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Deities, Demons and Outsiders: the cosmological dimensions of (in)security and (in)justice in Pajok, South Sudan

Ryan O'Byrne (University College London)

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Abstract

In the Acholi sociocultural world, the spiritual and physical spheres are not separate but intertwined, leaching into and affecting each other, with multitudinous and very real results. What happens in the physical realm has profound effects on the spiritual realm and, in turn, what happens in the realm of the spiritual can have important consequences in the physical. It is important to note that these consequences can have both positive and negative dimensions, and much of both the day-to-day and the longer-term rituals, activities, and events within the physical Acholi world are attuned to the requirements of these spiritual dimensions of life.

Drawing on long-term participant observation of everyday life in Pajok Payam, this paper provides a descriptive overview of the cosmological and spiritual dimensions of (in)security and (in)justice in Pajok. Several significant themes apparent within these systems are highlighted, including the importance of an overarching Acholi cultural logic of productivity and destruction; the connection between socially abnormal behaviour and culturally shared understandings of (in)security and (in)justice; and the threat posed by structural and conceptual outsiders to end-users' everyday experiences of (in)security and (in)justice.

By linking the specific details of spiritual entities and cosmological life in Pajok to wider work on Acholi cosmologies, especially, and Sub-Saharan Africa more generally, it is demonstrated that no attempt to understand end-users' perspectives on, and access to, other aspects of security or justice can progress without an appreciation of the cosmological dimensions of everyday life. Thus, it is argued that full understanding of end-user perspectives of (in)security or (in)justice first needs knowledge about how these affect, and are affected by, life's spiritual dimensions. Therefore, an argument is made for the wider incorporation of the cosmological in all scholarly and practical efforts to grapple with issues of (in)justice and (in)security within the majority world.

Finally, by a broader redefinition of the typological system presented in Fardon (1990), a heuristic framework for the comparative description and analysis of Sub-Saharan cosmological systems is provided. An argument is then given for the use of this framework to be incorporated within any future research or development work among Sub-Saharan Africa communities.

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The People of *Jok*: Cosmology, Mythology, and Historical (In)Securities

You see, [the people of Pajok] emigrated from the north and came south as far as the mountain Akwera [near the Ugandan border]... When they reach ... they found some people there, making food for themselves... But when they [the owners of that place] saw the crowd coming, they ran away. Because of the big majority. So Pajok saw the food and ate it and said the food must have been cooked by a spirit or by a god. So they said they had eaten the food of God. Meaning they had eaten the food of jok. Because jok in our language means God – Elderly male end-user, Ayu, 22/2/14.

Before they were called Pajok, they were called Agola Kapuk. So this Pajok name, where did it come from? During the travels of Agola Kapuk, they found the food there on their way. They ate that food and the people thought that the food was cooked by Satan... So they said, those people, they are Pajok. Because they eat the food of Satan – Elderly male end-user, Bura, 3/3/14.

Generally, we the people of Pajok, we were not here. We moved from Lokoro, Lafon. We came southwards... to a certain place where they found cooked food under a tree, already prepared... As they were very hungry, they started to eat the food. But some of them, from Obwoltoo [one of Pajok's 23 sub-clans], they refused to eat the food, saying it was made by the Devil. So the others named those people 'O bwol too', meaning 'those people who do not know anything, let them die'. Because they refuse the food given to them. So up to now, that is their name, because they refuse the food given to them by the Devil, or God – Elderly male end-user, Kapa, 9/3/14.

Introduction

Research Background and Conceptual Overview

The anecdotes that opened this paper immediately demonstrate the importance of the cosmological as a salient dimension within Pajok end-users' conceptualisations of the world, the way it works, and its effects upon their security. These origin myths also show the complexity of dealing with the cosmological dimensions of life in Acholi Pajok, as the same event – the eating of food – is explained through multiple connected but also contradictory cosmological forces: either the Devil, *jok*,¹ God, Satan, or a spirit. The central role of these entities within Pajok's cosmological systems are explained further below. What should be apparent, however, is that a central feature of the Pajok origin myth is divine providence in a time of crisis, the provision of food in a time of scarcity, and the intervention of the cosmological in ensuring bodily and social integrity in a time of famine.²

The Pajok origin narrative even demonstrates that there can be no Pajok without this intrusion from the cosmological. Without getting the required sustenance at the necessary time, the ancestors (*kwaro*) of Pajok would not have survived. Further, there could not be Pajok without this intervention, because the people and place would not exist as they are now known. To put it simply, a spiritual force acted upon the world and provided food required for the continuing security of the migrating people who would from then on be known as '*Pa Jok*', 'the people of *jok*'. As Girling (1960: 77) has argued, for the Acholi such stories 'are not really myths but... matters of practical everyday experience'.

As will be seen from what follows, Acholi worldviews, even Christian ones, differ significantly from those that dominate societies among the global north. Despite this, there is still a range of important similarities. Although it seems a redundant truism to note that the cosmological, religious, and spiritual have played significant parts in the historical development of all peoples worldwide, it is perhaps more important than ever to make this apparent. These other-worldly aspects of human existence continue to play a substantial part in the lives of many individuals and groups throughout the world, whether in the hustle and bustle of large-scale industrialised global megacities or for the small bands of hunter-gatherers in the remote Amazon or Kalahari. For example, academic attention toward Christianity as both local phenomenon and global cultural system has increased significantly this millennium. This interest mirrors the global explosion in Pentecostal, Evangelical, and Charismatic churches in the late twentieth century, with recent estimates putting church

¹ *Jok* (plural *jogi*) is a problematic term to translate but is nonetheless central to Acholi cosmology (p'Bitek 1971:26; Wright 1940). It is important to note that it is a multivalent term whose true meaning is contextually determined, thus being both deity *and* force or God *and* Satan for the same person, the distinction coming through contextually-situated use. Thus, any definition or translation which privileges one ontological conceptualisation of *jok* neglects the others (cf. Dalfovo 1998; Mogensen 2002; p'Bitek 1971; Wright 1940). For the purposes required here, this paper takes *jok* to mean 'local non-human spiritual force or deity'.

² This is a point raised also by Bere (1947: 5), who argues that the driving role for much of the historical and economic development of the Acholi region can be understood by the nearly-continual threat of hunger. It is no wonder, then, that a logic of productivity and destruction is such a central feature of Acholi cosmologies (See below).

membership between 260 million and 550 million adherents (Anderson 2004),³ especially but certainly not exclusively located within non-Western nations.⁴

In this way, the Acholi ethnolinguistic group who comprise the overwhelming majority of Pajok's population of over 20,000 are no different than any other community. For them, as for the majority of humankind, the cosmological aspects of existence are as real and as important as the physical. What is different about the cosmological dimensions of life in Acholiland, however, is how Acholi world views seem to generate significantly divergent understandings to those of adherents of the same faith in the global north. Further, it has been argued that 'this spiritual dimension of the Acholi... is little understood by non-Acholi' (Baines 2005: 10). This paper is thus an attempt to both correct this deficiency as well as provide concrete examples of exactly how Acholi cosmological understandings are different to those of Christians elsewhere in the world.

Therefore, the relevant literature on Acholi cosmological systems is incorporated in this analysis. As well as the work of Baines herself (2005, 2010), this area has also seen significant recent contributions by Finnstrom (2005, 2006, 2008) and Porter (2013). Furthermore, there is the older work of Crazzolaro (1950), Girling (1960), Grove (1919), Malandra (1939), p'Bitek (1971), C.G Seligman (1925), Seligman and Seligman (1932),⁵ and Wright (1936, 1940). This corpus provides a substantial amount of useful and well-researched information on the spiritual dimensions of Acholi life. Thus, whether or not Baines' (2005) assessment is still true ten years later,⁶ this paper provides further empirically grounded data on these cosmological dimensions, albeit from a South Sudanese Acholi perspective. This should allow further ethnographic understanding as well as wider comparative analysis.

As noted in an earlier paper on end-users' perceptions of everyday security and justice in Pajok Payam (O'Byrne 2014), very little has been written on Pajok Payam, Magwi County, or even Eastern Equatoria. Indeed, as the majority of Acholi live in Uganda, almost all that is available is based on Acholi in that country. There are five notable exceptions: the early accounts of the Victorian explorer Samuel Baker (1866, 1884) during his search for Lake Albert;⁷ the work of colonial officer Captain E.T.N. Grove in the 1919 edition of Sudan Notes and Records Grove (Grove 1919); two early papers by Tim Allen on Sudanese Acholi workgroups (Allen 1987) and the political uses of oral history among the cultural elite of Obbo (Allen 1991) from research conducted during the 1980s; several papers on Sudanese Acholi refugees in Kiryandongo Settlement Camp in Uganda in the 1990s by Tania Kaiser (2006a, 2006b, 2008, 2010); and the incorporation of Pajok within wider Eastern and Central Equatorial-based research conducted in the mid-2000s by Mareike Schomerus (2007, 2008a,

³ According to Anderson (2004:11-13), the exact number of adherents depends upon definition, with the inclusion of 'Independent' Churches increasing the number significantly. Anderson himself favours as broad a definition as possible.

⁴ It must be highlighted that there is also a significant and increasing number of adherents to these churches in the global north. For example, the BBC notes Pentecostal Christian churches are the fastest growing Christian group and one of the fastest growing religious denominations in the both the UK and the USA (BBC 2009).

⁵ Despite their outdated physiological methods and uncritical acceptance of the now-discredited Hamitic Hypothesis, Seligman and Seligman's section on the Acholi in their *Pagan tribes of the Nilotic Sudan* (1932: 106-134) is really quite excellent and, alongside Seligman's (1925) *Presidential Address*, provides one of the few existing ethnographic accounts of Acholi rainmaking, among other things.

⁶ It seems given the increasing amount of research on these issues in northern Uganda, this is no longer the case among much of the academic community, at least. It may still be correct when speaking about the general world.

⁷ Baker and his wife were the first *muni* (white people) to contact northern Acholi, where they spent many months in Obbo (the community to Pajok's north) and made an exploratory visit to Pajok (which Baker wrote in his accounts as 'Farajoke').

2008b). However, none of this literature really engages with the cosmological systems of either Pajok or South Sudanese Acholi more generally.

In Pajok, as across Acholiland,⁸ the continuing importance of the *kwaro* (ancestor, grandfather) in everyday life cannot be overstated.⁹ The significance of the cosmological dimensions of (in)security and (in)justice in Acholi lives is immediately apparent when acknowledgement is made of the rich cosmological systems that are replete with a multitude of local spiritual entities who both positively and negatively affect the health, wealth, and fortunes of the people they live amongst. Indeed, as Baines (2005: 72) notes, the majority of Acholi ‘continue to hold sophisticated cultural beliefs in the spirit world, which greatly shape their perceptions... *Jok* and ancestor spirits guide the Acholi moral order, and when a wrong is committed, they send misfortune and illness (*cen*) until appropriate actions are taken’. The everyday cosmological negotiation of (in)security and (in)justice thus inhabits the very core of Acholi end-users’ ontological understandings.

For example, *tipu pa kwaro* (ancestral spirits) are common within Pajok, as they must be within a cosmological system with no coherent notion of an underworld, afterlife, or place of the dead outside the physical world. On top of this, Pajok as a place suffered decades of devastating and violent conflict during both Anyanya I and Anyanya II,¹⁰ leading to multiple deaths among the kin of most community members. Therefore, it is not ethnographically surprising to find the continuing presence of the shades of people killed during the war alongside those deceased since returning from exile. Nor is it surprising some end-users turn to the spiritual to help provide them with the cosmological security they need to live in a world in which some of the greatest dangers come not from the physical aspects of existence, but rather from its cosmological dimensions. These findings replicate similarities within the Acholi-based literature (Baines 2005, 2010; Finnstrom 2008; Porter 2013), which finds that an increased number of *tipu* (‘shades, spirits, souls’), or similar entities, in an area means that end-users find their cosmological, bodily, and psychological security at greater risk.

Therefore, following earlier research (O’Byrne 2014), this paper aims to contribute a grounded and empirically rigorous analysis of an important but significantly under-researched and under-appreciated component of end-users’ everyday experiences of (in)security and (in)justice. It does this by providing substantial and significant data relevant to understanding questions such as ‘how do public authority and the governance of justice and security serve the end user?’ and ‘how is the end-user experience of justice and security affected by dynamics of social exclusion?’ (Justice and Security Research Project [JSRP] 2013b). The findings of this research are especially relevant to understanding questions of (in)security and (in)justice about the gendered dynamics of social exclusion.

Such questions are of increasing interest amongst donors and policy makers, from both NGOs and national governments, as is the generation of better, more sustainable, and wider reaching development policies and initiatives. There is a growing realisation from these quarters that a

⁸ Acholiland arguably comprises most of Uganda north of the Nile River and a small, almost triangle-shaped sliver of South Sudan (called ‘the Acholi corridor’) running from just east of the Nile across to the Imatong Mountains and northwards from the Ugandan border nearly to Aru Junction. For more specific details of the Acholi corridor, see the sketch map of Acholi Sudan provided by Allen (1987).

⁹ *Kwaro* is a word meaning both ancestor(s) and grandfather(s), as well as locally referring to Pajok’s council of elders, the *Kal Kwaro*, or ‘ancestral council’.

¹⁰ Commonly known as ‘the Second Sudanese War’, Pajok end-users often refer to this conflict by the name Anyanya II, noting the continuities and similarities between the Anyanya uprising which sparked the First Sudanese War (called in Pajok by the name ‘Anyanya I’) and the second conflict. This paper follows the local vernacular and calls these conflicts ‘Anyanya I’ and ‘Anyanya II’.

stronger evidence base is needed on issues such as how public authority and governance serve the end-user or how experiences of justice and security are affected by dynamics of social exclusion. This paper provides original, important, and much needed research into just these areas, adding not only to the existing evidence base but also providing a unique and empirically grounded argument for the importance of further and wider reaching research into the cosmological dimensions of (in)justice and (in)security in end-users' lives

Indeed, one dominant theme of this paper is that end-users not only experience (in)security and (in)justice in multiple socially and spiritually determined ways but that, in responding to their exclusion, injustice, and insecurity experiences, they adopt a diverse array of cosmologically oriented strategies. These strategies attempt to (re)construct, (re)produce, and (re)orient cosmological governance structures towards their own needs. Further research into these under-recognised areas of (in)justice and (in)security is therefore vital.

A growing body of literature shows that, in order for people to survive in the world's most difficult places,¹¹ they must 'use a diverse set of institutions — public and private, traditional and more formal' (JSRP 2013a; cf. Allen & McDonald 2013; Goodfellow & Lindemann 2013; Goodfellow 2014; Hoffman & Kirk 2013; Luckman & Kirk 2012; McDonald 2013; Stein 2013; Valters 2013). It is argued here, however, that normative views of which actors and institutions can form these so-called 'hybrid governance structures' is unnecessarily focussed toward a Weberian view of power and is therefore also unnecessarily restricted. The continuing state-centric world view of such theorising is demonstrated in the focus of one recent definition, which renders hybrid governance structures as 'militias, vigilantes, warlords and other non-state actors' (JSRP 2013a).¹²

Instead, it is argued that a correct depiction of the diversity of hybrid governance forms in the lives of end-users in such areas must, by both contextual and theoretical necessity, always define governance actors as broadly as the ethnographic circumstances require.¹³ Indeed, such circumstances must be considered highly relevant to the wider forum of interest in understanding the interactions between hybrid governance and issues of (in)security and (in)justice in the world's most difficult places. Therefore, because of the way they impact on and frame interpersonal and communal relations, in this paper the actors and institutions comprising the 'hybrid governance structures' of contemporary Pajok Payam include such cosmological aspects as *jogi*, rainmakers, shapechangers, and *cen*.¹⁴ The reasons underlying such broad and distinctly non-standard definitional criteria are because it is precisely these 'informal institutions that govern the lives of people' (JSRP 2013a) in Pajok today.

The research underlying this paper concentrates specifically on Acholi-speaking Pajok Payam in Magwi County, Eastern Equatoria State, South Sudan. Despite this, it is argued the findings are not only applicable to both South Sudan and Acholi generally, but following the wide-ranging regional sociocultural similarities noted by several Africanists and

¹¹ Defined by JSRP, for example, as 'poor, badly-governed, politically-fragile and conflict-affected environments' (JSRP 2013b).

¹² It must be noted that although this definition outwardly seems oriented away from the state, through its implicit assumption of the inherent factuality of a Weberian power paradigm, is specifically defined in relation to the state. In other words, it uncritically assumes that the state is still the most important governance characteristic. Thus the state-centric normativity of Euro-American ideas of power and governance remain.

¹³ For an excellent example of exactly this, see Jones (2009) work on governance in rural Uganda.

¹⁴ *Cen* has received much attention in the literature on Acholi sociocultural life (cf. Baines 2005, 2010; Behrend 1999; Finnstrom 2005, 2006, 2008; Porter 2012, 2013). A full discussion of the variable meanings and uses of the term *cen* is provided later. Following Finnstrom (2005) and p'Bitek (1971), for the purposes of this paper the term is taken to mean 'ghostly vengeance'.

Cosmologists, also towards Sub-Saharan Africa more widely (cf. Fardon 1990; Horton 1997; Mbiti 1970, 1990, 1991; Morris 2006; p'Bitek 1970).

Methodological and Theoretical Positioning

The most important methodological component of this research was ongoing long-term participant observation. It was the observations and conversations arising from this method that originally indicated the everyday importance of the cosmological dimensions of (in)security and (in)justice in Pajok Payam. The participant observation method as used herein attempts to gain greater insights into the everyday lived realities of end-users by attempting, as much as is possible, to live with and alongside them.

Just as the basis of all human life is social, all social life is intersubjective, and therefore fully engaged participant observation must also be aware of the intersubjective element (Jackson 1998, 2002, 2005; Mogensen 2002; Morris 2006). This implies many of the deeper findings come directly from the researcher's relationships and interactions with other individuals. It means engaging in the activities end-users engage in and living as closely as possible to the way they live, as just another fully participating social person. Importantly, rather than just asking questions, it demands taking the time and effort to build actually significant interpersonal relationships and thus requires the social and emotional knowledge and maturity to know when to ask questions, participate, or simply observe. In terms of this research, it has been a conscious and ongoing attempt to participate as fully as possible in the everyday actions and conversations of Pajok end-users, from attendance at noisy weddings and funerals to silently sitting with women under the shade of a tree to *bito anyogi* (remove maize kernels).

It was this commitment to the intersubjective which provided knowledge of the importance of the cosmological dimensions of everyday (in)security and (in)justice in Pajok Payam, as well as allowing appreciation of the intricacies of the seemingly contradictory complexities of Pajok's multiple competing cosmologies. It was the nature and depth of the relationships underpinning these realisations which allowed access to some of the more fundamental but previously unknown or unreported components of Acholi cosmology as manifested in Pajok.¹⁵ Likewise, it was this component of participant observation which allowed understanding of the everyday and taken for granted ontological reality of the various cosmological entities who together comprise these systems.

The social and ontological reality of these entities within Pajok highlights a common analytical failing in the investigation of cosmological and religious systems: an *a priori* assumption regarding the essentially non-real status of supernatural entities. Such positions are usually based in the researcher's own spiritual leanings. However, Poloma (n.d.: 8; cf. Ewing 1994; Engelke 2002) argues that, beset by the limitations of their personal or methodological atheism, social scientists are unable to take 'things as they are' (Jackson 1996). Rather, because they 'know' (or rather, believe) supernatural phenomena are empirically non-existent, these things are relegated to the status of the epiphenomenal. The cosmological is instead seen as a function of the more 'real' realms of the political or

¹⁵ In this way, the research team were allowed to participate in a local rainmaking ritual, as well as to accompany *lodito* ('community elders') to various places of *jok* for otherwise secret events not even accessible to most end-users. Although a promise made means details of these events must be kept secret, for the purposes of this discussion it should suffice to note one rainmaker told the researchers 'you are only allowed to see the *nyig kot* ('rainstones') because you are now *lodito* (in this context, 'big men') in Pajok here, and because the people now know that you can be trusted' (Personal data withheld, 5/3/14).

economic. Given the lack of evidence upon which such positions are based, this outlook may in fact be more ethnocentric than ontological in orientation.

Although such approaches provide some analytical insights, a commitment to methodological atheism also imposes limits upon understanding; epistemological questioning only says so much about socially real supernatural entities and the ways they act in and upon end-users' everyday lives. As Poloma (n.d.: 8) argues:

While it is impossible to demonstrate that the divine does in fact communicate directly to humans using the methodological tools of social science, it is equally impossible to prove that the divine does not do so. What is possible to demonstrate using a social scientific perspective is that many people believe that they are in dialogue and interaction with God and that their definition of the situation has real social consequences.

It is that aspect of the 'real social consequences' of such engagements that this paper is interested in, especially those leading to justice or security-related consequences. If we wish to understand end-users' everyday realities, we must strive to come to terms with their worlds in their own terms. This is especially true for analysts of the spiritual and religious lives and worlds of people for whom God or other cosmological beings unquestioningly exist. The full array of end-user' lives, actions, and beliefs must be taken seriously. Scott (2007: 3) notes that this means grounding such assumptions in 'local histories and social processes so that such analyses arise and reference, not putatively universal logics and their permutations, but empirical events – lived realities, interactions, perceptions, dilemmas, and innovations'. Agreeing with Scott, this paper argues that such ontological assumptions should be gathered from end-users' rather than researchers' own cultural backgrounds.

Methodology

Given the nature of the information sought and the ongoing research project within which it was based (sixteen months from August 2013 to November 2014), it was felt that investigations specific to this paper should be open-ended and context-specific. Thus, this paper is based on the insights gleaned from participant observation based ethnographic information, as well as forty formal semi-structured interviews. These interviews were conducted with a total of forty-three end-users, including nineteen females over the course of eleven interviews, and twenty-five males over the course of thirty-three interviews. Due to the nature of Acholi social organisation, it was an unfortunate inevitability that most participants were generally elderly men (*lodito*, sing. *ladit*). This reflects both the gerontocratic as well as the patrilineal and patriarchal nature of Pajok's normative social relations. A list of fourteen initial interviewees was compiled through recommendation, of whom twelve were interviewed. Further participants were then included by the snowball technique: at the end of each interview, participants were asked if they knew others who could provide the information sought. The sole non-Acholi participant was one Madi woman. Acholi was the native language of all other interviewees and twenty-six interviews were conducted in Acholi, ten in English, and four in a mixture of both Acholi and English. All interviews used the same translator.

The interview schedule was purposefully broad, its themes originating from a combination of previous ethnographic research, interviewees' own interests, and those aspects of Acholi cosmology deemed important by the appropriate literature. This allowed flexibility for

interviews to proceed organically, following the inclinations of the interviewee and subject matter, but still ensured that relevant topics remained the focus. Significant topics included the history of Pajok, specific cosmological entities such as *Labot Onyom* (Pajok's guardian *jok*), locally important cosmological dangers such as shapechangers and poisoners, and concepts and processes such as *cen* that a literature review suggested as relevant to the cosmological dimensions of Acholi life.

God(s), Demons, and (In)Security and (In)Justice: *Jogi* in Pajok

Overview

The widespread Nilotic concept/term/entity of *jok* (pl. *jogi*) is variously translated by different academic sources as deity, demon, devil, force, power, Satan, spirit, or even God (or gods). However, due to the highly politicised nature of the historical spread of Christianity throughout Africa, as well as the continuing religious politics in African Christianity's contemporary forms, *jok* is an extremely difficult term to translate accurately. Indeed, often the translation seems to confirm the assumptions and suspicions of the translator rather than giving an accurate rendering of the *jok*-concept's many dimensions.¹⁶ In a translation which provides the basic conceptual dimensions of the term's scope, Adong and Lakareber's *Lwo – English Dictionary* (2009) renders *jok* as 'god, spirit, demon'.

Ethnographic research demonstrates that the cosmological conceptualisations *jok* and *jogi* are central to almost all Pajok-specific manifestations of customary Acholi understandings of the world and its workings (cf. p'Bitek 1971: 26; Wright 1940: 130). Normally, *jogi* are located in the wilderness near rivers, lakes, and mountains (cf. Allen & Storm 2012: 27; Baines 2010: 417; Girling 1960: 14).¹⁷ Apart from *Labot-Onyom* and *Nyol*, the two named 'free' *jogi* of Pajok – 'free' in that they have no fixed place of abode and are not specifically connected to any one *dogola* ('subclan') (Baines 2010: 418) – most of Pajok's other known *jogi* are 'fixed' cosmological entities attached to particular *dogola* and having specific *wang jok* (places of sacrifice and residence). Much as Girling (1960: 81) noted in Uganda, in Pajok these 'shrine[s] consists of a cave, a spring, a tree, or other outstanding feature'.¹⁸ Many of Pajok's *dogola* have their respective *jok* or *jogi*.¹⁹ However, the *jogi* of some *dogola* are more numerous and powerful than those of others (cf. Girling 1960: 80). Indeed, it seems likely that the distribution and power of *jogi* are some indication of Pajok's migration history, with those *dogola* possessing the most powerful 'fixed' *jogi* likely to be the area's original inhabitants.²⁰

Perhaps best understood as powerful non-human spiritual forces, *jogi* are unpredictable, can possess people, and have the potential to be either helpful or dangerous. Depending upon the circumstances, *jogi* can be good or evil and are widely used to explain both good luck and

¹⁶ For fuller analyses of this very argument, see Dalfovo 1998; Lienhardt 1961; Masolo 2003; Mogensen 2002; p'Bitek 1971; Wright 1940.

¹⁷ See Wright (1936) for in-depth explanation of Acholi rituals relating to *jogi* and other cosmological entities.

¹⁸ Although Girling (1960: 81) argues that *jogi* are either 'an impersonal spirit with no human attributes, known by the name of the physical feature where the rites are performed... [or] male, his name... known, and having a wife', all the formally known *jogi* in Pajok seem to be of the former, impersonal variety.

¹⁹ Interview with Male end-user, Kapa, 9/3/14.

²⁰ Indeed, it seems possible to trace the recent migration history of Pajok's various *dogola* by tracing the important (and always *jok*-related) mountains in the migration stories. This would seem to agree with Girling's arguments on the importance of mountains for Acholi migration myths (1960: 14) as well as with Atkinson's (1994) arguments regarding clan distribution of *jogi* in Uganda.

misfortune (Baines 2010: 417; Mogensen 2002: 433). They are connected with giving and taking productivity of all kinds, agricultural and social as well as biological (cf. Menzies 1954: 184). Although Baines (2010: 418-419; cf. Finnstrom 2006) notes that a *jok* who possesses someone can be exorcised and tamed, with the person controlling the possessing *jok* then becoming the *ajwaka* (spirit medium) for that *jok*, no end-user interviewed spoke either about possession or the role of the *ajwaka* in this way.²¹ Instead, end-users said interactions with *jogi* may involve the person being ‘*captured*’ (i.e. possessed) or dying (cf. Baines 2005: 13; Malandra 1939: 34; Mogensen 2002: 431; pa'Lukobo 1971: 59-61; Seligman & Seligman 1932: 127).²²

Although by no means true for everyone, since the coming of Christianity to the area in the 1920s the majority of Pajok end-users now seem to consider *jogi* as fundamentally problematic, an essentially evil or demonic force linked to the Biblical Satan. Indeed, some end-users say *jok* and Satan are identical, nothing but different words for the same thing.²³ This is a rather simplistic but nonetheless common understanding of the role and function of *jogi* in pre-Christian times. It is also, through recourse to the trope of Devil worship, an effective and wide-ranging means of disparaging any non-Christian ritual activity. In Pajok, the effects which Christianity’s commonplace demonising of tradition has had on other aspects of the customary cosmological system is true even for Labot-Onyom, the one *jok* who continues to have almost everyday salience. These effects are particularly apparent among members of Pajok’s various Protestant denominations (cf. Baines 2010: 419; Mogensen 2002: 423).

Much as Mogensen (2002) noted for the Jop'Adhola in eastern Uganda,²⁴ not all Christian end-users subscribe to such simplistic analyses. For example, one church leader told the researchers that ‘*.. people, they used to respect jok. Now some are saying that it is Satan. But that is not true. Because they used to respect as God, because of their beliefs, before the missionaries came... But people are mistaken that jok is the same as Satan*’.²⁵ Further, despite what most Pajok end-users self-narrate as their steadfast Christianity, there is an obvious element of ‘if the new ways do not work then the old ways will’ in their pragmatic attempts at guaranteeing cosmological security (cf. Mogensen 2002). For instance, after one man told me people must to go to church when a *jok* possesses them, his wife added ‘*but if the pastors come from the church and do the prayer and you are still not better, then you must try the old ways, with the ajwaka*’.²⁶

The ‘Free’ Jogi of Pajok: Labot-Onyom and Nyol

Labot-Onyom, the Pajok defensive jok.

Labot-Onyom (meaning ‘the bachelors can now get married’) is Pajok’s pre-eminent *jok*. The origin of the name is this: because Labot-Onyom is so powerful, the people of Pajok are

²¹ Although *ajwaka* (sing, *ajwkai* pl.) is usually translated as ‘witchdoctor’, the pejorative associations of the word ‘witchdoctor’ makes this a problematic term. Therefore, and following the rationale provided by Morris (2006), this paper prefers the neutral term ‘spirit medium’

²² Interviews with: 2 Female end-users, Ywaya, 25/2/14; 7 Female end-users, various clans, 9/3/14.

²³ Interviews with: 7 Female end-users, various clans, 9/3/14; Male end-user, Panyageri, 10/3/14; Male end-user, Ywaya, 16/3/14; Male end-user, Kwacanyoro, 17/3/14.

²⁴ Like the Acholi, the Jop'Adhola are also a Nilotic Lwo group.

²⁵ Interview with Male end-user, Paito, 13/3/14. A group of female end-users made a very similar comments: ‘*That talent [of jok] must be given by God, not Satan. So it is difficult to tell if it is good or bad, because it can help you and make sickness go away*’ (7 Female end-users, various clans, 9/3/14).

²⁶ Interview with Male and Female end-user, Ayu, 27/2/14.

guaranteed victory in conflict. After defeating the warriors, the women of the opposing group will be captured. These captives are used as brides for Pajok men who, owing to youth or poverty, have been unable to marry up to then.²⁷ The *ladit* in charge of the Labot-Onyom rituals told the research team that:

*When the people ate the food [during the origin myth], that was the beginning of Labot-Onyom. And so it is respected in the community, as a very big jok. It comes from that place [where the food was eaten] and the name comes because some people ate and others did not. So that is why it is Obwoltoo that are responsible.*²⁸

Unlike most *jogi*, Labot-Onyom is a ‘free’ rather than a ‘fixed’ cosmological entity. Instead of protecting only one *dogola*, Labot-Onyom is a protective *jok* for all Pajok end-users, and, if its goodwill is maintained with the annual sacrifice of a large male sheep,²⁹ will defend Pajok and all its inhabitants in times of crisis. It must be noted not all end-users share this or any other belief system. For example, one man noted ‘*Some people believe in Labot-Onyom, but it is only nonsense!*’³⁰ Such a statement demonstrates why it is pointless to attempt to delineate and describe these systems as if they form a coherent and static structure. Rather, such systems can only exist through socially embedded and culturally meaningful practices.

The ways Labot-Onyom helps protect Pajok end-users are manifold, but are generally a variation of several themes: firstly, the coming of a wind which either confuses an enemy or destroys them.³¹ This may be linked to the sending of an *ajoro* (whirlwind) which spins the enemy around, disorienting them and leaving them vulnerable to attack;³² second, the removal of sickness or disease, especially ‘airborne’ diseases such as measles;³³ thirdly, Labot-Onyom can guide a band of warriors towards their target or allow someone lost in the bush to find their way home;³⁴ it helps protect citizens of Pajok who are fighting elsewhere. For example, despite the number of deaths in South Sudan due to the chronic violence currently besetting the country, no ‘*son of Pajok*’ had so far been killed in this violence. Some end-users say this is because Labot-Onyom continues to protect Pajok citizens even when away from the Payam.³⁵ Finally, it helps the community find bodies of people who died in the bush, thus allowing a proper burial.³⁶ This is an extremely important security consideration, as improper burial can result in the coming of *cen* (cf. Baines 2005: 12, 2010: 418; Finnstrom 2001: 250).³⁷

Labot-Onyom has defended Pajok several times in the past, most recently during Anyanya II (The Second Sudanese War, 1983 to 2005). In this instance, Labot-Onyom is credited with

²⁷ Thus the other rendering of the meaning of *Labot-Onyom* as ‘the men who had nothing can now get married’. Interview with male end-user, Kapa, 9/3/14. Although bride capture may have originated with the effects of slavery in the mid-19th century, historically it was a culturally appropriate means for an Acholi man to find a wife and, despite what some community leaders say, is still an important social practice (cf. Porter 2013).

²⁸ Interview with Male end-user, Obwoltoo, 16/3/14.

²⁹ Interview with Male end-user, Obwoltoo, 16/3/14.

³⁰ Interview with Male end-user, Oyere, 20/2/12.

³¹ Interviews with: Male end-user, Obwoltoo, 25/2/14; Male end-user, Panto, 4/3/14; 7 Female end-users, various clans, 9/3/14; Male end-user, Obwoltoo, 16/3/14.

³² Interviews with: 2 Female end-users, Oyere and Ywaya, 20/2/14; 2 Female end-users, Kapa, 27/2/14.

³³ Interviews with: Male end-user, Bura, 19/2/14; Male end-user, Obwoltoo, 25/2/14; Male end-user, Paito, 5/3/14; *Rwot Kwaro*, Ywaya, 16/3/14 and 17/3/14.

³⁴ Interviews with: Male end-user, Obwoltoo, 25/2/14; Male end-user, Obwoltoo, 16/3/14.

³⁵ Interviews with: 7 Female end-users, various clans, 9/3/14; Male end-user, Ywaya, 16/3/14. Male end-user, Obwoltoo, 16/3/14

³⁶ Interviews with: Male end-user, Panto, 4/3/14; Male end-user, Obwoltoo, 16/3/14.

³⁷ For more information on this, see the section on *cen* below.

saving Pajok during a particularly vicious assault by SPLA forces on 1st March 1989. During this incident, Sudanese government troops retreating from Torit were followed by a SPLA contingent that both outmanned and outgunned them. Surrounded, Pajok residents called on the power of Labot-Onyom and, owing to the *jok*'s intervention, the SPLA mistakenly left a gap in their encirclement. Following an unseasonal storm, many Pajok end-users were then able to escape to safety in Uganda.³⁸ One way people know it was Labot-Onyom who ensured the safety of Pajok in this event was the coming of the storm. Or rather the wind which brought the storm. Throughout its history, Labot-Onyom has always used the power of wind, and several end-users also spoke about a previous war with the neighbouring community of Obbo in which Labot-Onyom gave Pajok similar wind-borne assistance.³⁹ The *ladit* in charge of Labot-Onyom also noted the *jok* will help maintain the security of Pajok if there is an escalation in the current cross-border land conflict with the Ugandan communities of Ngomoromo and Lokung. He noted, however, that *'Some of the people here are saying just to go and fight... But that is not following the rules of Labot-Onyom. The people here cannot go first! No. Labot-Onyom needs the Ugandans to come here first, then to fight them!'*⁴⁰

The protection offered by Labot-Onyom is so powerful that a group of seven female end-users agreed, saying *'Even if it [the current South Sudanese conflict] comes here, Labot-Onyom will help us. If we do the celebration properly, and show the belief in it'*.⁴¹ Importantly, though, the help which Labot-Onyom may provide the Pajok community remains contingent upon their continuing performance of the appropriate annual appeasement ritual, a point of contention among Pajok's population and especially problematic for many Born Again Christians, who view the *jok* primarily as a demon rather than as a positive force. However, the necessity of ritual for Labot-Onyom's provision of security is unsurprising, since in a cosmological system based on the continuing maintenance of harmonious relations between all social entities (Porter 2013), failure to complete the necessary rituals would be a public and humiliating slight to Labot-Onyom, as well as the explicit negation of shared sociality.

Despite its predominantly protective nature, Labot-Onyom may threaten the security of Pajok end-users in three ways. Firstly, because Labot-Onyom is so powerful, the rituals involved are very dangerous. Participation in them can cause blindness or even infertility and because of this only end-users past child-bearing age are allowed to be involved.⁴² In fact, to even randomly observe a ritual is to incur Labot-Onyom's wrath and be struck down with illness. This threat is so serious that in March 2014 the researchers were not permitted to observe a *Labot-Onyom* related-ritual.

The second way Labot-Onyom can be a source of insecurity also involves this same appeasement ritual: if the ritual practices are not conducted correctly, or if they are not done frequently enough, or if a community member insults the *jok* by breaking rules associated with the rituals, then Labot-Onyom will get enraged and some calamity will strike the individual end-user or perhaps even the community as a whole.⁴³ Finally, if an end-user calls on the power of Labot-Onyom for the purposes of aggression without a threat of violence being made against themselves, then Labot-Onyom will not protect them. Instead, they will

³⁸ Interview with Male end-user, Obwoltoo, 16/3/14.

³⁹ Interviews with: Male end-user, Panto, 4/3/14; Male end-user, Paito, 5/3/14; Male end-user, Obwoltoo, 16/3/14.

⁴⁰ Interview with Male end-user, Obwoltoo, 16/3/14.

⁴¹ Interview with 7 Female end-users, various clans, 9/3/14.

⁴² Interviews with: Male end-user, Patanga, 7/3/14; Male end-user, Panyageri, 10/3/14.

⁴³ Interviews with: Male end-user, Obwoltoo, 16/3/14; Male end-user, Ywaya, 16/3/14.

find themselves susceptible to attack by the irritated *jok*, resulting in problems similar to those inadvertently seeing the Labot-Onyom ritual: blindness, impotence, infertility, or madness.⁴⁴

Nyol

Considered to be ‘like Labot-Onyom’,⁴⁵ *Nyol* is said to be a small metallic-looking and roughly cone-shaped object about six inches long that was historically used to defend Pajok from invasion or the coming of illness, especially measles.⁴⁶ It is ‘like our shield’.⁴⁷ Although lost during the violence of Anyanya II, *Nyol* should ideally be housed within the compound of the *Rwot Kwaro* so that, when needed, the members of the *Kal Kwaro* can place the object on a road leading out of the Payam. A ritual must be performed and the *Kal Kwaro* ‘nail it down and pray to it, saying “if it is measles killing our community, then by God’s power, in Jesus’s name, you must make it disappear. Take it away down this road!”’.⁴⁸ Like *Labot-Onyom*, *Nyol* is so powerful that ordinary end-users are forbidden to see it, and even the *Rwot Kwaro* and other *lodito* formerly charged with maintaining it should not touch the object outside the appropriate ritual. Anyone breaking these regulations is subject to the same sanctions imposed by *Labot-Onyom*: blindness, illness, impotence, sterility, perhaps death. To overcome such assaults, the person is fined and must go through a cleansing ritual in which they slaughter an animal in the compound of the *Rwot Kwaro*.

Jogi of Reknown: Ololweny, Oyara, and Worojok.

Overview

There are three other *jogi* of importance to the everyday security of Pajok’s end-users. These reside at a hill called Ololweny (‘they are the warriors’, so called because the hill was a gift of tribute or *tyer* from Obbo to the people of Pajok for their help during a nineteenth century war) and two places on the Atepi River, Oyara (‘it spreads out [its power]’) and Worojok (‘respect the *jok*’). All three places are historically connected with strange happenings and cosmological events and are thus known as *wang jok*, places where powerful *jogi* live.

As the residence of powerful *jogi*, these places are strangely ambivalent for the everyday (in)security of Pajok end-users: approached with respect, the *jogi* that live in these places can remove sickness and help provide good harvests and profitable hunting.⁴⁹ However, great harm may befall someone who approaches *jogi* with contempt, who is unknowledgeable about the necessary rituals for dealing with them, or attempts to hunt or remove firewood from such areas without the *jok*’s consent. This happens ‘because of the *jok*. Because you

⁴⁴ Interviews with: Male end-user, Paito, 5/3/14; Male end-user, Ywaya, 16/3/14.

⁴⁵ Interviews with: Male end-user, Paito, 5/3/14; Male end-user, Panyageri, 10/3/14.

⁴⁶ Potentially meaning ‘hammer’, the actual English translation of the name *Nyol* is unknown. Also, the reference to measles is significant: whether or not it was actually measles that was the fatal disease, the reason the Pajok community occupy their present location on the Atepi River was due to a devastating outbreak of measles in 1938 at Ayaci, their previous location. This outbreak is said to have killed many people, especially children.

⁴⁷ Interview with Male end-user, Patanga, 7/3/14.

⁴⁸ Interview with Male end-user, Paito, 5/3/14. Although the reference here to Jesus may seem significant, it should be noted that this end-user is such a devout Christian that after initially writing off all non-Christian beliefs and practices as witchcraft and/or demon worship, he refused to even discuss such aspects of customary Acholi cosmologies.

⁴⁹ Interviews with: 2 Female end-users, Kapa, 27/2/14; Three Male and One Female end-user, Panto, 14/3/14. See also Grove (1919) and Seligman and Seligman (1932).

failed to follow the rules. Because those places are *jok*'.⁵⁰ For example, one male end-user said:

*If you go to a place of jok without telling the right people, you will not find it. You will get lost. Or worse than lost! For example, a woman went to get firewood [at Worojok] and her son followed and got lost. Never found! Even to today! So there is no reason just to go there.*⁵¹

However, not all end-users believe in the power of such places. Some no longer follow the customary beliefs and others, especially more devout Christians, find such beliefs problematic, even demonic. As one Ayu man said, *'I will not talk about Oyara or Worojok, because the people who believe in those places are not Christian! So they [the jogi] are not important, not real!'*⁵²

Ololweny.

Unlike Oyara and Worojok, Ololweny is not connected with any particular *dogola*. This makes it particularly dangerous, as there is no *ladit* holding the appropriate ritual knowledge needed to appease the demands of the *jok* inhabiting the area. Instead, although Ololweny is known for good hunting, many end-users greatly fear it and refuse to go there. Further, a number of people have been lost and died there. *'The reason why people get lost there'*, one elderly end-user said, *'is because of a lot of jok there. They will come to you and will be singing. Others will disturb your dreams. They will come and beat you, very badly. Beat you but cannot even see them!'*⁵³

Other end-users refuse even to point at Ololweny. As one man told the researchers, *'Ololweny is a very important place, very special. You are not even allowed to point at it with your finger, but only with your knuckle. The moment you point at it with your finger, that place will take you. So we respect and even fear it'*.⁵⁴ Another man was terrified when he once went to Ololweny and the *jok* there made his face change so his *'face was on the back and the back was on the front'*. After this, he got very lost and has not returned to that place since.⁵⁵ As the man who noted the danger of pointing at Ololweny argued, *'you know, it [people disappearing] must have happened there a long time ago. Because you cannot believe something without seeing! So the old people, they must have seen it [Ololweny] take the people'*.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Interview with Male end-user, Palyec, 7/3/14. It is important to note that *jok* is all of a place, an entity, and a force in this end-user's description, demonstrating the inherent cosmological complexity involved. See also Seligman and Seligman (1932: 126).

⁵¹ Interviews with: Male end-user, Paito, 5/3/14.

⁵² Interview with Male end-user, Ayu, 16/3/14.

⁵³ Interview with Male end-user, Panyageri, 10/3/14. Again, it is important to note the multitudinous as well as anthropomorphic nature of the *jogi* in this description, highlighting the problematic nature of monotheistic or singular definitions of *jok* and the complexity that this concept contains.

⁵⁴ Interview with Male end-user, Palyec, 7/3/14.

⁵⁵ Interviews with: Male end-user, Palyec, 7/3/14; Male end-user, Panyageri, 10/3/14; Male end-user, Kwacanyoro, 17/3/14.

⁵⁶ Interview with Male end-user, Palyec, 7/3/14.

Oyara.

Connected to the Bobi subclan, Oyara is a large tree situated beside the Atepi River upstream of Pajok, within which there used to live a large and productive hive of bees.⁵⁷ In the past people could go there, perform a ritual, and be rewarded with large amounts of honey falling to the ground.⁵⁸ Members of Bobi can go to Oyara when ill or if the subclan has a problem and, if they perform rituals, Oyara will intervene to remove their difficulties.⁵⁹ Oyara can also speak to Bobi elders, talking with them '*inside their heads*'.⁶⁰ Like similar places of *jogi*, however, if someone goes there without the permission of the responsible *ladit*, they will either get lost or become mad.⁶¹

Worajok.

A *jok* similar to Oyara, Worajok is the ancestral *jok* of the Pamuda subclan, and is a large mahogany tree (*tidu*) growing on a rocky outcrop sitting in the middle of the river downstream of Pajok centre.⁶² Worajok is particularly powerful at rewarding or punishing hunters and fishers, and end-users noted that Worajok provides Pamuda with good catches if the correct rituals are performed but that it will summon a leopard or a crocodile to attack unwanted trespassers in its territory.⁶³ During Anyanya II, Worajok even affected Sudanese government soldiers and their families based at a nearby barracks. After attacking the soldiers with a powerful wind, the wives of the soldiers were rendered infertile, suffering many miscarriages. The soldiers therefore approached local leaders about their problems, the appropriate ritual was performed and the barracks doors were protected with blood and *wee* (stomach contents). The affected women were then able to conceive again.⁶⁴

Like Ololweny, many people who went to Worajok without the consent of the Pamuda *lodito* have been captured by the *jok* there.⁶⁵ A *ladit* from Kwacanyoro, alarmed by news that the researchers were planning to visit Worajok, noted:

*Why do you want to go there? What reason? To die? Are you tired of this life? That is a dangerous place! Many people fear there, because of the dead. The bodies... If you hear people fear a place, there is no need to go, because they fear for a reason!*⁶⁶

⁵⁷ Unfortunately, it seems that the LRA disturbed *Oyara* during the course of their occupation of Pajok territory (approximately 1991 to 2006) and the bees left, never to return. Despite this, *Oyara* remains incredibly powerful, respected, and feared (Interview with Male end-user, Bobi, 2/3/14).

⁵⁸ Interviews with: Male end-user, Patanga, 19/2/14; Male end-user, Bobi, 2/3/14.

⁵⁹ Interviews with: Male end-user, Bobi, 2/3/14; Male end-user, Kapa, 9/3/14; Male end-user, Paito, 13/3/14.

⁶⁰ Interview with Male end-user, Bobi, 2/3/14.

⁶¹ Interview with Male end-user, Panyageri, 10/3/14.

⁶² Interviews with: Male end-user, Patanga, 19/2/14; 2 Female end-users, Kapa, 27/2/14; Male end-user, Bura, 2/3/14.

⁶³ Interviews with: Male end-user, Patanga, 19/2/14; 7 Female end-users, various clans, 9/3/14; Male end-user, Paito, 13/3/14.

⁶⁴ Interview with Male end-user, Bura, 2/3/14.

⁶⁵ Interviews with: 7 Female end-users, various clans, 9/3/14; Male end-user, Kwacanyoro, 17/3/14.

⁶⁶ Interview with Male end-user, Kwacanyoro, 17/3/14. Also interview with two Female end-users, Ywaya and Bura, 25/2/14.

Jogi of Rivers, Rocks, and Other Places

Girling (1960: 73; cf. Allen & Storm 2012: 27) notes that rivers are particularly associated with *jogi*, and this finding is true in Pajok also.⁶⁷ One teacher alleged that ‘*Many people believe that in the river, or beside the river, there are jok. So the people respect the river, because of the jok*’,⁶⁸ and several other end-users noted the dangerous presence of *jogi* living in the river, with one woman from Ywaya saying ‘*there is definitely jogi in Atepi! Very big ones, and they will kill people if they catch them!*’⁶⁹ Indeed, the younger of another two women interviewed together provided several stories about problems with *jogi* in the river, and noted they were particularly common close to the bridge, where they are said to dance and play music in an attempt to confuse and capture their victims.

This young woman gave three accounts of such *jogi*-related activity in quick succession. In one instance, four young women from the Catholic Church choir saw a *jok* at the bridge on their way home from choir practice around dusk. Although three escaped unharmed, one girl stared too long at the *jok* and has been unable to speak or produce children since.⁷⁰ On another occasion, a friend of the interviewee heard, ‘*dancing and singing and a celebration of people and playing the local instruments*’ under the bridge while, in a third incident, the interviewee’s husband saw fire dancing on top of the water on each side of the bridge. He ‘*was lucky to escape! He was very scared and his heart was telling him to run but he could not look away. They [the jogi] made him want to stay and watch the fire*’.⁷¹ Outside of this single woman, however, all other end-users note such incidents are rare and that it is very bad luck to be disturbed by river *jogi*.⁷²

There are many mountains and other rocky outcrops throughout Pajok Payam that are considered the resting places of different subclans’ various *jogi*. Only some are mentioned here. Firstly, Adodi (‘it [the *jok*] is piled up upon [by rocks]’), the ancestral place of Panto, is a high rocky hill with a large cave in it which is very near to the South Sudan – Ugandan border.⁷³ Close to Pugee, and also near the Ugandan border, is a mountain called Kit Aweno (‘of the nature of guinea fowl’). People who wish to hunt around Kit Aweno must slaughter a goat, otherwise the *jok* there will confuse people by sending visions to them and causing them to go mad or to change their shape so that they look like an animal.⁷⁴ There is also a *jok* called Laluri (‘the barren one’ or ‘the sterile one’),⁷⁵ the *jok* of Oyere, which ‘*is in the form of a rock*’ and to which people from the Oyere subclan can perform rituals to remove an illness

⁶⁷ Significantly, Malandra (1939: 33) has observed that ancestral spirits live along river banks ‘where they feed on frogs or upon leaves’. Given the conceptual connection and elision between *cen*, *jogi*, *kwaro*, and *tipu* (explicated later), it is not surprising that the places of residence of dangerous cosmological entities should also be connected and, therefore, that rivers should be so greatly feared. Furthermore, given the social, cultural, and cosmological importance of food among the Acholi, it is interesting to note that Malandra’s ancestral spirits only feed on frogs and leaves, both of which are either considered inedible (frogs) or of low sociocultural value (leaves): a well maintained *tipu pa kwaro* (ancestral spirit) would feast on meat.

⁶⁸ Interview with Male end-user, Patanga, 19/2/14.

⁶⁹ Interview with two Female end-users, Ywaya and Bura, 25/2/14. Also Male end-user, Bura, 2/3/14.

⁷⁰ The inability to speak or to produce children are two of the more common traits used to talk about *jogi*-related problems. The other common examples of such problems include: an inability to greet people correctly, greed (especially in relation to food), and a desire to randomly attack or to beat people. As can be seen, these are all examples of an inability to be a ‘normal’ social person and to unproblematically engage in ‘normal’ social activity.

⁷¹ Interview with two Female end-users, Ywaya and Oyere, 20/2/14.

⁷² Interviews with: Male and Female end-users, Ayu, 27/2/14; 2 Female end-users, Kapa, 27/2/14.

⁷³ Interview with Male end-user, Patanga, 19/2/14.

⁷⁴ Interview with two Female end-users, Ywaya and Oyere, 20/2/14.

⁷⁵ In Acholi cosmologies, *jok* are incontrovertibly associated with barrenness and infertility, which is seen as the action, work, or effect of *jok*.

if they are sick.⁷⁶ Further, at another rock, Pakec the *jok* of Pagaya may be appealed to in times of disease and other problems.⁷⁷

(In)Security and (In)Justice Personified: Living Cosmological Entities

Overview

As well as the various *jogi*, Pajok also hosts many, more corporeal cosmological entities. These entities include both those who function to maintain security and justice (such as rainmakers) and those whose mere presence is dangerous (such as shapechangers, poisoners, and sorcerers), as well as those who hold much more ambivalent positions in relation to everyday (in)security and (in)justice (for example, *ajwaki*). The role of the cosmological in the understanding of illness and misfortune has a long and robust history across Acholiland, and Seligman and Seligman (1932: 128) observe that most early 20th century Acholi had a ‘strongly held belief that envy and ill-will in their most extreme forms act through the evil eye’. They further note that ‘on this subject, Captain Grove [1919: 175] has the following interesting passage: “It is a very rooted belief that ill-will or envy on the part of even private individuals with no supernatural powers will bring misfortune on its subject”’. Much of the insecurity generated by these entities comes from the ambiguity of the social relations within which they are embedded and through which they enact their powers (cf. Finnstrom 206: 209; p'Bitek 1971: 146). Even those entities regarded in a generally more positive way can have their own security threatened by dint of the very cosmological powers through which they help the community, such as the threats of violence made against rainmakers (*Rwodi me Kot*) when unable to produce rain (cf. Allen 1991: 82; Baker 1866: 216-217).

Rainmakers and Anti-Rainmakers: *Rwodi me Kot* and *Anti Kot*.

Rainmakers (*Rwodi me Kot* or ‘chiefs of rain’, also known as *Locwer Kot* or ‘the makers of rain’) have important parts to play in the annual cultivation cycle in Pajok and were historically regarded as the providers of rain.⁷⁸ As *Rwot me Kot*, the rainmaker’s function is to bring rain so the community can grow the crops needed to eat or to sell to engage in the cash economy. There are four Pajok *dogola* with historical connections to rainmaking (Ywaya pa Rwot, Ayu, Bobi, Panto), and all but Ayu continue to practice their roles.⁷⁹ *Rwot me Kot* is a hereditary position, with either the eldest son or brother of a rainmaker becoming *Rwot me Kot* upon his death, and in each of the extant rainmaking clans, one *ladit* holds the skills, knowledge, and paraphernalia necessary to conduct successful rituals.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Interview with Male and Female end-users, Ayu, 27/2/14.

⁷⁷ Interview with Male end-user, Patanga, 1/3/14.

⁷⁸ Baker provides a lengthy and amusing account of Katchiba, the rainmaker of Obbo, the main village in the Payam directly to the north of Pajok (Baker 1866: 176-178, 216-218; see also Baker 1884).

⁷⁹ The people responsible for rainmaking among Ayu are said to have lost the ability to make rain while in exile in Uganda during Anyanya II and the clan has been unable to participate in the rituals since their return (Interviews with: 4 Male and 1 Female end-user, Panto, 4/3/14; 3 Male and 1 Female end-users, Panto, 14/3/14).

⁸⁰ Bere (1947: 5) argues that despite the common association between rainmaking and Acholi *Rwodi* (chiefs), rainmaking is a sign of Madi or other Sudanese origin. Atkinson (1994) disagrees and argues instead that rainmaking is a core indicator of the Luo origin of Acholi chiefdoms. Seligman (1925) and Seligman &

To produce rain, a *Rwot me Kot* must possess certain stones having the ability to bring rain when a ritual is performed.⁸¹ These stones are called *Nyig Kot* ('the Seeds/Fruit of Rain') or sometimes simply just *Kot* (the physical manifestation of rain). Although specific details of rainmaking ceremonies vary significantly among end-users (and even between Pajok's three rainmakers), it is sufficient here to say the stones are smallish pieces of quartz-like rock kept with water in special long-necked pots (*abino*) that, in turn, are buried in the earth of a rainmaker's compound (cf. Grove 1919; Seligman 1925: 24; Seligman & Seligman 1932: 130). When rain is needed, the rainmakers gather in the compound of the *Rwot Kwaro* and perform the required ritual. Upon returning to their own compound they must wash the stones with water and *moo nyim* (sesame oil). Within a period of time,⁸² rain will come (cf. Seligman 1925: 24; Seligman & Seligman 1932: 129-132).⁸³

The hereditary chief, the *Rwot Kwaro*, is the community's preeminent rainmaker, and rainmaking is an important means connecting the *Rwot Kwaro* to the community, its land, and their shared productive potential (cf. Seligman 1925: 26). As Allen (1991: 69; cf. Grove 1919: 173; Seligman 1925: 26; Seligman & Seligman 1932: 130) argues, 'fertility of the soil was ensured by a rainmaker (*rwot kot*) a figure also closely connected with the chiefly clan'. If there is too much rain during the rainy seasons (March to June and August to November), or if lack of rain begins to impact the cultivation cycle, the community may go to the *Rwot Kwaro* in his guise as *Rwot me Kot*. They must '*beg and cry to them, because he can control it [the rain]. So they [the community] must kneel down and respect him*'.⁸⁴ In a form of *tyer* (tribute gift), the community members not only give the *Rwot me Kot* a selection of foodstuffs and alcohol but also a portion of their time digging in his gardens.⁸⁵

The *Rwot me Kot*'s ability to produce rain upon demand is not doubted by the majority of people the researchers spoke with over the period of ethnographic research, with several Christian end-users even describing this power as given to them by God, the same as any God-given skill or talent. One man and his wife noted '*The people believe in it, making the rain, but he can do it also!*'⁸⁶ However, several others refused to believe in the efficacy of rainmakers and their rituals. A standard retort was that it was an old belief based on a lack of knowledge about the Christian God and Bible.⁸⁷ For example, a former chief of Pajok said, '*That is a primitive belief, an old belief. But we know that rain comes from God, so when we pray, that is when God sends rain. That is all, nothing more*'.⁸⁸

However, one important indicator that such practices are still believed is the threats that rainmakers face if unable to provide rain when required. All three *Rwodi me Kot* spoke about how a rainmaker's bodily security depends upon the provision of rain, and gave examples of attacks upon unsuccessful rainmakers in Pajok's recent past, including the drought that

Seligman (1932), on the other hand, observe that rainmaking is common among most Nilotic peoples throughout Sudan and Uganda.

⁸¹ Seligman (1925: 22) notes that while rainmakers exist among the northern Nilotic groups such as the Dinka and Nuer, these rainstones do not, and that this is because the northern Nilotes practice divine kingship while southern Nilotes such as the Acholi have a more acephalous and egalitarian socio-political structure.

⁸² Again, like the ritual itself, people give different time spans for when the rain will come. Most say a day or a few days.

⁸³ For a much more in-depth discussion of Acholi rainmaking rituals, see Grove (1919) and Seligman and Seligman (1932: 129-132). For a discussion of similar rituals among the Nuba, see Seligman (1925: 22-4).

⁸⁴ Interview with Male and 4 Female end-users, Paibono and Kapa, 23/2/14

⁸⁵ Interviews with: 2 Female end-users, Ywaya and Oyere, 20/2/14; Male end-user, Paito, 5/3/14; Male end-user, Palyec, 7/3/14.

⁸⁶ Interview with Male and Female end-users, Ayu, 23/2/14.

⁸⁷ Interviews with: Male end-user, Bura, 19/2/14; Male end-user, Kapa, 27/2/14; Male end-user, Paliyo, 25/2/14.

⁸⁸ Interview with Male end-user, Kapa, 27/2/14.

devastated the March to June growing season in 2013.⁸⁹ Another end-user, although professing disbelief in the efficacy of the ritual, told the researchers:

*Once, when there was the drought, the chief tried to make the rain but could not, so the women came and put him in the fire and killed him! That was in 1983, near Torit... It was because the chief could not bring the rain. But a human cannot make rain, rain must come from God. But that has not happened here.*⁹⁰

Allen (1991: 82) and Baker (1866: 217) both refer to similar stories happening during their time in Acholi-speaking South Sudan, Baker in the mid-1800s and Allen over a century later in the 1980s. Baker (1866: 217) says that despite ‘his bluster, I saw that old Katchiba was in a great dilemma... It was a common freak of the tribes to sacrifice the rainmaker, should he be unsuccessful’, while Allen (1991: 82) notes that

Like other rainmakers Kaciba was likely to be blamed if the rains failed, and... Kaciba's people even threatened to kill him in 1863. Similar threats were made against rainmakers in the region at the time I was doing research in the 1980s, and I came across a few instances in which they were actually beaten, as well as a couple of reported incidents of killing among groups living to the north of Obbo.

Given the historical penchant for such incidents in the area, it seems likely the community's warnings in early 2013 were taken extremely seriously by local *Rwodi me Kot*.

Nyig Yat, the physical manifestation of rain and imbued with the power to produce rain or drought, are themselves a source of insecurity to Pajok end-users: firstly, they can damage the bodily security of those who come across them; secondly, they may be used to damage the community's food supply (a form of bodily, physical, social, communal, economic, and food security) (cf. Grove 1919: 173; Seligman & Seligman 1932: 130). Like the powers inherent in Labot-Onyom and Nyol, rainstones can easily hurt unsuspecting end-users. This generally happens in two ways, the first resulting from finding a rainstone and not giving it to someone trained in dealing with its power. Indeed, unauthorised possession of rainstones will make a person sterile. This is one reason most *Anti Kot* (mentioned below) are elderly men. The second way *nyig yat* can damage an individual's bodily security happens if an uninitiated end-user sees rainstones being used during a ritual. Because *nyig yat* are inherently powerful, looking at the stones can cause blindness (cf. Grove 1919: 173; Seligman & Seligman 1932: 130). The only protection is to smear one's hands and face with a special *odii nyim* (ground sesame paste) and not wash for at least twenty-four hours.

Although most rain stones are either gifts from God or the ancestors, some end-users noted the stones could be purchased in Uganda.⁹¹ However, buying the stones would certainly bring trouble. This is because there is no reason to possess rainstones if not a rainmaker. Further, as being a rainmaker is a hereditary position held by only one end-user from each rainmaking

⁸⁹ Interviews with: Male end-user, Bobi, 2/3/14; 4 Male and 1 Female end-users, Panto, 4/3/14; *Rwot Kwaro*, Ywaya pa Rwot, 16/3/14.

⁹⁰ Interview with Male end-user, Paliyo, 1/3/14.

⁹¹ Interview with Male end-user, Paliyo, 1/3/14. According to Driberg (cited in Seligman & Seligman 1932: 132), ‘in Uganda the Acholi fetch their rain-stones, small quartz pebbles called *ame*, from the Agoro hills beyond their territory. These are also called *nyig kot*’. What is interesting here is that the Agoro hills are very close to the southern limits of recent Pajok migration history and are very much considered *within* their territorial purview. It would be interesting to trace how the recent decades of violence in this region have shaped the ways rainstones are gathered.

dogola, only these people should possess rainstones at any one time. Anyone else possessing such stones must want them for nefarious purposes, such as stopping rain and destroying the community's crops. For a community whose food security almost exclusively relies on cultivation, such an action is tantamount to murder. People who may want to take such actions were mentioned several times during this research, with all end-users saying anyone doing such a thing would be beaten, imprisoned, or killed.⁹² The *Rwot Kwaro* described such a person as an *Anti Kot* ('someone who is against the rain').⁹³

An *Anti Kot* is someone who can stop rain, either through inherent powers or possession of rain stopping paraphernalia, such as rainstones or the head of a bird called *apananak* (see below). Usually an elderly man, an *Anti Kot* wants to stop it from raining so that problems come to the community and make them question the rainmakers' abilities. According to the *Rwot Kwaro*, '*those people are always there. They are always the people who want to fight with the kingdom chief. Because they want to be the chief. So when the chief is trying to do good things, then they are trying to stop the rain and stop the chief*'.⁹⁴ To stop the activities of *Anti Kot*, the *Rwot Kwaro* has a team of security staff and investigators. When *Rwodi me Kot* have been unsuccessfully trying to make rain, an *Anti Kot* is known to be at work and so these men move around the Payam searching for signs of *Anti Kot* or their activities. When found, an *Anti Kot* may be beaten, imprisoned, taken to court, or banished. They are certainly not wanted within the community, as their practices are not only acts of aggression against the *Rwot Kwaro* and his leadership but also against the community itself.⁹⁵

Conceptually and methodologically linked to *Anti Kot* is a bird called *apananak*,⁹⁶ found only in the forests of the mountains to Pajok's east. *Apananak* have the power to stop rain. If someone wishes to do this evil deed, they need only cut the head off an *apananak*, bring the head to the area where they want rain to stop, open its mouth, and rain will immediately cease. Like possession of rain stones, possession of *apananak* is equivalent to aggression against the community and anyone found possessing the bird '*will be arrested by the community, immediately... because they will think you want to stop the rain so that you can kill the people here!*'⁹⁷

Spirit Mediums and Witchdoctors: Ajwaka/Ajwaki

Although in Pajok it seems as if significant change has taken place since the widespread uptake of Christianity, historically *ajwaki* (plural, singular *ajwaka*) were extremely important figures within Acholi cosmological systems. Today, however, the English term 'witchdoctor' has been widely incorporated into the local vernacular, with all the pejorative connotations contained therein.⁹⁸ For example, Porter (2012: 89) observes that *ajwaka* is 'often translated

⁹² Interviews with: Male end-user, Paliyo, 1/3/14; Male end-users, Palyec, 7/3/14.

⁹³ It is important to note here that, of all the end-users interviewed for this paper, the *Rwot Kwaro* was the only one to provide any information about the *Anti Kot*. Whether this is due to privileged knowledge or hopes of keeping access to titular privilege is unknown.

⁹⁴ Interview with *Rwot Kwaro*, Ywaya pa *Rwot*, 17/3/14.

⁹⁵ Interview with *Rwot Kwaro*, Ywaya pa *Rwot*, 17/3/14.

⁹⁶ Unfortunately, no-one was able to give either a translation or a description of *apananak*, beyond '*it is a brown colour, but not very brown... A chicken is bigger than it. And it has a long beak, as long as a hand with the [index] finger extended*' (Interview with 4 Male and 1 Female end-users, Panto, 14/3/14).

⁹⁷ Interview with 4 Male and 1 Female end-users, Panto, 14/3/14.

⁹⁸ Allen and Storm (2012: 31) found similarly widespread use of the term 'witchdoctor' among the Madi of northwestern Uganda. It must be noted that the Madi homeland and the Acholi homeland share both a common border and so such similarities should not be surprising.

with the lump term witchdoctor that is inappropriately applied to all people who deal in some way with the supernatural or traditional herbal remedies'. However, because 'witchdoctor' is now the standard English translation of *ajwaka*, this paper suggests it is important to interrogate how such changes affect contemporary understandings and lived realities.

Historically, an *ajwaka* was the mediator between the physical and spiritual worlds, someone with a particular connection to, and affinity with, the various cosmological entities this paper describes. They thus have the ability to connect persons and events in the physical world with those in the realm of the spiritual. Due to their special relationship with the cosmological, *ajwaki* were 'believed to have a strong communication link to the spirit worlds, and ability to heal [the] afflicted' (Baines 2005: 13). *Ajwaki* are usually female, often barren, perhaps suffering from conditions which Western biomedical science would deem mental illness, and very commonly the children or grandchildren of other *ajwaki*. Girling (1960: 160-161; cf. Allen & Storm 2012: 27; Baines 2005, 2010) has suggested that the reason *ajwaki* 'are often daughters of women who were themselves *ajwaka*... [is because] 'Acholi regard any manifestation of *jok* as being particularly likely to be inherited through females'.

Many Pajok end-users conceptually connect the categories and/or entities of *ajwaka*, *catan* (Satan), *cen*, and *tipu*, and commonly responses to questions about any one of these realms links them with each other, often specifically identifying them either as variants of the same thing or as cosmological equivalencies which manifest in different ways in different contexts. For example, one man said '*Jok is Satan. Ajwaka is the same thing. Some people call ajwaka, some call Satan. Ajwaka is also cen... So no difference. Only the names are different*'.⁹⁹

For end-users who '*follow the old ways*', if you or your family are struck by illness an *ajwaka* can help in one of two ways: first, they can divine the source of a problem by using their unique relationship with the cosmological to determine which of all the potential sources are causing it: whether it is an angry ancestor, a particular resident *jok* (such as Oyara or Worajok), or perhaps some form or another of a 'free' *jok* or *cen* (cf. Baines 2010: 418).¹⁰⁰ Upon determining the cause of the problem, *ajwaki* can then advise people how to resolve the issue, which generally involves slaughtering an animal. Although some end-users may not agree with *ajwaki* and their methods, one more sceptical interviewee noted, '*they [the ajwaka] will say slaughter the goat. Maybe truth, maybe lies. Who knows? But if you believe, you need to do*'.¹⁰¹

The other way *ajwaki* help maintain individual and community security is in removing illness. This is especially important when the end-user has already attempted the methods of biomedicine, whose failure demonstrates the complaint as cosmological (cf. Baines 2010: 418; Mogensen 2002). For example, one English speaking man said '*when you are sick, mentally disturbed, possessed, then you can go to the witchdoctor [sic], the traditional healer. Or if bewitched*'.¹⁰² In these cases, *ajwaki* may be able to provide immediate relief: '*they can take the hair from the head... Then they throw that thing down, outside, and they have taken that thing from your body, that sickness*'.¹⁰³ Indeed, when asked, a large group of women were adamant *ajwaki* could help where doctors could not. They said, '*they [the ajwaki] have the medicines. And if hospital is not helping, then you can go to the ajwaka and they will give those medicines to you and you will now be ok. So they are working like*

⁹⁹ Interview with Male end-user, Ywaya Ka Tum, 17/3/14. Also: 7 Female end-users, various clans, 9/3/14; Male end-user, Panyageri, 10/3/14;

¹⁰⁰ Interview with 2 Female end-users, Ywaya and Oyere, 20/2/14.

¹⁰¹ Interview with Male end-user, Patanga, 7/3/14.

¹⁰² Interview with Male end-user, Patanga, 7/3/14.

¹⁰³ Interview with Male end-user, Bura, 2/3/14.

doctors'.¹⁰⁴ It appears that the same pattern occurs among Acholi in Uganda, where Porter (pers. comm., 3/9/14) has found that '*ajwaki* are sought out for cures to things without other explanations'.

For other end-users, however, *ajwaki* are undisputedly evil; devil worshippers and deceivers. Any and all statements they make are considered lies. Thus, if an *ajwaka* tells people about *jogi* or problems brought to them by their ancestors, this is understood simply as a way to get money out of people.¹⁰⁵ For this reason, many end-users repeated some variation of the phrase, '*they have the talent for conning people out of money. Of deceiving people*'.¹⁰⁶ As this statement indicates, *ajwaki* are found extremely problematic by many end-users, and very few said anything positive about them. For example, one man described *ajwaka* by saying '*an ajwaka is a killer. It means you want people to die. Just to kill them. Like with poisons*'.¹⁰⁷ Another, speaking English, said '*people go to the witchdoctor [sic] not to get medicine but information about how to kill you... Then, the person can die... for sure they will die*'.¹⁰⁸

A further problem *ajwaki* bring Pajok comes through the actual performance of their rituals, especially with the activities that must be engaged in during these rituals. '*Now we believe it is not allowed to use blood*', one man said, '*to make the sacrifice with blood. Those people only believe in jok. Those ones are ajwaki. Because blood is very hot and we Acholi do not like it, do not believe in it or want it poured*'.¹⁰⁹ Such rituals contradict the teachings of Christianity, and puts Pajok's various Christian denominations in direct confrontation with the beliefs and ritual practices of customary Acholi cosmological systems. Such a cosmological confrontation can be problematic to end-users continuing to follow traditional beliefs, however, and another end-user (speaking specifically about *jok*) noted that for customary rituals to be effective they needed to include '*a slaughter. And then pour the blood. Because jok likes blood. And if you do not do, then the problems come, the sickness, disease. Destroying things. So need to pour the blood*'.¹¹⁰ Thus, the cosmological contest between Christianity and the customary creates a zero-sum situation which inherently leads to the insecurity of one group or the other: if Christians get their way and sacrifices are not made, traditional entities are not appeased and sickness remains; if *ajwaki* continue their activities, the spirits bringing sickness to Pajok will be satisfied but the community becomes a modern-day Sodom or Gomorrah. Either way, insecurity remains.

Shapechangers: Dano me Loki.

Shapechangers or *Dano me Loki* (literally 'people who change') are people who can change

¹⁰⁴ Interview with 7 Female end-users, various clans, 9/3/14.

¹⁰⁵ The connection of 'witchcraft' with devil worship, lying, deceit, and monetary gain is not unique to Pajok but is, rather, a common ethnographic finding throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. See Allen and McDonald 2013: 11; Comaroff & Comaroff 1999; Driberg 1923; Evans-Pritchard 1972; Fisher 1911; Kopytoff 1987; La Fontaine 1959; Middleton & Winter 1963; Morris 2006; Newell 2007; Niehaus 2005; p'Bitek 1971; West 2008.

¹⁰⁶ Interviews with: Male end-user, Bura, 19/2/14; 2 Female end-users, Ywaya, 25/2/14; Male end-user, Panyageri, 10/3/14; Male end-user, Kwacanyoro, 17/3/14; Male end-user, Ywaya Ka Tum, 17/3/14.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Male end-user, Ywaya Ka Tum, 17/3/14.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Male end-user, Bura, 2/3/14. It is important to note in these last two quotes that, for these end-users, the *ajwaka* is considered analogous to or the same as the poisoner or *layat*. This may be due to individual biases, the effects of Christianity, or an historical connection between these entities' activities.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Male end-user, Ywaya Ka Tum, 17/3/14. Despite what this end-user contends, it is not in fact the Acholi belief system which precludes blood (otherwise why would blood be such an important part of virtually all customary ritual practices?), but rather the imported Christian one.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Male end-user, Ywaya La Moo, 16/3/14

from human form into animal form, usually into hunting cats such as lions or leopards, although hyenas, snakes and water-living mammals are also noted by Pajok's end-users.¹¹¹ Creatures similar to *dano me loki* are relatively common across many different people groups in Africa (Deng 1974: 161; Pratten 2007; Seligman & Seligman 1932; West 2008). Although uncommon in the Acholi ethnographic record, their occurrence is not unknown (Baines 2010: 420; Bere 1973: 118-119; Girling 1960: 77).¹¹² This literature confirms two findings from within Pajok. Firstly, that the ability to change shape is a power the individual gets genetically. Secondly, that *dano me loki* usually change shape for one of two reasons: as an act of aggression to avenge a wrong, or as an act of defence from the aggression of others. Both of these reasons are obviously connected to issues of (in)security.

End-users generally agree that people who can change from human into animal form do exist among Pajok's current residents, although none come from Pajok itself. Historically, end-users say *dano me loki* never existed in Pajok. Instead, in a refrain common when discussing many of society's current ills, outsiders are now coming to live in Pajok as people return from exile in Uganda. These people are either of Madi origin or, if Acholi, come from among the northern South Sudanese Acholi groups who border Madi-speakers.¹¹³ As will be discussed later, these are the same groups of people also considered poisoners (*loyat*) and thus doubly dangerous. It is they who bring such practices with them, because '*these people, they are the bad person. It is just in their nature*'.¹¹⁴ Girling (1960: 77) relates one significant aspect about Ugandan Acholi clans accused of being shapechangers: that 'they all... have one thing in common, a claim to have migrated into the area from the North [i.e., South Sudan]'. The inherent badness of shapechangers is a common ethnographic refrain, and Deng (1974: 161) notes that, among the Dinka, 'A person who violates fundamental precepts of the Dinka moral code is often identified... as an outsider and an animal... the transformation of a human being into an animal [seen] as the result of moral violation'.

The shapechanger as a social category is one which is highly gendered. Although both men and women may be *dano me loki* – indeed, in Pajok there are shapechangers among each – the significant determining factor is which parent's 'blood' dominates. This is because '*it [the power to change shape] comes from marriage. It is in the blood, the mother's blood... Only some children can change, because they get the blood from the mother and not the father*'.¹¹⁵ As Porter (2013: 181; cf. Allen 1994: 131; Baines 2005: 23-24; Finnström 2008: 192-193) notes, in Acholi society 'a woman is seen as liminal until she marries, and even then, she is considered unstable, and her loyalties may be questioned until she has children... who will help perpetrate the existence of the patrilineal clan of her husband, and she is no longer seen as a threatening outsider'. Although obviously a social fact – when is it not? – in this instance the threatening outsider status is biological in origin, derived from the genetically inherited 'bad blood' a particular woman brings into the reproductive partnership. Like with *ajwaki*, it is assumed that any biological or genetic weaknesses are brought into the marriage, and thus the family and clan, by the woman.

¹¹¹ Although there seems to be no specific Acholi concept to describe those people who demonstrate the ability to change from human form to animal form and vice versa, the term '*dano me loki*' (literally 'person/people that change') was the most common term among end-users in this research. Alternatively, 'humanchangers' was how the term was usually translated

¹¹² Baines does not provide more than a brief anecdote for this finding, simply passing over the shape changing ability of the man concerned to principally, and perhaps erroneously, connect the ability with *cen*.

¹¹³ Interviews with: Female end-user, Madi, 27/10/13; Male and Female end-users, Ayu, 27/2/14; 2 Female end-users, Kapa, 27/2/14; Male end-user, Bura, 2/3/14; 7 Female end-users, various clans, 9/3/14; Male end-user, Kapa, 9/3/14; Male end-user, Panyageri, 10/3/14; Female end-user, Madi, 13/3/14.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Male end-user, Bura, 2/3/14.

¹¹⁵ Interview with Female end-user, Madi, 13/3/14.

Like suspected poisoners and *ajwaki*, *dano me loki* are also ambiguous for end-users' security. Considered of great danger to Pajok's non-magical residents, shapechangers are thought responsible for the death or injury of several end-users, although exactly which shapechanger did this and why is less coherently elaborated. No matter the coherency of these narratives, however, if a shapechanger is suspected, the community response is the same – '*a severe beating*' resulting in '*a strong warning*' not to repeat the action. If the warning is not heeded, or if suspected of involvement in another incident, they are likely to face consequences like banishment or even death.

There is, however, a non-violent solution to the shapechanger problem. This solution is *malakwang*, one of the myriad of local green vegetables eaten by people across Acholiland, and distinctive for its sour flavour. If a person is worried they live near a shapechanger, then one fail-safe mechanism in providing one's own security is to somehow ensure the *dano me loki* eats *malakwang*. This is because the sour flavour of *malakwang* attacks the shapechanger's teeth and claws, sapping them of their power. Girling (1960: 77) similarly notes shapechangers inability to eat *malakwang* due to the detrimental effects it has on their teeth.

It is not easy to make a *dano me loki* eat *malakwang*, but you can '*cook some of the malakwang and then mix it in with the other green vegetables. Then give it to them like that. They will eat it and not even know! Then they will not be able to change*'.¹¹⁶ Although physically non-violent, the techniques employed in this method of defence are eerily similar to those of the *layat*, the poisoner: preparing powerful ingredients known for their magical potency followed by secretly forcing another individual to consume foodstuffs detrimental to them. Nonetheless, some end-users may feel such an action is better than the threat a shapechanger's presence brings.

In this way, the everyday lives of alleged *dano me loki* are also greatly insecure. Similar to *loyat*, they are the first people suspected in any incident of unknown assault or night time attack. They are also targets for harassment and there are several stories about mob-related violence directed at suspected shapechangers because they began, or were suspected of, changing into their animal form.¹¹⁷ Further, following a mob-related incident in early 2013, local leaders announced that any people seen or otherwise known to have become an animal and to have harmed another end-user or their property would henceforth be killed immediately. According to several end-users, this announcement provided the promise of security and justice that they needed to live in Pajok knowing that dangerous and magical quasi-humans also lived among them. For example, one man said '*The people here are not worried, because now if they do anything to the people in Pajok then the people here, the community, they will just kill them*'.¹¹⁸

Certainly, one could argue that on the issue of *dano me loki* the only end-users whose security is truly endangered are suspected shapechangers. This is particularly true considering the community's often heavy-handed response to suspected shapechangers, as well as the fact some end-users say the only reason a *dano me loki* even changes into animal form is for protection. Indeed, given some community members' aggression toward suspected shapechangers, it could perhaps be argued that by attacking *dano me loki* some end-users create insecurity, driving *dano me loki* to change shape through their unsolicited attacks upon

¹¹⁶ Interview with Female end-user, Madi, 13/3/14.

¹¹⁷ Interviews with: Female end-user, Madi, 27/10/13; Female end-user, Madi, 13/3/14.

¹¹⁸ Interview with Male end-user, Panyageri, 10/3/14. Also Female end-user, Madi, 27/10/13; Male end-user, Bura, 2/3/14; Female end-user, Madi, 13/3/14.

them. This seems to have been the ultimate cause of the early 2013 incident mentioned above: attacked by a drunk in a local bar, the shapechanger changed into an animal for his own defence, thus prompting mob-related violence.¹¹⁹

In a final example of the security impact of shapechangers, two women professed great concern for the researchers' well-being because of the entities they were asking about. As these women said:

*If you go to people asking about those things, then you are giving yourselves as food to them. Because maybe you ask the shapechanger. And so then that will be the one to do things to you, to kill you, eat you, before you can tell people what you know. You know, asking questions about those things, writing down about those things, they will want to know why. Why are you asking? So automatically they will think you will be telling people about them, who they are. So they must kill you. Because those things are like secrets.*¹²⁰

Following this statement, these women no longer answered the researchers' questions but rather tried to persuade them to cease their research. It must be noted, however, that similar to the other cosmological categories described herein, not all Pajok end-users believe in the existence of *dano me loki*. As one particularly sceptical man stated, '*I have not seen, so I do not believe. Because a lion is only a lion. God creates them to be a lion, so how can a person become a lion?*'¹²¹

Poison and Poisoners: Yat and Loyat.

Similarly to shapechangers, poisoners (*Loyat*) are also known to live in Pajok. Also similarly to shapechangers, these people are almost without exception of foreign origin, as is much of their poison (*yat*).¹²² Most poison comes from Uganda,¹²³ the place generally considered the origin of many of Pajok's current evils,¹²⁴ and where people are thought to have first gained the knowledge of such nefarious and antisocial activities. *Loyat* are said to poison people because they suffer from *cwiny marac* ('a bad or wicked liver/heart')¹²⁵ or *cwiny macol* ('a black or dark liver/heart') and thus are susceptible to *nyeko* ('jealousy' or 'envy') and *woro*

¹¹⁹ Interviews with: Female end-user, Madi, 27/10/13; Female end-user, Madi, 13/3/14.

¹²⁰ Interview with 2 Female end-users, Kapa, 27/2/14.

¹²¹ Interview with Male end-user, Ayu, 16/3/14.

¹²² Interestingly, in Acholi the word for poison (*yat*) is the same as the word for medicine. This highlights the historical ambiguity of both the medications and the methods through which they are given (many of which are said to be identical), as well as the role of the doctor or witchdoctor-type individual in Acholi society. Because such a person has access to and knowledge of powerful and almost-magical items that other community members do not, they are to be both respected (*woro*) and feared (*lworo*). Also interesting is the way end-users make similar statements about needing to continue to respect and fear high-status community members of all types, perhaps highlighting the essential ambiguity of all such people and the effects their actions may have upon community security in general.

¹²³ Interviews with: Male end-user, Bura, 19/2/14; Male and Female end-users, Ayu, 27/2/14; Male end-user, Bura, 2/3/14.

¹²⁴ The reason end-users say Uganda is linked with these problems is because the time spent in Uganda as refugees was when people first started spending time with and marrying other ethnic groups, '*mixing the culture*', and losing their own ethnic knowledge and identity.

¹²⁵ Although the word '*cwiny*' is literally 'the liver', as the place from which all emotion and feelings come from it is usually (and erroneously) translated into English as 'heart'.

(‘greed’ or ‘selfishness’).¹²⁶ Two female end-users from Ywaya gave the following rationale for why *Loyat* do the things they do:

*The people who use yat [poison], they do it because they have cwiny marac [a bad liver/heart]. They give the yat to the person they do not like and then they will die. Not only that, maybe they are your colleague and they want to take over your post but they do not have the right papers [degree, certificate, etc.]. Then they will give you the poison and you will die and they will take over from you. Like in the government or the NGO.*¹²⁷

Although Grove (1919: 178) and Seligman and Seligman (1932: 128) earlier noted how poison is distributed is unknown, it can be stated here poison is generally given in one of three ways. First and least commonly there are ‘atmospheric poisons’, concoctions the *loyat* places in the compound of the intended victim, often in the grass thatch of the roof. These poisons tend to bring misfortune and disaster rather than sickness and death, although the misfortune may well be the death of the victim’s animals. The existence of these poisons is proven by a ritual specialist’s search of the affected compound. A purification ritual must then be done. Although Porter (pers. comm., 3/9/14) notes that Ugandan *loyat* are said to have the power to send poison by spiritual means and thus do not have to enter the compound of the victim, there is no evidence *loyat* in Pajok can do the same thing.

Secondly, there is a category of contact poison that, when touched, makes the victim immediately fall ill and likely die unless help is sought. These poisons are usually found in one of two places: on the locking mechanism on the door to the victim’s *ot* (hut), the intention being to poison the victim in the process of unlocking the door; or across a path the victim is known to frequent, where the victim will step on the poison and allow it to enter their body through their feet (cf. Allen & Storm 2012: 32). Even if this poison does not kill, it can still have devastating results: a former chief of Pajok Payam lost his leg in this way, ‘poisoned because of nyeko [jealousy], because I was a leader and well known, well liked’.¹²⁸ Being unable to cultivate since, his food and economic security now depend upon the charity of his surviving children and subclan members. Both these categories of poison are more ‘magical potion’ than poison *per se*, but they have very real and damaging effects nonetheless.

Most commonly, however, poison is ingested through consuming food or drink, often alcohol.¹²⁹ Giving one specific example of how alcohol was recently used to commit murder in Pajok, two women told the research team:

*In 2013, there was a boy who was travelling somewhere and then some people called him and gave him the poison and then they found him lying on the road and he was dead. And they gave him the poison through the alcohol. I do not know why. He was just in a group drinking alcohol and he died.*¹³⁰

When speaking about poison’s connection to alcohol, however, another man made a conflicting point. He said ‘many people here have too much to drink and die of alcohol and

¹²⁶ Interviews with: Female end-user, Madi, 27/10/13; Male end-user, Bura, 2/3/14; Male end-user, Kapa, 9/3/14; Male end-user, Panyageri, 10/3/14; Female end-user, Madi, 13/3/14. See also Allen and Storm (2012), Baines (2005), Middleton (1960), and Wright (1940).

¹²⁷ Interview with 2 Female end-users, Ywaya, 25/2/14.

¹²⁸ Interview with Male end-user, Bura, 19/2/14.

¹²⁹ Interviews with: 2 Female end-users, Ywaya, 25/2/14; Male end-user, Kapa, 9/3/14; Male end-user, Ayu, 16/3/14.

¹³⁰ Interview with 2 Female end-users, Ywaya, 25/2/14.

then people say it was the poison. Because do not know or want to believe that the alcohol was the problem'.¹³¹ Given the scale of alcohol use and abuse among the community, this may well be true in some instances.

Closely tied to the insecurities poisoning brings is the difficulty of proving anyone has been poisoned, let alone who the poisoner is. Within Pajok, it is common for any sudden and unexpected death to be suspected as poisoning. Although not official acknowledged, the head chief and other community leaders readily concede poison and poisoners live within the community. This is demonstrated by consistent warnings given during announcements at funerals or other community events that plead to those who may have poison not to use it at the event. The frequency of such comments demonstrates the threat of poison is a very real part of life in Pajok Payam. It also means many people are suspected of being poisoned while others are suspected of doing it. However, with no way to prove what happened and who was responsible, this is usually as far as it goes. For example, some end-users said that although they knew who committed these despicable acts, they could not tell the researchers due to safety concerns.¹³²

Poisoners have two things in common: first, they do not originate from within the community. Rather, they are outsiders, people who benefit from Pajok but whose presence is damaging. If Acholi they invariably come from Uganda or those South Sudanese clans that border the Madi; if absolute cultural foreigners, they are Kuku or, most commonly of all, Madi.¹³³ They are certainly '*not of Pajok*'.¹³⁴ Indeed, they are sometimes the same people who can also change into animal form, further amalgamating the foreign with the strange and unnatural, as well as with ideas of both bodily and social insecurity.

Secondly, poisoners are almost always women.¹³⁵ As in much else, many men perceive women as dangerous outsiders who cannot be trusted and who need to have their wanton and dangerous tendencies controlled (cf. Allen & Storm 2012: 33). An extended example can be provided by one man, who said:

Researcher: And poisoners, people who use poison, are they here in Pajok?

End-user: Those women are here, yes, and they are many. They are generally women. Some old, some young. But generally women.

Researcher: Women? What about men?

End-user: Men also are there, but not many.

Researcher: Why is it mostly women who do those things?

End-user: The reason why it is women is because God has given them the talents you cannot know. Like your wife, if she gets annoyed, then she can even just give to kill you. So that is why.

Researcher: But why would my wife want to kill me?

¹³¹ Interview with Male end-user, Ayu, 16/3/14.

¹³² Interviews with: 2 Female end-users, Ywaya, 25/2/14; 7 Female end-users, various clans, 9/3/14; Male end-user, Panyageri, 10/3/14.

¹³³ Interviews with: Male and Female end-users, Ayu, 27/2/14; 7 Female end-users, various clans, 9/3/14; Male end-user, Ayu, 16/3/14.

¹³⁴ Interview with Male and Female end-users, Ayu, 27/2/14.

¹³⁵ Interviews with: Female end-user, Madi, 27/10/13; Male end-user, Bura, 2/3/14; Male end-user, Panyageri, 10/3/14; Female end-user, Madi, 13/3/14; Male end-user, Bura, 19/2/14.

*End-user: The reason? Because you have done something wrong to her. Then she will get annoyed and kill you. But if not your wife, then the one with the bad heart [cwiny marac], they will just give you the poison because of the bad heart, because of jealousy [nyeko] and evil thoughts [tamo marac]. No other reason. So you must be careful. Even you [the researcher]! Where you are staying and where you are eating. Always be careful!*¹³⁶

Although this quote comes from a man, several women also mentioned that it is mainly women who use poison, generally because of the normative gendered conceptualisation that ‘African women are too jealous! Too jealous of men and other women! Because they cannot live together in peace’.¹³⁷ Therefore, the common and hegemonic understanding is that it is not because of men that women allegedly poison, nor is it because of structural conditions that favour men, nor a woman’s resistance towards these structures. Instead, like sexual promiscuity, it is an inherent condition of femaleness, something dangerous to the reproduction of society and thus something to be controlled (cf. O’Byrne 2014: 48-51; O’Byrne, forthcoming; Porter 2012, 2013). Instead, this paper suggests one reason women are more likely to be considered poisoners is that, given the gendered division of labour within Acholi sociocultural life, women produce the food and alcohol that men consume. This rationale was even provided by some end-users, like a man from Bura, who said:

*The women do it [poison people] mostly because they do not favour people. If angry, they will do whatever they want to whoever they like. Also, they know how to give [poison] more than men. They are very wise! They cook food, give medicine, make alcohol. They say, “Here, take this”. Then you die.*¹³⁸

Like other cosmological categories, the poisoner poses a double-edged threat. Not only is a *Layat*’s presence a threat to the safety and security of Pajok’s end-users but the community’s response to suspected poisoners is a very real threat to those suspected, whether or not they are actually *Loyat*. Indeed, before Anyanya II the community seemed to have a relatively straightforward means of dealing with suspected poisoners: death by stoning. Seemingly not practiced since return from exile in the mid-2000s, beating is now the most common method of exacting communal vengeance, but one which is not entirely satisfactory to all end-users in Pajok: as one man said, ‘so now, the one who has killed is left, no consequences’.¹³⁹

On the other side of the equation, and highlighting the inherent danger as well as diabolical nature of a poisoner’s activities, the same man noted that ‘But, if you have the poison and you do not use it, then you or your family will be the one to die! Because you must use! It makes you to kill people! So, if cannot kill a person, some kill a dog as alternative’.¹⁴⁰ Embedded in this statement is a cosmological conceptualisation with a wide reaching ethnographic basis: the insidiousness of putting aside one’s ethics and attacking the community for benefits that accrue only to the individual or of doing lasting damage to one’s group for the purposes of a temporary material gain. Of selling one’s soul to make a ‘pact with the Devil’ (cf. Comaroff & Comaroff 1999; Meyer 1999; Niehaus 2005; Taussig 1980). In the Acholi variation of this, it is kill or be killed: either by the community or by the very poison one uses to harm the

¹³⁶ Interview with Male end-user, Panyageri, 10/3/14.

¹³⁷ Interview with Female end-user, Madi, 13/3/14.

¹³⁸ Interview with Male end-user, Bura, 2/3/14.

¹³⁹ Interview with Male end-user, Bura, 2/3/14.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Male end-user, Bura, 2/3/14.

community. In this way, the basis of the *Loyat*'s trade is, one way or the other, also the basis of their insecurity and eventual demise.

Witches and Wizards: Lajok/Lojok.

The final category of human or community-derived cosmological insecurity is *Lojok* ('witches' or 'wizards').¹⁴¹ Although few *lojok* are said to reside within Pajok, they very definitely exist. Like many of the more dangerous entities described throughout this paper, *lojok* are driven to commit evil deeds through greed, jealousy, and frustrated desire. Further, like those other entities, they gain their power through the subversion of cosmological powers legitimately held by other end-users and used for individual, social, or communal good – in this case through undermining the blessing and healing power of the *laa* (saliva) of *lodito* and *megi* (male and female elders, respectively) and turning it into a curse (cf. Finnstrom 2006: 208-210, p'Bitek 1971: 146-153).¹⁴² For example:

*There are also those people, the Lojok. They are those men who are jealous. When you have something good. And he is a wizard [sic]. When he sees you have the thing that they want, like the food, the animals, the children, he just swallows his spittle and you will die or get very sick... So these Lojok, with the saliva, if you have something good, he will just swallow his saliva down. Because to put saliva on someone is a blessing but to swallow it is dangerous and can make you sick or dead. So if you do that, they will say you are Lajok.*¹⁴³

The cosmological power of saliva is often used by older end-users as an everyday blessing. This is done by spitting onto their hands and then rubbing this saliva on the face or head of the person they wish to impart good fortune upon. *Laa* also has a significant place in the community's more formal rituals, a necessary component for removing both curses (*kwang*) and bad omens (*kiir*) as well as for initiating the power of *jogi* such as *Labot-Onyom* or *Nyol*. As it contains the life essence, however, such power is easily corrupted and if enacted through envy or jealousy, the power of *laa* can just as easily bring bad luck as it can good fortune.

When asked to describe *lojok*, another end-user said:

*They are the ones who have the greed, who stay together and curse other people, because of the jealousy... But I cannot tell the names, because if you say the names then you will be hurt or taken [possessed], or someone close will die. Because they will hear you. But if not say the names when asked, then they might even bless you.*¹⁴⁴

According to a former chief, around two years ago some end-users banded together to take several *lojok* to the County Court in Magwi. They were said to have bewitched the community and so, tired both of local government inaction as well as their inability to stop the *lojok* by other means, they tried to have the suspects imprisoned. They were unsuccessful,

¹⁴¹ '*Lojok*' is the plural of the singular term '*lajok*', meaning 'an evil person, a witch, a night dancer' (Adong & Lakareber 2009). Despite the fact that Grove (1919) and Seligman and Seligman (1932) observe that Sudanese Acholi call members of this cosmological category '*latal*' or '*jatal*', end-users in Pajok now follow Ugandan Acholi and use the term *lajok*.

¹⁴² One male end-user from Palyec said '*the power of laa is that it has the person in it, their spirit*' (7/3/14.)

¹⁴³ Interview with Male end-user, Kapa, 9/3/14.

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Male end-user, Bura, 2/3/14.

however, as they were unable to prove to the accused were responsible for the actions that they were suspected of. The court let them go, at which time they returned to Pajok. The Pajok community is said to have ‘*given them a serious warning*’ and threatened to kill them if they were even suspected of repeating their malicious activities.¹⁴⁵

Although they apparently no longer cause problems, the threat these *lojok* pose remains a source of real insecurity to both themselves and the community at large: the possibility they will repeat their actions are a direct threat to the bodily and psychological safety and security of Pajok end-users at both the social and the individual levels. Likewise, because they will always be suspected of harbouring jealousy and evil intentions towards those around them, they may become scapegoats for other misfortunes befalling the community or its members. As the same end-user quoted above said, ‘*These people [the community] now think and know them to be the bad man, to have the bad heart. So people now know and expect them to be the bad man [in the future]*’.¹⁴⁶

Spiritual Aspects of (In)Security and (In)Justice: *Cen*, *Kwaro*, and *Tip*.

Overview

Those cosmological entities and forces this paper terms the ‘spiritual aspects’ of (in)security and (in)justice in Pajok Payam predominantly include the conceptually linked spirit-based phenomena of *cen* (ghostly vengeance), *kwaro* (ancestors or grandfathers),¹⁴⁷ and *tipu* (shades or souls). These categories are conceptually linked in many Pajok’s end-users everyday cosmological understandings, not only in the realm of discourse, but also in that of ritual practice. For example, in trying to explain the similarities and differences between *cen*, *jok*, *kwaro*, and *tipu*, a group of seven female end-users described these in the following way:

*When you die, you have a spirit, a soul. That is the tipu pa dano [spirit of people]. But then there is the catan [Satan], and if someone is getting sick, then that sickness is the one brought by the catan. That is jok. That is not from your kwaro [ancestors/grandfathers], not from your dogola [clan]. That one is not your friend. The tipu is just like a wind, it just comes. And there is no difference between cen or jok or tipu, they are all the same.*¹⁴⁸

This paper describes these concepts as ‘spiritual’ because all three are predominantly considered the presence of aspects or powers of previously existing but now dead human persons continuing within the earthly world of the living. In this way, some Christian end-users consider the positive aspects analogous to that of the ‘soul’ while the negative aspects

¹⁴⁵ This statement is most likely a euphemism meaning that they were beaten and threatened with future mob-related violent deaths, as are other quasi-human entities with dangerous cosmological powers, such as poisoners, shapechangers, and some *ajwaki*. Note the similarity to the threats made against both *dano me loki* and *loyat*, above (Interview with Male end-user, Kapa, 9/3/14).

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Male end-user, Kapa, 9/3/14.

¹⁴⁷ Indeed, according to the logics of the patrilineal ideologies and classificatory systems underlying Acholi kinship, all ancestors must be grandfathers, as inheritance and lineage and clan membership takes place almost exclusively through the male line.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with 7 Female end-users, various clans, 9/3/14. On such distinctions among Sudanese Acholi in the early 20th century, Seligman & Seligman (1932: 126) have this to say: ‘It is clear that the *cen* and *tipu* are distinct entities; the *cen*, always malignant, is... stated to wander freely, yet the method of disposing of a *cen* indicates that it is linked with the physical remains of the dead man’.

like a ‘demon’ or ‘devil’.¹⁴⁹ Some other end-users translated them variously as ‘spirit’ or ‘ghost’.¹⁵⁰ This puts end-users descriptions within a similar conceptual range as that in most academic sources.

This research indicates that, despite *kwaro* (‘ancestors’) being physically dead, they continue to live on in the physical world, unseen but no less real. As one elderly man said, ‘*That happens because the tipu cannot die, only the body, the human being... So when you die, it is only the body. The tipu pa dano remains*’.¹⁵¹ In this way, it is acknowledged that although the physical form of a person may die, their spiritual aspect remains (cf. Malandra 1939; Mogensen 2002: 425; Seligman 1925: 32). Such an understanding is further demonstrated by the fact that it is important to bury the deceased as soon as possible after death, ideally on the same day, and as close to the main compound building as possible (Wright 1936). In this way the *tipu* of the newly dead does not wander around and get lost. Instead, by taking these measures, the *tipu* will stay close to the family home, able to look over those family members who remain alive and help provide for their cosmological security, if required (cf. Malandra 1939).

Unlike other research conducted on Acholi cosmologies, *cen* was not particularly relevant in the day-to-day lives of Pajok end-users. *Cen* is not something many end-users speak about until specifically asked. Instead, some end-users feel any *cen* previously connected to the community was left in Uganda when people began returning to Pajok from 2008.¹⁵² Indeed, several end-users told the researchers that both *cen* and spirit or demon (*jok*) possession were not only much more common in Uganda than they are in Pajok, but that these phenomena are more common among Ugandan Acholi communities than Pajok or other South Sudanese Acholi.¹⁵³

Instead, most end-users speak of *kwaro* and *tipu*, often in relation to each other, and these spiritually-based cosmological entities also seem to be most salient within their day-to-day lives. On the other hand, *cen* is usually related to *jogi*, *ajwaki*, and other now diabolised pre-Christian cosmological categories. These and similar categories are now, in the current world of Christian normativity, generally spoken about only in relation to Satan and devil worship. Unlike *kwaro* and *tipu*, which continue to very definitely contain elements of both genealogical and cosmological importance for even many Christian end-users, *cen*, *jogi*, and other related categories are often now considered evil.

Tipu (Shades) and Kwaro (Ancestors)

Seligman (1925: 32) once noted that ‘the everyday working religion of the Acholi is the cult

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Male end-user, Ayu, 16/3/14.

¹⁵⁰ Interviews with: 2 Female end-users, Ywaya, 25/2/14; Male and Female end-users, Ayu, 27/2/14; Male end-user, Bura, 2/3/14.

¹⁵¹ Interview with Male end-user, Kwacanyoro, 17/3/14. Dalfovo (1998: 477-478) notes that the cosmological system of the Lugbara of northwest Uganda/northeast Congo has a similar connection between the grandfathers (*a'bi*) and spirits of the ancestors (*adro*). Opposing a view of customary monotheism, which he argues was the outcome of missionary influence in the area, Dalfovo uses this connection to suggest the dynamic, multidimensional, and practice-oriented nature of pre-Christian Lugbara cosmologies. As Allen and Storm (2012) have noted the historical and cultural similarities between the Lugbara and the Madi, with Allen (1987, 1991) further noting those between the Madi and the Acholi, it is possible that there is some wider comparative cosmological synthesis between the grandparent-ancestor-spirit linkages. Further research should be undertaken to substantiate this suggestion.

¹⁵² Unrelated interviews.

¹⁵³ Unrelated interviews.

of the dead, whose spirits, *tipu* [sic], are regarded as taking a profound interest in the doings of their descendants and as being responsible for much of the good and most of the evil that befalls them'. Alternatively referred to as *tipu pa dano* ('shades of people'), *tipu pa kwaro* ('shades of the ancestors'), or *tipu pa woro* ('shades to be respected'), the cosmological category Pajok end-users refer to as *tipu* essentially denotes those concepts captured by the English terms 'spirits' or 'souls', and indicates an unseen but known quality of each individual human. It seems that, for end-users in Pajok, *tipu* is a meta-category referring to the spiritual element of all persons, dead or alive. However, it is also specifically used to indicate recently deceased and known persons an individual end-user has a socially close relationship with, especially that individual's *kwaro* (ancestors). This is an important categorical distinction, and it is necessary to know how and when the term is used in relation to the connotation as essence of humanity meta-category as opposed to its essentially individualised component.

When speaking about how these individualised aspects of *tipu* are connected to the everyday experience of (in)security and (in)justice, the most common association between *tipu* and *kwaro* references how negative aspects of deceased ancestors' reappearances intervene in, and disturb, the world of the living. Historically, this would become known by recourse to the specialist knowledge of *ajwaki*, spirit mediums who would diagnose such problems by communication with the spirit world (cf. Baines 2005, 2010; Finnstrom 2006; Malandra 1939). This was summarised for the researchers by one end-user, a former head chief and devout Christian, who told us that:

*Tipu pa dano are the spirits of the old people, the kwaro... And they are the ones causing the sickness, according to the old belief. They say the sickness is due to the spirit of a certain person. They know this by going to the fortune-teller, the ajwaka, because they can see with their mind and say something to the spirit and then tell the person why the sickness comes.*¹⁵⁴

These ancestral spirits can cause sickness and misfortune (problems both individual and clan-based in nature), as well as madness or sterility (problems which, due to the conceptual organisation and structuring of Acholi society, are considered more social than individual) (cf. Mogensen 2002: 433). One male end-user argued that '*you cannot see them, the tipu pa kwaro, but you know them through the sickness and the bad luck (gum marac), or through talking with the elders*',¹⁵⁵ while another man said '*if you are not a normal person, they will say the kwaro were not happy with you*'.¹⁵⁶ If such a thing happens, if an end-user or their family still believing the customs and rituals of '*the old ways*' suffers from sickness, mental disturbance, or bad luck that cannot be cured by modern medicine, then they will call their family to perform the necessary rituals, '*Calling the spirits of the father's ancestors to come and remove the sickness*'.¹⁵⁷ In doing so, they place offerings of food and alcohol in the ancestral shrine (*abila*), sometimes preventatively but more often in an effort to appease the desires of the *tipu pa kwaro* and to turn aside their already enflamed wrath (cf. Malandra 1939).

If an appeasement ritual succeeds, the problems will disappear. If the problem continues, it may not have been sent by the ancestors after all but instead be possession by a *jok* or

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Male end-user, Kapa, 9/3/14.

¹⁵⁵ Interview Male and 4 Female end-users, Paiboro, 23/2/14.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Male end-user, Obwoltoo, 25/2/14; Also Male and Female end-users, Ayu, 27/2/14; Male end-user, Paito, 13/3/14. Note how, as explained in footnote 72 earlier, the term 'normal' is used to denote someone who is socially non-functional.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Male end-user, Ywaya Ka Tum, 17/3/14.

demon.¹⁵⁸ As one end-user described it, ‘*if sickness is coming but the kwaro are not helping, then they used to go to the layat, the ajwaka. To do the proper celebration. But today, people are not going. Because not the true thing. Instead they must go and pray*’.¹⁵⁹ It is therefore necessary to call either for the intervention of an *ajwaka* or one of the local churches, with the decision made on the basis of the beliefs of the affected persons and their families (cf. Baines 2005: 13). As the same quote indicates, the dominant end-user narrative about decision-making processes is that although people used to go to the *ajwaka*, this happened before people got knowledge about God and now one must pray at a church instead. In another example, a man from the Palyec subclan said that:

*The belief is now that you should go to the pastor or the priest and say the name of Yesu Kristo [Jesus Christ] and it will leave. But in those days, the people believe you need to get together with your clan and beat drums and dance.*¹⁶⁰

The reason some Christian end-users argue *ajwaki* should not be consulted is because they are conceptually connected to, and in communion with, demons and thus unable to ‘really’ help remove them. Any help an *ajwaka* provides comes not with God’s blessing but rather from the domain of Satan. In this way, using an *ajwaka* to remove *tipu* is considered making a pact with the Devil. Such an understanding also connects *ajwaki* with post-Christian notions of *cen* as an otherworldly entity associated with demonic possession, an important cosmological component of Christian churches of the charismatic, evangelical, and Pentecostal persuasions (cf. Baines 2005: 72; Porter 2012, 2013).

Cen (Ghostly Vengeance)

In this section, both customary and Christian understandings of *cen* are explored, situating them within broader processes describing and defining the everyday (in)security and (in)justice experiences of Pajok end-users. *Cen* has been variously translated as: ‘spiritual haunting whereby the ghost of a person who was killed violently or had their remains desecrated torments those connected to their death’ (Anyeko, Baines, Komakech, Ojok, Ogora, & Victor 2012: 120); ‘spirits of people who had died by violence or abroad and received no decent burial and thus, thirsting for vengeance, sought to afflict their relatives with disease and misfortune’ (Behrend 1999: 108-9); ‘the spiritual power of those who have suffered a violent death’ (Finnstrom 2006b: 204); ‘troublesome spirit’ (Odoki 1997: 40); ‘polluting death-like spirits including vengeful ghosts’ (Porter 2012: 83); or by Acholi anthropologist Okot p’Bitek (1971), simply as a ‘vengeful ghost’ or ‘ghostly vengeance’. The conceptual similarity underlying all these definitions is a purposeful and directed spiritual force or power that will come to haunt, attack, or trouble those connected with the acts that led to its formation.

Unlike among Acholi in Uganda, where the existing literature makes the concept seem of central import, in Pajok *cen* has only been spoken of with the researchers when specifically

¹⁵⁸ The specific entity at fault largely depends upon the cosmological system the end-user subscribes to. What makes using a separate definitional category even more difficult and problematic for this apparent conceptual distinction is that the same Acholi word is used for both *jok*-as deity-spirit and *jok*-as-demon: simply *jok*. How it is translated or what meaning it is given often says more about the term’s user than it does the term itself.

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Male end-user, Paito, 13/3/14. Note here the conceptual and categorical elision between *ajwaki* and *loyat*, again highlighting the problems involved in creating analytical definitions or other abstractions which are divorced from contextually specific practices.

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Male end-users, Palyec, 7/3/14.

responding to their questions concerning it. Even then, it was often denied or it was spoken of in relation to related cosmological categories. The inclusion of the concept here should not be understood to give the place of *cen* in Pajok unnecessary and ethnographically unsound importance but is rather for the purposes of comparative analysis.

End-users say the reason these ghostly aspects continue to reside in the world and affect the health, fortune, and security of end-users is because somebody in their family or clan did something to offend them while still alive (cf. Baines 2005: 12; Finnstrom 2001: 205). End-users say the main reasons *cen* remain in Pajok is the failure or refusal to provide things a lineage member is expected to provide for another socially-close person. These include food, medicine, alcohol, or assistance.¹⁶¹ Refusal of annual grave offerings may also lead to *cen*.¹⁶² Refusal of such things will cause someone or their *tipu* to get angry and the *cen* aspect of their presence will remain to haunt and disturb the living. Such hauntings often manifest as bad dreams in which the presence and identity of the person is made known (cf. Baines 2005: 12; Seligman 1925: 33).¹⁶³ Lineage members disturbed by *cen* may not be those who committed the problems leading to *cen*, but instead anyone in the family or clan (cf. Baines 2005: 12).¹⁶⁴

No matter the origin of *cen* or the reason for its presence, all end-users were certain about one thing: its appearance among the living brings not only misfortune, sickness, and death, but other socially-recognised signs of spiritual affliction, such as impotence and infertility, anger and violence, or an inability to ‘*move freely*’ or ‘*greet people correctly*’.¹⁶⁵ In this way, although not as widespread within Pajok as in Uganda, as either a threat or an actual manifestation, *cen* is the source of considerable cosmological insecurity, psychological and physical, individual as well as social.

Like all other cosmological categories discussed in this paper, however, it must be noted not all end-users believe in either the reality or the efficacy of *cen*. For example, one man noted that ‘*Cen is someone who died and was angry... And then sickness will come. And so the people will think it is the cen of that person who died. But not a true thing, just a belief*’.¹⁶⁶ This statement does not mean this end-user denies the reality of the realm of the spiritual. Quite the opposite, in fact. Like the other end-users this paper quotes as denying certain aspects of the existence, reality, truth, or efficacy of customary cosmological entities or categories, this man was not making a claim for ontological realism or denying the authenticity of the unseen. Instead, like many Christian end-users, he was making a hegemonic statement denying the worth, value, or effectiveness of customary Acholi cosmological practices in the face of a normative Christian cosmological paradigm which relegates these and other non-Christian beliefs to the realms of the demonic at worst and the unreal at best.

¹⁶¹ Interviews with: Male and Female end-users, Ayu, 27/2/14; Male end-user, Palyec, 7/3/14; Male end-user, Patanga, 7/3/14.

¹⁶² Interview with Male end-user, Kapa, 9/3/14.

¹⁶³ Interviews with: Male end-user, Patanga, 7/3/14; Male end-user, Bura, 2/3/14. Seligman (1925: 33) also reports that the *tipu* ‘communicate with the living in dreams, in which they are apparently heard rather than seen’ and that ‘the general resemblance of such [Acholi] beliefs to those of the Dinka and Shilluk is remarkable’.

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Male and Female end-users, Ayu, 27/2/14; Male end-user, Kapa, 9/3/14.

¹⁶⁵ Interviews with: Male and Female end-users, Ayu, 27/2/14; Male end-user, Palyec, 7/3/14; Male end-user, Patanga, 7/3/14.

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Male end-user, Paito, 13/3/14.

Furthermore, when asked if what they said was the increasing number of *cen* and *jogi* in Pajok was now also making them more worried or scared, two women from Ywaya responded:

*Yes, we are becoming afraid. Very afraid. Because of all the dead people. It means that life is very hard, because it can be very difficult with them disturbing you. So life is bad here now. But all you can do is pray to God, to beg forgiveness, because there are a lot of cen and jogi in the community here. But if you truly believe in Yesu [Jesus], then the jogi and the cen will go away from you.*¹⁶⁷

A noteworthy aspect of this response, and one common among many end-users, is the primacy given to a Christian cosmological paradigm in providing both spiritual and physical security. The next section therefore turns to the role Christianity plays in end-users' everyday experiences of (in)security and (in)justice.

Christianity in Acholi South Sudan

Overview

Essentially a prophetic millennial cult promising eternal salvation to the global dispossessed and focusing on the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the self-proclaimed 'Son of God' (Morris 2006: 146), Christianity plays an important role in the determination and provision of (in)security and (in)justice in Pajok Payam. A Christian cosmological paradigm is of overwhelming importance in understanding the cosmological dimensions of the everyday experiences of (in)security and (in)justice in Pajok and, as should be apparent from the preceding discussion, Christianity fulfils many security and justice functions, relating both to the everyday aspects of this world as well as to the eternal facets of the next world that believers are promised.

What is noteworthy is that, despite Christianity's brief temporal period within the community – slightly less than 100 years – the influence and reach of this particular cosmological understanding is such that virtually all end-users would unhesitatingly describe themselves as Christian. It is also important to note that Christian end-users certainly do not all form one homogenous group and that there is significant variation in how Christians engage with customary cultural systems, even among members of the same church. For example, some Christians seem to view '*the old ways*' simply as some form of misguided superstition based in a lack of real knowledge about the true nature of God, while there are other Christian end-users for whom the traditional cosmological entities are very much real, the manifestation of Satanic presence and power on earth. In this way, there is a significant variation between those who deny the reality of the customary entities and those who believe in them but have effectively demonised them.

The following discussion focuses on three of the more important but so far unanalysed ways that Christianity affects end-users' (in)security and (in)justice. The themes underlying this discussion are apparent from the descriptions given in the preceding sections but, due to the importance given to Christianity in Pajok, as well as the ways that it manifests as a multifaceted and often times contradictory complex of cosmological understandings and

¹⁶⁷ Interview with 2 Female end-users, Ywaya, 25/2/14.

positions, they are pulled together and highlighted again here. The themes which this discussion emphasises are: the diabolisation of tradition, the connections between justice and salvation, and the essential ambivalence of Christianity's millennial message.

Christianity's role in (In)Security and (In)Justice in Pajok

Despite its sometimes aggressive or radically disjunctive absorption of pre-Christian belief systems (Bialecki, Haynes, & Robbins 2008; Cannell 2006; Engelke 2004, 2010; Eriksen 2009; Lampe 2010; Robbins 2007), Christianity as manifested in Pajok plays out many important and pre-existing Acholi cosmological logics and relations. Indeed, this paper suggests that for many end-users it is not that a Christian cosmological system has replaced systems previously used to structure and understand the cosmological aspects of existence. Rather it seems this new system instead organises and rationalises the locational, generational, and cultural specificities of those pre-existing logics under and within its wider rubrics (cf. Baines 2010: 419). One important distinction, however, is that the new system is one that now presents itself as not only 'true' (and also as the only truth), but also as something decidedly new, global, and infinite in nature (cf. Mogensen 2002: 422; Morris 2006: 146).

What this means to a discussion of the cosmological dimensions of (in)security and (in)justice is that, to all intents and purposes, Christianity has not removed or replaced those pre-Christian cosmological entities important in protecting the end-user and maintaining the community. As Mogensen (2002: 425) has argued, among the Jop'Adhola, '*Juok* indeed has meshed with a Christian theology of God and the devil... [and is now understood as] all of: God, the devil, evil spirits, wind and power, good or bad in excess, depending on the situation and combined in different ways'. Neither has Christianity removed those beings posing the greatest security threats. Indeed, it could even be argued that, for those manifestations of Africanised Christianity currently dominant in Pajok, just as the presence of Christianity has provided some end-users with new means of over-coming cosmological dangers, so too has Christianity's diabolisation of tradition actively produced more such threats than previously existed (Allen & Storm 2012: 35; Morris 2006; Ranger 2003). In this way, for example, in Pajok *ajwaki* generally no longer positively address individual and communal cosmological danger but are now simply considered dangerous. So too are *jogi*, and thus because of mainstream Christianity's demonization of these customary cosmological figures, the number of dangerous entities active within the community has only increased with the presence of Christianity (Doom & Vlassenroot 1999: 17).

On the other hand, the existence of Christ within the everyday lives of Christian end-users gives an ever-present means of cosmological protection to these people. Further, this is a cosmological protection that requires no special mediator, location, or ritual, and no sacrifice beyond the continuing daily sacrifices needed '*to live the Christian life*'. Each and every Christian end-user thus holds within themselves and their faith the means for their own cosmological protection, protection which can also be bolstered by appeal to the community's religious leaders during times of crisis.

Christianity also offers the average Christian something equally important for cosmological security and justice: a message of eternal salvational millennialism. This message as propagated by Pajok Christians is that any end-user who is a 'true believer' – someone who lives their life in accordance with the regulations of Jesus Christ as stipulated in the Bible – is guaranteed a position in Heaven following the second coming of Christ. Such an ideological

position is a cosmological levelling mechanism: as all believers are equal in front of Christ, it does not matter what position any end-user holds on earth, nor how rich, powerful, or successful they are. Furthermore, this understanding combines with the locally dominant Christian worldview that *'there is no good in this world, all the world is only sin'*,¹⁶⁸ meaning that Christian end-users believe as absolute fact that on the day of judgement every individual is held accountable for their actions and beliefs. Therefore, any and all injustices suffered on earth are considered only temporary aspects of believers' this-worldly existence, to be eternally rectified with the coming of Christ. This is a cosmological system which therefore has an ideology of eternal other-worldly justice as one of its very core messages and teachings.

Although Christianity provides an important community of belonging, unlike customary Acholi cosmological systems or entities where security and justice are a function of the communal performance of socially appropriate ritual, the entirely individualised belief and action oriented salvation at Christianity's core focuses attention less on community and more on individuals. In doing this, Christianity is at times both radically individualising as well as radically socially disjunctive (cf. Engelke 2004, 2010; Eriksen 2009; Robbins 2007). Although the version of Africanised Christianity prevalent in Pajok is one shared by most community members, it may be argued that millennial Christianity's more radical doctrines make its very presence a form of cosmological insecurity for those end-users who do not subscribe to the message of the Messiah's imminent return. For example, just as Christianity provides justice and security to the *'true Christians'* among Pajok end-users, so too does its inherent eschatology mean that having the Lord's justice being brought to bear will result in the eternal destruction of non-believing end-users. Indeed, this is a necessary and fundamental component of Christianity's millennial discourse: to fulfil the needs of both logic and justice, teachings which posit an eternal heaven open only to *'true believers'* need a counterpoint, a place of damnation where those who fail the Biblical requirements must be consigned for all eternity. The message of Christianity is therefore one which, by necessity, provides eternal justice and security to some end-users while forever condemning others. Although many Christians might say that such damnation is very much an expression of justice, it is unlikely that non-believers would agree. In this way, although being a blessing in the provision of security and justice for some of Pajok's end-users, Christianity inevitably, and perhaps unjustly, contributes to the insecurity of others.

Theoretical Reflections: Productivity, Normativity, and the Threat of Outsiders

It is important to note several fundamental themes apparent when analysing the cosmological aspects of everyday (in)security and (in)justice in Pajok. These themes relate to virtually all the major cosmological categories analysed in this paper, whether *jogi*, spirits, or even the now-dominant incorporated world religion of Christianity. First is the overwhelming importance of a cultural and cosmological logic of production and destruction, especially as this relates to social and biological (re)production (cf. Girling 1960: 14, 73; Menzies 1954: 184; Seligman & Seligman 1932: 120). As Malandra (1939: 27) suggested, the reason *kwaro* are so respected is to encourage the 'exercise [of] their power so... hunting will be successful, evil spirits will be deterred from entering their villages, sickness may be

¹⁶⁸ Unrelated interview.

unknown..., women may not be barren, their children will enjoy health and happiness and their crops will be abundant'. As is apparent, according to this cultural logic communal security is strongly tied to local conceptualisations of that which is productive, with those entities who threaten this logic themselves threatened by the community.

Virtually all aspects of cosmological life in Acholi Pajok connect to this cultural logic, as do practically all understandings of individual and communal security. Those positively regarded cosmological entities such as *Rwodi me Kot* and local clan-based *jogi* are also the ones responsible for ensuring the productivity of agriculture, hunting and ultimately, by association, the community itself. On the other hand, those creatures or powers considered most dangerous are also those which strike right at the heart of this cultural logic of production and destruction. They ruin hunting, destroy harvests, and make people ill or infertile (cf. Girling 1960: 73). Indeed, the most feared of all entities are those who actively and maliciously set out to destroy the physical, social, and environmental basis of Pajok life: *Anti Kot*, *Lojok*, and *Loyat*. This finding follows that of Finnstrom (2006: 209, following p'Bitek 1971: 146), who argues that 'in Acholi thought, powers to heal are also potential powers to harm, depending on shifting contexts..., the blessing is one side of the famous coin, of which the other is the curse' and that the 'blessing and curse is profoundly embedded in the lived realities in Acholiland' (Finnstrom 2006: 213). It is argued here that the blessing and the curse are specific conceptual manifestations of wider cultural logics of productive and/or destructive powers. The intimate interrelationships between these logics and the entities which manipulate them can also be seen within the connection between the blessing and the curse.

The next significant theme is the importance of social normativity, that is, the wider social imperative toward individual end-users being capable of engaging in 'socially normal' acts. Those who cannot engage in the normal everyday activities required for the maintenance of harmonious social relations are those considered as either the causes or the results of problematic cosmological deeds or events. For example, the inability to speak correctly or to produce children are two of the more common effects of cosmological action upon community members. The other common examples of such problems include an inability to greet people correctly; greed (especially in relation to food); and a desire to randomly attack or beat people. As can be seen, these are all examples of an inability to be a 'normal' social person and to unproblematically engage in 'normal' social activity. Problematic individual behaviours and social acts are therefore understood and explained in cosmological terms. Indeed, as Baines (2005: 72) argues, 'the phenomenon of *cen* [for example] illustrates the centrality of relationships between the natural and supernatural worlds in Acholi, the living and the dead, and the normative continuity between an individual and the community'.

Furthermore, there is a very definite cultural patterning to the ways in which these problematic acts and individuals are not only described and understood, but also how they manifest and are expressed. For example, not just any person can be possessed by a *jok* and become an *ajwaka*. Instead, as mentioned earlier, *ajwaki* are sometimes barren women. Therefore, not only is there a sociocultural patterning to being an Acholi spirit medium (cf. Behrend 1999), but this patterning also repeats wider cosmological themes relating to (in)security and (in)justice as well as to the deeper logic of production and destruction. Indeed, in pre-Christian understandings, *ajwaki* are customarily cosmologically ambiguous precisely because they not only threaten but also safeguard the everyday security of end-users at both the individual and communal levels.

This ambiguity is heightened by their usual predominant positioning as social, cultural, and structural outsiders: if unable to biologically reproduce, they are on the very boundary of that

understood as socially human; further, being women, they are lineage outsiders, ambivalent within the wider subclan into which they marry, and potentially a Trojan Horse for that family's cosmological and physical security. Many other cosmological entities also exhibit similarly culturally determined behavioural or definitional patternings. *Anti-Kot* are usually men who can no longer or have never biologically reproduced. *Cen*, *kwaro*, and *tipu* all attack members of their own families and clans, breaking the predominant and most culturally important social bonds. Through their perverted inversion of local medical knowledge on their use of medicines to injure people, *loyat* threaten not only the social and cultural order but also the physical security of Pajok end-users.

The above argument also demonstrates what is the final key cosmological theme in the everyday (in)security and (in)justice of Pajok end-users, and that is the threat posed by outsiders. These outsiders are not only foreigners – although Ugandan poisoners and Madi shapechangers, for example, are by no means insignificant dangers – but also outsiders within the community itself, structural and conceptual outsiders whose structural positioning outside the family, subclan, or community is mirrored in the everyday, productive, and cosmological insecurities their presence generates. As Doom and Vlassenroot (1999: 17) argue, 'outsiders [as] individuals... were considered to be dangerous and possessed by evil spirits. Killing them was not considered murder'. Thus, in this, as with other themes, the nature of insecurity and its responses cuts in two directions: the outsider is a danger and, in bringing that danger to the community, is thereby endangered by the community. Similar cosmological themes emerge from among the Lugbara and Madi (Allen & Storm 2012; Barnes-Dean 1986; Middleton 1960). As Allen and Storm (2012: 27) argue for the Lugbara, the most important function of the *oyo*, the Lugbara female diviner figure, 'was in mediating that which was "outside"... the social and moral order'.

When analysing the logics why women and foreigners are most likely to be poisoners, it is important to note they are conceptually interlinked: both are structural and categorical outsiders. A simple ethnological 'fact' is that, as a patrilineal and patrilocal society, women leave the *dogola* and place of their birth and move into those of their husbands upon marriage. In general terms, a woman is not considered part of her husband's *dogola* until she gives birth. Therefore, structurally speaking, all married women, by definition, are or have been outsiders in the *dogola* and *gang* of their husband (cf. Allen & Storm 2012; Barnes-Dean 1986; Middleton 1960; Porter 2013).¹⁶⁹

This further highlights points made in O'Byrne (2014) about the ongoing and embedded structural injustices and insecurities most Pajok females face every day. Such an observation is even truer for those female end-users who come from outside Pajok. Therefore, despite the fact that many male end-users say otherwise, it is suggested that poisoning is not an inherent trait of women *per se* but instead that the reason women are considered more likely to be poisoners (or *ajwaki*, or any other dangerous cosmological entity) is due to a culturally derived structural position which places them as outsiders within the community: a social group composed of, and thus comprising, the always-foreign (cf. Allen & Storm 2012; Barnes-Dean 1986; Middleton 1960; Porter 2013).

This is thus another example of how the danger and difficulty of being an outsider within Pajok has very definite and very real dimensions and, as such, is a form of insecurity which goes in both directions: the outsider can be dangerous to Pajok through their outside and unknown status and, likewise, Pajok end-users are dangerous to those outsiders through their expectation of that danger. One main reason outsiders are dangerous is because they are not

¹⁶⁹ In fact, to marry an insider is to commit incest, one of the greatest of all *kiir* (taboos).

connected by genealogical ties to the people and place in which they reside and, therefore, cannot be held accountable by or in front of the clan-based *jogi* who are the usual customary means for maintaining functional intracommunal relations. Another reason is that they practice their wicked acts within those key components of everyday sociality which form the very core of Acholi social life. *Loyat*, for example, strike at the community by targeting end-users' food and drink, and are particularly feared at funerals or other fundamental and everyday social gatherings.

Eating and drinking are not only major everyday shared social activities but also the predominant source of uncontrolled social interaction and may include wide-ranging and uncontrollable contact with multiple persons otherwise unknown. To the extent that loss of agency or control is always associated with greater levels of risk (cf. Finnstrom 2006; Jackson 1995, 1998, 2002, 2005), such occasions are always inherently dangerous, because they always involve the potential for dangerous encounters. This is especially so in large-scale communal events such funerals. In such situations, an individual cannot control how their food and alcohol was made and who made it. In such contexts of existential and bodily uncertainty, then, these situations are ripe for the *loyat* to work their reprehensible deeds.

It is important to highlight that not all the cosmological entities challenging the everyday security of Pajok's end-users are structural outsiders, however. For example, *kwaro* and *tipu* are by definition lineage members of Pajok end-users. Nonetheless, most of these dangerous entities still breach culturally acceptable norms and social practices, as well as manifesting culturally prescribed patternings through the ways in which their thoughts, behaviour, and histories breach the dominant Acholi cultural logics of classification: either without children or too old to have more, they are socially and biologically unproductive; in their perversion of legitimate cosmological power, they use these powers to benefit themselves rather than the community. They are thus individualising and destructive rather than socially or communally focused.

In the *Anti-Kot*'s selfish perversion of socially beneficial cosmological power, for instance, they are analogous both to *Lojok* and *Loyat*, as well as to holding the same structural positions as magical male evil-doers (wizard, warlock, sorcerer etc.) common in societies throughout the world (including Europe and North America.¹⁷⁰ In Pajok's specific manifestation of Acholi cosmological systems, they are the male version of the (usually female) *ajwaki* and *loyat*, their one essential difference being they are members of the community and therefore kinsmen and clan mates to the very people whose lives and livelihoods they are trying to destroy. In this way, they are less common, more insidious, and certainly more dangerous than their female counterparts.

Finally, therefore, this paper argues that the one primary reason the most dangerous of the entities discussed herein are inherently perilous is that, in breaching, inverting, perverting, or otherwise crossing the boundaries and definitions which order the Acholi world, they strike right at the heart of the definitional and categorical imperatives underlying the creation and maintenance of human sociocultural life (cf. Douglas 2002; Levi-Strauss 1971). They are conceptually impure, classificatory disparate, and thus socioculturally dangerous. They are forces of insecurity precisely because they cannot be fixed with certainty. They are cosmologically as well as categorically incongruent and therefore their motivations can never be known. Thus, not only inherently imbued with the potential for multitudinous insecurities,

¹⁷⁰ Indeed, Seligman and Seligman (1932: 128) argue that *lojok* are best described as 'the evil "medicine man"', as opposed to the *ajwaka*, who at the time of their research in the pre-Christian 1920s still held a huge amount of power and respect within Acholi society.

their very existence and social presence actually generates these insecurities, almost as an essential quality of their very beings. If cosmologies are about defining, explaining, and giving order to the otherwise unexplainable, then this paper argues that the entities described herein are the cosmological manifestation of *all* existential uncertainties and insecurities.

Conclusion

This paper has proceeded on the basis of the assumption, now borne out by evidence, that a broader and more holistic notion of hybrid governance is needed than that typically used in scholarship on justice and security in difficult places. This is especially true for research to pay due diligence to the real diversity of such governance forms in end-users' lives. It is argued that, rather than beginning from a methodological position which assumes prior knowledge of which dimensions of experience are most important in understanding (in)justice and (in)security experiences, both the actors within these forms of governance as well as the specific dimensions these forms can take should be defined primarily through long-term ethnographic research.

Time in the field is crucial. Socially or culturally disengaged and quick hitting interviews, surveys, questionnaires, and similar research methods often struggle to discover the data that long-term ethnographic research seeks to uncover. Further, without an embedded understanding of the everyday existential importance of a practice-oriented approach, nor the incorporation of the anthropological truism that there are considerable differences between what people say, what people do, and what people say they do, other techniques often misrecognise or fail to appreciate the full significance of those aspects of life that do not fit materialist and often ethnocentric political and economic biases. For example, much of the information presented in this paper was only discovered to be important to (in)justice and (in)security by building positive and long term personal relationships that allowed end-users to discuss possibly dangerous cosmological entities and practices. Furthermore, the day-to-day lives of end-users were only able to be contextualised through daily access to the often vast contradictions between discourse and practice that makes up much of everyday human sociality.

It is important to note that Christianity in Pajok has a history of less than 100 years, with its widespread uptake somewhat more recent than this. Nonetheless, in contemporary Pajok, Christianity now dominates all normative discussions surrounding the religious or spiritual realms, especially among community leaders. Because of this, a strong conceptual connection is made between customary Acholi ritual practices and non-Christian behaviours and beliefs, with many Christians making a conceptual analogy between non-Christian ritual practices and devil worship or idolatry.

Despite structural and conceptual transformations towards a world dominated by Christianity and a Christian God, however, agency in Pajok is still conceived as essentially spiritual. Rather than being medical or psychological in nature, causes and cures of problems are still predominantly understood as based in the rupture and repair of a person or group's fundamental social relations with important cosmological entities. Indeed, because they are both ultimate cause as well as predominant cure for all social ills, including a wide range of both individual and communal events, these entities remain largely ambiguous for end-users' everyday (in)security.

This research has found that the spiritual and physical spheres of the Acholi sociocultural world as manifested in Pajok are not separate but intertwined, leaching into and affecting end-users' everyday experiences of (in)security and (in)justice with multitudinous and profound results. What is done in the physical realm has very real effects on the spiritual world and, in turn, what happens in the realm of the spiritual has important consequences within that of the physical. These consequences have both positive and negative dimensions and much day-to-day activity within Pajok is specifically attuned to spiritual requirements.

Many authors note that Acholi cosmologies are about maintaining harmonious relations with the environment, including all social entities living and dead, physical and spiritual (Baines 2005, 2010; Finnstrom 2006, 2008; Malandra 1939; p'Bitek 1986; Porter 2013). In this way, Acholi cosmological systems are like those in other African societies and focus especially on the pragmatic aspects of environmental control (cf. Evans-Pritchard 1956, 1972; Horton 1997; Lienhardt 1961; Mbiti 1990; Morris 2006). In Pajok, the basis of this largely rests on relationships with powerful entities who have known connections to the family, lineage, and clan and appeasement of whom allows for greater control over the existential (in)security of one's self, family, and community (cf. Finnstrom 2005, 2008; Malandra 1939; Mogensen 2002). Consequently, by situating the cosmological dimensions of Pajok life within local conceptualisations of (in)security and (in)justice, this paper has demonstrated that an understanding of these cosmological dimensions is a necessary foundation for all future research on (in)security and (in)justice within Africa. Therefore, no attempt to understand end-users' perspectives on and access to other aspects of (in)security and (in)justice can progress without an understanding and appreciation of the spiritual and cosmological dimensions of everyday life.

A Heuristic Framework for Analysing Cosmological Security and Justice in Africa

A final point in conclusion leads away from cosmology as manifested within either Pajok or the Acholi ethnolinguistic group and points instead to future avenues of research on (in)security and (in)justice within Sub-Saharan Africa. In his 1990 monograph *Between God, the dead and the wild: Chamba interpretations of ritual and religion*, Fardon (1990) notes that West African peoples have a tripartite understanding of cosmology, which he describes as 'God', 'the dead', and 'the wild'. As is apparent from the discussion in this paper, these three categories also broadly reflect some of the predominant structuring features of Acholi cosmologies as manifested within Pajok. These typological categories also have great comparative strength. Indeed, if Fardon's typological category of 'God' is reframed toward the more broadly conceptual category of 'Deity', then in the Acholi world this would not only capture the imported monotheistic Godhead in either its Christian or Islamic orientations,¹⁷¹ but would also include the wider Nilotic deistic category of *Jok/Jogi*, a concept which already has immense theoretical and ethnographic comparative value.¹⁷²

As has been demonstrated throughout, especially in the explanation of the concepts of *cen*, *kwaro*, and *tipu*, the classificatory position held by 'the dead' in Fardon's typological categorisation has considerable ethnographic support among Acholi. The same holds true for

¹⁷¹ This conceptual expansion does not seem too great an analytical challenge: Fardon's thesis was based on the predominantly Islamic Chamba people of Nigeria, whose longer-term engagement with the synchronising work of that particular world religion had effectively resulted in the de-sacralisation of pre-Islamic deities. This proposed expansion is merely arguing for the re-Africanisation of Fardon's important conceptual categories.

¹⁷² Nilotic people groups live, for instance, across both Sudan and South Sudan, as well as within the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania.

other Nilotic groups (cf. Deng 1974; Evans-Pritchard 1956). Indeed, Morris (2006: 149-150) notes that this is one of the most dominant of all cosmological categories throughout Africa and may well even be considered a cultural universal across Sub-Saharan Africa taken as a whole. Furthermore, Fardon's typological category of 'the wild' also finds its ethnographic equivalent in Acholi South Sudan, especially in the concept of *tim* and the specific ways in which many conceptual outsiders are understood and discussed.¹⁷³

As mentioned earlier, *jogi* are normally located in *tim* (wilderness). In the Acholi worldview, *tim* is unambiguously and consciously conceptualised as all that which lies outside of the specific Acholi *gang* or village (considered the domain of humans).¹⁷⁴ In this way, *tim* encompasses not only the uninhabited wilderness itself, but also all other peoples – both Acholi and non-Acholi – as well as all unknown areas of the world. *Tim*, therefore, is a conceptually important and cosmologically structuring meta-abstraction within the Acholi cultural framework. It is very much connected to basic understandings of culture and nature, inside and outside, human and other, and echoes theoretical ideas of structural definition and categorical purity proposed by Levi-Strauss (1974) and Mary Douglas (2002).¹⁷⁵

Under the argument proposed here, and given the analytical framework provided by Fardon (1990), one easily notices how the most dangerous cosmological categories and the most pressing everyday security and justice concerns of Pajok end-users are connected to *tim*. By way of conclusion this paper therefore argues that the reworking of Fardon's conceptual framework suggested herein is also of broad relevance to other cosmological conceptualisations within Sub-Saharan Africa. As has been demonstrated, it is certainly relevant to Acholi cosmologies, especially as manifested within Pajok, South Sudan. Further, given the cross cultural similarities between cosmological systems in Sub-Saharan Africa, this framework can be applied to multiple peoples across the continent (cf. Fardon 1990; Horton 1997; Mbiti 1970, 1990, 1991; Morris 2006; p'Bitek 1970). In this way, the importance of the cosmological within Pajok end-users' understandings of (in)security and (in)justice that this research found, should have much wider theoretical and comparative consequences.

The results of this paper therefore provide a starting point toward creating more dynamic and cosmologically-engaged comparative work within justice and security related research programmes, leading individual projects and researchers in one ethnographic area towards engagement with similar projects in other, more disparate regions of Sub-Saharan Africa. This is especially true given that the basic cosmological components fundamental to Pajok end-users everyday (in)security and (in)justice experiences may be essentially similar to those found elsewhere in Africa. Although the terms of reference might change, the basic structuring principles remain remarkably similar, although conclusively demonstrating the validity of this requires a much larger comparative project.

¹⁷³ Porter (pers. comm., 7/9/14) notes that the Acholi concepts *ayweya* (places known to be connected to *jok*), *kulu* ('river': as a place of *jok*, rivers are inherently wild and dangerous) and *lum* (literally 'grass' but can also mean 'the bush') are also examples of the distinction between the home and the wild, the cultural and the natural, the human and the non-human.

¹⁷⁴ The English word 'village' can also be rendered in Acholi as *caro*.

¹⁷⁵ Similarities are also found within the work of Sverker Finnstrom, especially in his 'Wars of the past and war in the present: The Lord's Resistance Movement/Army in Uganda' (2006: 201)

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Contact details:

email: Intdev.jsrp@lse.ac.uk

Web: lse.ac.uk/internationalDevelopment/research/JSRP/jsrp.aspx

Tel: +44 (0)20 7849 4631