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The Creation and Evolution of the Acholi Ethnic Identity

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THE CREATION AND EVOLUTION OF THE ACHOLI ETHNIC IDENTITY

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
History

by
Leslie Whitmre
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Accepted by:
Dr. James Burns, Committee Chair
Dr. Michael Meng
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ABSTRACT

On March 5th, 2012, the Kony 2012 video was released by the authors and director of *Invisible Children*, and Uganda instantaneously became the center of young America's focus. This graphic video contained disturbing images of child soldiers and dead children, aiming to draw sympathy and awareness to the ongoing problem the Lord's Resistance Army's violent attacks on the Acholi of Northern Uganda and recruitment measures. While many Americans responded to the video's urgent request for support by encouraging the government to act, others adhered to the popular belief that this conflict was nothing more than another tribal conflict among a backwards group of people. In my African history class that same week, students voiced their concern over the violent images they saw, but unconsciously, they also displayed an ignorance of the origins of such conflicts in Africa. To someone with very little knowledge of Africa's history, this situation would seemingly offer an obvious solution such as the one the Kony 2012 video presented to its viewers: kill Joseph Kony and the situation will resolve itself. To Africanist, particularly those who study Uganda's history, this conflict reflects issues that extend beyond the current conflict.

In order to understand the origins of this conflict, people need a better understanding of the largest ethnic group affected by it, the Acholi of northern Uganda. This thesis provides a history of the Acholi that clarifies their role in Ugandan politics.

The larger purpose of this thesis is to illustrate the factors that contributed to the creation and evolution of the Acholi ethnic identity and how their ethnic identity influenced their relationships with those outside of their ethnic group. The Acholi identity continuously evolved because of their interaction with other groups, as well as their inclusion into a larger socio-political institution. Through processes of negotiation, the Acholi the pre-colonial period adjusted to the changes the colonial and post-colonial periods instigated. While this thesis does not cover the present day conflict, the role the Acholi have in it becomes more evident through this study.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my family for their unwavering support throughout my academic career. My mother advised me to pursue what I am passionate about instead of what was practical. I have no practical skills, and I am horrible at math and science, so pursuing history was both natural and necessary. Having my younger brother, Daniel, in my life always encouraged me to work hard and be mindful of everything I chose to pursue. I hope that I am setting a great example for you, kid.

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INTRODUCTION

THEORIES OF ETHNICITY

This thesis is an analysis of the creation and manipulation of the Acholi identity. The Acholi ethnic identity evolved out of a process of politicization, migration, shared experiences, and traditions. That identity changed throughout the colonial period through a process of negotiation, violence, and political stratification. The changes the Acholi and their ethnic identity endured during the colonial period had a negative impact on the relationship the Acholi formed with other groups in Uganda. Prior to discussing the creation of the Acholi ethnic identity, it is important to analyze various theories of ethnicity. Rather than criticizing the shortcomings of these theories, this study aims to utilize each of them to illustrate factors that contributed to the creation of the Acholi ethnic identity.

At the core of my thesis, the understanding is that the Acholi ethnic identity is a socio-political identifier. Their ethnic identity could not exist without recognizing that their social organization informed their political ideology. Likewise, their political ideology existed to maintain their social organization. One could not exist independently from the other without changing their ethnic identity entirely. This thesis illustrates how the colonial government manipulated the Acholi identity by attempting to separate the important social aspects of their identity from their political ideology. This created a rift between traditional Acholi and “new” Acholi, as these “new” Acholi only recognized their identity as a political classification.

E.E. Evans-Pritchard's *The Nuer* was one of the most influential anthropological studies on ethnic identity. He was one of the first anthropologists to use his own observations to construct the collective identity of the Nuer. The Government of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan requested that he study the Nuer, which undoubtedly influenced his research.¹ The Nuer's political institutions informed much of his analysis of their collective identity. The Nuer classification reflected their political collective identity, but their tribal affiliations shaped their social identities. Thus, for Evans-Pritchard, their social identities informed their collective political identity, but both of these identities existed independently.² This is where he and I differ. My thesis argues that the Acholi ethnic identity constantly changed because different aspects of their identity continuously evolved to compliment their position in a larger socio-political body.

Evans-Pritchard's use of the term "tribe" was problematic as well. Tribe was generally a standard term to classify Africans during the colonial period. However, anthropologist, such as Aiden Southall, took issue with its application. According to Southall, tribes could not exist once integrated into another larger entity. Once integrated, the traditional characteristic of the tribe gave way to the larger entity's traditions, which destroyed the tribe. Thus, tribes could only exist if they were completely isolated.³

¹E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: a description of the modes of livelihood and political institutions of a Nilotic people.*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940), preface.

² Ibid, 4.

³ Southall Aidan W. "The Illusion of Tribe," *Perspectives on Africa*, ed. Roy Richard Grinker, Stephen C. Lubkemann, and Christopher B. Steiner (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 84.

Another issue with the term was how colonialists applied it to Africans. “Tribe” referred to a place rather than the people. This application sometimes grouped people together that otherwise had little to no association with each other.⁴ Thus, the classification of tribes was often times inaccurate and its application was ambiguous. For this reason, I chose not to use “tribe” to classify the Acholi. Using “ethnic identity” in lieu of “tribe” in relation to the Acholi suggest that each lineage retained their important attributes and contributed to the creation of their collective identity.

Geoff Emberling views ethnicity as a general term that addresses both group and individual identity. The members of an ethnic group believe they share a common ancestry based on cultural constructs or history rather than biology. Ethnic groups are larger than clans, families, or lineages.⁵ Ethnicity also refers to a shared memory of a unified past and common history. The members usually speak a common language, although that language may not be different from other ethnic groups in the area.⁶ Ethnic groups exist concurrently with a larger sociopolitical entity, which is usually a state. While some ethnicities live in plural societies, others exist in states where they are the only or most dominant group. The state and ethnic groups serve different functions, but both may attempt to utilize each other. In summation, “an ethnic group is most essentially a group whose members view themselves as having common ancestry, therefore as being

⁴ Ibid, 86.

⁵ Geoff Emberling, "Ethnicity in Complex Societies: Archaeological Perspectives," *Journal of Archaeological Research*, 5, no. 4 (1997),302

⁶ Ibid, 303-304

kin.” They use a common language, share common historical experiences, and exist in a relationship to the state.⁷

Emberling’s analysis is useful because he acknowledges the evolution of ethnic identity and does not subject it to periodization. He recognizes the importance of internal factors, such as traditions and culture, to creating an ethnic identity as well as external factors. I will use Emberling’s theory to demonstrate the evolution of the Acholi identity by emphasizing the continuous internal and external influences to the creation of that identity. Contact with the British, Arabs, and other Ugandans during the colonial and independence periods changed the importance of certain aspects of Acholi traditions, which changed their identity. Additionally, the emergence of the chiefdom ideology evolved from lineage based villages. These villages shared common *jogi* (ancestor spirits) and kinship claims. Thus, one of the most important points to take away from this study is that the Acholi ethnic identity is mutable.

For Terrance Ranger, colonial Africa displayed the influence of European-invented traditions as white settlers used them to establish themselves as natural leaders. In this context, whites used tradition as a way to control Africans by inventing traditions to keep Africans out of certain categories of power.⁸ Colonial administrations and missionaries used what they perceived to be African traditions and codified them so that Africans could easily ascribe to them. Europeans also imported their neo-traditions,

⁷ Ibid, 304

⁸ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 211.

which derived from the Industrial Revolution, to Africa to provide Africans with examples of modern, civilized behavior.⁹

Ranger also analyzed whites' usage of pre-colonial aspects of African cultures and neo-traditions from Europe to control Africans, particularly through indirect rule. European traditions' influence on colonial governments created a feudal-patriarchal model instead of a purely capitalistic one.¹⁰ Whites accepted that some Africans could handle roles as members of the colonial government and tried to use their neo-traditions to restructure the relationship between those that led and those that followed.¹¹ In the late 19th century, colonial governments allowed African chiefs to resume their positions of power within their communities, but by the turn of the century, whites regretted forming alliances such as these. Whites thought that the only way to modernize colonial Africa was to establish a system in which all Africans were clearly subordinate.¹² Colonial governments implemented a series of Masters and Servants Acts throughout the British colonies to establish a paternalistic ideology among Africans where whites maintained power, and in exchange, whites took care of the needs of Africans.¹³ This difficulty to transpose European ideals to African societies while maintaining a system of white dominance was a constant theme during the colonial period in Acholiland.

Mamdani addressed what whites called the "native question". Until whites colonized Africa, they believed childlike people inhabited Africa that could not progress

⁹ Ibid, 212

¹⁰ Ibid, 220

¹¹ Ibid, 220-221

¹² Ibid, 223

¹³ Ibid, 223-224

beyond their simplistic environment. Once colonization began, the central issue became modernizing Africans while subjecting them to white rule. Europeans' efforts to modernize and control Africans using European neo-traditions and concurrently implementing territorial segregation, was futile to whites' goal of controlling Africans. Whites needed to place more emphasis on the importance of African culture, as well as the differences between Africans and themselves in the socio-political hierarchy, to maintain white dominance.¹⁴ In Acholiland, colonial administrators utilized the social hierarchies previously established to enact a system of indirect rule. While appearing to respect and protect the positions the Acholi leaders held, administrators used their positions to dominate the Acholi population.

Mamdani emphasized the importance of using "identity" when addressing ethnicity. He said the shifts between the study of tribalism to ethnicity to identity grants more respectability and individual influence within the human framework. Identity implies a more personal stake in the dynamic of the community rather than the gravitation towards a naïve, group- think mentality.¹⁵ While homogenous distinctions, whites, and elites members of the Acholi ethnicity greatly influenced the codification of the Acholi ethnic identity, ordinary Acholi contributed significantly to this process as well. Therefore, one of the goals of this thesis is to place more emphasis on the importance of the non-elite in creating the Acholi identity, as well as understanding what ordinary Acholi had to gain from the codification of their identity.

¹⁴ Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, (Princeton: Princeton University, 1996), 6.

¹⁵ *ibid*, 185.

Richard H. Thompson analyzed primordial theories of ethnicity.¹⁶ One theory claimed that people needed to affiliate themselves with an ethnic group, which established their individual identity. As Thompson pointed out, this theory devalued any other group affiliations, particularly class.¹⁷ Additionally, this theory implied that if someone could not identify with a particular ethnic group, creating an individual identity was impossible. Considering that angle, establishing an individual identity was contingent upon a strong connection to one's ancestral past and history, which was not always accessible. Another primordialist theory explained ethnic loyalty as an important tool used by external forces to organize societies into well-defined institutions, particularly states.¹⁸ People used primordial associations to maintain their individual identities while creating a social environment in which they could thrive.¹⁹ In this sense, primordial sentiments were a way to reclaim power. The more traditional Acholi attempted to use primordial connections to stabilize their rapidly changing social environment during colonization by emphasizing their traditional distinctions.

Thompson suggested that scholars needed a theory to explain the causes of exploitative practices, such as colonization, that produced ethnic resistance today. Previous primordial arguments failed to reflect the changes to ethnic identities that occurred during colonialism.²⁰ Furthermore, scholars cannot dismiss ethnicity as primordial because ethnic identity is not a rigidly defined phenomenon. Primordialist

¹⁶ Richard H. Thompson, *Theories of Ethnicity: A Critical Appraisal*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989) 54

¹⁷ Ibid, 56. An analysis of Edward Shils' primordial theory.

¹⁸ Ibid, 61

¹⁹ Ibid, 62-63. An analysis of Clifford Geertz's primordial theory.

²⁰ Ibid, 68

theory did not account for the changes ethnic identities experienced overtime, particularly due to contact with external influences. One of the themes of this thesis is the continuous development of the Acholi identity, which disputes any primordialist claims.

Carolyn Hamilton focused on examining how the Zulu community used certain cultural symbols, particularly the symbolic figure of Shaka Zulu, to distinguish themselves as fierce, independent people. What we know of the Zulu culture now is a condensed version of pre-colonial Zulu culture and the Zulu experience during colonization. Chiefs and leaders in independent South Africa used the image of Shaka, as well as their claims to be a part of his lineage, to establish themselves as legitimate rulers.²¹ Hamilton's analysis of how the present day Zulu identity was constructed was most important. In saying that the Zulu identity is a condensed version of what they were historically and reflects the changes it endured during colonization, she is acknowledging the manipulation of the Zulu identity through time.

Although Hamilton presented her argument as being unique to the Zulu culture, this approach is applicable to the Acholi, as they had their own rituals and symbols that contributed to the creation of their ethnic identity. Acholi incorporated their traditions into the formation of their chiefdom ideology, which informed their collective ethnic identity. The British also capitalized on what they perceived to be the Acholi's natural militarism to integrate them into other economic spheres beyond agricultural labor. This led to the militarization of the Acholi, and influenced their interaction and reputation with other ethnic groups in Uganda.

²¹ Carolyn Hamilton , *Terrific Majesty: The Powers of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 3

Leroy Vail believed ethnic ideologies were a product of colonialism as well as history and tradition. It was important to missionaries and colonial governments to involve African intellectuals in formulating ethnic identities.²² Vail also addressed the appeal of these newly created ethnic identities to ordinary Africans. Ethnicity appealed to many people because it helped them establish a measure of control in their difficult daily lives. Land was important to creating these new ethnicities because the historical integrity of a tribe, as well as the sanctity of families and their rights which were tied to the land.²³ Vail's explanation of the invention of ethnicity credits foreign intervention and colonialism for the formation of ethnicities in Africa.

Chapter One challenges Vail's popular assertion. The foundation of the Acholi ethnic identity formed prior to colonization. The only thing missing from their identity was the classification, "Acholi". During the pre-colonial period, the Acholi identity evolved out of their shared experiences, common political ideology, and shared traditions. Richard Atkinson's and F.K. Girling's Acholi histories set the premise of this chapter, as their work are the most informative on the subject of constructing the Acholi identity. Atkinson and Girling shared Vail's assertion, and this chapter will challenge that by emphasizing that the Acholi shared all of the necessary factors to form their collective

²² Leroy Vail, *The Creation of Tribalism in South Africa*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 11.

²³ *Ibid*, 14.

identity. It is important to note that Girling wrote his Acholi history with interference from the colonial government, which undoubtedly influenced his perspective.²⁴

Chapter Two analyses the attempts the Acholi made to preserve their identity during colonialism. Throughout the colonial period, the Acholi struggled with the British to maintain the importance of their traditions and political ideology. The colonial administration changed the roles of traditional leaders while promoting the positions of leaders they appointed themselves. This resulted in conflicts between the Acholi and the colonial administration and internal challenges between traditional leaders and government appointed leaders. Weakening the traditional leaders' positions changed the Acholi identity by changing the roles these leaders had in maintaining that identity. Additionally, a new generation of Acholi attempted to create roles for themselves outside of their chiefdoms to gain prominence on a larger political stage. These new Acholi represented the disconnection between the traditional chiefdom ideology and the larger political institution that the colonial period instigated.

Chapter Three covers the militarization of the Acholi and how that influenced internal and external conflicts they faced in the midst of nation building efforts. The Acholi boast a rich military history, but that history is relevant for reasons beyond the scope of militarism. Likewise, there were reasons that the Acholi represented such a large portion of the colonial and post-colonial militaries that reflected issues introduced during the colonial period. New Acholi used the colonial military as an economic avenue

²⁴ Girling wrote several letters to the colonial administration asking for permission to finish his doctoral dissertation. He later admitted that the great majority of *The Acholi of Uganda* was based on his dissertation.

because of the lack of economic opportunity available to them. During the colonial period, Acholi soldiers represented their ethnicity on a national level but had little connection with the traditional aspects of their identity. Once these soldiers went back to Acholiland, integration into the traditional chiefdom structure was unappealing. Thus, traditional leaders and Acholi soldiers represented a clash between traditionalism versus political modernization. The resolution of this issue was most evident in the introduction of the Holy Spirits Movement.

In conclusion, the chiefdom ideology comes to represent a traditional past rather than a practical model for modern Acholi societies. Acholi religious beliefs evolved to include the Christian theology while retaining some traditional aspects of their traditional beliefs. Their traditional social structure, beliefs, and political ideology now serve to unite them in the midst of constant warfare between the Lord's Resistance Army and the Ugandan Military.

CHAPTER ONE

PRE-COLONIAL ACHOLILAND

Pre-colonial Acholi history differs greatly from other ethnic groups in Uganda. Acholiland was sparsely populated, and most of the population migrated quite frequently prior to the 18th century. The propensity to migrate, the absence of a centralized government, and several other factors led Acholi historians, such as Atkinson²⁵, to believe that Acholi lacked a collective ethnic identity prior to the 19th century. However, the development of the chiefdom ideology during the 17th century provided the Acholi with a basis to form their collective identity. The Acholi identity was not just a political identity, nor was it limited to the chiefdom ideology. The chiefdom ideology, traditions, and the adoption of a common language functioned to form the Acholi ethnic identity during the pre-colonial period.

This chapter relies on the work of a few historians, mainly Ronald Atkinson and F.K. Girling. These historians have written the most extensive and comprehensive histories of pre-colonial Acholi. Surprisingly, they agree on one thing: prior to colonialism, the Acholi did not have a collective ethnic identity. This chapter challenges that misconception by focusing on the commonalities among all the Acholi during this period, mainly in the development of their collective identity. The chiefdom ideology functioned as the amalgamation of the social, political, religious, and traditional of the

²⁵ Ronald R. Atkinson, *The Roots of Ethnicity: The Origins of the Acholi of Uganda Before 1800*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 273.

Acholi. This informed the creation of their collective identity during the pre-colonial period.

Ecology, Migration, and Early Settlement

The ecology of Acholiland influenced the chiefdom building process throughout Acholiland, which started in the late 17th Century. Chiefdoms located in central and southern Acholiland were larger and more powerful because of the fertility and rainfall in those areas. Atkinson asserted that chiefdoms often formed near mountains because they provided natural security against invasions. Most of Acholiland's borders served as a natural defense, and the land itself provided for all of the Acholi's agricultural needs. The natural security and fertility of Acholiland kept invaders out of the region and stabilized the population.²⁶

The river systems throughout Acholiland were the most important aspects of the landscape. The Acaa, Payer, Unyama, and other minor rivers contributed to the Nile while serving as natural borders. The rivers were also important for agriculture, defense, and fishing.²⁷ Due to the hostile lands surrounding Acholiland, there was very little contact with other ethnic groups in East Africa during the migratory period. The areas surrounding the mountains were the most populous during the migratory period because of the security they provided. In the southeast, the Acholi dwelled around the slopes of the Ogili, Amyel, and Lapono mountain ranges until the 19th century. In the west, the

²⁶Atkinson,(1994, 47).

²⁷Atkinson, (1994, 47). F.K Girling, *The Acholi of Uganda*, (London: Her Majest'ys Stationary Office, 1960), 13.

Kilak mountain range served as a home for many Acholi groups. The mountain range along the Uganda-Sudan border served as a natural boundary as well, which influenced the socio-political differences of the Acholi in Uganda versus the Acholi in the Sudan.²⁸

The rainy season in Acholiland lasts from April/May to October/November. The average in Acholiland is around 45 inches, but this varies by regions as well. Central Acholiland receives at least 40 inches of rainfall each year, which contributes to their fruitful agricultural pursuits. The area surrounding central Acholiland, from Otuke to the Nile, receives between 30-40 inches of rainfall.²⁹ The southwest and central northern regions receive very little rainfall. While those regions' environments are not conducive to producing successful crops, they are ideal for raising livestock.³⁰

The amount of rainfall influenced the likelihood of a successful harvest. Likewise, the length of the rainy season could both benefit and damage the soil and agriculture. Of all the crops grown throughout Acholiland, eleusine millet and sesame were most important and desired. Both required dependable rainfall and fertile soil.³¹ Eleusine millet and sesame cultivation was labor intensive, partially because of the rigidity of the rainy period.³² Women were highly involved in crop cultivation because of the intensity of the labor. As such, the only male dominated domain was hunting, which took up less than

²⁸ Atkinson, (1994, 48).

²⁹ Ibid, 49.

³⁰ Ibid, 50.

³¹ Ibid, 50.

³² Ibid, 58

4% of their labor time each year.³³ Other crops grown throughout Acholiland included sorghum, bulrush millet, pigeon and cowpeas.³⁴

Despite historical evidence of cattle herding among Central Sudanic speakers, cattle were not as important in all regions of Acholiland. Archaeologist uncovered evidence of cattle herding primarily in the northern and eastern regions.³⁵ The west probably suffered from tsetse fly infestations.³⁶ There is very little evidence that suggest the importance of wild game in Acholiland during before the emergence of chiefdoms, but it was certainly important during the time of chiefdoms for food and tribute to *rwodi*.³⁷

Migration and Settlement

Central Sudanic lineages settled into eastern Acholiland by the end of the first millinium BCE. Eastern Nilotic groups moved into the same region during the early part of the first millinium CE, and both groups made contact. Western Nilotic Luo speakers migrated to the area during the 15th century and settled along the southern border of Acholiland. Central Sudanic peoples represented the largest group, particularly in the

³³ Ibid, 60

³⁴ Atkinson (1994, 55), F.K Girling, *The Acholi of Uganda*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1960), 17.

³⁵ Atkinson, (1994, 56).

³⁶ Tsetse flies carry trypanosomes, which is deadly for animals.

³⁷ Ibid, 57. *Rwodi*, plural for *rwot*. *Rwot* is synonymous for chief in Acholiland. They are the political heads of chiefdoms.

west. Eastern Nilotic speakers settled primarily in east and central Acholiland.³⁸ The Luo, which represented the smallest portion of the population, remained in the south until the late 17th century.³⁹

The occupation of Acholiland started with the northwest migration of the Uma and Lairubi lineage groups, both of which were Central Sudanic. The Lamogi, also Central Sudanic, were already occupying the neighboring hills. Patwol (Central Sudanic) peoples migrated into Uma territory and formed a village grouping. Although the Patwol and Uma lineage groups migrated into the area at different times, many of them considered each other as kin. Some in the Patwol and Pauma groups claim Uma as their main line of ancestry.⁴⁰ The Lamogi also grouped with Uma.⁴¹

Eastern Nilotic lineage groups migrated from the Agoro Mountains and settled near Uma. This became the largest village in the area. Traditions say that the Agoro group became more powerful than the Uma. The Lamogi and Patwol joined the Agoro. The Uma became head of the Pauma lineage and joined the Agoro. The Larubi remained an independent village, although they were originally associated with the Pauma.⁴²

The Luo were not as prevalent during the migratory period because they were a smaller group. The Luo occupied an area in southwest Acholiland called the Luo Triangle. The largest Luo presence near Acholiland was located in northern Bunyoro-

³⁸ Ibid, 63.

³⁹ Ibid, 64.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 68

⁴¹ Ibid, 69

⁴² Ibid, 69.

Kitara.⁴³ This contradicts the ethnopolitical and historical assumptions that the Acholi favored Luo traditions and customs during this time. It also assist in understanding the rivalries that existed between the Luo, Central Sudanic, and Eastern Nilotic peoples during the 20th century, which puts the conflicts during the colonial and post-colonial periods into perspective.⁴⁴

The Pre-Polity Period

The pre-polity period refers to the time-period before the chiefdom building process began, mainly before the 17th century. Atkinson's analysis contained more consideration for the role of non-Luo speaking people in the region than Girling before the 17th century. For Atkinson, the majority of pre-polity Acholiland lacked rigid socio-political structure. Traditions from this period rarely survived because of the lack of political centralization.⁴⁵ Some scholars, such as Webster, often interpreted this time-period as having chiefdoms or other forms of rigid political structures. This reflects the popular assumption that early Luo migrations brought the chiefdom concept to Acholiland. The Patiko traditions include of list of *rwodi* that predate their first chiefdom under *Rwot Atiko* in the late nineteenth century. If those names represented legitimate chiefdoms, the Luo were responsible for the first chiefdoms.⁴⁶ Later archaeologist

⁴³ Ibid, 71

⁴⁴ Ibid, 72. The largest Luo presence during this time was located in southwest Acholiland in an area known as the Luo Triangle. The majority of the Luo in the area settled in northern Bunyoro-Kitara during the sixteenth century.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 64

⁴⁶ Ibid, 65.

produced evidence that political centralization predated the Luo migration into Acholiland.⁴⁷

Most Acholi during this period dwelled in small communities based on village-lineages.⁴⁸ Sometimes, communities combined so that they represented multiple village-lineages. For example, the Patiko existed as a multi-village community, which included the Panyagira village.⁴⁹ Some evidence from Patiko traditions suggests that relations between the Patiko and Panyagira were relaxed, but the introduction of chiefdoms caused the separation of the two villages.⁵⁰ Some villages also appointed a village leader, or lineage head, that acted as primary leader among other leaders. In such cases, the village head maintained an equal status with the other leaders within the village. Villages appointed leaders based on the size of the village.⁵¹

While the village leader was supposed to be “first among equals”, larger village dwellings experienced more of a concentration of power. Palaro was comprised of four Central Sudanic groups: the Uma⁵², Larubi, Lamogi, and Patwol. The Uma and Larubi migrated from the northwest and settled in central Acholiland. The Lamogi lived in the area long before the Uma and Larubi settled into the area. The Patwol migrated into the

⁴⁷ Ibid, 66.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 67.

⁴⁹ Also, like several other village dwellings at the time, the Patiko-Panyagira multi-village community represented two language groups. The Patiko are Luo, and the Panyagira are Central Sudanic.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 67, some of the Luo traditions also suggest that the Panyagira were slaves to the Luo.

⁵¹ Ibid, 67

⁵² Later called Pauma.

area and joined the Uma to form a multi-village community.⁵³ The Lamogi joined the Uma-Patwol grouping, which left the Larubi as the only single village community in the area⁵⁴

An Eastern Nilotic group migrated into the area from the Agoro Mountains. This Agoro group established contact with the Uma but chose to live independently. They became the largest village in the area, and gained more respect than the Uma led village grouping. The Lamogi and Patwol abandoned the Uma and joined the Agoro. After some time, the Uma became the Pauma and joined the Agoro as well. The Larubi continued to live independently as a single village community. The Agoro maintained their dominance in the area until the 18th century when the Palaro incorporated all of the villages in the area.⁵⁵

Atkinson challenged the popular interpretation of the Acholi being ethnically Luo. The prevalence of non-Luo speaking people in the region supports the assertion that Luo were solely responsible for social organization and the adoption of the chiefdom ideology. That belief stems from the later adoption of the Luo language, which led historians and anthropologists to believe that either all Acholi were descendents of Luo speakers or Luo speakers were the most powerful group in the region during this period.⁵⁶ Though there were little to no chiefdoms before the 17th century, the communities non-Luo speakers formed were the basis of chiefdom building.

⁵³ Ibid, 68.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 69.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 69.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 71.

Instead of challenging Atkinson's analysis, this section affirms it and furthers the notion of non-Luo speaking peoples having a significant role in social organization based on migratory patterns and settlement. Prior to the late 17th century, Central Sudanic and Eastern Nilotic peoples comprised the vast majority of villages in Acholiland. Single and multi-village communities were important to the development of chiefdoms throughout Acholiland. As villages experienced population growth, their power structures became centralized. Village leaders, who were mainly Eastern Nilotic and Central Sudanic, gained increasingly important roles in these communities while monopolizing more power over the villages. Throughout the 17th century, villages created the ideal socio-political environment for the chiefdom ideology to flourish throughout the region.

Rituals, Jogi, and Traditions

The importance of rituals, *jogi* (ancestor spirits), and traditions greatly influenced the chiefdom building process, and thus helped to create the Acholi identity. Before chiefdoms emerged, each village had its own *jok* or *jogi*, traditions, and rituals that the head of the chiefdom, or *rwot*, used as unifying factors for all lineages within the chiefdom. Additionally, there were rituals and traditional symbols that legitimized the *rwot's* position and the sovereignty of the chiefdom as a political entity. Therefore, the social mores of the members of the chiefdom directly influenced and legitimized the political nature of the chiefdom. Without acknowledging and incorporating the traditions, *jogi*, and rituals of his people, a *rwot* could not expect them to acknowledge him as their legitimate leader.

Religion and Jogi

V. Opoka's analysis of the role of *jogi* in Acholi debunked the popular misconception that the Acholi had no religion or supreme god-like figure before the colonial period. Their belief system focused on their minor *jogi* and their supreme *jok*, *Jok Madit* or *Jok Lacwec*. "The belief in the Supreme Being is the Foundation Stone of the Acholi religion, which are moral customs, religious ceremonies, or ritual."⁵⁷ The belief in *Jok Lacwec* did not mean that the Acholi religion was as organized as Christianity according to Opoka. However, in order to understand the social aspects of Acholi life, one has to understand their religion.⁵⁸

Before the incorporation of Christianity, the core of the Acholi religion focused on three terminologies: *wilobo*, *woko*, and *rupiny*. The literal translation of *Wilobo* is "the world, the earth".⁵⁹ Metaphorically, it means "the life of both men and other creatures living on earth" and "the life of each individual creature as destined by God."⁶⁰ *Wilobo* is responsible for the fortune and misfortune of Acholi. Concurrently, *wilobo* determines the physical aspects of each Acholi, such as height and weight. Thus, *wilobo* is responsible for all aspects of an Acholi's life, both metaphorically and physically.⁶¹ The

⁵⁷ V. Opoka, *Traditional Values of Acholi Religion and Culture for their Evangelization*, (Rome: Universita Lateranense, 1980), 7.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 7.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 9.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 10.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 10.

literal translation of *Woko* is “environment on the face of the earth”.⁶² Metaphorically, it shares a similar meaning with *wilobo*. It also refers to the inhabitants of a place on earth or the earth as a whole, and the influence *jogi* have on Acholi.⁶³ The Acholi view *woko* and *wilobo* synonymously.⁶⁴

Rupiny literally translates to “dawn of the day, the coming of another day with sunlight.”⁶⁵ Metaphorically, when the Acholi use *rupiny*, they are referring to the application of *woko* or *wilobo*. Therefore, *rupiny* signify the coming of each day as an event.⁶⁶ *Rupiny* is the fulfillment of life for each individual. *Woko* and *wilobo* refer to the daily happenings in each individual’s life.⁶⁷ All three aspects work in unison in the lives of Acholi.

Each chiefdom performed duties in reverence to *Jok Lacwec*. For example, the Acholi performed rituals and sacrificed to Him during the cultivation period, droughts, plagues, famine, and war. The Acholi chose mountains and hills as places to worship Him to get closer to the place he dwelled, the upper part of the universe.⁶⁸ (This is not to be confused with a heaven-like place, as seen in Christianity.) The official place for Acholi family or community worship was the *Abila*, or shrine. Acholi built *Abila* as a shrine for their ancestors, and they prayed to ancestors who served as their representatives to *Jok Lacwec*. The *rwot* was their religious Supreme Leader. There was a

⁶² Ibid, 11.

⁶³ Ibid, 11.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 12.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 13.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 13.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 14.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 24.

time that elders elected Priest from their villages, but the position eventually became hereditarily acquired.⁶⁹

Opoka's contribution to understanding the Acholi religion furthers our understanding of how their beliefs shaped the chiefdom building process, which informed their collective identity. The *rwot* was not just a political figurehead. He served as the leader of their religion and rituals. His religious role, and the importance of the Acholi religion in general, was challenged by missionaries during the colonial period. Thus, to view *rwodi* solely as political figures diminished the role and value their position held within the chiefdom.

Rituals, Symbols, and Traditions

The introduction of the *rwotship*, tribute system, and royal regalia to Acholiland was largely in part due to the Paluo migrations from the Bunyoro-Kitara kingdom, a massive kingdom located to the south of Acholiland. The Paluo were located on the northern border of Bunyoro-Kitara and referred to the king as their *rwot*.⁷⁰ The king recognized Paluo chiefs as *rwodi* of their smaller political entities. He collected tribute from them and gave Paluo *rwodi* royal regalia in exchange for their loyalty. Bunyoro-Kitara kings relied on the possession of the royal drum to signify their sovereignty.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Ibid, 35.

⁷⁰ Atkinson, (1994, 82.)

⁷¹ Ibid, 83.

During the late 17th century, the Paluo began experiencing trouble with the *rwot* of Bunyoro-Kitara. The *rwot* of the Bunyoro-Kitara targeted the Paluo for allying with his brother during their struggle for the *rwot*ship. This caused a mass migration out of northern Bunyoro into Acholiland to escape his wrath. Most of the Paluo migrated to eastern Acholiland, although a few migrated west.⁷²

The Paluo leadership who migrated out of Paluo established most of the first powerful chiefdoms in central, southeastern, and east-central regions of Acholiland. By 1725, there were only eleven successful Acholi chiefdoms: six in the central region, four in the southeast, and one just north of Paluo territory. These chiefdoms created the dominant socio-political ideology that lasted until colonialism.⁷³ Though the Paluo adopted the chiefdom model from the Bunyoro-Kitara kingdom, that model changed to fit the lack of political centralization in Acholiland. Acholi chiefdoms existed as independent and sovereign entities, whereas the chiefdoms in Bunyoro-Kitara recognized the supreme authority of a king above their own authority.⁷⁴

Ceremonies and rituals were extremely important as they unified the entire chiefdom. The most important ceremonies and rituals marked the dry and harvesting seasons. At the end of the dry season in February, all of the villages participated in a large hunt. Hunters captured a young buck for the village elders to kill. They mixed the blood of the buck with the seeds be planted that season. After this ritual, the sowing season began. Once the sowing was complete, the *rwot* held a feast for the entire domain.

⁷² Ronald Atkinson, *State Formation and Development in Western Acholi*. (Kampala: Makerere University, 1971), 7-8.

⁷³ Atkinson, (1994, 104).

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 82.

The same ceremonies and rituals marked the beginning of the harvesting season in September.⁷⁵

The most important traditional symbol in the chiefdom was the royal drum, *bul ker*. It symbolically represented the *rwot*'s authority and the sovereignty of the chiefdom. Losing possession of the *bul ker* meant losing *rwotship* and forfeiting the sovereignty of the chiefdom to who ever took the drum from the *rwot*. The *bul ker* remained in the *rwot*'s compound unless a serious ritual or funeral took place. The *rwot* only played the royal drums on special occasions, which the Acholi accompanied with a traditional dance, the *bwola*.⁷⁶ The Acholi also credited the royal drum with making the rains fall, particularly the east. During the colonial period, one of the ways the British Administration challenged the authority of the *rwot* and the sovereignty of his chiefdom was by confiscating the royal drum.⁷⁷

The tribute system (*tyer*) in Acholiland was one of the most important means used to recognize the *rwot*'s political authority. Acholi paid tribute to their *rwot* with material possessions and service. For example, a village could pay their tribute with spears, iron goods, and jewelry if they had a blacksmith.⁷⁸ Usually, the members of a village paid their tribute collectively by working in the *rwot*'s fields for his wives. Paying tribute was usually not burdensome to the village, particularly if they paid it with agricultural labor. However, collecting tributes granted the *rwot* material wealth greater than anyone else in the chiefdom. Oftentimes, the *rwot* used his tribute as a form of retribution by paying

⁷⁵ Girling, (1960, 98).

⁷⁶ Atkinson, (1994, 95).

⁷⁷ Ibid, 96. This is discussed at length in Chapter Two.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 92.

those who helped him. For example, in exchange for working in his fields, it was customary for a *rwot* to gift large quantities of beer.⁷⁹ Thus, the tribute system made the *rwot* the center of the redistribution of material wealth in his chiefdom.⁸⁰

The rituals, symbols, and religion of the Acholi shaped the traditions of chiefdoms. By honoring those aspects of chiefdom life, the *rwot* solidified his position as his chiefdom's traditional leader. During the colonial period, the British displayed a lack of regard for Acholi traditions in several significant ways. Chapter Two covers the challenges and changes these traditions endured, as well as how those changes reshaped the chiefdom structure.

Chiefdom Building during the 17th Century

It is important to note that Girling's based his analysis of the chiefdom structure was on what he observed during colonial. Therefore, the model he provided quite possibly reflected the changes the colonial government implemented in Acholiland instead of the traditional social structure of these chiefdoms. Girling discussed the socio-political structure of the chiefdom by analyzing the sub-groups within the political system, including villages, hamlets, and families. Additionally, Girling challenged the notion of Africans living in stateless societies because to him, the application of the term itself was meaningless and useless.⁸¹ Yet, he contradicts himself by claiming that the

⁷⁹ Ibid, 93.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 94.

⁸¹ Girling, (1960, 3).

Acholi did not have a centralizing political or judiciary institution, which would translate to statelessness.⁸² Using his analysis, this section challenges the misconception of Acholi statelessness.

The Chiefdom Model

Girling referred to chiefdoms as domains to emphasize their political nature. The domains consisted of two types of villages, *lokar* (aristocratic village) and *lobang* (commoner village). The *rwot* was also the *won lobo*, father of the land. Most domains also appointed a “father of the soil”, which was usually an elder of a prominent commoner lineage. Both the *rwot* and the “father of the soil” were responsible for making the rains fall in their domain, as well as other domains suffering from drought.⁸³

The *rwot* lived in the middle of the domain.⁸⁴ Lineages positioned their villages so they could hear the *rwot*’s alarm call. If the *rwot* sounded the alarm, he expected all men to report to his compound with a spear and shield to defend the domain. Failure to comply was a serious offense. If a *rwot* moved his domain, they relocated the remains of deceased *rwodi* as well. This was to maintain the well-being of the domain.⁸⁵

The royal lineage divided into aristocratic lineages in the domain. The *rwot*’s power was dependent upon the relationships he formed with the lineages. The effectiveness of the domain’s political structure was contingent upon these

⁸² Ibid, 9.

⁸³ Ibid, 82.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 82.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 83.

relationships.⁸⁶ The successor to the *rwot*ship was usually a son by the *rwot*'s wife, but disputes did occur over succession. The kings of Bunyoro-Kitara usually settled succession disputes for the Acholi. Once the elders and *rwot* agreed on the chosen successor, the succession ceremony began.⁸⁷ The succession ceremony, called *kwer ma keto Rwot*, involved the successor hiding from the elders in the bush. The elders forced him out as he struggled against them. This was supposed to simulate childbirth.⁸⁸

Ceremonies and rituals were extremely important as they unified the entire domain. The most important ceremonies and rituals marked the dry and harvesting seasons. At the end of the dry season in February, all of the villages participated in a large hunt. Hunters captured a small buck to take to the village elders to kill. The elders mixed the blood of the buck with the seeds for the planting season. After this ritual, the sowing season began. Once completed, the *rwot* held a feast for the entire domain. The same ceremony and rituals happened during the harvesting season in September.⁸⁹

While the *rwot* had the power to declare war against another domain, he rarely ever physically led a war.⁹⁰ The *rwot* customarily chose the leader of each war.⁹¹ Wars were typically over territorial expansion, invasions, cattle, or women.⁹² The internal cohesion of the domain was established during a period of warfare. Men achieved their optimum social status when they killed an enemy of the domain: a "killer name". The

⁸⁶ Ibid, 84.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 85.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 86. *Ker* is associated with childbirth and menstruation.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 98.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 102.

⁹¹ Ibid, 124. Wars were primarily between domains. Conflict within the domain, particularly between lineages, were feuds.

⁹² Ibid, 104.

rwot also served as an arbitrator in disputes between villages. If someone did not agree with his ruling, he was free to leave the domain and join kin in another domain.⁹³ No one was responsible for recording the laws of the domain. Members of the domain adhered to the *ongon*, precedents set by the elders. The *rwot* did not create or enforce the *ongon*; rather he kept the peace.⁹⁴

Organization within the Chiefdom

Girling recognized three important subgroups within the domain: households, hamlets, and villages. The household was comprised of a family hut. According to Acholi custom, a man was not allowed to build a hut for his wife until she was either pregnant or had already given birth. As the man expands his family, he expands his hut. Thusly, although a man was responsible for providing a physical dwelling for his family, the existence of that household was contingent upon childbirth. The word for sex, *geero*, also translates to “to build a hut.” Each wife maintained her own fields to provide for her husband and children. If there were multiple wives, they worked together to take care of the household’s needs.⁹⁵

A hamlet was the extended family dwelling that a household belonged to. A communal fire was at the center of each hamlet. The eldest son of the eldest son typically

⁹³ Ibid, 171.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 104.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 167.

produced the most children, had more wives, and controlled the hamlet.⁹⁶ The youngest son of the youngest son usually led the hamlet rituals. *Rwodi* did not recognize hamlet autonomy, but they shared a large degree of economic cooperation.⁹⁷

Villages were agnatic (patrilineal), as were hamlets and households. Age-sets and initiation schools for boys were common. If a village did not have either, elders gave the boys a new “flirtation name”, *nyiny mwoc*. All village members hunted and tended the fields together. Traditions prohibited marriage within a village-lineage.⁹⁸ Aristocratic villages had more non-agnates and wealth than commoner villages, so they developed at a faster rate. The *rwot* was also the head of the aristocratic lineages.⁹⁹ The *dakh ker* bound the *rwot* to symbolic ties to commoner lineages. The commoner lineages offered personal services to the *rwot* as part of their tribute to him.¹⁰⁰

Some domains in Acholiland, particularly in the southeastern and central regions, hailed from Babito lineage of the Babito Dynasty. Some members of this lineage migrated to Acholiland and created sovereign domains. These domains recognized the authority of the Bunyoro-Kitara kingdom, but they were not part of the kingdom.¹⁰¹ Bunyoro-Kitara kings were suppliers of many Acholi domains’ royal regalia, and they participated in the succession ceremonies of many *rwodi*. These kings had this sort of authority because of the massive size of the Bunyoro-Kitara kingdom, its’ wealth, and the

⁹⁶ Ibid, 168.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 169.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 169.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 170.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 171.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 172. A few of these domains also recognized the authority of the Payera kingdom. Babito was the royal lineage group in Bunyoro-Kitara.

centralized political system that allowed them to defend themselves much more efficiently than any domain in Acholiland.¹⁰²

The domain existed because of the cooperative effort of the *rwot*, the traditionally recognized leader of the domain, and lineage-heads. It was imperative that the *rwot* recognize both the legitimacy and limitations of his position in relation to the important positions lineage-heads held. The domain model in Acholiland evolved out of the socio-political order the Bunyoro-Kitara organized Paluoland by. Though many of the domains maintained a relationship to the Bunyoro-Kitara monarch, an overarching amalgamation of power never occurred in Acholiland. Girling regarded the absence of a centralized socio-political administration for Acholiland as indicative of a lack of cohesion.

Prior to the 19th century, domains were not as efficacious as other kingdoms to the south of Acholiland, partially because domains developed later than the larger kingdoms. Low population density and the freedom to migrate contributed to the absence of a political ideology in the region. When the chiefdom ideology became the primary means to organize the Acholi into political entities, recognition of sovereignty was imperative to the development of their political institution. This was unique feature of Acholiland, as the kingdoms in Uganda were subject to monarchical rule, which severely limited the influence lineages had. Acholi capitalized on the socio-political fluidity of the chiefdom ideology. Instead of lineages losing their autonomy, they continued to enjoy it while also enjoying the security and protection that chiefdoms provided. The chiefdom ideology

¹⁰² Ibid, 172.

thrived on incorporating the defining aspects of each lineage rather than forcing them to adopt traditions unlike their own.¹⁰³

Though Girling was correct to analyze the importance of the political aspect of these domains (or chiefdoms), he failed to recognize how the political structure was only one aspect of the domain. He placed too much importance in the political aspect of the domain. Chiefdoms were not merely domains. Thus, Girling's domain model only illustrates one function of the chiefdom, which was not solely responsible for the chiefdom ideology or the broader Acholi identity.

The Alero of Central Acholiland

The Alero chiefdom was located in central-western region of Acholiland during the 18th century. The formation of the Alero chiefdom illuminates the complexities of the chiefdom building process. Their history also reiterates the importance of the chiefdom ideology as a unifying factor in constructing the Acholi identity. The chiefdom building process involved negotiation, inclusion, and warfare. Once the chiefdom ideology became the primary ideology, chiefdoms formed states by incorporating other lineage groups and defending their territory against invaders.

The Paluo and Luo (from the "Luo Triangle" of southwestern Acholiland) influenced chiefdom building in central Acholiland tremendously. Early traditions place

¹⁰³ Despite the influence the kingdom had on the chiefdom building process in Acholiland, they did not attempt to incorporate the Acholi into the kingdom. Girling,(1960, 172)

Luo speakers in this area prior to the migration of Paluo into the region. Descendants from Luo formed the Alero, Patiko, Payera, Paico, and Paibona chiefdoms in the central region. The Paluo formed the sixth chiefdom, Palaro.¹⁰⁴

Alero was the first *rwot* of the Alero chiefdom.¹⁰⁵ He ruled from around 1680-1710. From all accounts, the early Alero chiefdom was small, with only two main lineages.¹⁰⁶ After the early migration from the “Luo Triangle” and settling near Got Lamola in western Acholi, Alero experienced two conflicts with the Madi and Koyo. While Alero traditions claim they were the victors in both conflicts, the Koyo later formed an alliance with the Pabo chiefdom and defeated the Alero. The Koyo attacked and defeated the Alero. *Rwot* Alero died, and the chiefdom migrated eastward near the Acaa River.¹⁰⁷

The Alero made contact with the Parabok group, which was comprised of the Parabok and Paiwidi village-lineages. The Parabok granted the Alero land to establish villages and agricultural fields. The Alero eventually came to outrank the Parabok, and the Parabok joined the chiefdom as one of the two most powerful lineage groups.¹⁰⁸ The Koyo launched another attack on the Alero in alliance with the Palaro. Despite the growth of the chiefdom, the Alero could not defend themselves against this attack. *Rwot* Kirya sent his brother to the Bunyoro-Paluo chiefdom to petition their *rwot* for help. The

¹⁰⁴ Atkinson, (1994, 104). Map of migration patterns on 105.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 106.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 108.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 109.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 109.

Bunyoro-Paluo sent a larger force, which resulted in the death of Koyo's and Palaro's *rwot*.¹⁰⁹

Unfortunately, the time spent on quelling the conflict caused the internal needs of the Alero to go neglected. There was a massive food shortage and a drought, which caused many Alero to leave the chiefdom during the 1720s.¹¹⁰ The turbulent nature of the early history of Alero illustrates a few important points. First, adopting the chiefdom ideology did not guarantee growth or the overall success of chiefdoms. The Alero chiefdom did not experience any growth due to the inclusion of outsiders during the first two generations of *rwots*. Second, though the chiefdom was relatively weak in military might, they were able to persuade the Parabok to join the chiefdom peacefully. Despite the hardships the Alero endured, the chiefdom ideology provided the stability needed to maintain their dominant position.¹¹¹

The Second Phase of Chiefdom Formation, 1720-1790

The second phase of chiefdom formation provided the foundation for a common Acholi identity, social order, and the political culture of the region. The permanent boundaries of Acholiland were set during this time as well. While the two generations before the drought of the 1720s only produced eleven chiefdoms, the following two

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 110.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 111.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 111.

generations produced almost sixty chiefdoms.¹¹² The drought was an important turning point for all the Acholi and was part of most of their oral traditions. The drought created the ideal physical and socio-political conditions for chiefdom growth until the end of the 18th century.¹¹³

Although the 1720s drought encouraged chiefdom creation and expansion, these chiefdoms remained smaller than those situated further south. The largest chiefdoms only consisted of up to 2,500 people. The Bunyoro-Kitara kingdom represented the largest socio-political entity in the area during this time, but they never threatened Acholi chiefdoms. Once an individual or group joined the chiefdom, *rwodi* did not expect them to sacrifice their personal freedom or direct communication with authority figures. Most were able to continue personal interactions with authority figures, and this was very essential to the nature of political rule throughout Acholiland. This personal interaction also assisted many groups in making the transition into chiefdoms.¹¹⁴

Although Acholiland experienced the growth of chiefdoms as a whole during this period, not all regions expanded at the same rate. For example, eighteen new chiefdoms originated in the southeastern region. In the east-central region, fourteen chiefdoms developed. Most of the chiefdoms in Acholiland presided in these two regions. However, north and northwester Acholiland experienced the least growth, with no more than five chiefdoms between them.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Ibid, 137.

¹¹³ Ibid, 138.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 138.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 138.

There were several reasons why southeast and east-central Acholiland experienced such rapid growth during this period. During the 1720s drought, many people in these regions joined chiefdoms because of the stability and security they provided. Additionally, the Labwor-Otuke hills experienced a mass exodus due to the drought as well, and many of the inhabitants moved into these regions. The drought also strengthened the Jie, a group to the east of Acholiland. The Jie and chiefdoms in eastern Acholiland began making territorial claims while establishing their identities. Thus, hostility and interaction with neighbors encouraged chiefdom creation as well as the establishment of the Acholi identity.¹¹⁶

The Paimol Chiefdom

The Paimol chiefdom, located in eastern Acholiland, serves as a good example of chiefdom formation during the 18th century. Uncontrollable environmental factors, as well as the inclusion of other lineages and smaller chiefdoms shaped the chiefdom building process. The Paimol's first *rwot*, Omol, settled near Mt. Akwang during the 1720s drought. The people of Acut, Lokka, Kadwong, Atura, and Kudeng joined the chiefdom during this time.¹¹⁷ Paimol selected *rwodi* based on secession from the royal

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 139.

¹¹⁷ Reuben S. Anywar, *Acoli ki ker Megi=The Acholi and the Chiefdoms in the Acholi language*, (Kampala: The Eagle Press, 1954), 115.

lineage regardless of how qualified a *rwot* was for the position. Most of the *rwodi* lived and died at Mt. Akwang because the neighboring Langi disturbed them.¹¹⁸

Each *rwodi* had a council of elders chosen from each lineage group. *Rwodi* used the royal drum to assemble the council as well as warn people when an enemy approached. The *rwodi* and their councils kept the peace in the chiefdom. The Paimol had many rules and regulations. The main laws provided instructions on punishing someone for murder depending on gender and circumstance, marriage, and fornication.¹¹⁹ There were also laws that regulated hunting and the fields.¹²⁰

According to traditions, the Paimol were natural warriors because of constant conflicts with the Lango, Karimojong, Kiwe, and Akolnyang. Mt. Akwang also served as a natural defense, as the Paimol could easily run back up the mountain and hide in the many caves. Their natural affinity to war made Paimol men very possessive of the women. Paimol women could not marry outside of the chiefdom, as she would take potential warriors with her to other chiefdoms. They uphold this belief in the present day.¹²¹

Paimol's *jogi* represented natural, uncontrollable aspects of their environment that they feared. The two main *jogi* were Akwang on a mountain and Karaka in a river. *Jok* Akwang represented their father because he always protected them. He was the *rwot*'s *jok*.¹²² The Kudeng lineage was responsible for maintaining the shrine to *jok* Akwang,

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 114.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 114-116.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 118.

¹²¹ Ibid, 119.

¹²² Ibid, 133.

and each village sacrificed one male goat to the *jok*. If rain fell, the *jok* was pleased with their offerings. This rain symbolized fertility in the fields and among the Paimol women. The people would then perform the customary Bwola, and then the *rwot* would allow people to begin work in the fields. The *rwot* would order people not to engage in any conflicts between with their neighbors or spouses. The penalty for that was one male goat to purify the soil and one female goat for the chief. The Paimol labored in their fields for one week, and then labored in the *rwot*'s fields until his were prepared.¹²³

The Acut lineage prepared for *Jok Karaka*.¹²⁴ The people give four baskets of millet to the priest. In addition to this, each household had to provide cooked food and a pot of beer from that year's crops. The *rwot* had to slaughter a male goat to purify the land. Everyone brought their weapons and granted good luck by the chickens flying around them. All of this takes place at Lela A Gang. After offering food and beer to Karaka, the people partook in the feast. This celebration is akin to Thanksgiving Day.¹²⁵

Another important aspect of Paimol society was the initiation of boys into manhood in order to protect Akwang. The elders would escort boys ages sixteen to eighteen to the grazing grounds. The elders sang a warrior song while beating the boys. The boys would then kill a number of goats for the elders. Once they ate, the elders allowed the boys to eat. This practice continues today as well.¹²⁶ Age-sets, then, were a crucial part of integrating young men into society.

¹²³ Ibid, 134.

¹²⁴ This *jok* is responsible for wealth, health, food, and hunting.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 135.

¹²⁶ Ibid, 137-138.

The Paimol socio-political structure, traditions, and rituals were similar to the chiefdom throughout much of Acholiland. The growing influence and power of the *rwot* was essential during this time. Additionally, the importance of chiefdom wide rituals and ceremonies were vital to the solidification of the overarching Acholi identity. The Paimol example also illustrates the process of incorporating lineages into chiefdom. In this particular case, this process was relatively peaceful, but that was not always the case throughout Acholiland.

Whether the lineages agreed with their inclusion into the chiefdom or not, they enjoyed certain benefits because of the relationship with the *rwot*, such as leading important rituals. A final point to make is the growing importance of the royal drum to the overall society. The royal drum started as the legitimizing symbol of the *rwot*'s power. After the 1720s, Acholi integrated it into rituals, ceremonies, and used for defense purposes. Thus, the royal drum became an important part of Acholi life beyond the pomp and circumstance.¹²⁷

The Paimol example reiterates the importance of the social mores, political structure, and traditions to chiefdom formation. Much of what occurred in this chiefdom was common for all Acholi chiefdom. The more significant point to make here is that, unlike other groups in Uganda, the absence of a centralized government and political figurehead was a critical part of the Acholi identity. Sovereignty and respect among *rwodi* was essential to the creation of their identity and that was what set them apart from the rest of Uganda. Therefore, challenging the sovereignty of any chiefdom was a threat

¹²⁷Atkinson, (1994, 151-152).

to their collective identity and not just their political institution. Their political and social identity shaped their ethnic identity. One could not exist without the other.

Conclusion

The prevalence and importance of the chiefdom ideology resonated throughout Acholiland by the end of the 18th century. Chiefdoms served as sources of security, both defensively and in procuring food. While the chiefdom model became increasingly important, lineage groups remained just as important. *Rwodi* recognized how vital lineages were to members of their chiefdoms, so they willingly granted lineage heads a great deal of respect. As such, lineage heads were responsible for various aspects of the chiefdom, particularly rituals. *Rwodi* required each lineage to pay tribute to him, but he also understood that this tribute was contingent upon them recognizing his legitimacy. In essence, *rwodi* and lineage heads recognized their dependence on each other, both for security and legitimacy. Additionally, *rwodi* represented more than the political figure of chiefdoms. His position granted him an important role in religion and traditions as well. Therefore, the *rwodi* represented each of the factors that contributed to the chiefdom ideology, which informed the Acholi ethnic identity.

Every chiefdom valued their religion, rituals and royal regalia as essential tools to constructing their chiefdom. Rituals and ceremonies were vital to each aspect of chiefdom affairs. Ceremonies for marriage were a means to establish new avenues of communication within and outside of the chiefdom. Rituals for the installment of a new

rwot gave him his legitimacy. These rituals and ceremonies also served as a way to establish solidarity within the chiefdom. Royal regalia, such as the royal drum, were symbols of the chiefdom's sovereignty. The sovereignty of chiefdoms, as well as the legitimacy of *rwodi*, depended on possession of the royal drum. Acholi viewed royal regalia, *jogi*, and rituals not only as important to their social environment, but to the status of the chiefdom throughout the Acholiland as well.

While other historians, such as Atkinson and Girling, did not recognize a collective Acholi identity prior to the 19th century, it is clear that the basis for the Acholi identity existed by the end of the 18th century. Chiefdoms shared the same political ideologies, social structure, traditions, and religion. While the individual histories of chiefdoms, their *jogi*, and some of their rituals varied, each Acholi commoner knew to expect those common practices regardless of which chiefdom they occupied. These commonalities encouraged constant movement throughout the region, as adjusting to life in a different chiefdom was not a difficult task.

The experiences that the Acholi shared throughout the 18th century consolidated the Acholi into a common identity through the chiefdom building process. Prior to the first drought in 1720, Acholi chiefdoms' contact was primarily during warfare over land. The series of droughts and famines throughout the 18th century encouraged cohesive efforts to survive. Smaller chiefdoms migrated to areas where larger, more influential chiefdoms could assist and protect them. The invasions brought on by droughts made inter-chiefdom alliances all the more necessary. Some maintained their sovereignty while larger chiefdoms annexed weaker ones.

The sovereignty of smaller chiefdoms existed because of universally recognized rights they had to their land, relationships with larger chiefdoms, as well as their possession of royal regalia. It may seem that the sovereignty of chiefdoms paradoxically existed to the detriment of the construction of a common Acholi identity, but it was actually a function of that identity. Likewise, defending the sovereignty of chiefdoms was actually a defense of their common identity. Foreign threats to the sovereignty of any chiefdom were a threat to the entire region.

Chapter Two examines the attempts of the Acholi to maintain the chiefdom ideology during the introduction of foreign invaders and British Coloniation. Arab and British invaders knew nothing about the Acholi prior to establishing contact. The inclusion of Acholiland in the Ugandan protectorate, and the introduction of colonial rule, challenged the ability of the chiefdom ideology to integrate into a larger socio-political structure. What occurred was the disassociation of traditionalism, religion, social structure, and political hierarchies from the chiefdom ideology, and the creation of a new Acholi class.

CHAPTER TWO

THE COLONIAL PERIOD

Colonization brought about the expansion of power of one *rwot* over others as the British attempted to superimpose their imperialist system over Acholiland. John Dwyer argued that this method weakened the impact of the Acholi *rwodi*.¹²⁸ Prior to colonialism, Acholi chiefdoms never experienced a period of solidarity aside from moments they defended themselves against outside threats. Colonialism caused “an enlargement of scale, a decline of reciprocity, and the possibility that the future of Acholiland would be as a people.”¹²⁹ To build on Dwyer’s argument, this chapter will focus on how challenging the traditions of the Acholi and implementing rigid a socio-political structure with the British as the leaders of the regions changed the Acholi ethnic identity. Thus, colonialism ushered in a period of the Acholi identity evolving beyond the parameters of the chiefdom ideology as a response to inclusion into a larger, more diverse socio-political structure.

19th Century Acholiland

For much of the 19th Century, the Acholi’s contact with foreigners centered on trading, specifically the Arab slave trade. Arab traders from southern Sudan established trading post on the northern border of the region, and relied on contact with *rwodi* to

¹²⁸ John Orr Dwyer, “*The Acholi of Uganda: Adjustment to Imperialism*”, (Ph.D diss, Columbia University, 1972), 2.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, 4.

supply them with trading goods and slaves. Additionally, unlike southern Uganda, British explorers lacked interest in Acholiland. As such, the majority of the region did not endure significant changes or contact with non-Acholi until the final thirty years of the century. The most significant changes occurred during the 1890s, when the British colonial administration annexed and incorporated Acholiland into the Uganda Protectorate. During this time, the British started the process of restructuring chiefdoms to compliment in-direct rule in a manner that placed the colonial government at the head of the hierarchy of power.¹³⁰ Once this occurred, Acholi *rwodi* underwent a process of renegotiation to determine their new positions in this newly established hierarchy.

Arabs, Europeans, and Egyptians infiltrated Acholiland from the start of the 19th Century. The only European to enter into the region prior to any British colonial administrators was Amabile, a Maltese trader who established a trading post near the Palero chiefdom in 1961. The slave trade had not reached that far inland during that time, so the area was quite peaceful.¹³¹ Arab traders, called *Kutoria*, arrived in Acholiland from Sudan searching for ivory and slaves in the late 1860s. *Jadiya*, representatives of an Egyptian administration, on the upper Nile, also migrated into the area to serve as representatives of the Egyptian administration on the upper Nile from 1872-1888. The

¹³⁰ The British used indirect rule to administer its colonies. Indirect rule consisted of the British using the pre-existing political hierarchies and institutions Africans. The British used traditional African leaders to impose their laws and taxes, while placing themselves at the top of the political hierarchy. On the surface, the British appeared to respect the socio-political hierarchies in place prior to colonialism. In reality, indirect rule disenfranchised many traditional leaders.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 36.

Kutoria maintained three bases for trade across Northern Uganda near the Patiko, Padibe, and Pabo chiefdoms.¹³²

Sir Samuel Baker installed *Jadiya* in the Equatorial Province to combat the slave trade. The *Jadiya* forced the Acholi to pay a grain tax, which resulted in increased violence throughout the region.¹³³ Ironically, the Arab slave traders had ceased all trading in Acholiland by the time *Jadiya* occupied region. Acholi *rwodi* respected Baker because they shared his desire to chase Arab traders out of the region. Baker developed a close relationship with *Rwot* Camo of the Payera chiefdom and believed that Camo was the *rwot* of all of Acholiland.¹³⁴ Though many *rwodi* trusted Baker, this was not a common theme throughout the colonial period. Comparatively, Baker was the least invasive and most cooperative of all colonial administrators. Though he misinterpreted the political structure in the region as monarchical, he did not try to impede on any of the internal happenings within the chiefdoms. Therefore, the chiefdom building process continued organically throughout his tenure.

During the late 1870s through the late 1880s, chiefdoms coalesced to attack the *Jadiya* and force them out of Acholiland. While contact with *Jadiya* and *Kutoria* seemingly caused a slew of conflicts throughout the region, the extended contact with non-Acholi peoples widened access to trade throughout East and North Africa.¹³⁵ The Acholi became heavily involved in ivory and slave trading. In addition to this, Acholi

¹³² Ronald R. Atkinson, *The Roots of Ethnicity: The Origins of the Acholi of Uganda 1800*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 267.

¹³³ Atkinson (1994, 268), Reuben S. Anywar, *Acholi ki ker Megi=The Acholi and the Chiefdoms in the Acholi language*, (Kampala: The Eagle Press, 1954), 13-14. Anywar also mentions a Nubian threat in the area as well. Nubians were most likely the Egyptians that migrated into the area from Upper Egypt.

¹³⁴ Orr, "The Acholi of Uganda", 37.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 268.

began raiding outside of Acholiland. As a result, the wealth of chiefdoms increased exponentially.¹³⁶

Though the wealth of Acholiland as a whole increased tremendously, the distribution of wealth was uneven across the region. *Rwodi* and their translators shared a monopoly on trade and wealth. When ivory traders moved into the area, *rwodi* began demanding tribute in the form of one tusk from every elephant killed in the chiefdom. Traders also gave *rwodi* goods and slaves in return for assistance to transport the ivory. For the first time in Acholi history, the wealth of chiefdoms did not depend on the tribute given to *rwodi*, and *rwodi* could pass substantial wealth to their successors.¹³⁷

Trading with foreigners created competition among chiefdoms that extended beyond land rights. This new economic outlet made *rwodi* less dependent on commoners and lineage heads for their wealth. Additionally, collecting tribute became less about legitimizing the *rwot*'s position because of the new grain taxes the Acholi had to pay. For the first time in history, *rwodi* did not dictate all economic activity in the region. The wealth beyond land holdings became more important to *rwodi*, as they could potentially utilize that wealth to exercise power within the region.

The Adaptation of the "Acholi" Identifier

Contact with *Kutoria* influenced the collective Acholi identity as well. The traders did not honor the hierarchy of power the chiefdoms established between lineages and

¹³⁶ *ibid*, 269.

¹³⁷ *ibid*, 269.

rwodi, or the separate identities that existed throughout Acholiland. They created a collective identity for the entire region, with the Luo language as the basis for its distinctions.¹³⁸ These traders had an extensive history with the Luo language and its speakers throughout Sudan, and they recognized the similarity in the languages throughout Acholiland. The first contact the traders had with Luo was in *Shilluk* in Sudan. The similarity in the languages prompted the traders to label the Acholi *Shuuli*. *Shuuli* became *Cuuli* because the Luo language did not recognize the “ch” sound. Then *Cuuli* became *Acooli*, or Acholi.¹³⁹

Conversely, British explorers in the region did not embrace Acholi as an ethnic distinction as quickly as Arab traders did. Sir Samuel Baker’s first encounter with Acholi occurred in 1863-1864. He was primarily interested in the trade activities conducted in the region. He referred to all of Northern Uganda as Madi while recognizing the individual chiefdoms as well. He referred to individual chiefdoms as “districts” or “tribes”. Baker also referred to all of Madi as a tribe, which demonstrated his lack of understanding when interpreting the socio-political divisions in Acholiland.¹⁴⁰ Baker became Governor of the Equatorial Province of Egypt in 1869. He travelled to Acholiland in 1872 and established his fort at Patiko. Baker’s goal for Acholiland was ending the Arab slave trade.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Ibid, 269.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 270. Crazzolaro also references this identity formation throughout his three volume series, *The Lwoo*.

¹⁴⁰ Atkinson, (1994, 270).

¹⁴¹ R.M. Bere, “An Outline of Acholi History”, *Uganda Journal* (1947): 6.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Europeans used *Shuuli* regularly to refer to the Acholi.¹⁴² The Acholi welcomed the *Shuuli* designator as well. The collective identity ushered in an era of collective cooperation and organization among chiefdoms while the area experienced an increase in warfare.¹⁴³ Chiefdoms also had increased contact with other chiefdoms from farther distances throughout Acholiland. Evidence in *Kutoria* trading records indicate that they raided outside of Acholiland more than within its borders. Additionally, evidence indicates that chiefdoms did not make it a regular practice to trade their captives (from intra-chiefdom warfare) with *Kutoria*, as was common throughout other parts of Uganda.¹⁴⁴

Kutoria were not interested in the culture of Acholiland so much as they were the potential for trade. As such, their effort to label those in Acholiland collectively had more to do with economic gains rather than a desire to occupy and control the region. Although British colonization of Uganda did not start officially until 1884, the British occupied Uganda decades prior to colonization. During the beginning phases of British occupation, the British had a basis for classifying the Acholi, which Sir Baker's books surely influenced.¹⁴⁵

Many historians, including Atkinson, attribute contact with *Kutoria*, *Jadiya*, and Europeans for the creation of a collective Acholi identity. However, increased contact

¹⁴² *Ibid*, 271. The differences in the Luo language in Acholiland versus the Sudan probably had to do with the prevalence of Central Sudanic and Eastern Nilotic speakers in the region prior to the Luo and Paluo migrations.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, 271.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 272.

¹⁴⁵ Anywar, (1954, 14). Additionally, Wild's *Early Travelers in Acholi* details some of the first information given by Baker to British government on Acholiland. His first books were published between the 1860s and 1890s.

between Acholi chiefdoms played a significant role in this process as well. Prior to the nineteenth century, contact between chiefdoms was limited to whichever region the chiefdom occupied. Chiefdoms primarily focused on solidifying and expanding. A great deal of intra-chiefdom contact had more to do with gaining more territory and lineages joining chiefdoms while abandoning others. However, chiefdoms shared similar traditions and a political ideology that made traveling between chiefdoms possible for individual Acholi. Prior the 19th Century, foundation for the Acholi identity was established. Therefore, the only significant factor credited to foreigners is the collective identifier itself, *Shuuli*.

The Transition into Colonialism

By the 1880s, early colonial administrators recognized the importance of the chiefdom model, as well as rituals and royal regalia, as vital to the Acholi collectively. Colonels MacDonald and Marter moved into Acholiland and established friendly relations with *rwodi* during the 1890s. The British Colonial Government then made Acholiland part of Uganda in 1898.¹⁴⁶ For the next twenty years, the Acholi resisted colonial rule rather successfully due to the lack of resources the colonial government had at their disposal. A few chiefdoms grew exponentially during the 19th century. Of these chiefdoms, the Payera attempted to exert more power in the region and solidify their position as the paramount chiefdom in Acholiland. Concurrently, the Payera experienced

¹⁴⁶ V. Pelligrini, *Lok pa Acoli macon: A history of the Acholi*, (Gulu: Catholic Press, 1963), 30.

the most contact with the colonial government because of the centrality of the chiefdom in the region. Therefore, Payera transition into colonialism provides the best example of the difficulty the Acholi faced in integrating the chiefdom ideology into the larger colonial socio-political institution.

The Payera

The Payera chiefdom, located in the center of Acholiland, experienced the largest expansion of power and influence during the 19th century. They were among the first to form a relationship with the British. Baker's relationship with the Payera influenced his opinion of Acholiland in its entirety. This worked to the benefit of *Rwot Camo's* goals for the Payera.¹⁴⁷ He and his son, Awich, were attempting to assert their dominance over Acholiland just as the British began colonizing Uganda. As such, having direct contact with the British gave the Payera a political advantage.¹⁴⁸

In January of 1887, *Jadiya* assassinated *Rwot Camo*.¹⁴⁹ Evidence indicated that a rival *rwot* had him killed, but there was no indication as to why this happened.¹⁵⁰ This tragic event was one of many that led to the withdrawal of *Jadiya* from Acholiland in 1889.¹⁵¹ Soon after Awich's coronation as *rwot* in 1889, the *rwot* of Labango requested his assistance in defeating the Padibe. Awich and his army leader, Latigo Luyang,

¹⁴⁷ John Orr Dwyer, "*The Acholi of Uganda: Adjustment to Imperialism*" (Ph.D diss, Columbia University, 1972) 37. Anywar, (1954, 10).

¹⁴⁸ Dwyer, "The Acholi of Uganda", 38.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 43.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 44.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 48.

defeated the Padibe army. Afterwards, Awich adopted the killer name *Lutanymoi* because he personally killed several men.¹⁵² This effort heightened the power and influence of the Payera.

Any attempt by chiefdoms to assert dominance over the entire region was short lived because that dominance was not traditionally recognized. While the dominant chiefdom's power could be militaristic and political, it could not be ritualistic or spiritual because the proper ceremonies did not take place. This correlated with the importance of the social aspects of Acholi society to forming their political ideology. Awich realized that his dominance over Acholiland would be limited because he could not take part in the proper succession ceremonies or be a part of the royal lineages of the other chiefdoms.¹⁵³

The Payera occupied the most fertile portion of Acholiland, which was also the most secure. As such, it was common for other chiefdoms to flock to Payera when faced with difficult situations such as famine and invasions from other chiefdoms. While serving as mediator for inter-chiefdom disputes, Awich realized that the Acholi were not interested in revenge as much as they were compensation for what they lost in a dispute.¹⁵⁴ *Rwodi* respected Awich's position in Acholiland, as he was a great mediator and had the means to enforce any decision he made. Unlike foreigners, Awich recognized the limitations of his power and the validity of the other *rwodi*'s political positions.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Anywar, (1954, 20). The importance of the killer name, and the militarization of the Acholi in general, will be discussed in Chapter Three.

¹⁵³ Dwyer, "The Acholi of Uganda", 52.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 53.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 54.

During the 1890s, all of Acholiland had the opportunity to strengthen their political traditions for the first time in 50 years.¹⁵⁶ Though the rest of Uganda experienced dramatic changes due to colonization during this time, Acholiland remained largely unaffected because of the colonial administration's lack of interest in the region up to that point. The colonial administration's headquarters were located in Buganda at the time. The British grew more concerned with the Upper Nile region of Acholiland because of their desire to monitor the French and Belgians.¹⁵⁷

Relations between the Payera and the British took a turn for the worst in 1898. Kabarega and Sudanese troops travelled from Bunyoro to Payera seeking refuge from the colonial administration. Acholi traditions required *rwodi* to be hospitable host to whoever sought their protection, so Awich was obliged to help.¹⁵⁸ Acholiland was not officially a part of the Ugandan protectorate during this time, so the colonial administration had to seek permission for the British government to invade the region. Lt. Neill Malcolm obtained permission to occupy Acholiland, rid the region of Sudanese troops, and capture Kabarega.¹⁵⁹ Malcolm travelled throughout western Acholiland signing symbolic treaties with *rwodi* to gain their trust and cooperation, but these treaties had no legal standing.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 58.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 60. Sir John Milner Gray details the secret projects the French started in the Upper Nile region in Acholiland in his history of the region. They planned to lead a secret expedition from the Senegal to the Nile Valley in 1896-1987. While operating under the guise of an expedition, the French were actually planning to join forces with Marchand. See Sir John Gray, "Acholi History 1860-1901," Part II, *UJ* (1952):36-37.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 59. Kabarega was the king of Bunyoro. He fled Bunyoro while fighting the colonial administration over their new administrative tactics.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 75

However, the treaties did recognize chiefdoms' political authority.¹⁶⁰ Acholiland officially became a part of the Ugandan protectorate in 1898.¹⁶¹

Major Delme' Radcliffe made Nimule a collectorate in 1899, and many Acholi *rwodi* sought his protection.¹⁶² At this point, most Acholi had real knowledge of the conflicts between the Nubians, the colonial administration, and Kabarega. It was not very clear to them whom they should align themselves with. Most believed that all outsiders were evil. Although Baker helped end the slave trade in Acholiland, he also placed *Jadiya* throughout the region, which caused many more problems for the Acholi. This lack of clarity caused the Payera to approach the British with hostility.¹⁶³ Awich utilized his 5000 man army to avoid colonial troops until they captured him in 1900. The colonial administration forced him into exile in Kampala until 1901. When Awich returned to Payera, the British occupied most of west Acholiland.¹⁶⁴ In 1908, Awich accepted British rule in the area, as it became clear that he could not resist their army.¹⁶⁵

The colonial administration established the Gulu Township in 1911. Gulu served as a central headquarters for the Acholi and their neighbors, the Lango. *Rwot* Awich became the great *rwot* of Lukiko. During this time, the British referred to the Acholi as Abucingo. The Lango were still resisting the British presence in the area, and they revolted against them from 1907-1917. The Acholi fought alongside the British throughout this struggle and which earned them cattle and women. The coalition between

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 76. The British captured Kabarega in 1897.

¹⁶¹ R.M. Bere, (1947,7).

¹⁶² Ibid, 76. Nimule was an administrative county in northern Acholiland.

¹⁶³ Anywar, (1954,23).

¹⁶⁴ Dwyer, "The Acholi of Uganda", 77.

¹⁶⁵ Anywar, (1954, 24). An interpreter reported back to Awich about the power of the British. He claimed they lived under the sea, which frightened Awich enough to respect their position in Uganda.

the British and Acholi during this struggle placed the Acholi on good terms with the colonial administration.¹⁶⁶ Broadly speaking, the majority of development and administration took place in western Acholiland, particularly in the western central portion as that was the most fertile and secure portion of the region. That trend continued throughout colonialism, which influenced the relations between Acholi in the west and the east.

In the summer of 1911, an Arab visitor came to Payera.¹⁶⁷ He sold the last of his trading goods to Awich, as the *rwot* treated him well. In exchange for his kindness, Awich arranged for guides to escort the Arab to Nimule. Those guides led the Arab to *Rwot* Owor of the Palaro chiefdom to provide him with new guides for the remainder of his trip. The Palaro guides killed the Arab and kept his murder a secret. Awich sent another guide, Ocaka, to ensure that the Arab reached Nimule. When Ocaka reached Nimule, District Commissioner Bene imprisoned Ocaka on suspicion of killing the Arab.¹⁶⁸

District Commissioner Sullivan questioned Awich on the whereabouts of the Arab's gun, which escalated into a physical altercation. The *rwot* paid two cows for attacking Sullivan and went to Nimule to see Bene. Bene sent Awich to prison in Kampala in January of 1912.¹⁶⁹ Alier Alier, Awich son, became *rwot* of Payera. Awich's interpreter, Gwara, gained southern Payera. This new division in the chiefdom

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 24. Abucingo refers to Sullivan, who moved the Acholi to the Gulu area in 1911.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 25.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 26.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 26. Awich was imprisoned at a place he named Kololo during his exile in 1901. Kololo means he stayed there without any assistance.

displeased Alier, particularly because Gwara was not part of the royal lineage. Soon, the chiefdom was reunited and Gwara became Alier's assistant.¹⁷⁰

In 1913, another quarrel occurred between Gwara and Alier because Gwara beat the royal drum during the time the Payera were mourning Awich's imprisonment. The building of the Kitgum Township split the chiefdom once more. The administration of Kitgum ruled the north, and Gulu ruled the south. Alier suggested a *rwotship* for his brother Yona Odida so he could rule southern Payera. In January of 1914, Yona became *rwot* of the region, and his post was in Bungatira. This marked the official split of the Payera chiefdom.¹⁷¹

The government released Awich from prison in November of 1919. Although he could move back to Acholiland, the colonial administration did not allow him to move back to the northern part of Payera out of fear that he would become *rwot* once more. Alier died in 1933 while Awich was stationed in Kitgum. Awich returned to Laguti when his son died.¹⁷² Awich died on July 22nd, 1946.¹⁷³

Rwot Camo and *Rwot* Amich were, quite possibly, the most important *rwodi* in Acholi history. Despite the obstacles they faced from foreign occupation and colonization, these *rwodi* were able to expand the population of the Payera chiefdom as well as their influence over Acholiland. Although neither one achieved full control over Acholiland, their *rwotships* a step towards political centralization. Unfortunately, colonialism hindered their attempts to consolidate all of Acholiland. However, Awich's

¹⁷⁰ *ibid*, 27.

¹⁷¹ *ibid*, 27.

¹⁷² *ibid*, 27.

¹⁷³ *ibid*, 29.

acknowledgement of his political limitations indicated his respect for Acholi customs and rituals, which put him in an advantageous position. Unlike the British, Awich understood that comprehensive political centralization was detrimental to Acholi traditions and rituals. The legitimacy of *rwotship* was contingent upon honoring these social aspects of the chiefdom ideology.

Conversely, the British colonial administration did not understand the chiefdom ideology despite maintaining close contact with Acholiland's most powerful *rwot*. Though they made much more of an effort to understand the basis of the Acholi identity, the British mistook the Payera as the model chiefdom for the rest of Acholiland. It is possible that *Rwot* Camo told Baker that he was the head *rwot* of all of Acholiland, but Baker's contact with other *rwodi* should have indicated otherwise. Still, it is understandable that Baker and the British colonial administration preferred to address Payera *rwodi* as being the most powerful *rwodi* in Acholiland. The Payera chiefdom was the most populous and organized chiefdom in Acholiland, and their central location proved beneficial to the colonial administration and other chiefdoms.

British Colonization from 1900-1950

The colonial administration viewed Acholiland as the most backward portion of Uganda.¹⁷⁴ This attitude may be an indication of the difficulty the British faced in forcing the Acholi to adapt to waged labor. The first few years of the colonial presence in

¹⁷⁴ F.K Girling, *The Acholi of Uganda*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1960), 174.

Acholiland aimed to consolidate power, identify influential *rwodi*, and implement a system of taxation. The Acholi resisted changes to their socio-political ideologies until the 1920s. It became clear to the Acholi, particularly *rwodi*, that they could not resist colonial rule. Once they accepted the policies of the colonial government, a power shift occurred that disenfranchised *rwodi* and challenged the importance of Acholi traditions.

Changes in Administration

The colonial government named John Rutherford Postlethwaite District Commissioner in 1912. The Acholi referred to him as Bwana Gweno, gweno being their word for chicken. His first task was to establish administrative headquarters in northeast Acholiland. The new headquarters became the Chua district.¹⁷⁵ In 1913, District Commissioner Postlethwaite began the process of resettling large portions of the Acholi population. He forced most of West Acholiland to move towards the central region to make his administrative goals much more feasible. Postlethwaite created further tension when he nullified the former colonial policy of honoring the succession laws for *rwodi* in 1915.¹⁷⁶

One of Postlethwaite's goals for the Acholi was to encourage less migration throughout the region, as chiefdoms did not restrict movement. He felt that progress in Acholiland rested in their ability to transition from communal agriculture to individual cultivation. This transition would encourage Acholi families to invest themselves into a

¹⁷⁵ Dwyer, "The Acholi of Uganda", 189.

¹⁷⁶ Girling, (1960, 175).

particular plot of land and settle there in perpetuity. This goal revealed two misconceptions that the colonial administration held of the Acholi. They believed that Acholiland lacked real socio-political organization because of their freedom to migrate as they pleased and lack of central authority.¹⁷⁷

Despite the changes Postlethwaite made to Acholiland, *rwodi* welcomed his presence in the region. He was well loved because of his patience and understanding. *Rwodi* were confident Postlethwaite would address any conflicts between them without bias and violence. He was also instrumental in recruiting many Acholi to serve during World War I, although this was probably not difficult to do as most Acholi were accustomed to fighting in wars.¹⁷⁸ The only point of contention he had with *rwodi* was their affinity to drink. He would not tolerate any drunkenness from *rwodi* and dismissed them from their positions if he caught them.¹⁷⁹

Prior to the 1920s, the colonial administration was severely understaffed. This was primarily due to World War I. In 1917, there were only four district commissioners and one provincial commissioner in Uganda. This lack of administrative support stalled new projects in Acholiland.¹⁸⁰ Large areas of the region remained uninfluenced by the colonial government. Until the mid-1920s, the focus of the colonial government was in keeping the peace and finding a way to draw profits from the protectorate. Once the

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 175.

¹⁷⁸ Dwyer, "The Acholi of Uganda", 190.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 191.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 194.

colonial government received the administrative and monetary support needed, enforcing indirect rule became much more plausible.¹⁸¹

Most of the changes implemented between 1910 and 1920 did not affect the majority of Acholi. Those who had contact with the government displayed indifference to the colonial presence.¹⁸² The absence of centralized power frustrated the British. They asserted control over *rwodi* by educating their sons and forcing elders to support their choice of successors. Some traditional *rwodi* faced resistance from other Acholi as well.¹⁸³ *Rwot* Aliker of the Payera tried to force the Labango to build roads, which instigated a conflict between both chiefdoms.¹⁸⁴

The Paimol rebelled against the government when the British installed *Rwot* Amet of the Lira Aimel to be their *rwot*. The Lira Aimel were located twenty miles away from Paimol, but the main argument against Amet's *rwotship* was his bout with leprosy. Although the Lira Aimel acknowledged Amet as a great and fair leader, the Paimol viewed his leprosy as a weakness. Paimol also resented the government's total lack of regard for their *rwotship* traditions by appointing a leader for them. The Paimol uprising occurred in 1918, but was quelled quickly by the government. Afterwards, the administration killed all Paimol leaders.¹⁸⁵ It is important to note that the colonial policy utilized discipline over understanding in east Acholiland.¹⁸⁶ A Northern District Commissioner stated that the guiding principle of the government was "if the villages are

¹⁸¹ *ibid*, 207.

¹⁸² *ibid*, 162.

¹⁸³ *ibid*, 163.

¹⁸⁴ *ibid*, 164.

¹⁸⁵ *ibid*, 164.

¹⁸⁶ *ibid*, 169.

going to resist the authority of their chiefs...very strong action must be taken and a good lesson given so that others will not follow suit.”¹⁸⁷ No rebellion was so big that it posed a threat to the government during this period.¹⁸⁸

Many *rwodi* cooperated with the colonial government. In turn, the British supplied them with guns and government police to help enforce their rule.¹⁸⁹ The British used *Rwot Alier* as a de facto paramount chief over much of Acholiland due to the Payera’s central location. Fighting between chiefdoms decreased dramatically due to this attempt to centralize power.¹⁹⁰ Alier did not solidify his position as paramount chief because he lacked an army capable of controlling other chiefdoms without the colonial police.¹⁹¹ Ironically, this position denigrated Alier’s power. Prior to colonialism, the Payera could call on allies to form armies large enough to defeat enemies. During this period, no chiefdom would assist Alier in any of his endeavors because of his alliance with the British.¹⁹²

The *rwotship* position denigrated during this period as well. Elders gradually stopped enforcing the traditional succession practices, which allowed the government to appoint *rwodi* without regarding Acholi traditions. The government used traditional *rwodi* until they found an easily manipulated alternative. By 1916, most *rwodi*’s rights

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 169-170.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 170.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 170.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 181.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 182.

¹⁹² *Ibid*, 183.

and power were limited to ceremonial duties.¹⁹³ Cooperation with the British earned *rwodi* prestige and favor.¹⁹⁴

In addition to the colonial administration, the British established the Native Administration. The government appointed most *rwodi* in the Native Administration. By 1937, only three *rwodi* traditionally succeeded to the *rwotship*. Ritual heads and elders had no authority. Most *rwodi* were strangers to their chiefdoms or commoners. Traditional *rwodi* generally had no political authority. New *rwodi* were usually from the educated class.¹⁹⁵

The government divided Acholiland into Divisions. Those Divisions contained Parishes, and Parishes contained villages. Parishes had a *rwot* called *Bakungu*. These *rwodi* were usually descendents of royal lineages. *Wegi Paco*, or village chiefs, usually worked for the government prior to earning that position. By 1950, there were 65 parishes and 143 villages.¹⁹⁶

A Divisional *rwot* told Girling they had to rule by fear. He thought that the colonial government style promoted progress, and it was his duty to produce at the desired level to achieve progress. A District Commissioner said fear was necessary for change. He hoped strides in education would eliminate the need for fear.¹⁹⁷ A commoner called the government foolish for their unwillingness to listen to the Acholi. To him, knowing why the Acholi resisted the colonial government could teach the government

¹⁹³ *Ibid*, 183.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 188.

¹⁹⁵ Girling, (1960, 197).

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 198.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 199.

how to rule the Acholi without using violent tactics.¹⁹⁸ Colonial rule robbed much of Acholiland of their right to express their dissatisfaction with their leaders and seek new leadership, something they enjoyed prior to colonialism.

In 1937, the government decided to change and better organize their governing style. In 1943, administrators modernized the traditional political structure in Acholiland. They created Councils modeled after the British Local Government Authorities. The government prohibited Councils from honoring any traditional socio-political allegiances. They were strictly political and based on well-defined territories. Each administrative division had Councils, which were comprised of elected members and officials. The Divisional Chief and Parish Chiefs were ex-officio members. Four representatives were elected from the chiefdoms. The *Rwot Bulu* was a younger man selected by *rwodi*. Elected members and official members had to elect two leading citizens in the division as well. This combined for a total of nine members to each Council.¹⁹⁹

Council members met whenever the colonial administration proposed any changes in the region. They also made recommendations to the administration for the *Bakungu* and *Wegi Paco* positions. Divisions also had county councils comprised of a *rwot*, two senior *Jagi*, and two elected members. The Acholi District Council was comprised of County and District Council members. They met in October of each year to address the District Commissioner, and the Commissioner addressed them on behalf of the queen. Elected members of councils usually worked for the government at some point or served in the military. Leading members were from different backgrounds; education,

¹⁹⁸ *ibid*, 199.

¹⁹⁹ *ibid*, 199.

shop-keepers, traders, etc.²⁰⁰ The majority of Council members were from commoner lineages. Councils benefitted the sector of the Acholi population that welcomed the opportunities the British government created. Normally, those people were commoners.²⁰¹

The inclusion of non-traditional leaders into the political arena was unheard of prior to colonialism. These elected and colonial appointed leaders enjoyed the favor of the British while serving as link between the Acholi and the colonial government. These leaders had experience with peoples outside of Acholiland because of their government post, past military experience, or other careers. These people created the new class of Acholi people. For them, politics existed within and beyond the borders and limitations of their chiefdom. As such, the traditional aspects of the chiefdom ideology were not as important to these new Acholi as the older, more traditional Acholi.

Changes to Acholi Social Practices

The British believed that their progress in Acholiland was contingent upon the Acholi's ability to adopt British institutions, particularly as they related to private land ownership. Forcing the Acholi to transition into private land ownership would make the transition into a agriculturally based labor force much more likely. The colonial administration wanted the Acholi to cultivate cotton more efficiently. They viewed the

²⁰⁰ *ibid*, 200.

²⁰¹ *ibid*, 201.

Acholi's resistance to this goal as indicative of cultural laziness.²⁰² What that resistance really indicated was a lack of understanding how changing the labor structure in Acholiland also changed their identity. Prior to colonization, the Acholi viewed labor as a means to honor the position of the *rwot*, *jogi*, and the traditions associated with cultivation. Likewise, their *rwodi* used their labor to provide security and provisions during famine. During colonization, labor was closely associated with taxation and production, which served the interest of the British more than the chiefdom.

The Uganda Agreement of 1900 was supposed to secure the rights of the Acholi to their land, but the language itself was vague. Before colonization, *rwodi* allocated land to lineage groups but owned the rights to the land. Women from different lineage groups worked on the *rwot*'s land in exchange for having their own land to cultivate. The new agricultural goals of the colonial administration allowed men to claim land for themselves, but this impeded upon the relationship the Acholi had with their *rwodi* as well as the importance of their rituals for land cultivation. Whoever cleared the land for hunting and agriculture during colonization claimed rights to it, which led to many land disputes. By 1950, there was not a clear system to resolve this issue.²⁰³

In addition to changing the agricultural and land tenure practices of Acholiland, the colonial administration changed the internal practices of Acholi societies. While it was still common for the most important members of chiefdoms to continue polygamous lifestyles, some commoners opted for monogamous relationships. The presence of missionaries influenced this change, and most of the monogamous couples lived on our

²⁰² Girling,(1960, 176).

²⁰³ Girling,(1960, 184). H.B. Thomas, Robert Scott, *Uganda*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), 40.

near missions. Monogamous couples enjoyed a higher standard of living and a lower infantile mortality rate. Many of the husbands in monogamous relationships expressed a desire to have less children, which was probably influenced by their mandatory taxes. Yet, the women maintained their dominant decision making role in conceiving children, and they did not wish to use birth control. To Girling, this signifies the ability of women to maintain their values stemming from pre-colonial Acholiland more so than men.²⁰⁴

The labor system within chiefdoms changed dramatically as well. Larger households began hiring people outside of their lineage to help cultivate their land. This was an effort to meet the agricultural demands of the colonial administration and their individual families.²⁰⁵ The rich families that formed during this time were able to incorporate waged labor to meet agricultural demand, while poor families combined to meet these needs. Cultivation became more about fueling the emergent cash economy than upholding the rituals of Acholi chiefdoms.²⁰⁶

A shift in the power structure occurred during this period as well. Men without important status in their chiefdoms were the first to offer their services to Europeans as servants, interpreters, and messengers. When chiefdoms did not have a *rwodi*, the British placed these men in those positions. These men became very wealthy during the early colonial period, as they had unrestricted access to land and ivory trading. Some of these men also formed the most powerful families in Acholiland outside of chiefdoms. Though

²⁰⁴ Girling,(1960, 187).

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 189.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 190.

there were not very many of them, these families lived close to each other in modern houses and enjoyed political influence without forming a political power after 1950.²⁰⁷

The people of northeast Acholiland maintained most of their traditional socio-political order during colonization, including the Agoro. The river valley in the area granted them the resources to support cattle herds and grow successful crops every year. Outsiders, including the colonial administration, could not travel into the region for most of the year because of constant flooding. There were no “new Acholi” in northeast Acholiland by 1950. The inhabitants controlled migration into the area through their membership on the Native Administration. Many of the men in the area served in the colonial army.²⁰⁸ As such, Agoro became the “home of sergeant-majors”.²⁰⁹

After the 1920s, many Acholi started migrate out of their traditional lineages and chiefdoms. The majority of Acholi lived in poor households. These people formed the nucleus of a new labor group. People in these new areas appointed their own *rwodi* and *jagi kweri*, chiefs of the hoe. Each *rwodi* had a staff comprised of *askans* (cooperative work parties), policemen, messengers, and clerks. They organized *askan* rotations in fields. Everyone had to participate in this system if they desired the security of living in these new groups. This system was strictly for men.²¹⁰

Poor women incorporated a system similar to the men. They appointed their own *Rwot Mon* (chief of women), and her staff organized the *askans*. Unlike chiefdoms, these new groups organized their labor based on neighborhood ties alone. Labor not attached to

²⁰⁷ *ibid*, 189.

²⁰⁸ *ibid*, 192.

²⁰⁹ *ibid*, 193.

²¹⁰ *ibid*, 193.

rituals, ceremonies, or political allegiances as was labor in chiefdoms.²¹¹ This new labor system reflected the changes the colonial administration intended to make throughout Acholiland. Workers focused more on meeting quotas that the colonial government set than providing for themselves.

Acholi society experienced many changes during the colonial period. *Rwodi* no longer enjoyed the influence and control over their chiefdoms that they once had. Although the colonial government aimed to consolidate power to one *rwot* during the first twenty years of colonial rule, their policies prevented political centralization among chiefdoms. Instead, political centralization occurred as the colonial government assumed more power and disenfranchised traditional *rwodi*. The government discouraged adherence to traditions and the old socio-political structure. As such, a generation of Acholi experienced life beyond the boundaries of chiefdoms. The colonial period ushered in a new group of Acholi, which enjoyed more political affluence than *rwodi*. For the first time in Acholi history, commoners wielded more socio-political power as traditional leaders.

The Role of Christianity

While this section analyzes the spread of Christianity in the region, it does not aim to challenge what may have motivated some Acholi to convert. The main interests here are the difficulty the missionaries faced in converting the Acholi and the influence

²¹¹ *ibid*, 193.

the missionaries had on the Acholi beyond Christianity. *Rwodi* took advantage of the educational opportunities the missionaries brought to the region to educate their sons and gain favor with the colonial government. The primary issues missionaries faced was their inability to conjoin Acholi beliefs with the Christian theology.

Missionaries in Acholiland approached Acholi beliefs as if they lacked a logical basis for establishing an Acholi philosophy. This failure to recognize the existence of an Acholi philosophy stemmed from the tendency to analyze Acholi beliefs using Western philosophies as a reference point. Like Livingstone, missionaries failed to investigate Acholi religion as a philosophy that existed on its own terms.²¹² Even Opoka addressed Acholi beliefs as if they were not as complex as the Christian theology.²¹³ Acholi religion was in fact highly advanced. Missionaries needed to approach their religion as a philosophy instead of a loosely conceptualized facet of their traditional ideals. In doing so, the difficulty that Acholi faced in integrating Christianity into their philosophy would have been apparent to these missionaries.

Likewise, although the Acholi religion was not a facet of their traditions, they were closely associated. Elders were responsible for appointing priest, but the office eventually became hereditarily inherited. The office itself was one of social and political nature. Thus, missionaries faced difficulty in converting Acholi to Christianity partly because their official statuses were not traditionally recognized.²¹⁴ Missionaries did not

²¹² David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1858), 22-27.

²¹³ Opoka, (1980,7)

²¹⁴ Opoka, (1980, 35)

recognize the obvious barriers Acholi faced in conceptualizing their beliefs to them, as well as the difficulty in recognizing the legitimacy of their religious offices.

Missionaries also failed to realize that they could not Christian theology by utilizing another ethnic group's religion to conceptualize Acholi religion. Essentially, missionaries approached Acholi beliefs as if the Acholi were incapable of conceptualizing them without the theological premise Christianity seemingly provided.²¹⁵ The translation of the Bible into Acholi brought this problem to the forefront. Sira Dongo translated the Bible into Acholi in 1904, and the British and Foreign Bible Society published it in 1905. Sira and Reverend Kitching translated the Bible under the assumption that the Acholi did not have a word for Supreme God in their vocabulary. Kitching decided to adopt the Bunyoro word *luhanga* for "God", the Acholi translation being *lubanga*. Unfortunately, *lubanga* originally signified an Acholi Jok that was responsible for people contracting tuberculosis. It took some time before the Acholi fully grasped the new meaning of *lubanga*, which made converting them all the more difficult.²¹⁶

Reverend Kitching and Sira built the first mission at Keyo in 1904. Soon after opening their doors to new students, Kitching realized that the Acholi were only interested in learning to read and write. Moreover, Christianity clashed with one of the

²¹⁵ Paulin J. Hountondji addressed this philosophical conflict in *African Philosophy, Myth, and Reality*. The assumption that Africans were unaware of their own philosophies stemmed from missionaries' biases toward the structure in Christian theology and the language used to conceptualize that theology. Since Africans were not accustomed to using the same language to conceptualize their own philosophies, missionaries believed they were responsible for recognizing African philosophies. Paulin J. Hountondji, *African Philosophy, Myth, and Reality*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 55-70.

²¹⁶ Louise Pirouet, *Black Evangelist: the Spread of Christianity in Uganda, 1891-1914*, (London: Rex Collings, 1978), 155.

most fundamental aspects of Acholi culture, polygamy. During the first year of the Keyo mission, Kitching baptized three men, one being a native Acholi. After his baptism, the Acholi sent his second wife away and kept his first wife. Other Acholi thought that this was foolish of him because the second wife bore him a son, while his first wife was barren.²¹⁷ This issue presented the Acholi with more than a threat to polygamy. As stated in chapter one, the Acholi did not allow men to build huts for themselves unless their wives conceived. Procreation was required if a man wanted a private home, and the size of a man's family determined his position within his hamlet. Thus, polygamy was usually a necessary route for Acholi men to achieve status.

Missionaries, and Christianity, posed a threat to Acholi religion, traditions, and more broadly, their philosophy. The religiously based role of the missionary conflicted with the traditional practice of choosing priest in Acholiland, which was something the missionaries failed to acknowledge. Additionally, missionaries did not recognize the Acholi religion and philosophy without conceptualizing both using Western philosophical methods and Christian theology. Missionaries instead approached Acholi beliefs as if they were part of a homogenous belief system, which discredited the legitimacy of their religion and the role their beliefs played in Acholi societies.

²¹⁷ *ibid*, 155.

Conclusion

The new policies enacted in Acholiland dramatically changed their chiefdom ideology. Individual commoners could participate in politics and hold important positions. Elders and *rwodi* no longer enjoyed a monopoly on land or political influence. Chiefdoms ceased to be the focal point for all aspects of Acholi life. New policies on agricultural production, the spread of Christianity, and education produced a new group in Acholiland that consciously separated themselves from the traditions of the past. The “new Acholi” produced new leaders and a new economic class. During first two decades of colonial rule in Acholiland, the Acholi upheld most of their traditions despite the efforts of the colonial government. Once World War I ended, the colonial government had the resources and support needed to enforce their colonial policies.

While the remaining *rwodi* maintained their traditional influence, the importance of those traditions declined during the colonial period. The new labor system and colonial administration discouraged the most important rituals and ceremonies for chiefdoms; those of the planting season. The traditions attached to the planting season served as a means to unify everyone in the chiefdom. When the government outlawed these traditions, and agricultural labor became regimented, commoners became less dependent on *rwodi*. Additionally, the colonial government encouraged the individual acquisition of land, which eliminated the *rwodi's* monopoly on their most important resource. Allegiance to the *rwodi* and lineage elders was once required if a man wanted land. Now, he could simply clear land for himself and it was his. This new independence encouraged

commoners to sever ties with their chiefdoms. Severing their political ties also lessened the importance of traditions in their lives.

The new changes to the Acholi socio-political system lasted until Uganda became an independent nation. Chapter Three covers the militarization of the Acholi and how that influenced the internal and external conflict they faced in determining their ethnic identity in the midst of nation building efforts. During the colonial period, Acholi soldiers represented the Acholi on the national level, but had very little in common with Acholi who adhered to their traditional background. Once these soldiers went back to Acholiland, integration into the traditional chiefdom structure was unappealing. Thus, traditional leaders and Acholi soldiers represented a clash between traditionalism versus modernization. The resolution of this issue was most evident in the introduction of the Holy Spirits Movement.

CHAPTER THREE

ACHOLI MILITARISM AND THE INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

The Acholi have a rich military history that originated during the colonial period. The military was one of few avenues the average Acholi could utilize to heighten his social status. The colonial government, as well as the new independent government, recognized the zealous commitment to militarization the Acholi. Yet, no person in either government considered why the Acholi were so eager to serve despite their resistance to the colonial regime. As such, authority figures, both in the colonial and independent governments, stereotyped the Acholi as a naturally militant ethnic group. While on the surface this appeared to work in favor of the Acholi, it resulted in a tumultuous relationship with other ethnic groups in independent Uganda.

This chapter explores the militaristic aspect of Acholi history, as well as how their affinity for militarism influenced their relationship with the colonial government, the post-colonial governments, and other groups in Uganda. To suggest that the Acholi were a naturally militaristic ethnic group would be erroneous and simplistic. There were certainly aspects of their traditions that celebrated militarism, but there were also external factors that encouraged their participation in the military, mainly social mobility. Men who were not a part of the royal lineage or closely connected to lineage heads used the military to gain prominent roles in their chiefdom. Furthermore, the same traditions that celebrated militarism before and during the colonial period encountered challenges when Acholi adopted modern warfare tactics to carry out nationalist goals.

Broadly, their military participation afforded Acholi an expanded role in national politics. This expanded role in nationalist projects forced Acholi to address their socio-political position beyond the borders of their region. Their participation in post-colonial governments challenged the efficacy of their chiefdom ideology and the necessity of their traditions and traditional social hierarchies.

Oteka Okello Mwoka Lengomoi

The military career of *Oteka Okello Mwoka Lengomoi* of Puranga illuminates how influential military leaders were throughout Acholiland. Military leaders were often as respected as their *rwodi* because inter chiefdom warfare was common in the region. Warfare also allowed military leaders to form relationships with leaders outside of their chiefdom. Once the British integrated the Acholi into the Ugandan Protectorate, military leaders used their prestige and intelligence to forge relationships with the colonial administration. The British quickly recognized the zealotry Acholi displayed for warfare and military training and labeled the Acholi as a naturally militaristic people. As such, Acholiland served as one of the main recruiting areas for the colonial army, and military leaders were able to influence and take advantage of the socio-political changes the British instituted.

Puranga's military structure was standard for most chiefdom. The army served the *Kacoke pa ludito Kaka*, or clan council, with the *rwot* as the leader (though he rarely fought in any wars). The council and *rwot* had the power to declare war and elect the

Oteka. The council served as a check on the *rwot*'s power and military leadership.²¹⁸ Within the army, leadership used age-sets to organize men into three fighting classes. Boys under age fifteen occupied the uninitiated class. Men between 15-25 years of age were in the junior class. The warrior class was comprised of men from ages 25 to 35. The senior class was comprised of men from age 35 to 45. The military reservist were between 45 and 55 years old, and men older than 55 were non-combatants. The *Oteka*, was the head of the army. Warriors from his lineage group chose him based on his bravery and leadership capabilities. He was in charge of all age-sets, he led the army, and was generally a confidant of the *rwot*. *Otekas* were the equivalent of modern day military commanders or generals.²¹⁹

Okello Mwoka was a gifted military leader whose influence expanded beyond the borders of his chiefdom of Puranga.²²⁰ He earned the title *Oteka*, which means military commander, of the Puranga chiefdom prior to colonial rule. During his youth, he proved to be a zealous and strategic fighter, which placed him in high regard throughout Acholiland.²²¹ The Puranga respected Okello so much so that they considered him a de facto *rwot*. He addressed lineage disputes, chaired cultural functions, and led the army. His elevated position created a rift between him and *Rwot* Ogwal, who was passive in his leadership approach. Additionally, Ogwal launched a military strike against the Langi without the support of Okello or the Puranga oracle. Okello responded to this by

²¹⁸ Jim Ocitti, *Oteka Okello Mwoka Lengomoi: a Legend Among the Acholi of Uganda*, (Nairobi, Sahel Books, 2010), 41.

²¹⁹ *Ibid*, 42.

²²⁰ *Ibid*, 41.

²²¹ *Ibid*, 41.

withdrawing soldiers from the Bobi and Palenga lineages.²²² The Puranga army lost many lives during this war, which boosted the Puranga's confidence in Okello while discrediting Ogwal. Broadly, this conflict showed the growing influence of military leaders.²²³

Before he became *Oteka*, the most important alliance Okello forged beyond Puranga was with the Kabarega of the Bunyoro-Kitara kingdom. This relationship not only proved that he could act as a foreign diplomat, but also shaped his relationship with the British later on.²²⁴ Ogwal sent Okello to Bunyoro-Kitara to pay tribute to Kabarega in the late 19th century, which was customary for Acholi chiefdoms to do.²²⁵ Okello made a lasting impression on Kabarega because of his stature and his ability to speak Lunyoro.²²⁶ This friendship led Kabarega to enlist Okello to assist him in the near future.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the by Sir Baker's annexation of the Bunyoro-Kitara kingdom to the Egyptian Province instigated the power struggle between the British and Kabarega.²²⁷ Baker and Lord Lugard viewed Bunyoro kings as godless tyrants that needed to be subdued. Despite the threat the British posed to him, Kabarega remained steadfast in his commitment to defend his kingdom for many years.²²⁸ In 1895, the colonial presence forced Kabarega to flee Bunyoro-Kitara to escape and sought refuge in Puranga with Okello's assistance.²²⁹ They put together a delegation with

²²² *Ibid*, 49.

²²³ *Ibid*, 50.

²²⁴ *Ibid*, 55.

²²⁵ *Ibid*, 56.

²²⁶ *Ibid*, 58.

²²⁷ *Ibid*, 58.

²²⁸ *Ibid*, 59.

²²⁹ *Ibid*, 60.

Okello serving as the leader because he could speak Acholi and Bunyoro languages. These men travelled to Sudan to seek assistance from the Mahdi in their fight against the British.²³⁰

Arab slave traders in Rajaf, the Sudanese Provincial Headquarters, captured the delegation. Okello sensed Arabi Dafa Allah's plans to ambush the delegation, and managed to escape.²³¹ His journey back to Puranga took three years, and he learned Dinka, Shilluk, and Arabic to survive.²³² When the Acholi learned of Okello's return, they viewed it as a return from the dead, which heightened his prominence throughout the region. Upon his return, Okello met with Kabarega knowing the British would soon capture him. He decided to surrender himself to the British rather than exacerbate the situation by continuing to help Kabarega.²³³

Okello surrendered himself to the British colonial forces as a show of his willingness to cooperate. Sabin Effendi, leader of the British *askaris*, knew very little about Acholiland, so he used Okello for his intelligence on the region. Sabin took Okello to then Captain Delme'-Radcliffe to provide intelligence for the British colonial forces.²³⁴ Okello's knowledge and military skill helped the British capture the last of the Sudanese in Lango. He became a trusted servant of the British administration by 1901.²³⁵

²³⁰ Ibid, 62. Delegation included Kabarega's followers that fled with him, Puranga soldiers and Payera soldiers. The Mahdi of Sudan had been successful prior in warding off the British forces in Sudan.

²³¹ Ibid, 64.

²³² Ibid, 65.

²³³ Ibid, 66. The British at that point thought Kabarega had allied with the Arab slave traders they were trying to chase out of Acholiland, which was untrue.

²³⁴ Dwyer, "The Acholi of Uganda", 99.

²³⁵ Ibid, 100.

Mayor Delme'-Radcliffe recognize the military skill and leadership abilities Okello possessed. He also realized that forming an alliance with military leaders and *rwodi* would make his goals for Acholiland possible.²³⁶ By this time, *Rwot* Ogwal had promoted Okello to the equivalent of a prime minister in Puranga. Ogwal's passive leadership style prompted the British to address all issues through Okello.²³⁷ Okello travelled throughout East Africa with Delme'-Radcliffe in 1903. During their travels, Okello established relationships with other British administrators. Upon their return to Acholiland, Delme'-Ratcliffe promoted Okello to *rwot* in Puranga.²³⁸

Okello's elevated status among the British made the Puranga a top priority for the colonial administration. Okello's mobilized the colonial forces against the Langi in 1903 by claiming their raiding prevented him from collecting hut taxes. The Puranga paid a considerable amount in taxes, so it was in the best interest of the British to assist them against the Langi.²³⁹ Okello showed his gratitude by protecting the colonist that passed through. His sons later became *rwodi* in Puranga despite not being a part of the royal lineage.²⁴⁰ The favoritism the colonial administration displayed towards the Puranga against the Langi was typical for all of the Acholi during the colonial period. This influenced the tumultuous relationship between the Acholi and Langi after colonialism ended.

²³⁶ Ocitti, (2010, 73).

²³⁷ Dwyer, "The Acholi of Uganda", 100.

²³⁸ Ocitti, (2010, 73).

²³⁹ *Ibid*, 75.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 79.

District Commissioner Bwona Gueno appointed Okello to oversee the Taya project, which included building roads and government camps. This project made Okello more popular throughout Acholiland, and Gueno considered replacing *Rwot* Ogwal with Okello as *rwot* of Puranga.²⁴¹ *Rwot* Ogwal proved to be uncooperative to the British, particularly during the construction of Gulu in 1910.²⁴² Tension between the British and Ogwal worsened when Gueno insulted Ogwal during a ceremony in Puranga by insisting Okello take the customary seat of the *rwot*.²⁴³ The tense relationship resulted in Gueno dividing the guns he provided to Puranga between Ogwal and Okello, with Okello receiving the most guns. This proved to Ogwal that his suspicions of being usurped as *rwot* were accurate.²⁴⁴ Though Okello did not intend to challenge Ogwal for the *rwotship*, the favoritism the colonial government displayed towards him placed him on equal footing with Ogwal.

Ogwal plotted to assassinate Okello to avoid losing his position. To do this, he resurrected an old rivalry between Okello and a family whose son he killed in 1905. By all accounts, this was an accidental murder and Ogwal was to blame for the incident.²⁴⁵ Ogwal gave the family permission to seek revenge during a chiefdom wide hunt. Two men ambushed Okello during the hunt, and he died in February of 1914.²⁴⁶

The British stepped in to avert any attempts at retaliation, as they knew many throughout the region would seek to avenge Okello's death. They chose not to punish any

²⁴¹ *Ibid*, 81.

²⁴² *Ibid*, 83.

²⁴³ *Ibid*, 84.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 85.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 86.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 88.

of the assassins because they recognized the family had suffered as well.²⁴⁷ The Puranga and the British launched an investigation to find out who caused the tragedy, and the administration found *Rwot* Ogwal guilty of conspiring to kill Okello. The administration stripped him of his *rwotship* and deported him.²⁴⁸ Bwano Guena split the Puranga chiefdom into eastern and western regions. Okello's son Olal, became *rwot* in the west, while Ogwal's son became *rwot* in the east. Olal proved to be the great leader his father was.²⁴⁹ He eventually became *rwot* of a united Puranga with Ogwal's son serving as his *jago*, or subchief.²⁵⁰

Throughout Acholiland, military leaders shared similar histories as Okello. During the colonial period, military leaders gained prestige that extended beyond their chiefdoms and Acholiland. Often times, the British preferred to work with military leaders rather than *rwodi* because they seemed much more knowledgeable of the region, whereas many *rwodi* rarely travelled beyond the borders of their chiefdom. This favoritism threatened the traditional *rwotship* and chiefdom ideology. The British promoted military leaders while ignoring the rituals and traditions that legitimized these positions. Once colonialism ended, many traditional *rwodi* could not reassert their political dominance because the political structure existed independently of the *rwotship* and chiefdom ideology.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 89. During the assassination, another member of the family was killed by Okello as he fell to the ground.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 90.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 91.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 92.

Acholi Militarization in the Colonial Period

According to Branch, understanding the violence in present day Northern Uganda is contingent upon an understanding of the role ethnicity has in conflicts. Ethnicity informed and influenced politics and violence in Uganda.²⁵¹ During the colonial period, ethnicity influenced the state building process during the implementation of indirect rule. Political ethnicity was the most important factor in Uganda, which made it impossible for the British to consolidate all ethnic groups. Ethnic political identities reflected both the hierarchy that indirect rule promoted and the groups that revolted against the colonial government. Throughout Uganda, people used their membership in an ethnic group to create a position of political power in national politics while combating the traditional power structure within their groups.²⁵²

Branch agreed with Girling's assertions that *rwodi* exercised little to know political power or aspirations during the colonial period. Chiefdoms existed as unifying political institutions for the Acholi. Each lineage head, or *rwodi-moo*, exercised more control over his lineage than the *rwodi*. The British viewed *rwodi-moo* as weak and unable rule an expansive territories, so they appointed their own *rwodi* instead.²⁵³ Branch and Girling's assertions did not account for the importance of chiefdom *rwodi* as symbols of sovereignty and unifying figures for lineages. Chiefdom *rwodi* and *rwodi-moo* depended on each other to reinforce their legitimacy among commoners and outsiders.

²⁵¹ Adam Branch, *Displacing Human Rights: War and Intervention in Northern Uganda*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 45.

²⁵² *Ibid*, 46.

²⁵³ *Ibid*, 47. F.K Girling, *The Acholi of Uganda*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1960), 100.

For Mazuri, the key to understanding the militarization of the Acholi and other Northern Ugandan ethnic groups was the rural population. In Uganda, rural areas were generally underprivileged with lots of land and a few members of a land aristocracy. An abundance of poor communities and the distance to Kampala made Northern Uganda politically weak during the colonial period. Uganda's military history represents a military-agrarian complex; an alliance between soldiers and kinsmen in the countryside. The colonial forces recruited men from the agrarian population, which manifested into an overrepresentation of a few ethnic groups in the military. By the end of the colonial period, the Acholi comprised one-third of the colonial forces.²⁵⁴

Mazuri's interpretation did not consider the affinity towards military careers that the Acholi had. Their affinity towards militarism was not a characteristic of their ethnic identity. Rather, the construction of that collective identity influenced Acholi militarism. The absence of a centralized political institution and figurehead encouraged internal warfare prior to colonialism, and some of their rituals celebrated militarism. While all Acholi men were required to defend their chiefdoms, displays of courage during battle offered socio-economic mobility to ordinary men during the pre-colonial and colonial periods. Acholi men did not fight just for the sake of fighting. In Okello's case, he gained prominence as a military leader that he could not enjoy through any other avenue because he was not a part of the royal lineage or a prominent lineage head. He, like many other Acholi men, utilized military participation to achieve a socio-economic status that was not available to them through any other avenue.

²⁵⁴ Ali A. Mazrui, *Soldiers and Kinsmen in Uganda: The Making of a Military Ethnocracy*, (London: Sage Publications, 1975), 32.

The Shift to an Independent Uganda

As discussed in Chapter Two, the formation of Councils provided the Acholi petty bourgeoisie an avenue into national and institutionalized politics. These Councils elevated their position in Acholi politics to one supreme to that of traditional leaders.²⁵⁵ During the 1950s, newly formed political parties recruited Acholi by gaining the support of Council members. The Uganda National Congress (UNC) and the Democratic Party used Councils to develop support for nationalization on a grassroots level. They offered Acholi political power on the local level that would influence national politics. This approach appealed to the rural Acholi and petty bourgeoisie alike.²⁵⁶

By 1959, Acholi UNC members were on every Council. Milton Obote's party, the Ugandan People's Congress, emerged from the UNC in 1960 and secured a prominent position in politics. The UPC won the support of rural Acholi by challenging the British on their behalf, particularly with issues concerning government appointed *rwodi*. This coalition combined local and national politics and proved to be very influential.²⁵⁷ Branch viewed this coalition as representative of the Acholi political identity, which had two dimensions. Local and traditional issues in the region comprised one dimension. The other dimension dealt with the Acholi's position in the national government. To Branch,

²⁵⁵ Branch, (2011,50).

²⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 51.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 52.

the Acholi accepted the collective identity the colonial government assigned to them to gain representation on the national level.²⁵⁸

During the first few years of Ugandan independence, the Acholi only produced 8.5% of Uganda's cotton export.²⁵⁹ There were no other industries in Acholiland beyond the two cotton ginneries.²⁶⁰ West Acholiland fared better economically than the east, which stemmed from colonial developments in the region. Gulu (in the west) boasted more progress economically and politically than Kitgum (in the east) during the colonial period. This was primarily due to the quality of soil in western Acholiland, as it was much more fertile than in the east. Additionally, the dryer climate made eastern Acholi harder to administer because of the tendency to migrate according to weather patterns.²⁶¹ Once Uganda became independent, the Acholi District Administration addressed all issues specifically pertaining to the Acholi while maintaining a symbiotic relationship with the national government.²⁶²

The ADA dedicated a significant amount of effort to manipulating the national government to further the district's goals.²⁶³ In order to stimulate growth, the national government consolidated grants for local administrations to encourage them to tap into their potential tax revenue. This was an unpopular move in 1962, but by 1963, the ADA began to reap the benefits of this system.²⁶⁴ The ADA was able to increase tax revenues,

²⁵⁸ Ibid, 53.

²⁵⁹ Colin Leys, *Politicians and Policies; an essay on politics in Acholi, Uganda, 1962-65*, (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967), 13.

²⁶⁰ Ibid, 15.

²⁶¹ Ibid, 19.

²⁶² Ibid, 21.

²⁶³ Ibid, 32.

²⁶⁴ Ibid, 34.

but they did not collect enough taxes because most Acholi could not afford the standard tax rate.²⁶⁵ Acholi councilors seemingly cooperated when attempting to exploit government resources, but internal rivalries between east and west Acholi complicated the allocation of these resources.²⁶⁶

Ley's analysis of the changes in Acholi politics and economy illustrates how the issues of the colonial period permeated and influenced independent Uganda's political climate. Although the Acholi's primary goal was to gain more access to the central government than they had previously, the political structure of the colonial period created an underlying issue. The problem shifted from the Acholi having very little access and influence on the central government as an entire region to one sector of Acholiland attempting to monopolize the resources of the government at the expense of the other sector. In essence, the favoritism that Southern Ugandans feared the national government displayed towards the north manifested into competition between different sections of the population of Acholiland. What was supposed to be a unifying economic plan created competition on the local level for resources because of a lack of revenue in Acholiland.

Milton Obote's First Term

Milton Obote became Uganda's first Prime Minister in 1962. Though his platform promoted the creation of a national identity above all else, the implementation of his programs suggested ethnic favoritism. As such, ethnic politics thrived during his first

²⁶⁵ *ibid*, 35.

²⁶⁶ *ibid* 92.

term because of the influence individual ethnic groups had over centralizing institutions.²⁶⁷ Obote attempted to equalize ethnic political identities before the law. While northern ethnic groups favored this change, groups in the south perceived this as a potential threat. He attempted to nationalize institutions while weakening those on the local level, such as the Councils. The promotion of nationalism for Uganda depended on the top-down reform of national and local politics by centralizing power and bringing all institutions under Obote's command. For the first time in history, the Acholi had the chance to influence national politics to the degree that the larger groups had during colonization.²⁶⁸

Branch contends that Obote blatantly displayed favoritism towards ethnic groups in northern Uganda. Obote's reforms appeared to benefit the north disproportionately, and many in the south presumed his favoritism stemmed from his Langi roots. However, groups in the north proved more willing to adapt to these political changes than the south because they never reaped the benefits of ethnically based politics. Groups in the south, such as Buganda and Baganda, enjoyed a monopoly of power before and during colonization due to the size of their kingdoms, so ethnically based politics were more desirable than nationalist goals.

Obote recruited for positions in the government and military based on areas he had the most support in, which were mainly in the north. In Acholiland, he recruited members of the petty bourgeoisie, traditional and colonially appointed *rwodi*.²⁶⁹ This

²⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 53.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 54.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 54.

political maneuver created a new source of friction between the north and the south. Though the south did not lose positions in the government, nationalist projects took precedent over local politics, which was a complete turnaround for the Bugandan and Bagandan kingdoms.²⁷⁰

Obote also depended on the north for support for his nationalization policies, so he granted them exclusive access to government jobs. For the emerging Acholi middle class, this was a great opportunity, but it also increased their dependency on government patronage for jobs.²⁷¹ Obote solidified his position in Ugandan politics by making the country a one party state led by his party, the UPC. The UPC's leadership favored the Acholi and Langi because of their support during the transition to an independent government.²⁷²

By 1970, the Acholi represented one-third of the army. Obote used this army to dismantle the Bagandan monarchy while favoring the Acholi for advanced positions in the Armed Forces branch. He put Buganda under martial law at the hands of the Langi and Acholi. Though Obote did all of this to further his nationalist goals, his programs only reversed the hierarchy created during colonialism. The favoritism the Acholi enjoyed during the 1960s made them a primary target of other ethnic groups during the 1970s.²⁷³

According to Lofchie, Ugandans carried ethnic rivalries into the military. The Acholi represented the largest ethnic group in the Special Forces branch. This contributed

²⁷⁰ *ibid*, 55.

²⁷¹ *ibid*, 55.

²⁷² *ibid*, 56.

²⁷³ *ibid*, 56.

to the tension between the Acholi and other ethnic groups, particularly in the south, because the army was subordinate to the Special Forces. The army was more heterogeneous than the Special Forces as well. By the coup of 1971, the army was willing to overthrow Obote because of his subordination and favoritism toward the Acholi.²⁷⁴

Obote's nationalist movement echoed Frantz Fanon's philosophy in many ways. The UNC acted as a liberator for ethnic groups, particularly in northern Uganda. For the Acholi, the UNC represented a way to reestablish the importance of their traditional political structure by ridding the region of government appointed *rwodi*. For the new Acholi, supporting the UNC presented the possibility to gain permanent positions on the national level. Obote's goals for the Acholi were contradictory in practice. Obote's goals created tensions between ethnic groups and within ethnic groups. Acholi soldiers experienced disconnection from Acholiland because of their roles in promoting nationalism through the military. As such, the traditional aspects of Acholi culture became less important to them.²⁷⁵

Acholi militarism promoted an ethnic pride among the soldiers that was more symbolic than traditional in nature. However, their reputation among other ethnic groups in Uganda had a negative impact on Acholi civilians. While Obote claimed to promote nationalist projects, his favoritism toward the Acholi promoted ethnically driven politics more than national solidarity. During Idi Amin's regime, the ethnic groups that felt

²⁷⁴ Michael F. Lofchie, "The Uganda Coup-Class Action by the Military," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 10, no. 1 (1972), 34.

²⁷⁵ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 177-178.

disenfranchised and targeted during the first ten years of independence targeted the Acholi, as they appeared to be the main supporters of Obote's regime.

Idi Amin's Regime

“Obote, the former President of Uganda, showed himself to be adept in the art of orchestrating civilian political forces by delicately applying his consummate knowledge of tribal or ethnic calculus; but he was naïve in his grasp of military-civil relationships and much too old-fashioned in his approach to realize the importance of effective control of the instruments of force. His successor, Amin, has demonstrated a capacity to bring the army, at least for some time to come, under his personal control by changing its ethnic composition and increasing its responsibilities. Will he also be able to develop the political skills necessary to contain the resurgent political tendencies within Ugandan society which are working towards a return to traditionalism and a dilution of national identity by a reassertion of tribal or ethnic particularities?”²⁷⁶

Idi Amin led a coup to oust Obote on January 25th, 1971. Amin was a general in the army prior to the coup, but did not agree with Obote's goals for the government. He also believed Obote showed favoritism towards the north and Nilotic speakers in general. Amin was from the West Nile region of Uganda, where predominantly Sudanese speakers lived. On the first day of the coup, Amin announced an eighteen-point plan, which appeared to favor the Acholi over the Langi. He highlighted the Acholi's past

²⁷⁶ T. V. Sathyamurthy, "Ugandan Politics: Convoluted Movement from Tribe to Nation," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 7, no. 42 (1972): 2122,

grievances against the Lango, including the Langi Master Plan of 1962. The Master Plan's focus was to occupy most government position with Lango from Akokoro country in the Lango district. If implemented, the Acholi would lose many government and military positions.²⁷⁷ Amin probably approached the Acholi leadership with this information to cause a rift between the Acholi and Langi, thus weakening their political position.

Amin also blamed the Langi and Acholi for attempting to disarm other ethnic groups in the military during Obote's term. He claimed Obote's long-term goal was to arm only Acholi and Langi troops, which placed the basis of Amin's coup on ethnic tensions. Until the coup, many Acholi were potential supporters for Amin's regime. Obote's support among the Acholi waned during the late 1960s. Obote's refusal to leave the country made other ethnic groups suspicious of the Acholi, as many felt the Langi and Acholi were planning to assist Obote in regaining power. Many Acholi and Langi voluntarily resigned from their government and military positions, which heightened people's suspicions of their loyalties to Obote. Amin was also suspicious of the Acholi, and he believed they were forming underground rebel groups to oust him. He used the military to target the Acholi to prevent any attacks. Amin was also suspicious of the Acholi, and he believed they were forming underground rebel groups to oust him. He used the military to target the Acholi to prevent any attacks.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷ Ali A. Mazrui, *Soldiers and Kinsmen in Uganda: The Making of a Military Ethnocracy*, (London: Sage Publications, 1975), 114.

²⁷⁸ Mazrui, (1975, 116). Phares Mutibwa, *Uganda Since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes*, (Trenton : Africa World Press, 1992), 72.

The Acholi were victims of violent massacres at the hands of the military throughout 1971 and 1972. In March of 1971, Acholi soldiers were bombed at the Makindye Barracks. In July, Around 500 Acholi and Langi from the Simba Battalion were forced onto trucks, taken to a remote farm, and massacred them. Before Amin travelled to Israel and Europe to win foreign support, he ordered a huge massacre in Lango and Acholiland to prevent a possible coup, although there was no proof that either group planned a coup. At the end of July, another 100 Langi and Acholi were killed at the Magamaga Ordinance Depot. Many more massacres occurred well into 1972. Central and Southern Ugandans viewed these massacres light heartedly, so these atrocities were not a matter of national concern.²⁷⁹

Though Amin violently targeted Acholi and Langi soldiers, he did try to implement plans that would benefit both groups. He wanted to open one more university in Gulu, which would be the only university in northern Uganda. He also wanted to finance more development projects in the north to encourage decentralization. Unfortunately, he did not get the support of foreign investors, so Acholiland experienced very little development during his regime.²⁸⁰

The strife the Acholi experienced during Amin's regime reflected the attitudes many Ugandans held toward them. Their disproportionate representation in the military made the Acholi the face of opposition for those Obote targeted. Amin's paranoia stemmed from his distrust of the Acholi because he assumed they were unwavering in

²⁷⁹ A.B.K Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda 1964-1985*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens's University Press, 1994),111. Mutibwa, (1992, 88). Amin also targeted the Alur, Madi, and Lubara ethnic group.

²⁸⁰ Mazuri, (1975,33).

their support of Obote's government. He did not consider the economic and socio-political motivations behind the Acholi's involvement in the military beyond loyalty to Obote. The Acholi were not homogeneous in their reasons for supporting Obote, nor were they in their motivations for joining the military. Yet, most Ugandans believed that the Acholi united behind their support and motivations, which made them a target for future violent acts.

Milton Obote's Second Term

During Obote's second term, the Acholi did not regain the favoritism that they enjoyed during his first term. While they regained their prominence in the military, they Obote did not grant them same access to higher positions of authority as the Langi, his own ethnic group. Additionally, Obote used the Acholi to carry out acts of violence against other ethnic groups, which worsened their reputation in Uganda. The Acholi's alliance with the government weakened during this period. However, their majority in the military strengthened their sense of ethnic solidarity, which fostered a defensive mentality against Obote's regime.

Obote regained his position as Prime Minister in 1980. However, a lack of national and foreign support marred this term because Obote had as many issues with human rights violations as Amin did. He regained power through a coup de grace, which reflected the lack of unity in Uganda. Though he and his supporters proved they would

use violence to maintain power, opposition groups rendered his regime ineffective.²⁸¹

The Acholi did not enjoy the same benefits during Obote's second term as they did in the past. Obote promoted Langi to most authority positions in the military and the government despite their loyalty to him. Obote furthered the Acholi's suspicions by promoting Langi Smith Opn Acak his chief of staff despite having many Acholi officers to choose from.²⁸²

Two factions led Obote's cabinet. He led one faction, which was comprised of younger men. The Acholi comprised most members of the other faction. Both factions disagreed on how to handle the resistance groups in Uganda. Obote's faction wanted to continue fighting the resistance groups. The Acholi faction wanted to negotiate with them to end the violence. Addressing the resistance groups created tension between the Langi and Acholi, which weakened Obote's regime.²⁸³

The one factor that kept the Langi/Acholi alliance alive was their mutual hatred for West Nilers. In 1984, Langi and Acholi soldiers invaded the West Nile region and massacred many people for an assassination attempt against Obote in Koboko. In October of the same year, UNRF soldiers from Zaire seized many towns in the West Nile region, which gave the appearance that West Nilers were cooperating with the rebel group. The Acholi and Langi militia went into Pakwach to quell the resistance and massacred many

²⁸¹ Kasozi,(1994, 171).

²⁸² *Ibid*, 172.

²⁸³ *Ibid*, 173.

more West Nilers in the process. There were reports of Acholi playing victory songs on their war flutes and wearing the genitals of their victims on their belts.²⁸⁴

The Acholi and Langi targeted other groups outside of the West Nile region as well. In September of 1982, Banyarwanda killed two young UPC supporters and one police officer for allegedly stealing cattle. As a result, the Special Forces forced all Banyarwanda into refugee camps. The Special Forces raped and killed many during this process, and they stole many heads of cattle. Some fled to camps in Toro or crossed the border into Tanzania. This event displayed the breakdown in military discipline and Obote's lack of concern for human rights.²⁸⁵

The Acholi and Langi targeted another ethnic group, the Karamojong as well. Southern Ugandans knew Karamojong were notorious cattle raiders. The problem worsened in 1980, when Amin's supporters gave their guns to Karamojong while fleeing the country. As a result, their cattle raids turned deadly. Obote did nothing to prevent this because the UPC made an alliance with Karamojong leader Apa Loris to gain votes. The Karamojong raided Acholiland, Lango, and Teso in 1983, which forced Obote to act. The UPC joined forces with Kenya's government to defeat Karamojong and other cattle raiders in northern Uganda.²⁸⁶ Acholi and Langi formed militias along with the Special Forces to assist the government. They destroyed Karamojong houses, cattle, and crops

²⁸⁴ *ibid*, 177.

²⁸⁵ *ibid*, 189.

²⁸⁶ *ibid*, 191.

during the conflict. 20,000 Karamojong fled Uganda, and Obote declared a national disaster to cover up the atrocities.²⁸⁷

By the summer of 1985, the Acholi were convinced that Obote wanted to eliminate them and sever all ties. A rumor circulated that Acak ordered Acholi soldiers to face the National Resistance Army (the largest rebel group) by themselves, although there was no proof of that order. There was another rumor that Obote ordered the imprisonment all Acholi officers before he fled east Uganda. There were several cases of Langi soldiers disarming Acholi soldiers as well.²⁸⁸

Barjilio Okello

Obote's General Barjilio Olara Okello led a rebellion in Gulu and Kampala. Obote lost control of the government again at the end of July in 1985. A military council formed to lead the government with Okello serving as their leader.²⁸⁹ The National Resistance Army ousted Okello in January of 1986. The NRA's victory destroyed the militarization myth of Nilotic/Lwo peoples being better soldiers than Bantu Speakers. This created another division between northern and southern Uganda, as most of the soldiers in the NRA were Bantu speakers from the south. The 1986 coup put the Acholi in the same vulnerable position that they put the Langi in because the NRA did not favor

²⁸⁷ Kasozi,(1994, 192). Tony Avirgan, and Martha Honey, *War In Uganda: The Legacy of Idi Amin*, (Westport: Lawrence Hill & Company Inc, 1982), 212.

²⁸⁸ Kasozi, (1994,173).

²⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 174.

them. This lack of government support destroyed the Acholi's infrastructure and depleted their economy.²⁹⁰

In 1985, Acholi soldiers joined the Acholi Bazilio Okello rebel group to end Obote's regime. Obote fled the country before the group reached Kampala in July.²⁹¹ The group's leader, Tito Okello, became president of Uganda, making him the first Acholi to lead the government. The UNLA divided Kampala amongst its leadership and sought revenge on those who targeted the Acholi, including the Langi. Okello's reign ended on January 26th, 1986 because the UNLA could not protect Kampala against the NRA. Acholi soldiers fled to Acholiland and southern Sudan to escape the wrath of the new president, Museveni. Okello attempted to reorganize a resistance army comprised of West Nilers and Acholi to prevent the NRA from invading North Uganda, but failed to protect the region. The NRA captured Gulu and Kitgum in March of 1986.²⁹²

A Transitional Period

Acholi soldiers returned to Acholiland and tried to adjust to life as peasants. This transition was devastating, as many of them lived comfortably during the many civil wars by looting victims' homes. The elders attempted to reintegrate the soldiers in the society by using Acholi traditions to no avail.²⁹³

²⁹⁰ Ibid, 195.

²⁹¹ Heike Behrend, *Alice Lakwena and the Holy Spirits: War in Northern Uganda 1985-97*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999), 23.

²⁹² Ibid, 24.

²⁹³ Ibid, 24.

Reintegration was difficult for Acholi soldiers because most spent the majority of their adult lives as soldiers, which meant they lived outside of Acholiland for extended periods. Additionally, many of these soldiers were part of the petty bourgeoisie class, but their income relied on the availability of government jobs and access to the military. Adjusting to life in Acholiland meant accepting a new socio-economic status as well as the traditional social structure, which held elders and *rwodi* as the most powerful men in the region. While on the surface it appeared that Acholi soldiers sought to regain their influential positions in the government and military, they were actually struggling to fit into a foreign society.

The NRA targeted the Acholi that served in the UNLA, but there were many civilians casualties as well. They forced thousands of Acholi into concentration camps where many were tortured and killed. During this time, the Acholi in Sudan founded the Uganda People's Democratic Army under the leadership of Odong Latek. Though they sought to overthrow the NRA and Museveni, many soldiers used their positions to plunder and kill peasants.²⁹⁴ Acholi soldiers needed organization and leadership that reflected their mindset, something that traditional leaders struggled to provide.

A power struggle developed between Acholi elders and soldiers. Peasants and elders viewed these soldiers as evil because of the atrocities they committed during the civil wars. Elders believed the soldiers brought *cen* to Acholiland, which were the spirits of their victims. Society viewed soldiers as impure but not because of the killings. As discussed in chapter one, whenever an Acholi killed someone during warfare, he was

²⁹⁴ *ibid*, 25.

given a kill name. After the soldier cleansed his spirit to appease the spirits of his victims, the elders gave him a kill name through a ritual.²⁹⁵ The modernization of warfare made it impossible for soldiers to know exactly whom they killed, so they could not perform the cleansing rituals. Elders began to question the legitimacy of such rituals in Acholi culture.²⁹⁶ This issue represented a conundrum in Acholi society. How would the new generation of Acholi preserve their traditions in a society influenced so heavily by external factors such as warfare and contact with other ethnic groups in Uganda? One solution presented itself in Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement.

Alice Lakwena and the Holy Spirit Movement

Behrand argued that Alice Lakwena and the Holy Spirit Movement represented an attempt to reintegrate soldiers into Acholi society and discipline them.²⁹⁷ Acholi elders and *rwodi* were an ineffective means to reintegrate Acholi soldiers because the colonial experience rendered them powerless. Alice Lakwena's grassroots movement not only reintegrated Acholi soldiers into society, but also reconnected them to their traditional past.

Along with being one of the most important modern day mythical tales among the Acholi, the story of the Journey to Paraa represents the marriage of Acholi traditions with Christianity, something that missionaries failed to do during the colonial phase. In

²⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 28.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 29.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 26.

January of 1985, *jok* Lakwena possessed Alice Auma.²⁹⁸ He led her on a spiritual journey in May of that same year to commune with earth's creatures, both animate and inanimate. Lakwena led Alice to National Park to hold commune with all animals. She asked the animals if they were responsible for the violence in Uganda. The animals said no and showed her their scars. She posed the same question to the water, and it responded as the animals did.²⁹⁹ Lakwena determined that nature was free from sin.³⁰⁰

Lakwena led Alice to Opit and Mount Kilak in June. She healed people with inflicted with various diseases and wounds from warfare using water. Her father, Severine, sacrificed a lamb to cleanse the land and people as Abraham did. Severine and Alice journeyed back to Paraa at the end of June. The animals complained of the continuing violence humans inflicted upon them. They said humans' evil nature drove them to practice witchcraft. Lakwena ordered that all witchcraft end because only the Holy Spirit could lead people to God.³⁰¹ This pivotal moment marks the first time the Acholi challenged their own traditions and while integrating Christianity into the fold.

Alice and her father traveled back to Mount Kilak and sacrificed a lamb to cleanse the Acholi of their sins. Once again, Lakwena healed the sick at Opit.³⁰² Days after the sacrifice, UPDA soldiers shot at Alice while pursuing a man that took refuge in her house. The soldiers claimed to have witnessed the bullets bounce off her. This miracle prompted the soldiers to ask for Alice's blessing and spiritual support in war.³⁰³

²⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 23.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 30.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 31.

³⁰¹ *Ibid*, 31.

³⁰² *Ibid*, 31

³⁰³ *Ibid*, 32.

Alice chose the sacred site *Wang Kwer* to pass judgment over nature. *Wang Kwer* was sacred because the *jok* warded off misfortune and diseases. Many Acholi made pilgrimages to the site to appease the *jok*. During Idi Amin's regime, the Acholi neglected the shrine because soldiers pillaged frequently in the area. Lakwena blamed witches and soldiers that brought *cen* for the misfortunes in Acholiland. Alice changed her name to Alice Lakwena and founded the Holy Spirit Movement as an anti-witchcraft movement.³⁰⁴

Nature told Alice it wanted revenge on the Acholi who wreaked havoc in the region.³⁰⁵ Alice's mission became reuniting nature, the Acholi, and their *jogi* as a cosmic uprising. God blamed all of Uganda's strife on all Acholi, not just the soldiers. The lamb sacrifice was an attempt to appease God. God sent Lakwena to Alice because the Acholi were God's chosen people, much like the story of Israel.³⁰⁶

The HSM clashed with the NRA and the UPDM/A rebels on many occasions. The HSM became known as the "army of heaven", while the UPDM/A were known as the "army of earth". The distinction derives from the heavy influences of Catholic and Protestant Acholi in the movement. The Acholi loved Alice because her message was one of love, redemption, and unity beyond ethnic divisions. The HSM moved beyond the borders of Acholiland towards the south. While the HSM wanted to include non-Acholi members in the movement, southern ethnic groups viewed their presence as a threat. The HSM presence reminded many people of the Acholi soldiers that massacred many people

³⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 32.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 32.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 33.

in central and southern Acholi. To the vast majority of Ugandans, the Acholi members were northern invaders.³⁰⁷

Moving towards the south caused a big split the HSM leadership. The members from the south were more educated than the Acholi, and they assumed higher positions in the movement. This upset the Acholi leaders, who were generally uneducated. This rift in the leadership exposed major weaknesses in the movement. The NRA defeated the HSM in November of 1987 and Alice fled to Kenya.³⁰⁸

The motivation behind integrating Christianity into their traditions while challenging witchcraft is not the issue in this study, as this study does not aim to challenge the premise of their beliefs. Unlike previous rebel groups, the HSM's primary function was not to further a political goal. It existed to reunite the Acholi by merging traditional beliefs with Christianity, something missionaries failed to do in the past. Ultimately, the total acceptance of Christianity occurred because Acholi, like Alice, understood how to incorporate Acholi traditions with Christian traditions.

Despite the goals of the HSM, most Ugandans were unreceptive of their cause. The reason for this tied into the history of the Acholi's contact with other Ugandans. The majority of Ugandans' interaction with the Acholi occurred through their involvement with the military. For southern Ugandans, the Acholi were nothing more than supporters of their oppressors' objectives. The Acholi's over representation in the military did not help to assuage that viewpoint either. Ultimately, the zeal that the Acholi displayed for

³⁰⁷ Sverker Finnstrom, *Living With Bad Surroundings: war, history, and everyday moments in northern Uganda*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 76.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 78.

military life negatively influenced their image throughout Uganda. As such, the HSM entered into regions where hostility towards the Acholi was high. The lack of support outside of Acholiland doomed the intentions of the HSM.

Conclusion

The UNC appealed to traditional *rwodi* by appearing to advocate for the restoration of their position on top of the political hierarchy, which would restore the importance of the chiefdom ideology. However, they also appealed to the new Acholi by offering higher positions in the government, particularly in the military, to influence the nation building process. New Acholi and traditional leaders entered into the post-colonial period with conflicting goals. Restoring the traditional role of the *rwodi* and the chiefdom model only influenced those within the borders of Acholiland. Acholi soldiers, who comprised the largest ethnic representation in the military, carried out nationalist goals with their ethnic identity serving only to unify them. Therefore, Acholi soldiers associated politics with nationalism, which separated them from their chiefdoms

The militarism of the Acholi reshaped the prominent role their traditions and chiefdom played in their lives. Military leaders gained more prestige among the British than many *rwodi* did, so they were able to influence political decisions in ways traditional leaders could not. Military leaders and soldiers were the only direct link to national politics Acholiland had access to. As such, the extraction of the Acholi from the military

weakened their political position in the national sphere. The strong presence of the Acholi in the military proved detrimental to their role in the nation building process.

Throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods, Acholi militarism reshaped different aspects of the Acholi identity. While their participation in the military garnered a sense of ethnic pride, their participation also challenged the traditional aspects of their identity. Elders and traditional *Rwodi* no longer wielded the same influence over commoners because they did not participate in national politics. Acholi soldiers' allegiance to the national military made their traditional power structure appear obsolete. Reintegration into Acholi society forced traditional leaders and Acholi soldiers to confront this disconnect. The HSM represented the result of this confrontation, which attempted to restore ethnic pride, discipline Acholi soldiers, and integrate Acholi traditions into the Christian theology. Thus, the post-colonial period forced the Acholi to adjust their ethnic identity to complement the changes colonialism and nationalism introduced to their society.

CONCLUSION

Instead of viewing the Acholi as victims to the changes during the colonial period, historians should recognize their role as actors. The evolution of the Acholi ethnic identity involved negotiations between their colonizers and within their own group. During the colonial period, the chiefdom ideology served as the original structure of the Acholi identity. Politics, traditions, religion, and social structure functioned to support the chiefdom ideology. Universal adherence to the chiefdom ideology proves the Acholi were cognizant of the construction of their collective identity, even if they did not label themselves as Acholi. What occurred during the 19th century then, was foreign recognition of the collective identity the Acholi established.

Indirect rule challenged the legitimacy of the chiefdom model. It also challenged the ability of the chiefdom model to adapt to a larger political institution. The while traditional leaders attempted to protect their dominant roles in Acholi, colonially appointed *rwodi* devalued the traditional aspect of the office itself. Additionally, new Acholi attempted to carve out a place for outside of the traditional chiefdom model, particularly within the colonial military. This exposure to state politics versus regional politics made Acholi politics seem obsolete throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods.

The post-colonial period brought the issues introduced during the colonial period to the forefront. The values between older and younger Acholi clashed in their attempts to determine the direction the evolution of the ethnic identity should pursue. New Acholi represented modernization, militarization, and nationalism. Those Acholi that upheld

their traditions wanted to reestablish their traditional political order and reconnect with their traditional past. The Holy Spirits Movement symbolically integrated Acholi traditions into a modern complex while provided the Acholi soldier with a new and worthy cause to rally around. Thus, the Acholi identity by the 1980s represented the incorporation of the traditional aspects of the Acholi ethnicity that complimented their present position in the nationalist system.

We leave the Acholi without introducing their current situation in Uganda, as that would introduce a different dynamic to this ethnography. The purpose of this thesis was not to put the conflict between the Lord's Resistance Army and the Ugandan military into perspective, as that conflict involves an explanation of issues that extend beyond the Acholi identity. Instead, this thesis aimed to construct the Acholi ethnicity in order to provide clarity about their role in the present day conflict. Broadly speaking, the goal was to illustrate the Acholi involvement in the evolution of their ethnic identity. They did not instigate many of the changes implemented during the colonial and post-colonial period, but they were cognizant of those changes.

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