

Sequela Comboni:
Writing Theological Ethnography in the Context of Empire

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Abstract

In the last half-dozen years or so, the idea and practice of borrowing ethnographic methods in the doing of theology has grown. Some contributors to this discussion, including myself, draw upon ethnographic methods in order to facilitate the writing of a theology that, we hope, exhibits solidarity with the poor and the marginalized. A key problem with the doing of theology as solidarity, however, is that writing itself has a troubled history. Levi-Strauss puts the point uncategorically: the only phenomenon with which writing has always been concomitant is the creation of empires. If we want to practice theology as a form of solidarity, then we have to face directly the issue of writing. The best place to begin such discernment is to investigate previous efforts to do theologically-oriented ethnography. The focus of the present article is on the activity of the Comboni missionaries among the Acholi people of northern Uganda in the first half of the twentieth century. However, my primary aim in examining the practices of the Combonis is not to either justify or condemn *them*, but rather to ask what their practices can tell us about the liabilities of *our* doing theological ethnography.

In what follows, I first provide an overview of the religious practices of the ethnic Acholi. Then I elaborate how such practices have worked through an oral/aural medium. This will allow me, in the next section, to show how the British used writing both to shut down the Acholi “magic” and produce their own. When the colonial magic of the written word failed—as evidenced in the panoply of forms of Acholi resistance—the British turned to violence. In the ensuing sections, I show how, under imperial pressure and in response to their own sufferings, the Comboni missionaries who evangelized northern Uganda rewrote salvation history (such that explorer Samuel Baker becomes the new Moses and Gulu, a town constructed through forced labor, is the New Jerusalem) rather than follow Christ in a way that likely would have brought about either their internment or their expulsion. In the final section, I run a thought experiment that places the present-day academic theological ethnographer in a life-situation much like that of the Combonis—curb your writing or face expulsion—so as to give us a sense of what the social pressures were like for the missionaries.

The only phenomenon with which writing has always been concomitant is the creation of cities and empires, that is, the integration of large numbers of individuals in a political system and their grading into castes or classes. . . . It seems to have favored the exploitation of human beings rather than their enlightenment.

—Claude Levi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*

In the last half-dozen years or so, the idea and practice of borrowing ethnographic methods in the doing of theology has grown, as is evidenced by this, the second issue of *Practical Matters* to focus on the subject. Some contributors to this discussion, including myself, draw upon ethnographic methods in order to facilitate the writing of a theology that, we hope, exhibits solidarity with the poor and the marginalized.¹ Ethnography, if done well, helps to bring the lives and the voices of the poor and the marginalized into the project of theology. A key problem with the doing of theology as solidarity, however, is that writing itself has a troubled history. Levi-Strauss puts the point uncategorically: the *only* phenomenon with which writing has *always* been concomitant is the creation of empires. Our own projects seem to have a second burden of proof in that professional anthropologists themselves have, with only a few exceptions, long held that theologically-oriented ethnography, most often carried out by missionaries, has been and is complicit in imperialism. John Burton writes regarding his time as an anthropology student that “it was a moral imperative to profess a highly critical attitude towards missionaries of all devotions.” Missionaries are not often the focus of anthropological writing, but when they are, according to Burton, “they are mentioned primarily as agents of colonialism.”² While theologians are by now used to countering criticisms of religion that are rooted in secularist biases and anxieties, we are

less used to addressing the problematics associated with writing itself. If we want to practice theology as a form of solidarity, however, we have to face directly the issue of writing. Our vocations depend on discerning ways to be exceptions to Levi-Strauss's rule.

The best place to begin such discernment is to investigate previous efforts to do theologically-oriented ethnography. Michael Rynkiewicz, an anthropologist, argues, "Anthropologists should treat missionaries as they do any other enigmatic group; they should do ethnographies of missionaries *before* justifying or condemning, if either needs to be done".³ The focus of the present article is on the activity of the Comboni missionaries among the Acholi people of northern Uganda in the first half of the twentieth century. However, my primary aim in examining the practices of the Combonis is not either to justify or condemn *them*, but rather to ask what their practices can tell us about the liabilities of *our* doing theological ethnography. I can say in advance that, in my judgment, under immense imperial pressure combined with the hardship of outpost evangelization, the Comboni community in northern Uganda used writing in way that, in the technical language of Catholic moral theology, constituted "formal cooperation with evil," in this case, the evil of British imperialism.

In their own, emic terms, the Combonis assessed themselves in light of the life of *sequela Christi*—following Christ—which for members of the congregation takes place through imitating the life of their founder, Daniel Comboni. Thus the title of this article. Over time and as the result of many, even daily, decisions, however, the Combonis turned—in increments that I am sure were not fully perceptible to them—from following Christ to actively supporting empire. It would be facile to assume that imperial pressures are any less forceful today. My aim is to investigate whether there are things in the Comboni response for which we ought to be watchful in our own practice of theological ethnography.

I use the rubric of "magic" to frame the analysis. Magic, as I am thinking of it here, is the capacity via symbolic action to transform one reality into another and to have the new reality accepted by the intended audiences. As we will see, the Acholi people of northern Uganda had their own forms of magic; the British brought the magic of writing. Writing, in the eyes of the newcomers, converted the vast "empty" land that was Africa into parceled colonies and protectorates belonging to Europeans. The Combonis—with the Eucharist, devotion to the Cross, veneration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and belief in the miraculous efficacy of their practices—brought still another magic. Yet they also brought writing and were, for all practical purposes, conscripted by the British to establish schools to teach writing for the sake of the empire to the Acholi.

The mission setting was, therefore, one of competing magics. When the colonial magic of writing failed to convince the Acholi that their land was under the command of the British, the latter turned to violence. The Combonis found themselves in an ongoing quandary: collaborate in the writing-violence dynamic or be expelled and thus unable to practice the magic of the Eucharist. If the choice seems easy, then we have failed to account for the fact that the Combonis considered evangelization through word and sacrament to be their vocation, and that anthropologists them-

selves have questioned the binary equation of missionary = preacher/knower/converter (or even destroyer); anthropologist = listener/doubter/conserver.⁴ Academic anthropologists—religiously-oriented or otherwise—have a vocation to write. Writing in the context of empire presents us with issues much like those that the Combonis faced. If we are to practice what George Stocking fittingly called “the ethnographer’s magic”—careful description and interpretation with a claim to the real—without collaborating with imperial violence, then it is crucial that we learn what we can from earlier theologically-driven ethnographers.⁵

In what follows, I proceed in several movements. First, I provide an overview of Acholi religiosity and the ways in which activity at clan and ancestral shrines and by free agent spirit mediums have worked the local magic. Then I elaborate how such religiosity has worked through an oral/aural medium. This will allow me, in the next section, to show how the British used writing in an effort both to shut down the Acholi magic and produce their own. When the colonial magic of the written word failed—as evidenced in the panoply of forms of Acholi resistance—the British turned to violence. Enter the Combonis. In the ensuing sections, I show how, under imperial pressure and in response to their own sufferings, the missionaries rewrote salvation history (such that explorer Samuel Baker becomes the new Moses and Gulu, a town constructed through forced labor, is the New Jerusalem) rather than follow Christ in a way that likely would have brought about either their internment in or their expulsion from Uganda. In the final section, I run a thought experiment that places the present-day academic theological ethnographer in a life-situation much like that of the Combonis—curb your writing or face expulsion—so as to give us a sense of what the social pressures were like for the missionaries.

*Acholi Religiosity*⁶

Aya Korina stomps the ground and spits holy water at me. Not Korina, really, but one of her several *jogi*, who possesses her. Although there is a four-foot clay vat of it, the water, like consecrated holy water everywhere, is not for drinking. It is for blessing and healing purposes only—and to ward off evil. *Jok Jagero*—“the fierce one”—spits in the other three directions, using Korina’s mouth and lips as his aspergillum.

Jagero is a free *jok*—literally, a “free spirit”—who, in contrast to chiefdom or ancestral *jogi*, is not attached to a particular shrine or natural landmark like a river or rock outcropping. He can, and does, come from great distances, most often when Korina bids, but sometimes without her asking.

Ten years ago, Korina fell sick, severely so, and went to an *ajwaka*, or, as the early mission dictionaries translate it, a witch doctor. The *ajwaka* told her to slaughter a black male goat at a mountain called *Lacic* and to sprinkle its blood. From the *ajwaka*’s house, *Jok Jagero* lifted Korina, as she put it, “up into the sky” and placed her back on the ground at Mt. Lacic. “It came as a madness,” Korina told me today before being possessed, “a sort of cruelty.” She slaughtered the goat, and “the gate of the mountain opened wide revealing a

cave, showing me all of the items that I have shown you today.”

Animal hides cover the center floor of Korina’s thatch-roofed and windowless wattle and daub home: one from *dolo*, a colobus monkey; two from *noya*, a fox-like animal with “a cruelty like that of a leopard.” She needs the skins of fierce animals to help bring in like-spirited *jogi*. Roots and herbs for curing ailments from anxiety to infertility trim the walls of the hut. As instructed by Jagero, she wears a garland and crisscrossing bandoliers of cowry shells. “If I do not wear them, the spirits will quarrel with me. ‘Why don’t you follow my law? My directive is to wear these shells. Put them on, then my spirit will be free to come.’” Such shells were first brought to northern Uganda when Arabic-speaking merchants and raiders came here from the north, using them as currency in the ivory and slave trade in the 1850s.

A mushroom-shaped stool, called *adwi*, remains in the middle of the room from a curing-exorcism Korina completed just yesterday. The sick sit on the stool for three days, going outside only to relieve themselves. The *ajwaka*’s assistants aid in feeding the person. Otherwise, they form a circle around the sick, shaking *ajaa*—oil-smeared gourd rattles—dancing and carrying out call-and-response chant with Maria while she goes about her work. On the third day they shave the patient’s head hair. The small inverted pot—*koro tipu*, or literally, “house in which to chase and hold the spirit”—that Korina placed on his head to draw the evil spirit out of him remains on the floor, together with scattered *nyim anyallo kweng*, a commonly eaten but also special kind of sesame seed used, when blessed, for healing the sick.

Jagero barks and whoops and says something that I do not catch. I can follow Korina’s Acholi far better than I can his. But the attendants have no problem and respond with well-timed assents and affirmations to the *jok*’s utterances and pronouncements. They, too—six of them—wear the cowry shell garlands. Jagero-Korina spins and dances facing the wall, with a *noya* skin tied around her waist and strings of bells around each ankle so that each stomp is followed by a harsh yet melodic ringing. Seven times, s/he alternates between call-and-response chant with the attendants and what to my ears—since I cannot keep up—sounds like Acholi glossolalia.

The possession lasts about half an hour. It winds down slowly: the stomps not as vigorous, the bells not as loud, the speech not as fast. Finally, Aya Korina sits down, facing me, her knees still bouncing, then slowing, then still—everything quiet except her ribs and lungs, which do quick, though not as violent, compressions that expel sharp bursts of air, the traces of Jagero as he leaves.

* * *

In order to understand the impact of the Combonis’ practice of mission anthropology on Acholi culture and religiosity, it is important first to limn the shape of that culture and religiosity prior to colonial engagement.⁷ Okot p’Bitek’s *Religion of the Central Luo* is taken by most scholars as a touchstone for what Acholi religiosity must have been like before the incursion of the British Empire. P’Bitek focuses on three types of *jogi*—spirits—as they manifest themselves in different

loci of religious practice.⁸ The first is the chiefdom *jok*, who is called upon in an annual feast at the chiefdom shrine. Priests, male and female, officiate at the rite—an occasion when the person of the chief recedes and the emphasis is on the purification and rededication of the people to the chiefdom *jok*. The second locus of religious activity is the *abila*, the clan lineage ancestral shrine where there is a “meeting of the living and the dead.” There is not, in traditional Acholi belief, a strong bifurcation between spirit and body. Therefore, the ancestors “were thought of as whole beings, not dismembered parts of man, i.e. spirits divorced from bodies.” People encountered their ancestors, therefore, “as they were known before death; their voices could be ‘recognized’ as they spoke through the diviner.”⁹ Put another way, the resurrected body is a given among the Acholi, with no waiting until the eschaton. The role of the *abila*, and the ancestors who gather there, is to protect the members of the clan against whatever dangers may confront them and to bring success to their endeavors, particularly hunting. “*Abila pa wora muptio an ki want tino*,” a woman sings at the shrine of her clan, “*Oco! Abila pa wora ogwoko an do*”—“*Abila* of my father that fed me from infancy; Oh *abila* of my father protect me oh.”¹⁰

Though p’Bitek treats the free *jogi* separately from those of the chiefdom and the ancestral shrine, his accounts of all three show that the role of the *ajwaka*, the third locus of Acholi religiosity, was fluid. He tells of one case where the priestess who officiated at the annual rite of the chiefdom shrine also had oversight of a lesser spirit, who was consulted, like the *jogi* of *ajwagi*, “for minor individual problems and sufferings.” In another case, the priestess, like an *ajwaka*, divines the sources of the illnesses and troubles of the people and proffers remedies. In yet a third, the *jok* of a diviner who performs miracles *becomes* a chiefdom *jok*.¹¹

When discussing the ancestral shrine, p’Bitek explicitly refers to the *ajwaka* as playing a role that closely matches, complete with shuddering, the one that Aya Korina performs, with the exception that the Korina calls free *jogi* rather than ancestors:

The *ajwaka* sat by the central pole. ... [S]he shook the rattle gourd, *ajaa*, called the names of the dead men of Pa-Cua, inviting them to come:

Ludongo Cua, Lalwak Wod Twon, bin;
Great men of Cua, Lalwak, Son of Bull, come;
Awobe gutoro komgi en, gikuri;
All the young men have gathered here, waiting for you;
Biyu wun weng, Keny Koropil, bin;
Come all of you, Keny Koropil, come;
Aryango, Olango, Bitek
(Aryango, Olango, Bitek)
Awobe kuru-we en, biyu.
The young men are waiting for you here, come ...

When ‘they’ came the *ajwaka* became very hysterical, and what she said was not clear. ... Then the *ajwaka* calmed down, and although she now spoke very faintly, she was more audible.¹²

The *ajwaka*'s fluidity in moving between chieftdom, ancestral and free *jok* is notable given the rather strict demarcation between roles that holds today. (I asked one chief if he was concerned about *cen*—vengeful spirits—at his shrine. He answered, "No, that is the concern of the *ajwaka*. I just care for the ancestral shrine. When I die, the task will rotate to another descendent." He made clear that there is a separation of spiritual powers between him, as chief, and the local *ajwagi*. His spirits are territorial, theirs are free; his ancestral, theirs of many originations.)

The pre-colonial Acholi respected the power of the *ajwagi*. P'Bitek elaborates, "In a significant way, their office operated as a powerful social control factor. They could always be hired by a man who had been wronged by someone stronger than him."¹³ When forces or events overran the protective capacity of the *jogi* of the chieftdom or clan ancestral shrines, the Acholi turned to the *ajwaka*. And overrun the chieftdoms and clans is precisely what the British did. They brought their own magic: the power of the written and printed word. To understand the enormity of the shift from oral to written culture, it is helpful to unpack the work of three theorists who have focused extensively on this transition: Jack Goody, Eric Havelock and Walter Ong.

From Orality to Literacy: Goody-Havelock-Ong and the Acholi

<i>Aliker, kel dyanga;</i>	Aliker, return my cattle;
<i>Ka ilwor,</i>	You coward,
<i>Mony Gala</i>	Tell the army of the white man
<i>Cung ikura</i>	To stop, and wait for me
<i>Waciwaromo Lamola</i>	We shall meet at Lamola;
<i>Iyoo, iyoo,</i>	O yes, o yes;
<i>Muloji lwor</i>	Muloji is a coward
<i>Dako loyo;</i>	Even a woman defeats him;
<i>Muloji lwor,</i>	Muloji is a coward,
<i>Muloji lwor,</i>	Muloji is a coward
<i>Dako loyo;</i>	Even a woman defeats him;
<i>Mouloji lwor,</i>	Muloji is a coward,
<i>Ee, Agwe pyelo i kaki</i>	Hey, he shits his khaki trousers;
<i>Aliker, kel dyanga.</i>	Aliker, return my cattle.

"Aliker, return my cattle." Aliker is the *rwot kalam*—"chief of the pen"—who the British installed after shipping his father, the resistant Chief Awich, to prison near Kampala. In 1947, District Commissioner A.S.A. Wright ordered Aliker to build a new road. Aliker, though the son of Awich, knew he was really a chief by imperial appointment and that his hold on his own Payira people was tenuous. So he tried to outsource the work to the Labongo clan. The British administration, in its quest for hierarchical order among the decentralized Acholi chieftdoms, subordinated the Labongo people under Aliker and the Payira. But Labongo warriors blocked Aliker when he went to enforce the work order and killed his bodyguard. Aliker retreated and mustered British

reinforcements, and together the colonialists and the Payira raided the Labongo villages, killing many of the inhabitants and stealing the cattle. A Labongo poet sang, “Alier, return my cattle / You coward / Tell the army of the white man / to stop, and wait for me / We shall meet at Lamola.”

He was not the first Acholi poet to sing defiance in the face of colonial power. Omal Lakana refused to take part in the forced labor system and the building of the town of Gulu commanded by the district commissioner:

<i>Ee, cuna mito telo,</i>	Ee, my penis wants to get erect,
<i>An aito wi lela,</i>	I am mounting the bicycle,
<i>Alaro Gulu;</i>	I am hurrying to Gulu;
<i>Ee, cuna mito telo,</i>	Ee, my penis wants to get erect,
<i>An anongo min Dici</i>	When I find the District Commissioner’s mother,
<i>Agero I bar Pece;</i>	I will fuck her in the football field at Pece;
<i>Ee, cuna mito telo</i>	Ee, my penis wants to get erect.

The British imprisoned Lakana for two years for his insolence. While in confinement, he composed the poem from which he received his popular name, Adok Too:

<i>Adok Too,</i>	If I could become Death,
<i>Adok Too,</i>	If I could become Death,
<i>Kono apoto i wi munu.</i>	I would fall upon the white man.

P’Bitek collected these and other song-poems—called *wer*—in the early 1970s and committed them to print.¹⁴ The question remains as to how they got passed down to p’Bitek in the first place, as many as fifty years—Adok Too composed his “penis poem” in 1918—after they were initially sung, particularly given colonial efforts to exile their composers and so expunge their content from Acholi culture. Oral communication is, in the words of classicist Eric Havelock, “light as air, and as fleeting.”¹⁵ The anthropologist Jack Goody adds, “There is no store for subsequent recall.”¹⁶ Cultural historian Walter Ong refers to the “winged words” which are “constantly moving” in oral performance and elaborates, “Sound exists only when it is going out of existence. It is not simply perishable but essentially evanescent. ... There is no way to stop sound. ... If I stop the movement of sound, I have nothing.”¹⁷ Havelock, Goody and Ong have all written extensively on the relationship between oral and literate cultures. Their insights overlap considerably and provide a way to both investigate the means of continuity in oral culture and assess the impact of the introduction of the written word in Acholiland.

Sustaining oral compositions over time, according to Havelock, requires a tradition of encoded language, what Goody calls “standardized oral forms.”¹⁸ The poet sets stock phrases to familiar rhythms and repeats them often: “Muloji is a coward / Muloji is a coward / Even a woman defeats him / Muloji is a coward.” The composer sets the poem to music, frequently accompanied by the *nanga*, a cigar-box-guitar-looking instrument laid flat and played in droning syncopated

rhythms—the Acholi blues. Oral tradition is somatically intense. After a few bars, the audience, often dancing, knows the refrain, and the song becomes call-and-response. At this point, the poet can add whatever vivid commentary he wishes: “Hey, he shifts his khaki trousers.” The more vivid, the more memorable.

An extended poem builds these memorable lines by parataxis, that is, the piling up of phrase upon phrase rather than by the subordination of points to a main thesis.¹⁹ Framed by repeated incantations of the line, “Ee, my penis wants to get erect,” the extended version of Adok Too’s poem and its threat to the sexual security of colonial mothers (and thus to the manhood of their sons who are supposed to protect them) builds by working up the chain of hierarchical command. He makes the boast-threat in the first stanza to the Acholi sub-chief, the one who was the last to pass down the colonial order to forced labor; he makes the next boast-threats, in ascending order, to the chief, the district commissioner, and the king of England. The clear exaggeration involved in the last boast makes it all the more memorable for retelling.

Havelock describes the “performative” syntax and context of oral poetry as “a continual dynamism,” “a flow of sound” and “a river of action.”²⁰ The result is that the community that carries the song may and likely will have more than one version of it. Parts of the song placed earlier in the performance by one poet in one context may be placed later by another in a different setting. The refrains and the more memorable phrases and short sequences remain relatively unaltered, even learned verbatim, and the narratives retain a certain trajectory. But listener-participants do not learn the poems verbatim throughout, in part because of the cognitive near impossibility of remembering the exact order and every word of a narrative performance, but also, and perhaps more fundamentally, because to perform in oral culture is at once to recite and to compose. How tightly the community controls the performances depends on a number of factors, from the size and geographical stability of the community to the presence or lack thereof of internal and external disruptions. Havelock, in particular, stresses the need in oral societies for regular performative contexts for the community to call forth its tradition. He identifies “ritualized utterances” in the context of “common festivals” as the bearer of memory,²¹ which is less a matter of looking back at events than breathing them forth to life.

Perhaps because Havelock is a classicist describing a tradition that he knows only through texts and the oral traditions that have lived on in texts, he, while rightly discussing special festivals, misses the ordinary-time means of retelling and reenacting the tradition. Among the rural Acholi, the practice of *wang oo*, the evening fire, is the center of the traditioning process. Both words in the term have multiple interrelated meanings. *Wang* can mean time, moment or period, and *oo* translates as arrival, so that we get “time of arrival.” *Wang* also means sight, appearance, opening or passage; and *oo* can be rendered “to warm,” so that *wang oo* is the warming fire where one can see and be present to others. The evening fire is the place where the Acholi gather to inform each other of the day’s events and to tell stories of origin, history or entertainment. Parents pass out any necessary discipline. Everyone gossips. *Wang oo* is where I learned that the Big Dip-

per is *Cing Lyec*, trunk of the elephant, and where I first heard the story of the dispute between the brothers Labongo and Nyipir as the source of the split between the Acholi and the Alur peoples.

Around *wang oo*, the young learn not by study, but by participatory listening and observation. There are no grammars or dictionaries directing how to speak properly; rather there is what Goody terms “direct semantic ratification” in both day-to-day activities and end-of-day *wang oo* performative contexts. Ong concurs, “The oral mind is uninterested in definitions. Words acquire their meanings only from their always insistent actual habitat, which is not, as in a dictionary, simply other words, but includes also gestures, vocal inflections, facial expressions, and the entire human, existential setting in which the real, spoken word always occurs.”²²

The practice of writing, particularly when it is brought from the outside by colonial powers, shocks the social latticework of performance in oral culture. Without adhering to any monocausal explanation, Goody argues that the shift in the means and mode of communication brought by writing and, later, print technology has as much explanatory power as Marx’s stress on the modes of production for understanding social and cultural change. Goody, Havelock and Ong all make the case that writing and print bring profound changes, what Goody calls a “linguistic recoding,” to human consciousness.²³ To understand the impact of the Comboni missionaries, therefore, we need to take into account the role of writing, particularly in imperial contexts.

The Imperial Magic of Writing

The explorer John Hanning Speke, in his journal from his 1860-1862 trip to Uganda, relates an exchange he had with the king of Bunyoro, the region just south of Acholiland: “The Mukama requested that I would spread a charm over all his subjects, so that their heart might be inclined towards him. ... I said that there was only one charm by which he could gain the influence he required over his subjects—this was, knowledge and power of the pen.”²⁴ The question arises as to how writing comes to have such a “power.” Levi-Strauss gives what is perhaps the most trenchant analysis of how the magic of writing works. During a gift exchange with some Nambikwara indigenous of Brazil, he gave them paper and pencils, and later noticed them “drawing wavy horizontal lines.” They were imitating his writing. The chief, however, went further. During the exchange of goods, he “read” from his piece of paper, as if checking the list of things that Levi-Strauss was giving to the Nambikwara in exchange for their offerings. Levi-Strauss interprets the chief’s actions as an effort not just to mimic the physical act of reading, but also to access political power. The chief sought to “astonish his companions, to convince them that he was acting as an intermediary agent in the exchange of the goods, that he was in alliance with the white man and shared his secrets.” He elaborates, “Writing had, on that occasion, made its appearance among the Nambikwara but not, as one might have imagined, as a result of long and laborious training. It had been borrowed as a symbol, and for a sociological purpose, while its reality remained unknown.”²⁵ Again, magic, as I understand it, is the capacity via symbolic action to transform one reality into

another—from goats as property of Levi-Strauss to goats as possessions of the Nambikwara—and to have the new reality accepted by the intended audiences. Levi-Strauss goes on to observe that local resistance to political domination among the Nambikwara—the chief who tried to serve as an access man to the power of whites “was abandoned by most of his people”—manifested itself importantly as, among other things, resistance to writing. In the end, the locals did not believe in writing’s magic, at least as practiced by whites.²⁶

More recent anthropological work in Fiji supports Levi-Strauss’s analysis. Using local materials, indigenous in Melanesia and Micronesia attempted to reconstruct—that is, imitate—modern artifacts ranging from airstrips to manifest logs in an effort to bring Western goods to themselves.²⁷ Such symbolic actions are like the Nambikwara making wavy lines on paper. Martha Kaplan argues that the locals in Fiji were using magic against a prior colonial magic. Kaplan highlights the power of magic to create new social realities, and shows that, in the case of the British colonization of Fiji, the printed and distributed Deed of Cession constituted a “magical creation of a new polity”: “And from then on, everything that was official and real in the colony was made real via the printed word. If it wasn’t ‘gazetted,’ it didn’t officially exist. And one of the things that was official was the colonial state itself.”²⁸ Fiji resistance to colonial magic, Kaplan shows, was, therefore, from the start, magic interwoven with political resistance.

In the case of the region that would become Uganda, the major European powers carried out the prime act of colonial magic in the form of the 1885 General Act of the Berlin Conference, twenty-three years after the explorer Speke recommended the “charm” of the “knowledge and power of the pen.” The General Act parceled artificially demarcated territories to the attending conference parties in the creation of a new reality: “Africa.” The particular power of the written and printed word in this case, as in the case of Fiji, is its fixity and consequent connotation of absoluteness and, thus, transcendence. There was no power of rebuttal against an officially printed and gazetted document. The Word was God.

The magic of the written and printed word gave the colonialists the power of administration. The General Act’s “Principle of Effectivity” required that the designated powers take actual possession of their granted lands via treaty with local leaders and by active administration. The British administered through “indirect rule,” that is, rule through the social leadership already in place in the targeted territory, in this case, the kings and chiefs. The kings and chiefs, on this theory, collect the taxes and enforce the work necessary to build the roads and buildings that make modern administration possible.²⁹ Problems arose, however, when kings and chiefs refused to cooperate or their peoples resisted.

In northern Uganda, Commissioner George Wilson described the local population as “child races to be educated firmly.” A later commissioner wrote of Wilson that he “advocated strenuous measures to bring the Nilotic tribes [of northern Uganda] under our rule and that a somewhat imposing display of force” was advisable.³⁰ Chief Awich Aboki Lutanymoi headed the largest and strongest of the Acholi clans, the Payira. When refugees fled to Acholiland from British attack in

the Bunyoro region to the south, Awich, following traditional practices of hospitality, refused to hand them over to the colonialists.³¹ For his refusal, the British imprisoned him in Kampala for two years.³²

Despite his resistance to colonial authority, Awich was the closest to a singular leader among the Acholi, so, in 1906, Wilson appointed him “king,” levied hut taxes and required *pro bono* work on the part of the locals. Punishment for noncompliance was swift. Comboni missionary Joseph Pasquale Crazzolaro noted in his journal:

11 Apr. 1911—Some soldiers/police come to the mission requesting 20 porters, including an Acooli (jagang) who just happens to be around. As the latter refuses, he is beaten up. Another one, who was engaged from his very home, seems to have caused some difficulties while on the march, near Rabwon, and was pierced to death with a bayonet.³³

The British found ruling a people as culturally independent and geographically scattered as the Acholi to be too difficult, and so—by written and gazetted fiat—ordered them to build from scratch and live in what was to become the largest town in northern Uganda: Gulu. Again, Crazzolaro’s journal narrates the scene:

On hearing the news, the population is thoroughly shaken. They still have their grains in the fields, but orders are that they must pick up cereals not for themselves but for [the support of] Gulu town. ... [I]t is as if they were not in their own territory, but in a hostile one. The government has ordered to burn down any house or village of those who have made remonstrations. ... I have seen burnt barns everywhere.³⁴

When “King” Awich resisted orders, the British imprisoned him again. Commissioner R.M. Bere noted that already by this time—the British had been consistently present in the region for only fourteen years³⁵—only about half of the chiefs came to their positions by traditional means. The rest were appointed by the British after the latter deposed the traditional chiefs who disobeyed. The imperial dismissals of local leaders were so frequent that the Acholi developed their own term for the ersatz replacements, notable for the reference to writing as the source of usurped power: *rwodi kalam*, “chiefs of the pen,” as distinct from *rwodi moo*, “chiefs anointed with shea oil.” The explorer Speke’s claim—that there is “only one charm by which he could gain the influence he required over his subjects, knowledge and power of the pen”—proved providential.

Locals put up a wide array of forms of resistance, from the more passive refusal to work to active sabotage and even outright rebellion. The most famous occasion of resistance was the Lamogi rebellion of 1911-12,³⁶ where the British chased an alliance of clans into the caves of the Guru Guru hills and laid siege. Even imperial-influenced reports stated that the trapped Acholi “began to suffer from dysentery and diarrhea on a very large scale, and those who attempted to approach the rivers outside the caves were shot. Many women and children died as a result of infection.”³⁷ Ninety-one Acholi were shot and killed in the caverns; over 300 died of dysentery.³⁸ Afterwards, the British deported all of the involved chiefs—thirty-four of them, indicating the broad support for the rebellion³⁹—to prison in Entebbe. The colonialists displaced the rest of the people to Gulu

town with a forced march during which the Acholi “lost more men than during the fight.”⁴⁰

With the traditional chiefs deposed and replaced by the “chiefs of the pen,” the annual rite at the chieftdom shrine lost legitimation. With many of the other Acholi displaced from their lands, engagement with the ancestral spirits at their shrines on clan land diminished. Okot p’Bitek’s insight regarding the *ajwagi* becomes pertinent: “Their office operated as a powerful social control factor. They could always be hired by a man who had been wronged by someone stronger than him.”⁴¹ The British overran the protective capacity of the *jogi* of the chieftdom and clan ancestral shrines. However, the free *jogi* of the spirit-mediating *ajwagi* remained to defend the Acholi, to give them hope and power, and this presented a problem for the British.⁴² They could not, as they did with the chiefs, depose the *ajwagi* because the latter held no political power. They could not displace them because the *ajwagi* worked with free *jogi* not tied to place. They sought to root out the spirit mediums with witchcraft laws, but these worked only if people were willing to turn in the *ajwagi*—the only recourse they had left—to the colonial powers.⁴³ The British did not quite trust Roman Catholicism to root out the *ajwaka*, not only for historical political reasons, but because Roman Catholicism, with its saints and relics, often itself verged on “superstition.” However, the Brussels Act of 1890 meant that the colonialists could not exclude Catholic missionaries from their territories, and given the limits of bureaucracy and military force, the empire needed someone who had the particular kind of wares to confront the *ajwaka* directly. The Comboni missionaries, already in southern Sudan, were ready at hand. The British allowed them in so as to disrupt Acholi magic and bring the locals to conform to empire.

Missionary Magic

Opira is well-off by IDP standards. He has three structures where he lives, a wattle and daub cooking hut, a similar storage hut, and a small brick sleeping abode. The front half of the sleeping dwelling is a sitting room—a space that is perhaps five by seven feet—with fold-out chairs and two small side tables. A suitcase rests on its side on one table, serving as a makeshift dresser. Here, he is the 1%.

A backlit clock, running when batteries are available, features the figure of Jesus pointing towards his illuminated, glowing heart, which is garroted with a coil of thorns: the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a direct link to the Combonis.

I forget to ask Opira where he got the clock and guess that it was either from the shop at Holy Rosary Parish in Gulu or from one of the many entrepreneurs of religious wares at the annual feast of the Acholi martyrs in Paimol. The site of the celebration is called *Wipolo*—heaven, or literally, “top of the sky.” There the merchants place their items on sheets of plastic tarp laid end-to-end for stretches of fifty feet or more: prayer books, rosaries with beads from pink to green, icons of Daniel Comboni, three-inch wood crucifixes on stands, framed depictions of Madonna and child. According to Opira, time and money spent on the *ajwaka* is “wasted”: “Only prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus will end this war.”

The devotions that shaped Daniel Comboni grew out of very specific experiences in his life. He was praying in St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome during the triduum in preparation for the beatification of Margaret Mary Alacoque, the French nun and mystic whose visions gave rise to the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, when his "Plan for the Regeneration of Africa" came to him as itself inspired.⁴⁴ So central was this devotion to him that Comboni named the order which he founded the "Sons of the Sacred Heart."⁴⁵ The missionaries practiced and transplanted other devotions—mediums of magic—to Acholiland as well.

* * *

There is only the slightest of bends in the road, but still the Toyota Land Cruiser skids to the side, pebbles flying. Father Matthew Lagoro is driving one hundred kilometers an hour, faster when the road is straight. He sees me put my hand to the dash to steady the ride.

I have come to visit him after joining in the celebration of the Acholi martyrs at *Wipolo*, but am regretting it at the moment. We are on our way from Madi Opei, the parish center in the far northeast corner of Acholiland, to Agoro. He is going there to perform twenty-six infant baptisms. Lagoro is better than many priests about getting to the outposts; still, the people are going to make the most of his visit. The priest to lay ratio is 1 to 30,000. The people of Agoro are not taking any chances, as this may be the last visit for another couple of months.

It is perhaps six o'clock in the evening. At certain points the low sun catches the windshield and we, or at least I, cannot see. I make some under-the-breath utterances that mix invective with severely pared versions of the travel prayers common out here. God. Slow! Jesus.

"I drive like this because I have been ambushed two times."

Father Lagoro lets me take this in, not slowing down.

The rebound from a pothole jams me into the seat then catapults my head into the ceiling. The seatbelt does not work. I tried it when we started off, but I try it again now anyway.

Lagoro looks over, "I have to get that fixed."

After a pause, he continues his earlier thread.

"The first ambush was 1997. I was traveling in a vehicle alone in the Pajule area. They attacked me at about 8:30 p.m. I jumped from the vehicle and hid in the river for about four hours. When I came out, leeches were attached all over my body.

"When I came onto the road, the first person I saw was my uncle, who was in the government military. He asked, 'You are the one?' I responded, 'Yes.'"

We drive by *Got Latoolim*—Mountain of the Dead Visitor—at about the halfway point. Agoro is the terminus of a north-south running road that comes to a halt at the base of the Imatong Mountains and the start of Sudan in this sector. In 2002, one thousand LRA rebel foot soldiers poured through a pass the UPDF claimed was impassable and overran the army.

“The second time was in 2003. About ten UPDF soldiers stood in the roadway and shot at us. I got out and ran into the bush and passed out. The soldiers burned the vehicle and stole some of the goods to make it look like LRA. But the soldier who took the keys later gave them, stupidly, to a Christian to give back to me. That is how I know it was UPDF.”

Father Lagoro goes on, “I do not ask for any more miracles than what I have already seen. The 1997 incident, I was too young to see this way. But before the second event, a friend of mine gave me a medal with the Virgin Mary and told me to put it on the dashboard of my vehicle to protect me.”

I look at the dash, partly in reaction to the comment, partly in prayer. We are still moving fast. Mary is not there now.

“In the second incident, one bullet went through the radiator, through the dashboard, deflected off the medal, and burned the skin on my left shoulder by the neck. It would have hit me. Another bullet burned the right of my abdomen and blew a hole in the seat. All of the windows were blown out. They counted ninety-seven bullet holes in the car.”

Father Lagoro talks like he drives and moves abruptly to yet another incident to buttress his central point.

“You know, I asked the parents of the parish if their girls who go to our school could sleep in the church because of the insecurities of going back and forth between school and home. It was May 29, 2003. They were sleeping on the floor in between pews.

“Somehow, the rebels got word of this and planned a raid to abduct them. Four came in with flashlights, but somehow they did not see the girls on the floor. The rebels left.

“Meanwhile, the UPDF began firing mortar shells. They fired a bazooka into the church—”

I remember seeing a large irregular hole—perhaps three by five feet—in one of the main walls.

“—and it hit the floor right on the engraving in the aisle, even splitting the relics of the *Wipolo* martyrs into two, creating a second martyrdom, with fragments scattering everywhere. The ceiling. Everywhere. Yet no shrapnel hit any of the girls.”

We reach Agoro, the small market center first. I later find out from a friend working for the UN about LRA rebels being on the camp perimeter during my visit. The trading center is like many others: low-slung brick buildings with corrugated tin-sheet awnings on either

side of the road. A shadow shouts from a blue plastic chair as we pass, “What are you going to do for *me*?”

A white woman likely too young to be a nun walks up to our vehicle, and we come to a halt. She is from [*Médecins sans Frontières*](#). She sticks her head, worried, almost frantic, in my window. I pull back.

“You have to tell them about the hepatitis E. Word has to get out. Scores are dying.” I agree to serve as messenger, and we move on.

The road comes to an end at the foot of the mountains. Cloud-shrouded and in low light, they speak of beauty and mystery. Dry, flat land suddenly becomes fertile and green as it heads upwards. A stream runs down into the town as if in greeting, “Come all you who are thirsty...” But four pigs roll in the water upstream from a gaggle of pantless children. Below that, two women wash their clothes. A painted sign, misspelled, reads, “Put children’s feaces always in the latrine since they are also harmful.” There are no latrines. I lower my eyes at this divine contradiction, this error in Judgment.

Father Matthew stops the engine, and we sit quietly, looking at everything around us. He speaks out of the silence as if speaking not only to me but to all this.

“I do not ask for any more miracles than what I have already seen.”

* * *

Daniel Comboni was ordained in 1854, only three weeks after Pope Pius IX defined the Immaculate Conception of Mary as official church doctrine. Comboni, in his turn, consecrated Africa to the Immaculate Virgin when he made a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of La Salette in France.⁴⁶ Though immaculate virgin, Mary is also Mother of God, and, more particularly for Comboni, of Jesus’ Sacred Heart. In 1875, the missionary combined these two devotions—to Mary and the Sacred Heart—to forge a new title under which to dedicate his specific vicariate in Africa: “Behold us prostrate at your feet, Mary, blessed Virgin Mother of God. Full of joy, we salute you ... with the new and glorious title of ‘Our Lady of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.’”⁴⁷

The practical upshot of the devotions to Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus is that such veneration has earthly efficaciousness. When Comboni prayed, he did so for the success of his mission and was certain of the results: “Mary will be my dearest ‘Mother’ and Jesus will be my ‘all.’ In their company ... I will succeed in giving life to the proposed Work for the regeneration of Africa.”⁴⁸ The surety of success reflects the belief that this is an omnipotent God who acts through Mary and Jesus.⁴⁹ Comboni most often described this power in terms of God’s “protection” of his confreres and him as they carried out their work;⁵⁰ yet, at times, that power went beyond mere protection to the effecting of great acts: “The Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary are enough for all,

and I expect miracles through their mediation.”⁵¹ The only difference here between Comboni and Father Matthew Lagoro is that, at the time of the writing, Comboni *did* ask for—and expected—more miracles.

The charisms of religious congregations are typically interpreted as having been first displayed in the person of their founder, and the Combonis are no different. Members of the order are called upon to focus on Daniel Comboni, according to Antonio Vignati, an early superior general, so as to “study his life and virtues in order to imitate the great apostle who is Comboni, a spirituality to be inserted in our own spirituality.”⁵² What the order’s official documents refer to as the *sequela Christi* (following Christ) is for the missionaries a matter of following Daniel Comboni.⁵³ Consistent with the shape of Comboni’s faith life, the missionaries have stressed the efficacious power that comes from such devotion, such that miracles follow. Two miracles predominate in the literature. The first in importance is Comboni’s own, which he performed eighty-nine years after his earthly death, when his relics healed a terminally ill ten-year-old girl.⁵⁴ Thirty-three years later, the relics of the Acholi martyrs protected the schoolgirls of Father Lagoro’s Madi Opei parish from bazooka shrapnel. The second often-told miracle evidences again that, in this account of the world, the life that has devoted itself to God through Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus itself becomes powerful. I will let one of the missionaries tell the story:

At the end of August 1903, Fr. Beduschi fell dangerously sick and was given the last sacraments. But Sr. Giuseppa sent word to him saying, “Father, you must not die because you must do much work here. I’ll die instead of you.” On the first of September Sr. Giuseppa was stricken by a violent fever and she sent for Fr. Beduschi to hear her last confession. The suffering priest was carried to the dying sister on a litter. ... After the sister’s confession, Fr. Beduschi asked two brothers to carry him back. “No,” said Sr. Giuseppa, “You must go alone, on your feet.” She touched his cassock and said, “Go!” At that moment Fr. Beduschi suddenly felt invaded by a new strength; as the onlookers watched stupefied, he arose and walked. Sr. Giuseppa passed away in the evening of the same day.⁵⁵

Much like with the Combonis, we have seen that the Acholi called on *jogi* for the spirits’ earthly powers. When the two traditions—Christian and traditional African—first confronted each other, the missionaries evangelized by presenting the Christian god as stronger—more efficacious in this world—than the local spirits. Father Angelo Vinco, a missionary priest who had a deep influence on Comboni,⁵⁶ gave an early and indicative speech to chiefs in Sudan, five years before Comboni himself made it to Africa:

The God who created you and me, also created the sun, the moon, and the stars. ... The same God who makes the grass and seeds grow—in other words, the same God who from nothing created everything in heaven and on earth. [T]his God is, as yet, not known to you. ... This is the God who makes the rain fall, thus preventing your fields from being scorched; He keeps you in good health; He multiplies your cattle; He gives you strength to overcome your enemies.⁵⁷

Like the British, the Combonis enlisted, again in the words of the explorer John Hanning

Speke, the “power of the pen” to manifest the power of their god.

* * *

1. The orthography adopted in this book follows that of the Rejaf Language Conference, 1928, and its suggestions. Additions, where necessary, have been made in accordance with the principles laid down by the conference. The so-called ‘central’ vowel-type is represented in the Rejaf orthography by the symbol *ö*. As further vowels of this type had to be adopted, the diacritical mark “ has been used to distinguish them.

—Opening lines of the first chapter of J. P. Crazzolaro,
*A Study of the Acooli Language: Grammar and Vocabulary*⁵⁸

Goody, Havelock and Ong all identify writing’s ability to abstract language from its lived matrix. Written language has the capacity to be, in Ong’s words, “context free.”⁵⁹ In order to capture the “light as air” (Havelock) and “constantly moving winged words” (Ong) of oral culture and fix them to a page, Crazzolaro followed a set of rules set out by a conference of European orthographers studying African languages. This is the same missionary who lived sufficiently in the context of Acholi life during the colonial years that he could report firsthand, “Yet now it is as if they were not in their own territory, but in a hostile one.”

The prime innovation that facilitates the process of capturing words on paper is the invention of the alphabet and its ability to convert what was fleeting sound to a more permanent visual medium.⁶⁰ Once this conversion takes place, language does not need performative reenactment to sustain a tradition. Writing itself provides a “storage” mechanism.⁶¹ Scribes can compile long lists of objects—things sold, gifts exchanged—without reference to the occasions that make them worthy of noting.⁶² In time, words and their rules themselves become listed objects, ratified not in their use, but through reference to dictionaries and grammars. Crazzolaro follows rule 1 above with, in numerical order, 536 more. There is no need in following such rules to refer to stolen cattle or cowards who lose control of their bowels in order to know what a verbal noun is and how to use it. And once abstracted from their lived context, words can be combined and reinserted in that context for other purposes.

* * *

2005. My first trip to the region. I am staying with the Comboni Missionary Sisters—first constituted in 1872 as the “Pious Mothers of the Nigritia”—at their residence. The lettering on the arch over the front gate announces to visitors that they are entering the “Comboni Missionary Animation Centre.” A painted cast-relief icon of Daniel Comboni stares out, though not, I think, menacingly, from a pillar to the side. He is not smiling, but his eyes are kind. The grounds are immaculate. Sister Fernanda shows me to my room and allows me to get settled before dinner. We eat late, as is the norm here, and as we finish, a strange chanting rises from somewhere beyond the back wall of the compound. Children’s voices. Many of them, though all in unison. It is sing-songy, yet at the same

time solemn. High-pitched voices from low-pitched souls. I try to make out what they are saying, but it is quickly clear that this is not in any language that I yet understand. *Wonwa* ... somethingsomethingsomething ... *polo*. I get the last because the word sounds familiar. Then *miwa* ... somethingsomethingsomething ... *amen*. I try to pick out more words that I recognize, even if wrongly. Something *maria* somethingsomething *gracia*. *Maria maleng* somethingsomething *amen*.

Sister Fernanda, black and grey hair, brown eyes, white veil, and light blue smock dress with white print flowers, says across the table, “Evening prayers.”

“May I go see?”

“Yes.”

I go through the back gate.

There they are: perhaps one hundred fifty of them; perhaps more. Seated in six ad hoc but somehow orderly long rows under a single light bulb in front of a low-slung building on cathedral property, where they will be staying tonight. All face a single leader seated in a chair in front of them. The light crowns their heads with gold-orange. I recognize them—so many now that they have their own moniker—as “night commuters,” children who leave their villages after an early supper and walk as far as twenty kilometers to the city, where they will be safer from LRA attack and abduction. At first light, they will return to their village school and start the process over. Forty thousand of them, it is estimated, all over northern Uganda.

* * *

One of the first tasks which the Combonis undertook upon reaching Acholiland was to develop a dictionary so that they could instruct the locals in the catechism of the Catholic faith. The missionaries first abstracted the language from its lived context via the rules of grammar and definitions of the dictionary, then recomposed it as catechism for evangelical ends. Crazzolarà’s “grammar and vocabulary” with its 537 rules is a stark crystallization of a process the Combonis began immediately upon their arrival in Gulu. The missionaries bore a Catholicism that was well placed for the task of verbatim catechism. As recently as 1888—over thirty years after Daniel Comboni made his first trip to Africa—Pope Leo XIII argued for paternalistic forms of government in Europe on the basis of the fact that the great majority of the people there constituted the *imperita multitudo*—“the illiterate masses.” The Pope would hardly expect something different in Africa. When the missionaries brought Catholicism to northern Uganda, they brought with them, according to the Comboni historian Mario Cisternino, a Christianity “wholly and absolutely in a ‘Latin’ form.”⁶³ In doing so, they brought a strong emphasis on catechesis through exact verbal recitation: religion for the illiterate masses.⁶⁴

The mission community superior in Uganda, Albino Colombaroli, in Cisternino's words, "forced his Missionaries to teach everything by heart, without any explanation. He himself started translating the catechism, and imposing it word for word."⁶⁵ To facilitate memorization, the missionaries had the locals chant the catechism,⁶⁶ and this, forged through life on the run in a conflict zone, gave the night commuters behind the Comboni Mission Animation Centre their haunting timbre in 2005. "*Wonwa ... somethingsomethingsomething ... polo*" is "*Wonwa ma itye i polo*"—"Our Father, who is in heaven"; "Something *maria* somethingsomething *gracia*" is "*Morembe Maria ipong ki gracia*"—"Hail Mary, full of grace." Now as then.

Still, the Catholicism brought to the Acholi in the early twentieth century was of a mixed written-oral kind where literate consciousness was evident and dominant. Though the locals were instructed and responded verbally, the form of the speech was thoroughly structured by literate coding.⁶⁷ Oral remembrance, though often exact with regard to standardized and particularly vivid phrases, is not, unlike the catechism, verbatim throughout. In fact, the "flow of sound" or "river of action" (Havelock) of oral communication often does not distinguish sharply between particular words.⁶⁸ Writing simultaneously "freezes" (Goody) or "fossilizes" (Havelock) language into a seemingly fixed form and cuts up the now frozen river of action (or fossilized flow of sound) into increasingly smaller units, from phrases to words and even to correct vowel and consonant sounds, as in the case of Crazzolaro's grammar and vocabulary, for any further utterance.⁶⁹ Learning the Catholic faith on the part of the Acholi, therefore, became a matter of learning "by heart," which meant "word for word."

The kind of instruction-from-a-distance involved in mission—bringing the teachings all the way from Rome and transplanting them to interior Africa—seemed to require the capacity to abstract language from lived context that the technology of writing offers. Writing, in Ong's words, makes language "autonomous ... self-contained and complete." Print only furthers a text's unsailability. "Once a letterpress form is closed, locked up ... and the sheet printed, the text does not accommodate changes (erasures, insertions) so readily as do written texts," making the printed word even more a "particularly pre-emptive and imperialist activity that tends to assimilate other things to itself." The result is what Goody calls the "orthodoxy of the book," in this case reinforcing a particular religious orthodoxy.⁷⁰

Such an arrangement could not last, however. The very capacity of writing and print to freeze or fossilize speech in visual form facilitates critical examination—what Goody calls "backward scanning"—a process that allows what is written and printed "to be inspected, manipulated and re-ordered."⁷¹ The non-literate Acholi tried to place the catechetical claims in some kind of broader lived interpretive framework—typically one that they had inherited—and this led them to inspect, manipulate and reorder the teachings they received from the Combonis. Father Joseph Zambonardi described the process in his Palaro Mission journal in 1915: "After many months of explanations, when we wanted to summarize our teaching we heard them saying that the Father is older than the Son because no child can be older than his own father. ... How could anyone live in Heaven

without sorghum bread? Does one sleep up there? Does one go hunting?”⁷²

Like with the British, then, the Combonis faced the real prospect of the failure of their magic to convert the Acholi. A 1917 epidemic in neighboring Moyo put the mission on the defensive when locals blamed the Catholic priests and their god. Father Joseph Zambondardi rebutted, “Is it the mission’s fault if people die? ... God is the master of us all, and only He can give well-being. ... Let us therefore love Him by doing what he desires.”⁷³ However, the charges of the ineffectiveness and even mendacity of the Christian god continued. A year later, a healthy Giuseppe Beduschi wrote, “One person says trembling that the 6 months spent in Gulu for Baptism causes boys and girls to starve to death! Another accusation is that death is also brought by the *waraga*.”⁷⁴ Significantly, *waraga* literally means “paper,” and more generally, “school,” the place where paper is written upon. From the start, locals understood their misfortunes in terms of the imported act of writing. How then to respond? The missionaries had two basic options. One option was to draw upon key symbols from Daniel Comboni’s spirituality of the Cross; the other was to graft the Gospel onto an imperial metanarrative.

Response to Mission Failure, I: The Cross

Comboni interpreted ill fortune, and thus the seeming ineffectiveness of the Christian god, in terms of the Cross. Like in the instances of the devotions to Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Comboni’s theology of the Cross arose out of concrete circumstances. While on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land just before his first trip to Africa, he visited Calvary. It had a profound effect on him.⁷⁵ The Cross reveals, Comboni repeatedly claimed, a particular understanding of God’s activity in the world that is otherwise unavailable: God brings success *through* human failure.⁷⁶ Comboni took it as empirically verifiable that failure and death is the only true source of success in the spread of the Gospel: “That all the works of salvation are born and grow at the foot of the Cross is a fact proved by the constant experience of nineteen centuries. ... It is through the Cross and martyrdom that all the missions have been founded and prospered.”⁷⁷

Upon his arrival in Africa in 1857, Comboni had plenty of experiences to reinforce his devotion to the Cross. Between 1848 and 1862, forty-six missionaries died in the region—twenty-two in one year—mostly from illnesses ranging from malaria to fevers without identifiable sources.⁷⁸ Comboni wrote, “Here, from evening to morning, people are dying. Here, there is no time to prepare oneself for death: you have always to be ready.”⁷⁹ Comboni himself had to return to Europe after only two years because of severe illness. The pope closed down all of the missions in the region. Comboni later returned to Africa and in 1872 became the new pro-vicar. But further deaths took their toll on his followers, and the Vatican then gave almost all of the vicariate to Charles Martial Lavigerie, the founder of the White Fathers and Comboni’s frequent intra-ecclesial competitor. Broken, Comboni returned ill to Europe once again. He ventured back to Africa one last

time, but was too ill to stay out in the field and had to retreat to Khartoum, where he died in 1881. He and his followers managed to convert only thirty families, indicating a rather high missionary-death-to-convert ratio. The number of priests was so low that Mario Cisternino, himself a priest of the congregation, was forced to write, “To be honest, Comboni’s priests were very few at the time: a good number had died, several others returned to Europe, and no leader had been found among the remainder.”⁸⁰ Death and failure: it seems safe to say that Comboni earned his appeal to the Cross.

In the face of death and failure, the task of the missionary, according to Comboni, was to trust in God’s wisdom.⁸¹ That trust was precisely in God’s capacity—God’s power—to bring about the success of the mission of evangelization. It was a trust that followers—or even other people entirely—would continue the mission in *sequela* Comboni, as he had imitated Jesus Christ:

The Gospel wins its victories in a very different way from the politicians. The apostle does not work for himself, but for eternity; he does not seek his own happiness, but that of his fellows; he knows that his work does not die with him and that his grave is the cradle of new apostles.⁸²

Such trust in God involved a willingness to die—even “the slow martyrdom of privation, fatigue or the burning climate”—rather than betray one’s mission.⁸³

Comboni was clear that the willingness to die in evangelization did not mean that the missionary did not exercise prudence; rather it meant that she or he undertook discernment about risk within a different interpretive context, one that the writings identify variously as the “economy” or “law” of “God’s Providence.” In this context, sacrifice and even martyrdom were the normal means of apostolic success; in the economy of Providence, “The Cross, contradictions, obstacles and sacrifices are the ordinary sign of the holiness of a work.”⁸⁴ The practical upshot of the appeal to the Cross was that the seeming failure of the Spirit to intervene on one’s behalf did not, unlike with colonial magic, entail the turn to military force as backup. Comboni is clear on this point. Although historically it has been “reverenced on the standards of armies,” the Cross itself involves “a strength which is gentle and does not kill.” It has “great power” because “the Nazarene ... stretched out one arm to the East and the other to the West, and gathered his elect from the whole world into the embrace of the Church with pierced hands.”⁸⁵

The idea and practice of success through failure in the Cross provided a stark alternative to the turn to violence when colonial magic failed, and, at least at first, the missionary critique of colonialism was strong. An early letter from Comboni to Cardinal Allesandro Barnabò regarding Samuel Baker states:

Letting the diplomats believe that the purpose of this enterprise was to introduce European civilization to these tribes and to abolish and destroy slavery there, [Baker] stationed various companies of soldiers on the principal points along the White Nile. ... As a result of this violent invasion, the majority of the Africans of the White Nile withdrew westwards to the interior to flee the oppression of the conquerors ... and many thousands of Africans were killed.⁸⁶

However, soon thereafter, Comboni measured the impact of direct confrontation with the British and elected to remain silent about their atrocities. According to a private letter he wrote to Cardinal Barnabò, Comboni met with the British ambassador to Egypt but kept silent with regard to the explorer's crimes: "The illustrious Sir Bartle Frère, Her Majesty's ambassador, came to see me with his entourage. ... However, I thought it prudent to keep quiet for the time being about the massacre of the Africans another Englishman, Sir Samuel Baker, is perpetuating."⁸⁷ Later, what was supposed to be a particular instance of prudence "for the time being" became Comboni's mission policy: "It is of supreme interest of the Mission of Central Africa that we should entertain good relations with the Khedive and the Egyptian Government [of which Baker was the representative in southern Sudan] and that maximum prudence should be used in dealing with them."⁸⁸ In the process of establishing their mission in Gulu, Comboni's followers took the exercise of prudence in seeking good relations with the Empire to extreme form. Father Louis Molinaro wrote in his memoirs regarding the relationship of another priest, Antonio Vignato (who would later become the Comboni superior general), with J.R.P. Postlethwaite, the first district commissioner of northern Uganda:

How did Fr. Vignato earn the Officer's friendship? Through his humility. He didn't disdain to go up to the office on foot (half an hour's walk) when Postlethwaite summoned him, which happened often. His many years passed in the Bahr-el-Ghazal meant great experience and prudence. ... In Venetian dialect, Vignato commented, "They say that I polish the Englishman's shoes. Not only will I polish them, but even kiss them if the Mission's survival is at stake."⁸⁹

Over time and through repeated interactions like those above, the Combonis moved from obsequious deference to the British to active support of empire—through writing—by grafting the Gospel narrative onto the colonial one in a grand metanarrative that, unlike verbatim catechesis, explicitly articulated how Acholi history fit within the context of a new history. This is most evident in the writing and publication of the pedagogical document *Acholi Macon* ("Old Acholi"), written by Father Vincent Pelligrini. Published in 1949 and going through multiple editions, *Acholi Macon* saw 45,000 copies distributed among the Acholi via the school system by the 1960s, and it is still used in the schools into the twenty-first century.⁹⁰

Response to Mission Failure, II: *Acholi Macon*

A 1921 gathering of Combonis set out as one of its key resolutions that all converts, in the words of then Monsignor Angelo Negri, "be able to at least read the primer" before baptism.⁹¹ Negri set up primary and secondary schools for both boys and girls in Gulu.⁹² Later, as bishop in the early- to mid-1940s, he founded an indigenous women's religious order, the Little Sisters of Mary Immaculate, with a focus on teaching, and it is at this point that literacy began to spread more significantly among Catholic Acholi. Mgr. Giovanni Battista Cesana conveyed the consensus from Gulu in 1948: "Catechism is no longer enough. We must give them something more; we must

give them education.”⁹³ That same year the Combonis brought a printing press to Gulu and, while still emphasizing English literacy, began to produce ethnographic texts on the Acholi *in* Acholi for consumption *by* the Acholi.⁹⁴ The following year, the Combonis, under the Archdiocese of Gulu, published Father Pellegrini’s local vernacular account, *Acholi Macon*, and made it required reading in their schools.

The title, *Acholi Macon*, translates “Old Acholi,” and the first line makes clear the audience and purpose of the booklet: “We write these historical matters so that you, the new people (*jo manyen*) may know about your ancestors, so that these issues are not forgotten.”⁹⁵ To make clear who these “new people” are, the present edition includes a photo of St. Joseph’s Cathedral in Gulu. The photo shows Acholi heading towards the cathedral entrance flanked by its four pillars with the caption, “*Abila pa Jo manyen i Gulu*”—“Shrine of the new people of Gulu.” Traditionally, *abila* refers to the clan ancestral shrine. For the *jo manyen*, however, the cathedral has displaced the traditional shrine.

Pellegrini’s reframing in terms of salvation history makes clear the supersessionist trajectory of his interpretation of local history: the new Acholi replace the old. Pellegrini, it needs to be clear, intends no disrespect towards Acholi history. On the contrary, he describes it as venerable.⁹⁶ In the background here is Thomas Aquinas’s account of the relationship between the New and the Old Law, which informed the Council of Trent and, in so doing, subsequent Catholic teaching. The Old Law, as manifested in the Hebrew Bible, relates to the New Law as “imperfect” to “perfect.” While the former aims for the earthly good by shaping our external acts through the fear of punishment, the latter, according to Aquinas, directs us to the heavenly good by forming our internal inclinations towards love.⁹⁷ Aquinas is clear that the Old Law is good, as is evidenced by the fact that it was given to humans by God. The important point for Aquinas is that whatever a tradition—whether ancient Israelite or “old Acholi”—adds of its own on top of the Old or Natural Law is no longer binding.⁹⁸ It is no longer necessary, or even desirable, to sacrifice to the ancestors now that the holy sacrifice of the Eucharist is available. The cathedral is the new *abila*.

Despite what Pellegrini writes about how “ancestral issues may be a source of learning” for the new Acholi, he takes the obsolescence of the *lodito*—the traditional elders—to be a given and goes on to make clear that the missionaries will serve as the relevant guides for the new Acholi. While the British replaced chiefs that they deemed inadequate for the new order with *rwodi kalam*—“chiefs of the pen”—the Combonis appointed themselves the new *lodito kalam* (my term)—elders of the pen.⁹⁹ In light of previous shifts from orality to literacy in other cultures, this deliberate, if not at all times conscious, displacement is not surprising. Havelock writes of Plato and the impact on ancient Greek pedagogy of the turn to prose and the writing down of the Socratic discourses:

He was attacking the poets less for their poetry (one might say) than for the instruction which it had been their accepted role to provide. They had been the teachers of Greece. ... Greek literature had been poetic because the poetry had performed a social function, that of preserving the tradition by which the Greeks lived and instructing them in it. ... It was precisely this didactic function and the authority that went with it to which Plato

objected.¹⁰⁰

In the Acholi case, as the *lodito kalam* worked to displace the traditional elders, the school—alternately called *waraga*, literally “paper,” to denote its literate basis, and *gang kwan*, or “home for reading”—began to replace *wang oo*, the evening fire where teaching and learning takes place in the context of the extended family (a process that becomes more complete after the more recent displacement of the Acholi by Museveni). Pellegrini writes as if he is retrieving Acholi tradition at the very moment that he is displacing it.

What is all the more striking about the re-narration of Acholi history in terms of salvation history in *Acholi Macon* is that there is very little reference to the missionaries themselves. The Combonis merit just two paragraphs of perfunctory description of how they settled in Gulu after the British established the town.¹⁰¹ The main protagonists in bringing the new out of the old are the British. The explorer Samuel Baker serves as a Moses figure. Arabic-speaking slave-traders, which the Acholi called *Kuturia*, had preceded Baker from Egypt-Sudan. While Baker did not bring the Acholi out of Egypt on this account, he did much to get (Arabic) Egypt out of Acholiland. As governor of Equatoria in the 1860s and 70s in what is now South Sudan, Baker “immediately thought of visiting Acholiland so that he could stop people who were hunting for slaves.” He set up a camp in Patiko in 1872, according to Pellegrini, in order to root out the *Kuturia*. Baker had momentarily to go southward to the Bunyoro region, but he left behind a Nubian security detail “to help provide protection for the people.” When the security detail faltered, Baker came back and routed the Arabs. Pellegrini comments, “You cannot narrate the kind of joy everyone had on seeing Baker return,” Baker “struggled so hard to put an end to the slave trading that the Arabs had started.”¹⁰²

Pellegrini lists a dozen chiefs who established treaties with Major James Macdonald and Lieutenant Cyril Martyr.¹⁰³ Subsequent soldier-administrators found “the majority of the Acholi chiefs” (“*rwodi Acholi mapol*”) to be supportive of the new “rules of cooperation” (“*cik me mer*”).¹⁰⁴ The exception was Chief Awich, who distrusted the British and resisted the rules of the new Acholiland. He “started inciting” (“*ocako piyo*”) not only his own Payira people, but other clans as well, to “start giving the government trouble” (“*wek giyel government*”), thereby necessitating his first imprisonment.¹⁰⁵ Many chiefs, according to Pellegrini, helped the British round up Awich and his followers. The peace that followed allowed the British, the Acholi and the missionaries together to start the “new town” (“*goma manyen*”) and “new mission” (“*Mission manyen*”) at a place they would come to call Gulu.¹⁰⁶ If Samuel Baker is the Moses figure in Pellegrini’s re-narration of Acholi history, Gulu is the New Jerusalem. Chief Awich’s resistance to the formation of Gulu after his initial release warranted his second and longer imprisonment.

Cooperation with Evil

We have seen Comboni judgment shift gradually but definitely from condemnation of British colonialism to celebration of it, from Samuel Baker as the leader of a “violent invasion” in which

“many thousands of Africans were killed,” to Baker as a source of “joy” because he offered “protection for the people.” The technologies of writing and print facilitated this process by abstracting Acholi language from its life setting, where it had been ratified not in dictionaries and grammars but in local daily interaction. Once abstracted from its immediate life context, the language became manipulatable in the hands of those who wielded the power of the pen. The Combonis reinserted the abstracted language into an imperial life narrative. The primary problem, in my judgment, is not with the abstraction per se, which is unavoidable when using the technology of writing, but with the particular reinsertion that the Combonis invented: the life of the Acholi as one indebted to the great acts and good will of the colonizers. The missionaries could have reinserted the Acholi language into a Gospel narrative centered, in the tradition of the early Daniel Comboni, around an interpretation of the Cross that promotes nonviolence, decries injustice and serves as a brake on the acceleration and accrual of prudential judgments that end in a policy of justifying, by silence and words, imperialism.¹⁰⁷ In their first half-century in northern Uganda, however, they selected the imperial narrative. The result was *Acholi Macon*.

It is helpful here to analyze this consequence in Comboni-emic terms, that is, in terms that Combonis even at the time would have accepted, even if they would have rejected my conclusions. (Again, my aim in undertaking such analysis is less to litigate the actions of the Combonis than to set before ourselves just how difficult it is to write in an imperial context in a way that does not further injustice.) One of the key issues that framed Catholic moral analysis at the time was that of the “cooperation with evil.” Medieval theologians detailed the conditions under which a person owed restitution to a victim even when someone else committed the primary act of injustice. According to Aquinas’s list of conditions, a third party owes restitution to a victim when the former helps bring about the injustice “[b]y command, by counsel, by consent, by flattery, by receiving [some of the material goods gained by the injustice], by participation, by silence, by not preventing, by not denouncing.”¹⁰⁸ In the eighteenth century, Alphonsus Liguori took up the list and described it in terms of “cooperation” with the injustice.¹⁰⁹ His further analysis of what constitutes licit and illicit cooperation with evil quickly became the standard for Roman Catholic moral theology and canon law. The key distinction is that between formal cooperation, where one confirms, at least in part, the object of the wrongdoer’s action, and material cooperation, where one’s actions simply somehow overlap with and inadvertently aid the wrongdoer.

The Comboni missionaries in northern Uganda were aware of the formal/material distinction. During the earlier Mahdist uprising in Sudan (1881-1898), the rebels captured several of the missionaries and held them for as long as twelve years. The men were tortured, and the women were under constant threat of sexual assault. Most of the priests and brothers, under duress, abjured the faith—they signed a document made public, thus giving their act the authority of being written and gazetted. Upon the liberation of the missionaries, the main question for Rome was whether their apostasy was formal, an affirmation in one way or another of Islam, or merely material, done with the aim of preserving their lives and no more.¹¹⁰

Liguori makes the distinction in the following way: “That [cooperation] is formal which concurs in the bad will of the other, and it cannot be without sin; that [cooperation] is material which concurs only in the bad action of the other, apart from the cooperator’s intention.”¹¹¹ *Acholi Macon*—again, required reading for all students in an institutional setting, the school, that functioned to displace the extended family, evening-fire context for passing on the tradition—inscribes Acholi history into a salvation history where the primary bearers of that history are the colonialists. Such a rewriting of Acholi history constitutes, in Liguori’s terms and the language of the time, formal cooperation in the evil of colonialism because it “concurs in the bad will” of the British. Rather than being a Moses-like figure who delivered people from slavery, Samuel Baker owned slaves himself in Mauritius and Ceylon. He bought his Nubian troops—called “Khartoumers” after the place in which they were sold—out of slavery simply in order to make them mercenaries against other Africans. Baker did not, as *Acholi Macon* states, simply “journey” to the Bunyoro region to the south of Acholiland; he used his Nubian mercenaries to attack the kingdom there. As indicated earlier, Daniel Comboni and his confreres knew about Baker’s patterns of behavior.

Acholi Macon supports its presentation that there was little or no Acholi resistance to colonization by isolating Awich as the lone defiant chief, leaving the broad coalition involved in the Lamogi rebellion—the British arrested thirty-four chiefs—out of its account. This contrasts with the assistant district commissioner’s own report that “the whole of the southern portion of the district” was “adopting bravado tactics.”¹¹² With regard to the forced labor and displacement that the British used to forge the largest town in northern Uganda, *Acholi Macon* simply states, as if it was created *ex nihilo*, “Gulu town started in February 1911 when Mr. Bainer and Mr. Sullivan came.” The events to which Crazzolaro and other Combonis were eyewitnesses and the insights that the former adds in his private diary—“Now it is as if they were not in their own territory, but in a hostile one. . . . I have seen burnt barns everywhere—never make it into the publicly printed booklet. Again, Alphonsus Liguori delineated the distinction between formal and material cooperation in response to a longer tradition from the Middle Ages seeking to address the problem of third-party culpability in unjust acts. Aquinas included “silence” and “not renouncing” injustice in his list of third-party acts that require restitution to the victims. It is clear that the Combonis’ public silence in *Acholi Macon* and elsewhere fits Liguori’s understanding of formal cooperation.

It was the Combonis’ judgment that the conversion of the Africans, and thereby the possibility of their experiencing the beatific vision in the afterlife, was more than proportionate to whatever the latter might suffer at the hands of the British in the present one. Daniel Comboni was clear: “The only thing that matters to me, I say, is that Africa should be converted.”¹¹³ However, in Catholic moral theology, then as now, it is not licit to commit an evil act or formally cooperate in such an act even in order to achieve what is taken to be a greater good. In Liguori’s words, formal cooperation with evil “cannot be without sin” (“*nequit esse sine peccato*”). This is true even though it is likely that if the missionaries had spoken out against the colonial practices, the British would have either interned or expelled them.

At this point, it is helpful for further illumination to bring in the emic distinction between objective wrongdoing and subjective culpability. Catholic missionaries in Sudan prior to and after the formation of the Comboni order died at an extraordinary rate as a result of following their vocations. Again, twenty-two died in a single year. And again, Mahdist rebels held captive for a period of up to twelve years, threatened, and often tortured all those missionaries, male and female, who could not flee in time. For instance, the Mahdists took scissors and cut the partition between one sister's nostrils; they suspended another from a tree and beat the soles of her feet until they were "swollen and black."¹¹⁴

I hope that it is clear that what the Comboni missionaries endured during this period was more than most of us could bear. It takes no stretch of the imagination to see that the Comboni community after the Mahdist rebellion was in a state of collective shock. In its wake, they viewed the retaking of Egypt-Sudan by the British not only as a reprieve, but as a kind of liberation that they then projected onto the situation in Acholiland. Baker became Moses, Gulu the New Jerusalem. The pressures of World War I only furthered—or as Aquinas would say, "increased"—the disposition not to speak of the British injustices. Many of the Combonis were Austrian and thus on the "wrong" side of the war. The British arrested and interned the Austrian missionaries and required even the Italians to declare allegiance to the Empire. Given that Italy and England were on the opposite sides of World War II, the years leading up to the publishing of *Acholi Macon* in 1948 provided little reprieve for the Combonis. How much such pressures mitigate the subjective culpability of the Combonis I leave open for debate, but that there were such pressures is unquestionable.

Lessons for Current Theological Ethnographers: A Thought Experiment

Over one hundred ten years after the British made Uganda a protectorate, a form of indirect rule continues. Following victory in a five-year bush war (1980-1985), current President Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance Army/Movement (NRA/M) forces pursued opponents from northern Uganda back to their homes, massacring people and raiding cattle along the way. An excerpt from an interview I gathered:

I have a few things that I will never forget in my life—atrocious acts of killing that I have seen in my home among my Acholi people. I will not forget this. I would see how people were arrested, and how people were tortured and eventually killed. I have seen so many young people arrested, for no reason, and taken away. . . . I have seen young people arrested in my area and put underground where a big hole had been dug by the military. And there, they suffered underground, and they [the military] would make bread and throw it to these people who were suffering in the ground, like little rats. I have also seen many of these young people who were thrown in the ground, in a pit, being killed by shooting, being killed by beating. Many people died in this way. They died from many causes—either you suffocated or you were beaten to death or you were shot and left dead in the pit.

One other thing that I will not forget that the military has done in this area is taking away all the possessions from people—the cattle—taking away from people whatever they had in their food store—the rice, maize, groundnuts—all foodstuffs, taking them away. The military would come and defecate in our pots where we had clean water, and they would expect you to drink this when you come, thirsty, back into your house.

In 1996, Museveni ordered all people in Gulu district not living in towns to move to “protected” Internally Displaced Persons camps (a new “protectorate”). Refusal to go to the camps on the part of the people was met with armed attack by the NRM’s newly constituted army, the Ugandan Peoples Defense Forces (UPDF). By 2005, over 90% of the people in the North lived in the camps. Numerically, this constituted over a million Acholi and between 1.6 and 1.8 million people overall. That same year, a World Health Organization study, after careful analysis of the situation on the ground in comparison with “non-crisis” levels in the IDP camps in the Acholi and districts, found that there were almost a thousand excess deaths per *week* due to such causes as malaria, AIDS, malnutrition and diarrhea (much like in the caves during the Lamogi rebellion).¹¹⁵ More, the camps served as LRA magnets. One peasant farmer told me, “The government soldiers who were protecting us were few. Many times when these people [the LRA] came, they [the government soldiers] ran away. They could not protect the people in the camp. The rebels would do whatever they wanted at will.”

While the government was ostensibly protecting the people in the camps, a far greater number of its soldiers were, under Museveni’s orders, robbing natural resources from the Democratic Republic of Congo as part of the “new scramble for Africa.”¹¹⁶ A 2010 United Nations report details the level of violence that the Ugandan government was willing to perpetrate in the DRC—much like it did in Acholiland, with detention in pits, torture and execution.¹¹⁷ That the dominant powers in the international community have not acted upon the findings of either the International Court of Justice or the United Nations, but rather have continued to fund Museveni’s government, indicates that the dynamics of indirect rule continue. To back his policies, Museveni has appealed to the colonial language of “modern” society civilizing those who are “backwards.”¹¹⁸ More, his National Resistance Movement government has received up to half of its budget from foreign aid in a way that has reinforced his twenty-five-year presidency and lack of democratic accountability. Donor nations get a president who meets their geo-strategic interests, and he gets to rule in perpetuity.¹¹⁹

In May and June 2011, Ugandan security personnel shot and killed nine people peacefully protesting skyrocketing fuel and food prices. When priests decried the actions, they were charged with “incitement against the government.”¹²⁰ Intimidation and even the disappearance of journalists who dare criticize the government continue unabated.¹²¹ When pressed, one U.S. State Department official said, “We’re watching the situation very carefully. But we aren’t considering sanctions.”¹²² On the contrary, in June 2011, the Pentagon authorized \$45 million for support to the 5,000-soldier Ugandan contingent fighting alongside Burundian soldiers in proxy for the United States in Somalia. In 2012, when the Ugandan prime minister’s office stole \$12 million in aid intended for northern Uganda, the European Union suspended aid, but the United States did not.¹²³ Indirect rule

continues.

So here is a thought experiment: You are a junior professor doing work in rural northern Uganda among the *megi*, the women elders. You are in your third year at a prestigious university that requires, in addition to a list of articles, a minimum of one book—one that is not a reworking of your dissertation—for tenure. You do not mind the requirements, however, because you have known since you were twelve that your vocation is to write and, more specifically, to write from the social location of the academy. You have poured years of energy into your effort, taking the time—itsself years—to learn to speak Acholi because many of the *megi*, particularly the older ones in the more remote areas, are non-literate and speak virtually no English. In fact, you focus on the lives of the *megi* precisely because their voices are among the most excluded in the discourses about sub-Saharan Africa. You have conscientiously learned ethnographic methods as an act of solidarity so that their voices can be heard. You are studying how it is that non-literate, non-English or -Italian speaking women became Christian and how their Christianity provided or failed to provide hope for them during the LRA war. It is your sabbatical year, the one meant to give you the time to undertake the year or so more on the ground that will give you enough data in the form of interviews and observations to write your tenure book when you return to the United States.

In your first month, you find a disturbing pattern already arising: the women testifying that rape has been and—this is the thought-experiment part—even continues to be carried out by government soldiers upon Acholi women as a means of spreading AIDS among the population.¹²⁴ The women do not want to report it themselves because they are afraid that their husbands will find out that their wives, specifically, have been raped. The women urge you to write something. The International Criminal Court representative gives you a two sentence thank-you-and-we'll-get-back-to-you-if-necessary reply. The U.S. embassy officer nods and holds out his hands in a “but-what-can-we-do” gesture. You approach Human Rights Watch. They are supportive of your work, but their hands are too full addressing the bill in the Ugandan Parliament that would give the death penalty for homosexual acts for them to give adequate attention to the problem of rape in northern Uganda at this time.¹²⁵

It is up to you. You figure another month of investigation focused on the problem of AIDS-intended rape will give you enough data to write an article. However, this would be a month directed away from your tenure book project. More problematically, publication of the article could well mean your expulsion from Uganda, or, minimally, the inability to reenter. If this turned out to be the case, you would not be able to finish your tenure book. You would have to start from scratch—different culture, different language—with only three years to work up and publish a new book project. Three years is nowhere near enough time. You would not get tenure. Given the all-or-nothing prospect involved with tenure—many, if not most, professors who fail to get it find that they must leave the academy in order to find gainful employment—the years you spent professionally (eight in graduate school and three as a junior professor) would be lost. You would not fulfill your vocation. And your \$50,000 in student loans remains unpaid. You could wait until the

book project is done to report the rapes, but how many will have taken place during the interval of silence?

I pose such questions not to exonerate the Combonis—I think that they formally cooperated with evil—but to help give us a feel for the pressures under which they operated in the first half of the twentieth century. They, too, had a vocation; acting on the initial formulation of that vocation in terms of the nonviolent cross that decries colonial injustice would have led, minimally, to their expulsion. The twin seismic shifts of 1962—the end of colonial rule in Uganda and the start of the Second Vatican Council—fundamentally altered the missionary landscape for the Combonis in a way that allowed life in accordance with the Cross to reemerge. Five were killed by Amin’s soldiers. Comboni missionaries were also at the forefront of negotiations with the LRA in ways that placed their lives at daily risk.¹²⁶ Now it is your turn. You have decoded the patois of the *megi*, abstracted it in your own notes to an extent rivaling the Comboni dictionaries and grammars. Into which narrative do you reinsert it, and when?

(Endnotes)

1 See, for instance, Todd Whitmore, “Crossing the Road: The Case for Ethnographic Fieldwork in Christian Ethics,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 27, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 273-294; Mary McClintock Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); and Christian Scharen and Aana Marie Vigen, eds., *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics* (London: Continuum, 2011).

2 John W. Burton, with Orsolya Arva Burton, “Some Reflections on Anthropology’s Missionary Positions,” *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute* 13 (2007): 209. For the anthropology of Christianity, see Fenella Cannell, ed., *The Anthropology of Christianity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006). For an anthropology that enters into conversation with Christian theology, see Joel Robbins, “Anthropology and Theology: An Awkward Relationship?” *Anthropological Quarterly* 79, no. 2 (2006): 285-295. Robbins and his students are at the forefront of an effort in anthropology to be in more conversation with theology.

3 Michael A. Rynkiewicz, response to Charles E. Stipe, “Anthropologists versus Missionaries: The Influence of Presuppositions,” *Current Anthropology* 21, no. 2 (April 1980): 165-179, at 174, emphasis in original. For nuanced essays by anthropologists on their relationships with missionaries, see also the articles in Roland Bensen, Hans Marks, and Jelle Miedema, eds., *The Ambiguity of Rapprochement: Reflections of Anthropologists on their Controversial Relationships with Missionaries* (City: Publisher, publication year).

4 On these binary depictions, see Sjaak van der Geest, “Anthropologists and Missionaries: Brothers under the Skin,” *Man*, New Series, 25, no. 4 (1990): 588-601.

5 George W. Stocking, Jr., *The Ethnographer’s Magic and Other Essays in the History of Anthropology*

(Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992).

6 I am here deliberately if momentarily reversing the Western tendency to identify its own practices as “religion” and those of indigenous peoples elsewhere as “magic.” Concomitant with the development of religious freedom in Western democracy was an anxious need to identify and delimit the not-religion. “Magic” and “witchcraft” became umbrella terms to cover all cultural ritual practices that were not “religion.”

7 It is difficult to ascertain an “original,” pre-colonial Acholi religiosity, both because of the migrations, and thus religious flux, of the peoples who would become “the Acholi” even prior to colonial contact, and because of the role of colonization itself in the formation of something like a unified Acholi identity.

8 There is a fourth kind of *jok*, one that is attached to a natural landmark but is not associated with a chiefdom or clan lineage. P’Bitek addresses this kind as part of his chapter on chiefdom *jogi*, but they are not the same, even though some chiefdom *jogi* are associated with natural landmarks.

9 Okot P’Bitek, *Religion of the Central Luo* (Nairobi/Kampala/Dar Es Salaam: East African Literature Bureau, 1971), 96 and 104.

10 Ibid., 94.

11 Ibid., 94, 76, 80, and 74.

12 Ibid., 95-96.

13 Ibid., 143.

14 See Okot p’Bitek, *Horn of My Love* (Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya Ltd, 1974), 12-14. I alter p’Bitek’s translation of *pyelo i kaki* from “he excretes in his khaki trousers” to “he shits his khaki trousers” because *pyelo* is the cruder term for *konynye*, the latter meaning literally, “to ease oneself.” Both the word *pyelo* and the context of mocking merit the cruder translation. P’Bitek does not hesitate in the second poem to translate *gero*, which means, even in a non-crude sense, both sexual intercourse and marriage, as “fuck.” The defiant, mocking tone of the second poem also seems to warrant the cruder translation.

15 Eric Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 66.

16 Jack Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 14.

17 Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (London: Routledge, 2002), 76 and 32.

18 Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write*, 69; cf also 54 and 57; Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, 113.

19 Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write*, 76; Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 37-41.

20 Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write*, 76.

21 Ibid., 70, 77, and 79.

22 Jack Goody and Ian Watt, “The Consequences of Literacy,” in *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, ed. Jack Goody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 29; Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 46-47.

23 Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, 109; cf. also 111, 128, and 160-161. For Ong and Havelock on how writing changes consciousness, see Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 50-56; and Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write*, 98-116.

24 John Hanning Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (London: William Blackwood, 1863), 535-537.

25 Claude Levi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques* (New York: Atheneum, 1981), 296 and 297-298.

26 Ibid.

27 On cargo cults, see Lamont Lindstrom, *Cargo Cult: Strange Stories from Melanesia and Beyond* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993).

28 Martha Kaplan, “The Magical Power of the (Printed) Word,” in *Magic and Modernity: Interfaces of Revelation and Concealment*, eds. Birgit Meyer and Peter Pels (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 190.

29 At first blush, this system appears to be more humane than direct rule and was claimed to be just that. Indirect rule meant that Uganda was not formally a colony, but merely a “protectorate.”

30 Cited in Mario Cisternino, *Passion for Africa: Missionary and Imperial Papers on the Evangelization of Uganda and Sudan, 1848-1923* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2004), 316 and 316, n. 40.

31 The possibility that the spirits of any killed returnees might visit upon the Acholi as *cen* —vengeful ghosts—also loomed.

32 Reuben S. Anywar, “The Life of Rwot Iburaim Awich,” *Uganda Journal* 12, no. 1 (1948): 76.

33 Cited in Cisternino, *Passion for Africa*, 363.

34 Ibid., 361.

35 Due to the Mahdist rebellion in Sudan, the British were absent from Acholiland from 1888-98. R. M. Bere, “Awich—A Biographical Note and a Chapter of Acholi History,” *Uganda Journal* 10, no. 2 (1946): 77.

36 On the variety of forms of resistance by locals under imperial presence, see James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

37 A. D. Adimola, “The Lamogi Rebellion, 1911-1912,” *Uganda Journal* 18, no. 2 (1954): 175. Cisternino states that “300 and more died of dysentery.” Cisternino, *Passion for Africa*, 375.

38 Cisternino, *Passion for Africa*, 375.

39 Ibid.

40 Adimola, “The Lamogi Rebellion, 1911-1912,” 176.

41 Ibid., 143.

42 Heike Behrend writes, in her overview of the impact of colonialism on Acholi religiosity, “Since the colonial period, the power of the *jogi* of the chiefdoms and the clans has generally tended to fade into the background, while the free *jogi* and the witches gained ever more power.” Behrend, *Alice Lakwena and the Holy Spirits: War in Northern Uganda* (Oxford: James Curry/ Kampala: Fountain Publishers/ Nairobi: EAEP/ Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999), 107.

43 The first missionaries to Gulu were aided in their spiritual combat by the colonial Witchcraft Ordinance of 1912, which was revised in 1921 to make punishment for practice more severe—increasing incarceration from one to five years and including penalties for possession of the objects of practice. See A. Adu Boahen, *Africa under Colonial Domination, 1880-1935*, vol. 7 of *UNESCO General History of Africa*, abridged ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 218.

44 On Margaret Mary Alacoque, see Robert Russell, “St. Margaret Mary Alacoque and the Sacre Coeur,” *Buckfast Chronicle* 32, no. 3 (Autumn 1962): 168.

45 The devotion remains prominent in the order, now called the “Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus.”

46 La Salette is the site of an apparition of Mary witnessed by two children in 1846. Daniel Comboni, *Daniel Comboni: The Man and His Message*, ed. and trans. Aldo Gilli (Bologna: Editrice Missionaria Italiana, 1980), 189-190.

47 Ibid., 192.

48 Ibid., 209.

49 Ibid., 212: “My work is in itself hard and arduous, and only God’s infinite power is able to make it succeed. So all my hope is in the Heart of Jesus and in the intercession of Mary.” For further references in Comboni’s writings to God’s power, particularly as exercised through Mary, see also 189 and 193.

50 On God’s protective role, particularly through Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus, see, for instance, Daniel Comboni, *Daniel Comboni*, 219: “The Sacred Heart of Jesus and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, to whom Central Africa is consecrated, they will protect our work.” See also 194 (“guard us as your property and heritage”), 214, 232 (“God should give me those who can help me ... and should keep them safe), and 257.

51 Ibid., 68.

52 Fr. Tarcisio Agostoni, *The Comboni Missionaries: An Outline History, 1867-1997* (Rome: Bibliotheca Comboniana, 2003), 290, referring to a letter to the Institute written by Vicar General Antonio Vignato in 1937.

53 Agostoni, *The Comboni Missionaries*, 486: The Comboni Rule of Life is “the concrete path of our ‘sequela Christi’ as followers of Comboni (sequela).” On the *sequela Christi* in the Comboni Rule, see also 468 and 469.

54 Ibid., 515.

55 Giovanni Vantini, "Lul: The First Missionary Outpost in Southern Sudan in the Twentieth Century," in *White Nile, Black Blood: War, Leadership, and Ethnicity from Khartoum to Kampala*, ed. Jay Spalding and Stephanie Beswick (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 2000), 320.

56 Vinco taught at the Mazza Institute, to which Comboni belonged before forming his own group of missionaries. See Giovanni Vantini, *Christianity in the Sudan* (Bologna: EMI, 1981), 237.

57 Cisternino, *Passion for Africa*, 13.

58 J. P. Crazzolaro, *A Study of the Acooli Language: Grammar and Vocabulary* (City of Publication: Publisher, year 1955), 1. In the earlier stages of the movement from orality to literacy, the spellings of words remain in flux. Crazzolaro uses *c* to symbolize the "ch" sound, and this is still the usage with many words. However, the more common spelling of *Acooli* now is *Acholi*.

59 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 77; cf. also 100 and 102.

60 See Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write*, 8-12, 58, and 61-2, 106; Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 84.

61 Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, 78 and 148; Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write*, 58-62.

62 On the development of lists due to the technology of writing, see Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, 74-111.

63 Cisternino, *Passion for Africa*, 64. Cisternino is a Comboni historian in the sense that he is both a historian of and member of the order. Rev. Cisternino died in June 2011.

64 I prefer to distinguish between "non-literate" persons in oral culture and "illiterate" persons whom a literate culture has failed to teach to read and write. Here, however, in order to indicate the parallel approach of Catholic catechesis in Europe and Africa at the time, I use Leo XIII's term, "illiterate." This also highlights the fact that European culture at the time viewed Africans not as non-literate, that is oral, but as illiterate and therefore lesser.

65 Cisternino, *Passion for Africa*, 353.

66 Fr. Mario Marchetti, *Too Long in the Dark: The Story of the Two Martyrs of Paimol and the Relevance to Uganda Today* (Gulu: Archdiocese of Gulu, 1999), 44.

67 Oral-literate combinations of various kinds have been and continue to be common. In the early stages in the literacy of a culture, for instance, most writing intended for public consumption was read aloud. The scribe was a specialist alongside the chief, the *ajwaka* and the poet. Even in societies that are deemed "fully literate," technologies like radio and film keep what Ong calls a "secondary orality" in play. The pertinent question is which of the two linguistic codings in the mix is dominant, and in the case of the form of catechism brought by the Combonis, it is the coding of literate consciousness. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 133-35.

68 Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, 115.

69 Ibid., 71; Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write*, 66.

70 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 130 and 12; Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, 37.

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- 71 Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, 128 and 76.
- 72 Cisternino, 433.
- 73 Ibid., 458.
- 74 Ibid., 469-470.
- 75 Daniel Comboni, *Daniel Comboni*, 200.
- 76 Ibid., 208: “The God-Man showed his wisdom in no better way than in making the Cross.” See also 210 and 218.
- 77 Ibid., 213-14 and 219-220. See also 235.
- 78 Giovanni Vantini, *Christianity in the Sudan* (Bologna: EMI, 1981), 240.
- 79 Daniel Comboni, *Daniel Comboni*, 203.
- 80 Cisternino, *Passion for Africa*, 212, n.29.
- 81 Daniel Comboni, *Daniel Comboni*, 211. On the theme of trust in God, see also 42, 136, 203-205, 209, 232, and 236.
- 82 Ibid., 136. See also 212.
- 83 Ibid., 220. See also 42.
- 84 Ibid., 221. On the “economy of Providence,” see also 201-202; on the “law of God’s Providence,” see 213; on prudence, see, for instance, 69.
- 85 Ibid., 215-216.
- 86 Cisternino, *Passion for Africa*, 80.
- 87 Ibid., 210, note 25.
- 88 Ibid., 85.
- 89 Ibid., 410.
- 90 Tim Allen, “Review of Ronald Atkinson, *The Roots of Ethnicity*,” *Africa* 66, no. 3 (1996): 474; and Behrend, *Alice Lakwena and the Holy Spirits*, 150. As of this writing, the most recent edition of *Acholi Macon* was published in 2006. Vincent Pellegrini, *Acholi Macon* (Gulu: Gulu Archdiocese: 2006).
- 91 Cisternino, *Passion for Africa*, 529-530.
- 92 The schools were named Angelo Negri Primary and Secondary School, Mary Immaculate Primary School and Sacred Heart Secondary School. See Sam Lawino, “Footprints of Colonialism in the North,” *Daily Monitor* (July 20, 2012), <http://www.monitor.co.ug/SpecialReports/ugandaat50/Footprints+of+colonialism+in+the+north/-/1370466/1458240/-/kl62lz/-/index.html> (accessed July 28, 2012).
- 93 Agostoni, *The Comboni Missionaries*, 338.

94 See Behrend, *Alice Lakwena and the Holy Spirits*, 148-150.

95 Pellegrini, *Acholi Macon*, (2. The Acholi reads, “*Lok manok man ma wacoyo kany watimo wek wunu jo manyen wungee maber lok pa kwarowu, wek kop man ducu pe dok orweny ki bot dano.*” I am indebted to Ketty Anyeko for translating key sections of the document for me. She translates much more rapidly and accurately than I can, and she saved me much time and headache. I have adjusted Ms. Anyeko’s translation in a few places and in minor ways where I thought different wording conveyed the meaning more fully.

96 Pellegrini, *Acholi Macon*, 2: “*Lok pa jo macon obed pwony pi jo manyen. Ka bed buk pe kano lok man kono gin ducu ma kwarowu otimo orwenyo woko oyotyot.*”

97 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia-IIae, q. 91, a.5. (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1948).

98 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia-IIae, q. 98.

99 Heike Behrend notes that the “feedback to the self-image of the Acholi and their ideas of their history” that resulted from the writing of *Acholi Macon* “should not be underestimated.” However, given that Behrend, by her own admission that she “abstained from learning Acholi or Lwo,” she has no way of knowing just what that feedback effect is given that *Acholi Macon* is written in Acholi Lwo. This severely delimits the depth of her analysis in what is, in many ways, a very good book. Behrend, *Alice Lakwena and the Holy Spirits*, 150 and 12-13. The Combonis tried at first to convert adults, but did not have much success, so focused on children, for whom the missionaries became spiritual parents.

100 Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write*, 8. For the full exposition of Havelock’s argument on this point, see Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963).

101 Pellegrini, *Acholi Macon*, 54: “*Mons. Geyer otito ki gin tic ma Mission obino ka tiyo*” and “*Lotino me lokotyeno gucako bino mapol.*”

102 Pellegrini, *Acholi Macon*, 37-41. “Baker immediately thought of visiting Acholiland so that he could stop people who were hunting for slaves,” in the original is, “*Baker otamo me cako limone cut, wek ecigeng ki kunnu jo yenyio dano.*” “Struggled so hard to put an end to the slave trading that the Arabs had started; his name became famous among the Acholi,” is “*oyelle mada wek etyek lok ma jo Arab gu cako me cato dano calo opi; nyinge oywek mada i kin Acoli, ma giloko pire wa onyo.*”

103 Ibid., 49-50.

104 Ibid., 51.

105 Ibid., 51. *Piyo*, to persuade, urge, induce, or incite, comes from its form as a verbal noun meaning to stir with a pestle. According to Pellegrini, Chief Awich was literally “stirring things up.”

106 Ibid., 52.

107 The Combonis also could have, as much as is possible, taught only the technology of writing and allowed the Acholi to reinsert the language into their life history and practices in ways that they deemed fit. Given that the Combonis were missionaries, the likelihood of this option was nil.

108 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa IIae, q. 62, a. 7.

109 Alphonsus Liguori, *Theologia Moralit*, ed. L. Gaude, 4 vols (Rome: Ex Typographia Vaticana, 1905-

12), 2:258-70 (lib. III, sections 557-78).

110 Cisternino, *Passion for Africa*, 233.

111 Liguori, *Theologia Moralis*, 1:357 (lib. II, section 63). The Latin reads: “*Sed melius cum aliis dicendum, illam esse formalem, quae concurrat ad malam voluntatem alterius, et nequit esse sine peccato; materialem vero illam, quae concurrat tantum ad malam actionem alterius, prater intentionem cooperantis.*”

112 Adimola, “The Lamogi Rebellion, 1911-1912,” 172.

113 Comboni, *Daniel Comboni*, 232; cf. also Comboni’s letter to Cardinal Simeoni in Cisternino, *Passion for Africa*, 143: “What I totally care for (and this has been the only and true passion of my whole life, and so will it be until death, and I will not blush about it) is that Africa should be converted.”

114 *Ibid.*, 215, 216, and 229.

115 Ministry of Health, The Republic of Uganda, *Health and Mortality Survey Among Internally Displaced Persons in Gulu, Kitgum, and Pader Districts, Northern Uganda* (July 2005): ii. Available at <http://www.who.int/hac/crises/uga/sitreps/Ugandamortsurvey.pdf> (retrieved April 22, 2013).

116 On the “new scramble,” see Roger Southall and Henning Melber, eds., *A New Scramble for Africa?: Imperialism, Investment and Development* (Scottsville, South Africa: University of Kwa-Zulu Press, 2009). In 2005, the International Court of Justice found the government of Uganda guilty of the illegal extraction of raw materials and ordered it to pay the DRC \$10 billion in restitution, an amount that remains unpaid. See International Court of Justice, “Armed Activities on the Territory of the Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo v. Uganda),” December 19, 2005, <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/116/10521.pdf> (accessed March 28, 2013). See also *United Nations Expert Panel on Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms*

of Wealth in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), “Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal

Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo” (2002), <http://www.un.org/News/dh/latest/drcongo.htm> (accessed March 28, 2013).

117 United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR), “Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1993-2003: Report of the Mapping Exercise documenting the most serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed within the territory of the Democratic Republic of Congo between March 1993 and June 2003,” paragraph 349, August 2010 (Released on October 1, 2010), http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/ZR/DRC_MAPPING_REPORT_FINAL_EN.pdf (accessed March 28, 2013).

118 See “Museveni directs final Lakwena offensive,” *New Vision* (November 6, 1987); and *New Vision* (July 23, 2006).

119 Kenya is another example that is perhaps even more trenchant than that of Uganda. In the case of Uganda, the International Criminal Court has refused to indict President Yoweri Museveni because the more serious of the crimes that he committed occurred before the founding of the court. The United States, therefore, can support him more readily than otherwise. In the case of Kenya, however, the newly elected president, Uhuru Kenyatta, has already been indicted by the court. Kenya, as well as Uganda, is a geo-politically strategic country for the United States, and both East African countries have soldiers fighting on behalf of the United States and its allies in Somalia. Kenya exports tea, coffee, and flowers to the United States and Europe and depends on their tourism for income. Kenya receives \$1 billion annually in aid from the United States. See, “Kenya’s Awkward Choice for President,” *New York Times*, March 13, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/14/opinion/kenyas-awkward-choice-for-president>.

[html?ref=uhurukenyatta&_r=0](#) (accessed March 16, 2013).

120 “Uganda: priests charged with incitement against government,” May 13, 2011, http://www.catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=10327&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+CatholicWorldNewsFeatureStories+%28Catholic+World+News+%28on+CatholicCulture.org%29%29 (accessed March 28, 2013).

121 See Human Rights Watch, *A Media Minefield: Increased Threats to Freedom of Expression in Uganda*, May 3, 2010, <http://www.hrw.org/node/90067> (accessed March 28, 2013); Human Rights Watch, “Uganda: Charge or Release Charged Journalist: Radio Reporter Disappeared After Meeting with Security Officer,” July 23, 2011, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2011/07/23/uganda-charge-or-release-detained-journalist> (accessed March 28, 2013); and Committee to Protect Journalists, “Uganda illegally detains journalist without charge,” July 26, 2011, <http://www.cpj.org/2011/07/uganda-illegally-detains-journalist-without-charge.php> (accessed March 28, 2013).

122 Helen Epstein, “What the US is ignoring in Uganda,” *The Monitor*, July 24, 2011, <http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/-/688334/1206294/-/bl38vkz/-/index.html> (accessed March 28, 2103).

123 Dear Jeanne and John Njoroge, “Donors cut all budget support to Uganda until 2015,” *Africa Review*, December 12, 2012, <http://www.africareview.com/News/Donors-cut-all-direct-aid-to-Uganda/-/979180/1636076/-/11k5ymv/-/index.html> (accessed March 16, 2013).

124 That rape for such reasons was carried out in the past by government soldiers has been reported to me on a number of occasions. What is unclear to me from what I been told is how the witnesses know that the rapes were carried out for the specific purpose of spreading AIDS. I know of no recent incidents of rape by government forces in northern Uganda.

125 See Rasmus Thirup Beck, “Gay people in Uganda: love on the run,” *The Guardian*, February 3, 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/feb/04/gay-people-uganda-love-run> (retrieved March 16, 2013).

126 One of the missionaries who risked his life repeatedly is Carlos Rordriquez Soto. Though he has since left the order, he details his time in Uganda in *Tall Grass: Stories of Suffering and Peace in Northern Uganda* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2009).