

# **TANGAZA COLLEGE**

## **INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL MINISTRY.**

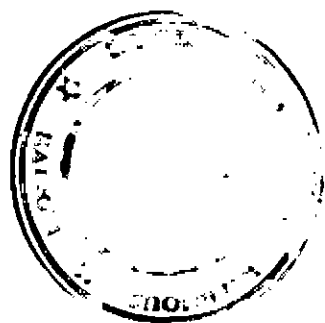
**CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA.**

**FACT FINDINGS REPORT ON;**

**CONFLICT AND RECONCILIATION AMONG ACHOLI AND MADI.**

**SUDANESE REFUGEES SETTLEMENT.**

**ADJUMANI - UGANDA.**



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS.

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.</b>	1
<b>INTRODUCTION.</b>	2
<b>DEFINITION.</b>	3
 <b>PART ONE.</b>	 4
(a) <b>HISTORICAL, SOCIAL, RELIGION AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND.</b>	4
1.1 COLONIAL IMPACT.	5
1.2 FORMATION AND INITIATION STAGES.	7
1.3 THE ROLE OF ELDERS.	9
1.4 THE TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND BELIEFS.	10
 (b) <b>THE ACTUAL CONFLICT SITUATION.</b>	 12
1.5 CONFLICT AND DISHARMONY.	12
1.6 THE ROOT OF THE CONFLICT.	13
1.7 THE YOUTH INVOLVEMENT.	15
1.8 LACK OF EDUCATION.	15
 <b>PART TWO.</b>	 17
(a) <b>CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION.</b>	17
2.1 FEAR AND SUSPICION.	17
2.2 UNDERSTAND THE TRADITIONAL LAWS.	18
2.3 TRADITIONAL RECONCILIATION.	21
2.4 SOME IMPORTANT SYMBOLS.	22
 (b) <b>THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING.</b>	 24
2.5 EVALUATION OF CHRISTIAN APPROACH.	24
2.6 INCULTURATION AS A WAY TO EVANGELIZATION.	25
2.7 RITES OF RECONCILIATION AND PEACE.	27
 <b>RECOMMENDATION AND OBSERVATION.</b>	 28
 <b>COMMENTS.</b>	 29
<b>CONCLUSION.</b>	30
<b>APPENDIXES.</b>	32
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.</b>	36

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My thanks also go to Bro. Mario Rossignolli who provided me with all the means to reach the refugees' settlements when I was in need. I also thank all the catechists for their collaboration and making possible all the arrangements with the elders of the communities.

This work is to help our missionaries who are working among these communities find ways and means to bring reconciliation and to build a community of love and peace.

**SUDANESE REFUGEES:**  
**CONFLICT AND RECONCILIATION AMONG THE ACHOLI AND**  
**MADI**

**INTRODUCTION.**

For nearly three decades the Acholi and Madi communities had lived together having some common customs, traditions and beliefs. However, during the last ten years these particular communities have been engaged in conflict and disagreement due to political situation in Sudan. Therefore, my main aim of carrying out this study is to try to find a way, to bring harmony and reconciliation through their good and harmonious traditions, customs and cultures. The values that had made them live together in unity for many years in the region of South Sudan.

Today these particular communities have taken refuge into Uganda due to the current civil war that had torn the Sudan into pieces. These communities experience difficult times in their lives. Before taking refuge into Uganda, conflicts and disharmony brought division among them following the massacre that emerged between them. These conflict continuos even in the refugee camps, and this had drawn my attention and concern to find some ways of reconciliation and unity among them.

I will focus on traditional process of reconciliation and its values taking into consideration what they have acquired from Christian values and what did not help them in their Christian lives. Thus, some of the traditional values of reconciliation will help us as missionaries in the process of inculturation. Throughout this past years

we had a lot of scandal from the Christian point of views, following the massacre that happened among the most African Christians above all among the Catholics. E.g. in South Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi etc.

The work is divided into two parts with segments, according to tangaza methodology of SEE JUDGE and ACT. In the first part of my work I tackled the historical, social, religious and political background. The other segment tackled the actual conflict situation and its cause.

In the second part I tried to analyze the situation of the people involved in the conflict and interviews about traditional reconciliation process including the symbols.

The last part I looked at theological and Christian approach and how to consider inculturation process from the traditional point of view, in order to find ways of building reconciliatory community of peace and harmony. I also gave some recommendation, observation and comments.

## **DEFINITION.**

### **Conflict**

Conflict is defined from Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary

as serious disagreement between two or more people-causing disharmony. Here the word was used to identify the clash between Acholi and Madi following the political situation in Sudan in the last ten years.

**Reconciliation** Is defined from the same "Dictionary" as bringing together people in conflict or people with different ideas, opinion and disagreement.

## **PART ONE.**

### **(a) HISTORICAL, SOCIAL, RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND.**

#### *1.1 HISTORICAL, SOCIAL, RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND.*

Between fifteenth and seventeenth centuries a number of later Iron Age pastoralists from the Southern Sudan pushed down into favorable grassland regions of the East Africa interior. Linguistic evidence shows them to have been speakers of Nilo-saharan group of languages. For this reason, they are generally referred to as the Nilotes. No evidence given for their migration but there must have been drought or conflict or pressure of green pasture for their livestock

Through primary pastoralists, most of the community members also practiced cereal cultivation and most of them today had become mainly farmers who now have very few livestock. Most have settled in the region of South Sudan and others in the region of Northern Uganda. This happened during the colonial era. The history has traced that by the year 1450 AD, a number of Luo speaking Nilotes probably began their seasonal movements to and from the pastures of the sudd region where the Barh El Gazal rivers meets the White Nile, and gathered in clans, at Pabungo near the Northern border of modern Uganda. This appears to have been hunting and raiding base for atleast a generation. From there, they dispersed into small clan groups. Eg. Jo-Pabitto clan, Kitara state etc.

The organization of the Acholi people before the colonial era, the different groups and clans together with the Madi people settled together. They settled in the region of Owiny-kibul (te got Ayipa). The chiefs of their rain were; chief Ache of Panyikwara, chief Milla of Madi were living together, then chief Aburi of Pajok and chief Ocheng of Obbo were living together.

These people came to live together in order to protect themselves from other tribes. There was only one place where all could fetch water, as a result, they ran shortage of water and one group claimed the water to be theirs. Therefore, war broke out, Panyikwara and Madi against Pajok and Obbo. Chief Milla of Madi and chief Ache of Panyikwara were very clever. They won the war without casualties, killing five people of their enemies. The defeated group withdrew and sent their elders for peace talk. The peace talk was made and goats were slaughtered, the livers of these goats were eaten together as a sign of reconciliation. A girl called Lajonga was given to Pajok and Obbo as a sign of unity. This was the first conflict among these people that resulted to the present division of clans.<sup>1</sup>

## 1.2 *THE COLONIAL IMPACT.*

The Acholi and Madi of ancient time progressed from one phase of development to another. They introduced cattle and invented methods of growing food crops under tropical condition. For about a hundred years they began smelting and forging iron for tools. They tamed their land and at the same time, evolved their own religions and social beliefs, methods of self-government and ways of keeping peace among themselves.

Their land as a variable and hostile region, made all those communities to try their best working to survive with constant self-adjustment to the climate. This has been the challenge of the Acholi and Madi people who survived in the region.

The new challenges now are different kinds of challenges offering new opportunities and bringing dangers to these particular communities. A hundred years ago the colonialists mainly Europeans, came to Africa with the idea of making trade;

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Dario Omoya aged 55, on June, 4th 1998; Obilokongo Settlement; Uganda.

exchange of goods. The new contact with Europe brought gains to both especially in ideas. It also brought the long and painful tragedy of the Trans-Atlantic trade in which Africans were captured in slavery.<sup>2</sup>

The latest challenges in the middle of nineteenth century is that the leading countries of Europe lost interest in exporting Africans as slaves outside for labor force. They wanted to use African labor in Africa itself. However, the European invasion to Africa took possession of Africa, and divided Africa into colonies of Europe. This colonial rule lasted for about sixty to ninety years. Within these period the people were made to be inferior to the Europeans and servants. Other Africans resisted the European invasion. The whole drama marked the beginning of conflict and hatred among African to this present day as weapons are still supplied from Europe and from the West.

‘The colonialist brought Arabs down to South Sudan as teachers to teach the black. These Arabs came with their own rules that were more painful than that of the colonialist. They were nicknamed ‘mirri’ by the Acholis, which means someone who takes without asking. This was the beginning of slavery in areas of the Acholi and Madi. People feared the Arabs because of the guns they had. This slave trade was again stopped by the colonialist but after a long suffering’.

The Acholi and Madi people lived in the region of South Sudan bordering Uganda. The colonialist divided them into Sudan and Uganda. At present there are the members of both communities living in Sudan and Uganda. The division of Sudan and Uganda took place in London and those who made the division had not been this region nor knew about the people of these areas. It was also against the will of those Europeans who were living in these regions. The two tribes occupied huge areas

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<sup>2</sup> Quotation from Bayart, *The State in Africa*: 1979, p.20



between South Sudan and Northern Uganda. These two tribes have some similar forms of cultures, customs and traditions but speak different dialect. They have lived together for many centuries without any problem.

The historical evidence indicates that colonialists contributed for the conflict and hatred that still exist in most part of Africa. Division of the same tribes into different colonies such as the Acholi, Madi, Kakwa, Zande etc. These tribes are found in Sudan, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The relationship among these tribes had never been good such as in the civil services because of identities. We can identify this from all the colonial system of rule that was all racist. 'The colonial systems of rule were all essential but had been exploitative with same assumption and purpose. They used colonial power to treat Africans as inferior to Europeans, justifying this by a whole range of myths about a supposed white superiority. Active men were taken to military services instead of looking after their families and farming. Those who resisted the colonial authorities resulted to escaping from one area to another and this brought about food shortages, death and the present poverty in rural areas of the later years'<sup>3</sup>.

As our aim is to know about disharmony among the Acholi and Madi, we are interested to know about their initial formation and how they were observing their own cultures, customs and traditional laws.

### *1.3 FORMATION AND INITIATION STAGES.*

These communities have some similar form of formation into adulthood and initiation stages. The formations of these two tribes from birth into adulthood are almost the same. Naming and initiating the child into the family I have

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<sup>3</sup> quotation from Bayart, *The state in Africa*: p.213

found to be the same in my interviews. The second phase of initiation is the phase where customs, culture and traditions, are taught to the newly initiated group. Norms as well as symbols about peace and conflict is also taught.

In the Acholi tradition generally the first initiation takes place during the naming of the newborn child. The newborn is brought out depending on the sex. A male child takes three days and female child, four days after birth. People are invited, mainly relatives, and the initiation ceremony starts in the morning until evening. The child is brought out mainly by the aunt then she will run round the house while the other relatives will run after her with some sticks, symbolizes weapon, specially gun. As the people run they make noise like gun. The process is like that of escaping from the conflict. This evidence shows that the people are prepared or initiated for conflict by the tradition from birth.<sup>4</sup>

There are differences in the training and formation of male and female child according to the traditions. But in both tribes there is the concept that a male child is the protector of the family and the clans, from invaders therefore must be trained to be brave and strong.

There are different stages of life of the Acholi and Madi people depending on the age. The grandparents, the parents, the youth and the children are categorised according to their initiation group. The Acholi termed the initiating group as *monyomiji*. This group is between eighteen and thirty-five years of age. However, respect is given according to the age, the eldest are respected more. The elders are seen as the backbone of the community; wisdom and experience of life comes from them. Therefore, the elders are the only figures who keep the peace in the community. The community to be energetic and fighters and protectors; the youth group must be

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Zacariah; June, 10th

brave and strong.<sup>5</sup>

The next phase of initiation starts from Eighteen to Thirty-five years of age. This initiation period is once every fifteen or twenty year. It is the most important phase in the life of the community members. It is the phase where traditional laws, culture and customs are taught for three or four months. The process is like training a soldier. The young men are given spears and ladies use *ateti* a kind of basket made from bamboo. The tribal mark is done also this time. The discipline is to the maximum as the young men and women stay and spend night together.

The initiation process is as brutal as the military training. The young men and women are forced to under go painful experiences. Normally after initiation they are very brutal. The important aspect is that all are faithful and obedient to the elder's order and the traditional laws.

#### 1.4 THE ROLE OF ELDERS.

Elders in any African communities are highly respected. They are believed by all to be the leading figures, the pillars and source of wisdom. For these reasons they are highly respected by the community members. The elders are the peacemakers when there is conflict with other communities. Likewise, they have the power to approve or not to approve conflict that rises with other communities. The elders are the ones who resolve and reconcile the parties in conflict. For these reasons, they are the most important figures in the community during conflict. In the words of William Conton, said, "African generally have deep and ingrained respect for old age, and even when we can find nothing to admire in an old man, we will not easily forget that his gray hairs have earned him right to courtesy and politeness"

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with Zacariah aged 50: June, 10th, 1998; Agojo settlement, Uganda

In the past when there was war, the Acholi and Madi communities combined together to face the common enemies. These enemies were other ethnic groups who were their neighbors, fighting for grazing-land and water for their livestock. They had four different chiefs mentioned above. Shortly war broke among them due to water shortage. All the communities under four chiefs had only one place to fetch water for all their domestic use. When the other chiefs realized that they were losing the war, they sent some elders to ask for peace and reconciliation. The winning side imposed on the losing side condition and they accepted. These elders as peace - makers, were respected by all and were moving to and fro with messages of the chief without being attacked. At last the two warring parties came together, through the mediation of the elders, and did the reconciliation, using the rituals required and the demand paid and peace was reached.<sup>6</sup>

The elders have all the powers of formation, they are the ones to be contacted and are made responsible for any crime of any member in the community in which they belong. Therefore, any elder gives instruction to any person belonging to his/her community. No member of the community does what he/she wants, because all the elders live in unity. Each elder has full power over any child, whether the child belongs to him or not.

### *1.5 THE TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND BELIEFS.*

“One of the bases on which the Acholi and Madi mode of life rests is ‘participation’ or the profound communion with the universe. It is here, perhaps, that one can try to pin down the differences between the European and the African art of living. The European’s major project is that of liberating and transforming the world,

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Lapson Omoya aged 57, on June, 25th, 1998; Okusijoni Settlement, Uganda.

even though he has not yet obtained fully the technical means of doing so. While these particular communities' main project is to live a life in harmony with humanity and with nature, even if he is engaged in modern work of transformation. While firmly preserving certain individualism, each member does not easily detach himself from the human and natural milieu in which he finds himself. For him the first evil is disintegration. The good thing is integration and participation".<sup>7</sup>

Generally most people in their traditions are conscious of total participation in human life, in the great family which includes ancestors, the living and those who are to come. Thus, the Acholi and Madi communities, man sees himself in harmony with man, with those who are living, just as with those who have departed; the traditional religions are often meant to maintain the relationship with ancestors. Therefore, the traditional religion is the core of their harmonious concept of life which is seen in their relationship with the living and the departed as well as with the nature. It is here that peace and reconciliation is highly valued in their life. Considering the concept of 'the good thing is integration and participation' we draw out the evidence of their need for reconciliation to maintain integration. Whereas the effort of avoiding disintegration, which is seen as evil, shows that these communities seek reconciliation when there is disharmony.

Therefore, in the research carried out among these two communities, the most original value is the community sense, solidarity and their communion. To be isolated is to be dead. They wish to face their destiny together, and they have no need of further hope so long as they are in agreement. We can believe in the traditional rituals as long as it will help in the reconciliation process.

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<sup>7</sup> secretariatatus pro non-christian, Meeting the African Religion; p. 33.

## (b) THE ACTUAL CONFLICT SITUATION.

### 1.6 CONFLICT AND DISHARMONY.

Conflict is believed by both communities to be evil. Every individual makes effort to maintain harmony in the community. However, due to human weakness, they are likely to fall into temptation through many factors in their life experience. Most authors, in line with Mbiti's study, have given a fairly comprehensive picture of why the spirits are regular recipients of sacrifice in African religion. These evils and its commission directly effect personal and social relationships in human and in the spiritual community and as such reflect on order and peace respectively. Mbiti confirms:

“As in all societies of the world, social order and peace are recognized by African peoples as essential and sacred. Where the sense of corporate life is so deep, it is inevitable that the solidarity of the community must be maintained, otherwise there is disintegration and destruction. This order is conceived of primarily in terms of kinship relationship, which simultaneously produces many situations of tension since everybody is related to everybody else and deepens the sense of damage caused by the strain of such tension. If a person steals a sheep, personal relations are at once involved because the sheep belongs to a member of the corporate body, perhaps to someone who is a brother or a father... to the thief. As such it is an offense against the community, and its consequences affect not only the thief but also the whole body of his relative”<sup>8</sup>

This high degree sense of corporate responsibility often expressed and practices in both positive and negative senses. To be good in both Acholi and Madi

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<sup>8</sup> Oliver A. Onwubik African thought, Religion and culture pp.84

communities was believed to be the normal way of life for all the community members. So the imputation of the guilt of one to the whole of the immediate relations of the thief is because they can be the remote cause of his action by a neglect of their own responsibilities and thereby commit the sin indirectly.

### *1.7 THE ROOT OF THE CONFLICT.*

As time passed the elders gradually lost their important roles in the communities. These happened as the result of the “economic world”. Most young men and women have no access to education and marriage, due to poverty. The elders can not meet the demands of their children any more. At this time many young men and women were struggling on their own and as a result many lost confidence in their parents and respect as well. Therefore, when the ‘movement for freedom’ started many young men were able to join without the permission of their parents or elders.

The movement was against the ideology of the Islamic government in Khartoum, that any body who does not want to follow Islam must be eliminated and his property taken by the state according to the Shari’ah law. The state’s constitution article 35(1) says, the constitution renders obligatory the citizens a duty to participate in the holy war or Jihad against non-Moslems. Even the Moslem’s ‘shorter encyclopedia of Islam’ (Leiden, 1953) says, “participation in Jihad is a duty in general on all male, free, adult Muslims; it must continue to be done until the whole world is under the rule of Islam”. The targets of Jihad are non-Moslems, who must first embrace Islam. If they refuse and fight back; they and their families be enslaved and all their properties seized as booty since they have no legal rights whatsoever.

However, the freedom movement (SPLA) was against all those from South Sudan who still want to serve the Islamic government. Many of these were ignorant

about the constitution and the ideology of the Islamic government. Therefore, the root cause of the conflict stem from these facts:

There were two candidates, an Acholi and a Madi, to be elected as Members of Parliament. Since the two communities belong to one district, only one MP was to be elected. However, the two candidates started their campaign. This time the civil war had already started and it was on its second year. However, at the end of 1985, the movement spread all over the eastern part of South Sudan. In January 1986 the movement crossed into Acholi land with the aim to open up their base in the area of Owiny ki-bul. After defeating the government soldiers from Owiny-ki-bul the movement crossed back to the Ethiopian border where they had open up their base before. On their way to the Ethiopian border, many Acholi young men joined them.

These Acholi young men and other fellow comrade, came back well armed and started their operation closing all the roads linking the small towns. They planned to arrest these politicians who were made MP candidates. The Acholi candidate took off to the main town as soon as he sensed this plan. The Madi candidate on his way to the main town by bus, fell into the ambush of the freedom fighters and he was killed. The commander of the group was an Acholi, therefore, the Madi community blamed the Acholi for killing their leader. As a result they started recruiting militia in order to prevent the movement from any attack. It was this militia who started the massacre in Acholi area, revenging for the killing of their leader. Since there were many Acholi young men in the movement, they also went and massacred the Madi community. Thousands of people lost their lives in the conflict and nothing was done to bring the two communities into reconciliation process.<sup>9</sup>

However, the civil war deteriorated and these same communities took refuge

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with a soldier involved in the massacre, July 19, 1998.



together in Uganda. In Uganda the conflict continued and the camp commander intervened and strongly expressed the Uganda's law, which persecuted any refugee found guilty of a crime. This law later forced the refugees from fighting each other. Those who fell under this law were severely punished by serving long term imprisonment. But the imprisonment did not help them to reconcile with one another. There is still a lot of fear and suspicion specially those who were convicted and released after their term of imprisonment.

### *1.8 THE YOUTH INVOLVEMENT.*

Obviously, it is inconceivable to think of these two particular communities. We are tracing how conflict and disharmony entered both communities. One factor is that there was no proper formation for children into adulthood. And as we know, children are the future of any nation, society and family. They must receive proper formation in the early years of their development. In my interviews I found that the traditional laws does not punish an individual in the community. For example, before in both traditions, if a boy abuses his mother, father, uncle or any elderly person, the whole groups (mainly of the same age) are punished together. Their parents will make the local beer a quantity of one twenty litres for each child. This system of punishment is realized that it was not affecting the child involved in the crime. Compare to other forms of punishments, where an individual is severely punished and will never commit the same crime again, such as in the formal system of education.

### *1.9 LACK OF INFUSTRUCTURES.*

In the traditional communities like the Acholi and Madi communities, before the formal education (before the colonial era) the young are trained first how they

could produce food. They do this by helping the parents in cultivation. They are also taught how to catch fish and hunt with their spears, bow and arrows. They are also introduced into various assignments and task; to defend their land and animals. They do this by obtaining basic training from their elders who are experts to guard their land from any foreign intruders. These assignments help to entrench them in traditional life

After the colonial era, they were introduced formally to learning career through formal education and vocational training. With this they develop concepts of career choice, dictated by the modern demands in industries and economic. However, in the war torn areas like in South Sudan, particularly in Equatoria Region where war is still reigning with unabated fury since independence 1956, the young are bewildered and disillusioned at the prospect of their future. There are no infrastructures like schools to educate and prepare the youth for the future. The only school available for them is the prevalent in their environment from the war, many by-product emanates aggression, vengeance, decadence of moral and traditional values. The sanctity of human life and the respect for property is thus devalued. The war has facilitated easy procurement of arms almost every household paving ways of informal groups to organize killing, looting other people. Many frustrated young people had joined the military services to rape, steal and harass people with their guns. The gun has become a solution to all their problems. This had been the root of disharmony and conflict in both Acholi and Madi communities.

## PART TWO

### (a) CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION

#### 2.1 *FEAR AND SUSPICION.*

In the communities of the Acholi and Madi, people live together, sharing food and drinks with all the community members. They work under participation in solidarity with those who are disable and protecting them. However, in my research I realized that there is no more sharing of any kind of food or drinks because of fear and suspicion. I can say that this fear and suspicion exist among all the Sudanese ethnic and tribal groups due to political and tribal conflict that resulted to thousands of people killed in massacres before taking refuge in Uganda. While on the other hand, fear of being poisoned as some people have poison.

This fact of fear and suspicion is very strong as a result there is disunity even among the political leaders. We can prove this from the real situation of division in the movement during the recent years. Ignorance has ruined the entire country as every body struggle for his own interest. This applies to all ethnic/tribal group in conflict that united we stand strong and separated we fall into pieces.

These cases of poison among the members of these two communities highlight the fact that there is no unity and communitarian life. Most people I interviewed said those with poison are killing their own blood relationships. This poison is put in the local beer or drinking water, some are called land mines; you step on it and tomorrow you are dead. Others are called gun-ship, very difficult to avoid. It is put on the grass along the roadside. This evil act is found among elderly people of both sexes. People of these two communities, Acholi and Madi, had lost sense of community life and the concept of extended family due to conflict and disharmony caused by using poison to

destroy life. According to my observation, the family is becoming more and less concerned of each other and therefore, appears to be heading individualistic type of life.

Many people have lost their lives after being poisoned by their own community members. An eyewitness reported this fact. "A man was poisoned and died within four hours. Among the people who came to mourn him, a woman of about twenty-eight years old was poisoned on the first day of the funeral. Everybody left the funeral, fearing to get poison. I went to see the woman poisoned the following day and got her still alive. We prayed for her while a woman, believe by the people to be a diviner, was busy trying to get rid of the poison from the lady's left arm. Fortunately, the lady recovered but still complaining that sometimes she sleeps during night, but not often. The arm of this woman is half paralyzed, now six weeks".<sup>10</sup>

There is a lot of fear among the people about this poison. Some even migrated leaving pieces of land cultivated with young crops, and are forced to hire houses in other areas where citizen live. This instability has resulted to lack of food, disintegration, disease and death. To my surprise this evil act is happening among the communities whom we believe that 70% of them are Christians. How far will this fear continue among the people? It depends on our Christian teaching and formation of the new generation.

## **2.2 UNDERSTAND THE TRADITIONAL LAWS.**

At the end of the initiation period, the authority to protect traditional laws is handed to the newly initiated group. One of their duties is to see that the people follow the traditional laws. For example, if somebody committed crime, like murder,

the person will be brought before the court. This court comprises of elders from the side of the offender and the offended. They will discuss and find out what was the problem. Then the family of the deceased will ask for compensation. This is mainly a young girl to be given to the family of the diseased. Then some rituals will be done, a goat will be slaughtered and the blood is used to cleanse the offender and the family from sin.

This shows that the traditional law does not exclude the offender from the community, like sending him to prison. However, the civil law that sends the offender in prison, excluding him/her from the community and does not reconcile him/her from the crime committed. When the offender is released from prison, he/she still feels guilty and ashamed to come back to the community. The family of the diseased will not forgive him/her and will seek vengeance, as a result there will be fear and suspicion in the community which will result to taking refuge for protection.

The civil law seek to identify the function and the goal of human enterprise and a complex of social activity reflecting human purposeful. The law is intended to accomplish the need of the people within their society by their socially oriented activities. Even the church said the valid law produced by the authority must function to produce the common good. Thus law must aim at producing justice through the ordered goodness of the activities of the members who act together under the law. The colonialists that interacted with the traditional law influence the civil law. However, it brought growing awareness of need to balance two distinguishable function.

In my research among the Acholi and Madi communities, it is worth mentioning that the concept of civil law did not help the two communities in terms of reconciliation. These people have a saying that 'a man outside his clan is like 'a

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<sup>10</sup> An eyewitness Gerald aged 34, on July 2nd, 1998.

grasshopper which has lost its wing'. The concept of Civil law to exclude people, who had committed crimes like murder, from the society by sending them into imprisonment, had done more harms than good. We realized that at the end of imprisonment, releases them without any kind of reconciliation and ritual made, as a result the person after his/her release, is still guilty of going back to join the community life. As a matter of fact, the families of the deceased did not reconcile, and had remained aggressive toward the offender; no matter how long he/she had served the prison. We should note that about 60% of those who were convicted of crimes became even worst than before.

In my research, I interviewed a teacher who refused to be identified by name and school, said 'my brother was arrested by two SPLA soldiers whom I knew very well, they took him and killed him before reaching the main camp nor before the officer in charge. I followed them the following day in the camp. In the camp I went to plead to the officer in charge. The officer told me he had no case reported a day before. However, since I know the soldiers who brought my brother, I told the officer their names and they were brought before him immediately. They were found guilty of killing my brother innocently. The reason they gave was that this brother abused them. The two were put in prison for fifteen years under hard labor. When I took refuge here in Uganda I met the two in the refugees settlement. They have been released to go and fight in the front line after which they found their way to Uganda. I asked the teacher what was his feeling about them, and his answer was 'I would like to see them dead like my brother'. I did not care even if they were to serve in prison for fifteen years.'<sup>11</sup>

This evidence shows the root cause of vengeance that framed the conflict

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with a teacher aged 47, July 2nd, 1998. Alere Settlement. Uganda.

among the people. 'We must consider the African mentality of community as an entity that remains, while individuals, as persons, come and go. The African emphasizes community life and communalism as a living principle of which the basic ideology is community identity'<sup>12</sup>

Steve Biko said, 'we regard our living together not as an unfortunate mishap warranting endless competition among us but as a deliberate act of God to make us a community of brothers and sisters jointly involved in the quest for a composite answer to the varied problems of life. Hence, all our action is usually joint community-oriented action rather than the individualism'.

Therefore, the civil law must put into consideration the traditional aspect of reconciliation before it convicts the offender. Considering the people's belief that when a blood is shed into the soil a ritual should be done in order to receive good harvest of the crops.

### 2.3 *TRADITIONAL RECONCILIATION*

Among the Acholi, if the husband fight his wife and close her out of the house, he will kill a goat in order for the wife to enter that house again. If there was only quarrel between husband and wife, they will share about the cause of their problem and confess before the elders, accepting their fault, then the elders will bring a guard full of water mix with simsim. It will be given to each, drinking and spitting it back in the same container then the other also does the same. The leaves of a particular tree is used to split the water on the children, while they use the words 'be clean from your evil act and let the bad spirit go with the sunset'.

In the case of murder, the recociliation is more serious. The individual

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<sup>12</sup> Oliver A. Onwubiko, African thought, Religion and Culture, p. 14.

involved in the murder is brought before the assembly. This is only if the individual did the murder accidentally. Such cases happens in the hunting areas when a person intend to shoot an animal and the arrow divert to a person. Hence, the one involved will bring a goat and in front of the assembly will say few words as he pierced the goat. He/she will take the blood of the goat and smear it on the family of the deceased. Then the liver of the goat is cooked and shared together as a sign of reconciliation with that family. The Christian did not accept these traditional reconciliation ceremonies and this is where the people are rigid with a dramatic change.

In Africa there is a way of coming together, in a traditional milieu, and this must be respected. Libermann, the missionary pioneer to Africa says, "we must be negroes with the negroes". This is simply to follow their way of communitarian life and reconciliation with one another as well. Even Christian are able to live together because of the sacrament of reconciliation. We should take into account the sociological factors as St. Francis Xavier did in his experience in Japan, to show us that success in making contact is often achieved through showing respect for the social structures. However, if in our approach to these communities we can appreciate thier traditional process of reconciliation then they can also appreciate our Christian teaching and with that we can preach the Gospel in terms of reconciliation effectively.

#### *2.4 SOME IMPORTANT SYMBOLS.*

For peace the communities, Acholi and Madi, use white feathers of an Ostrich before they had clothes. Now they use white piece of clothes. The messengers move around with their weapons covered mainly to protect themselves from wild animals. Green leaves and a guard full of water is used for blessing. It could be blessing to go



and fight or as a sign of peace between the warring group. For conflict the communities use red feathers of the same species mentioned above. There is also the traditional body decoration, using red soil mixed with oil

“In the past before the colonial era, if the chief wants to fight the other chief, he will send the messenger with the red feather fixed in a piece of grass to the other chief. If the other chief is ready to fight he will also use the same symbol to answer that chief. The root cause of such conflict was provoked by songs termed as ‘werabee’ which means indirect songs mainly use to insult someone mostly coward chiefs or leaders of the communities”.<sup>13</sup>

Generally, all Africans have symbols for reconciliation in order to maintain harmony in the community. It is highly considered by all the community members. In my research, I found among the Acholi and Madi communities several symbols of reconciliation. These symbols are different from one type of reconciliation to another, depending on the individual act and beliefs and level of crime committed. From the family act of reconciliation to the tribal level, generally the symbols are similar according to the beliefs of each community.

The following are some symbols in common:

Water (is also a symbol of life)

Animals (goats, sheep, cows and hens) blood.

Gecko blood. (night lizard)

Animal liver (camo oput)

Some of these symbols are very important in the life of these particular communities therefore, should be encouraged.

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with Saverio aged 55, July, 12th 1998; Mungula Settlement, Uganda.

## (b) THEOLOGICAL ASPECTS.

### 2.5 *EVALUATION OF CHRISTIAN APPROACH*

The main scandal is that Christians are fighting and killing each other; Christians are suffering from the same members of faith. Division and hatred among many tribes, the more they are becoming Christians the more they hate each other. Among the Acholi and Madi who are considered the most Christian group compare to other ethnic groups in South Sudan. Truly they are christians with very little knowledge about Christianity following their act of violence in the past years that resulted to conflict and hatred among themselves. We are ashamed, as Christians preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ. Considering what happened in Burundi and Rwanda, it seemed our Christian approach had not been well understood or inculturated. We should evaluate our Christian way of teaching and approach so that Christianity takes its peaceful root. There are people who are still saying that Christianity is 'the religion of the white people.' This reveals that many people know very little about Christianity. People who know about Christianity are those who are stretching their helping hands and are looking for ways and means to bring peace and reconciliation to their people.

Teresa Okure wrote in her article that, "in the sphere of religion, music is subject to the same laws and rules as is any other art, or indeed art in general. However, we are aware that in recent years some artists have greatly offended Christian feelings. They have dared to introduce into Christian worship compositions of theirs, which are completely devoid of religious inspiration. Moreover, these compositions offend against the appropriate laws of art. These people attempt to find plausible reasons for this deplorable procedure, in what they insist is the real nature

and character of art. One of their usual arguments is that an artist's soul is guided by an inspiration that is free. Accordingly, they say, it is not right to subject the artist to laws and rules, whether religious or moral, that are foreign to art itself. Such restrictions would only do great injustice to art's rightful worth, and bind and fetter the artist in his inspired activity."

Arguments of this kind obviously raise a difficult and important question, affecting every kind of inculturation. It must be decided in the light of something altogether fundamental, namely, the final purpose of human life that can guide their action through their own way of life, provided it keeps harmony in the community. Even if our complain goes back to the work of the former missionaries, who were the pioneers of African missions, we believe that those missionaries have the desire to share with the African peoples the message of peace and redemption entrusted to the church by God. For the love of God, the missionaries left their own families and countries and gave their very lives for the welfare of Africa.

## *2.6 INCULTURATION AS A WAY TO EVANGELIZATION.*

The basic assumption of inculturation is that once we have established more clearly the scriptural and theological principles involved, we are then better prepared to adopt apt strategies for promoting authentic and effective inculturation. Inculturation is not just a twentieth century, and specifically an African problem, which grows out of reappraisal of our cultural heritage, or consequent from our colonization.

Theologically speaking, inculturation belongs to the very core of the history of the fulfillment of the church's universal mission of evangelisation. However, if we can accept those traditions that promotes reconciliation in a significant way

mentioned above, we can enter into the life of the people, using their own traditional approach to promote the reconciliation process. Inculturation for the New Testament Christian arose, as an indirect, but natural consequence of living their faith in Jesus of Nazareth, accepted as the messiah, the Christ, God's unique and final agent of salvation for all peoples of the human race is destroyed, down graded or absorbed. Yet each is enriched and mysteriously transformed by the other. Less effort had been done to adopt the Gospel into an African culture. But we should also note that the diversity of the African culture made it difficult to work on. The Church in Africa is still European, Latin oriented it must be African in order to obtain its traditional reconciliatory process.

The fact that we have cultures in diversity, the inculturation is an integration of a new culture based on peaceful Christian culture. The culture that promotes unity and love for one another. I believe that the process of inculturation had not yet taken its root among many of our communities in particular the Acholi and Madi. There are some signs and symbols which are parallel to our traditional beliefs, such as striking the chest at the beginning of the Mass, showing sorry to God for the sin a person has committed. I asked, Dario Omoya, aged 55, (Magwi), what is the meaning of striking the chest in our traditional beliefs? He answered, in our traditional beliefs, striking the chest to someone shows an aggression act of wanting to fight the other. It is the sign of conflict not reconciliatory act as Christians think.

For confession Dario said, according to our traditional beliefs, confession is done in public during reconciliation process. The person involved in stealing, fighting or murdering cases confesses in public, mostly elders, accepting the crime he/she had done. Everybody will acknowledge his/her willingness to maintain harmony in the community and accept him/her back in the community. Until the people accept his/her

guilt then the water or a goat will be slaughter and blood used in the reconciliatory process, depending on the type of crime committed. Otherwise denial of any act will lead to rejection of that particular individual from that particular community if there is concrete evidence about the crime. But he continued that normally the elders curses such an individual, believing that it is better for one evil person to die than the whole community to perish.

Likewise, Christianity does the same process but there is some misunderstanding in the sense that the African found it difficult to confess to someone who is not in conflict with, such as to a priest. They do believe that the priest is the representative and mediator between God and humankind. They always want to reconcile with the person in conflict first and then search for God's forgiveness through the priest.

There was a case of two people in one of the Parish. The two men live together but they do not greet or talk to each other. After sometimes the priest came to know about their problem. The priest who was an African, before the communion, asked them to come in front and confess their problem in public. Willingly, both stood up and went in front and did the confession and both greeted each other. Then the Eucharist was distributed to the people. The two men continued with the peace process in their location by completing the reconciliation process using the water and other required rituals.

## 2.7 *rites of reconciliation and peace.*

All African cultures have traditional rites of reconciliation. Depending upon the seriousness of the situation, these rites may involve the sacrifice of an animal, usually a sheep or goat or a bull. When two families, or two members of the same

clan have had strained relations for along time. One member develops a sore on the finger like leprosy symptoms, it can be healed by ceremonial healing process '*ahor*' in the following ways: All the members of the two families on an agreed day, and the affected member is brought and put to sit in front of the door facing out side. Some questions will follow and the member will be asking to confess to the assembly. On such and such a day I got upset and angry with that brother of mine...'In minute detail he/she describes the occasion of his/her evil mood. It's real cause, the words of curse he had uttered, and the kind of evil thoughts, intention and dreams he had come to nurse against his/her enemy, and perhaps even against some innocent members of his/her family and clan. In a word, he/she cleanses his/her heart thoroughly.

A goat will be slaughtered and blood put on the face and feet while the one involved says "if that was the cause of your sickness let it be cleansed by this blood and enters into the mountain. The meat of that goat will not be eaten by either of the family, it will be given to other people far from that relations.

(c) ***RECOMMENDATION AND OBSERVATION.***

"If our claim to speak for Africa has any meaning, then these (million of refugees) remain our responsibility... they are victims of forces beyond their control; it could happen to any one. The manner in which they know un avoidably look to us for succour may be the way we ourselves will tomorrow be looking to others." (Julius Nyerere, 1979)

In Sudan there are still people on the move as the war deteriorates. All the neighboring countries are expecting refugee influx from Sudan any time. Although the number entering is small, the number keeps on increasing. All of us are needed to solve the problem of the refugees. Actually they are not the problems; they are our

brothers and sisters. The problem stems from war and conflict, oppression and all forms of human right abuses. What can we do? Our resources are meager, our own needs many. At least we can listen to their stories and try to respond to them as St. Peter did to the beggar. "I have no money at all, but I give you what I have". (Acts 3:6). Peter reached out to the beggar and helped him up, by reaching out with understanding and compassion. To the refugee, we restore their dignity and renew their hope. In turn they enrich our lives, for they show you and me the face of a God who suffers in our midst

*(d) COMMENTS.*

"Theologian Robert Schreiter advises that we can best work on reconciliation, keeping in mind, that true reconciliation does not mean 'a hasty peace,' where the entire history of violence and suffering are avoided or overlooked. The causes and situations of violence and suffering must be acknowledged and accepted sincerely by all concerned as a first, indispensable step of reconciliation process. Then we must understand that liberation from open and hidden violence situations created by injustice, oppression and anger must be changed. We should consider that reconciliation is not essentially "a manage process," it is beyond human negotiating skills. Genuine reconciliation is rather a gift of God, and if we are sincere at heart, we discover it as God's prior understanding and forgiveness."<sup>14</sup>

The problem of conflict and war is theological. Man's basic need today is the need for spiritual birth. He needs a new nature which God alone can impart through His son, Jesus Christ. The solution to any conflict begins with the individual. We can reorganize the refugee communities involved in the conflict and create a

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<sup>14</sup> New People, July 14, 1998.

reconciliatory process in their environment. Create awareness on what had happen and help them built a society of peace and harmony. Forming Small Christian Communities (SCCs) among them must be the first priority in the work of evangelization.

The Church owes to the poor the gift of faith therefore, in words and deeds, the Church must make known a Jesus who does not judge according to the deeds, but who loves them for their suffering. A Jesus who neither takes credit for the miracle performed, nor carries on self-affirming propaganda after healing has taken place. The Jesus of the Gospel says: "Go in peace, for your faith has saved you." If the Church will preach this Jesus, then there will be a real possibility for the African to become outstanding followers of Jesus and there will be peace and love in all communities of the world. The Church has a duty to empower people to become aware of what is happening in the society such as corruption, violence, poverty, impunity, and to bring peace and justice. And this is the mission of the Catholic Church.

## CONCLUSION.

It is quite obvious that, throughout the ages, conflict and war has been the rule on earth, and peace has been the exception. Nicholas Rowe explained that conflict and war is "the needy bankrupt's resort." While Thomas Hobbes said there are three principal causes of war: "competition, diffidence, and glory." But the ancient philosopher, Plato, was probably the closest to the truth when he said, "wars and factions and fighting have no other source than the body and its lust. It is for the getting of wealth that all our wars arise; and we are compelled to get wealth because of our body, to whose service we are slaves."

According to my investigation, the fear and suspicion between the two



communities was the result of the tribal and political killing that happened during the civil war in the Sudan. This issue should be addressed by the church and the church must implement civic education to the communities involved in order to learn about their traditional rights and duty of maintaining harmony and peace in their social settings.

Finally on the role of the Church, Rev. Fr. Gatu of Nairobi diocese wrote in Mwananchi, article No.266, of August 1998, that 'the Church had a responsibility to create a new climate the trouble areas and make authorities understand their role as peacemakers. The Church has the loudest voice in bringing people together and a duty to reconcile those in conflicts.

## APENDIX NO. 1

**Comboni missionaries working in South Sudan.**



**Preliminary Assembly of South Sudan Delegation; January 1998.**

## APENDIX NO. 2

### The Chapel of Agojo East Refugees Settlement.



Meeting the Christian of the Settlement.

### **APENDIX NO. 3.**

**The Homily on Reconciliation among the Sudanese in the Refugees Settlement.**



**His Lordship Bishop Paride Taban of Torit Diocese- South Sudan.**

## APENDIX NO. 2

### Reconciliation done in Robidire Refugees Settlement.



A goat is pulled for reconciliation process.

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