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To cite this article: Julaina A. Obika & Patrick W. Otim (2022) 'Returning to the world of ancestors': death and dying among the Acholi of Northern Uganda, 1900s–1980s, *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 16:3, 375–394, DOI: [10.1080/17531055.2022.2163124](https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2022.2163124)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2022.2163124>



Published online: 01 Feb 2023.



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'Returning to the world of ancestors': death and dying among the Acholi of Northern Uganda, 1900s–1980s

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ABSTRACT

The encounters between Acholi and Europeans, beginning in 1904 with the settlement of the Church Missionary Society in Acholiland, had a profound impact on the people. Scholars have long examined the impact of these encounters on various aspects of life. But a study of their impact on mortuary practices in the region has largely been neglected. Recently, scholars have shined a spotlight on death and dying as a result of the armed conflict that engulfed Acholiland from the late 1980s. Drawing on previously untapped primary sources, interviews, and works of Acholi intellectuals, this article complements this new trend, by focusing on death and mortuary practices between the 1900s and the 1980s. Specifically, it recreates these practices and demonstrates change and continuity; and it concludes with a history of the cemetery in Acholiland.

KEYWORDS

Acholi; death; dying; burial; inheritance; cemetery; northern Uganda

One rainy evening in August 1903, A. B. Lloyd of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) arrived in Patiko Chiefdom and decided to spend a night there before proceeding to Payira Chiefdom the next day, to meet with Chief Awich. The following afternoon, just before Lloyd was to leave for Payira, a heavy downpour engulfed Patiko Chiefdom, and a 'man who was cultivating in the fields was struck by lightning, and was immediately killed.' The death gave Lloyd an opportunity to witness what he called 'all the ceremonies of a heathen funeral'.¹

Without dwelling on the identity of the deceased, Lloyd recounts the burial procedure in some detail: the 'grave was dug by the side of his house, a small round hole, broadening out towards the bottom. Into this the body was put, and a wicker framework placed over the top of the open grave. Over this were spread various clothes and ornaments he [the deceased] had been in the habit of wearing.' The widows, Lloyd continues, sat 'around the grave, crying and shrieking, throwing themselves upon the ground, sometimes shouting their husband's name into the pit. His old mother, with a rough rope tied around her waist, knotted at the back with two ends streaming behind, and grasping in her hands a bundle of the deceased's arrows, walked round and round the circle of women.' Lloyd sums up the event as 'an awful sight'.²

The missionary's short account is replete with overt and hidden information on Acholi burial and mourning rituals, and it is rich in symbols, raising many interesting questions: why were some of the deceased's clothes and ornaments put on the tomb? What was the role of the widows in the ritual? Why did the deceased's mother walk around with the deceased's bundle of arrows? Lloyd, however, did not address any of these questions. Moreover, although Lloyd claims to have witnessed 'all the ceremonies of a heathen funeral,' his account is incomplete: he witnessed only the burial rituals. In Acholiland, death triggered a series of rituals that continued for several months after burial, that Lloyd did not witness and are, therefore, missing in his account. For example, he did not witness the last funeral rites (*guru lyel*), which occurred nine months after the burial.³ Moreover, Lloyd did not tell us what happened to the widows, but we know there was a wife inheritance ritual (*lako*) that occurred after the last funeral rites.

Nevertheless, Lloyd's account is a good starting point for our study of death and dying among the Acholi of northern Uganda. Specifically, the study focuses on Gulu District, where the bulk of documentary sources are located. Recent works on death and dying in Acholiland have exclusively concentrated on the post-1986 period, neglecting death and dying in the late precolonial, colonial, and immediate post-independence eras.⁴ Drawing on previously untapped primary sources, interviews with Acholi elders, and works of Acholi intellectuals, such as Okot p'Bitek and Sabino Odoki, this article examines the social history of death since the first decade of the twentieth century.⁵ It also contributes to the recent literature on death and dying in African history.⁶

The first part of the article examines Acholi funerary culture from the 1900s to the 1940s. The second demonstrates both change and continuity in these rituals up to the 1980s, largely as a result of the spread of Christianity and colonial rule. The article concludes with a history of the cemetery in Acholiland.

Death and dying in Acholiland

The Acholi people live in northern Uganda. The term Acholi, or 'Shuuli' as Ronald Atkinson noted, was in the region since the 1860s.⁷ However, today, most scholars agree that the Acholi 'tribal' identity was largely the creation of the colonial state and missionaries, beginning in the 1910s.⁸ The Acholi share customs with their neighbors, such as the Langi to the south, the Madi and Alur to the west, and the Karimojong to the east [Figure 1](#).⁹

Historically, Acholiland had been loosely organized into many small chiefdoms. Beginning in the 1860s, the region experienced increasing and widespread violence due to the activities of ivory and slave traders, and later of Turco-Egyptian soldiers stationed in Acholiland.¹⁰ From the 1880s, the region experienced even more violence, and some chiefdoms united and fought the Turco-Egyptian soldiers. Following this war, violence also broke out between chiefdoms in 1890s, especially between Payira and Padibe chiefdoms as they fought for supremacy.¹¹ There is no way of knowing how this violence impacted death and dying since we do not have any documentary evidence.

In 1904, the CMS missionaries became the first Europeans to settle in Acholiland. They were soon joined by the Verona Fathers in 1910. And in 1911, colonial rule began. By 1960, the missionaries claimed to have Christianized seventy percent of the

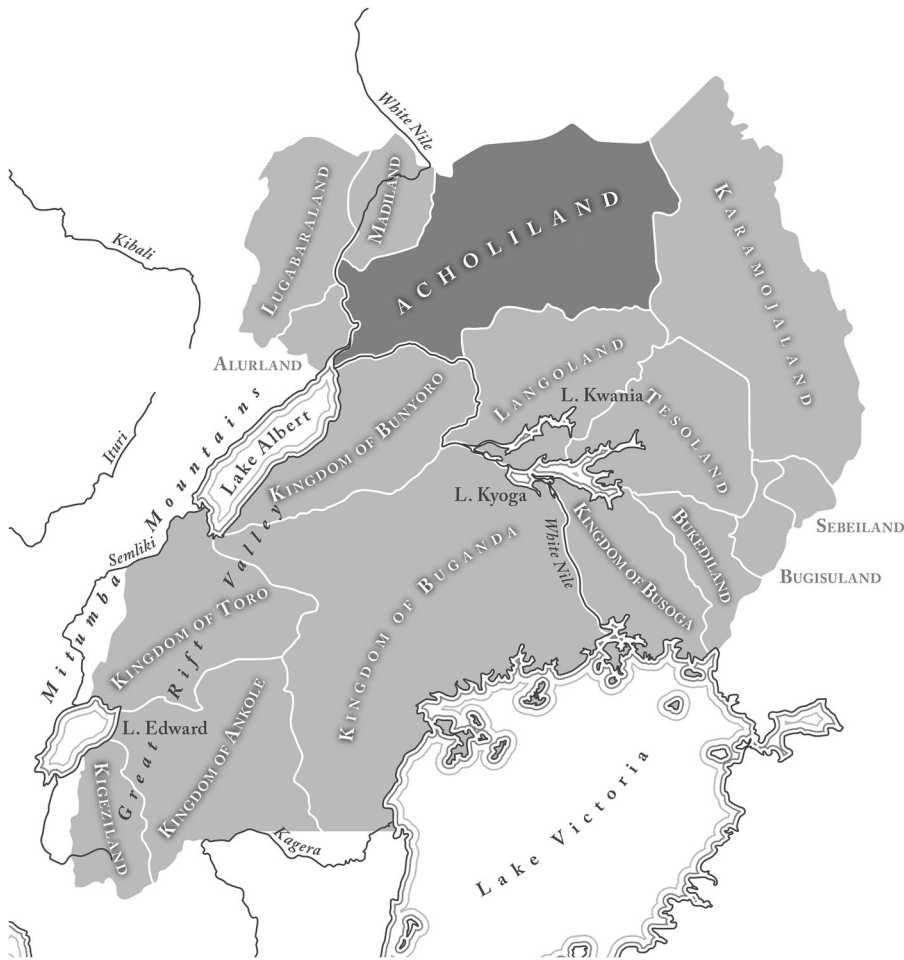


Figure 1. Location of Acholiland (Map by Daniel Huffman).

Acholi, and their writings provide insights into the change and continuity that occurred in Acholi funerary culture.¹²

The first documentary accounts of death and mortuary rituals are from the CMS. Following Lloyd's tour of Acholiland in 1903, and the establishment of the church in April 1904, in June 1904, A. L. Kitching, a brilliant linguist, arrived in Acholiland to translate the Bible into Acholi.¹³ He began compiling a list of every Acholi word he learned, which formed the basis of the first Acholi dictionary, produced in 1907.¹⁴ One of the many words Kitching compiled was the Acholi word for *death*. He noted that the Acholi referred to death as *to* (sometimes written as *too*), which he translated as 'die, [or get] broken.'¹⁵ The second word in the translation, *broken*, is important. It suggests that *to* was understood not just as the end of a person's life, but also as getting broken, probably from the social networks of relatives and friends whom the deceased had enjoyed while living. When Kitching asked what happened when a person died, he was told that every human body carried a 'spirit' or 'shadow,' called '*tipo*.' Upon death, the spirit left the body and started wandering in the bush, and it was the duty of the clan and family to perform

rituals to ‘appease the spirit and bring it back home.’ According to Kitching, the Acholi believed that the spirits of the dead continued to play vital roles in the affairs of the living. He also learned that the term *to* was not applied to the death of twins. ‘In the case of the death of twins,’ he wrote, ‘they are not said to have died, but to have flown up to heaven, disappeared or gone away,’ and ‘the spirits of the twins would punish’ anyone who said the twins had died.¹⁶

Following his initial work in July 1904, Kitching returned to the topic of death in December of the same year and wrote that the Acholi categorized death into two types: deaths that were celebrated, and deaths that were uncelebrated.¹⁷ These distinctions echo the ‘bad’ and ‘good death’ categorizations that Sandra Greene observed among the Anlo of Ghana, and hereafter, we refer to Kitching’s ‘celebrated’ death as ‘good’ death and ‘uncelebrated’ death as ‘bad’ death.¹⁸ Good death, Kitching explained, was when a person died of old age. In the event of such a death, ‘there was not much mourning,’ and mourners celebrated such death with ‘singing and dancing as if no one had died.’ On the other hand, bad death occurred when someone died from an accident, lightning, witchcraft or in a battle or feud. This type of death, Kitching explained, occasioned a lot of anger in the community, because the deceased was believed ‘to have died with anger in his heart’ on account of his life having been cut short. The spirits of people who died a bad death, Kitching concluded, were expected to turn against their killers and avenge their deaths after their burial.¹⁹ The type of death one suffered also determined the burial location and the burial rites performed.

Burial and burial rituals in Acholiland, 1900s to 1940s

On a rainy March 25, 1905, Kitching received terrible news: ‘A minor chief of Patiko,’ and a close friend of Kitching who had helped him learn Acholi, had died that evening after a short illness. The following day, Kitching attended the burial and took extensive notes.²⁰

Burial locations

The first observation Kitching made was that there were no cemeteries in Acholiland: burial took place in the homestead of the deceased.²¹ He added that the type of death determined the specific burial location within the homestead, and the rites performed. A woman who died a good death, he added, was buried near her kitchen, while a man who died a good death was buried on the opposite side within the compound.²² But the burial sites of those who died a bad death varied. Those who died of disease, like those who died a good death, were buried near their huts, if they had one, or in the center of the courtyard. But, according to Kitching, who attended a burial of twins in Patiko in 1905, twins who died in childhood were not buried like ordinary children. Instead, their bodies were placed ‘in a pot with three-mouths,’ and the pot was not interred in the ground or in a tomb; rather, it was placed at the family shrine, because twins were considered special gifts from *jok*, the spirit that governed the people’s lives.²³

Conversely, those who were killed and, therefore, died a bad death, were buried at the edge of the compound. In 1905, A. E Pleydell, another missionary sent to help Lloyd and Kitching in Acholiland, wrote that the heads of the bodies of such people pointed outward to the bush, to enable their spirits to return to the wilderness and avenge

their death. He explained that those who were killed were buried this way because their spirits were understood to be 'very hostile,' wanting to avenge 'their own death' because their lives had been taken away from them. Failure to bury them this way, Pleydell expounded, would bring curses to their own family and clan, in the form of death, female infertility, or illness within the family and clan. Pleydell concluded that when a person killed another—outside of violent group conflicts—the killer was always in a hurry to report the misdeed and agree to quick mediation to prevent the spirit of the deceased from wreaking havoc on the killer's family.²⁴

But some bad deaths, like those due to suicide or accidents, were considered worse than others, and the victims were buried in different locations. In 1906, Kitching recounted that, typically, those who committed suicide were not buried at home. Instead, they were buried near a river, and no special ceremonies were performed for them. The tree where a suicide victim hanged themselves or the house where their body was found, Kitching expounded, was cut down or burned to ashes, respectively, to erase any memory of the event. If the family of such a deceased person decided to bury the corpse at home, there were no celebrations to honor the life of the deceased.²⁵ Similarly, Pleydell noted, those who died of accidents, which was understood to be a punishment from the spirit world, were also buried near a river, and there was no formal mourning after burial.²⁶ He recalled that he had once heard of a man who died when his hut fell on him as he was resting, and he was buried at the riverside.²⁷ Similarly, in August 1907, Kitching reported seeing the corpse of a man who had died after being hit by a tree branch in his compound being taken to the riverside for burial.²⁸

Distribution of burial roles

Funerary roles were allocated by gender. In 1904, Kitching wrote that men were responsible for disseminating news of death and digging and preparing the grave. Men, Kitching noted, spread the news by blowing horns, loudly singing funeral dirges, and performing a funeral dance with spears and shields to communicate death to passersby.²⁹ To announce the death of a person to distant relatives and friends, male messengers were sent out.³⁰ If the deceased was a chief, the royal messenger conveyed the news to his distant subjects.³¹ In May 1904, Lloyd reported that 'old muskets' were also 'used to announce the death of chiefs,' by firing three shots.³²

The funerary roles of women consisted of taking care of the corpse under the guidance of a mistress of the funeral. According to Lloyd, once a death had been announced, 'an elderly woman in the home [clan]' was appointed 'to lead all rituals.'³³ Kitching also noted that 'an old woman was placed in charge of all the burial ceremonies.'³⁴ They are both describing the mistress of the funeral. Unfortunately, neither missionary tells us the specific qualities and roles of the women in charge of burials. Father Joseph Okumu, an Acholi Catholic priest and anthropologist, provides the best insights. He writes that when death occurred in a family, the women of the extended family came together and chose an 'elderly woman of good repute ... to be mistress of the funeral from among those who, by their age, can no longer bear children.' Significantly, the mistress of the funeral had to be experienced and deeply knowledgeable about death rituals. The mistress, with the help of other women, washed 'the body of the deceased and shave

[d] its head.' Washing the body and shaving the head were part of any proper burial and were meant to ease the deceased's 'entrance into new life.'³⁵

Thereafter, the mistress led a 'brief ceremony ... inside the house where the corpse is lying.' The ceremony was 'attended only by a few elderly people.'³⁶ In 1904, Lloyd wrote that he was told there was an important ritual that took place inside the hut of the deceased, but he was never invited to witness the ceremony. However, p'Bitek tells us that, during that ceremony, the 'widow is made to lie over the dead man, and she embraces him. The father of the dead man, or his eldest son, covers the couple with a duiker skin and taps their heads with *olutu kwon* (a wooden spoon used for making millet bread), and *ogwec* (a wooden spoon used for making gravy).' The shaven head of the deceased was then 'smeared with *pala*, red ochre and oil.'³⁷

The choreography of the ritual—shaving the deceased's head and smearing it with red ochre and oil, the widow lying over the dead man, the father or the eldest son of the deceased covering the couple with a skin and tapping their heads with cooking implements—was consistent across Acholiland. What differed was the type of skin used. In Payira Chieftdom, duiker skins were used for burial because duikers were intimately connected with the chieftdom spirit.³⁸ Other chieftdoms used different types of skins. For example, in 1904, Lloyd reported seeing corpses wrapped in goat skins in Alo-kolum Chieftdom.³⁹ And in 1907, Pleydell recalled seeing a corpse covered with a cow skin in Lamogi Chieftdom.⁴⁰

But why was the shaven head of the deceased smeared with red ochre? In 1913, A. B. Fisher, a missionary sent to reopen the CMS church in Acholiland, asked Mario Ojok, one of his converts, to explain to him why a corpse's head was smeared with red ochre. After it had been confirmed that someone had died, Ojok told Fisher, red ochre was collected from a well and smeared on the deceased's shaved head to make it slippery so as to ease the deceased's passage 'into the world of the spirits.'⁴¹

The act of the widow lying on the body of her dead spouse and embracing it is also symbolically significant, and it has been eloquently explained by Father Venansio Opoka, another Acholi anthropologist, as 'a sign of willingness for conjugal unity which characterized their family life but which is now terminated by death.'⁴² Similarly, the widow's father-in-law or the deceased's eldest son tapping the heads of the widow and her dead husband with cooking utensils symbolizes the widow's continued, but now futile, readiness to feed her husband.⁴³

Although women played a central role in caring for the corpse, the mistress of the funeral did more than care for the corpse; she also performed two acts to prepare the widow for burial. First, according to Lloyd, the mistress tied a rope around the waist of the widow, and 'knotted [the rope] at the back with two ends streaming behind.'⁴⁴ In a perhaps better description of this act, p'Bitek wrote that the mistress approaches the widow and ties '[a] piece of string ... around the chest of the widow and another around her head, and the leaves of the *Olwedo* tree are hung on the strings.'⁴⁵ This entire ritual was called '*tweyo cola*.'⁴⁶ Lloyd was told that it was a coping mechanism: the spots tied—chest and head—were places where the widow was assumed to feel the pain of bereavement most acutely.⁴⁷ However, Kitching noted that *tweyo cola* was meant to prevent the spirit of the widow's husband from entering her body.⁴⁸ Other accounts from northern Uganda support the latter explanation rather than the former.⁴⁹

The use of *Olwedo* leaves in the ritual is less enigmatic, though no less significant. The *Olwedo* tree, which was understood to be planted by *jok*, had several uses. First, it was one of the plants used for building family shrines.⁵⁰ Second, the *Olwedo* had long been used to bless people, especially hunters. When hunters were offered a branch of the *Olwedo* tree, they were believed to have been blessed so that they would be protected on their mission. Finally, elders used an *Olwedo* tree branch to curse both people and beasts.⁵¹ Thus, the *Olwedo* was intensely symbolic. The most probable explanation for using *Olwedo* in this ritual was to bless the widow and protect her from the bitter spirit of the deceased and the vagaries of widowhood.

After the mistress of the funeral had completed tying the widow's chest and head, she performed her second role: leading the widow 'off into the wilderness' so that she would not witness the burial.⁵² In January 1914, just before Fisher left Acholiland, he speculated that it might have been a way of sparing spouses the extreme pain of witnessing their departed partner being lowered into the grave and covered with soil.⁵³ It is highly probable that it was for the same reason that, as p'Bitek tells us, a husband did 'not attend the actual burial of his wife.'⁵⁴

As the widow was led away, the actual burial began. Lloyd tells us that the corpse, wrapped in an animal skin, was lowered into the grave.⁵⁵ He does not tell us how the body was positioned in the grave, but Fisher, perhaps a more careful observer, noted that men were buried lying on their left-hand sides, while women were buried lying on their right-hand sides. Fisher did not explain these differences. However, according to Father Sabino Odoki, men were laid to rest on the left 'because men use their right hand for holding spears in war and for hunting. Symbolically, it means they are to continue guarding and feeding the family.' Women were 'laid to rest on their right-hand side ... because women use their left hands for ... [raising the] alarm (*oduru*) when there is danger at home.'⁵⁶ So, even after death, women were expected to continue looking out for their families and raising the alarm whenever necessary.

As soon as the corpse had been laid to rest, interment began. According to Lloyd, everyone—except those unable to go near the grave—threw a handful of soil into the grave until a mound was made. Soon after the mound was made, a goat was slaughtered in appreciation of the men who had participated in the burial.⁵⁷ On this mound, relatives 'spread various clothes and ornaments he [the deceased] had been in the habit of wearing.'⁵⁸ Although the body of a chief also underwent all the procedures described, Kitching tells us that, unlike commoners, a chief was 'interred in the house he had been last using,' with some of his property put inside the hut and some put outside.⁵⁹

After the burial, the CMS missionaries tell us, formal mourning began. According to Lloyd, the widow was brought back home and led to her husband's mound. Relatives who arrived after the burial joined the widow near 'the grave, crying and shrieking, throwing themselves upon the ground,' to express their grief.⁶⁰ If the deceased had died a good death and was old, 'there was much dancing and celebration of [the deceased's] life.'⁶¹ However, if the deceased had died a bad death, there was no such formal mourning. Formal mourning went on for three days for men and four days for women, and it ended with a special ritual, called *puyu lyel*, in which the mistress of the funeral and other selected women 'tidied up and smeared [the grave] with a black clayey soil.'⁶² The smearing of the grave ended with a meeting in which relatives discussed the cause of death and planned the day of *guru lyel*, the last funeral rites.⁶³

The last funeral rites

In 1904, Lloyd pointed out that *guru lyel* rites were held exactly nine months after the burial, but he did not explain why.⁶⁴ However, Father Okumu explained that the 'significance of nine months is that, as a child spends nine months in the womb, so does the deceased spend nine months in the grave before ... [their spirit] joins a new community of the living-dead.'⁶⁵ In 1907, when Pleydell attended a *guru lyel* ceremony in Lamogi Chieftdom, he described it as a larger gathering than the burial, that lasted between five and ten days. This duration, he explained, was because relatives were notified of the event well in advance, thus enabling them to prepare adequately and attend these elaborate rites in large numbers. He concluded that the number of people who attended *guru lyel* depended on the age and status of the deceased: the older and more prominent the deceased, the larger the attendance.⁶⁶

The rites began at dawn, with *omo tipu*, the important 'ceremony of leading home the spirit of the deceased [from the wilderness]'⁶⁷ It is believed that after one's death, the deceased wanders about in a lonely manner without shelter, food, or drink, and 'concern for his welfare obliges his people to invite him back home ... [to] live among them, although in an invisible manner.'⁶⁸ Thus, the ritual was meant to recall the spirit of the deceased home from the 'bush.' To recall the spirit of the deceased successfully, *omo tipu* required the services of two people: a spirit medium and a close friend of the deceased.

When Pleydell attended the last funeral rites of one of his converts in 1907, he arrived at around ten o'clock in the morning, and was told he was late. *Omo tipu* had been completed at dawn, and the spirit of his deceased convert and friend had already been brought home.⁶⁹ Pleydell wrote that the ritual began 'very early in the morning' of the appointed day of the last funeral rites. The spirit medium, whom Pleydell referred to as a 'witch doctor,' led the ritual with a friend of the deceased. They disappeared 'in the bush' with a spear, an egg, and a leaf of *Olwedo* and begun calling the name of the deceased, inviting him to come home.⁷⁰

The significance of *Olwedo* has already been explained. In this case, the spirit medium holds the *Olwedo* leaf to bless the spirit of the deceased and bring it home. The spear was a sign of protection for the spirit. Finally, the egg was used for cleansing the spirit of the deceased as it returned from the wilderness. Usually, a person who stayed away from home for a long time was, upon returning, expected to step on an egg to cleanse themselves. In this case, the egg was used to cleanse the spirit of the deceased, which had stayed in the wilderness for a long time.⁷¹

Just as she did not attend her husband's burial, the widow did not attend the *omo tipu* ritual, because she was concurrently involved in another ritual elsewhere. On the morning when *omo tipu* began, the widow was 'led off into the wilderness once more,' by the funeral mistress who had presided over the burial. As will be recalled, during the burial, the mistress tied the widow's chest and head with strings which the widow did not remove until the day of the last funeral rites. It was during the last funeral rites, while the spirit medium was inviting back the spirit of the widow's husband, that the widow went to the bush and untied the strings. This act was called *gonyo cola*. After untying the strings, 'all the things which she had worn are removed and left there [in the bush],' marking the end of her mourning.⁷²

Following *gonyo cola*, the funeral mistress shaved the widow's hair in the bush.⁷³ Untying of the strings from the widow and shaving her head were meant to cleanse her so that she could begin a new life. From the bush, Lloyd writes, the widow was brought home where the crowd received her with jubilation. Before the last funeral rites, the widow would eat alone all the time, but after *gonyo cola*, she was free to eat with other people.⁷⁴ Thus, after the *omo tipu* and *gonyo cola* rituals, the remaining days of *guru lyel* were dedicated to feasting, singing, drumming, and dancing.⁷⁵ For men and women of high status, Kitching wrote in 1906, this feasting could go on for two weeks. This part of the last funeral rites sometimes angered missionaries. Kitching complained that all their catechumens escaped from the mission to attend this part of the rites, describing it as 'feasting days of heathens' during which 'they eat only meat and drink a lot.'⁷⁶ Pleydell wrote that catechumens escaped from the mission and came back after five to ten days.⁷⁷

Just like in the death rituals, widows performed specific roles in the *guru lyel* rites. The reason for their participation is twofold. First, as John Parker has pointed out among the Ga in Ghana, widows participated because they 'lived in fear of the jealous and vengeful spirits of their husbands.'⁷⁸ Their participation was, therefore, seen as a means of cleansing and setting them free from their husbands' spirits. Secondly, the widow participated because some of these rituals were meant to free her from past marital obligations, paving the way for her to remarry.⁷⁹

The widow-inheritance ritual (*lako*)

The completion of the last funeral rites meant that the widow was cleansed and, more importantly, freed from any marital obligation to her deceased husband. Customarily, she was free to remarry, but her choices were limited to the brothers or clansmen of her late husband, a condition meant to spare her clan the burden of returning the bride price that had been paid for her. The role of the levirate was to take care of the widow, and her children and property.⁸⁰ But, as Kitching added, if a widow preferred to marry a man unrelated to her dead husband (which was rare), she was free to do so, but only if her new husband returned the bride price that her late husband's clan had paid for her.⁸¹

Although the choice of the levirate was the most intriguing aspect of the widow-inheritance ritual, missionary accounts are silent on it. In 1905, Kitching was blocked from attending a widow-inheritance ritual.⁸² So was Pleydell when he tried to attend a similar ceremony in 1906.⁸³ However, according to Jim Ocitti, an Acholi historian, 'The decision as to whom the widow's new husband would be was always the prerogative of the elders.'⁸⁴ But, according to p'Bitek, 'The system of inheritance allow[ed] the widow considerable freedom in the choice of the inheritor, *lalaku*. During the period between the death of the husband and this ceremony, the widow indicated who among the dead man's brothers or clan should be the guardian of her children.'⁸⁵

Julio Otto, an Anglican convert who inherited a widow in 1930, recounted his story in *Acholi Magazine* in 1949, presenting a picture midway between those of Ocitti and Okot. According to Otto, 'The man was carefully selected, taking into consideration his character and ability to take care of the widow and her children. But the wishes of the widow are also taken into consideration.'⁸⁶ This suggests that while the elders may have

considered one or more potential inheritors, the widow had a role in choosing the eventual inheritor.⁸⁷ After choosing her prospective inheritor, the inheritance ceremony, *lako*, was organized. However, *lako* was performed only after the appearance of the moon, a period associated with female bodily purification through menstruation. Before the day of the ritual, elders informed the prospective levirate to bring a goat. The goat was chosen for the ritual partly because, customarily, it is a sacrificial animal and partly because it was more easily affordable than a cow or bull. On the appointed day, all the clan leaders would assemble at the dead man's home. The ritual, Kitching reminds us, took place only at the deceased's home. Though Kitching does not tell us why, we know it was an expression of solidarity with the dead, to demonstrate the clan's commitment to taking care of the deceased's family.⁸⁸

John Otto, the Anglican convert who recounted his story of *lako* in *Acholi Magazine* in 1949, gives us some of the best insights into what happened on that day. According to Otto, the clan leader called out the name of the new husband, and the man stood up and presented a goat to the ritual specialist. The ritual specialist would then ask the prospective levirate and his current wife or wives (if he was already married) and the widow to symbolically hold the goat. This act of holding the goat together, Otto explained, was to demonstrate that the inheritance was unanimously agreed on by the inheritor's family and the widow. The ritual leader would then spear the goat, and its blood would be collected in a bowl and put at the door post.⁸⁹ This act, according to Otto, freed the widow from her dead husband's spirit. The mother of the dead man or the eldest woman in his family, Otto added, would then give the widow a new '*olutu kwon* (a wooden spoon used for making millet bread) and *ogwec* (a wooden spoon used for making gravy),' to signify the widow's beginning of a new life with another man, whom she would now cook for. Thereafter, the goat meat would be cooked. During the rest of the day, Otto concluded, the elders counseled the levirate and his new wife on how to begin their newly constituted family.⁹⁰

Before *lako*, the widow was referred to as *dako-to* (the wife of the late so-and-so), but after this ritual, Otto stated, 'she became a wife and no one was permitted to call her a widow.'⁹¹ In 1913, Fisher wrote that, in Patiko Chiefdom, whoever referred to a remarried widow as *dako-to* would be 'fined seven goats by the chief.'⁹² Similarly, in 1914, H. T. Wright, a CMS missionary who replaced Fisher, recounted that, in Lamogi Chiefdom, whoever insulted a widow who had remarried was fined two cows, one for the new husband and the other for the chief.⁹³

Change and continuity in mortuary practices, 1911 to the 1980s

In 1911, colonial officials in Acholiland, like in many other places, imposed 'on the district their own conceptions about the proper disposal of the dead.'⁹⁴ Assistant District Commissioner C. E. E. Sullivan tasked each chief in Gulu District with selecting a burial site far from home and water sources to protect the Europeans and Acholi.⁹⁵ But the order was not enforced immediately because, soon after the beginning of colonial rule, the state was preoccupied with fighting rebellions and implementing a disarmament policy. It was not until 1914, when the state transferred J. R. P. Postlethwaite from Chua District, in eastern Acholi, to Gulu and made him acting District Commissioner, that the spotlight was again shone on mortuary practices.

Unlike Sullivan, Postlethwaite was not concerned with the health risks of Acholi mortuary practices. Rather, he was irked that his work was moving sluggishly because Acholi men were spending much more time on burial and last funeral rites than on working on their roads and government farms. He, therefore, began the first attempt to restrict the durations of burial and last funeral rites, instructing chiefs to find ways to reduce the number of days people spent at these ceremonies.⁹⁶ It is, however, unclear how chiefs reacted to these instructions.

Unlike Postlethwaite, CMS missionaries did not initially see funeral ceremonies as an impediment to their work. For example, Fisher believed that strict church rules would prevent the converts and catechumens from participating in these practices.⁹⁷ But in 1918, the missionaries came under pressure from within their ranks to intervene after seeing that converts were still attending funerals and failing to appear for Sunday service. Both the missionaries and 'native church leaders' came up with a broad law banning converts from participating in any 'heathen funeral practices.' The law did not specify what constituted 'heathen funeral practices,' although it must have targeted both burial and last funeral rites. All the same, Acholi Christians continued to participate in such practices.⁹⁸

Even some prominent Anglican 'native church leaders' were accused of participating in these ceremonies. For example, in 1924, Marako Okello was accused of spending two weeks at the burial of his mother-in-law and abandoning his duties at the church for three weeks. Similarly, Pilipo Opiyo was accused of abandoning his role as a church leader for six weeks to participate in the last funeral rites of his mother. So, too, was Temceo Obol, a choirmaster, who asked the missionaries to allow him to attend the burial of his uncle, and stayed away for four weeks.⁹⁹ The actions of such church leaders, who themselves participated in making the laws, reveal the resilience of Acholi traditions and some of the resultant challenges the churches faced.

This failure of the CMS to control its converts, including prominent local church leaders, forced the missionaries to rethink the law and draft a new one in 1929, perhaps after realizing that the first one was excessively stringent.¹⁰⁰ The new law stipulated that church leaders were allowed to take off two days to participate in the funerals of their relatives, but they had to strive to return and attend Sunday church service.¹⁰¹ By 1935, the church's opposition to specific aspects of Acholi death and burial rituals had become clearer. In May 1935, Arthur Kitching, the bishop of the Upper Nile Diocese, warned his flock that he had received complaints about increasing cases of wife inheritance. The punishment for engaging in wife inheritance, he wrote, was expulsion from the church. But the Acholi converts did not take this warning seriously, and, in September 1935, Kitching excommunicated ten church leaders for having inherited wives.¹⁰² Among them was Lacito Obol, an assistant choirmaster whom Kitching described as a former friend, who was excommunicated for inheriting his brother's wife. Obol was told that the church would receive him back if he 'repented his sins' and sent away the wife he had inherited.¹⁰³

In addition to rejecting wife inheritance, both the Catholic and the Anglican churches began disparaging and attempting to modify Acholi last funeral rites. The Catholic Church, in particular, opposed *omo tipu*, the ritual of bringing the spirit of the deceased home, because it was in stark contradiction of the Christian teaching that the souls of righteous Christians would ascend to heaven. Moreover, the church prohibited the

work of spirit mediums in funeral rituals, dismissing the mediums as mere charlatans. From the 1950s, the Catholic and Anglican churches agreed that priests and reverends would take the place of spirit mediums at the last funeral rites of prominent Christian converts, and that the Christian Mass should become part of the last funeral rites, with priests and reverends leading the spirits of the dead to heaven.¹⁰⁴ Finally, the missionaries condemned the prolonged duration of the last funeral rites, claiming that it prevented converts from going to church, especially on Sunday. Consequently, in 1949, at a meeting of the Gulu deanery, the Catholic Church 'decreed that funeral rites be celebrated from Thursday to Saturday so that Christians may be able to fulfill their Sunday Mass obligations.'¹⁰⁵

Following the decree, in 1950, the Catholic Church threatened its converts with suspension for first-time offenders and excommunication for repeat offenders against the decree.¹⁰⁶ Although the decree resulted in some changes, it did not end all aspects of last funeral rituals. In 1955, Father Paul Ottolini, a Catholic priest, wrote that the biggest success of the church had been in convincing people to reduce the number of days they spent at last funerals rites, with 'the rites now lasting only two to three days, from Thursday to Saturday, instead of a whole week or even two weeks,' allowing Christians to attend Sunday Mass.¹⁰⁷ However, Ottolini admitted that it remained difficult to eradicate *omo tipu*.

The church was not alone in the efforts to change some aspects of last funeral rituals. The colonial state also weighed in. For example, by the 1950s, the Acholi way of life had been drastically disrupted by strict colonial and mission labor laws. Many colonial and mission employees were required to stay at work from Monday to Friday, which probably helped confine last funeral rites to a few days. But the reduction in the number of days devoted to funeral rites did not mean that all funerary norms and practices changed. For example, in 1976, Father Okumu found that, despite the Catholic Church's insistence since the 1940s that its followers abandon *omo tipu*, the practice was still very much alive, and the Catholic Church reacted by ordering catechists to find out in advance 'in which funeral celebration the ceremony of leading the spirit of the dead back home ... [was] to be performed. They were to report the matter to the priest who would accordingly cancel his attendance at the ceremony.'¹⁰⁸

The early 1950s also saw increasing attacks on specific aspects of burial rituals. For example, in 1952, the Catholic Church called on its followers to stop the practice of washing the body and shaving and smearing the heads of corpses with red ochre and oil.¹⁰⁹ According to Father Okumu, the Catholic Church called these practices '*tic acholi* [acholi rituals]' and 'condemned' them 'as satanic.'¹¹⁰ This was because the practices contradicted Christian teaching, which stated that, if the dead had lived righteous lives, they would go to heaven and not to any so-called world of ancestral spirits. The Catholic Church also condemned the practice of making the widow lie on the body of her dead husband.¹¹¹

In June 1953, Giovanni Battista Cesana, the newly appointed Catholic Bishop of Gulu, wrote that his church had prohibited the Acholi practice of burying corpses sideways and wrapping them in animal skins. Christians, he wrote, were to be wrapped in blankets, placed in coffins, and buried. Despite all these church efforts, the funeral practices—washing the body, shaving the head, and smearing it with red ochre and oil—continued. For example, in 1958, when Matteo Otto, a leading local church leader in Gulu, died in

hospital, the church prepared his body and provided a blanket and a coffin—but after the church service, when the body of Otto was given to his family for burial, it was removed from the coffin and washed again, and its head was shaved before the body was buried.¹¹²

Ultimately, although the Catholic and Anglican churches, with some assistance from the colonial state, used prohibitions, rebukes, and punishments to try to change some of the Acholi burial practices and beliefs, their efforts were not entirely successful. However, the missionaries were not deterred: they continued finding ways to stop Acholi from performing ‘satanic’ rituals on the dead. One of these new ways was allowing Acholi to be buried in church cemeteries.

The rise and fall of cemeteries in Acholiland

In 1911, the colonial state established its first cemetery for Europeans in Gulu Town. The earliest recorded burial in the cemetery appears to have been that of Captain H. S. Tanner of the Uganda Police, who died in 1912.¹¹³ The influx of Asians into Gulu paved the way for another cemetery in 1918, the Muslim cemetery, mainly for Indian Muslims who had settled in Gulu to operate retail businesses. Thus, by 1919, there were two cemeteries and a ‘Hindu Crematorium’ in Gulu Town (see Figure 2).¹¹⁴ In addition to these two cemeteries, the Anglican and Catholic churches had graveyards near their respective churches, where they buried their missionaries.¹¹⁵ But these cemeteries and graveyards were exclusively for Europeans and Asians.

It was not until 1927 that the colonial state opened a small cemetery for Acholi and other ethnic groups in Pece, about six kilometers East of Gulu Town. This cemetery was for the burial of unclaimed bodies found within the town and in the hospital mortuary; and it was located near the African quarters, where the majority of local laborers lived.¹¹⁶ This cemetery was enlarged in 1945, as Gulu Town grew.¹¹⁷ That same year, both the Anglican and the Catholic churches also enlarged their ‘European’ cemeteries and relaxed their laws, allowing converts to be buried in their respective church cemeteries.¹¹⁸ However, as Cesana explained in 1953, only Christians deemed to have led full Christian lives could be buried in the Catholic cemetery, and there were specific places reserved for them.¹¹⁹ Acholi Catholics who had been suspended or excommunicated for various infractions were denied burial in the church cemetery.

However, not every Acholi Christian wanted to be buried in a church cemetery; many Acholi of good standing with their churches preferred to be buried in their homes. In 1954, Cesana explained that Acholi, especially catechists, were reluctant to be buried in the cemetery because it prevented their families from performing burial rituals. Therefore, priests and reverends took it upon themselves to convince their prominent converts of the benefits of being buried in the cemetery. For example, in 1958, Santo Oyet wrote in *Lobo Mewa*, a Catholic newspaper, declaring that he wanted to be buried in the Catholic Church cemetery. The reason, he explained, was that his priest had told him that prayers were said daily for those buried in the cemetery, which would enable them to ascend to heaven. Because of the daily prayers, Oyet concluded, he informed his priest and family of his wish to be buried in the Catholic cemetery, not at his home. For similar reasons, Camconi Onen, an Anglican, opted to be buried in the Anglican cemetery.¹²⁰

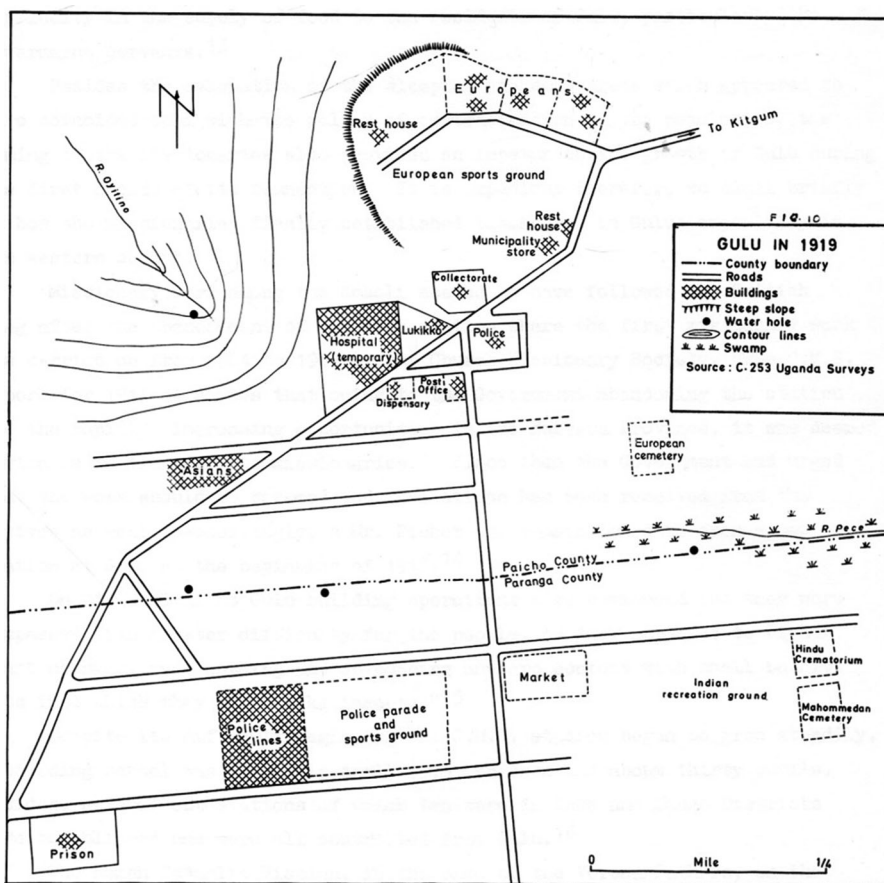


Figure 2. Map of Gulu (1919) showing 'European' and 'Mohammedan' Cemeteries, and 'Hindu' Crematorium. Reprinted from J. P. Ocitti, *The Urban Geography of Gulu*, 64 (1973). Permission courtesy of Makerere University.

Lakana Olok and other Christians had different reasons for wanting to be buried in a cemetery. Olok, an Anglican, explained that he wanted to be buried in a cemetery because he did not want his family to perform 'satanic rituals' on his body when he was dead, and thus prevent him from going to heaven.¹²¹ So, too, did Matteo Obol, a Catholic: he chose to be buried in the cemetery to prevent his family from blocking his going to heaven by performing un-Christian rituals.¹²² Finally, Lacito Okello, an Anglican, chose to be buried in the cemetery because he wanted to be buried where the reverend who had baptized him was buried.¹²³ Thus, the reasons for opting to be buried in church cemeteries were often steeped in Christianity.

By opting to be buried in church cemeteries, these converts altered burial and related rituals, making it possible for Acholi to bury their dead outside their homes.¹²⁴ Yet burying someone in a cemetery did not always stop their families and clans from asking the church to allow them to perform certain burial rituals. For example, in 1953, Bishop Cesana reported that, after the burial of some Catholic Church leaders, he got frequent requests from the families of the deceased to allow them to come and

perform certain rituals. The most common request, Cesana explained, was to perform *puyu lyel*, which came three days after burial, when families would tidy up the grave and smear it with black soil.¹²⁵

In addition to the church cemeteries, in the late 1960s, after Uganda's independence in 1962, the postcolonial government cleared a five-acre piece of land and commissioned a new public cemetery in Gulu Town called Limo, which was adjacent to, and part of, a recently built hospital at the heart of Gulu Town (see [Figure 2](#)). The new cemetery relieved the pressure on the small cemetery in Pece, which was eventually closed.¹²⁶ Initially, this new cemetery had begun as a burial place for unclaimed bodies from hospitals.¹²⁷ But by 1970, it was being used for the burial of any unclaimed bodies.¹²⁸ By 1974, the cemetery had become a burial ground for former political prisoners, murdered by Idi Amin's regime. Their bodies were secretly taken to the cemetery at night, and buried.¹²⁹

Following the establishment of this public cemetery, the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council opened another cemetery to replace the first one that had been built in 1918. Established in 1972 to bury Muslims, this cemetery was located in Nakasero Village, south of Gulu Town. These two cemeteries—public and Islamic—served their purpose in the 1970s and 1980s. However, beginning in the mid-1990s, the public cemetery was in rapid decline; people displaced by the war between the government of Uganda (GoU) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) encroached on part of it. But, more importantly, in the 1990s, with increasing urbanization, the municipal council began to relocate cemeteries outside the town and, thereafter, the cemetery was sold and parceled off for redevelopment. In 1997, Gulu Municipal Council asked the Muslim Supreme Council to relocate its 1972 cemetery from the heart of town. The relocation was completed in 2015.¹³⁰ However, the Catholic and Anglican cemeteries remained intact because they were located on private land outside the town.

All these cemeteries contributed to altering Acholi burial and related rituals, making it possible for Acholi to bury their dead outside their homes.¹³¹

Conclusion

From 1900, when Europeans began settling in Acholiland, the region began to undergo transformation. The spread of Christianity and colonial rule altered attitudes to, and experiences of, burial rituals, wife inheritance, mourning, and their associated rites. However, these changes unfolded slowly, becoming more visible from the late 1930s. By the late 1980s, practices such as shaving corpses' heads and smearing them with red ochre and oil, making the widow lie on the body of her dead husband, and wife inheritance, were in significant decline. But wife inheritance did not decline exclusively because the churches disparaged it: the HIV/AIDS scourge of the 1980s also contributed to the decline of the practice in Acholiland.

The GoU and the LRA war have also impacted and significantly altered practices related to death and dying in Acholiland. During the war, the government restricted the movement of people, gatherings, and the amount of time spent at social events. As such, less people attended burials. Some pre-burial rituals, such as washing the corpse, became impossible to execute. In some instances, burials were carried out by soldiers. Those who were living in camps were forced to bury their dead in the camps. Finally,

the post burial gathering, *guru lyel*, which was an important ritual to honor the dead, was restricted and, in certain cases, denied.¹³²

Recent works on death and dying have shown that, because of the war and old beliefs that the spirits of the dead play a central role in the lives of the living, there has been talk of 'bones resting in the wrong soil.'¹³³ And as such, there are numerous cases of exhumation, and reburial of the dead in 'proper places,' and boisterous, though belated, last funeral rites.¹³⁴ In broad terms, our study builds on the recent body of work by shifting its focus to an earlier period, and providing additional insights into continuities as well as changes that have occurred before the LRA war. Finally, one change that has occurred in the last decade, which deserves mention, is the emergence of funeral homes, which is further altering old ideas, beliefs, and rituals around death and burial in Acholiland.

Archives

The Uganda National Archives, Entebbe, Uganda (UNA)

The Makerere University Archives, Kampala, Uganda (MUA)

The Comboni Missionary House Library, Gulu, Uganda (CMHLG)

Notes

1. Lloyd, *Uganda to Khartoum*, 198.
2. Ibid.
3. The Comboni Missionary House Library, Gulu, Uganda (hereafter: CMHLG)/002: A. B. Lloyd in Patiko, 1904–1908; Okumu, "The Funeral Rites," 175.
4. Meinert et al., "Cement, Graves and Pillar"; Meinert and Whyte, "Creating the New Times: Reburials"; Seebach, "The Dead Are Not Dead"; Victor, Letha and Porter, "Dirty things."
5. p'Bitek, *Horn of My Love*; see also Odoki, *Death Ritual*.
6. See, for example, the edited collection in the *Journal of African History* by Rebekah Lee and Megan Vaughan, "Death and Dying in the History of Africa since 1800."
7. Atkinson, *The Roots*, 270.
8. See, for example, Behrend, *Alice Lakwena*, 14; Amone and Muura, "British Colonialism." However, Finnström disagrees with this argument, see *Living with Bad Surroundings*, 54.
9. On Alur see Southall, *Alur Society*; on Lugbara see Middleton's *Lugbara Religion*.
10. Atkinson, *The Roots*, 267.
11. Ibid., 268.
12. CMHLG/117/Christian in Acholiland. Here, the Catholic church claimed to have converted 50 percent of the Acholi while the Anglican claimed to have Christianized 30 percent.
13. Kitching, "The Commencement of Work," 827.
14. Kitching, *An Outline Grammar*, 1907.
15. Ibid., 76.
16. CMHLG/312: A. L. Kitching, 1904–1908; see also Kitching, *On the Backwaters*, 253.
17. CMHLG/312: A. L. Kitching, 1904–1908.
18. Greene, *Sacred Sites*, 61–82.
19. CMHLG/312: A. L. Kitching, 1904–1908; see also p'Bitek, *Horn of My Love*, 24.
20. CMHLG/312: A. L. Kitching, 1904–1908.
21. CMHLG/312: A. L. Kitching, 1904–1908.
22. CMHLG/002: A. B. Lloyd in Patiko, 1904–1908; see also Odoki, *Death Ritual*, 37–38.
23. CMHLG/312: A. L. Kitching, 1904–1908.
24. CMHLG/102: Acholi Death Ceremonies.
25. CMHLG/312: A. L. Kitching, 1904–1908.

26. CMHLG/102: Acholi Death Ceremonies.
27. CMHLG/102: Acholi Death Ceremonies.
28. CMHLG/102: Acholi Death Ceremonies.
29. CMHLG/312: A. L. Kitching, 1904–1908.
30. p'Bitek, *Horn of My Love*, 22.
31. P. Okech, personal communication, February 17, 2015.
32. CMHLG/002: A. B. Lloyd in Patiko, 1904–1908.
33. CMHLG/102: Acholi Death Ceremonies.
34. CMHLG/312: A. L. Kitching, 1904–1908.
35. Okumu, “The Funeral Rites,” 174.
36. p'Bitek, *Horn of My Love*, 22.
37. Ibid.
38. Girling, *The Acholi*, 159.
39. CMHLG/002: A. B. Lloyd in Patiko, 1904–1908.
40. CMHLG/102: Acholi Death Ceremonies.
41. CMHLG/007: A. B. Fisher, 1913–1914.
42. Opoka, “Funeral Rite,” 170.
43. Peter Loum, personal communication, February 8, 2015.
44. CMHLG/002: A. B. Lloyd in Patiko, 1904–1908.
45. p'Bitek, *Horn of My Love*, 21.
46. Ibid.
47. CMHLG/002: A. B. Lloyd in Patiko, 1904–1908.
48. CMHLG/312: A. L. Kitching, 1904–1908.
49. See, for example, Curley, *Elders*, 67–78.
50. p'Bitek, *Religion of the central Luo*, 92–3.
51. Ibid., 151–3.
52. CMHLG/002: A. B. Lloyd in Patiko, 1904–1908.
53. CMHLG/007: A. B. Fisher, 1913–1914.
54. p'Bitek, *Horn of My Love*, 22.
55. Lloyd, *Uganda to Khartoum*, 198.
56. Odoki, *Death Ritual*, 41.
57. CMHLG/002: A. B. Lloyd in Patiko, 1904–1908; p'Bitek, *Horn of My Love*, 22.
58. Lloyd, *Uganda to Khartoum*, 198.
59. Kitching, *On the Backwaters*, 254.
60. Lloyd, *Uganda to Khartoum*, 198.
61. CMHLG/002: A. B. Lloyd in Patiko, 1904–1908.
62. p'Bitek, *Horn of My Love*, 22; Opoka, “Funeral Rite,” 170.
63. CMHLG/002: A. B. Lloyd in Patiko, 1904–1908.
64. CMHLG/002: A. B. Lloyd in Patiko, 1904–1908.
65. Okumu, “The Funeral Rites,” 175–6.
66. CMHLG/102: Acholi Death Ceremonies; see also Opoka, “Funeral Rite,” 170.
67. Okumu, “The Funeral Rites,” 175.
68. Ibid., 176; see also Opoka, “Funeral Rite,” 170.
69. CMHLG/102: Acholi Death Ceremonies.
70. CMHLG/102: Acholi Death Ceremonies; see also Okumu, “The Funeral Rites,” 176.
71. Harlacher et al., *Traditional ways of coping*, 65–69.
72. CMHLG/002: A. B. Lloyd in Patiko, 1904–1908.
73. CMHLG/002: A. B. Lloyd in Patiko, 1904–1908.
74. CMHLG/002: A. B. Lloyd in Patiko, 1904–1908.
75. p'Bitek, *Horn of My Love*, 22.
76. CMHLG/312: A. L. Kitching, 1904–1908.
77. CMHLG/102: Acholi Death Ceremonies.
78. Parker, “The Cultural Politics of Death,” 212.
79. CMHLG/312: A. L. Kitching, 1904–1908.

80. CMHLG/312: A. L. Kitching, 1904–1908; see also Kitching, *An Outline Grammar*, 50; Ocitti, *Oteka Okello Mwoka Lengomoi*, 33.
81. CMHLG/312: A. L. Kitching, 1904–1908.
82. CMHLG/312: A. L. Kitching, 1904–1908.
83. CMHLG/102: Acholi Death Ceremonies.
84. Ocitti, *Oteka Okello Mwoka Lengomoi*, 33.
85. p'Bitek, *Horn of My Love*, 24.
86. CMHLG/01: Article from *Acholi Magazine* (author's translation).
87. This view is consistent with the practice of the Acholi's southerly neighbors, the Langi, among whom 'the widow herself decides which man of her husband's clan she will marry, in consultation with senior members of the lineage,' see Curley, *Elders*, 77.
88. Ocitti, *Oteka Okello Mwoka Lengomoi*, 33.
89. Just like among the Langi that Curley studied, among the Acholi a 'goat must be sacrificed or the woman will be afflicted with illness and misfortune by the shade of her former husband' (1973: 78).
90. CMHLG/01: Article from *Acholi Magazine* (author's translation).
91. Ibid.
92. CMHLG/007: A. B. Fisher, 1913–1914.
93. CMHLG/109: Reopening of the CMS Mission, 1913–1917.
94. Greene, *Sacred Sites*, 71.
95. The Uganda National Archives, Entebbe, Uganda (hereafter: UNA)/SMP/0121: Burial Sites in Gulu District, 16 November 1911.
96. UNA/SMP/0412: Meetings with Acholi Chiefs in Gulu District, 6 March 1914.
97. CMHLG/007: A. B. Fisher, 1913–1914.
98. The Makerere University Archives, Kampala, Uganda (hereafter MUA)/AR/CMS/98/2: Minutes of the Upper Nile Mission, Gulu.
99. CMHLG/1: Minutes of Church Meetings, 1929–1935.
100. Ibid.
101. Ibid.
102. CMHLG/1: Minutes of Church Meetings, 1935–1937.
103. CMHLG/1: Minutes of Church Meetings, 1935–1937.
104. Okumu, "The Funeral Rites," 177.
105. Okumu, "The Funeral Rites," 177.
106. CMHLG/17/Minutes of the Church Meeting, 1950.
107. CMHLG/17/Minutes of the Church Meeting, 1955.
108. Okumu, "The Funeral Rites," 178–9.
109. CMHLG/17/Minutes of the Church Meeting, 1952.
110. Okumu, "The Funeral Rites," 177.
111. CMHLG/17/Minutes of the Church Meeting, 1952.
112. CMHLG/18/Minutes of the Church Meeting, 1953.
113. Okech, *Tekwaro*, 31.
114. Ocitti, *The Urban Geography of Gulu*.
115. MUA/AR/CMS/98/2: Minutes of the Upper Nile Mission, Gulu.
116. UNA/SMP/1127: Gulu District Cemetery, 24 August 1925.
117. MUA/AR/CMS/107/4: Correspondence of the Standing Committee of Upper Nile Mission, 1947–1950.
118. MUA/AR/CMS/107/4: Correspondence of the Standing Committee of Upper Nile Mission, 1947–1950.
119. CMHLG/17/Minutes of the Church Meeting, 1950.
120. CMHLG/022/Copies of *Lobo Mewa*.
121. CMHLG/023/*Acholi Magazine* Articles.
122. CMHLG/023/*Acholi Magazine* Articles.
123. CMHLG/023/*Acholi Magazine* Articles.

124. Samuel Arweny, personal communication, February 17, 2015; John Otto, personal communication, February 15, 2015.
125. CMHLG/023/*Acholi Magazine* articles.
126. Gulu District Archives, Gulu, Uganda (hereafter: GDA)/Box 532: Gulu Cemetery, 16 November 1968.
127. GDA Box 532: Gulu Cemetery, 16 November 1968.
128. CMHLG/022/Copies of *Lobo Mewa*.
129. Samuel Arweny, personal communication, February 17, 2015; John Otto, personal communication, February 15, 2015.
130. The task of relocation was finally completed in 2018, see James “Muslims Relocate Graves from Gulu Town.”
131. Samuel Arweny, personal communication, February 17, 2015; John Otto, personal communication, February 15, 2015.
132. See, for example, See Hepner, Steadman, and Hanebrink, “Sowing the Dead: Massacre and the Missing in Northern Uganda”; Meinert et al., “Cement, Graves and Pillar”; Meinert and Whyte, “Creating the New Times: Reburials”; Seebach, “The Dead Are Not Dead”; Jahn and Wilhelm-Solomon, “Bones in the Wrong Soil”.
133. Jahn and Wilhelm-Solomon, “Bones in the Wrong Soil,” 182.
134. See, for example, Meinert et al., “Cement, Graves and Pillar”; Meinert and Whyte, “Creating the New Times: Reburials”; Hepner et al., “Sowing the Dead: Massacres and the Missing in Northern Uganda”; Jahn and Wilhelm-Solomon, “Bones in the Wrong Soil”.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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