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THE TESO INSURGENCY REMEMBERED: CHURCHES, BURIALS AND PROPRIETY

Ben Jones

Over the past decade or so there have been a number of developments in the institutional landscape of the Teso region of eastern Uganda. These developments have taken place in the wake of a violent insurgency. Lasting from 1986 to 1993, it is remembered as a time of disorder, when life in the region was turned upside-down. There was a breakdown in the conventions and daily rituals that governed life at the local level. Rebels targeted and killed older men, usually from the same locality. These men were buried in disrespectful ways and the insurgency signalled a retreat inwards, away from the usual forms of sociality and reciprocity. Many of the changes that have taken place in the region since then have dealt with the memory of the insurgency. Life, both public and private, has increasingly emphasized displays of propriety.

Most obvious among the changes was the growth of Pentecostal Christianity. Pentecostal church buildings, usually grass-thatched structures with mud walls and floors, could be found in most Teso villages, alongside older Catholic and Anglican churches. Pentecostalism differed from these earlier versions of Christianity, with a greater focus on healing and spiritual transformation, and with a greater space for innovation and entrepreneurship. Those who had become 'born again' were expected to adopt new rules and behaviours. There was an emphasis on propriety, on showing inner conversion through outward acts.

But the advent of Pentecostalism was only one among a number of developments affecting the Teso region. There was also a growth of charismatic forms of worship in both Anglican and Catholic churches. Charismatic Christians borrowed much of their way of doing things from the particular form Pentecostalism had taken in the region, and similarly emphasized notions of conversion, adherence to new rules and living a life guided by faith. Alongside these new versions of Christianity there were innovations in customary organizations. Most obvious among these developments was the setting up of burial societies – locally run insurance schemes which were designed to help families meet the costs of funerals. Burial societies dealt with questions of respect and of belonging, and offered those who joined them a means of demonstrating respectability and membership in the community.

As such, the memory of the insurgency shadowed many of the institutional developments that had taken hold in recent years. Life in Teso was framed by a desire to break with the violence of the

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past. Orderly funerals, or the enforcement of new codes of personal behaviour, shared in a similar set of images, and made a purposeful contrast with the disorder of the insurgency years. While it is important not to be too reductive in explaining institutional developments – the growth of Pentecostalism is, after all, one of the master narratives of contemporary social change in sub-Saharan Africa – the memory of the insurgency was important in explaining how social change was approached and understood in the Teso region. In the particular context of one part of eastern Uganda, charismatic groups, Pentecostal churches and burial societies drew significance from the way they related their present back to the past.[1] In their orderliness, propriety and commensality, different institutions were able to effect a break with the past.

The article is organized as follows. After a sketch of the history of the region, there is a more detailed account of the insurgency, in which I focus on the experience of violence and the nature of death and dying. Then comes a discussion of the role of churches and the evolution of burial societies, institutions whose work was greatly influenced by the memory of the insurgency; the growing influence of churches can be related to the increasing importance of notions of propriety and respectability. Next, the significance of these different sorts of organization is expressed in more personal terms through an account of the death and burial of a young man, Edotun Jackson. In reflecting on Edotun's death I argue that those institutions that mattered in helping his mother deal with the funeral – the church and the burial society – drew part of their public authority from the way they opposed the memory of the insurgency. Pentecostal churches, charismatic groups or burial societies broke with the remembered past. In so doing they also institutionalized a version of that past in the present.

TESO BEFORE THE INSURGENCY

H. B. Thomas and Robert Scott, civil servants working in the Uganda Protectorate in 1935, had the following to say on the Teso region:

> No portion of the Protectorate has displayed more spectacular progress. At the beginning of the century the district was almost completely unknown, much of it appearing on maps as a blank, inscribed "Natives rich in flocks, herds and food, but reported treacherous."[2]

The first half of the twentieth century was a time of sometimes overwhelming economic and social transformation in Teso. Available histories of the region focus on this transformation (Lawrance 1957;

[1] On the growing importance of the relationship between burials and social insurance, see Whyte and Higenyi 1997 and Dercon *et al.* 2006. On the significance of Pentecostalism in Uganda and beyond, see Gifford 1998; and Meyer 2004.

[2] Thomas and Scott 1935: 448.

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Pirouet 1978; Vincent 1968, 1982). Teso achieved prominence as a cotton-growing area during these years, and according to Joan Vincent the export revenues from Teso cotton made the Protectorate government self-financing (Vincent 1982: 170; Vail 1972: 146).[3]

Cotton, introduced towards the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, transformed not only the fortunes of Uganda but also the lives of those living in what was to become Teso District. The Iteso have been characterized as an acephalous or stateless society, with a history of cattle keeping and pastoralism and without fixed political structures or hierarchies (Vincent 1982: Chapter 3). The introduction of cotton meant the sedentarization of this population, something achieved through a mixture of institutional innovation and blunt coercion. There was the invention of a chiefly class, part of a larger project to settle the population down so that they could grow cotton and pay taxes. A considerable amount of violence had to be embedded in this system of government, as there were no indigenous hierarchies that could be co-opted. The introduction of colonial government therefore produced an obvious tension between a relatively mobile society, reliant on contingent, small-scale social structures, and a new political economy focused on cotton production (Gartrell 1983: 5–7).

A listing of the cumulative developments achieved in the first decade of colonial administration does much to convey the rapid speed of the transformation. In 1908 the trading centre of Kumi was established as regional headquarters; in 1909 the Kyoga Marine Service came into operation; in 1910 the land on either side of the road from Mbale to Gondo – via Kumi – was opened for cotton cultivation; in 1911 the first ploughs arrived in the district. The year 1912 saw the rapid expansion of public works in the region, which demanded a considerable amount of forced labour. By 1914, Soroti, in what had once been the hinterland of the northern half of the Teso region, was made the district capital (Vincent 1968: 41–5). Such developments were achieved despite three years of crop failure in 1916, 1917 and 1918, an outbreak of rinderpest in 1914, and instances of smallpox and Spanish 'flu (Vincent 1982: 192). In 1919 there was a famine resulting in 2,067 (recorded) deaths. In other words, the financial self-sufficiency of the district administration and the Protectorate government was achieved in the face of immense hardships in the Teso region.

Missions were also part of the transformation of Teso society. The Church Missionary Society in 1908 educated the sons of the newly appointed chiefs. The first county chiefs selected from among the population were all old boys of the mission-founded Ngora High School (Pirouet 1978: 184).[4] The Mill Hill Fathers of the Roman Catholic

[3] By 1913 the value of Uganda's exports had increased twelve-fold. The share of cotton as a value percentage of exports rose from next to nothing in 1903 to near 60 per cent in 1913 (Ehrlich 1957: 162–3)

[4] The bias towards administrative recruitment from the Anglican portion of the population may explain why, in the 1921 census, there were three times as many baptized Anglicans as Catholics in Teso.

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Church, who had established a permanent base in the region in the same year as the CMS, similarly emphasized education, though with a greater commitment to the industrial arts of brick making, bricklaying, carpentry, working in iron, road making and tailoring, and a greater concern with religious instruction among the lay population (Vincent 1982: 109).[5] The overall process of evangelization was slow, perhaps a reflection of the mismatch between indigenous society and mission hierarchies, with only 6 per cent reporting adherence to the mission churches in the 1921 census, and only modest increases recorded in the 1931 census (Uganda Protectorate 1921, 1933).

The slow process of evangelization nonetheless had an impact. There was the presence of the radical and oppositional Bamalaki movement in the 1910s as well as the advent of the reformist Balokole movement in the 1930s, both of which suggested an increasingly complex religious landscape (Vincent 1982: 247–9; Ward 1989). District Commissioner J. C. D. Lawrance put the number of adult men baptized into the mission churches at 70 per cent by the mid-1950s (Lawrance 1957: 182). In terms of the evangelization process itself, conversion was lay-led, as a Mill Hill Father later recalled:

> The lay involvement was very strong from the beginning. In Toroma we had about 15,000 Catholics. In Kidetok, where I was, we had 28,000. We were two of us [Europeans] at the best of times . . . that big development occurred through the laity, not through the clergy.[6]

And as villagers took on the roles of evangelist, catechist and congregant, Christianity itself was subject to change. Church attendance was incorporated into prevailing notions of sociality and respectability, while Christian forms of worship and prayer offered a sense of community in the newly sedentarized society. Mission schools provided the place where children were educated during the week, and the building where the family as a whole prayed on Sundays. The gradual inculturation of Christianity is also suggested by the persistence of churches in the years after independence as well as in the readiness of many people to turn to Pentecostal or charismatic forms of worship in the 1980s and 1990s.

A look at the early years of colonial rule is also useful in deepening our understanding of the conflicts that emerged during the insurgency years of the late 1980s. The rebellion was increasingly defined as a series of localized political disputes, with most acts of violence perpetrated by younger men against those in positions of authority in their home area. The rebellion could be seen to express, albeit in fairly desperate ways, something of the tension between hierarchical structures established

[5] Prior to the mission being established, a catechumenate was established at Ngora by Father Kirk in April 1905 – though, in an indication of the hostility of the environment into which missions were received, Father Kirk made little headway and had to be recalled (Gale 1959: 294).

[6] Fr Bernard Phelan, St Joseph's Missionary Society, Mill Hill, London. Interviewed 20 August 2001.

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during the colonial period and the acephalous inheritance of Teso society.

THE TESO INSURGENCY

After the tumult of Idi Amin's administration in the 1970s, the first half of the 1980s were quiet years for those living in eastern Uganda. The five years of the second Obote government (1980–5) were experienced at some distance from the conflicts waged in other parts of the country. The violence that affected Buganda was removed from the business of daily life in the Teso region and life in the east of the country was able to recover, to some extent, from the economic collapse presided over by Amin. Much of the region's wealth was tied up in large stocks of cattle, and this insulated people from the political and economic crises that surrounded them. Opposition to the government in Kampala came from central and western parts of Uganda rather than the east.

When the National Resistance Army took power in January 1986 those living in the east of the country found themselves in a difficult position. Many had served in the army or the police force of the defeated government and worried that Museveni's National Resistance Army, with its power based in the west of the country, would persecute them. Their fears were realized when the government imposed a dishonourable discharge on roughly three quarters of the national police force in July 1986, denying them the right to severance pay and pension (Omara-Otunnu 1987: 178). Museveni's accession to power also coincided with a deteriorating security situation in the east of the country. The National Resistance Army decided to disband local militias that had been set up to defend the Teso region against cattle rustlers from neighbouring Karamoja (Zistel 2000: 118).[7]

Early in 1986 Karamojong warriors entered the eastern parts of Teso, and a series of spectacular raids destroyed the cattle stocks of the region. Each raid produced a new group of cattle-less men, and by the time raiding reached western and southern parts of Teso in 1988, the raiding parties comprised Itesot as well as Karamojong warriors.[8] Estimates put the number of cattle lost at 500,000, though numbers were of less importance than the overwhelming nature of the raiding (Henriques 2002: 18). This involved not only the stealing of cattle, but also the

[7] Mirzeler and Young suggest that the raiding was the result of a longer process of militarization of the Karamoja region, as well as a way of dealing with the effects of drought (Mirzeler and Young 2000: 416–17).

[8] There is a tendency in Teso scholarship to limit the raiding to 1986, giving the false impression that cattle raiding was a singular event, rather than an extended series of raids lasting into 1989 (cf. Zistel 2002: 118; de Berry 2000: 67). I am grateful to Father Bernard Phelan of the Mill Hill Society for suggesting the graduated nature of the raiding chronology in Teso (written communication, 13 July 2005).

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burning of huts, the theft of ploughs and hand hoes, and the looting of stores of grain and flour.[9]

The loss of cattle represented a heavy blow to the social identity of the people living in the Teso region. Despite their success as cotton farmers, those living in the Teso region retained their affection for cattle. The handing over of cattle from father to son was the principal means through which a youth became a man (Zistel 2002: 126). The raiding aggravated antagonisms between older and younger men, as Akol James[10] explains:

> Some of the old men did not care so much that they had lost their cows. It was the boys who felt it the most. They thought that cattle would be their way into marriage and into education. Our sons were just told that the cows had gone. At first they did not know what it was to lose them. But as time went on they became angry as he knows there is nothing the old man can do to get back the cattle. They were resentful.[11]

The cattle raiding and Museveni's accession to power were bound together in the popular imagination (Ocitti 2000: 342), and many felt that a rebellion offered the best chance of restoring order.[12]

By the time I arrived in Teso, a decade on, what was remembered of the insurgency was the very particular experience of rebel violence. Any veneer of military management by the rebel leadership bore little relationship to the lived experience of the insurgency on the ground. Within a sub-parish of little more than a hundred homes, villagers could recall at least four different rebel groups. The rebellion was experienced as more of a localized civil war. Much of the violence was directed towards village politicians:

> How could those people survive in the villages? The rebels did not want them. If the rebels saw a village council chairman he would be dead soon after. They would take him to 'dig his potatoes' (*aibok acok*) in the swamp. Within a short time they would cover his eyes and face with his shirt and they would move him to the swamp, while singing:
>
> *mam idaete eong ne, koyangarai eong da ore neja ikatunga*
>
> (don't bury me here, take my body home to my people).

[9] The analysis contained here is particularly indebted to Okiror Ben Isaac of Agolitom sub-parish, who discussed in considerable detail the complex chronology of the insurgency. Interviewed 14 January 2003.

[10] Throughout the article I follow the Teso convention of listing the *ateker* name before the Christian name.

[11] Interviewed 21 November 2002.

[12] The ex-Minister of Local Government, Jaberi Bidandi Ssali, later accepted that the NRA had been complicit in the cattle raiding ('Iteso to be compensated – Bidandi' by Nathan Etengu, *New Vision*, 14 February 1995).

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> That was their song, their song for killing.[13]

The song refers to the way in which men were killed and buried. A 'big man', such as a village council chairman, would be forced to 'dig potatoes', meaning that he would be made to dig the hole that later would serve as his grave. The point seems to be to deny such a man the respectable burial he would otherwise be accorded. As Ikara Patrick, a catechist serving in the Catholic community in Agolitom later recalled: 'you could get a man killed like a goat, his dead body would be strewn along the road; the rebels could kill a man and tell his people not to mourn'.[14]

Within an increasingly fragmented landscape, churches offered one form of refuge, providing a place where people could come together:

> You would run to church and if the lay reader was also there you would pray. You would pray that God will make sure nothing would happen to you in His house. On Sundays, if you thought the place was secure you would first say a prayer for God to help you before going. Even though the place was insecure that did not mean people stopped praying.[15]

Churches also came to the fore during the months when the rural population was interned. Early in 1990 the National Resistance Army decided to forcibly resettle the rural population into camps. Internment, it was felt, would make the prosecution of the war a more straightforward affair. The camps, which were placed on the outskirts of major towns, were a way of emptying the countryside of people, cutting off support, either voluntary or coerced, for the rebellion. Estimates put the number of people interned at over 100,000 (Henriques 2002: 223–4; de Berry 2000: 72). The camp at Ngora crammed 35,000 people into a few square miles. There were inadequate supplies of food, shelter and water, and a lack of overall organization: dysentery was endemic.[16] Most of the considerable number of people who died were buried in communal pits.

It was at this time that Pentecostalism came to the fore.[17] The camps provided a place where people began to consider quite radical changes in their religious lives. Life was reduced to a pattern of sitting and waiting, and the relationships involved in conversion had time to evolve. As Kevin Ward suggests, there were 'stories of a revival of

[13] This observation was made by Angejet Jennifer Loy, a widow from the sub-parish of Agolitom. Interviewed 7 November 2002.

[14] Interviewed 4 December 2002.

[15] Taken from a conversation with Amujal Joyce Mary, a member of an Anglican congregation at Kalengo. Interviewed 24 October 2002.

[16] An Amnesty International report guessed the number of dead at around 10,000 (Amnesty International 1992: 7). If these figures are to be believed, then roughly a twelfth of the interned population died in the camps.

[17] Though Pentecostal churches had achieved a significant presence in rural parts of Teso only in the late 1980s, Pentecostalism has been present in eastern Uganda since at least the 1930s (Barrett *et al.* 2000: 765).

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religious commitment in some of the camps' (Ward 1995: 102). In the Ngora camp the Pentecostal Assemblies of God church prayed in the same building as the Catholic and Anglican congregations, and this meant that villagers had the possibility of comparing Pentecostalism to other more established churches within a familiar setting. Aguti Betty, a one-time member of the Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG) church, had the following to say about the importance of the camps to the growth of the PAG:

> It was the PAG that led so many people into salvation. They stayed in the camps, and their church was founded in the camps. They would pray and preach and the church grew big. I remember when we went to get the body of our deceased grandmother. I saw how they were in the camps, I found the Pentecostals preaching.[18]

The social and psychological dynamics of the insurgency also did much to make the message of Pentecostal Christianity persuasive. The millennial elements of Pentecostalism, the belief that the 'born-again' Christian should prepare for the life to come, and that the world itself might come to an end, made sense to many at that time.

THE YEARS AFTER THE INSURGENCY

Pentecostal churches and charismatic groups

The growth of Pentecostalism continued into the 1990s; and in this the Teso region belongs to a much larger story of Christian revival in sub-Saharan Africa and the developing world more generally (Maxwell 2006, Introduction and Chapter 1; see also Gifford 1998; Meyer 2004). Though it is difficult to generalize about Pentecostalism as a religious category, what can be said is that Pentecostal Christians place considerable emphasis on the process of inner conversion, of becoming 'born again'. Conversion is to be achieved through receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and then demonstrating these gifts outwardly either through displaying certain spiritual gifts – speaking in tongues, healing ceremonies, prophesying – or through adhering to new rules and codes of behaviour (Maxwell 2006: 7–10). In the Teso region the Pentecostal Assemblies of God, the Christ the Disciples church and the Church Foundation Ministry all placed prohibitions on drinking beer, on smoking, on taking more than one wife, and on marrying outside of the church. An argument, common in the literature, is that the outward different-ness of Pentecostal Christians makes it easier for them to challenge accepted ideas of community and social obligation (Meyer 1998: 318–19). Pentecostals are seen to break with the past and this often entails a very public break with family members.

And yet what was striking about Pentecostalism in Teso was the way it had become part of the institutional landscape. Though Pentecostal

[18] Interviewed 4 August 2002.

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churches in Teso espoused an ideological commitment to separating the life of the 'saved' and the ways of the world, the practical division was less clear at village level. Church members continued to be significant players in governmental and customary institutions (Jones 2005: 497). In Oledai the vice chairman of the village council was also youth leader of the local Pentecostal Assemblies of God congregation, while his wife, a member of the PAG choir, was also treasurer of the local borehole committee.

It is therefore less surprising to find that Pentecostalism influenced other parts of village life. In both Catholic and Anglican churches charismatic Christians in the historic mission churches had adopted a number of behaviours and practices which borrowed from the local variant of Pentecostalism. A 'charismatic' Catholic or Anglican accepted prohibitions on alcohol and smoking, and took much the same position on questions of personal morality as did Pentecostal Christians. In a conversation with a young Pentecostal in the village of Oledai the similarities between charismatics and members of his own church was clear:

> charismatics are the same [as us]. They have left behind many of the bad ways of others, they are like saved people. They reject the same things we do. They do not drink, or have many wives; they do not see witchdoctors. Like us they have left behind those things that bring conflict and trouble to the lives of Christians. They now preach the Gospel in a true way, they say that 'Jesus Christ is their saviour', they say it aloud, not in a half-hearted way.[19]

In recent years there have also been more subtle changes concerning the meaning of church membership. When asked what had changed in church, a common answer was 'rules are more important now'. There was the understanding that those who had been absent from church for some time could no longer claim to be proper Christians, a contrast to the nominal sort of Christianity detailed in earlier accounts (cf. Pirouet 1978: Chapter 6). The redefinition around questions of what it meant to be a Christian was perhaps a way of dealing with the increasing competition between churches. But it was also a reflection of the capacity of different denominations to absorb something of the more committed, participatory faith envisioned by Pentecostalism.

As I have already suggested, reforms and renovations in the religious sphere were part of a much broader set of changes. Though Pentecostal churches have often been viewed as somewhat distinct communities, set apart from more prosaic forms of social organization, in the Teso context their emphasis on notions of respect and propriety was shared by other institutions. Village courts, for example, had evolved similarly, and there was a renewed interest in questions of proper behaviour and deference. Cases presented were argued in ways that linked younger men to ideas of wilfulness or stubbornness with the apparent aim of

[19] Interviewed 21 November 2002.

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associating them with the violence of the insurgency. If a young man could be shown to be wilful, he was also felt to be a reminder of the violence of the insurgency, and in such cases it was likely that the decision would go against him. The idea that courts provided a place where young people could be disciplined was nothing new; rather what was new was the egregious way in which this was done. Cases on wholly unrelated matters – a dispute between husband and wife, a witchcraft accusation – turned on the question of whether or not the young man involved in the case had been wilful or stubborn. The memory of the insurgency was also played out through the work of burial societies.

Burial societies

Burial societies worked as insurance schemes, typically organized around one or two lineage groups (*atekerin*). Their work was to collect money from society members when someone died, so as to help the family of the deceased meet the burial costs. Once the burial society had collected money from its members, one or two individuals would be sent to purchase a burial cloth, a coffin and cement for sealing the grave. The society was responsible for organizing the ceremony, with women given the job of collecting firewood and preparing food for the guests, and men responsible for digging the grave and for making sure that the funeral was conducted in an orderly and timely fashion.

The burial typically lasted two to three days. The first day was the day of the burial proper, referred to both in the literature and by villagers as the day of *aipud* (Lawrance 1957: 99). This was the day when burial societies were most active. Many guests would gather, and the home would be busy with women working in kitchens, cooking food, preparing beer, or serving and clearing up. In most cases prayers would be said at the burial by the local catechist, lay reader, or Pentecostal preacher, and afterwards the elders of the burial society would speak about the deceased. At the point of actual interment the coffin would be lowered into place and an iron sheet would be laid on top of it. When the burial was over the treasurer would report the income and expenditures of the burial as well as the remaining balance, which was handed over to the family of the deceased.

Paying burial dues and turning up to funerals were perhaps the strongest social conventions to be found in the Teso region. They were the means through which villagers demonstrated their membership in a particular community[20] – even though they were new institutions they had transformed the social significance of funerals and had built up new norms of civility and sociality.[21] A funeral organized by a burial society

[20] In Agolitom and Oledai villages, where I spent most of my time, all but a handful of households were members of a burial society.

[21] There is also an echo of this in the literature on burial societies in Victorian England. F. M. L. Thompson observes that: 'having the means to avoid [a pauper burial] and to provide for a decent funeral that would preserve the family's standing in the community was the measure of basic respectability; around this minimum core could be built all the other defences against degradation' (Thompson 1988: 200).

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not only contrasted sharply with the isolated nature of death during the insurgency, but also with the sorts of burials that could be found in the years before, which were more the responsibility of the home than the lineage or the community.

What was most remarkable about burial societies was their ability to draw considerable resources from their memberships. Burials were a regular part of village life, and it was not unusual for a society member to contribute to a burial every other month. The money paid was fixed by the burial society committee and payment could not be avoided.[22] As well as this money payment, households were expected to contribute gifts in kind. Women were delegated the task of bringing food, water and firewood to the burial home, and in the case of *Atekok Esasi* burial society, were required to bring the following:

1 tin of cassava flour
1 tin of sweet potato flour
1 tin of sorghum
5 tubers of cassava or 5 sweet potatoes
3 pieces of firewood
1 twenty-litre jerry can of water

In emphasizing ideas of commensality and social obligation burial societies marked a separation from the isolation and violence of the insurgency. In this they were part of a broader story to which Pentecostal churches, charismatic groups and village courts all contributed. A good chunk of the legitimacy of these different institutions came from the way they marked a separation from the nature of death and dying in the recent past. The sense of ceremony and community that surrounded burials or church services, or the ability of a court to discipline a young man, contrasted sharply with the experience of the insurgency.

In the following case, the death and burial of Edotun Jackson shows the significance of burial societies and the new-found influence of the Anglican Church. I would like to point to the way the work of these different institutions was, at the level of experience, complementary. The case suggests how the insurgency affected institutional developments at the local level, and how these institutional developments affected individuals.

[22] Anyone who failed to attend the pre-burial meeting would be visited by one or more young men known as *askaris* whose job it was to make sure everyone paid their money and attended the burial. *Askaris* had a policy of tying a rope around those who had failed to pay their fees, before bringing them along to the burial society committee for punishment.

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THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF EDOTUN JACKSON

In June 2002 Edotun had gone to the police to lay charges against two men from a neighbouring sub-parish.[23] The charges concerned the theft of his radio, sponge mattress and some 13,000 shillings (US$7) that he had managed to save up and store in his compound. The day after the theft, one of Edotun's neighbours named the two suspected thieves. Edotun went to the police and, after he had paid the summary fee of 5,000 shillings ($3), they recovered the stolen goods from the home of one of the suspects. The radio and sponge mattress were then returned to Edotun, and the thieves were obliged to pay double the money they had stolen from him by way of compensation. By the time of his death – he was murdered two months later – this money had not been paid.

At the time of his death Edotun's position in the village was fragile. Not only was he locked in a conflict with his two debtors, but he was the only son of a poor widow, with no obvious connections. Edotun lived alone. The grass-thatched hut in which he slept was not protected by the bustle of life that surrounded other homes. He worked long hours as a bicycle taxi man, and was criticized by others for socializing in the trading centre rather than spending time at home. Though Edotun and his mother lived on his deceased father's land, their hold on this land was tenuous. It was commonly understood that land was only held in trust by a male member of the *ateker*, as land belonged to the lineage rather than the household.

Given this already difficult situation, Edotun's death placed his mother, Atai Helen, in a precarious position. The burial itself was a costly business. In order to proceed with the funeral, Atai Helen had to pay the police and hospital a total of 80,000 shillings ($46), to have the body of her son released with the death certificate required in murder cases. Aside from the ensuing financial hardship, Atai was also left with the problem of how to keep hold of the land she had been farming. Her son's death left her without a man from within her immediate family to guarantee the land that had been apportioned to her. In the past, the vulnerable nature of this situation would have compelled Atai to take a levirate – a second husband from within the *ateker* – or otherwise struggle on with a smaller piece of land. But the setting up of burial societies and the increasing importance of churches shaped the context within which Atai's future was determined. Edotun's burial was a very public affair, and was attended by most of the members of the

[23] Before his death Edotun Jackson was interviewed as part of survey work conducted in the village of Oledai. He also participated in a group discussion on 31 May 2002 with three other bicycle taxi men, while his services as a bicycle taxi man were often needed to reach the far side of the sub-parish. The information used to piece together the case study of his death draws from a series of interviews, observations and written records. Edotun's death was discussed in detail in interviews with Oberei Fastine (30 August 2002); Akol Florence (20 August 2002); Tino Rose (23 August 2002); Okaleke Peter (11 September 2002) and Ibuchet Max (9 January 2003). Atai Helen was interviewed on 2 September 2002 and 27 January 2003.

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sub-parish. The funeral itself was an elaborate and inclusive occasion and contrasted sharply with the violence and isolation of the young man's death.

On the burial day itself, prayers were said by Ongenge George Washington, the lay reader of the Anglican church (Edotun had been baptized into the Church of Uganda). Ongenge was something of an independent voice in the village, a distance away from the conflicts and disputes that affected his parishioners. Ongenge drew his independence from his status as a one-time *Balokole*, a 'saved' member of the Church of Uganda. His independence was also drawn from his origins in a neighbouring sub-parish, and although Edotun was not a regular churchgoer Ongenge chose to give a sermon before offering burial prayers. The sermon was delivered to a larger audience than Ongenge could hope to attract to his Sunday service, and he took the opportunity to speak out against those who had done the killing, characterizing the men of the area as violent and disruptive:

> I spoke strongly during the burial. I said so many things against the indiscipline of men. After the burial, some of those men came to my home and said that I had made a mistake; that I should not talk like that at a burial. But I replied that that was my duty as a Christian. I am doing God's work.[24]

In determining whether or not Atai could hold onto the land she had been farming, the influence of the lay reader was significant. He had connected the death of Edotun with the violence of young men, and Atai's case came to be viewed in the light of the idea that her son's burial signified the restoration of civility and propriety. Her situation was also strengthened by the work of the church and the burial society. The public platform of the burial was an outgrowth of the work of burial societies and churches, and since the end of the insurgency burials had become ever more clearly defined public spaces that opened up new opportunities for debate and discussion of social issues.

BREAKING WITH THE PAST IN TESO

One way of thinking about the work of burial societies or of churches in the Teso region is to borrow from notions of rupture developed in the literature on Pentecostalism. Birgit Meyer has written of Pentecostal discourse and practice as concerned with making a complete break with the past (Meyer 1998: 317; see also Engelke 2004; van Dijk 1998). In Meyer's view being 'born again' is demonstrated through the adoption of new ways of doing things: through prohibitions on alcohol or the use of traditional medicines, or, at a more profound level, through breaking with past relationships. In many instances Pentecostal Christians have been seen to pull away from family members, and, as David Maxwell

[24] From an interview with Ongenge George Washington, 22 October 2002.

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observes: 'Pentecostals exhibit an aggressive intolerance towards aspects of their own culture, which they label "tradition"' (Maxwell 2006: 10).

In Teso, however, the sense of rupture or of breaking with the past was something that cut across different institutions. While it is true to say that Pentecostal Christians broke with the past through being 'born again', it is also true that those who participated in burial societies or the local courts were also making a break with the past. The need to mark a separation from the past was part of the life of the region. Burial societies, like churches, mattered in part because they were able to relate to the history of the Teso region. They were more than insurance schemes. The sanctions and punishments available to them, as well as their ability to collect funds, should be understood as bound into the memory of the insurgency. And in this they were not so different from Pentecostal churches or charismatic groups.

What can also be drawn from Meyer's work on rupture in Pentecostalism is the idea that breaking with the past also institutionalizes a version of that past in the present (2004: 457). For the Pentecostal Christian who becomes ill or gets poorer, such a piece of misfortune is a sign that he or she has not fully broken with the past. Because the past can still catch up with you, salvation has constantly to be proved. One's status as a 'born-again' Christian is never entirely guaranteed; rather it has to be remade through everyday demonstrations.

In a similar way, the insurgency was also remade in the life of the Teso region. The sense of order and propriety in the work of churches, burial societies and local courts meant that the violent recent past was becoming a contrasting image to the present. The insurgency had become a fixture of the institutional landscape of the Teso region, albeit a fixture that was never entirely fixed. The insurgency could still unsettle things. Through the words of the lay reader at the burial of Edotun Jackson, a young man's death demonstrated that the violence of the insurgency retained its power.

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ABSTRACT

From 1986 to 1993 the Teso region of eastern Uganda experienced a violent insurgency. The insurgency was remembered as a time of brutality, when norms of respect and reciprocity were broken down. Younger men targeted and killed older men, and life retreated inwards. In the years since the insurgency a number of institutional developments have reflected on this experience. A growing number of Pentecostal churches have been established in the region, while charismatic forms of worship have been introduced in Anglican and Catholic churches. Burial societies have been set up and in the local courts the presentation of cases has undergone a change of emphasis. In all these different institutions there has been an attempt to draw a line under the violence of the recent past. A growing emphasis on notions of propriety and respectability – whether in church, in court, or at a burial – was a common theme in the life of Teso villages. In emphasizing new forms of sociality and obligation, churches and burial societies promoted a sense of fortunes restored; a belief that the past could be divorced from the present. At the same time, however, the attempt to draw a line under the past made the insurgency, or rather the memory of the insurgency, a powerful catalyst for change. The article examines the continuing influence the insurgency has over processes of social and political change in Teso.

RÉSUMÉ

Entre 1986 et 1993, la région de Teso, dans l'Est de l'Ouganda, a été le théâtre d'une insurgence violente. Le souvenir de cette insurgence est celui d'une période de brutalité caractérisée par une désintégration des normes de respect et de réciprocité. Des hommes jeunes visaient et tuaient des hommes âgés, et la vie se repliait vers l'intérieur. Au cours des années qui ont suivi l'insurgence, un certain nombre d'évolutions institutionnelles ont reflété cette expérience. Les églises pentecôtistes ont été de plus en plus nombreuses à s'établir dans la région, tandis que des formes de culte charismatiques étaient introduites dans les églises anglicanes et catholiques. Des sociétés de funérailles ont été mises en place et, dans les tribunaux locaux, la présentation des affaires a connu un changement d'orientation. Dans toutes ces diverses institutions, il y a eu une tentative de tirer un trait sur la violence du passé récent. Parmi les thèmes communs identifiés dans la vie des villages teso figurait l'importance croissante accordée aux notions de propriété et de respectabilité (que ce soit à l'église, au tribunal ou aux funérailles). En privilégiant de nouvelles formes

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de socialité et d'obligation, les églises et les sociétés de funérailles favorisaient le sens d'un retour à la prospérité; l'idée que le passé pouvait être dissocié du présent. Or, dans le même temps, la tentative de tirer un trait sur le passé faisait de l'insurgence, ou plutôt du souvenir de l'insurgence, un puissant catalyste de changement. L'article examine l'influence continue de l'insurgence sur les processus de changement social et politique à Teso.

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