very angry and dangerous. Another trial is made later, and if this fails again another, more powerful ajwaka is called in. In most cases however, the patient soon begins to tremble and then to dance according to the bright and quick rythmic movement being produced.

The patient is now possessed and is now a medium. He normally dances about, but other persons who were once possessed may also join in. After a while, the patient is led into the inner room, and through him, the ajwaka contacts the ghosts causing the ailment. The ghosts make known their complaints and demands. An argument ensues. The demands of the ghosts may or may not be met. In case of obdurate ghosts they are rejected and a violent struggle between the ajwaka and the ghost follows "Why do you kill me, O! why do you kill me?" the ghosts are heard to cry; and the conquering ajwaka replies: "You have troubled us badly, now it is

your turn." The hostile ghosts are captured and put into an empty gourd or pot and this is tightly sealed. The gourd is then buried into a live ant-hill. Sometimes it is speared to death. (22)

The patient resumes his seat on the stool in the outer room, and more ghosts are exorcised in a similar manner. The appropriate songs being sung for different types of ghosts. When all the ghosts have been got rid of, the patient dances vigorously, and as he is about to collapse, he is given a goat which he carries on his back and runs with this towards the river, bush, rock etc. as the case may be, that is wherever the last ghost to be exorcised is believed to dwell, and on reaching the river bank, the goat is killed by stamping on its throat; (23) after this the patient collapses. (But in fact he may collapse before reaching the dwelling place of the ghost). He is then carried into the house, where he is left to rest. On coming round he should feel much better, cured and well.

#### Jok Kulu Songs.

These express concern for childbirth. In the first, Jok Kulu is blamed for barrenness, infanticide

and abortion. The second and third mention the gifts she has brought for Jok Kulu, a white cock, some honey, ripe bananas and ~~simsim~~; and even a possibility of ivory, should her prayers be listened to.

1. The words of Jok Kulu causes barrenness in daughters and kills off babies, so that the strap for carrying babies on the back of mothers and nurses becomes useless. Jok Kulu is asked to promise that there will be no abortion.

Ogengo nyara nywal ye!  
 Kop pa kulu  
 Ya wee! ya wee!  
 Nyodo ber ki obeno  
 Ya wee! ya wee!  
 Kop pa Kulu  
 Ya wee! ya wee!  
 Kulu yee, gwok ioo-na iya  
 Maa Kulu  
 Ya wee! ya wee!

It has stopped my daughter (from having) child  
 birth, yes!

The words of Kulu  
 O yes! O yes!  
 Childbirth is good with the strap (i.e. if it is  
 used).

O yes! O yes!  
 The words of Kulu  
 O yes! O yes!  
 Kulu promise, do not cause abortion in me  
 Mother Kulu  
 O yes! O yes!

lok - words here means the responsibility of: that is,  
Kulu is responsible for barrenness.

2. Jok Kulu is offered presents: a cock, some  
honey, and ripe bananas.

Twon gweno pa Kulu  
Eiya! Eiya!  
Kic ~~Kic~~ bent mitte me ananga  
Eiya! Eiya!  
Labolo mitte me amunya  
Eiya! Eiya!  
An akayo wiye  
Eiya! Eiya!

This cock is for Kulu  
O yes! O yes!  
Honey is also required for eating  
O yes! O yes!  
Banana is required, for swall<sup>ing</sup>.  
O yes! O yes!  
I bite its head  
O yes! O yes!

3. Jok Kulu now refered to as "my brother" is offered  
some more presents, a white cock, and some simsim. She  
says that she has no cow, but her husband who is on  
the way coming, may still have something more.

An anongo dyang kwene  
Amiyo ki omera?  
Omera, au awoto ki latwol  
Lamola yo  
An owoto ki latwol  
Cwara odong i yo  
Cwara woto yon  
An anongo dyang kwene?

Where shall I find a cow \*  
 To present to my brother?  
 My brother I have come with a white cock  
 (And) some simsim  
 I have come with a white cock  
 My husband I have left on the way  
 My husband is stalking along proudly  
 Where shall I find a cow?

4. This is a difficult song to interpret. It seems that the patient is promising that some ivory may be given to Jok Kulu; but reference to her husband as "a woman", that is, a cowardly and weak person, may allude to the sex aspect of spirit possession. This will be expanded later.

Omako lyec i Kulu  
 Ya wee! ya wee!  
 Awobi lapyem wangoo  
 Awobi ma yam pyem  
 Nyaragang ya, awobi  
 Omako lyec i Kulu

He caught an elephant in the river  
 O yes! O yes!  
 The young man that brags by the fireside  
 The young man who used to brag  
 He is a 'woman' that young man. (cowardly and weak)  
 He has caught an elephant in the river.

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\* I am a poor person and have no cattle.

2. Jok Ayweya Songs

Owiny is a common name in Acholi: why in the song below he is described as wild beast, is not clear. If this is the name of a ghost, then in the song we see where the Ayweya ghosts dwell, under the grasses.

1. Owiny lee tim woto ma dano  
Owiny omera jok lum  
Te latina Owiny jok tina  
Woto ma ~~dano~~ dano
- Owiny wild beast goes about like man  
Owiny my brother, jok of the grasses  
Under the thick grasses Owiny jok of the wilderness  
Goes about like man.

The next ayweya song refers to the wagtail swaying its tail up and down; but its meaning is not clear.

2. Ojwiny dyang tye i boro  
Nak nak  
Nemu ka bolo yibe  
Nak nak
- Wagtail is in the cave  
Its tail sways up and down  
See him throwing his tail (gracefully)  
It's tail sways up and down.

In the next song the connexion between spirit possession "twins" is obvious. I was told that although this song is also used as an ayweya song, it is mostly used at the twins dance. Who Otwala was, I have not been able to discover.

3. Omera yam won ngom  
Otwala ye men ka abako dogo

Omera ye, won bangi\* ye, won ngom  
 Omera nen ka abedo wi kom ker  
 Won Ocen gikwed Opiyo\*  
 Omera yam won ngom.

My brother (you) who was "owner of the land"  
 Otwala oh! behold, I beseech you  
 My brother, oh! father of twins oh, "owner of the land"  
 My brother, behold I sit on the royal stool  
 Father of Ocen and Opiyo (names of twins)  
 My brother (you) who was "owner of the land".

Although most of the possession dance songs belong to the different types of ghosts, a number of them, especially those sung late at night, do not seem to fit any category. Most of these songs allude to sex and some are quite obscene. I was unable to study closely the sex activities during the possession dance. The songs, however, and this aspect generally, corresponds to those of the Nyoro cult initiation ceremony, to which we may briefly turn.

A young girl told Beattie (25) after her initiation that she was instructed as follows: "wherever you go, babandwa are your parents and grandparents. If a mbandwa asks you for fire for his pipe you should give it to him" (this is a covert reference to sexual

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\* Bangi is nick name for twins; rudi. Opiyo is the first, and Ocen, the second twin. Girls are called Apiyo and Acen.

intercourse) (my italics). In the evening of the initiation, at the ceremony of climbing the termite mound, a male mbandwa sleeps with the young initiate in order to end the dangerous ritual state. Another woman informed <sup>Dr.</sup> Beattie "In this case I refused because I saw that the man was diseased, but at a subsequent initiation ceremony I lay with another musegu (male mbandwa) because I had not recovered from my illness and the diviners had told me that the reason I did not get better was that I had not yet ended the mahono (dangerous ritual state) by copulating with a musegu". An initiate had to sleep with a musegu regardless of his age, state of health, or whether the woman was married or not. She must do this if she wishes to be initiated into the mbandwa cult. Following is one of the songs <sup>Dr.</sup> Beattie recorded:

Wherever I am called  
 And wherever my wonderings take me  
 I find beautiful girls prepared for me  
 Eee! how happy you are  
 When you bandwa.

To what extent a similar situation obtained in Acholi and Lango during possession dances is a question for further study. But that some form of it did exist may be seen from the condemnation it drew from an Acholi

Christian priest.

"Man myel mua loka Palwo, jo Mucupe aye gukelo. Myelle pe ber, balo mon mada. Bimedo two ma pol pien gimyelo dyewor, kingi orubbe atata, wer-re rac mada. Dok balo odi pa jo ma pol, balo deko, camo lim ki nimungu two pe gitero i daktor."\*

"This is a dance which came from across the River (Nile), Palwo, people of Choape brought it. The dance is not good. It spoils women very much. It will increase many diseases (v.d.), because they dance it at night: the dancers are mixed up anyhow,\*\* the songs are very bad.\*\*\* Also it spoils the homes of many people\*\*\*\* it spoils women,\*\*\*\*\* wastes money, and people do not reveal their diseases, they do not go to hospital."

The following song refers to a beautiful but loose girl called Dove: whose 'semen fills a granary': meaning that her vagina was always full of semen of the many men who slept with her.

Nyara ma nyinge Luga  
Luga yam lakwete co  
Luga yam ber oneko  
Lac pare pongo dero  
Nyara lu-lwongo Luga

---

\* Rev. A.O. Latigo in Acholi Magazine, Vol. 1, p. 24.

\*\* without regard to health

\*\*\* obscene

\*\*\*\* Husbands seek divorce when their wives go about sleeping with abaani.

\*\*\*\*\* Makes them loose.

My daughter whose name was Dove  
 Dove was a loose girl  
 Luga was very pretty (killingly beautiful).  
 Her semen would fill a granary  
 My daughter was called Luga.

The husband in the next song is described as a lone-hunter. He does not come home to his wife at night, as he goes about sleeping with other women. It is not clear whether he was one of the abaani, or whether the wife sings this, as it were, to say that she is also free to have other men.

Aligo ye,  
 Cwara dwogo awene?  
 Aligo ye  
 Cwar mon alwak  
 Cwar ma woto wor  
 Cwar dwogo awene?  
 Cwar mon kibwoya

Lone hunter oh  
 My husband when will he come back?  
 Lone hunter oh  
 Husband of many wives  
 My husband who goes about by night  
 My husband when will he come back?  
 Husband of defeated wives!

This too is about a 'lone-hunter' husband. Here the wife repudiates him, saying he is no longer her husband, and sets out to look for another man "who shall help me" - i.e. sleep with me.

Twon co woto aligo  
 Meno cwara ku.  
 Ladwar woto aligo do  
 Anong mera ma konya kanyi?  
 Twon co woto aligo.

The 'bull'\* that goes hunting alone  
 That is not my husband;  
 The hunter that goes hunting alone.  
 Where shall I find mine (a husband) that shall  
 help me  
 The 'bull' goes about hunting alone.

This is a description of the sexual act, with  
 emphasis on what the toes do when the earth is soft.

Gol piny ki tyeni acel  
 Lawod tyeni ogolo ngom  
 Latal woto aligo  
 Lawod tyeni agolo gnom  
 Gol piny ki tyeni acel

Dig into the ground with one foot  
 Your big toe digs a hole into the ground  
 The sorcerer\*\* goes about hunting alone  
 One of your toes digs a hole into the ground  
 Dig into the ground with one foot.

The penis of the man in this song is likened to  
 a hard-headed spear penetrating into a hard rock. The  
 woman, perhaps unwilling, keeps her thighs tightly closed.

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\* Important person.

\*\* Copulation normally takes place inside a house.  
 To sleep with one another in the bush is regarded  
 as an act of sorcery.

Tong ma lake tok  
 Cubu Lela\*  
 Tong ma an ageno  
 Cubu got  
 Ladwar obutu i tim  
 Ato Lela  
 Tong ma lake tek  
 Kaka Lela  
 Aligo tongnge tek  
 Ato Lela  
 Mwoco Lela Geto  
 Ato woko.

The spear with the hard point  
 Penetrates the Lela rocks  
 The spear that I trust  
 Penetrates the Lela rocks  
 The hunter slept in the wilderness  
 I die\*\* Lela rocks!  
 The spear with the hard point  
 Splits the Lela rocks  
 The spear of the lone hunter is hard  
 I die Lela rocks  
 He shouts the praise name Lela Gelo  
 I die completely.

In normal circumstances a chiefdom jok is concerned only with men and women of that chiefdom. In this song Jok Lapul of Palaro is described as petulant, because "he" possesses not only people of Palaro, but also outsiders: mother's, sister's sons: father's sister's sons, etc.

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\* Lela rock - gneiss, iron; or iron in a rough form.  
 - also flat stone or rock on which corn is spread for drying. Lela is also a name of a Hill in Palaro, from which iron ore was obtained in old times.

\*\* With pain or sex pleasure?

Lapul ki kolo mere  
 Mako wa ki okeyo  
 Jok man wai lakolo  
 Mako wa ki nero  
 Lapul ki gingi mere  
 Mako wa ki omaro etc.

Lapul is petulant  
 He possess even maternal uncles (mother's sister's  
 sons)

This jok is peevish  
 He possesses even paternal uncles (father's  
 sister's sons)

Lapul is irritatingly pertinent  
 He possesses even omaro (wife's sisters husbands and  
 children of sisters).

In this song Lapul is described as desiring a woman.

Jok ker wai mito nyako  
 Jok kwaro  
 Jok wa ka imito nyako  
 Amini mola ya  
 Lapul in ka imito nyako  
 Amini mola!

Royal jok he desires a girl  
 Jok of the ancestors  
 Our jok, if you desire a girl  
 I give you brass (bracelet) here! (26)  
 Lapul you, if you desire a girl  
 I give you brass!

## FOOTNOTES

- (1) These include bark cloth robes, and head dresses decorated with beads, cowry shells, mantles of skins of white and black colobus monkey, necklaces of cowries, beads, wooden bits, claws of carnivorous birds and animals, wreath of bomo, a convulvus creeper plant, bells tied round the legs etc. They create an impressive awe inspiring appearance. This is strikingly similar to that of the Nyoro mediums and Lango ajwaka.
- (2) See also Hayley Anatomy of Lango Religion pp. 8-11.
- (3) This is what Driesberg and Hayley referred to when they asserted that all hills and rocks in Lango were associated with jok.
- (4) See p. 242 ~~below~~
- (5) U.J. Vol. IV p. 91; Vol. 10 pp. 74-5.  
"The Jongu is a man who has the power of turning himself into a leopard ... there is a vallage of these people at Opari who are at the present moment supposed to be engaged in eating a Kuku village on the other side of the river. In actual fact nearly 50 deaths have occurred from man eating leopards during the last four years at the village in question. In the case of the Opari leopards however some say that they do not actually turn themselves into leopards but that they have a charm which enables them to send ordinary leopards to do the work for them." ~~Capt.~~ Grove S.N. & R. Vol. II (1919) p. 178.
- (6) Dr. John Beattie (The Nyoro pp. 78-9)
- (7) The Lango p. 221.
- (8) Fr. Crazzolara U.J. Vol. VII pp. 130-137
- (9) According to Dr. Middleton: The Madi word for

- (21) God is Rubangi, and among the Lugbara there is a shrine called ridi or rudu, which in some areas is also called Orubangi: (Bangi in Acholi means twins). Lugbara Religion p. 69 footnote.
- (10) Lunyoro-Lunyankole Dictionary M.B. Davis.
- (11) Rhodes Livingstone Institute Journal No. XXX Dec. 1961.
- (12) <sup>r.</sup> John Beattie "Twin ceremonies of Bunyoro" J.R.A.I. Vol. 39 p.1.
- (13), (14) U.J. Vol. VII No. 3 p. 130-
- (15) Acholi Magazine No. 1. p. 25.
- (16) ~~The~~ <sup>Society</sup> Alur Appendix IV p. 371
- (17) Driberg The Lango p. 222-3. "A modern manifestation dating back to 1877 when Kabarega escaped from Bunyoro".
- (18) "Although nowadays, owing to Government and missionary repression, the spirit possession cult is a clandestine, even furtive affair, there is no doubt that in pre-european times members of the cult did form recognized groups or corporations" John Beattie "Rhodes Livingstone Journal No. XXX p. 19.
- (19) Compare the description below with Beatties description of Nyoro initiation into cwezi spirit cult Journal of Africa Studies No. 16 (1957) p. 153-4; and in the exorcising of cen among the Lango. The Lango p. 222-3
- (20) For a psychological study of the use of drums etc. in ghost possession see Sargent: The Battle for the Mind (1957) Under the "witchcraft ordinance", spirit possession dances are now illegal in Bunyoro, so that drums are not used for fear of attracting attention of the authorities. Beattie Rhodes Livingstone Journal No. XXX p. 19.

- (21) Among the Nyoro, after some time has passed without the initiate showing any sign of possession, the babandwa (mediums) present begin to sing songs criticising her:  
 She has a stupid expression  
 Like a goat which is about  
 To be caught by a leopard.  
 If nothing still happens, the initiate is taken outside the hut and before going in again she is told "You have been annoying us for a long time; as soon as we go back to the house and start singing again you must begin to shake the branch of the muramura you are holding ... so that people may say that muchwezi has come".  
 Dr. J. Beattie, Journal of African Studies. No. 16 pp. 154.
- (22) For the Lango ceremony see Dricberg's strikingly similar account The Lango pp. 232-233
- (23) Among the Lango the goat is kicked by the patient which is then killed. The Lango p. 232.
- (24) Required by Kulu. All the demands of Kulu, as prescribed by the ajwaka are being fulfilled.
- (25) Dr. John Beattie, Journal of African Studies No. 16 p. 159.
- (26) A girl accepts a young man's proposal to marry her by giving him some object, a ring, beads, bangles of giraffe tail hair etc. as a sign (what usually happens is that the young man takes the object by force; as no girl ever willingly gives it). The young man shows this to his father when he makes the request that the marriage be arranged.

## Chapter 10

## 'POETIC JUSTICE' THROUGH ORAK DANCE SONGS.

O lamin apwai, we!  
Kop loyo odo.

O sister of my friend, listen!  
Words pain more than a stick.

(Acholi song 1940s)

"The rule of custom" wrote Maciver and Page "is only sanctioned by some degree of social displeasure or ostracism, but this, in its extremer forms, is one of the most powerful sanctions that exist" (Society (1961) p. 140). In this chapter we examine the way in which the orak dance song function as sanctions to some Acholi customs. (I was unable to collect Ikoce dance songs of the Lango which corresponds to the Orak). No attempt is made here to distinguish between fashions, conventions and etiquette, for such a distinction would not be useful. But we draw a 'rough and working' line between codes relating to institutions such as marriage, inheritance, chiefship, called cik, and the modes of behaviour called kit, which we treat here as

customs.

L. Okech in his book Tekwaro ki ker Lobo Acholi (1953), describes the rules of murder, assault and battery, arson, fornication and tyer - official tributes to the chief in Chapter VI entitled Twer ki Tek pa Pwodi i lobo Acholi (Authority and Power of chiefs in Acholiland). Chapter VII is entitled Kit Acholi - manners, behaviour, ways of the Acholi, and here he discusses the attitude and behaviour of the Acholi towards work, hunting, dancing and games. A similar distinction is made by R.S. Anywar, who after describing marriage rules wrote "... lok man omiyo cik pa wat pire Tek tutwal" (... because of these reasons the rules concerning incest were well observed). Religious and other sanctions are beyond the scope of this thesis.

The modes of behaviour we have called customs, like other social codes, are an apparatus for compelling or forbidding certain behaviour. By conforming to them the individual is identified with the group and this in turn strengthens the unity of the group. The sense of superiority or contempt felt towards those who do not conform, ridicule, laughter, satire and gossip are the sanctions. Rev. A. Latigo wrote that the

reason why the Acholi removed their two lower incisors, was because they feared a particular 'joke insult', ngala: which goes "Laki ogebbe calo pa dano awila", your row of teeth is gapless as that of a slave. For similar reasons young girls of about 14 years of age willingly and gladly underwent the painful <sup>t</sup>tattooing operation: the instruments are a fishing hook and home made razor with which the skin is hooked, and cut off, and designs made all over the face, chest and back of the victim; after this the whole area is washed with salted water and rubbed with sand.

This type of Ngala (joke) is to be distinguished from that which exist for instance between in-laws, (the types described by Radcliffe Brown in The Introduction: African Systems Structure). This takes place at all times in all places <sup>J. Kinding and Harriet P.P. 54-60.</sup> between any two or more persons or groups; although the tendency is for an elder person to ngala 'joke insult' a younger person, rather than the other way round. It is supposed to be a friendly comment on another persons behaviour. It may be a single sentence or it may assume the form of a debate. Following is a typical ngala between young boys of say between the ages of eight and twelve. Someone has wetted his bed in the night.

Oto Ha, ha, somebody urinated in bed last night.

Group: Who, who was it Oto? Tell us, are you a woman (weak and cowardly)?

Oto Olok.

Olok Liar; what a liar you are. But you stole some ground nuts from the pot yesterday, you are a liar and a thief.

Oto I did not steal anything. The nuts were left there by my sister for me. You say I am a liar; but why were you crying this morning. Why did they cane you if you did not do it? (Laughter).

Olok It was not me who urinated in bed. It was my brother Odur, you see! you liar, liar!

Oto Look at the eyes of a liar! You are old enough to start wooing (Laughter) and you still urinate in bed?

Opige Here comes Odur, lets ask him.

Oto Yes lets ask Odur (Laughter).

Olok You are very stupid, you coward!

Oto What! what do you think you urinator in bed? (much laughter).

In the wrestling match that follows, the small crowd makes sure that no offensive weapons are used. The two boys may box or even use small things as canes. The whole episode is closed after this. Olok is stung into fighting by the laughter of the little group of playmates. At a later day somebody may still refer to

him publicly as the one who urinates in bed, which may provoke another fight. Among grown ups, the songs of the orak dance is a form of this ngala or 'joke insult'.

The lucak wer, creators or composers (they produce both the words and tunes) are well known, feared and respected, because of their talent and for their ability to lampoon their enemies <sup>E.P.</sup> (Evans-Pritchard 'The Dance' Africa Vol. i. p. 449). But they do not enjoy any special economic status. They socially 'kill' with their sharp and painful songs. One of the most feared poet-musician in West Acholi, who is still alive and active, is called Opoka, a man from Lamogi chiefdom, and belongs to the Pailyec clan. His comment on the generally held idea that ~~the~~ <sup>he</sup> 'kills' people socially is contained in one of his most humorous songs. It takes the form of a conversation between the ghost of a person 'killed' by the song of Opoka and a 'by:stander'.

"Lagama icito kanyi"?  
Lagama where are you going to?

"Acito tung pa To".  
"I am going to the homestead of Death".  
(I am dead)

"Cimot To"!.  
"Take my greetings to Death"! (If you are really  
dead).

"Iyo, iyo"  
 "Certainly, certainly".

Lapailyec owero wer  
 The man from Pailyec (Opoka) has composed a song.

Wer meko Okoli.  
 The song has killed Okoli.

"Iyo, iyo, Ndio"  
 "Certainly, certainly, Ndio!" (Swahili for yes).

Apw<sup>o</sup>yo motti  
 Thanks for the 'good wishes'

Dong koni aci moto  
 In a few moments, I will greet (Death)!

Lagama Okoli had 'died' as a result of a song composed by Opoka, 'the man from Pailyec'. And he, Okoli (or is it his ghost?) meets the 'killer' who pretends not to know of Okoli's 'death': Okoli (or his ghost) does not recognize the killer either.

When this blind poet was threatened with physical death by someone against whom he had composed a bitter song, Opoka retorted with the following song, a fitting title of which would be "Pity my mother when I die".

Nen min Opoka  
 Behold the mother of Opoka

Oloko doge kunyango  
 She is turning her mouth towards the east

Oloko ngeye kupoto ceng  
 She is turning her back to the west

Ka kok do!  
 And she is wailing

Omako wiye ki cinge aryo  
 She is holding her head with both hands

Lanyongo nyongo ye  
 She is squatting down oh!

Wer tum ku!  
 Her (sad) songs are endless

Omako wiye ting ting  
 She is holding her head tightly, very tightly.

Omako wiye  
 She is holding her head.

Ka kok do!  
 And she is wailing!

Opoka, like other Acholi composers plays the Nanga, harp which he uses as an accompaniment. But the songs may also be played by the girls on adungu, the bow harp, and the zitters, lukembe. Most frequently however they are sung at the Orak dance.

The orak is the most informal dance of the Acholi: in that there is no special occasion for it, and to hold it no chief's authority or permission is required. Usually however, it is held in connexion with marriage and so it is also called Myel keny, (marriage dance). Thus, when a girl has been abducted opor, that is, when

she is (supposed to have) left her homestead secretly with her lover, (often the girl's mother knows all about it) the dance is held nightly, until a delegation from her homestead has taken her back. And again during the payment of the dowry and the completion of marriage ceremonies: the orak is performed for days or even weeks, depending on the status of the groom. After an otole dance, as was mentioned before, the young men and girls dance the orak all night long. After an awak, communal co-operative cultivation of the garden or construction of a house of one member, some beer is consumed, and later in the night the orak is performed. It is also called myel kongo, beer dance.

Within a short period of about fifty years the orak dance has undergone many changes and has assumed various names. L. Okech says that around 1906 it was called Ojere (Te kwaro ki ker lobo Acholi p.20). This name persisted in some parts of Acholiland until 1923, then the dance became known as lalobolobo, in which, according to Bere "all the dancers carry little sticks. The men form an outer ring of the circle and the girls the inner ring. There are no drums at all in this

dance and the movements are rather slow and stiff ... Beer is not made and there are no special occasion for the dance" (U.J. Vol. I. p. 61). The small sticks were beaten to produce the rythm. Then it became known as lacele, and afterwards as lalobolobo. This was the period when, for the first time, lacukucuku, a kind of rattle, made out of fruits of a plant known by that name was used. The shell of the fruit, about an inch in diameter is scooped out, and small stones put in it. Three to twelve of them are then joined together by a string which is tied round the leg. It jingles as the dancer stamps the ground rythmically.

The following song, calling lacukucuku the poor man's ankle bells, was composed at that time.

Gara pa laca<sup>3</sup> lacuku do  
Ankle bells of the poor, that is the lacuku (short  
for lacukucuku).

Gara pa laca<sup>3</sup> yo!  
Ankle bells of the poor oh!

Lacucuku kati woko  
Lacucuku come out (who has the lacucuku should  
not be shy to join the dance).

Gara pa laca<sup>3</sup> lacuku do  
Ankle bells of the poor oh!

Gara pa laca<sup>3</sup> omera  
Ankle bells of the poor, my brother

Lacucuku kati woko.  
Lacucuku come out.

In some parts of Acholiland dancers also had on their heads a thing called lalimu, a ball mounted at the end of a stick made from the bamboo stem, and fixed on the head dress (~~See plate~~ ). As they stamped their feet rythmically, the dancers shook their heads so that the lalimu moved up and down. It was difficult to do this and sing at the same time. So those who wore the lalimu danced silently, laling. So the dance came to be known as lalingo lingo.

Quite recently however, a man called Larakaraka introduced new styles. Instead of the little sticks, refered to by Bere, he started the use of half-gourds, awal, which was tapped rythmically by a number of sticks tied together (later bicycle <sup>spokes</sup> chains were used). The new style was called after the initiator. It is recorded in the next song.

Larakaraka okelo myel me deyo  
Larakaraka has initiated a dance of pride

Larakaraka oroto myel me deyo.  
Larakaraka has discovered a dance of pride.

Orak is the short form of larakaraka. When performed in the moonlight it is called lamoko-cwang.

(from moko, flour mixed with yeast and water; owang, burnt). One type of millet beer, labwor, is made from baked moko. The story goes that a certain girl who was asked by her mother to bake the moko, left it on the stove and went off to dance in the moonlight; and it was completely destroyed: hence the name.

During the last 2 years or so the moonlight dance has changed its styles: under the influence of the ball-room "pairing up" system. It is now called moko; to get caught, to get stuck to. The Acholi District Council passed a resolution a year ago prohibiting the myel moko, because of the sexual immorality alleged to be committed during the dance.

The Orak is primarily a dance for youths. Very few married men and women take part, although they watch the day time performances. And often older women, provoked by the irresistible drumming and rhythm of the gourds and the singing, line up and dance in a circle around the edge of the arena. Young married women are strictly forbidden. R.S. Anywar has called it "myel me cuna", dance for wōing. (Acholi ki ker Megi. p. 211). It is important to bear this in mind,

when we consider the meanings of the songs. For, in the presence of a lover, criticism, accusations and insults tend to be sharper and to cut more deeply than in other circumstances.

The orak dance is a local activity, that is, only those living within a few hours walk of the arena attend. But the dancers come from different clans and lineage groups. The youths meet and get to know one another at these dances, as people come from different parts either to dance or to watch, to meet friends or lovers or relatives, and all those from the audience, the public who, through singing the larakaraka songs pass judgment on breachers of custom, praise achievements of other and laud those in authority.

On nearing the arena, the party of dancers from one village splits into two: the girls move off in a group and join another group from a different village. For, in this dance a man may not have as partner, his sister, niece, aunt or any of his relatives that he is prohibited from marrying: the main reason being that the orak provides an opportunity for young persons to meet prospective spouses. Another reason is that some of the songs are quite obscene: and it is improper

to sing such songs in the presence of one's female relatives and vice versa in the case of girls.

Below are two such songs:

1. ~~Miya~~ miya mo do  
Give it (your body) to me my dear  
  
Gin pa Lubanga tum ku  
This object (her body) (made by) God, does not  
wear out.  
  
Anyaka liwota we  
You girl, my lover listen,  
  
Gin pa Lubanga telo  
This object (his penis) (made by) God, is erect.  
  
~~Miya~~ miya mo do  
Give it (your body) to me my dear  
  
Laden~~g~~ bene telo  
The clitoris is also erect.
2. Gin ni mit kiwor do  
This thing (vagina) is sweet at night  
  
Tum mit ka lucobo ngete  
Vagina is sweet when you spear it (with the penis)  
on the side.  
  
Tum mit liwota do  
Vagina is sweet my dear friend  
  
Gin ni mit kiwor  
This thing is sweet at night.  
  
Wi yo aba wor  
Oh behold those active at night  
  
Aba wor livenyo kene  
They each struggle alone (no one asks another for  
assistance when sleeping with a girl).

Myel opong kiwor do  
The arena is full at night

Mon dongo dong rabo ngete  
Elderly women dance on the edge (of the arena)

Tun mit ki aba wor  
Vagina is sweet to those active at night.

The entry by a group into the arena resembles that of the otole dance. Much resistance is put up by the groups occupying the arena against new comers to "suppress" the drum major. And since there is not much control, often this sparks off a fight among the competitive and aggressive youths. The other groups do not withdraw when a new group has made their entry. A soloist from the new group starts a song, leaping up and down and playing on his half-gourd. Members of his group take up the chorus. But this is met by disruptive jeers, shouts, and counter songs from the other groups. If the new group is discouraged by the disruption, this is very shameful, and the girls move away. If they succeed in getting the entire arena dancing to their tune, this is considered great success. Their soloist and drummers become well known throughout the locality.

The boys in a curved line, interlock their legs,

bend forward and play on their half-gourds. The girls, in another line in front of the boys, facing them, move forwards and backwards, then coming as close as possible to the boys, turn their backs, and shake their waists and buttocks to the rythm of the drums, the singing and the tapping on the half-gourds. This is called piyo teke. It needs some training before a girl can do it properly. There are a number of songs, about girls who cannot do it well.

Nyanmi wiro dude awira  
This girl simply turns her buttocks

Lanyani teke dong peke  
This girl, to do the teke, she cannot

Nyal pa Maro  
Daughter of a mother-in-law

Loko dude aloka ya  
She simply moves her buttocks

Lamin apwai  
Sister of the youth

Teke oloyo anyaka do!  
Teke, she is completely unable to do oh!

"If a boy is pleased with the dance of any particular girl he leaves his place in the ring, and catches her right hand", which he lifts up and whispers a few words in her ears. (R.M. Bere 'Acholi Dances' U.J. Vol. 1 p. 65).

When the drumming has stopped, this marks the end of one song. A soloist from any group starts another song: and the dance continues; but there is constant competition between the boys and girls, in the singing, drumming and dancing.

The drums have different tunes, to which words are often attached. The following is one example:

Small drums (lakele): Adula ongolo te pene  
Adula has tattoo below her  
'belly button'

Drum major.

Min bul:

Pyere ding, pyere yom  
Her waist is narrow, her  
waist is soft

Nyare odin, odin bic, bic.  
Her pubic hair is bushy,  
bushy very bushy.

Odin, odin, odin cuc, cuc!  
Bushy, bushy, bushy and very  
dark!

As it grows darker, pairs disappear and re-appear later singly. But this must be done very secretly, to avoid the girl's brothers. The dance breaks up unannounced. Parties from the different villages leave as and when they please, but there is a lot of chasing of the girls in the bushes. Sleeping with a girl in the open is, however, taboo. "If the sun or

the open (woko) sees your vagina you become barren"; and a boy who tries to sleep with a girl outside a hut is called latal, a wizard. The girls are usually dragged, kicking but silent, into huts. Attempts by the Acholi District Council to ban myel moko, were prompted by the fact that the taboo referred to above has rapidly lost its effect on the modern youth, and sleeping in the open, if in the dark was becoming widespread, during the dance. The orak dance compares with the dance of the youths of Buganda, that Roscoe recorded, "took place nightly amidst the plantain groves during the time when the moon was nearing the full and especially on nights of full moon". The wives of the King and chiefs were strictly forbidden to take part. The mixed dances ended frequently in immoral conduct". (The Baganda p. 24).

Unlike the otele and bwala songs, and also to some extent the funeral dirges, the orak songs are very transitory. Being running commentaries on day to day affairs of individuals, like news items in a newspaper, they soon become out of date; and new ones, equally transitory, replace them. The vast majority of them

treat local issues; and the jokes, the 'twist of the tail' are understood only locally. As Evans Pritchard remarked of the Zande beer songs:

"their meaning is not doubtful in their context and in the creator's mind, for they refer to persons and events known to him ... but I have found that often people, though they knew and sang the songs have only a very vague idea of the meanings" ('The Dance' Africa Vol. I p. 449).

Smith and Dale thought that the songs of a corresponding dance among the Ila were almost meaningless:

"It is not easy, even for one well acquainted with the language, to translate these songs. They abound in words and phrases of not a bit of meaning than 'Hi-tiddeley-hi-ti'" (The Ila p. 272).

Occasionally, however there are issues which ~~ex~~<sup>e</sup>cite the interest of a wider audience. When an important person such as a chief, a jago, a headmaster of an important school, the army, an organization which is both respected and feared, and represented in the village by a soldier etc. when such persons are caught in a funny situation and become objects of ridicule and fun, the orak songs composed about them are at once popular and widely sung. The element of protest, of hitting back, of "putting their back up" is quite clear in these songs, as will be shown below.

A visitor arrived, and Ato, a newly married wife started off on her journey towards Nimule. This was interpreted as meanness, that she was running away from her guests so as to avoid feeding them.

Oringo welo yo!  
She ran away from visitors oh!

Oringo welo dok Lumule  
She ran away towards Nimule

Oringo welo  
She ran away from visitors.

Wi yo! Ato oringo welo  
Oo dear! Ato ran away from visitors

Ato woko  
I die (of shame)

Ato oringo welo  
Ato ran away from visitors

Someone, charged with theft of a raincoat was heard to swear that a snake should bite him if he really stole the raincoat belonging to Larenga.

Girikot Larenga do, girikot  
The raincoat of Larenga, oh, the raincoat.

An ka akwalo girikot  
If I have stolen the raincoat

Twol otonga  
Let me be bitten by a snake

Ee, girikot  
Ee, raincoat

Ko' dok akwalo nining?  
How could I have stolen it?

Mother's-in-law are not always very popular with their sons-in-law. One of the reasons for this is their endless advice on how her son-in-law should behave. In the next song, Akelo the wife is asked to tell her mother to stop talking endlessly like the otel, a bird, the song of which, often announces bad luck. Apparently Akelo's mother was a short and small woman.

Maro ango ma loko calo otel wi yat?  
What kind of mother-in-law is this that talks  
(endlessly) like the otel perched on a tree?

Akelo kong i juku meni,  
Akelo please stop your mother

Lok ogengo dongo  
Talking too much prevented her growing taller.

The next two songs are accusations of killing by poison, and of witchcraft. In the first song, a wife is suspected of having put poison in mushroom dish, and the whole of her lineage is accused of being poisoners. She is referred to as "the sister of my friend", and her brother's name is Latoni.

Awola pa lamin apwai  
Poison of the sister of the youth

Awola man odoko rac  
The poison has become terrible

To pa Latoni-gi  
Death (the poison) of Latoni and his clan

Dong tweere ku  
No one can survive it

Owola ki obwol  
I was poisoned with a mushroom dish

Owola ki otigo  
I was poisoned with otigo dish (a kind of vegetable)

Awola pa lamin apwai  
Poison of the sister of the youth

Awola man otyeko jo  
The poison has finished off many people.

The next song mentions Owiny and Lunyama who are brothers. Both are alleged to be wizards. They dance naked around other peoples homesteads and cast spells that the occupants may die. When wizards are caught doing this they may be killed outright. But the 'usual method', so it is said, is by driving a long peg through the wizard's anus. (See Proverb No. 67). In this song Owiny is said to be a worse wizard than Lunyama.

Wuyeny yat mutwo  
Look for a dry peg

Wurwak i ter Owiny  
Push it into Owiny's anus.

Twora Lunyama do  
Lunyama is less dangerous oh!

Twora Lunyama ya.  
Lunyama is far less dangerous.

Nenu yat mutal  
Get a stout dry peg

Guru ter Owiny  
Drive it into Owiny's anus

Otyeko jo ki tal  
He has finished many people with his sorcery.

Twon lajok ya  
He is a great wizard.

My father, from whom I recorded this song says that Owiny was a huge man with deep set little eyes. When someone started this song, Owiny would vanish into his house and fetch a large spear (Kaba, the type used for killing elephants) and would dance round the circle looking for the soloist. This was great fun, because when Owiny was on one side of the arena, a soloist would emerge from the opposite side. You sang in a muffled voice when Owiny's shadow passed near you.

The next group of songs are about soldiers and their wives. As mentioned above, a large number of Acholi men joined the army, the Kings African Rifles (K.A.R. rendered Keya in Acholi). When the men came home on leave or on retirement, they stood out socially

and economically: in contrast with their clansmen who remained behind. Much fitter, better fed and clothed, having more cash and property than most people in the village, they had some knowledge of a second language, Swahili, and had seen the world and therefore a much broader outlook. This made them individually and also as a group, objects of envy: which became more intense because they were proud and haughty, full of self confidence and most assertive, and the girls went for them, to the annoyance of "those who remained behind". They had plenty of stories to tell, and crowds gathered around them to hear of their exploits in strange far away countries; and of course also to obtain some small gifts. These were dubbed acut, 'vultures'. It was not a pleasant name - (compare Proverb No. 102 } Vultures do not alight anywhere).

Some of the feelings of "those who remained behind" come out clearly in these songs. The first one questions the motive of those who joined the army. The soldiers ask their brother to look after their wives well, because they are off to fight Hitler (~~Hitler~~ *Stila*). They are asked "is this your father's feud"? and to their answer that it is the white man's war, they are told to

go and ask Mus<sup>s</sup>olini to come and look after their wives  
and children and property.

Awobe tua ,we :  
Youths of our homeland, listen :

Katino, gwoku mon gang  
Children, look after our women in the homestead

Wan wacito ka celo <sup>Iti la</sup>  
We are off to shoot (fight) Hitler.

Monyi mony pa woru ce?  
This battle, is it your fathers feud?

Otara do  
It is the white mans (battle).

Mony dwong ya  
The battle is great oh.

Wupeny Musolini  
You ask Mussolini (to come and look after your  
wives and property).

Questioned further as to why they must join in the  
white man's fight, the soldiers, according to this song,  
reply that it is because Mus<sup>s</sup>olini is a bad man, he  
fights even with women. Italians are refered to as  
Katoli, catholics, because the first catholic fathers  
in Acholiland were Italians, the Verona Fathers. Moreover  
when Italy declared war on the Allies in 1939, all the  
Italian Fathers in Acholiland were arrested and detained.

Kitino Katoli yam oero mony  
Young men (fighters) of Italy started a fight.

Oero ali ma lukwiya tere  
They started a feud, but nobody knows the cause;

Lweny ceng awaco in obed be  
Fighting, I said some time ago, there should be none.

Lawi monyi Musolini  
The leader of this battle is Musolini

Musolini lare re lwenyo wa ki mon  
Musolini is quick tempered, he fights  
even with women.

Jonni otolo luduku piny  
They (Italians) have now thrown away their  
rifles

Gilaro mujinga  
They are now using artillery. (The war is  
becoming more serious).

"Girls beware", this is the discouraging theme  
of the next two songs. The first warns the girls  
that soldiers suffer from venereal diseases. The singer  
tells of the sufferings of his father's sister's daughter,  
lakeya, when the soldier la-keya thrust his long and  
big penis, its top eaten up, and 'red-hot' with ghonorea,  
into her vagina (just like the stake that Odysseus  
used for putting out the eye of the cyclope). In great  
agony she cries Oyo-yo-yo!

Oyo-yo! Oyo-yo-yo! Oyo-yo.

Twon nyac ma la-keya ocwinyo kom lakeya  
The great ghonorea with which the soldier scorched  
my father's sister's daughter

Lakeya kok oyo-yo!  
My father's sister's daughter moans Oyo-yo!

Twon cun lakeya obako kwede lakeya  
The large penis with which the soldier stabbed  
my father's sister's daughter

Lakeya kok Oyo-yo!  
My father's sister's daughter moans: Oyo-yo!

Lwak nyac ma lakeya orado kom lakeya  
The many types of venereal diseases that the  
soldier smeared all over my father's  
sister's daughter.

Lakeya kok bene bene  
My father's sister's daughter weeps all night long

Lakeya kok Oyo-yo-yo!  
She moans Oyo-yo-yo!

The girl who marries a soldier has many long and lonely nights when he is away on service. He may write to her occasionally, and she to him; but this cannot satisfy her sexual desires. "Letters" the next song declares "do not cause pregnancy".

Kere kere kere ki waraga  
Writing writing writing so many letters.

Waraga doko latin ce?  
Those letters can they be changed into a child?

Mon keya lulur  
Wives of soldiers are barren (have to wait for years before they get a child).

Mon keya lulur ada!  
Wives of soldiers are truly barren.

Chiefs are often subject to criticism and ridicule through the orak songs. In the first song, it is alleged that a chief advised his daughter not to marry a poor man. The poet reminds the chief that all men are children of God. In the song the chief is referred to as nyer moni, a certain man.

Anongo nyer moni tye ka pwoyo nyore  
I found a certain man advising his daughter.

Anongo jal mo tye ka loko lok  
I found a certain man giving a talk.

Gwok iyee la can  
Never love a poor man.

Lacan bene dano  
A poor man is also a man

Lalonyo bene dano  
A rich man is also a man

Dano ducu ducu dano pa Lubanga  
All men, all of them are men of God.

The next song is simply insult on Chief Lukwiya Abucolom, who is accused of gluttony, he eats a whole basketful of bananas; and is said to be so thoroughly black that even the palms of his hands, his tongue and inside his anus are black. In short, Chief Lukwiya is greedy, mean, and ugly.

Abucolom, cam bye bye neko dano  
Abucolom, endless feeding like termites kills a  
man

Abucolom camo labolo mupongo aduku  
Abucolom eats a whole basketful of bananas

Lawang acel  
at one go.

Cam naka naka balo dano  
Eating endlessly spoils (the shape) a man.

Abucolom, col naka naka  
Abucolom is endlessly black

Col wa i cinge, col wa i tere  
Black even in his palm, black even inside his anus

Col wa i lebe col neki do  
Black even is his tongue, blackness will kill  
you oh!

A school teacher who used spectacles is accused of  
blindness in the next song:

Wange oto wa con  
His eyes have been dead long ago (He has been blind)

Polo men ki i iye  
The sky can be seen in them (reflected by the glasses)

To wang lapwony!  
The blindness of the teacher!

Polo nen do  
The sky is visible

Wange obap con  
His eyeballs burst long ago

Lapwony kwano ki maraya  
The teacher reads only with the glasses.

Any act, behaviour or spoken word, so long as it  
is a breach of, a divergence from the straight and

narrow path of custom is seized upon as a subject for these poems. Very few of them sing praises; the so-called love songs are often a combination of praise and insult. One line says how wonderful the lady is, the next regrets that she should be married to such an old man, that she must have been dazzled by his wealth etc.

Although the orak is a dance for youths only, the songs refer to all groups, old and young: chiefs, schoolteachers, husbands, newly married wives etc. Young boys and girls, however, do not appear often in these songs. The fear of being a subject of these songs act as an important sanction. The dancers and watchers come from a small locality, they usually know who the subject of the dance is; and an orak song from one area is soon known in another area of the locality. A person becomes well known, but not for the good things he has done. To be a subject of an orak song is not a thing to be proud of, no one desires it. This is what Aristotle called 'poetic justice'.

It was pointed out that customs like other social codes are an apparatus for compelling or forbidding

certain behaviour. The sanctions, such as the orak songs, enforce these standards of daily conduct. In the next chapter on Proverbs, we examine some of the 'instructions of wisdom, justice and judgment and equity' (Holy Bible Proverbs I,3.) of the Acholi and Lango; and in the last chapter on Folk Tales, we describe, how, through the dramatic story, some of these ideals are inculcated.

(Ecclesiastes III 9, 10.)

A proverb, according to the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, is a 'concise sentence which is held to express some truth ascertained by experience or observation, and familiar to all'. Acholi and Lango proverbs, called Orak, are seldom quoted in full; often only half-sentences, phrases or even single words are used. Thus when an old man complained to his friends about the disobedient behavior of his eldest son, someone may reply: Orak akaka, my brother, a rhinoceros. This is the abbreviated form of Proverb No. 22. A young rhinoceros will compare the size of its spear with that of its father, and when the sizes are more or less equal, it challenges its father for the supremacy of

## Chapter II

## PROVERBS

And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge, yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs.

The preacher sought to find acceptable words, and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.

(Ecclesiastes XII 9, 10.)

A proverb, according to the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, is a "concise sentence which is held to express some truth ascertained by experience or observation, and familiar to all". Acholi and Lango proverbs, called Caro-lok, are seldom quoted in full: often only half-sentences, phrases or even single words are used. Thus when an old man complains to his friends about the disobedient behaviour of his eldest son, someone may reply: Omera amuka, my brother, a rhinoceros. This is the abbreviated form of Proverb No. 22. A young rhinoceros bull compares the size of its spoor with that of its father, and when the sizes are more or less equal, it challenges its father for the supremacy of

the herd. He may, however, be asked: "Pi ce mol dok nedi?" But which way does the water (in the river) flow? The questioner is referring to Proverb No. 157: water does not flow upwards, the march of time cannot be arrested, old age must come, and when it does younger men must take over the leadership. (See Nason on 'Luganda Proverbs: V.J. Vol. III No. 4 p. 248).

Moreover, some of the proverbs contain words which are no longer in use, others are expressed in archaic forms. Some of them are obviously new, as they refer to life in Acholiland after the establishment of colonial rule. All of them however, derive from Acholi and Lango conditions, are based on experiences of life in the villages, in the homesteads at the hunts and raids and in the gardens. They are a result of observations of characteristics of local plants, birds, insects and animals.

In order to bring out a clearer meaning of the proverbs, I have, firstly recorded them in full sentences, that is, in a much fuller form than they are used in ordinary conversations. I have secondly given a literal

translation, although not word for word. Thirdly, by means of brief notes, I have tried to explain how each proverb is derived. This is followed by their meanings, the social truths embodied in the caro-lok; and where available, I have also given the nearest English or other equivalents.

The study of the proverbs of a people gives an insight into their character and attitude to life. They are "the instructions of wisdom, justice and judgement and equity" (Proverbs I, 3); and "express the likes and dislikes of a people in certain directions in quite unmistakable fashion" (Smith and Dale The Ila Speaking Peoples Vol. II p. 311).

Cox, in the introduction to his collection of Lango Proverbs, published in Vol. 10 of the Uganda Journal (p. 113) noted that the language was poor in proverbs when compared to Bantu languages. This apparent paucity seems to be a general tendency with most of the Nilo-Hamitic languages. J.C.D. Lawrence wrote that Ateso (language of the Iteso) has very few proverbs, most of them tritely moral (The Iteso (1957) p. 38). Dr. J.G. Peristiany, in personal correspondence, stressed

that the Pokot and Kipsigis languages were almost devoid of proverbs. <sup>H.</sup>M.W. Beech also reported that among the Suk, stories were told and riddles asked on many occasions; but in a book on Suk language and folklore there is no mention of proverbs.

If this is true, the question arises why this is so. Are there some kinds of social organizations that favour the development of proverbs than others? In societies where proverbs are not so important, in what forms are "the instructions of wisdom, justice and judgement and equity" expressed?

A useful way of determining proverbial richness or poverty of a language is by classifying the proverbs under headings corresponding to the different aspects of social life that they refer to. Since proverbs are "regarded as rules of life" they may, like legal precepts, legitimately be grouped under broad departments such as:

1. Proverbs relating to Authority:

- (a) Political: those dealing with relationships between chiefs and other persons who hold political power, on the one hand, and people, on the other.

(b) Domestic: those dealing with relationships between parents and children, wives and husbands etc.

2. Proverbs about co-operation.
3. General: Personal qualities, words of wisdom and advice which do not fall under 1 and 2.

A language may therefore be said to be richer than another in proverbs, if it has greater numbers of proverbs, covering more aspects of life; while a poorer language is one which has only a limited number of proverbs, which may be grouped under only a few headings.

Under this scheme it would be reasonable to expect that in a hierarchical society such as the Nyoro, (and other Bantus) the problems arising from the complex relationships between the Mukama and the chiefs, between the chiefs inter-se, between the chiefs and clan heads, between the chiefs and the people etc. would throw up 'political' proverbs such as would not be found in Lango: there being no paramount chief or political institutions which corresponded to Nyoro chiefs.

Further, the domestic proverbs seem to arise from the close relationship between members of the family group. An Acholi boy grows up in his fathers homestead, together with his brothers and sisters and close relatives.

Some of the codes concerned with the regulation of behaviour are embodied in the proverbs, and they deal with latent crisis at every point of tension: between father and son, husband and wife, eldest and youngest sons, mother and daughter etc.

In contrast, a Lango or any Nilo-Hamitic boy after the initiation to an age set joins a new society of equals among whom he spends the rest of his life. The initiation "is an exhilarating moment in the life of a young man, as it affords him his first experience of social solidarity, of protection by, and loyalty to, a group which extends beyond his narrow range of kinship ties and the confines of his province". After the initiation the young man is "no longer a solitary youthful figure surrounded by a group of elderly kinsmen as during his childhood ceremonies". (J.G. Peristiany "Pokot" Africa Vol. XXI No. 3 p. 204, 279.) Age mates help one another in marriage, they act as his supporters in his courting and gathering bride wealth and in capturing a bride, and are under an obligation to be present at the birth of the first child. P.H. Gulliver Communications from the School of African Studies

(A Preliminary Survey of the Turkana), New Series  
No. 26 July 1951 p. 137.

Such assistances are provided by the lineage group in  
the case of the Acholi.

Gulliver pointed out that

"... there was a great difference between  
sibling relationships bound up with the  
family and a complex of stock rights,  
and age mate relationships which are based  
on certain kinds of activities only, and  
which in practice for fruitful development  
needed some extra bond "This general  
sentiment of comradeship which intrudes  
into many aspects of life is perhaps the  
most important feature of membership ...  
it is a matter of subjective feeling and  
attitude which tends to determine action  
in other fields".

This feeling found expression in co-operative activities  
such as those mentioned above, and in intense competition  
of which the peculiar Nilo-Hamitic duelling<sup>with the whip</sup> was an  
outstanding form. It is not surprising too, that  
riddles, which is a test of memory, a game in which  
individuals compete, is widespread and popular: as  
Lawrence noted of the Iteso. He wrote, "The paucity  
of proverbs is, however, more than offset by a richness  
in riddles. These are numerous and popular. (The  
Iteso p. 176).

It is however, questionable whether paucity of

proverbs in a language can be offset by richness in riddles as the two differ from each other in many ways. Proverbs, like folk tales express some social truth, and are meant to influence thought and action ("The words of the wise are as goods, and <sup>n</sup>nails well festoned" Ecclesiastes XII). Riddles are morally neutral, they contain no social instructions or wisdom of any kind. They do not tell men what to do or how to behave. The exchange of riddles is purely a game in which the person who can remember the stereotype answers to the standard questions, wins.

The following example illustrates this point. In the riddle: what female does not go to <sup>w</sup>eed, does not collect firewood, does not light fire, yet eats cooked food? The answer is a bitch. There are a number of possible answers to this riddle: a hen, a house rat (female), a cat, a baby girl etc. But the only acceptable answer is the bitch. And having given th<sup>i</sup> quite arbitrary answer, that is the end of the round. Nobody asks: so what? the question does not arise.

But in the case of the proverb: a dog runs where

bread is thrown to it (No. 11), dog represents a person in need, who goes where he is most likely to obtain assistance i.e. a close friend. The proverb is usually quoted by a borrower to the donor, as an expression of close friendship and a plea for sympathy.

Likewise in the folk tale entitled Hyena and Dog. Hyena finds dog sleeping by the fire and asks what he is doing. Dog replies that he is guarding the chief's meat which is roasting inside the fire; and grants permission to Hyena to take some if he wishes to. Hyena plunges his hands into the glowing charcoal and is severely burnt. Dog bursts out laughing, and his mouth is torn right up to his cheek. Hyena is the foolish and greedy man. Dog is the cruel bluffer, who goes too far with his jokes, and suffers thereby.

Proverbs and folk tales are concerned with the standards of daily conduct. And because this is so, a relevant and useful way of classifying them is according to the aspects of human relationships they deal with. This seems to be a much more useful classification than, for instance that used by Herzog who classified Jabo proverbs according to where they are derived:

Phenomena of Nature; plants; invertebrates; amphibians and reptiles; birds; mammals, objects of use; human behaviour and pursuits; social relations; peoples; attributes and the human body. The use of animals and other objects to represent human beings is fully discussed under Folk Tales. Herzog's classification is not so useful, because in fact all proverbs, like all folk tales are derived from, and are concerned with social life.

I have classified the Acholi-Lango proverbs according to whether they are political: concerned with the authority of the chief etc; domestic: concerning the family and the clan; co-operative dealing with the principles of co-operation, and fourthly all those about general ethical qualities not already covered by the above categories. The divisions are elastic, in that a proverb may easily fit into any two or three categories.

## A. PROVERBS CONNECTED WITH AUTHORITY

i. Political

1. Agoro pe camo kato kulu.  
 Agoro termites do not cross a stream (river)  
 to feed on the other side.

When left too long, a guard becomes hardened and brittle, and is too easy to split into two halves to make it into water cups or plates.  
 There are various types of termites e.g. agoro and aribu which build large hillocks, nakka, okuba and aningaming which do not build any. Amingaming is not edible. Nakka and okuba fly in the evening, agoro before midnight and aribu early in the morning). These termites are extremely destructive, and agoro is believed to be the most destructive of them all. The Nilotes were almost powerless against them. But according to this proverb, even they are restricted within certain areas.

Each person, whatever his status, has a jurisdiction beyond which his powers become ineffective. Compare Nos. 6, 19.

2. Agulu pii odiyo otac.  
 Water pot presses upon the otac.

Otac is the small circular pad used as a stand and also for carrying water pots on the head. Unless the pot is lifted, the pad cannot be removed. The proverb

refers to the position of an individual who is forced by authority or public opinion to do or refrain from doing certain acts against his will. other names are,

3. Agwata ma tek mac aye puku  
Hardened gourd is softened by fire.

When left too long, a gourd becomes hardened and brittle, and is not easy to split into two halves to make it into 'water cups' or 'plates'.

Used of a person who needs tough treatment before he can see sense. Compare No. 14.

4. Ali myero ki okwata  
Causing trouble should be left to kites.

If a human being causes trouble he is often discovered and held responsible. But kites fly away.

5. Anga ma owacci oyo odok rwot?  
Who ever suggested that rats should become chiefs.

Said of people who behave as if they were much greater: giving parties the expenses of which are beyond their income.

6. Arwot ki i oda.  
I am chief in my own house.

This proverb expresses dislike of restrictions by other men whatever their political or social status; also asserts the supreme position of a man within the

family.

"Arwot" is one of the three names of a small oil lamp made out of canning tins. Its other names are, laput- crippled child: the lamp gives such poor light that it has to be carried from place to place as required - as the crippled child is also carried from place to place. Anga muono? - (who has coughed?); a cough blows out the naked flame. This poor man's lamp is called Arwot "I am chief", that is to say, however poor one might be, he is still chief in his own house. In other words all men are equal in certain respects.

Compare ~~with~~ No. 1 and "An Englishman's house is his castle".

7. Aweno pe kilaro ki won tol  
No-one disputes (the ownership of) a guniea fowl with the owner of the snare (on which it has been caught).

Because the ownership of the snare is beyond dispute. Give to whom it is due: respect and honour to those who deserve it; e.g. tyer to the rwot; and to the owner of a hunt, his share of the kill.

8. Cip aye otero i tim  
It is the apron skirt that took her away.

Only women wear the apron skirt; and because of the rules of exogamy, sisters and daughters must marry outside the lineage. This proverb stresses the fact that they are just as close relatives as the boys. Used when there is a tendency to treat girls or women as less important than boys and men.

9. Cun yam tudde?  
Can you tie two penis in a knot?

The answer is no. In the same way it is impossible to expect two men to be tied (by whatever string) to each other and to live in peace. Men are bound to compete and fight in order to assert individual personality.

10. Gwok loyo ki yibe  
A dog is better than So-and-so by its tail.

Said of an ungrateful person. A dog at least wags its tail in gratitude.

11. Gwok ringo kama kibelle iye kwon  
A dog goes (lit. runs) where it is given bread.

A person in need goes where he expects assistance.

Thus a generous chief has many followers.

12. La-gwok kinguku ma cette pud lyet.  
Catch and punish a puppy while its excreta is still hot.

Punish a child immediately after doing a prohibited

act; otherwise he forgets, and *m̄ya* not understand the reason for the punishment. "Strike the iron while it is hot".

13. Lagwok man ki cet ma ingwinye.  
(Punish) each puppy because of its own excreta

roy: Let each person suffer for his own crime.

14. Latung pa latek latek aye omo  
The axe of a strong man is fetched by a strong man.

19. "Send a thief to catch a thief". Compare No. 3.

15. Lyec neko won poto i kom poto ne.  
The elephant kills the owner of the field it is raiding.

20. Might is sometimes right. A strong man who is in the wrong may still harm a weak person who is in the right.

16. Oree keto latin i ic  
Joking (with a brother's wife) causes pregnancy.

Oben "Familiarity breeds contempt" *m̄ia*. You cannot

17. "Rwot ineka woko"  
"Chief you have killed me (with laughter)"

21. This is a sly dig at those who frequent the chiefs 'palace', and endeavour to obtain gifts etc. from the chief by pretending to please the chief, saying how brilliant the chief is at making jokes. It is a proverb of spite, for a man should be independent and

self-reliant. Contrast with No. 6 and 18.

18. Rwot loya ki ngo  
With what is the chief better than me?

All men are equal irrespective of status etc.

The answer is: Rwot loyi ki bul: The chief has the royal drum which you do not have. In other words, although all men are equal in some respects, in others they are not.

19. Twon gweno pe kok loka pa Ayan.  
A cock does not crow at Ayaa's homestead  
on the other side of the river.

Same as Nos. 1 and 6.

20. Wer aryo oneko Oboni  
Two wooden-bowls (of food) killed Oboni.

The story is told that Oboni, secretly served two hostile chiefs from each of whom he obtained bowls of food for his services. But this was discovered and Oboni was killed by one of the enemies. You cannot serve two masters. "You cannot serve God and man."

21. Yom cwiny oneko Latina.  
Generosity killed Latina.

Latina was the first man to discover the process of brewing millet beer. He took some and offered it to the chief, who liked it very much. Having emptied a large gourd, the chief fell down dead-drunk. The lu-kal,

(people of the palace) believing the king to be dead, thought Latina had poisoned him and killed Latina.

One must not be too generous to those in authority. The truth of this proverb manifested itself with a new significance when people were charged with, and punished for corruption because they gave gifts to policemen, hospital orderlies, and chiefs. Compare No. 20.

ii. Domestic

22. Amuka poro obot tyene ki pa wonne.  
The (young) rhinoceros bull compares (the size of) its spoor with that of its father.

Before the fierce battle for the supremacy of the rhinoceros herd, the rival bull makes sure that it is big and strong enough to win. Time comes when a son asserts his independence from his father's authority, and demands to be treated as an adult. The proverb is used in answer to a father's complaint about his sons lack of obedience.

23. Ayita ringo mot geno ode.  
The ground squirrel runs slowly (because it) trusts its hole (which is nearby).

Said of children who behave rudely because their

parents are nearby, to whom they can always escape when attacked.

24. Gweno dong pe bwolo ki latin  
The hen no longer leaves (food) for the chick.

Towards sunset the hen, which for most of the day, was concerned with the well being of the chicks, now starts to fill its own stomach. It pecks quite hard at any chick that comes in its way.

Used of otherwise kind parents who become harsh towards their spoilt children in order to satisfy their own interests.

25. Iwila ki lak lyec?  
Did you buy me with elephant tusks?

Used by wives when ill treated by their husbands to draw a distinction between slaves - who may be bought with elephant tusks, and wives for whom dowery in the form of cattle is paid.

26. It pe kato wic  
The ear is not bigger than the head.

A child is not greater, more important than its parents, and must therefore obey. Seniores priores. In Swahili a similar proverb means: one must sift what meets one's ears by one's understanding, and not come to conclusions upon hearsay evidence. Taylor African

Aphorisms No. 246.

27. Kicaa pa ladit pe dong nono.  
An elder's handbag is never completely empty.

An old man being wise always prepares for difficult times. ~~See Folk Tale No. \_\_\_\_\_ for application.~~

28. Kome gum calo min romo ma lok wode dok cware  
She is as lucky as the sheep which makes her son to become her husband.

The proverb with its 'Oedipus complex' is highly sarcastic and is used by quarelling women against one another. It is loaded with the ominous suggestion of mother-son sexual relationship which is the sting. In ordinary circumstances, it would mean that the other woman has a son who looks after her as well as her husband. (Junod, Panta Heriara, p. 49.)

29. Labolo nywato to ma neke  
Plantain produces death which kills itself.

The banana tree is "killed" as it were by its produce. After bearing fruit the stem withers away and falls down. At the same time numerous shoots spring up. The proverb refers to parents who suffer on account of their children's needs. Compare No. 22

30. Labot kilwongo ka dek wi kot.  
The unmarried young man is called to a meal in the rain.

To be seen running through the rain to go for a

meal was considered undignified. But since unmarried men lived in the boys hut Otogo, they had to go for their meals wherever it was prepared.

30. The proverb reflects the attitude of the Acholi to unmarried young men; and is used when something has to be done considered below the dignity of a person: it carries blame.

31. Labul tong gweno ngeyo ka pene.  
Who roasts many eggs knows where the embryo is.

A specialist in any occupation knows best. Elders are wiser than young people in many matters in which they have much experience.

"You do not teach your grandmother how to suck eggs"

(Junod, Bantu Heritage, p. 49.)

32. Lacan ma kwo pe kinyero  
No one laughs at a poor man so long as he lives.

(Junod, Bantu Heritage, p. 49.)

"Every dog has its day" ~~See Funeral Dirge No.~~

~~above; also the Story of Abam, under Folk Tales~~

~~below.~~

33. Lacan ma kwo pe nyomo minne  
A poor man so long as he lives does not marry his mother.

He will work and obtain bride-wealth, rather than commit the sinful act.

Compare with Sangana-Tonga proverb "If you do not travel you will marry your sister". (Title of a novel by J.P. Oeitti published 1960). (very, honesty etc.)

34. Ladit pe loko laa i ngeye nono.  
An elder does not turn the skin apron behind his back for nothing.

This proverb is derived from hunting. When the situation threatens to be dangerous, the older men turn their goat-skin apron so that the broad part covers the buttocks and the front is almost naked. This makes it easier to run. This is a signal to the younger men and boys to be ready for any emergency. Compare with No. 31.

35. Ladyel ma lapele tur bad dero  
A kid which is too lively breaks (its bones) on the granary.

In its attempt to jump from a height beyond its capacity it injures itself. Over ambition and daring especially against the advice of older people results in injury.

36. Lalworo dok i meni  
Cowardly man return back into your mothers womb.

Where it is warm and comfortable and one has no responsibilities. But since this is impossible we must learn to face the struggles of this world bravely.

The proverb is a line in a well known Ogodo  
(Ogodo is a womens dance, most of its songs are about  
men and especially their qualities: bravery, honesty etc.)  
dance song: in which women challenge their menfolk.

Lalworo dok i meni  
Kodi pa luming  
Kodi pa lugingi  
Lalworo ogengo ira yo ding  
Ngat ma gengo meya  
Laming ada  
39. Kodi pa lugingi  
Lalworo ogengo ira yo woko.

Cowardly man return back into your mothers  
womb

These are the children of fools  
These are the children of the brave  
The cowardly man has blocked the narrow  
path for me.  
Who blocks the path for my beloved  
Is a true fool  
40. These are the children of the brave  
The cowardly man has blocked the path for  
me completely.

37. Latek keng we ogwang mutwo  
The disobedient does not taste the smoked  
head of a wild cat.

41. Cat meat is not eaten among the Lwo speaking  
peoples; and the promise of being given smoked head of  
a wild cat is not at all an incentive for willing  
obedience. But should he do what the elders require  
of him, he is always richly rewarded. The smoked  
42. head of a wild cat is a comouflage name for the choice  
meat that the elders enjoy: especially on ceremonial

occasions. with "Walle have vava" and the Swahili

38. Latin aweno pe dongoi kin gweni  
A guinea-fowl chick cannot be reared among  
chickens. (Taylor African Aphorisms)

Even though hatched by a hen, the wild birds run  
away into the bush. Strangers will always remain  
strangers. Said of orphans or slave boys who misbehave  
or show ungratefulness.

39. Latin kic winyo pwo ny ki i bad dero  
An orphan hears good advice from behind the  
granary.

Having no father to teach and guide him properly  
he must <sup>2</sup>eyesdrop, when other children are being advised  
by their parents. "One word is enough for the wise".

40. Latunge ki remo  
The (goat) with blood on its horns.

Said of a person who is fond of fighting, or  
starting a fight: and is always suffering injuries  
sustained in the many encounters.

41. Mac onywalo buru  
Fire has begotten ashes. (Taylor African Aphorisms)

Said of a son unworthy of his father, sometimes to  
express regret, but often as a word of encouragement to  
the young. (Taylor African Aphorisms)

42. Maru kadi iter itte pii (pe mungnge).  
Your mother-in-law, even if you take her  
(and sleep with her) under the bottom of  
a river (the act cannot be kept secret).

Compare with "Walls have ears"; and the Swahili proverb "Crime admits - of no hiding; it brings its retribution in the future. (Taylor African Aphorisms No. 599 p. 134.)

43. Min ngatti kadi ber rom ment pe kato meni.  
Somebody else's mother, however kind (beautiful, etc.) is never kinder than your own mother.

44. Mon rwotgi peke  
Women have no chiefs.

They cannot allow another woman to be a superior.

In another sense, a chief is not a chief to his own wife or wives.

45. Ngat mumito nyac pa lakware made  
Who invites her grandson suffering from yaws must treat him.

She cannot later complain of the troubles, or endeavour to send the son to his parents. Having started on adventure one must be prepared to bear the full cost.

46. Nyek meni pe meni,  
The other wife of your father is not your mother.

Same as Nos. 43, 67. Compare with Swahili Your step father is not your father. (Taylor African Aphorisms)

47. Obong dyang ma mabo lubu ma piny.  
The hoofs of a cow that are lifted up follow those that are on the ground.

A child follows his parents in manners and trade.

Contrast with No. 41.

48. Ocoke man ki bye-ne  
Each ocok plant grows on its own ant hill.

Each person has a place to go to when in need of help.

49. Odero rut aa i ot  
The winnowing basket (of millet flour) for celebrating twins comes from the house (in which the twins are born).

It is the father of the twins who is responsible for the food and drinks for those who come to celebrate the birth. Used of persons who tend to shirk their responsibilities especially in matters relating to feasts. This is quite easy, since those who come normally bring some food and beer with them.

50. Odure katti woko  
Odure come out (of the kitchen).

The story goes that Odure was a boy who was very fond of spending most of his time in the kitchen while his mother prepared meals. One day the spark from the kitchen stove landed on his penis. The proverb is derived from the following childrens play song.

Leo and Swah  
Odure katti woko to be more or less the  
Ki i wat keno  
Mac keno wango cuni copies about slavery  
Ah!

and slaves diff. Odure come out  
 Away from the kitchen stove  
 Fire from the kitchen stove burns your penis  
 Ah! (its painful).

62. It is used primarily against boys who frequent the kitchen. *and willingness to serve elders is always*

60. Okwero pwoy cito ki cet ka pa maro  
 He who rejects advice (correction) goes to  
 63. his mother-in-law's homestead with (his  
 clothes soiled by) excreta. *their size.*

When going to visit one's mother in law one puts on his "Sunday best"; this is necessary if one is not to fall a victim of the hostile jokes - Ngala - of course the worst thing that could befall one is to pay such a visit when one's attire is soiled by excreta. But this is possible when advice and correction are not heeded. Compare Nos. 87, 91. *stick. re. food*

61. Opi dag adwora. *in groups determined*  
 A slave should not be pampered.

For he will pay generosity with ingratitude.  
 Compare No. 38, and the Swahili "A slave is a brute, an enemy to God and the Prophet meaning, whatever you do for a slave he is never the better for it, and will return evil for good. (Although the meanings of the Lwo and Swahili proverbs seem to be more or less the same, the attitudes of the two peoples about slavery

and slaves differed considerably).

~~akuba oleyo nge gweno~~ is required.

62. Or bwong dyel  
For service (you get) a young goat.

65. Obedience and willingness to serve elders is always rewarded. Compare No. 37.

63. Oyo kirubu kiporo  
Rats are stacked according to their size.

Among the Agoro and Palaro a certain kind of rat (opilo) was edible. After catching a number of them, the rodents were thrown into the fire which removed the hair, then the bowels were taken out. A piece of stick - the size of an arrow, was then passed through a number of them, and then smoked. Rats of nearly equal sizes were put on the same stick.

At feasts, meals are eaten in groups determined by sex and age. It is considered rude to ask a married man to eat with youths; often he will decline the invitation.

To each according to his status.

64. Pyem tutwal omiyo lak gweno peke  
Too much argument, that is why chicken have

68. no teeth.

And so they are condemned to swallowing things whole, and these sometimes stick in their throats.



although it may still frighten other less stronger than itself. Used of young men who threaten little boys, while afraid of someone stronger than himself. Also of lesser chiefs, and today, of persons in the lower echelons of the civil service.

69. Twon pa omeru pe ipako  
You do not praise your brother's bull.

When a bull roars, its owner shouts its praises, mentioning its name, colour, shape of its horns etc.

But the owner alone can do this, as this is an expression of self satisfaction and pride in the beast, and of achievement. No one rejoices much at the success of others, even if he is your own brother.

70. Wi latek bedo poyo  
The strong man's head is full of scars.

Same as No. 40.

73. Bedo akera oroma  
I am tired of (vexed by) dependent life.  
The proverb is derived from the following bwala song:

Bedo akera oroma do  
I am vexed by dependent existence

Dung na wangu orwenye  
When my face is lost (when I die).

Lapat para ki lwiyo  
Strangers will mourn for us with whistles.  
(My loss will be deeply felt).

## B. PROVERBS ABOUT CO-OPERATION

71. Abil, abil otyeko kodi.  
Let me taste, let me taste, finished the seed.

As the Nyika say "Dipping, dipping finishes the corn sack." (Taylor African Aphorisms p. 146).

Drop by drop, water wears away stone. But this proverb is usually directed against women who use foods set aside as seeds; or anyone in charge of property belonging to others, when he uses small parts of it.

72. Banya cwir poto ki banya oro  
Wet season debt is settled by a dry season debt.

A. borrows money from B. and fails to pay it.

After some time B. borrows money from A's son or father, and refuses to pay it back. Settling an old score as a feud.

73. Bedo akera oroma  
I am tired of (vexed by) dependent life.

The proverb is derived from the following bwala song:

Bedo okera oroma do  
I am vexed by dependent existence

Ceng ma wanga orwenyo  
When my face is lost (when I die).

Lapat para ki lwiyo  
Strangers will mourn for me with whistles.  
(My loss will be deeply felt).

The implication is that while one is still dependent nobody pays much regard for one. It is an expression of desire for freedom and equality.

74. Cing acel pe kweko ngwiny  
One hand alone cannot open the vagina.

Many hands make light work. Two heads are better than one. (Note, however, that because a man has two hands he can still do it alone!)

75. Dog mon omiyo lee oneko Otwee.  
(Words from) a womans mouth caused the animals to kill Otwee.

This is a Lango proverb; derived from the following hunting story. Otwee had returned home empty handed after a hunt in which nearly everybody in the village had some success. His wife taunted him so much that the next day Otwee set out alone for the wilderness. He met a wounded buffalo and was killed.

76. Gin caka pe moko odeyo  
Crust is not formed when the millet flour is from the caka.

One form of co-operative work was the caka. This was not organised. A woman passing by on seeing another harvesting some crop, millet or ground nuts, would stop to assist. At the end of the day, she was rewarded with some of the produce.

The amount given was not much. When millet

obtained in this way was grounded and the flour made into bread, the pot in which the bread was made was thoroughly cleaned out. But when there is plenty of flour the pot is not so thoroughly cleaned, and some crusts formed.

It is used when there is a shortage of foodstuff; but often it is an expression of modesty. Thus when presenting a large meal to important guests, the wife will always say.

Camu kwede kumeno kadi tidi; gin caka pe moko odeyo.

Please accept and eat this little food, millet flour from a caka does not form crust.

77. Gipoko pyer ngwen.  
They (two friends) divide an ant between them.

Share the smallest things as a sign of friendship.

Very close friends. Compare No. 92.

78. Giribo pii ma ikulu.  
They share (only) water from the well.

Because they are so hostile to one another, the only thing they have in common is the village well. It is also used in another sense (rarely) to mean that although they are so hostile they are still belonging to one home, in that they share the same well. That is, there are times when they must unite to face an

external aggressor.

79. Kiweko calo cun lyec mudong i lil.  
He (she or it) is deserted like the penis of  
the elephant in the ashes.

This part of the animal is not eaten, and after  
all the flesh ~~have~~ <sup>has</sup> been carried away by the hunters  
it is left there in the ashes. Elephants are often  
killed during the arum, the fire hunt.

To be regarded and treated as utterly useless.

80. Kulu pong ki jange  
A river is filled up (supplied by) its  
tributaries.

A man's position is due to other people who support  
him.

81. Labwor mwodo yago.  
A lion eats 'sausage fruit'

Having failed to kill any game the king of the  
jungle resorts to eating the yago fruit. Said of a  
person drunk with success etc. who is humiliated later  
by failure.

Compare Nos. 87

82. Lacwec camo ki otako  
A potter eats off a potshred.

A common proverb in East and Central Africa,  
used by Nyoro, Ganda, Swahili and Shangana-Tonga: The  
rich do not show off their wealth.

83. Ladwar neno opoko pii ki wange  
A hunter looks into the water-gourd with  
his own eyes.

Only then he may believe what others have said:  
that is, that there is no water. Do not be put off  
by what people say, they may be bluffing.

84. Lak lyec pe loyo rwode  
(i) An elephant is not overburned by its tusks  
(ii) The tusks are not too heavy for the killer.

Said of a person who is determined to complete a  
difficult task: e.g. a poor person marrying a wife  
for his son. It is also as widespread as No. 83.

85. Lakucel pala Loka  
One-edged like Bantu knife.

Said of a person who does not give gifts in return  
for those received. Often also used as a joke by  
mothers of their children who are too young to help  
them in any way.

86. Langala ramo boo ki toyo  
The haughty person devours dew green vegetables.

Normally the leaves of vegetables is left in the  
sun for a while to remove the dew as well as insects  
and snail which may be in it, before cooking.

Same as No. 82.

87. Lapok cinge guna  
The distributor's hand is bagy.

He invariably gets a bigger share than anybody else.

88. Lok pa jo aryo pe doko pa jo adek.  
A matter between two is not a matter for  
three persons.

A secret ceases to be a secret when a third person gets to know of it.

89. Lum ot acel pe weko ot cwe  
A single blade of grass (coming off) does  
spring a leak in the (thatched) roof.

No man is indispensable.

90. Mon nywal ki nyek gi  
Women give birth with (the assistance) of  
their co-wives.

Alone, each person is helpless; at times our competitors e.g. co-wives may render assistance: such as during pregnancy and birth. The word nyeko means jealousy, co-wives are always jealous of one another.

91. Ogwal acel balo wang it  
One frog spoils the well.

A single dead frog is enough to render the well unusable; alternatively, in a shallow well, one frog may stir up the mud and make the clear water dirty.

A single person's wrong act brings misfortune to the whole group; e.g. the feud.

92. Okwata oloko ngeye ki polo  
Kite turns his back to the sky (his home).

Said of an ungrateful person who turns his back on those who were kind to him: e.g. an orphan deserting a foster father in need.

93. Otwong kongo wille  
Beer cups pay for one another.

A gift must be re-paid. Compare No. 86. to one

94. Oyo ma pol pe golo ot  
Many rats cannot (all at once) dig a (hole  
for their) home.

The diameter of the hole is such that only one rat  
at a time can be engaged in scooping out the earth. Too  
many cooks spoil the broth.

95. Ryeko pe pa ngat acel  
Wisdom (cunning, skill, knowledge) is not  
of one person only.

Compare No. 90.

96. Tong gweno oloyo Menya.  
Menya failed to get an egg.

This was stingy rich man who had plenty of cattle  
sheep and goats but no chicken. His son lay down with  
sickness. The diviner prescribed that an egg should  
be sacrificed. He got an egg from his neighbour but  
had to pay a billy goat for it.

97. Tong gweno oro pe toko ducu  
Not all eggs (laid) in the dry season  
hatch out.

If Some people have to go short when the thing to be  
distributed is limited. This is often the distributor's  
answer to No. 88.

Compare No. 94.

98. Um ki wang  
Nose and eyes.

Said of two good friends who are so close to one another that to injure one is to injure the other, as when smoke gets into the eye the nose waters. Compare No. 77.

99. Wek cam ogigit (cwaari, nyoggi).  
Stop eating like the peeling skin below the  
finger nail (bed bugs or lice)

The skin below the finger nails sometimes peel off, and although it is still part of the body, and hurts when pulled, is worthless. Stop being a parasite like bed bugs and lice.

100. Yom ic aa i ojoga.  
Kindness (generosity, happiness, joy) comes  
from the intestinal worms.

Hunger, it is believed, is caused by the intestinal worms which, when themselves hungry are heard to grumble and occasionally bite the walls of the stomach. On eating some food the worms get their share and are pleased and stop grumbling (making noise in the stomach). If you give food to a hungry man and please the worms in his stomach, he becomes happy and will be kind to you in return.

Compare No. 94.

## C. PROVERBS CONCERNING PERSONAL QUALITIES,

ADVICE AND WORDS OF WISDOM.

101. Acen aye jok  
It is Acen who is Jok.

Acen is the second of twin girls. Twins are generally regarded as something more than ordinary children; but the second is feared a little more than the first: Apiyo. The proverb means that injury inflicted in retaliation is more painful than that inflicted in the first attack. That which comes afterwards, because it is provoked, is more dangerous.

Same as Nos. 101.

102. Acut pe pye ata  
Vultures do not alight anywhere

They alight where there is some carcass: a dead person, left in the wilderness; remnants of meat left by lions etc. Vultures often lead hunters to such spots.

People do not gather for no reason.

103. Agoro opoto ikom aribu  
Agoro white ants have made their home in an aribu anthill.

For different types of ants, see above p. 327. When one type has taken over the anthill of another type,

there is not much work for them to do in building another hill. Said of persons who are encouraged or assisted in their schemes by accidents and chances.

E.g. A lazy man wishes to cut down a certain tree but fears it is too difficult and will take a long time to do so; but on getting there finds white ants had gnawed much of the tree. Same as No.

104. Agulu pii to i dogola  
Water pot breaks near the door.

Having carried the water all the way from the well, a girl slips and the water pot breaks when she has reached home. It is easy to lose at the end of the race.

105. Akuri ma welo piyo ki moko  
A visiting dove is easily caught in the snares.

Visitors beware.

106. Alunya loyo lakwong  
That which follows is greater (better, worse, more painful etc.) than the first.

Same as No. 96.

107. Ange dong cen ngec  
"I-wish-I-knew" always comes afterwards.

we usually exaggerate our own virtues and are

blind to Ange tyene lit.  
I-wish-I-knew has a bad foot: (so always lags behind).

The guinea fowl cannot reject its bold-head.

Regrets follow the deeds.

108. Apora bot onedo apwoyo  
Blind copying killed Mare.

See <sup>under</sup> Folk Tales Nos.

109. Arum butu kec kom bonyo  
The ground horn-bill sleeps hungry inspite of  
a swarm of locusts.

The bird has the habit of taking a locust and  
throwing it up, and then opening its beaks so that the  
pray may fall right into its throat: but each time the  
insect flies away. It is said that when a locust  
flies away, the hornbill says "Go! there are plenty  
more!"

Of a lost opportunity.

110. Ayom mudong cen nyero yib lawote  
The monkey laughs at the tail of the one  
in front of it.

As the Nyika say "The ape sees not his own hind  
part, he sees his neighbours. The Southern Bantu say  
"Monkeys laugh at each others' deep eye sockets", and  
Masai "The firewood which has been cut ready for burning  
laughs at that which is being consumed.

We usually exaggerate our own virtues and are  
blind **to** our weaknesses.

111. Aweno pe weko tal wiye  
The guniea fowl cannot reject its bold-head.

111. The Gada say the Zebra cannot do away with its stripes. Said of manners (usually bad ones) which are difficult to get rid of: e.g. stealing.

112. Awobi ma olet ma wiye dag ten.  
The proud youth whose head prefers not the ordinary pillow.

Of youth in his prime who prefers extraordinary things. Instead of the ordinary pillow he prefers the arm of a lady: so he must find a girl for every night; and if caught he may be beaten by the girl's brothers, and then must pay the luk - fine. But there is no moral condemnation incurred.

The proverb is also used sarcastically against aging men who behave like youth: childishly.

113. Bedo kacel miyo okolok lak i teri.  
If you sit in one position for too long centipede crawls into your bottom.

Centipedes make their homes in damp dark and quiet corners, and may easily mistake stationary buttocks for an immobile object where it is safe to breed. No man can afford to remain in one position too long.

"Clay lies still  
But blood is a rover"

Sangana-Tonga "If you do not travel you will marry your sister". (Junod. Bantu Heritage p. 46).

114. Bedo obedde Atyak rac ku, Palabek odok tugi.  
The sorjourn is long enough, Atyak are not  
bad (in saying) Palero to return to their  
homes.

See p. above.

115. Ber ber pa lalaa  
She is as beautiful as the lalaa

Lalaa is a vegetable whose leaves look beautiful

but taste bitter. If is used only when there is shortage.

119. Beauty is skin deep.

116. Boko winyo i wang oo  
To tell about the nest of a bird around the  
fireplace.

It is said that when boys tell about a nest of a  
bird they intend to invade in the night, (so as to  
catch the hen and as well as to take the eggs or chicks),  
the bird migrates and will not be found in the nest.  
To let off a secret so that the people concerned (those  
to be attacked) get ready etc. Compare No. 153.

- 117 Deene ki tung tyen  
Hanging oneself by the leg.

Instead of putting the rope around her neck, she  
ties it around her leg. Of people who threaten to  
commit suicide to blackmail others into performing  
certain acts; but who when not restrained, will quickly  
find some excuse for not committing suicide.

118. Dok i war pa Oget.  
To return to Oget sandles.

Oget was an Acholi diviner who used sandles but was not highly thought of as a good diviner. However, after scorning it, people would return to him having failed elsewhere.

Same as Nos. 82, 87.

119. Dwe man tar ber me lwokko maro  
The moon is so bright, it is good for seeing  
off mothers-in-law.

An indirect way of saying that a guest has overstayed his welcome. Mother's-in-law are not very popular visitors, usually complaining about their daughters wel-fare. It is also believed they spoil their daughters encouraging them to have big heads. The Lango have mother-in-law avoidance relationship.

(Zande; see Evans Pritchard Essays in Anthropology p. 216).

120. Geno bwoyo ngor  
He trusts the froth of peas

The story is told of a thin but greedy little man who had a fat wife. He was most curious to find out why he never grew any fatter inspite of all the food he ate, while his wife looked so well fed, although she did not appear to eat too much. One evening his

wife was cooking peas for supper, and having removed the froth from the cooking pot, she went to her neighbour to borrow salt. The greedy little man immediately rushed into the kitchen, and discovered the froth safely put away in an earthen dish. Believing that this was the special food on which his fat wife fed, he took the dish and hid it away. At supper he declined to eat pretended that he had a bad stomach, and trusting that he would have a proper meal afterwards. Later when he went to eat, the froth had disappeared.

120. To have faith in ineffective persons or things.

121.           Gin akwo mitte redo  
              You       The sweetness of stolen things shout aloud.

              "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." (Holy Bible Proverbs & IX, 17).

122.           Gin ma rii doko gweng  
              What lasts too long ossifies into stone.

              Millet bread left for a long time in fresh air, becomes stone-hard, and uneatable. Of lost opportunity.

Compare Nos. 104, 164.       who will taunt their, now,

123.           Goro camo apil.  
              Weakness wins a case.

127. Cripples and other weak persons such as women, have acid tongues; but if you allow yourself to be provoked

and to fight them, and the matter is taken to court,  
you always lose the case. Their weakness wins sympathy  
from the chief.

It is worthless unmanly to fight some one who is  
not your match.

124. Gwok aye dok ka nangngo ngokke.  
It is a dog that returns to lick its vomit.

"A man's word is his honour". The Giryama say  
A lion does not eat its own cubs. (Taylor, African  
Aphorisms No. 606)

125. I luduku col  
Inside the barrel of the gun is dark.

You never know what is inside a man's heart. Do  
not have simple trust in any person. All men are  
potentially dangerous.

126. Imulu wang ngu labutu  
You touch the eyes of a lion which is lying  
down (dead).

Of cowardly men who flee on hearing of a lion but  
will play a leading part. in celebrating the killing  
of one. Also of men who will taunt their, now,  
disabled enemies.

127. Itingo wic ki leb  
You will take the head as well as the tongue.

130 Who takes the head also takes the tongue: the container as well as the content. To take full responsibility for a person and his crimes etc.

Compare No. 45.

128. Jwi jwi ci Ongole ce? (Cong pe neko?)  
All the time Ongole alone is successful? (Does not Cong ever kill?)

Ongole was a great hunter of elephants, and killed many. Cong the chief, was not as great, but every now and then he also killed an elephant. Skill, wisdom, knowledge is not of one person.

Compare Nos. 90, 96.

129. Ka lwok pe doko ka two  
The place for bathing is not the place for drying.

The streams and rivers and swamps in which men bathed, are sometimes infested with crocodiles and water-snakes. Thus after a quick bath in the stream (you stand on the bank, scoop the water with both hands held so that it forms a "cup", and pour it on your body), it is wise to move away to avoid stalking crocodile.

The scene of a forbidden act is not suitable as a resting place. Having done it, keep moving.

Compare: No. 109.

130. Ka-to pa co tye i tim  
The place for a man to die is the wilderness  
(hunting or in war).

Only women and children are home-birds. The  
Lango say: A man's grave is in the wilderness. Today  
over 80% of Uganda's Armed Forces, Police and Prison  
staff, Game wardens are Acholi and Lango.

131. Kimari ka pud ikwo  
You are loved while you live (well).

Same as Ganda you have many friends as long as you  
are prosperous." (Roscoe The Baganda pp. 485-490).

132. 'Kong ikur, kong ikur' miyo icobo yibe  
"Wait a bit, wait a bit," and you spear the  
(animals) tail.

The most effective spear which kills at once, is  
either that which strikes under the ear, or that which  
goes through the arm-pit, through the heart. But even  
if your spear cuts off the tail of a wild animal, it  
is not effective. The animal may still escape.

"He who hesitates is lost" Compare No. 104.  
Contrast No. 143.

133. Kwot piny obwolo ladobo  
The damp, cool weather deceived the lepper.

Hot dry weather causes the skin to crack and is  
not comfortable for leppers. So they go out for a walk

when it is damp and cool.

To be caught unawares. To be lured by an enemy  
into a trap.

134. La ber wange ryeny (lal)  
The eye of the beautiful dazzled (is lost,  
cannot see well).

When a girl has got it into her head that she is  
beautiful, she may become loose, going from one young  
man to another, and in the end she may fail to marry  
the most eligible young man.

Compare No. 131.

135. Laber ume ngwe  
The nose of the beautiful one smells.

Same as No. 111.

136. Labwor ma kok pe mako lee  
Roaring lion does not catch any animal.

It frightens them away. Of men who boast and  
brag before the deed. A man of words and not of deeds  
is useless. Same as Nos. 64, 65.

137. Ladong cen mato pi ma rac  
Who comes last drinks bad (muddy) water.

As the Giryama say the first to get there draws  
no muddy water. Condemns late-coming. (Taylor,  
African Aphorisms, No. 141.)

138. Lak kweri pe to nono  
The blade of the hoe does not die (wear out)  
for nothing.

A man's labours and sweat shall be rewarded.

139. Labur kona obilo ringo abula  
When the hyena tastes roasted meat.

Finds it much better than the raw or rotting meat  
it is wont to eat. But in order to get roasted meat  
the hyena must steal it; and even though beaten will  
come again and again. Compare No. 117.

140. Langak nget yo pe weko  
Who (has the habit of) excreting near the  
path does not stop it.

A thief will return again; so will a sorcerer  
to dance naked around the hut: then he will be caught.  
Same as Nos. 107, 135.

141. Latwo ngeyo yo dogola kene  
The sick person (who has stomach trouble)  
knows the direction of the door without  
being told.

He has to get out quickly in the middle of the  
night to go to the lavatory. The wearer knows where  
the shoe pinches; but the implication here is that the  
suffere will do something about it, and will not wait  
for others. The Nyoro say: An illness which is not  
yours does not prevent you from sleep. (Roscoe The  
Banyoro).

142. Lewic miyo icamo awala  
Because of shyness you may eat poisoned food.

Since you fear and are shy to disappoint your host by declining to eat the meal offered to you, even if you suspect it. Same as No. 139.

143. Lewic oneko balaturu  
Shyness kills balaturu

When surprised the little bird does not make any attempt at escaping, but sits there quietly, like a shy little girl and it is killed off.

144. Lwango pe kunu bur  
Flies never give up the ulcer.

Same as Nos. 107, 135, 136.

145. Lwongo aryo oroco gwok  
Two calls confuse a dog.

149. You cannot attend two masters simultaneously.

Compare No. 175.

146. Lyec oturu yen me talle.  
The elephant broke down the tree for smoking its own flesh.

A thief carries a piece of rope to use in climbing into a house; when <sup>he is</sup> caught, the rope is used for binding him.

147. Mot mot ocero munu poto  
Steadily steadily that is why the white man did not fall down.

When the ground is slippery one must go slowly and steadily, as the white rulers appeared to do when dealing with any difficult situation. The following remark illustrates this attitude. Munu timo gaa calo kome wac: White man does things as if he is lazy.

148. Ngat man boko kot mupwode  
Each person tells of the rain that drenched him.

During a conversation in which "A" relates the story of how someone (whose name he does not mention) was caught stealing and punished, the proverb is quoted at him; the implication being that since he knows the story so well, it must be him who was caught and beaten. This draws out the name of the real culprit.

149. Ngwen keken, okokke peke?  
Only white ants, no soldier ants?

The flying ants which are eaten and which develop into queens and consorts of the anthill do not cause any destruction, except that they produce the 'workers' who do the actual gnawing of wooden and other structures and crops, and the 'soldiers' which do the hunting and defensive jobs. <sup>people are</sup> When collecting white ants, the soldiers bite, causing painful bleeding little wounds.

Any success means suffering and toiling.

150. Nyako ma wang minne oto, myelo neno ceng.  
A girl whose mother is blind: dances and  
looks at the sun.

Before the advent of clocks and watches time was told by the position in the sky of the sun. A girl whose mother is blind and so cannot do much in the home as regards looking after the family, cannot afford to stay too long at a dance.

Duty first before pleasure.

151. Nyuka ka oton i cip pe dok nangnge  
Porridge that has dropped on a woman's  
string apron cannot be licked.

Same as No. 120.

152. Obolo opuk i pii  
He has thrown the tortoise into the river.

Hare lifted up tortoise meaning to kill him and said, "How do you want to die? Shall I dash you against the rock or do you prefer to drown? Tortoise answered, what a fool you are to think that you can kill me by smashing me on the rocks. Do you not know that my shell is unbreakable?" Whereupon the foolish Hare threw tortoise into the river.

When misfortune turns into a blessing in disguise.

153. Oceke kiweko kim mol  
The beer sucking tube is left while still  
flowing.

You cannot spend all the time drinking beer and in other pleasures. There is also work to be done.

Compare No. 146.

154. (a) Odo ma bor pe goyo twol  
A long stick cannot kill a snake

You need a short stick for fighting a snake which is very close to you. Use of the correct tool for a specific job.

- (b) Odo ma kama bor pe goyo twol  
A stick which is far away cannot kill a snake.

Help which is far away is no help. Identical with the Ganda and Nyoro versions.

155. Okom oyoko la ngwec  
(By stumbling on it) the stump has pushed forward the runner.

This causes him to go even faster. Of things which assist one in his undertakings (mostly of a forbidden type). E.g. Father is very strict about the movements of his daughter. Mother sends her to fetch something from a neighbouring village; on the way she meets her beloved.

156. Olam ma mit pe cek wang aryo  
Sweet plums are not produced twice.

Opportunity never knocks twice. Compare No. 104.

157. Ongweyo yamo  
He has smelt the wind.

Like animals who smell their enemies, when the object of an attack has become aware of the plan before it is carried out, the Acholi say, he has smelt the wind.

Compare No. 112. Contrast No. 166.

158. Otigo ma nok tyeko kwon  
A little otigo (source) finishes a whole loaf

That is, with only a little otigo sauce, a whole loaf is consumed. Otigo sauce is slippery, so that not much is caught in the lump of millet bread that is dipped into the sauce. Size alone is not the only criterion. Do not underestimate the capacity and capability of a little man or of a small clan.

This is part of the chiefdom Mwoc of Patiko: which is relatively small: compared, for instance, with the Payira (See. Table p.43 above).

159. Oweko ngwen kom tuk  
He has left white ants in the tuk.

Tuk is a miniature anthill about a foot or so high, made by ants which are not eaten. But some of the hills made by edible ants are not much bigger - especially when seen from afar under the tall grass: and may be mistaken for tuk.

External qualities: size, beauty, white teeth, smiles etc. can be misleading. Also used about animals, plants, gardens etc.

Ngu ye  
 Kweya ye  
 Kamlara ye  
 Otigo ye  
Otigo ma nok tyeko kwon.

Lions oh (We are as fierce, strong, brave as lions).  
 Softeners oh (If you are thinking you are strong we will soften you up).  
 Red pepper oh! (We are as hot as red pepper).  
 Otigo oh  
A little otigo finishes whole loaf.

Compare stories about Lagitin, opuk etc. under Folk Tales.

160. Oyo kayi kuti  
 A rat bites you and blows at the same time.

An enemy may operate under cover of friendliness.  
 Same as in Nyida (Taylor African Aphorisms No. 647).  
 In Swahili: The two mouthed snake bites and blows at the same time (Ibid No. 441).

161. Pi pe mol dok tere  
 Water does not flow upwards to the source  
 (of the river)

The march of time cannot be arrested. Old age must come; and with it general decline. Compare Nos. 162, 165.

162. Raa tum ki oboko  
The whole grass torch is used up for oboko.

A small pit is made at the foot of the anthill, and a torch is held near this, that the agoro white ants (which fly at night) are attracted by the light from the torch into the pit, from where they collected. This is the proper use of the torch; there are a few types of agoro e.g. atyeno - fly much earlier in the evening, while the awor comes about midnight. While waiting for ones awor, the grass torch may be used for collecting "stray" ants is called oboko. Torches used for oboko is considered more or less wasted, as the amount of ants normally gathered is small.

To waste energy and material in preliminary activities.

163. Tar lak aye miyo wanyero  
(It is to show) the whiteness of our teeth  
that we laugh.

Sadness and sorrow should not weigh us down. At funerals effort is made to make light the sufferings of the bereft; and, when a joke has raised a laugh from a widow she says: Tar lak aye yela: it is the whiteness of my teeth that is troubling me, i.e. making me laugh when she should be weeping. Title of my novel published in 1956.

164. Te okono obur bong luputu  
Pumpkin growing (wild) in the deserted  
village site is not uprooted.

To do so would merely be purposeless destruction of food stuff.

Old customs which are harmless and may even be useful, should not be uprooted. It is used a great deal by old men who feel that the young educated men may throw the entire Acholi culture overboard. This is the theme of my poem "The Song of Lawino".

165.           Tidu poto goyo kano  
                  When the tidu falls it smashes the kano.

Tidu grows to enormous <sup>heights</sup> heights and width, so that when it is cut down - (for making drums) it smashes any other trees standing where it falls.

When the great ones fall many suffer.

166.           Tiyu balo akeyo  
                  Old age ruins akeyo.

When in full bloom the plant, a vegetable is very beautiful; but it soon withers its beauty disappears and dies away. Beauty, youthfulness etc. does not last for ever. Compare Nos. 157.

167.           Twol pwodo yibe  
                  The (dead) snake wriggles its tail.

Although the head is smashed or cut off, the tail of a snake still wriggles. Said of people whose defeat is complete in reality but put up a brave face.

168. Twon gweno pa Ladiri odoko ler  
Ladiri's cock became mere tendons,

Ladiri adored his cock so much that he could not kill it. The bird lived so long that when at last it died, its meat was stiff like tendons and could not be eaten. Same as No. 118.

169. Twon gwok pe ringo mwaka aryo  
The "bull" dog does not run for two years.

There is some form of competition among bull dogs over bitches which are "on heat"; in which one "bull" dog emerges as the strongest. But this success is never repeated. The peak is soon passed, and decline follows. Compare Nos. 157, 162.

170. Um pe ngweyo cet  
The nose cannot smell excreta.

Although it has a strong unpleasant smell, often men step on excreta, much to their disgust. Man's upright gait prevents him from smelling what is on the ground on the pathway.

We are often ignorant of the coming of misfortune. Compare Nos. 102, 142. Contrast Nos. 112, 153.

171. "Waneno i bar" pa Ataka  
As Ataka's saying goes "we shall see in the arena".

The story is told of a group of dancers debating

hotly among themselves who should be the soloist and the drummers when they make their entry into the arena. Ataka declared that this debate was useless, and that the best soloist and the drummers will emerge when they get into the arena: "We shall see when we get there".

Same as English:- The ~~taste~~<sup>Proof</sup> of the pudding is in the eating; A man of words and not of deeds is like a garden full of weeds. Compare Nos. 64, 65, 132.

172. Wang ceng odok i ode  
The sun has returned into its house (the halo)

When the halo is formed round the sun, it is said that after much wondering in the wilderness, the sun has returned into its house.

Said of women, who, after deserting their husbands and children and going about with other men, finally return, repentant, to their old husbands.

173. Wang pe kwanyo  
The eye cannot take anything.

There is no need for secrecy; unless the act or thing is bad or hostile. Between friends there is nothing that is hidden.

174. Winyo ocodo tol  
The bird has broken the strings of the snare.

Having escaped so narrowly it will never be caught

again. A thief who has had a narrow escape will not come back to the same place. Once bitten twice shy. Compare Nos. 100, 112, 153. Contrast Nos. 107, 135, 136.

175.           Wor oweko agero langolo  
              Darkness, that is why I slept with a cripple.

During the funeral dance of a grand old man, there is much sexual activity; and sometimes, because of darkness, partners cannot see each other too well. The eye cannot see in the dark.

Same as Nos. 102, 166.

176.           Woro oweko kom lalur tabitabi  
              Greed, that is why the hyena's coat is ugly.

See <sup>under</sup> Folk Tales ~~no~~.

177.           Yamo ogengo kot cwe  
              It is the wind that prevented the rain from falling.

The rain maker often blames the wind, never admitting that his magic might have been faulty.

When we blame other people and things instead of admitting our own weaknesses and failures.

178.           Yito lubu wir  
              Smoke (from the cooking stove) follows the central pole (of the kitchen).

When a man 'breaks the wind' silently, he is often the first person to smell it, and will accuse others of having done it. This is often met with a quotation

of this proverb.

Same as No. 144.

179. Yo aryo oroco labur  
Two paths confused the hyena.

Same as No. 141. Compare No. 20.

This is clearly shown by the proverbs which declare that each individual is a chief in his own house, such as Nos. 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, and those that ridicule the chief before others, as Nos. 17, 20 and 21. Thus, of course, it is to be expected that egalitarian tendencies would be as strong as those which are in contrast with the South American where differentiation of rank and wealth are pronounced, and status has been accepted. The result, like their other Middle American though they treat their chiefs with every appearance of outward reverence, would be freedom from their leaders.

At the same time, however, other proverbs express the need for some kind of authority and control and obedience. Security demanded unity, and the leader, the chief or jefe had to be obeyed at times of emergency. These leaders, as No. 2 show, are shared with subsistence. It is interesting to note that the proverbs that appear to uphold the authority of chiefs, such as Nos. 2, 3, 4, 11 and 15 are equally so

The political proverbs express the attitudes of the Acholi and Lango towards political institutions and the powers of chiefs and those in authority. There is a strong emphasis on personal freedom, independence and equality: a dislike of restrictions and interference from any quarter. This is clearly shown in the proverbs which declare that each individual is a chief in his own house, such as Nos. 1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 18, 19, and those that ridicule men who prostrate before others, as Nos. 17, 20 and 21. This, of course, is to be expected from egalitarian societies such as that of Acholi and Lango in contrast with the Bantu societies where differentiations of rank and wealth are pronounced, and status have become accepted. The Acholi, like their other Nilotic kinsmen though they treat their chiefs with every appearance of outward deference, brook no coercion from their leaders.

At the same time, however, other proverbs express the need for some kind of authority and control and obedience. Security demanded unity, and the leader, the chief or japo had to be obeyed at times of emergency. These orders, as No. 2 show, are obeyed with reluctance. It is interesting to note that the proverbs that appear to uphold the authority of chiefs, such as Nos. 2, 3, 5, 11 and 15 may equally be

used to challenge their powers. Thus, No. 3 could be used of an arrogant chief who has been rebuffed, humiliated by a powerful commoner; and No. 15, to mean that a strong man can afford to cheat a weak chief.

The same emphasis on personal freedom, independence and self reliance runs through the domestic proverbs. The independence of children is expressed by Nos. 22, 23, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 40, 41, 45, 50, 65, 69, and 71. Of wives by Nos. 25, 28 and 44. But the need for obedience is also emphasised as is seen in Nos. 26, 27, 34, 37, 42, 43, 46, 47, 48, 60, 62, 64, 67, 68 and 70. It may be noted, however, that those proverbs that uphold the authority of the parents emphasise the fact that parents are to be obeyed because they are wiser, No. 26 'the ear is not bigger than the head', or because they offer prizes to the obedient, No. 37. The disobedient does not taste the smoked head of a wild cat etc. The implications being that there are these advantages available for any child to benefit by, if he wishes.

Proverbs of co-operation, again are commentaries on the problem of individualism vs. collectivism. Both sides are emphasised. No. 81. A river is supplied by its tributaries. No. 75. One hand alone cannot open the

vagina contrast with No. 85. The elephant is not overburdened by its tusks. Of course freedom and independence ~~are~~ desirable, but there is also times when conditions demand that individuals should unite together. But no one should think he is so important that he is indispensable, No. 90. A single blade of grass does not spring a leak in the roof. No. 93. Wisdom is not of one man.

Proverbs in group C. deal generally with personal qualities, emphasising the fact that virtues such as common sense, wit, quickness, carefulness, gratefulness etc. pay, and vices such as avarice, slowness, carelessness, haughtiness etc. cause harm.

But if proverbs contain social truths, and express the attitudes of a people towards social problems, it has to be emphasised that proverbs are used in every-day speech by any and everybody. Some people, older men for instance, have a greater store of proverbs, and know better how to employ them than younger men. But when used, the meaning is intended to be understood by the person to whom or against whom it is directed. A proverb is used because it is more effective than direct speech. Instead of explaining in so many words that one is determined to fight for a certain cause, and will not go back on his word, he says (No.120),

"it is a dog that goes back to lick its own vomit". No man of honour acts like a dog, the despised scavenger beast that eats anything, including its own vomit, food that his stomach has rejected. Having likened his word (that he will fight) to the vomit of a dog, he must carry it out, for fear of later on being called gwok, dog. (The use of animals to represent men, is fully discussed in the next chapter). But should other circumstances prevent him from fighting immediately he may if he still wishes to fight another day, say (No. 73) "Wet season debt will be settled by a dry season debt". Or if the fight is off because of the intervention by authorities that be, he may quote No. 2, "Water pot presses on the otac" etc. There seem to be a number of proverbs for every occasion.

The fact that the meanings of the proverbs are known, and are intended to convey these very meanings, distinguishes proverbs from another form of expression generally known as dum Patiko: which is akin to the Zande sanza. (Dum means to speak in a language that is not understood, and it is said that it started with the people of Patiko chiefdom (who are alleged to be very good at it), probably at the time when a number of chiefdoms migrated and settled around Ajulu Hill, under the protection of Samuel Baker and his

successors, against Arab slave and ivory traders. Hence the term dum Patiko).

This is an indirect way of speech in which the words used have one meaning to the person to whom it is directed, but quite another to other listeners. It is easy to understand why the Patiko invented this way of speech, so as to be able while speaking in the common language, Acholi, which everybody understood, to communicate with each other and to keep all 'foreigners' in the dark as to what was being said.

Thus when a man wishes to say something to his wife and does not want his children or guests, who are also present, to understand it, or if a wife wishes to say to her brother something that her husband should not understand, dum Patiko is used. This predicament, when it is essential to declare something secret so that only some and not all those present may understand, forms the plot of a number of folk tales. In the story of the Leopard and the Hare, Hare, by deceit got Leopard to drown his mother, and then tried to kill Leopard by suffocating him in a drum. Leopard pretended to be dead, so Hare opened the drum, and dragged Leopard back to his house. When he began to skin Leopard, he discovered that it was not really dead. Now,

in order to save his family, Hare wanted to tell his wife to take the children and his mother, <sup>and</sup> hide them under the pumpkins: but he could not do so directly, since Leopard, who was his friend, knew where the pumpkin garden was. So Hare whistled the message to his wife, but the foolish woman could not understand. Hare had to act quickly, he started to sing, but his wife only danced, although he sang quite clearly: "Take the children under the pumpkins" etc. (See also the story of Hare, Lagut and OGRE p. above).

The use of dum Patiko in Acholiland is not very common, and it is hardly known in Lango. And it also differs from the Zande sanza, in that although it is indirect in one way, that is, not all those who hear it get the intended meaning, it is also direct in another sense since those to whom it is directed understand it straightaway. There is nothing <sup>or</sup> circum<sub>l</sub>atory about it. The Acholi and Lango on the whole prefer directness in their dealings with one another: this is another characteristically egalitarian feature of Acholi and Lango thought and outlook.

We may contrast this with the attitude of the Zande which is based on the idea of subordination to the powerful and despotic princes; and suspicion of witchcraft of their fellow men. "The Azande"; <sup>Professor</sup> Evans-Pritchard wrote, "attributes

all his misfortunes to the ill-will of others - he believes this ill-will through the power to bewitch, causes all his woes and ills and pains. He feels himself, therefore, to be always on the defensive. He peers out of his shell, like a snail, and then withdraws, and sees that all the other snails do the same. His world is a world in which what happens is caused by man himself, a somewhat malicious and selfish man, and therefore a hostile world." (Essays in Social Anthropology (1962) p.227.

The Zande sanza, is a circumlocutory way of speech in which the speaker keeps under cover and keeps 'a line of retreat' should the sufferer from his malice take offence and try to make trouble.

The Acholi-Lango term for proverb, carolok meaning 'not the real word'<sup>is</sup> itself a misleading word; for as we have seen proverbs express social truths, or realities. A proverb is a single pregnant sentence, which aptly summarises a whole situation. Some of them, as was illustrated, are derived from folk tales: are the morals of those stories. In the next chapter we examine the role of Acholi and Lango folk tales in the inculcation of these moral ideas.

## Chapter 12

## ACHOLI - LANGO FOLK TALES.

Truth in her dress finds facts too tight  
In fiction she moves with ease.

Tagore

Towards sunset, as the day's work is over, you can see men and boys moving along narrow pathways carrying logs or branches of dry wood as well as their hoes. You can also hear the *flutes* of the herd boys bringing the cattle home; they too carry branches of firewood. The women and girls had returned home from the gardens much earlier in order to prepare the evening meal, and to do other domestic chores. On arrival the younger boys take turns to make the outdoor fire mac wang oo, while older men have their hot baths. Soon, all those not otherwise engaged, come and sit around the fire, waiting for supper. The stage is set for telling folk tales.

The oo is an important part of the homestead. Situated in the middle of the swept compound, surrounded by huts and granaries, this is the meeting place for all

the members of the family group. Very early in the morning, often before sunrise, father and mother and the grown up boys and girls go off to hoe, weed or harvest in the fields. By mid morning when the dew has dried up, after milking the cows, the herdsboys take the cattle to graze in the wild pastures. The younger children remain in the care of some old grandmother or one sister. The evening meal is the one feast of the day in which the entire family group takes part. The oo serves as the 'dining' hall, the 'lounge' and also as a kind of family theatre.

Captain Grove noted in 1919 that each Acholi village was divided according to size in two or three oos, which he called 'clubs', adding "There is considerable rivalry between the oos" (Sudan Notes and Records, 1919, p.161).

During the simsim harvest, bundles of stems bearing the seeds are brought out, and simsim pods are cracked as the tales are told. Today folk tales are also told during the day, when seed cotton is being prepared for sale at the ginneries.

The first stories are of a simple and short; and are directed towards the younger members of the family.

"Ododo-na in yo", someone calls out. Anybody may volunteer to begin. "My story, listen". This is the

formula which is spoken at the beginning of each story, and the rest in a chorus reply, "Iyo!" "Yes!" and without announcing the title the teller begins:

Once upon a time there was a big homestead near the hill, in which there were many children. One day when all the grown ups had gone to the field, and the old nurse, their grandmother, had fallen asleep in the shades of the big millet granary, the five-eyed Obibi appeared. His teeth were rotten, black as soot, his eyes red as ochre, like the eyes of an opium smoker. His flapping ears, each large enough for making a drum hung loosely, touching his shoulders. He had a huge bag swinging on his long skiny neck, and he held a crooked walking staff in his hand, his claws were long and sharp.

The children fled in terror. "Akoo! akoo!" the obibi croaked in his hoary ugly voice, saliva dripping from his smelly mouth. "Come back to me. Do not run away from your grandpa! Come back to me, and I will give you some roasted and salted ground nuts mixed with sim sim." Some of the children began to return, and he gave them some roasted and salted ground nuts mixed with simsim. Soon, all the children gathered around the obibi, and he gave them some food, and they ate it and enjoyed it very much.

Then the obibi took out a long rope from his cow-skin bag. "Akoo! akoo!" he croaked, "my grandchildren, let us have a game of tug of war." And the children eagerly agreed. Then he tied one end of the rope around his large testicles hanging loosely behind him, and the children took the other end and began to pull. And as they pulled they sang:

Ngat muweko ywayo likwayo oloye  
Who so fails to pull his grandchildren!

and the obibi replied:

U<sup>f</sup>u-uc likwaya ywaya mot mot  
 (cry of pain) My grandchildren, pull me gently  
 gently.

Everyone joins in the song; the children around the fire sing the first line, and some of the older people sing the chorus: the part of the obibi. After a while, the story teller continues:

The children pulled and pulled and danced and danced. Sometimes the children dragged the ogre, sometimes the ogre pulled the children; and then they began to tire. Obibi warned the children not to tell their parents about his visit or else he would not come again and bring them no more roasted and salted ground nuts mixed with simsim, and they would never have another game of tug-of-war. The children promised that they would not tell anybody anything.

When the grown-ups came back from the field and asked about the large foot prints all over the swept compound, the children did not tell anything. They said they did not know. Next day, Obibi returned again, he gave the children more food, and again they played the game of tug-of-war. But this time he enticed the children away. He put them all in his bag of cow-skin. And when he got home, he took one of them and ate him alive and raw until he finished them all.

The moral of the story is clear. Beware of strangers, and never tell lies to your friends. A number of proverbs in the last chapter express clearly what is expected of children as regards their relations to their parents. These children died a cruel death because first of all

they allowed themselves to be deceived by a stranger, and secondly because they showed more loyalty to a stranger than to their own parents. But nobody stops to elaborate on the moral of the story. As soon as the story teller has come to the end of his story, he chooses the next person to perform, and this could be anybody present.

Among the Acholi and Lango there were no professional storytellers. Everybody was encouraged to tell a story. The teller of the last story says:

Abolo i wi ngadi  
I throw it (the burden) on so-and-so (naming the person)

It is said that if you are unable to tell one when you are chosen, then your mother would lose an eye. Here then was training, especially for the young in the art of self-expression and public speaking: training which became very useful, at least for the boys, who when they got married took part in the village, the clan or the chiefs council.

Moreover, no one was allowed to repeat a story already told that evening; and this encouraged children to learn a number of stories. In this way folk tales and the moral ideas embedded in them were transmitted from one generation to another.

One consequence of this free-for-all policy was that the standard of story telling varied with the teller; so that at times it was very poor, as when a shy little child mumbled a few sentences as his contribution. And at other times the description by Smith and Dale of an Ila story teller, equally fitted an Acholi-Lango story teller:

"Speak of eloquence, here was no lip mumbling, but every muscle of the face and body spoke; a swift gesture supplying the place of a whole sentence. The animals spoke each in their own tone: the deep rumbling voice of Mamba the Hornbill, for example contrasting with the piping accents of Silve the Hare." (The Ila Speaking Peoples, Vol. II, p. 336)

The evening meal arrives, various dishes come from each of the different huts of the wives. And men and boys in one large circle, and the women, girls and children in another, Everybody settles down to eat. And when it is over, utensils are put away, and all those who were engaged in the preparation of the meal, now join those around the wang oo. And folk-telling is resumed. The younger children begin to tire and to drop off to sleep, one by one. And the stories now told are longer and more profound. They treat the problems arising from the relations between youths, inter se, and between youths and adults.

At this time, about 9.00 p.m., a young man arrives perhaps from the next village, perhaps further. He pretends to have lost his way. But most people know what he is really after. He has come to 'call', lwongo, one of the girls. The particular girl will have told her mother of the impending visit, and now her mother asks the girl to show the visitor the path that leads to so-and-so's homestead. The two move off a few yards, and cuna, the 'love-debate', continues.

If one of the brothers or the girl's father disapproves of the suitor, he protests vigorously, and drives away the young man. Later on in the evening or perhaps the next day, someone will tell the story of the brother (or father) who was so strict with his sister that he forged a bell round her leg, so that it jingled whenever she moved, and he was thus able to tell her whereabouts. One day with the help of friends the bell was removed and tied round a dog's leg; and the girl went and slept with her lover. When it was discovered that she had a stomach (pregnant) she declared to the whole village that the father of the child in her stomach was none other than her brother. It was difficult for him to escape the accusation, and he hanged himself. But of course the story would begin:

"Once upon a time, Elephant had a most beautiful sister  
... and so on." /

At about 10.00 p.m. you can hear drum beats in the distance. Lamoko owang, the moonlight dance has begun. Soon all the youths leave wang oo. The man and his wives, and any adult visitors now exchange witty folk tales dealing with the problems of the grown ups. The language is no longer guarded and quite obscene stories may now be told.

Hare fell in love with his mother-in-law and in order to make love to her secretly, Hare buried himself in the sand, leaving only his penis sticking outside. Hare's mother-in-law then wandered towards the sand and they enjoyed themselves. Nobody saw them, but there was a broken piece of gourd which, when evening came, began to pop up and down singing:

Pengele pengele pengele yo!

(Sound of the gourd shred popping up and down)

Apwoyo gin ki maro-ne

Hare and his mother-in-law

Otino lakodi gi mo-in

Have done a certain something, something sweet.

Nuk nuk ka nuk ka nuk nukere

(Sound of a pair copulating)

Hare took the broken piece of gourd and threw it away in the tall grass; but the wind blew it back again,

and it began to sing more loudly,

Pengele pengele pengele ...

Hare smashed the thing to bits, and ground it into powder, dissolved it in water and drank it up. But as soon as Hare 'went into the grass' (lavatory) the broken piece of gourd returned into the village and began to sing, loudly and distinctly:

Pengele pengele pengele ... and so on

The rules of propriety would prevent the telling of such a tale to an audience containing a certain class of people: for in the hands of a good story teller you hear a detailed description of the background of Hare's mother-in-law: her age, what she was like in her youth - a loose girl? were her parents or brothers too strict? etc. You are also told exactly how it is that Hare came to commit such a crime, the various stages from when he first made his advance, to the actual sexual act: the various methods and styles of making love secretly are described and their advantages and disadvantages discussed openly, frankly, etc.

When such stories are being related the audience will normally consist of grown ups only that is, the owner of the household and his married brothers and their

wives, his married sisters and their husbands; and his brothers-in-law. No children are allowed, sons and daughters of all those mentioned above, and unmarried younger brothers and sisters. Similarly the parents of people in this class are not allowed; unless they are extremely old. The significance of this is that apart from the obscene language of these tales exchanged among adults, they are directed against particular individuals or groups. They are meant to expose certain undesirable traits in the character of one or more of, or someone connected with, the listeners. The story teller is up to a point licenced to expose the weakness of a brother, a husband, a wife, the chief, wife's or husband's mother etc., his greed, deceit, cruelty, meanness, stupidity, her jealousy, looseness and so on, in a thinly veiled story.

No names are mentioned. The story speaks of Elephants, Hares, Lions, Hyenas, 'a certain man', etc., and all incidents happened in the past: long, long ago; and in a certain country far, far away. But of course, this is especially true of the witty stories told by adults, they refer to specific individuals or groups. Thus when the audience laughs, they are laughing at somebody present.

This subjection of persons to ridicule makes folk tales one of the means of social control. The other techniques of creating fear, mainly used in stories told to children, is discussed below.

We now briefly describe some of the more popular animals that represent men in Acholi-Lango folk tales. Pioneer students of African folk tales, influenced by the search for the origins of institutions of folk lore, and even of the use of animals in folk lore, manufactured two answers which fitted in with their ideological approach. Firstly, that at that lowest stage of culture man could not make a distinction between himself and beasts.

Taylor wrote (Primitive Culture, p.409):

"To their (primitive peoples', *Okot* ) minds the semi-human beast is no fictitious creature invented to preach, he is all but a reality."

This view is echoed in Smith and Dale, The Ila Speaking Peoples, p.337:

"It seems that in ancient time, when things were still fluid, before animals and men assumed their present forms, it was possible for one creature to effect another, favourably or adversely, by merely pronouncing its destiny."

And again on p.338:

"We are not prepared to say that the sophisticated listeners to these today believe that animals would act and speak like men ... but most natives would, we believe, accept them as veridical ... We are confident that the tales arose in the stage of culture, when the vital differences between men and animals were not yet recognised."

(See also Alice Werner, Myths and Legends of the Bantu, p.25).

The second 'answer' was that these folk tales represented the attempts by early man to account for natural phenomena.

Roscoe wrote:

"The origin of folk lore in Uganda seems to have been two-fold: first, there were many things which were beyond the understanding of the people, and they wished in some ways to account for them ... Secondly there was the need to impress on men the moral truth that wickedness and cruelty in the long run met with their due reward."

Alexander Krappe commented, "The animal tale in its most primitive form is essentially an aetiological story i.e. a tale purporting to explain a cause", adding, "This aetiological instinct is not dead even now: it is commonly found among children" (The Science of Folk Lore (1920) Reprinted 1961, p.60). "If the explanations were naive", Smith and Dale said, "they bear witness to considerable powers of observation and reflection, of imagination and

humour" (Ibid., Vol.II, p.337).

During a lucid interval, however, Smith and Dale saw that "in sketching the animals the Bantus are sketching themselves: the hare is the cunning trickster, the small toad is cold and calculating, the lion is the powerful chief" (Ibid., Voll.II, p.338). Rattray is more elaborate:

"The names of animals and even of the Sky God, were substitutes of the names of real individuals whom it would be impolite to mention. The beasts and birds which masquerade as human beings, were not, however, selected haphazardly. They were chosen with all the cleverness and insight which one would expect from a nation of hunters." Akan-Ashanti Folk Tales (1930), p.xii.

Professor Leech, Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend, (1949), under Fables, wrote: "The fable uses the animal tale not to explain animal characteristics, or behaviour, but to inculcate a moral lesson for human beings, or to satire the conduct of human beings," adding, "Consequently, the fable is not folk composition, but a product of sophisticated culture."

Following are some of the more popular animal personae dramatis of Acholi-Lango folk tales:

Hare, in real life this is a timid little animal which runs swiftly by leaps, and makes a very difficult

target for the hunter to spear. But it soon tires, and then sits under the thicket or bush, facing its pursuers, moving its lips and whiskers, which is interpreted as a smile. Stories are told of how hares have often escaped because pursuers stopped to laugh at that smile long enough for the hare to rest and make another dash.

In folk tales Hare is cunning, clever and extremely cowardly - as any man who runs away during a fight is considered cowardly, a 'woman'. But Hare is also brimful of tricks, quick wit and humour, usually at the expense of larger, stronger and fiercer animals such as the slow and foolish elephant, lion and the imaginary Obibi, ogre. Hare is admired when he makes the mighty look foolish, for then he represents the weak, the small, the young, the unfortunate against the strong and bullies. But often Hare's pride and stupidity leads him to copy blindly. Then he is despised. Many such stories illustrate the proverb: Aporabot oneko Apwoyo, blind copying killed Hare (No 108, <sup>p. 356</sup> above). Hare speaks quickly at a high pitch, his voice is hoarse and often stammers badly. He addresses all those he would fool "Uncle", my mother's brother. Hare likes good living, good food and women. Lagitin, guy. This is an imaginary dwarf of a man. Because of his size, he is despised and looked down upon,

under-rated; but he is invariably victorious against all his opponents: especially elephant and Obibi, and also clever fellows like Hare. He is tough, quick, quick witted, self-confident, and often saves those being threatened by cruel bullies. Lagitin represents the ideal child or youth. Similar parts are sometimes played by Oculi, the weasel, and the slow moving, weak and highly despised chameleon, lahoggo. They represent unfortunate persons, who nonetheless should never be laughed at. In some stories cripples, hunchbacks or the ugly girl play leading and heroic parts, like saving the healthy, the strong and the beautiful from peril. (H. Owuor, The Place of Folk Tales in the Education of Luo Children, Essay for the Art's Research Prize 1956, Makerere University College, Kampala).

Obibi, ogre or giant. This too is an imaginary multi-eyed awe-inspiring semi-human beast. Always extraordinarily hungry, it delights in raw human flesh especially the tender meat of children: (he invariably eats up all the disobedient, naughty and generally bad children). His voice is low and hoarse and prefaces all his sentences with a frightful but meaningless grunt Ako! ako! When killed, his thumb may be cut off, and all the people who had been eaten by him come out of his

stomach, alive.

Obibi appears mainly in stories addressed to children. The Acholi and Lango in these tales use the technique of fear to instil moral ideas in the minds of their children: all the bad children get carried away by the obibi. But brave children or youth represented by Lagitin (guy), Hare, Tortoise, often fight and defeat Obibi. Thus, bravery, quick wit, etc., shines forth above mere fierceness. The role of Obibi is sometimes played by Elephant, Leopard, Buffalo, and other imaginary monsters such as Min Kwet (the mother of numerous children), and Omot.

Hyena in real life distinguishes itself from the other carnivorous animals of its size, lion, leopard, by its ugliness and cowardice. It does not attack, and lives mainly on the remains of the flesh of animals killed by lions etc., or on the carcass of animals that die naturally: or by stealing skins and hides left outside the huts. When frightened, the Hyena does not only urinate - a manifestation of great cowardice - but squirts dung. The story is told of men who wrap themselves up in raw cow hides and stay outside the huts overnight. When the hyenas come to steal the hide, the man inside

blasts his obute, trumpet, and the frightened hyenas scatter squirting wet dung and wailing.

In folk tales Hyena is always despised, and plays the part of the glutton, thief and cowardly fool who is always hungry, unfaithful and never successful.

Following are tales to illustrate typical roles of the popular animal 'actors' in Acholi-Lango folk tales. In the first Obibi's fierceness and bully is matched against the quick wit and presence of mind of Hare and Lagut - redbreast or robin (*Erithacus rubecula*).

Hare and Lagut went on a hunting expedition; and towards mid-day a heavy storm broke out. There were no big trees or rocks under which they could take shelter. They ran around in all directions not knowing where to go. Then they saw far away on the horizon, a thin smoke coming from the mouth of a cave. It was the smoke from Obibi's smithy. When they entered in, they found a ten-eyed Obibi helped by his sons making weapons. They were very frightened. Obibi made them welcome. "Ako! ako! Come strangers, you are guests in my home. Sit by the fire and warm yourselves." He chuckled with gladness, at the thought of fresh supplies of food.

As he pulled and pushed the leather pump of his bellows rythimically he sang in a hoarse low voice:

Buk okelo cam!  
Smithing has brought food

Buk okelo cam!  
Smithing has brought food.

(Smoke from his smithy has led strangers into his den, these are to be eaten).

Lagut said to their frightening host, let us try our hand at the bellows, and as they pulled and pushed the skin pumps rhythmically they sang confidently:

Kitwom won ot  
Knock down the owner of the house

Kinyon kiddi piny  
Kick him, fix him down under your foot.

Obibi snatched away the bellows from Lagut and Hare, saying, "I do not like impertinent people! Hare, sit down by the fire and I will play and sing for you a song on my nanga, harp." He took his nanga from above the firewood stack. He tuned it so that it was very loosely strung, and as he played it, he sang:

Dekka ononga ka tera  
My food has found me where I was sitting.

Dekka ononga ka tera  
My food has found me where I was witting

(Compare: Russian proverb 'Game goes towards the hunter.)

"Wonderful, wonderful," exclaimed Hare. "Uncle, you play wonderfully, and you sing magnificently. But Uncle, give me your harp, let me see if I can play and sing for you a good song also." Hare re-tuned the harp to a high pitch, and struck a highly spirited tune to the song:

Lakodi gin ma laworo waneko in  
That something which, yesterday, we killed

Man tidi mo  
This one is much, much smaller

Maka dwong  
The other one was much, much huger.

Lakodi gin ma lawero wamwodo in  
That something which, yesterday, we devoured

Man tidi mo  
This one is much, much younger

Maka dit  
The other one was much, much older.

Lakodi gin ma lawero wayango in  
That something which, yesterday, we skinned

Man goro lwor  
This one is much, much weaker, and cowardly,

Maca ger  
The other one was much, much fiercer.

"Give back my harp, you impertinent little visitors," Obibi snatched away the harp from Hare, and quickly re-tuned it, and the strings were loosely strung. He stumped the floor of his house agitatedly, opened all his ten eyes wide open, and began singing frighteningly.

My food found me ...

Hare said to Lagut, "My cannibal friend, go and see where the rain is now!" The red breasted Lagut returned and announced, "The rain has reached the forest in which yesterday we killed and ate the fierce fighting lioness and its two cubs, whose blood is still wet on my chest." Obibi threw down the harp. Hare quickly re-tuned it and began playing the bright tune, they pranced and danced gaily, saying how lucky they are to have found such a huge Obibi and his sons at home. Obibi's flesh they sang, was the best meat. What a feast they were going to enjoy that night! They wondered where Obibi's wife was, saying when she returned she too would be victim.

"Go," Obibi shouted to his sons. "Go and drive the birds off from the millet.

But when you go - 'lamanya ki ladwogga'" (a secret Obibi phrase for never return). Hare asked Obibi what the last words meant; and Obibi said that he was instructing his sons to return at once. Then after a short while he said, "I wonder what has delayed those silly children? Let me go and see." He hurried out of the cave, and rushed clumsily through the bushes as fast as he could, never looking behind. Hare and Lagut drank much sour milk and beer, took a lot of Obibi's smoked meat and returned home happily.

In the next story Hare represents the foolish person who suffers because of blind copying.

Cock and Hare were friends. One day Cock invited Hare to come and visit him; and when he arrived Cock welcomed him and took him to his otogo, bachelor's hut. "My friend," Cock said, "as you know, there is a shortage of meat these days. My mother has nothing to cook for us. I am therefore going to have one of my legs amputated, and my mother will prepare it for lunch."

(Chicken which is a delicacy is often prepared for male visitors; he does not eat it all by himself, but shares the dish with two to four or five other people. There are certain choice parts, however, which the visitor eats: the gizzard, the back and tail parts, and at least one leg. Children are given the chest, and the neck, which are not as delicious to eat as the portions the visitor eats.)

Hare thought that his friend Cock was joking as usual, and although he was very hungry and also fond of a chicken's leg, he never believed

that Cock could amputate his leg and have his mother cook it for lunch.

When Cock emerged from his mother's hut, he was limping painfully on one leg only. The other leg he had tucked carefully under his wing (as cocks usually do when resting in the shade in the middle of a hot sunny day). "Oh my friend," said Hare, "you should not have caused such great pains on yourself for my sake." The smell of the food was delicious, and Hare's mouth was full of water (saliva). Cock replied slowly, as if in great pain, "Well, it was for you, and for the sake of our friendship. Now to eat some food." Hare cleaned up the dish and all the bread.

Hare said, "Cock, my friend, you come and visit me," and Cock agreed. When he arrived, limping painfully on one leg only, Hare welcomed him in the bachelor's hut, and said, "As you know, my friend, there is great shortage of meat these days. Mother has nothing else to cook for us." "In that case," Cock interrupted, "do not bother my friend, I am not really hungry ...". "Do not be silly," and so saying, Hare rushed out of the otogo, and went straight to his mother's hut.

"Min obuthe!" (Mother of Obuthe, Hare's mother), Hare called out, "where are you?" "What is it my son?" "Come quick, my friend Cock has just arrived." "But you know there is nothing to cook." Hare told his mother not to worry about that. "Sharpen the knife." Hare's mother made the knife very sharp, thinking that her son had brought some meat for her to cook. "Now, cut off my right leg." Hare's mother was perplexed. "Are you mad?" "It is you who are mad, silly woman. Do as you are told. It is my leg and not yours." "Is it?" ... And in this manner Hare made his mother cut off his right leg. His cry could be heard beyond the stream.

Hare came out bleeding very badly. Cock came out of the otogo, and ran away using

both his legs. Hare wept bitterly because of the pain, and also his folly, and died soon afterwards.

In another story Hare died as a result of a fall from a lubele tree. Acholi boys used to build a platform on tops of large tall trees, and there they would sit, talk, do their hair, etc. Hare, went to visit his friend Bat, Olik, and they went up the lubele tree. Bat's mother prepared some porridge for them (Nyuka, is liquid porridge made from millet flour and boiling water. Honey and the sour tamarind fruit juice is often added, as well as simsim paste etc. This must be distinguished from millet bread or loaf, sometimes referred to as porridge also). When it was ready, Bat's mother called Bat to come down to fetch it. Bat asked his mother to throw up the gourd bowl full of boiling porridge. She did, and Bat flew down, and neatly caught the bowl in mid air, took it up the lubele tree, and he and his friend ate it. During a return visit, Hare tried to do the same feat. He fell down, broke his neck and died as a result.

In the tale of Hare and Mosquito, Ober, Hare is the vicious friend who, having invited Mosquito to visit him, gets his (Hare's) wife to cook an old cock, Mosquito

cannot partake of the meal, because the meat is too tough for his weak little arms to break it. When the hungry Mosquito requests Hare to do it for him, Hare taunts him, saying, "Ah, my friend, what a pity it is that your thin arms are so weak. But is it really too difficult to tear off a piece like this" - and so saying he tore the leg of the chicken, "and put it in your mouth like this?" - and ate the leg, saying as he chewed it, "Mmm! wonderful, delicious!" Mosquito had nothing to eat.

On a return visit, Mosquito asked his wife to prepare one of Hare's favourite dishes, termite paste mixed with shea butter, lawinya ngwen. This was put in a jar, abino, with a long but very thin neck. During the meal, Hare asked his friend to help him enjoy the lawinya. Mosquito retorted, "Ah, my friend, stop being so lazy. Is it really too difficult to take a bit like this," - so saying Mosquito dipped his long thin arm into the jar, and took a lump of lawinya, "and to eat it like this?" "Then why do you invite me here," Hare began to quarrel. "Mosquito, "why did you invite me to your home?"

In these stories, as in all others in which animals 'act', both the physical, biological characteristics of the animals, as well as those given to them by men, such

as described above, are used to build up vivid and dramatic situations. The red blob on the chest of the robin, becomes the blood of the lioness and its cubs; the habit whereby cocks tuck one leg under the wings, is used to deceive foolish Hare that the other leg had been cooked for lunch; bats that feed on insects catch them in mid air and hares, as everyone knows, cannot catch anything; and lastly the needle-like arms of the mosquito which cannot tear anything is yet the only thing that can reach the bottom of the long and thin necked jar containing lawinya.

Similarly in the tales that pioneer students of African folk tales called aetiological, mistaking them for attempts of early man to account for natural phenomena, the stories use the physical, biological characteristics, as well as those given them by men, to preach moral lessons: as in the following tale which 'explains' why Leopard has a beautiful coat, while Hyena's is ugly.

One day Leopard found Guinea Fowl, Aweno, 'bathing' in the sand in a clearing in the forest. "Guinea Fowl," he said, "will you tattoo my body as beautifully as yours?" (the Acholi made designs on their bodies). In those days leopards were plain brown. "If you want me to tattoo your body, catch a bush-buck, and bury it in the ground," Guinea Fowl answered, adding, "And when maggots have multiplied in the carcass, then call me." Leopard

went into the forest and caught a big bull bushbuck. After some days, the carcass was alive with maggots. Guinea Fowl and his family and all relatives had a big feast, ate the maggots and drank much beer. He was very pleased with Leopard. Then he began to make designs on Leopard's body, and as he did so he sang:

Ma otima kiber  
Who so treats me well,

An bene atime kiber  
I also treat him well.

Ma otima kirae  
Who so treats me ill

An bene atime kirae  
I also treat him ill.

When he had finished, Leopard stood up and his body (coat) was very beautiful indeed.

Now as he proudly walked through the forest, Leopard was met by Hyena. "Leopard, my friend, who has done your body design so beautifully?" Leopard told him, and Hyena ran through the forest, and found Guinea Fowl 'bathing' in the sand. "Guinea Fowl, was it you who did Leopard's body design?" Guinea Fowl said, "Yes," and told him the conditions. Hyena hurried through the forest and caught a big bull bushbuck. But being so greedy, he ate most of it, and collected the bones and the skull, and buried these in the ground. A few days later he went to Guinea Fowl. "Guinea Fowl," he said, "your feast is ready." Guinea Fowl and his family, and all his relations came to eat the maggots, but there were very few indeed. Hyena said, "Eat quickly, and do my body design. Make me as beautiful as Leopard." Guinea Fowl began to cut designs on Hyena's body, as he did so, he sang:

Mutima kibber ...  
Who so treats me well.

Hyena's body was very badly designed; and as he went through the forest everybody laughed at him, as they still do today.

Earlier students of African folk tales, believing that in such tales Africans attempted to explain natural phenomenon, classified them as myths. Thus, Smith and Dale, and Alice Werner and Junod described the simple story in which slowness and delay is condemned, as the myth of the origin of death. In that story, God sent Chameleon to say to men, "Let men not die." Some time later, he sent Lizard to say to men, "Let men die." Lizard reached men before the slow moving Chameleon and announced the fatal message.

Captain Grove recorded a similar story among the Acholi, and he also called it a myth (Sudan Notes and <sup>Records</sup> ~~Queries~~ 1919). God(?) sent messengers to man, and the heavenly bodies to come and eat of a tree of everlasting life. The sun, moon and stars came as soon as possible. After waiting for a long time, another messenger was sent to see what was the matter with man. The messenger returned and reported that man was loitering on the way-side. God was angry and divided up all the tree of life, so that when man arrived there was nothing left for him.

That is why man dies, but the sun, moon and stars never die.

This confusion of myths, folk tales and other related subjects is one of the obstacles which may be blamed for their generally poor quality of recorded tales, unsatisfactory classifications and failures to interpret folk tales.

Mention has already been made of the faulty ideological approach to the study of social anthropology. Folk tales formed a part of Folk lore, which as Herskovits stated "was the study of cultural 'curiosities' held to be survivals of an earlier period in the history of 'civilised' and literate peoples." (Standard Dictionary of Folk Lore, Mythology and Legend, under Folk lore).

Its scope was to reconstruct a spiritual history of Man, not as exemplified by the outstanding works of poets and thinkers, but as represented by the more or less inarticulate voice of the folk (A. H. Krappe, The Science of Folk Lore (1930), Reprinted 1960, p.xv).

Under Folk lore were lumped together myths or legends, proverbs, folk songs and folk dances, charms, rhymes, religion or superstition, customs, magic, etc. No clear

distinction was made between these subjects, and folk tales, myths and religious ideas were thoroughly confused. Thus, Junod mistook folk tales in which some episodes take place underground as proof that the Bantus believed in life after death. "The dead are supposed to go on living underground, very much in the same way as they had done on earth. There are many stories describing adventures of people who have accidentally reached this country, usually following a porcupine or some burrowing animal into its hole. (Bantu Heritage (1933), pp.19-20).

Similarly, African stories which correspond to the "Jack and the Bean Stalk" or the Russian version in which an old man reached Skyland by climbing the cabbage stalk (Mrs. Ralston, Russian Folk Tales, pp.291-3), were taken to show that the Africans believed in the existence of heaven. F. Lukyn Williams wrote, "In the tale of the 'Hare and the Hornet' we have a good example of one of the methods of ascent and descent from Skyland, which was thought by the Ancients and by primitive races to exist above the earth" (Review 'Fifteen Lango Folk Tales' by J. M. Wright, U.J. Vol.23, p.198).

In that story Hare and his friend Hornet went up to Skyland to woo girls. Hornet's thin waist was well

padded, and covered up with soft duiker skin. When they got up to Skyland, the girls took a liking for Hornet and Hare became jealous. So he sang the following song which betrayed and infuriated Hornet:

Pinno pyere widi widi  
Hornet's waist is thin, very thin ...

As a result, Hornet flew back to earth and left Hare up in Skyland with no means of return. Hare then asked Skylanders to plait a long grass rope (lakada kidi) such as women use for binding pieces of firewood.

He tied this around his waist and began to come down. He took a small drum and said that when he played on it that was the signal that he had arrived on earth. But as soon as Hare faintly saw the top of the highest mountain he beat the drum, and the Skylanders left the rope; and down Hare came at a high speed. Just before he made contact with the ground, however, Hare shouted:

Ngini-ngini coka  
Smallest black ants (mono morium) collect me.

Hare crashed on the earth and was smitten into numerous tiniest bits. But the smallest black ants collected his tiny, tiny bits together, so that he lived again. The story usually ends: "But now when Hare walks or runs about, you can hear the crackling sound of his chest bones,

because he was once smitten to tiny, tiny bits, and was only put together by the smallest black ants when he fell from Skyland, where he was deserted by his great friend Hornet."

In another version of the same story Hare is left in Skyland by Koga - Hornbill, who returns to earth in great shame and anger, because, due to jealousy, Hare removed the beeswax from Koga's anus when he was asleep. The wax was put there to stop Koga's dysentery. Hare in these two stories, represents ruthless men who exploit those they call friends, and never hesitate to betray them and cast their friends into the rubbish heap when it suits them or when their interests clash. The second episode condemns impatience and it is from this that the proverb Onguku labul ki i kor polo, He has beaten the drum in mid air (~~He~~ ) is derived.

To use such a story as an illustration of a people's belief in the existence of heaven is to miss the whole point of the story. It may seem to us unreasonable, but as I have tried to show, this was due to the confusion in the minds of students of African folk tales between folk tales, myths and religion. Moreover, as <sup>Dr.</sup> Whiteley has pointed out, "One has to remember also, that the main

purpose of such studies was to make the Christian message accessible to pagan peoples, not to evaluate African literature" ('The Concept of African Prose Literature' Diogenes, 37, p.37).

It was the same lack of clear distinction between these different subjects that led Wright to assert that "Folk tales contain much of their (Lango, Okot) religion, philosophy and ethics" and again that "The Lango tales suggests that the tribe is not greatly interested in myths of origin or in tales connected with ritual. This lack of interest of the Lango in myths of origin seem to be balanced by an interest in stories which show how men should behave ... One might say that the folk tales of the Lango tend to ignore the road of faith that leads to religion, but to emphasize the road of good work" ('Lango Folk Tales - An Analysis', U.J. Vol.24, No.1, p.110). (my italics)

The functions of myths have been discussed above; and those of folk tales are summarised below. But we may say here that folk tales describe and judge behaviour of peoples, and have nothing to do with rituals, faiths and religions.

The telling of folk tales forms a part of the many pastime activities of the Acholi and Lango, which comprise

of various dances, games and the playing of musical instruments. But folk tales as a form of recreation differs from the other entertainments, firstly in the composition of the group that takes part in it, and secondly in its aims or objects.

The otele, bwala, funeral, spirit-possession and orak dances have already been described, and their social functions, and the significance of the songs sung when these dances are performed have been discussed. Other Acholi dances are ogodo (or apiti) danced by women or grown up girls only; myel nanga (lit. the harp dance) the music is provided by a harpist accompanied by a drummer, and sometimes by tapping on the half-gourd as is done in the Orak dance. Lamuya and olila dances are now defunct. The Lango have bilo, ikoce and myel kongo (beer dance); the edonga and abalkari dances are no longer performed.

Acholi and Lango youths indulge in various games, most of which are competitive. The most popular is the lawala, (ikot in Lango), played between two teams. A small hoop of about 9" in diameter is flung by a member of one team towards the other team, members of which try to 'spear' it. Other Acholi field games are ywayo yago

(lit. pulling the 'sausage-fruit'), thus making a mobile target which is speared: cello ngilli, marksmanship with bows and arrows; odilo, native hockey, pelle, at which the players try to catch a piece of wood in mid air using a noose fixed at the end of a pole. It is now defunct (L. Okech Tekwaro ki ker Lobo Acholi, p.20). Most of these outdoor games, apart from providing physical exercise, gave training in hunting skills and marksmanship. Children played various nursery games and sang lullabies.

The telling of folk tales is, as described above, primarily a family affair. At the end of the day, during which members of the family group are engaged in different economic and other activities, such as hoeing, weeding, harvesting, herding, fishing, etc., the entire group, together with any visitors present (relatives of either the husband, the head of the homestead, or of his wives) sit around the oo, the family hearth. And each, except for the youngest ones, take turns in entertaining the group, before it breaks up again, the younger boys and girls to sleep, and the youths to the moonlight dance, and lastly the won gang and his wives and elderly guests, if there are any, retire into their different huts for the night's rest.

In contrast to the dances and field games, the telling of folk tales is mainly an intellectual exercise involving the powers of memory and creative imagination. Because repeating of a tale already told that evening is forbidden on pain of losing one of one's mother's eye, an individual is encouraged to learn and remember a number of tales, and to be able to relate one at a moment's notice. There is no standard form in which a particular tale may be told. Indeed no two versions of the same story are identical in its details. The individual teller of a folk tale recreates his characters as he proceeds: playing something of the role of an actor who has to perform a play not from the original texts, but from his own notes; except that the story teller has to impersonate all the characters in the story, as well as fill in the background, to describe the scene, to build up the plot, etc. As <sup>Dr.</sup>Whiteley put it "any given tale is merely one version of a slice from a much larger body of traditional material, loosely connected by theme or events. The skill of the individual reciter lies in handling of certain of these themes, all well known to his audience. Each recital is, thus, a unique 'literary' event." ("The Concept of an African Prose Literature" Offprint, Diogenes 37, p.35).

Moreover, the folk tale is a means of conveying moral messages. Each tale has a moral. Wright's assertion that "some Lango folk tales have a definite moral, but others, and especially those of the Hare cycle have not ..." (U.J. Vol.24, p.102) is due to failure on his part to recognize certain virtues such as quick wit, or what he calls cleverness, as morals which in certain situations rank above other virtues such as honesty. Now if a tale is to be fully effective, the teller must tell it so that it is relevant to some existing social problem or issue. Thus the story about the ogre which enticed the children away and ate them all, is told because some children have behaved towards a stranger without any caution. It is an attempt to get them to be more careful, to beware of strangers. Similarly tales about family life, arise out of conflicts between wife and husband, parents and children, etc. And in order to relate a good and relevant story, knowledge, not only of the general family relationships, but also of breaches of one or two of the rules governing the behaviour of individuals in specific situations, is required. This is also necessary for the full appreciation of a folk tale. What is the point of the story? What is the humour or fun? These questions can be answered only after an understanding of the social,

economic and political thinking of the people.

In this way we may say that folk tales provides one mechanism by means of which the Acholi and Lango analyse, conceptualise and see their societies. In the adventures of animals, they create human situations and crises, and laugh at the person who, perhaps because of inexcusable ignorance, forgetfulness, foolishness or stupidity, slowness, etc., does the wrong thing with certain undesirable consequences; and applaud those who do the right things inspite of insuperable difficulties. It is also in this sense that we may say that folk tales are a means of social control.

Sources of Acholi-Lango Folk Tales

15

That the quality of recorded folk tales ~~are~~ poor is mainly due to the fact that pioneer students of African folk tales had to cope with poor techniques and apparatus. In most cases the collectors did not have an adequate working knowledge of the language of the people among whom they worked. They had, therefore, to rely on literate English speaking Africans who either wrote down the tales in English or translated texts. These African assistants, in most cases, did not have a high standard of English.

G. Lindblom reported (Akamba Folk Tales p. vii), that his method of collecting the texts was as follows: the story teller told his story uninterrupted, while he took notes as far as he could manage, "especially, I took down words which are unknown to me, or expressions of linguistic interest". Then he asked the teller to repeat the story a second time while he filled in his notes. Then lastly, he asked his "faithful old servant" to repeat the story a third time. But in spite of this, he confessed that the stories he collected when he began were so bad that he could not include them in the book. The product of such

transcriptions or translations has resulted in the <sup>un</sup>idiomatic and plain stories, far inferior to the living words that dropped from the lips of the story-teller around the evening fire.

Again stories were often collected in artificial conditions, such as in the tent of the ethnographer. The story-teller was surrounded, not by a live responsive audience taking up the chorus of a song, laughing at the jokes etc. He sat facing a strange man who wrote down something.

Lindblom said that the writing made the medium uneasy so that he often lost his trend. To overcome this, he erected a screen between himself and the teller "so that he was not able to see what I was occupied with". (ibid. p.vii) <sup>M.W.H.</sup>  
 Beech confessed that the stories he recorded were not good, "Had I been able to collect them when the honey-wine jars were circulating, they would have undoubtedly been more interesting". (The Suk p. 38)

Lukyn Williams in his Review of Wright's Fifteen Lango Folk Tales (U.J. Vol. 23, p.186) wrote "we should be wary, if not sceptical, of tales which have been gathered and set out by schoolboys" who may repeat stories they have read in books. Both Wright and Lees seem to have included

'foreign' tales in their collections which they then claimed to be Lango or Acholi.

Wright employed mission trained Langi to collect, translate and interpret the stories he compiled in his Fifteen Lango Folk Tales. He gives a list of his sources which shows that seven were schoolboys, three teachers, three clerks and one Christian housewife. All of them had, to various degrees, been subjected to foreign influences: Church and school teachers from Acholi, Buganda, Bunyoro and Teso and also from Europe, and some had read story books in Swahili and English. Two stories which the author claimed the "Lango share with other non-African culture" were taken directly from English Readers.

In the first, entitled "The Monkey and the Catfish", Catfish invited Monkey to visit his uncle in the lake. When they reached the middle, Catfish revealed that his uncle was ill, and the diviner had said that he cannot recover unless he eats a monkey's heart. Monkey regretted that he had left his heart behind in the tree. When he was taken back to fetch it, he escaped.

A version of this story was published in the Sanskrit collection of folk tales The Panchantra in 1889 by

T. Benfey. It was also told to Steere, and published in a collection called Swahili Tales, as the first episode of a narrative known as the 'Washerman's Donkey'. It is not known whether the person who told the story to Steere had read it in the Panchantra, or whether it had been brought to East Africa by Asian Merchants (L.W. Hollingsworth The Asians of East Africa ch.II)

On page 22 of the Oxford English Reader for African schools, Book III, we read:

"A monkey lived in a big tree near the sea in Zanzibar. He made friends with a big shark who came to listen to the stories the monkey told. One day the Shark invited the monkey home. When they had reached some distance from the shore the shark told the monkey, "I asked you because our king is ill, and the doctor says that he will get better if he eats the heart of a monkey. So I am taking you."

The monkey escaped as in the so-called Lango version. There is little doubt that this was an intelligent rendering of the story of the Washerman's Donkey in Lango. There is a conscious attempt to remould the story to fit Lango social and natural environment, so as to make the story typically Lango. The shark which only lives in the sea is replaced by catfish which abounds in the lakes of Uganda. The Lango have no king, and nero, uncle, the mother's brother is used instead; the king's physician

becomes the diviner and so on. (Rattray has suggested that an interesting line of research would be to compare these widely known stories as told in different parts "in order to see the changes which have been introduced according to the peculiar psychology of the people re-counting them." (Akan-Ashanti Folk Tales, p.V, footnote)

There is little or no attempt however in the second story "The Story of the Shoe-maker and the Monkey" to re-cast it so as to make it appear typically Lango. It was written down for Wright by a schoolboy who Wright says in the Book, claimed that he heard it from one of his father's wives. In the U.J. Vol.24, p.106, however, Wright reports that the boy said that he heard it from his aunt; the wife of an old chief. The story appears in Hanford's Aesop's Fables (1954) No. 49. Stories from the book are in wide circulation in East African schools, and not used as Supplementary Readers.

A shoe maker worked under a tree in which there was a monkey. When he went away for lunch the monkey climbed down and, imitating the cobbler, ruined his materials, tools and finished shoes. Next time the shoe maker drew a knife across his throat before leaving for lunch. The foolish monkey imitated him, and cut his throat.

Wright partially admitted that it was likely that these stories might have been read by a Lango and re-told

with such effect that it seemed a part of Lango folk tale, "but on the other hand there is no reason why the story could not have been re-told several times, and at one time by this old woman to the school boy." He suggested that the tale was perhaps part of the old folk lore of Central Africa which was subsequently included in Aesop's collections. (U.J. Vol.24, p.106).

The form and content of the story is definitely not typically Lango. Traditionally, the Lango used sandals, (for a description of the Lango sandals and their uses, see Driberg The Lango p.264), and although by 1958 when the tale was published, cobblers' shops had been established in Lira and one or two other commercial centres in Lango, these were owned and staffed by Asian business men and shoe makers. Lango sandals were made, not by professional cobblers, but by the individuals who wore them. Cobblers did not exist in the traditional system, and no shoe maker could be seen sitting under a tree making and selling his or her merchandise to customers. This seems to suggest that the story, far from being part of a Lango folk tale, is of much more recent introduction.

A similar critical examination of Rev. P. Lees' Gang Fables (1920) also reveal that some of the tales

which he compiled were in fact Ganda tales badly translated into Acholi. Unlike Wright, Lees does not give a list of his sources, but it is known that there were Ganda and Nyoro teachers at Gulu throughout the relevant period. Lees arrived in Acholi in 1913, and opened Gulu High School the next year. The C.M.S. Mission centre consisted of Nyoro and Ganda and Alur church workers and teachers. In 1919 a Muganda teacher joined the staff of Gulu High School; another Muganda was in charge of the Kitgum mission station (L. Okech Tekwaro Ki Ker Lobo Acholi, pp.22-24; Anony: Kwo pa Ladit Canon Sira Dongo (undated))

That these Bantu teachers had at least some influence on the recording of the tales is shown by the non-Luro words such as "lukiiko", for council, instead of the Acholi term "kacokke". More serious, however, is the impressive similarity between some of the tales in Gang Fables, and Roscoe's Collection of Ganda Tales in The Baganda. So identical are some that the possibility of direct translation cannot be seriously doubted.

The story of "The Leopard and the Hare" recorded on page 467 of the Baganda, and that of "The Leopard and the Hare" on page 25 of Rev. Lees' book, are identical almost

word for word, as is shown below:

Leopard cheated Hare of his goat, and then persuaded Hare to go with him to some island where he might obtain a goat from his relatives to refund the debt. During the journey it was necessary to offer some bread to the Spirits of the Lake, but Leopard threw stones, while Hare threw real bread, and so he had no food to eat. On arrival Leopard sent Hare to fetch some water from the spring (in the Luganda version Hare is sent to fetch banana bark to be used as a basin for washing hands), and in his absence Leopard ate all the food. Likewise he drank all the beer alone, having sent Hare to fetch beer sucking tubes. At night Leopard stole and ate a goat, and smeared the blood on Hare's face. Next morning Hare was identified as the thief and killed.

On his return, Hare's son (in the Luganda version (his brother) asked Leopard what had become of his father, and demanded payment of his father's debt. Leopard tried the same tricks on Hare's son, but this time it did not work. Hare's son had consulted a diviner who told him what to do. In the middle of the lake both of them threw stones. When Hare's son is sent to fetch water, he had some ready in his gourd. When sent to fetch beer sucking tube, there were some in his bag, so that Hare's son did not starve. At night Hare's son put some shiny shells in his eyes, so that he appeared to be awake. After stealing and eating another goat, Leopard came to smear blood on Hare's son's face, but he was "awake". He tried this several times, until morning broke. Leopard was caught, "red-faced" and killed.

The following are other stories found in both volumes and also in Wright's collection Fifteen Lango Folk Tales, which are equally similar:

- (a) The Legend of Kintu, Roscoe, The Baganda p.460.  
(This is the first story).

Mwok, Obworopyon, Lwango Ka Otit, Lees, Gang Fables, p.1. (This also is the first story recorded)

Nyoni Apwo, Wright Fifteen Kango Folk Tales, p.12

(b) The Story of Mpobe, Roscoe, *ibid.* p.465

Ke Timo, Lees *Ibid.*

(c) Kiwobe and His Sheep, Roscoe, p.477

Nyok romo ki obibi (Ram and the Ogre) Lees p.5.

(d) Why bats hang downwards and only fly by night,  
Roscoe, p.483

Gin muweko tula pe tuk dyeceng (why owls do not  
fly by day, Lees.

(e) Makubira Omulalu mu kyuma, Roscoe, p.483

Okeny gin ki rwot, Lees

(f) The Dog and the Leopard, Roscoe, p.471

Kwac, Dyel, Ogwang ki Aweno (Leopard, Goat, Wild  
Cat and Guinea Fowl). Lees, p.19

Wright claimed that "Lango stories are part of a body of African folk tales which is common to many African tribes south of the Sahara, and that although the Lango are a Nilotic tribe, or at least speak a Nilotic language, they have tales in common with the Bantu and Nilo-Hamitic tribes far to the south and east. (U.J. Vol. 24, p.106). From this he concluded that, since Bantu and Nilotic tribes have folk tales in common, they have a common tradition. "There is only one conclusion which I think will only be confirmed by research. This is that the Lango have a good proportion as have the Bantu tribes, of folk tales that

are in the main stream of African tradition... Despite the great dissimilarities of language, they have a common culture." (ibid. p.111).

It is true that certain stories are widely known in different parts of Africa. Rat<sup>t</sup>ray mentioned slavery, both as an indigenous institution and as carried out by Arab and European as an important factor in the dissemination of folk tales (Akan Ashanti Folklore, p.x). Other factors are inter-clan, inter-chiefdom, and inter-tribal marriages and warfare: travel, trade and migrations. Marriage establishes relationships which are strengthened by, among other things, constant visits by the in-laws. And one or two of the guests sitting around the oo may be in-laws, who will relate tales from their own villages.

Not much is known about the trade activities of the Acholi and Lango among themselves or with their neighbours, but some Acholi groups obtained hoes and barbed-headed arrows from Madi blacksmiths. The hoe was called kweri Madi, Madi hoes. Dric~~ic~~berg reported also that the Lango first acquired spears from the Jopalu (The Lango p.81). That there were some travel between Acholi and Bunyoro, and Lango and Bunyoro, were discussed in Chapter I. Stories of migrations have also been discussed above.

Similar factors operated in Europe and Asia. Oriental tales were disseminated throughout Europe by pilgrims and merchants, emissaries of some religious sects, or in the trained armies such as the crusaders, or the Arab warriors who ruled in Spain and the Tartars in Russia (Mrs. Ralston, Russian Folk Tales, p.4).

In these various ways a folk tale or an episode of a tale, from one part of Africa would eventually reach a remote area, moulded and re-cast again and again in translation and according to the novel influences under which it becomes subjected, but always easily recognizable in each of its many versions (Rattray *ibid.* p. x)

However, the existence of such stories that have travelled far, do not necessarily prove that the folk tales of one African people forms a part of a body of tales which is shared by other peoples. In order to show that there is in fact a "main spring of African tradition" much more work of collection of tales of the various African peoples must be carried out, followed by a comparative study. And in the collection, care must be taken to ensure that "foreign" tales recently learnt at school or read in books, etc. are excluded, as there would be little or no point in making a comparative study.

The apparent similarity between the folk tales of the Lango and the Bantus and other races which Wright claimed, may only exist in the mind of the author, and not in fact. Wright's conclusions based on such imaginary similarities are in fact faulty and misleading. The danger of uncritical collection of folk tales, however, increases with the acceleration of the dissemination of foreign tales through various modern means, including books, newspapers, the radio and television.

## Chapter 13

## SOME CONCLUSIONS

"Every age", wrote Storm Jameson "asks its thinkers a question. In the end it is always the same question: what is man? why was I born? what does life mean? But every age asks it in a different form..." (The Writer's Situation, 1950, p.1). The songs and chants, proverbs and stories discussed in this thesis are creative works of generations of unknown Acholi and Lango poets, musicians, and storytellers; and they embody some of the 'answers' of the human situation as seen by the original artists and those who repeat their works. The myths, the otole and bwala songs, and the songs of the age sets express strong sentiments of group solidarity; they embody the hopes and fears of the units in which the individual belongs, justify the institutions and relationships which hold that unit together. The songs and chants which are sung during religious occasions connect the individual with ultra-human powers that men believe they encounter; and the Oyak songs, the proverbs and folk tales are commentaries on the moral problem of how men should behave.

I have tried to describe and analyse the social and historical background of these songs and dramatic stories; the challenges that provoked the imagination of the Acholi and Lango artists. Each category of oral literature was discussed in their social contexts, special attention being paid to the individuals or groups who perform, and what other things and activities make up the setting; for only in this way <sup>can</sup> ~~could~~ the social significance and the meanings, the social truths embodied in the songs and stories become clearer.

I have not questioned the literary status of the oral texts, nor indulged in literary criticism, partly because I am not fully qualified for the task, nor is there a general standard of criticism which may be employed. As a guide, I took the view expressed in Notes and Queries in Anthropology (6th ed. p. 206), that the repeating of stories, proverbs etc. may be an integral element of culture "corresponding among illiterate peoples as literature among the literates". (See also R. Wellek and A. Warren, Theory of Literature, 1949, p. 11.)

If we wish to classify the oral literature of Acholi and Lango into prose and poetry, a useful criteria would be: what is sung and what is spoken. (Whiteley,

ibid., p. 30). Prose would then include myths, folk tales and perhaps proverbs; and poetry, the religious chants and the songs of the different dances. But here again I do not enter the controversy as to what constitutes a true poem and a true prose.

James R. Sutherland wrote,

In the history of literature and the history of individual nations, the development of prose is nearly always slower and more uncertain than that of poetry. When we go back to obscure beginnings of any national literature, what we usually come upon is some kind of poetry, but we have to wait several centuries before we can get prose, and an even longer time before we find it fully articulate and perhaps longer still before we meet prose that is a pleasure to read. (On English Prose, 1957, p. 3).

It is impossible, as <sup>Sir</sup> C.M. Bowra quite rightly remarked, to discover the beginning of song, and therefore of poetry, by the strictly historical method of delving into the past in the hope that it will yield the evidence we seek

"The trouble with the art of words, unlike its sister arts of painting and sculpture, is that before the invention of writing, they are doomed to perish on the air".

(Primitive Song, 1962, p. 3). But, alas, in this book <sup>Sir</sup> Bowra purports to examine songs from the Pygmies, Bushmen, the Semang, the Vedas and the Andamanese and from the Australians. He writes - "They represent a stage in the evolutionary development of song before it had branched

into many later varieties... Though we can discover nothing about historical Paleolithic song, we can examine living primitive song, which is born from what are in most respects Paleolithic conditions and bears many marks of them" (Ibid., p.4).

In 1955, Professor Evans-Pritchard declared, "Gone are the days, at least for the time being, of such speculative and uncritical theorising". (The Fawcett Lecture 1955-56). This may be true among social anthropologists; among students of comparative literature, the position is not so.

It may be that social anthropologists, despite their new approach, by the continued use of terms such as 'savage' and 'primitive' when they refer to the peoples they study, unwittingly mislead non-anthropologists. According to The Pocket Oxford Dictionary, 'savage' means, uncultivated wild, uncivilised, in primitive state. 'Primitive', means early, ancient simple, rude, original, primary. These terms which today embarrass as well as irritate, and mislead, were essential equipment of early anthropologists, who saw themselves perched on top of the evolutionary ladder, below and at the foot of which were rude societies, the members of which lived a life which was <sup>nasty brutish and short.</sup> ~~short brutish and nasty!~~

Speaking on 'Poetry and the First World War', Sir Maurice Bowra said, of the poets of all the belligerent countries?

"They tried to express in forceful words what the new situation meant for the human spirit, what issues were at stake, what was the significance of the crisis and the conflict which ravaged the mind no less than the homes of men. The great bulk of their work was of course ephemeral and has long mouldered in deserved neglect, but enough has survived the probing test of ~~time~~ the years to have a place in our memories... It provides ~~nothing~~ facts which we cannot learn better from elsewhere; it does not begin to compete on their ground with history or the realistic novel. But it does what nothing else can do. It not only gives a coherent form to the moods which at the time were almost indiscernible in the general welter of emotions..... It enables us to see through the eyes of an unusual few what the war meant to them.... What they have created survives for its own worth, we can share their experience and learn from it". (The Taylorian Lecture, 1961).

This remark applies equally effectively to the creations of Acholi and Lango poets and story tellers.

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FOUR CHIEFTAIN CLANS OF ANILOS

Clan	Yak	Yak Offerings Made at Altar	Possesses Pardon	"Owner"	Prayer for	Sacrificial feast
1. Alaro	Fungu Clan (1) Lakaja (1) Lankyal	X X Hill	X	Chief Jago		
2. Atyak	(1) Xitong-Kongo (11) Ollaw	X X Hill		Chief	Childbirth, health Rain, blessing of seeds	Black billy goat or bull Black bull
3. Beobo	Ogoro	X Hill				
4. Ece	(1) Lokka (11) Hinga-ber (1)	X Hill	X First possessed Ojawa, son of Oll in Bunyoro (2)			
5. Eze	(1) Hinga-ber (2)	X Hill				
6. Labongo	Above (fell from the sky)	X Hill				
7. Jabo	Kilah	X Hill			Childbirth, health, rain, hunt, war	Black billy goat, bull or pig
8. Panabol	(1) Lapete-jete (1) Lamerete	X X		Copener	Rain Health, especially when there is a plague	Goat or cow milk
9. Padike	Patial Clan (1) Langoi (fell from the sky) (1) Bedi (11) (Rain)-Lot	X X X	X When a man is possessed he becomes barren.	Chief Jago Chief	Rain, blessing of seeds Rain	Black or goat and chicken
10. Palsol	(1) Akwang (11) Sereka	X Hill X Spot on bank of K. Lela Akwaka		" Celebrant Fruz Pedang clan	Rain, blessing of seeds Childbirth, hunt, war, good harvest	Each clan supply billy goats Billy goat, white chicken
11. Palra	(1) Katakanga (1) (11) Hinga-ber (11) Nyeye (12) Nyook (13) Lasekol	X Hill X Hill X Hill X Group of tall Nyeye trees	X When a man is possessed he becomes barren; a woman becomes insane.	" Celebrant Pallele clan " Celebrant Ogoke clan " (originated by Loni)	Childbirth, rain Childbirth, health, good harvest Rain, war.	Black or brown billy goat
	(11) Angweya (11) Gosa	X X Hill		" Celebrant Oen clan		
12. Palebek	(1) Ogili (11) Nyarobanga	X Hill X Hill		" Celebrant Oen clan		
13. Palaro	Lepul	X Hill	X	Chief	Rain, childbirth, health, war, good harvest, blessing of seeds	
14. Pambongo	Apto Koro					
15. Pansolt	Nywalu					
16. Patiko	(1) Baku (11) Alele (twice or Baku)	X Hill X Hill		Chief	Childbirth, health and rain	Brown or goat Goat, milk, sugar, eggs, butter
17. Patongo	Ayuel	X Hill				
18. Parenga	(1) Alakton (11) Ogoro (5)	X Hill (in Bunyoro) X Hill		" Celebrant Palso Pasiri		

1, 3, 4. Presumably the area around the hill was settled by the three chieftains at different times.  
 2. See p. 17 above.  
 5. Same altar as Beobo. See p. 17 above.