

ALUR TRADITION AND ITS HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

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INTRODUCTION

THE Alur occupy the southern quarter of the West Nile District of Uganda, and the neighbouring parts of Mahagi Territoire in the Belgian Congo. They are linguistically classified as Nilotes, along with the Acoli, Palwo (Copi), Padhola (Dama) and Lango of Uganda and the Luo of Nyanza Province in Kenya. I stress the linguistic basis of this classification advisedly, because in culture and ethnic origin the Alur are extremely heterogeneous. The dominant groups among them claim to be Lwo, thus linking themselves with all the other tribes mentioned above except the Lango, and also with the numerous Lwo groups of the Sudan.

In addition to this Nilotic component, the Alur are composed of Bantu and Sudanic elements which they have absorbed from all around them. The Bantu or originally Bantu elements consist of immigrants of high status from Bunyoro, remnants of the aboriginal Bantu tribes of the shores of Lake Albert and the Albert Nile, and small numbers of Nyali and Bira from the Congo. The Sudanic elements consist of portions of the Okebo, Madi, Lendu and Bendi peoples, most of whom are now in the Belgian Congo. According to Alur tradition, the process of assimilating these remarkably diverse elements into a degree of common culture had been going on continuously for a number of generations up to the time of the imposition of European rule. It must suffice to say here that the process of assimilation was accomplished largely through peaceful penetration and recruitment rather than by military conquest, the assimilators being aristocratic Lwo, or Bantuized Lwo from Bunyoro, who established themselves as ritual leaders among the chiefless societies around them, arbitrating in their endless inter-clan conflicts, providing them with a larger scale administrative organization which gave them some respite from fighting amongst themselves, and enjoying a great reputation as rainmakers.¹

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the historical significance of tribal traditions in general, and in the light of this discussion to present a very abbreviated summary of the voluminous traditions of the many Alur groups. From this summary the reader may judge the relationship between tribal tradition and social structure, and the relevance of this particular body of tradition to an explanation of the relation between various Alur groups and of the emergence of the Alur as a people.

It may be noted briefly here that the salient characteristic of Alur social structure is its combination of political institutions at an elementary level of specialization with an extensive and highly ramified system of localized segmentary lineages. This may be characterized as two polar principles of social organization, the one operating from above, the other from below. Above, there was the political institution of chiefship, tending towards the centralization of

¹ A full analysis of the Alur social system is awaiting publication.

political power within any of the numerous Alur chiefdoms. Below, there was the system of localized segmentary lineages, giving opportunities for the constant splitting, dispersion, and regrouping of the smaller social units.²

MYTH AND HISTORY

Anthropologists have of late been criticized, or have criticized themselves, for neglecting the time dimension in their studies.³

They have also from time to time put forward very good reasons for doing so in certain circumstances.⁴ There is no doubt that the folk traditions of preliterate tribes cannot be simply treated as historical accounts of their past development. Some myths present no difficulty in that they do not claim any time referent. Some tribes 'have no history', in the sense that the structural relations on which they are based give no evidence of any changes except in their human content, and in the absence of other reliable records this has to be accepted as an irreducible *datum*, though it may be quite erroneous were the truth known. The importance of showing, if possible, whether a certain process has regularities over a longer time period as well as in space, need not be stressed. Of course, by the very word 'process' we are at once committed to a limited time dimension, but this is usually taken for granted, and it is the question of greater time depth which constitutes the problem.

A great deal of the theoretical interest of a political system such as that of the Alur centres upon the time dimension. It is essential to establish the synchronic relations between individuals and groups of which this system is at any moment made up, but much of the significance of these is lost if nothing can be indicated as to their development. I have therefore adopted the somewhat daring course of illustrating this in a series of maps with a commentary. I have found that this has several incidental advantages. Nothing but the attempt to relate the space and time dimensions of groups can so clarify the problems of their development and reveal the possible inconsistencies which might otherwise unwittingly influence critical judgment without ever being consciously appraised. I present the results with hesitation, but with the justification that the evidence is there for others to reject my interpretation, and that the issues have not been twisted or the contradictions concealed.

Although all preliterate societies are subject to the same lack of internal documentation of their past, the relation of their folk traditions to the actual sequence of past events varies greatly according to the type of society. The crude distinction is between societies having hereditary chiefs and those without. The traditions of decentralized societies whose social organization is restricted to a very small scale, may almost entirely lack any historical content. Some groups may indeed for a considerable period have had no significant history except the continuity of their structural relations. But this is still an important historical fact. Is the Nuer belief (see Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*,

² An adequate explanation of this somewhat complex system cannot be given here, and must await the publication of the full analysis.

³ E.g. Gluckman, *Africa*, 1947, pp. 103-06. Murdock, *American Anthropologist*, vol. 53, No. 4, Pt. 1, p. 468. Evans-Pritchard, *Man*, 1950, No. 198.

⁴ E.g. Radcliffe Brown, *J.R.A.I.*, 1941, pp. 1 and 16. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, Oxford, 1940, p. 108.

p. 101), that man was created under a tree still standing in Nuerland, without historical significance? There is in principle no reason why myths should not utilize a historical content for the attainment of other purposes, but some societies have identifiable motives for distortion, such as the adoption of the traditions of migration associated with other groups of higher status. Even so, where several societies are in contact at all it is likely that some valid information will result from checking the accounts of different neighbouring societies of one another. This makes it possible, for example, to establish the last major movement of even a chiefless migratory society, but not to work back into its more remote past. Societies with hereditary chiefs and with even a very elementary state organization usually have a positive vested interest in the transmission of historical information of a type, and the fact that myths are used to validate contemporary relationships will in such societies favour the recollection of important historical events in some detail, albeit with distortions and exaggerations. But these latter are still subject to the countercheck of the versions of all the groups concerned in a particular event.

The crucial distinction is between societies which have a motive for transmitting information which is historical in type, even if not wholly accurate, and those societies which have not. Nadel⁵ hypothesizes for purposes of argument "a state based on conquest, so that its justification lies in historical happenings, which carries historical viewpoints and reasoning into a wide range of social contexts". The psychological needs served by oral traditions require only to emphasize particular qualitative aspects and details of events, not necessarily to distort the major historical sequences. This is amply illustrated in the recurrence of certain themes in Alur tradition, the details of which are quite inessential to the major occurrence which happens to be expressed in this form.

In the case of Alur society we have the Lwo, chiefly elements who had this historical motive, and the various subject tribes who until they came in contact with the Lwo probably had not. I am therefore sceptical about establishing the migrations of the subject tribes except during the comparatively recent period with reference to which a number of independent accounts are available including that of the Lwo themselves; but I refer to some of the attempts at reconstructing these migrations. A strong argument for the near accuracy of much of the Alur tradition, granting the counterchecks already noted (and after all these still have to be employed even when written documents are available), is the continuity of the main processes through time, or rather, the consistency of the traditional account of political activities from the crossing of the Nile till the European occupation, of the recollections of reliable informants of the actual events of their youth, and of the political attitudes still expressed towards contemporary issues.

A technical argument for this presentation is that it makes a rather complex social situation, and the arguments based upon it, so much more easily intelligible. The maps have been arranged in seven successive phases with a view both to illustrating events which seem to have been roughly contemporary, and to including only a schematically manageable body of facts on each one.

⁵ *The Foundations of Social Anthropology*. London, 1951, p. 399.

THE SOURCES

The sources on which this account is based are of three kinds, the writings of Europeans on tribal migrations, European recordings of native traditions, and my own recordings of native traditions. I have leant most heavily on the first source for the earlier, more general, and least important part of the account, contained in the first two phases. The rest is based on my own study of the native traditions, confirmed or amplified at various points by that of other writers.

The more the concrete local details are ignored and the more general such accounts are made, dealing with large tribes or language groups rather than smaller political groups, the more suspiciously coherent they seem to become. It is usually held by those who hope to reconstruct tribal histories that the problem could be solved if enough of the local traditional material could be assembled and collated. I think that, within a very limited time period,⁶ this would be true. But when many of the sweeping generalizations made about tribal movements extending far into the past are confronted with this local traditional material the result is a mass of contradictions. This is partly because memory does not extend far enough back and so what has actually been forgotten must be invented, and partly because of the positive reasons for the distortion of history. Also, when large tribal movements are studied at close quarters there sometimes emerges such a welter of small independent groups moving apparently in all directions that any picture of a coherent general movement is obscured. To this extent the near view is unable to see the wood for the trees.

However, in the present state of knowledge, the logical hypotheses which could account for the distribution and relationships of the main ethnic groups of this area during the last two or three centuries are sufficiently restricted for the general outlines of the account to be beyond serious doubt. Certain conclusions of a historical kind, consisting of a probable chronological order of events in any area, though the length of the time-periods involved can be only very roughly calculated, do emerge from the relation of traditions to the actual present distribution of peoples, to the linguistic evidence, and to the few available milestones of a more definitely historical kind. This is true of the historical relations of all the following groups: the Southern Lwo (Alur, Acoli, Palwo, Padhola, Kenya Luo); the related dynasties of Bunyoro, Toro, Koki, Kiziba, Buganda, Busoga and Bugwere; The Hinda dynasties of Nkole, Karagwe, Uzinza and Usubi; the related Hima-Tutsi dynasties of Mpororo, Ruanda, Urundi, Uha, Usukuma and northern Unyamwezi; the conquering dynasties of the Mangbetu and Azande; the Sudanic Moru-Madi group of Logo, Kaliko, Lugbara, Madi, Okebo and Lendu; the Nilo-Hamitic 'Lango' group of the Karamojong including the Lwo speaking Lango;⁷ and the other mixed peoples of the north-western Congo area⁸ (Grass and Forest Bira, Nyali, Bendi, Mamvu-Lese and Pygmies).

⁶ Cf. van Warmelo, in *The Bantu Speaking Tribes of South Africa*, ed. I. Schapera, London, 1937, p. 44. "Native tribal tradition is weak in chronology and scanty in regard for truth. As a rule, three hundred years is the limit of possibly reliable tradition."

⁷ For such an account of this group see P. H. Gulliver, the Karamojong Cluster, *Africa*, January, 1952.

⁸ For this area see P. Schebesta, *Die Bambuti-Pygmaen vom Ituri*, Brussels, 1938, and subsequent volumes with a very useful map (Band I at end).

Along these lines earlier writers such as Calonne Beaufaict⁹ and Czekański¹⁰ attempted to work, and, with much greater precision as material accumulated, more recent writers have continued to do so. Particularly valuable is Tucker's concise assessment of the evidence as a background for his linguistic account.¹¹

When attention is focused upon one particular tribe, as has here been done for the Alur, certain minimal conclusions can safely be drawn, such as that the tribe appears to have been settled in the same territory for a certain number of generations, or that it came from a certain direction so many generations ago, and that certain correlated movements of adjacent tribes must necessarily have occurred. Within such a broad framework of relatively shallow time-depth, the more detailed movements of component sections of a tribe can be established from checking the traditions of all groups within areas whose populations retain some common consciousness of one another and their past. The interpretation of native tradition depends upon a critical quality towards it which is rarely conveyed with success in published accounts. It is only when one is thoroughly conversant with a particular society at first hand that one can make much confident use of further material recorded by others from the same tribe. It is essential to know the general social structure of a people, the age, education and social status of informants, and the exact social groups and localities from which they come.¹² There still remains the qualitative assessment of a people's attitude towards time and historical events, and their possible motives for distortion. In accounts of migrations, data of this kind are required all along the route supposedly followed.

Crazzolaro¹³ is bringing a wealth of local traditional detail rarely surpassed in African studies to bear upon his account of the Lwo migration and the peoples concerned in it. Though one may be permitted to doubt some of his more far fetched conclusions (for example, his superficial identification of Cwezi and Hima with Lwo) and some of his methods of interpretation, the material he provides substantiates some of his main points.

For the more recent period of Alur development I have used as a rough chronological yardstick the generations of the various lines of Alur chiefs. I have assumed a generation in this case to be about twenty years, which is a conservative estimate. The recent reigns of chiefs have been rather long, fifteen cases averaging twenty-eight years, but this has been under conditions differing in important respects from those of the past.

The fullest account of Alur dynastic traditions is that of Quix¹⁴ which I have found reliable, though it would be better still if one knew exactly who the

⁹ *Azande: Introduction à une ethnographie générale des Bassins de l'Ubangi-Uele et de l'Aruwimi*. Brussels, 1921.

¹⁰ *Forschungen im Nil-Kongo Zwischengebiet*. Leipzig, 1911-27.

¹¹ A. N. Tucker, *The Eastern Sudanic Languages*, Oxford, 1940, pp. 25-37.

¹² Cf. Kluckhohn's exhaustive discussion of the difficulties of adequately recording native texts for personality purposes, in *The Use of Personal Documents in History, Anthropology and Sociology*. American Social Science Research Council. Bulletin 53, New York, 1945.

¹³ *The Lwoo*, Verona, parts I, II, III, (published: 1950, 1951, 1954).

¹⁴ *Au Pays de Mahagi, Congo*, 1 (1939), 276-94, 387-411.

informants were. Another valuable confirmatory source, dealing mainly with the Uganda midlands and lowlands of the Alur country, is an unpublished manuscript of Father Maeght,¹⁵ which is also quoted by Quix. Father Vanneste's *Legenden Geschiedenis en Gebruiken van een Nilotisch Volk*¹⁶ is a fine model of the recording of native tradition, in which the vernacular text recorded from each informant is given verbatim together with his name, but not, unfortunately, his social group. Crazzolaria (op. cit.) also includes some detailed Alur material, but it is considerably coloured by the tone of the author's translation and his *a priori* objectives.

It should be noted that the vast wealth of detail collected in recording the traditions of local groups on which the following account is based has been omitted. This detail is of the greatest interest in relation both to the social structure and to the value system of the Alur, but its omission is the only way to render intelligible an account which may well be considered over-complicated already.

PHASE I

The early migratory period. Tradition represents the Cwezi as ruling over Hima and Bantu both in the area of the present Bunyoro and also to the south, east and north.

The Lwo are represented as moving southwards from the Sudan through the present Acoliland, coming in contact with the Cwezi political system somewhere to the north of Bunyoro. The Lwo probably travelled in a number of relatively separate groups, some of which were already in contact with Madi and Okebo, if not also Lendu.

The Madi were also moving down from the north, and though they therefore mingled considerably with the Lwo on the same route, on the whole they were further west, possibly on both banks of the Albert Nile, with the Lwo mainly to the east.

The Okebo were no doubt divided into a number of independently moving groups, some of which mingled with the Lendu, some with the Madi and some with the Lwo.

I have assumed that the Lendu were already across to the west of the Nile, as the direction from which they got there is dubious. They were probably scattered widely over the whole area to the west of the Nile and Lake Albert from Puvungu in the north to the Jangoba river in the south, extending inland for forty or fifty miles. Throughout this area, place names testify to their former presence. The Lendu language is much more distantly related to Okebo and Madi than these two latter are to one another. It may be, therefore, that the Lendu migration was considerably earlier, and that they began to move on again to the south-west when the Okebo, Madi and Lwo came in contact with them.

Along the western shores of the lake and the river were sparse groups of Bantu who were sections of the aboriginal Bantu tribes of Bunyoro (Gungu,

¹⁵ I am informed by Dr. R. Oliver that a copy is to be found in the District Office at Gulu, Uganda.

¹⁶ Institut Royal Colonial Belge, 1949.

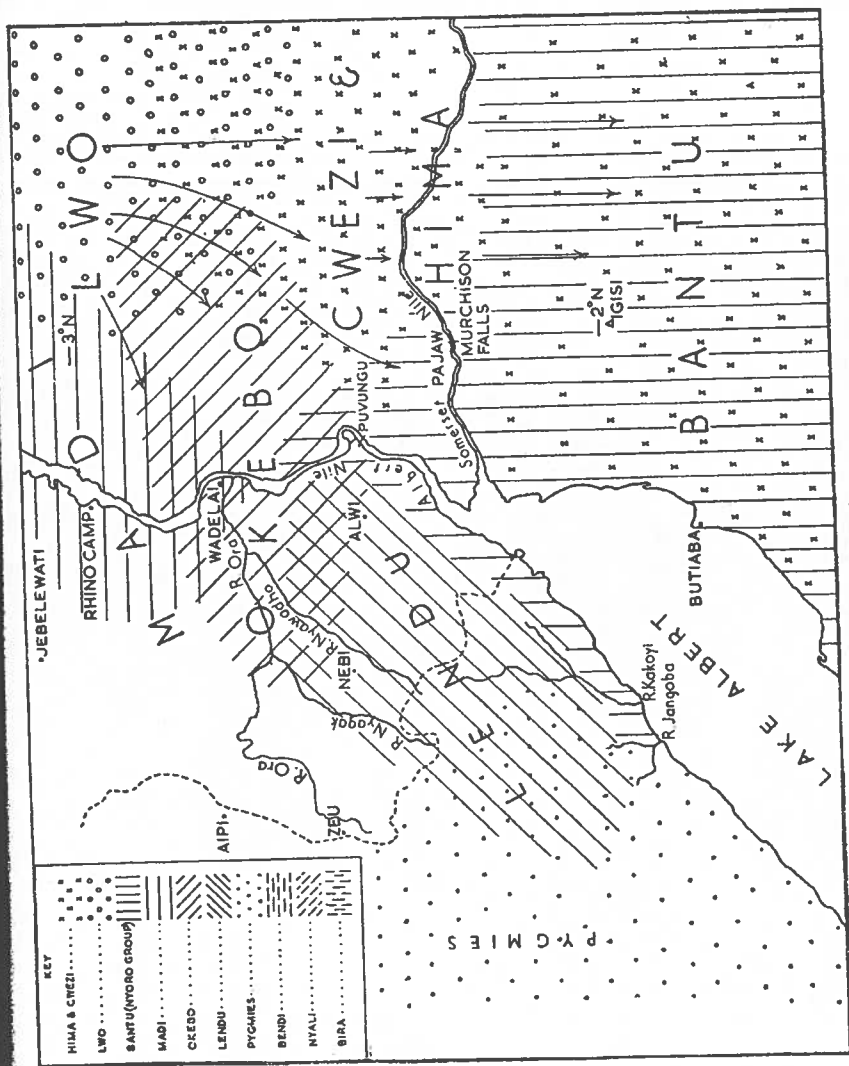


FIG. 1
Phase I.

Kobia, Loholi, etc.). Some mixture took place between them and the Lendu on the arrival of the latter. There were also odd groups of Abira widely scattered inland which gave rise later to other hybrid groups.¹⁷

Pygmy Bambuti were in wandering bands in the south-west of the area nearly up to the shores of the lake. It is natural to suppose that mixture took place between them and the Lendu, and most writers on the subject have assumed direct pygmoid influence on Lendu physique.¹⁸ It is certainly true that the Lendu are today the shortest and palest skinned inhabitants of Alurland. Some of their own traditions refer to a period at which they themselves were hunters and collectors, and hunting magic is still the most noticeable direction of cultural elaboration among them.

I do not include the Bendi, Nyali or Bira on the map of this phase because the Alur had no contact with these peoples until much later. The traditions of tribes of this type, entirely lacking any centralized political authorities, are a very uncertain guide to past events unless they can be checked against those of tribes whose political systems render traditions of a more historical kind important to them. However, Johnston, Van Bulck, and Maenhaut¹⁹ accept the theory that the Lendu found Bambuti, Lese, Nyali and Bendi in this area and according to Moeller (op. cit.) the Lendu turned back the Nyali from the region of Mahagi to the south-west.

PHASE II

The period in which the oldest of the present dynasties of Alur chiefs made their first appearance in Alurland, twelve or more generations ago in Alur tradition.

By this time the Cwezi had disappeared and the Lwo had taken possession of Bunyoro and founded the Bito dynasty. A little later a branch of the Bito moved into Buganda, leading to a change of dynasty there. Ganda tradition expresses this event in the story of the prince Kimera,²⁰ who is supposed to have been the son of one of the wives of Wunyi, King of Bunyoro, by Kalimera, son of the King of Buganda, who had seduced her. But in Nyoro tradition Kimera appears as Kato, twin brother of the King of Bunyoro, who went and conquered Buganda. Modern authorities are agreed that this myth represents a change from the Kintu dynasty to a Bito dynasty of Ganda kings. Six of the present Ganda clans claim to have come with Kimera from Bunyoro. Among

¹⁷ The ethnic status of the Abira is dubious, and they have been equated with the Bira of the Congo or held to be of Okebo or Lendu origin. At anyrate they are widely scattered in small groups among the Alur, and always strenuously lay claim to a distinct origin although now indistinguishable from their neighbours in language, culture or physical type.

¹⁸ See Johnston, *The Uganda Protectorate*, London, 1902, p. 547. A. Moeller *Les Grandes Lignes des Migrations*, I.R.C.B., 1936. F. Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin Pascha*, Berlin, 1894, p. 534.

¹⁹ Johnston, *Uganda Protectorate*, p. 550. Van Bulck, *De la Recherche Linguistique au Congo Belge*, Brussels, 1948, p. 190. Maenhaut, *Les Walendu*, *Bulletin Juridique Indigène du Congo Belge*, 1939, i, 1-7; ii, 25-37; iii, 65-77; iv, 97-116.

²⁰ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, London, 1911, p. 163, and also several articles in *Uganda J.*, 2, 266 (J. M. Gray), 7, 182-3 (F. Lukyn Williams), 14, 153 (A. H. Cox).

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these is the Ganda Bushbuck clan, which shares this totem with the Bito kings of Bunyoro and with ruling clans in Toro and Busoga all evidently of common origin.²¹ Others of these six clans have strong Hima associations.

Meanwhile, it is probable that the Atyak and Ucibu clans of the Lwo were moving separately down towards the Nile. More Lwo continued to move down from the north. Sometime during this period the body of Lwo who were later to become the Padhola and the Kenya Luo began their journey to the east, possibly after a period of settlement in Bunyoro.²² The earliest of present Alur groups settled on the Nile seems to be Panyimur, and they may have reached there at this stage. Panyimur chiefs belong to the Kwoŋa group of Lwo.²³ They practise a crude form of mummification on dead chiefs, delaying their interment several months for ritual reasons. There is a puzzling connection between Panyimur and Abira, both groups claiming that, some time after Panyimur had settled at the mouth of the Albert Nile, their chief Lingru went off westwards into the hills and eventually left his son Alal as chief of Abira, himself returning to Panyimur. This is much at variance with the whole tradition of all other Abira groups, which are essentially chiefless decentralized groups. It seems the most plausible hypothesis that Abira received an early line of Lwo chiefs from Panyimur.

More Madi were still coming into the Nile valley and Acoliland from the north. The term Madi properly includes the tribes at present known as Lugbara as well as Madi, nor is there any hard and fast distinction between the Lugbara and the Kaliko and Logo further north. But the Logo and Lugbara on the one side, and the Lendu, Okebo and Madi on the other, represent respectively a western and an eastern migratory movement of the Moru-Madi peoples, of which the latter was considerably the earlier. It took place mainly to the east of the Nile, though many groups eventually crossed over to the west. Traces of

²¹ Although the Alur lack totemic clans, the major Alur chiefs share with the Bito the prohibition on eating bushbuck. Dr. E. H. Winter has brought to my notice the interesting case of an Amba group recently adopting this prohibition because of its prestige associations with the ruling dynasty of Toro. Nowadays, the traditional status relations of social groups may be upset or even reversed by current economic developments. But in pre-European times, there was little chance for groups of inferior status suddenly to adopt prestige symbols to which they had no right. In the first place, even groups of inferior status accorded general recognition to the value system which subordinated them; and had they attempted to adopt the symbols of prestige, they would only have evoked ridicule if not a more violent reaction.

²² Cf. also Crazzolara, *The Lwoo People*, *Uganda J.*, 5, 1; also *The Lwoo*, Pt. 1 (Verona, 1950), pp. 78-80, 88-9, and R. M. Bere, *An outline of Acholi history*, *Uganda J.*, 11.

²³ Other Alur groups claiming descent from Kwoŋa are Palei, Padere, Panywer, Panyoŋa, Mbaro' pa Magungu, Pumit. There is some confusion between the figure of Kwoŋa and that of Cuwa; some groups which claim bonds of common exogamy with clans of the Kwoŋa group themselves claiming descent not from Kwoŋa but from Cuwa, and the same legend is attributed by one group to Kwoŋa and by another to Cuwa. Both names frequently occur in the legendary period of both the Alur and the Bito. Kwoŋa in Alur language literally means 'beginning', while Cuwa is also the name of the tamarind tree. Another figure of the same legendary period is Lei or Nyilei, who often stands for Kwoŋa or Cuwa. In Bunyoro there is also Kiyabambi, who sometimes appears in Alur versions, and is interpreted by Maeght, (*Les Alurs*) as the name given to Nyilei by the Bantu in Bunyoro. Pamitu are the most important Alur clan of the Cuwa group; others are Pulum and Koc. Bakwoŋa and Bachwa clans also appear in Bunyoro and Toro, Busoga (Kwanga and Mucwa), and Nkole (Abanemucwa)—see Roscoe, *The Bakitara*, 1923, *The Northern Bantu*, 1915 and *The Banyankole*, 1923.

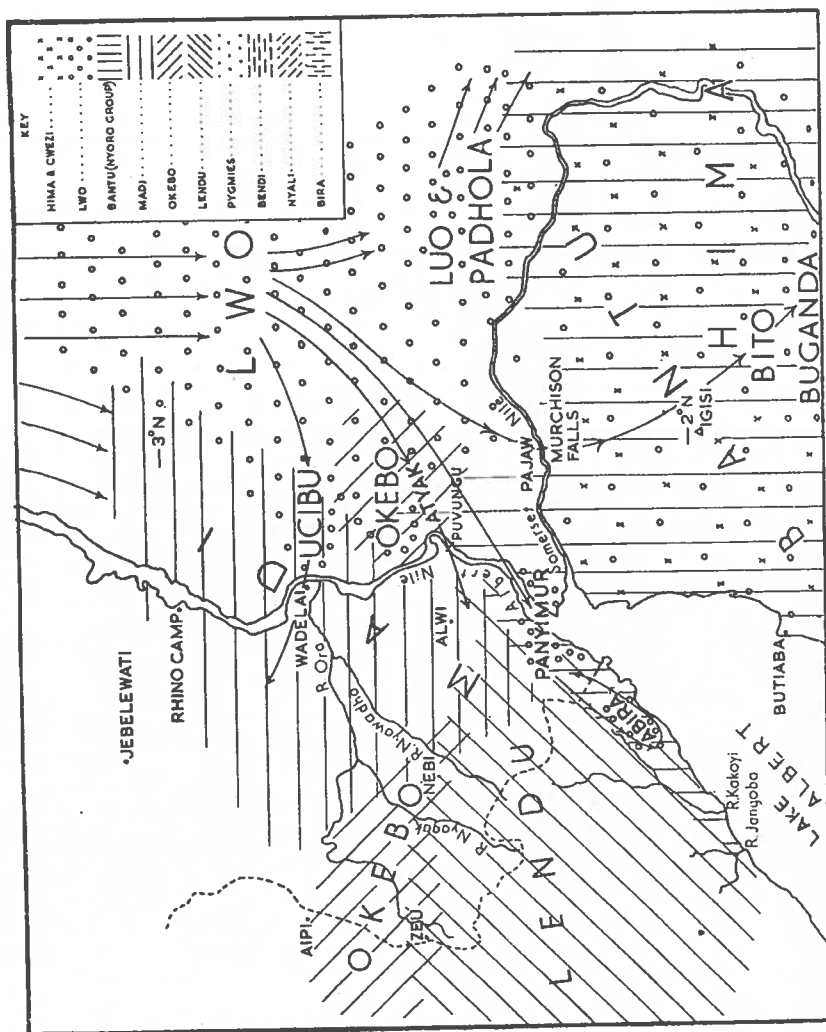


Fig. 2

Lwo²⁴ influence occur among the Madi to the south, where they reached the lower valley of Ora river, and beyond that mingled with the Alur, and also in the north where they are now settled immediately to the west of the Acoli, on both sides of the Nile just south of the Uganda-Sudan border. According to the traditions of both, groups of Madi frequently moved east among the Lwo and groups of Lwo moved west among the Madi. The culture of the Lugbara, and *a fortiori* that of the more distant Logo, shows no such influences, and this western stream of Moru-Madi migration probably did not come in contact with the Lwo until about eight generations ago. By that time (phase V) there were evidently some Lugbara about; for example the Panjira group in Juganda claims descent from Agangara, who went from Ukuru, and married among others Lugbara wives.

In the map (Fig. 2) I represent a section of the Okebo as having already crossed the Nile and reached the country between Nebi and Zeu. This is simply to indicate schematically what must have happened. It is clear that some Okebo were well in advance of the Alur, while others stayed in close dependence on the latter. The aboriginal Abira of Ukuru speak of Thiful and the Lendu going by before the arrival of the Alur, but all the Okebo of western Ukuru maintain that the Okebo who are now much further to the north-west came up with Thiful and passed on before the appearance of the rest of the Alur.²⁵ There must have been a good deal of pressure on the Okebo with Lendu to the south, Madi to the north, and Alur advancing from the east: but its influence upon their movements may have been lessened by the fact that their ironworking specialization predisposed them to live in symbiosis with other groups. But for those who wished to escape there was only the north-west unbarred.

Movement to the west and south-west was equally obvious for the Lendu in response to the pressure of the other tribes, for even if they had to push out other tribes such as the Nyali there is no sign that the latter were ever more than very sparsely settled, whereas on all other sides the Lendu were surrounded by tribes such as the Madi, Nyoro and Lwo which were already numerous and fairly dense, or else were rapidly increasing.

By the end of this phase all the Okebo must have crossed to the west of the Nile. The Atyak Lwo crossed at Puvungu under their chief Nyipir, and gradually moved inland for some thirty miles. Nyipir is said to have settled for a time at Nyaryegi hill just south of Alwi, and later at Ramogi between there and Nebi. At Ramogi the tethering place of Nyipir's cattle is remembered, and he is said to have died and been buried there. He was succeeded by his son Umier Amor (Umier the Fierce) of whom, however, practically nothing is remembered, whereas the events attributed to Nyipir suggest a very long reign, unless several generations have been telescoped in the figure of Nyipir. Nyipir represents a

²⁴ To wit the presence among the Madi of the concept of Rabanga (see F. R. J. Williams, *The Pagan Religion of the Madi*, *Uganda J.*, 13, 202), of the name *abila* for a type of ancestor shrine, of rainstones and rainmakers, and of clan names either of Lwo form or actually common to both Madi and Lwo.

²⁵ In Alur tradition the brothers Thiful, Nyabongo and Nyipir represent three different migratory streams; Nyipir that of the Alur themselves into their present territory, Nyabongo that of the Bito into Bunyoro, and Thiful another stream which cannot with certainty be identified. (Cf. R. M. Bere, *op. cit.*, and Crazzolaro, *The Lwoo*, part 1. pp. 62-6.)

critical point in the fortunes of the Lwo and the emergence of the Alur, and the name is a household word even to Alur who are poorly informed on traditional matters in general. Occurrences are therefore sometimes carelessly attributed to him, and some groups have ulterior motives for claiming association with his name. These accretions are revealed by comparing the accounts of many different groups.

PHASE III

Late seventeenth century, eleven to twelve generations ago.

It is characteristic of the Alur, as it is of the Kenya Luo and probably many other migratory peoples, that their recollections of the past take on a quite different quality with reference to events which occurred before and after the moment when they passed some striking physical barrier or landmark and entered their present territory. This is true of the Alur once they crossed west of the Nile, and for the Luo of South Kavirondo once they had crossed Kavirondo Gulf. Within the people's own attitude system there is something of the distinction between myth and history between these two sections of the past. Their past is thus far from being an undifferentiated continuum, though the greater clarity and precision of the more recent section of it is clearly to be linked with its contemporary importance as an index of structural relations.²⁶

Umier Amor had succeeded his father Nyipir as chief of Atyak. During his reign he moved on about ten miles further west from Ramogi, settling at Agem hill on the north-west bank of the Namtin river. It was here that he died. The quarrel for the succession between his sons Nduru and Umier Dhyanj (Umier the Cow) of whom Nduru was the eldest, led to the secession of Nduru and the accession of Umier as chief. Nduru's secession was the origin of the important chiefdom of PaNduru, the first of many to split off from Atyak. Nduru first withdrew a little to the south across the Namtin river, together with his two full brothers Minya and Zango, who became the founders of the large lineages of PaMinya and Pagei. Minya soon fell out with Nduru, and moved away to the east again with his followers, setting himself up as an independent chieflet. Nduru and his party later set off on their travels, leaving Pagei behind. Pagei rejoined Umier Dhyanj and became one of the most important loyal lineages under his successors the chiefs of Ukuru. Two other sons of Umier Amor went north among the Madi, founding the lines of chieflets of Udraro and Akina with Madi subjects.

Nduru is supposed to have wandered on from Nebi right to Zeu, then down south to Mount Rona and east again back to the track previously followed by Atyak between Alwi and Nebi. On his way he came across Mitu, whose group claim to have crossed the Nile with Nyipir and then on the way up went off on a long trek to the west and slightly south as far as Mount Akara and back. The main body of PaMitu remained closely associated with PaNduru, having chiefship of their own but accepting the PaNduru chiefs as overlords. One section of PaMitu later wandered off again to found the chiefdom of Mambisa to the south-west, while other sections are found in various chiefdoms as Lwo commoners.

²⁶ Cf. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, Oxford, 1940, p. 108.

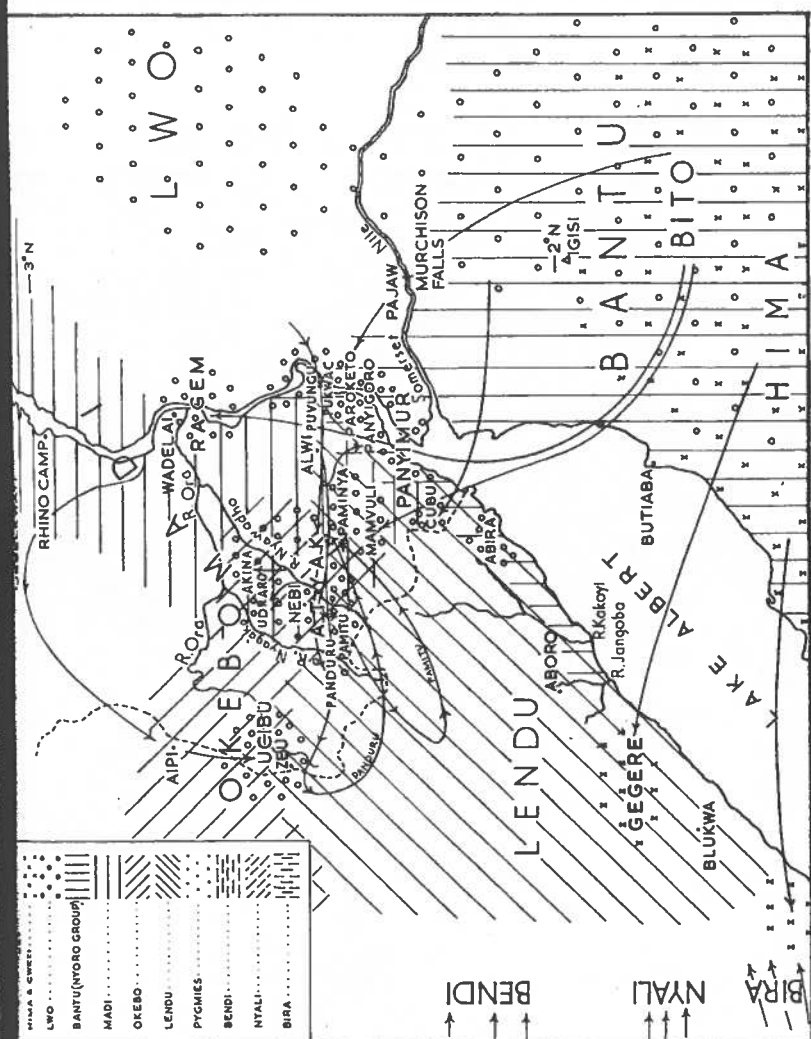


FIG. 3
Phase III.

The Alur were frequently depositing small settlements in their track to look after localities of ritual importance.

Of unique significance among these is Puvungu, which is claimed to be the group left ritually to guard the spot where the axe was buried sealing the separation of Alur, Acoli, and Bunyoro groups of Lwo.²⁷ No parties to such a pact could go back beyond the place of the axe for to meet one another again before a sheep had been sacrificed between them would mean disaster. A Puvungu girl is remembered as wife of chief Umier Amor. The chiefdom of Pukwac (which gave its name to the present river port of Pakwach) whose ruling line changed several times, is also claimed to have been established at the time when Atyak went on inland from the river. The chiefs of Panyigoro, who settled just north of Panyimur, claim to have split off from the main body of Atyak on the march inland. Paroketo chiefs claim to have come from the Lwo in Bunyoro at the same time and settled between Panyigoro and Pukwac. The founders of the chiefdom of Ragem, which was established near Wadelai among the Madi and some other Lwo groups, are said to have arrived there drifting down the Nile from Bunyoro on the sudd.

Oecologically, the country offered two obvious foci of attraction, the Nile and the grassy highlands. The Nile held fish and hippopotamus, and the highlands grass for cattle and very fertile soil. At this time cattle were also kept in the Nile valley, but it was obviously less favourable to them and was later invaded by tsetse. These different foci were responsible for a certain separation, both physical and cultural, between the lowland groups on the river who acquired a particular sense of common identity as Junam²⁸ (river-dwellers) within the general body of the Alur, and the highland Alur who tended to move further away from them. There was not a complete loss of contact between them. West of the Nile is a narrow belt of particularly barren and dry country, which can never have been attractive, and the less so during the early period when such a free choice offered elsewhere. But the Junam and the highlanders were kept in continual indirect contact by the subsequent Lwo groups which kept crossing the Nile to the west and following on behind. Later, the highlands themselves returned the process in establishing some colonies in the lowlands, or in the midlands immediately behind. At this period the space shown on the map (Fig. 3) between Junam and Atyak was certainly the scene of various wandering groups, some of which we shall specify but many others of which have no doubt vanished leaving no trace. There were there besides small numbers of Madi, Okebo, and Lendu who stayed on under the Alur.

The Mamvuli, claiming descent from Nyabongo the founder of the Bito, crossed to Panyimur and began to follow after Nyipir and Atyak, eventually founding a small chiefdom in the midlands with Lwo, Madi and Okebo subjects.

The Cubu are a group of rather obscure origin. Like the Palwo²⁹ they claim to have come from Mount Igisi, but some Alur think that they are Alurized Lendu. They must have been one of the earliest groups to settle, were of low status, but

²⁷ See R. M. Bere, loc. cit. Fr. Crazzolaro, *The Lwoo*, part. 1, pp. 59-66.

²⁸ Cf. Crazzolaro, op. cit., p. 86-7.

²⁹ Crazzolaro, op. cit., p. 79 reports a Lwoo group of Ya-Cobo, claiming to have come from Pawir (Palwo) and to be related to the Alur, though now living in the south-west of Lango district, fifty miles west of the present Palwo country in Bunyoro district.

became the most important subject group in the establishment of the chiefdom of Añal.

While the Atyak had been crossing the Nile and moving inland from Puvungu the Ucibu were doing more or less the same thing further north. There is no need to suppose that all crossed at exactly the same point; the main Añal tradition speaks of crossing near Wadelai. But instead of going to the west they then made a great detour round to the north, passing Mount Jebelewati, and then turning south-west as far as Mount Aipi and from there south to Zeu.

The earliest Hima chiefs to cross Lake Albert were the Gegere who settled among the Lendu south-west of Mount Aboro. They were recognized as overlords by subsequent Hima groups which joined them. Presumably Bantu speakers on arrival, they gradually became entirely Lendu in speech.³⁰ Other Hima crossed further south near Kasenyi. These retained a form of Nyoro speech, but as they dominated Lendu and Bira they learnt those languages as well.

The Okebo spread further to the west and north, the Lendu to the west and south. By this time the Lendu may have come in contact with the Nyali and Bendi. All along the western borders the population seems never to have been anything but very sparse as it is today. In the Territoire de Djugu two thousand Bendi still occupy nominally a vast tract of country, which has now been designated by the Belgian authorities as an expansion area for the dense Alur populations to the east.

PHASE IV

Early eighteenth century, nine or ten generations ago.

The Ucibu clan split into two, Juganda moving slightly to the west among the Okebo and Lendu, Añal moving round to the north of the Atyak settlements and across to the south-west of Nyarwodho river which was for a time the boundary between them. According to some versions Añal settled actually with Atyak for some time before misunderstanding arose between them and Añal moved on.

After the quarrel with Nduru, Umier Dhyanj (Umier the Cow) had succeeded Umier Amor as chief of Ukuru, as we may now more conveniently call the parent chiefdom of Atyak, though they themselves ascribe the origin of the name Ukuru to a later period. Umier Dhyanj moved on from Nebi a little further north-west just below the escarpment of the highlands. Various groups were left behind around Nebi: Pubidhi and Pawon lineages descended from Nyipir, Pakucur under Umier Amor's son Ucur, and a number of groups in charge of the great shrine at Kalowan with other sons of Umier Amor to supply them with chiefship. Then Paidha and Palara split off from Ukuru under different sons of Umier Dhyanj. The tradition attributes the origin of Paidha to the kidnapping of the chief's son by some Okebo groups to be their chief. Paidha settled between PaNduru and Ukuru, with Palara to the south-east.

A branch of the Bito crossed from Bunyoro to found the chiefdom of

³⁰ In the genealogies of their ruling lineages famous names from Nyoro tradition remain recognizable in spite of typical Lendu consonantal changes, e.g. Murindr for Mulindwa, Ndaura for Ndaula, Vavito for Babito.

Panyikaŋo south of Panyimur. Panyikaŋo never achieved great size, and like Muswa were almost exterminated by sleeping sickness early in this century. The Kings of Bunyoro gave Panyikaŋo a ritual supremacy over the chiefs of Muswa and Mukambo who communicated through them with Bunyoro and sent their tribute by them. A Magungu³¹ group went all round Lake Albert from Toro to the west and north, and, settling between the rivers Jangoba and Kakoyi, founded the chiefdom of Musongwa. According to their tradition the first chief then made a great journey through the Lendu of the hinterland, passing up the Kakoyi valley, leaving PaNduru and PaMitu a little to the north, entering the southern Okebo country and so round south and east back to the lake. Of their subjects, the Bantu Muliu who had first received them on their arrival, and the Acoli Pakule who joined them there, had the highest status. They were also recognized by the Okebo of Mount Aboro and by all the neighbouring Lendu. A brother of the chief led his followers southwest among the Hima where they became Lendu speaking subjects of the Gegere chiefs. Another Magungu group crossed from Bunyoro to found the chiefdom of Muswa on the north bank of Kakoyi river next to Musongwa.

We may at this point conveniently begin to call the Lwo who had lately settled in the north-east of Bunyoro the Palwo.³² They consisted of an influx of Lwo later than those who came with the Bito and who, like them, adopted Bantu speech in Bunyoro. Those Lwo who still remained east of the Albert Nile further north, mingling with the Madi and themselves receiving further accretions of Lwo from the north, we may begin to call the Acoli. Some of these groups, like Payera and Patiko, may have arrived at the time when the Alur of Atyak and Ucibu crossed the Nile, others came later. These are empirical distinctions. There are few *a priori* grounds for distinguishing between Palwo and Acoli. Palwo seems to be a name of antiquity by which they know themselves; the name Acoli, though in its present form attributable to the early foreign travellers in the area, seems to represent the root Collo, which like Lwo itself is an ancient generic name in this Nilotic group. Palwo is now administratively restricted to the Lwo who settled on the banks of the Somerset Nile above the Murchison Falls, and who became known as Copi by the Nyoro. Oecology gave these people something of the same distinctness from the population of Acoliland as the Junam had from the highland Alur. Nevertheless, as a term of self-ascription, Palwo includes most of southern and eastern Acoli as well, for most of the ruling groups of this area came from Palwo, that is to say, from the banks of the Somerset Nile and the north-east corner of Bunyoro, which may be regarded as Palwo proper. Acoli would more logically refer to the northern and western parts of Acoliland where the population claiming to have come from Palwo is unimportant. But here oecology is a unifying factor, in view of the physical homogeneity of Acoliland, and I understand³³ that this, together with the common substratum of Lwo culture, gives many common elements to the

³¹ The term Magungu is used by the Alur for ruling groups which came from Bunyoro and may, in fact, have been of varying ethnic origin.

³² Pawir was also an important name by which the Palwo were known, especially in Acoliland. cf. Crazzolara, *The Lwo*, part 1, pp. 78-80.

³³ From Mr. F. K. Girling who has studied the area.

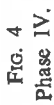


FIG. 4
Phase IV.

process whereby Acoli society has come into existence in both the 'Palwo' and 'Acoli' regions of Acoliland.

It is generally accepted³⁴ that the Palwo made this double movement, first south as far as the Somerset Nile and possibly deep into Bunyoro, then back again to the Somerset Nile where the main permanent concentration has been, and from there north and east to become ruling groups among the subsequent Lwo population there and the Nilo-Hamitic 'Lango' elements³⁵ mixed with it. The Palwo are therefore distinguished from the other Lwo of Bunyoro in that they were not Bantuized, and from the rest of the Acoli in that they arrived in their present settlements from the south and not the north.

It may seem of small moment whether certain groups immigrant into Alur-land are classified as Palwo or Acoli. However, when I refer to them as Palwo I mean that they consider themselves as such, very often claiming to have come from Mount Igisi in Palwo proper, but during the early period they might have come from wandering almost anywhere in northern Bunyoro or southern Acoliland. Alur groups classified as Acoli in origin came from northern or western Acoliland, where there had been no re-colonization from Palwo, considerably later than the period in which the main Alur groups, Atyak, Ucibu, and PaMitu, had crossed west of the Nile.

Two of these Palwo groups, of some numerical importance, had arrived west of the Albert Nile by the fourth phase. The Acer were somewhere in the mid-lands west of the mouth of the Albert Nile. Here they came in contact with Anjal on the arrival of the latter from the north-west.

The Pamora were also in the midlands a little to the north, and there PaMinya found them after they had separated from PaNduru. Pamora accepted the heads of PaMinya as chieflets over them. A smaller group which reached the same area at this time was Paicin.

With the arrival of Anjal south and east of the Nyarwodho river the Cubu accepted Anjal as their chiefs. Together they fought Abira and according to the tradition it was a Cubu who shot the Abira chief. Abira also became subjects of Anjal. Later, fighting broke out between Anjal and Acer.

It is rarely possible to mention, or depict on the map, groups other than those which had a fairly progressive history in terms of natural increase and survival as self-aware units. There are one or two Alur groups extant today which once had chiefship and subsequently lost it. Such groups may have been at this period of little less importance than the other chiefly groups which are now so much larger, but time has proved them abortive. Presumably there were other such groups which died out or disappeared completely. Therefore, besides those developing Alur groups shown on the map we must remember that there were probably others, filling up much of the blank space left on the map between Puvungu and Nyarwodho, Panyikano and PaNduru and Juganda. The story of Thiful may represent such a lost group formerly of great importance.

³⁴ J. M. Gray, *Uganda J.*, 15, 121; Crazzolara, *The Lwoo*, part 1, pp. 52-8, 67-8, 83-5. *Girling*, verbal communication. R. M. Bere, An outline of Acholi history, *Uganda J.*, 11, 1.

³⁵ For this term see Fr. Tarantino, Notes on the Lango, *Uganda J.*, 13, 145; P. H. Gulliver, The name Lango as a Title for the Nilo-Hamites, *Uganda J.*, 15, 111; Crazzolara, *The Lwoo*, part 1, p. 88.

PHASE V

Late eighteenth century, eight or nine generations ago.

Umier Dhyay died in Patera on the edge of the Alur highlands and his son Qjira, who succeeded him as chief of Ukuru, moved up into the highlands and lived substantially where the Ukuru chiefs still live today. The reasons for this final move are told in a very widely known story.³⁶ One of Qjira's sons became chieflet over several groups of Madi and Gungu origin, forming the political unit of Patek on the edge of the escarpment. Several other chiefly lineages joined it later. The alien elements became highly assimilated to Alur culture in course of time and the chiefship of Patek imperceptibly lapsed, the whole population of Patek reverting to the status of direct commoner subjects of the Ukuru chiefs.

Qjira was succeeded by his son Awaza as chief, but he proved unsatisfactory and was turned out by the subjects and his younger brother Keno installed instead. Whereupon Awaza, like Nduru before him, set up a new chiefdom, which became known as Padea and occupied the area west of Paidha and north of PaNduru. A chiefly group from Pawon in Nebi moved east among the Madi and became established as chieflets of Panyeth. The original chiefship of Pawon lapsed, possibly as a result of the Ajal-Acer war, and Pawon became subjects of War. (see p. 157.)

With Padea dominating the Lendu to their north, PaNduru extended further among the Lendu to the south, and by this time if not earlier, a section of PaMitú left PaNduru and wandered off to the south-west under Ukal, founding the chiefdom of Mambisa. They ranged far and wide over what is now the Territoire de Djugu, and Ukal was eventually killed by the Hema while returning from one of his expeditions in which he is said to have reached the Semliki River. The Mambisa PaMitú settled mainly in Lendu country, but they had a large group of Okebo attached to them, and later incorporated eastern portions of the Bendi, Nyali and Bira.

Mukambo are another Magungu ruling group who claim to have arrived after half circumnavigating Lake Albert from Bunyoro round the south and west. They settled between Muswa and Panyikano, but on arrival split in two forming the chiefdom of Mukambo proper, on and immediately above the lakeshore, and Rvinga under a younger brother in the high mountains just across the middle Kakoyi river. They received at first mainly Lendu subjects, together with small Bantu groups, but were also joined by some wandering groups of Palwo and Acoli. Juganda continued to expand westward among the Okebo, without interference from other Lwo groups. Wherever the Lwo settled among the various subject peoples part of the population became assimilated to them and the other part moved off further afield.

During this, and the next phase an extensive reshuffle of groupings occurred in the midlands between Panyimur and Nyarwodho river, after which they assumed something like their present distribution. Because of the importance

³⁶ One of the chief's bulls wandered off and got lost. Subsequently it returned plastered with mud which was recognized as an indication of the presence of water and fertile soil. Members of Palei clan tracked the bull back again to the source of the Nyanjoto river, and brought back such a glowing report of the country that the Ukuru group moved up and settled there.

of these developments the maps illustrating phases V and VI represent events which took place during shorter periods than those of the other phases (Figs. 5 and 6).

Another important Palwo group,³⁷ that of Parombo, claim to have crossed the Nile with Nyipir and Atyak and to have followed them up to the highlands, remaining in Ukuru chiefdom. Then they came down again to settle in the mid-lands inland from Panyimur and to act as agents for the chiefs of Ukuru in supplying them with salt from Panyimur. As noted under phase IV, fighting was going on between Añal and Acer, and the latter appealed to Parombo to get help from the chief of Ukuru. The chief of Ukuru, following the usual custom, gave one of his sons, Udero, to Parombo to take back with them to Acer.³⁸ Udero failed in his task of assisting Acer, and was unsatisfactory in other ways, but he and his descendants were chieflets of Padel with a number of small subject groups (Pamitu, Pataka, Jagi, Padolo, Penji). Pataka also claim to have fetched Udero as chieflet, if so perhaps they fetched him after he had failed in his mission to Acer, or else the chief of Ukuru indicated him to assist Acer because he was already on the spot. Parombo then again petitioned the chiefs of Ukuru, and were given another son, Umier nyathi rombo ('Umier the Lamb'). Umier enabled Acer to beat off Añal, and founded the chiefdom of War with Acer as its most important subjects. Parombo also from then on formed part of War, but continued to recognize the supremacy of the chiefs of Ukuru and to provide them with salt. The chieflets of Palara recognized War chiefs as overlords. Paicin also became subjects of War. Mamvuli say that Añal 'took their drum'; at any rate they lost their authority and their subjects scattered to other chiefdoms, some to War, some to Añal, some to PaNduru and some Okebo groups eventually to Jukoth (see below). Mamvuli themselves reverted to commoner status as subjects of War.

Añal moved south, immediately inland from Panyikajo, after failing to establish domination over Acer. Their main subjects at this time were Tharo, a clan which had accompanied Añal across the Nile and throughout their travels since then, the Ubaro Okebo who had come with them from Zeu where they had left the Juganda, Panam who had joined them at Namtin river just before they crossed the Nyarwodho, Cubu who have already been mentioned, and the Abira whom they had recently subdued. About this time they received an important addition in the related Acoli clans of Paravur and Añaba, which accepted commoner status under them.

In present day Añal there are about 3,000 Paravur and Añaba, 1,000 Cubu, 2,000 Abira, 500 Tharo and some 200 Panam. Of more importance for the future was the arrival in Añal of Ucen, founder of the chiefdom of Jukoth. Ucen was a Magungu from Bunyoro and evidently of high status. He crossed first to Panyikajo and from there appeared among the Paravur and was taken by them to the chief of Añal who received him with great respect. He stayed in

³⁷ But Crazzolaro calls them Lajo.

³⁸ I fall into the Alur habit of personalizing clans and lineages for the sake of brevity where the meaning is plain. The statement that such and such a clan performed a certain action means that such action was taken by the constituted authorities, clan heads and often the heads of component lineages supporting them.

Ajal and came to be accepted as chieflet by a group of Lendu. He eventually fled from Ajal and set up as a chief on his own among the Lendu further west (phase VI).

PHASE VI

The end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, seven generations ago.

Of all the figures in the Alur past chief Keno of Ukuru has left the greatest historical mark. According to tradition, he acceded to the chiefship as a young boy and ruled till he was an old man. Begetting a large family, he saw at least ten of his sons establish themselves as chieflets, while from his other sons more than half a dozen large clan sections descend, and numerous smaller ones. In his old age he left his son Songa as chief in his place, and travelled round visiting some of his other ruling sons, eventually meeting his death among the Lendu, whereupon his famous drum miraculously made its own way home.

We have already noted the founding of Padel and War by sons of Keno. Other sons founded Boro, Mbaro, Alwi, Ajal-the-bei, Ramogi, Vur, Padwot and Boltur. The subjects of these chieflets were, as usual, various: in Boltur—Madi; in Vur—Abira, Okebo and Lendu; in Ramogi—Madi; in Ajal-the-bei several groups left behind there by the main body of Ajal, some of chiefly descent, some Tharo, some Acer; in Alwi some Acer and Madi; in Mbaro—Gungu and Okebo; in Boro—Gungu and Acoli. Keno himself, during his travels, came to Ajudha accompanied by one wife and her two sons. Here the Lendu showed him the shrine of Jok Riba and the secrets of the fish harvest in Lake Albert nearby. Keno left his wife and two sons in Ajudha and they and their descendants remained there in charge of the most celebrated shrine in Alurland.

Songa succeeded Keno as chief of Ukuru. The Madi Lokra took his son Agulukongo to be their chieflet on the northern border, and a number of other chiefly lineages subsequently joined them, forming the group known as Juloka. The chief of PaNduru set off with the Pamoc travelling south-west to the Mambisa country. There he left Pamoc as a Lwo chiefly group associated with the PaMitu Mambisa, and himself returned to PaNduru. On his death Kingi succeeded but was later turned out in favour of his brother Adrogo, just as Keno had replaced Awaza in Ukuru. Kingi followed the usual pattern in founding the new chieflet group of PaKingi. In Padea there was a similar split resulting in the formation of Pakwo who settled south of Padea proper.

A group left Ajal and went north-east to settle on the Nile north of Puvungu, and, as Panyango, became the most numerous commoner clan under the chiefs of Ragem. During this period, Ajal was extending its settlement inland to the west, and chief Ukwir's son Upiyo became a chieflet over the Lendu to the south, with a number of commoner clans following him from Ajal proper. At this time also, the chiefs of Jukoth established their independence of Ajal, and began to spread very rapidly among the Lendu to the south and west.

PHASE VII

Mid-nineteenth century, five to six generations ago.

New chieflets continued to issue from Ukuru; most important were Ucego

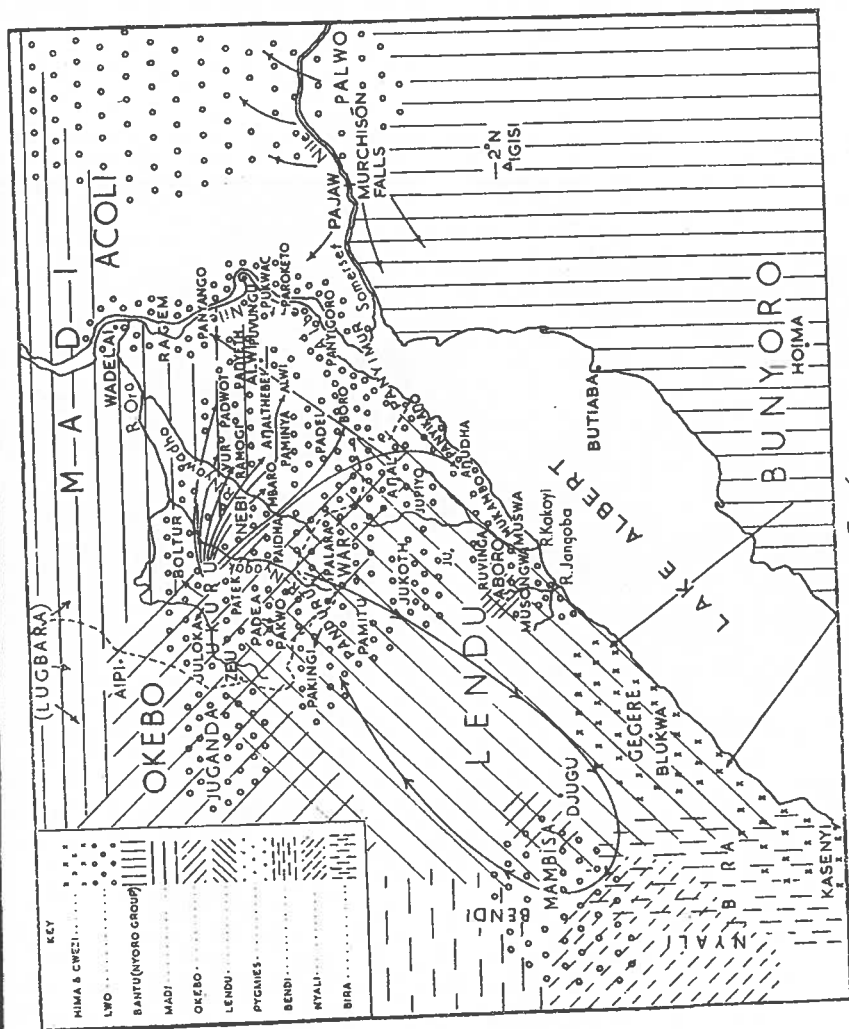


FIG. 6
Phase VI.

and Aryek in Nebi and Atyak in Junam. The latter did not thrive but, together with Boro, Alwi and Panjeth formed the only extensions of Ukuru domination into the fringes of Junam where miscellaneous ruling clans were in power. Aryek was founded by Songa, a son of chief Ucweda of Ukuru, and superseded a number of pre-existing chieflets whose power had decayed. At Ucweda's death Acil disputed the succession with Aryem but was worsted and went to join Aryek in Nebi with a very large following.

Anjal continued to spread westward, the chieflets of JUpiyo occupied the whole valley of the Ca and the middle Kakoyi, and Agasa, a son of chief Ujanga of Anjal, became a new chieflet founding JupAgasa on the slopes of Mount Ju, west of Kakoyi.

Everywhere there was a general growth of the numbers and spread of the settlements of the Alur Lwo and Lwo-ized lineages. But the outstanding feature of this period was the breaking out of PaNduru into repeatedly aggressive warfare, which changed the quality of Alur expansion to the south-west, and during the subsequent period just before the European occupation, threw the whole of Alurland into temporary confusion when the coming of guns and slave-raiding threatened to revolutionize the traditional political methods and upset the delicate balances of power.

By this time, the Lugbara had probably approached near the Alur northern border, and caused further movement of the Okebo to the west and north.

PHASE VIII

The last period of independence, ending 1912-1914.

No more ruling groups entered Alurland from the outside. Those already there, continued to expand by the same methods as before; by the purposeful sending out of chiefs' sons to be chieflets over both Alur and non-Alur groups, by the splitting of chiefly groups after internal quarrels also leading to the establishment of new political units embracing new non-Alur groups, and by the increasing density of population, due especially to the growth and proliferation of chiefly lineages leading to general expansion of settlements. We have seen how through these processes a new society came into being over a few generations.

The first contact with new external forces came in the shape of the traffic in arms and slaves, brought to Alurland by traders of African or mixed blood, but indirectly due to the Arab slave trade organized from the coast, and ultimately to the tightening grip of the European powers upon Africa. These forces would have had a devastating effect on Alur society anyhow, but historically fortuitous³⁹ factors added to it. Alur society depended on a peculiar blend of quasi-kinship quasi-state organization in which political development offered easy channels for the exercise of the fantastic new power created by the introduction of firearms, but provided no unequivocal state organs for the undisputed use of it. To put the matter concretely, it was far more disruptive of Alur life than it was of Ganda or Nyoro life. Unless it was that British and Belgian intervention in Alur affairs cut in just at the point of disequilibrium before a new

³⁹ On this question see Nadel, *The Foundations of Social Anthropology*, pp. 13-16.

adjustment could appear. In that case, perhaps those Alur are right who think that Ujuru, the ferocious chief of PaNduru, would have created a single Alur state and so caught up with the political and territorial development of the Lacustrine kingdoms. Some factors in the traditional system rendered increasing political centralization likely, but their operation was obscured by the arrival of firearms and, shortly afterwards, by the imposition of European political control.

It is unquestionable that, both in PaNduru and in Mambisa, a ruthlessness and violence which was uncharacteristic of political activity in other chiefdoms had become common before the coming of the slave and arms trade. This was a historical accident which enhanced the disruptive effect on Alur society as a whole.⁴⁰ Deeds of violence and treachery certainly occurred from time to time in the dynastic affairs of other chiefdoms, succession was sometimes disputed or subjects wantonly pillaged, but in the minds of every Alur these things were regarded as occasional lapses, whereas in the later history of PaNduru they became almost commonplace. I here recount briefly some of the salient later activities of PaNduru to show the mounting incidence of atrocities and the implication of other chiefdoms.

Lajo, third in the line of PaNduru chiefs, had to fight for the succession with his brother Nyondo, and then with another brother, Jalkil who fled to War where he was killed. Lajo then left a third brother, Wonda, in charge of his chiefdom and went off on his travels. Wonda incited the Lendu to kill Lajo on his return. Lajo's sons Kingi and Adrogo recovered his corpse and buried it. As chief, Kingi killed five of the widows whom he had inherited from his father, then by forcing the Okebo to dig his fields he provoked a rebellion in which he was deposed and Adrogo installed instead. Adrogo fought against Acer. He was succeeded by his son Malawi. Malawi fought Palara for making fun of him in a song, then he massacred the Lendu of Kpanduma because one of his men had been killed. He skinned the murderer to make a medicine. Acida succeeded Malawi, and again fought Palara, then allied with them to fight the Lendu right down to the Hema of Blukwa (Gegere). On his return he fought Padea who had stolen a cow, and turned on PaKingi suspecting them of the same. He was involved in internal feuds and had to fight his own PaMitu and Pabon subjects. Padea took the news of an expected PaNduru attack on them to Alworuna, chief of Ukuru, and Ukuru and Padea then took Acida by surprise and killed him at Mount Rona. His son Ujuru succeeded him. Ujuru renewed the war with Padea, but became involved in fighting with his own brothers over an adultery case. They allied with PaKingi against him and intercepted his tribute. In the ensuing fighting between them not even women were spared as was usual. Ujuru's brothers then appealed to Ukuru and Jukoth for help against him. At this, Ujuru turned upon Jukoth, ravaged chief Kidikpa's village and plundered his cattle. Jukoth appealed to Keta, chief of Agal, who then massacred a PaNduru settlement but had part of his forces in turn massacred by Ujuru on

⁴⁰ Cf. Nadel, loc. cit. "when a group adopts this or that cultural item from outside, I can legitimately search for some pre-existing readiness, that is, for a state of affairs which, on the grounds of general knowledge would be likely to lead to some such results as actually happened; yet, that the readiness was matched there and then by a suitable occasion, is, once more, accident".

his way back. Moving north Ujuru then subdued the Lendu of Anzhou south of Juganda, then returning south at a call from Ŋblukba the Hema chief of the Gegere he massacred the Lendu as far as Blukwa and Mambisa. Going north again, he subdued the Malizi Okebo and began to massacre and pillage Juganda, taking many of their young men and girls as slaves. Juganda fled *en masse* to Aŋal and have never recovered from the disaster. Ujuru went on north from Juganda into Lugbara country and captured thousands of cattle and hundreds of slaves. The Lugbara have never forgotten this and still maintain a lively hatred of the Alur in general for Ujuru's sake. On he went beyond the Lugbara into Logo country and made blood brotherhood with Matafa of Faradje. Then followed an incident with one of the early European elephant hunters; PaNduru claimed that this man had taken a cow from Ujuru's brother Janga without paying for it; with this good excuse, Ujuru captured him and killed all his armed followers but one, taking a prize of seven rifles of improved design. With this access of firepower Ujuru felt strong enough to avenge his father's death on Ukuru. He made a surprise attack by night and is said to have killed more than six hundred men.⁴¹ He captured Alworuŋa, killed him and burnt his body, throwing the ashes into water.⁴² Like Juganda previously, Ukuru fled *en masse*, nearly all went as far as Nebi and many crossed the Nile into Acoliland whence they were brought back after the establishment of British rule. The PaNduru sequence of events is of importance because of the contrasting light which it throws on the political methods of different Alur chiefs over the last four or five generations of their independence. But by the end of the nineteenth century other neighbours were adopting methods similar to those of PaNduru, and any small feud was exacerbated and almost haphazardly extended by the presence of a few firearms. A little before Ujuru's attacks upon them, the Acoli chief Ulili had crossed the Nile and entered Ukuru and Juganda on a slaving expedition. From there he went and took slaves among the Cubu and Paravur subjects of Aŋal. The Aŋal chief Keta gave battle and was defeated. Ulili marched to Keta's village and sacked it, after which there was another fight in which Keta himself managed to wound Ulili with an arrow and put him to flight, then pursued and finally killed him. A few years later there ensued the succession war of the brothers Uwiny and Uŋwec for the chiefship of Ragem. It was aggravated not only by the added incentive of slaving, and the greater mortality resulting from the use of firearms, but by the fact that Uŋwec came to be associated with the then Belgian sphere—west bank and Uwiny with the British sphere—east bank of the Albert Nile. The fighting dragged on for years, and was further increased by the invocation of chief Awich of Acoli Payera first on one side and then on the other, bringing Acoli forces from Payera, Ariya, Pagero, Yweya, Pabit, Alokolum, Koic and Pawel, to assist in the decimation of the population of Junam.

It seems that Alurland had entered upon a period of destructive turmoil which was still on the increase when European rule was imposed. Areas such as

⁴¹ Of course no accuracy can be claimed for the recollected figures of these campaigns, but that the casualties were prodigious by Alur standards there can be no doubt; I have often enough met people in Ukuru who had several relatives killed in this war.

⁴² Such details emphasize the degree of calculated brutality, normally repugnant to the Alur.

Juganda and northern Junam suffered so badly, that the effects are still felt, but for most Alur, after nearly two generations of guaranteed peace, the gun and slave period has lapsed into the perspective of a brief atypical interlude in the continuity of their tradition. This is not merely their own subjective verdict, but objectively, the political values to which they are still most strongly attached, and which they continue to practise within the limits set by alien rule, are clearly those belonging to the continuous tradition, upon which the irregular violence of the last days of independence was largely a superficial imposition induced from without. In fact, even during the turbulent period these traditional processes continued, for this was the very time during which the important chieflets of PAmatho, PaKubi and PaYem established their rule over the Lendu and Okebo who actually lay between PaNduru, Juganda and Ukuru.

THE APPARENT TRENDS IN THE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF ALUR SOCIETY

The following emphases may be noted in the development of Alur society as seen in the traditions. At first there were large numbers of Lwo groups, of similar status but under no common organization, wandering about and establishing themselves as, at first, petty chiefs. So far as it is possible to tell the Atyak chiefs were even then pre-eminent in the degree of differentiation of the group they led, for it already contained numerous different Lwo clans in addition to whatever alien groups were then associated with it. On the available evidence I think there is no other group among the Southern Lwo⁴³ except the Bito which can compete in this respect with the Atyak clan of the Alur. The number of unconnected ruling groups in the Alur country in course of time became less, and the pre-eminence of a few steadily increased, above all the chiefs of the Atyak clan and to a lesser extent those of Ucibu. Atyak was equally pre-eminent in the proliferation of its chiefship. Other chiefly lines segmented once or twice, and Ucibu somewhat more, but the number of lines of chiefs derived from Atyak is counted in dozens. The later expansion of the Alur was more by the derivation of new chieflets from existent chiefships than by the addition of new immigrant chiefs. All the highland chiefdoms had a very high rate of increase of their Lwo population, so that, in spite of the frequent colonies which went out as Lwo minorities among other tribes, the ratio of Lwo to non-Lwo in such areas always rose rapidly, producing an effective core of common culture and often giving the Lwo element eventual dominance in numbers as well as status. As in most chronicles, battles and conquests are landmarks which more easily hold interest and memory than less spectacular events, but it is clear that the Alur gained most of their non-Alur subjects by methods other than those of armed force. The fact of the recording in tradition of the fighting which occurred at various points in the process emphasizes the marked lack of it in most instances of the extension of Alur authority over surrounding tribes. Assimilation was so successful in some cases that the ethnic origin of some large clans is impossible to establish with certainty, for while they seem to be of non-Alur origin all diagnostic traits of their original ethnicity have vanished (e.g. Mbaro in Padwot,

⁴³ Acoli, Alur, Palwo, Padhola and Kenya Luo. The Lango also belong to this linguistic group, though of different ethnic origin from the rest. The Bito would formerly have been included in it but are now Bantu.

Cubu in Anag). But usually assimilated clans know their ethnic origin perfectly well, though for all practical purposes, they are accepted as Alur commoners in everyday life.

One striking feature is the failure of Palwo groups to establish effective chiefship west of the Nile. The first Lwo immigrants established chiefdoms, some lasting and others not, so did the more recent Magungu chiefly immigrants, but there seems to be no case of a Palwo group doing so. This raises the question of what enabling qualities the others had which the Palwo lacked, and how it came about that Palwo did succeed in establishing so many chiefdoms in south and east Acoliland. These latter Palwo seem mostly to have belonged to the Pawir group, and possibly the Alur who went westwards did not, but the problem of the distinguishing qualities of the two remains.

The proliferation of Alur chiefship was hardly ever a ruling clan's planned policy of expansion. The expansion occurred for a variety of reasons and in a variety of ways, and the parent chiefships made little or no attempt to consolidate or centralize it politically, though several rivals might go on claiming ritual supremacy. Even when chief Keno of Ukuru planted a colony at Jok Riba, the most widely recognized Alur shrine, it never became a political bargaining counter for Ukuru, and few of those to whom Riba is well known are aware of the Ukuru connection.

Alur society developed embryonic political institutions of a specialized type. This, combined with the continuous mobility and fluidity of Alur groups in space and time, rendered necessary and habitual the recollection of past events as a charter of present political relations. The high degree of ethnic variability and of temporal and spatial fluidity and mobility provides some of the fascination of Alur studies, but involves formidable difficulties of presentation.

This paper is intended to provide some concrete evidence of the influence of differing types of social structure, and of the temporal processes inherent in them and the particular oecological environment, on the quality of recollection of past events. From this, the reader may assess the advisability of relating the traditions of particular tribal societies to the possible sequence of historical development.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ For other writings on the problem of time and social processes see:

E. Sapir, *Time perspective in Aboriginal American Culture*, Canadian Department of Mines, Ottawa, 1914.

M. Fortes, *Time and Social Structure: An Ashanti Case Study*, in *Social Structure—Studies presented to A. R. Radcliffe-Brown*, Oxford, 1949.

I. C. Cunnison, *History on the Luapula*, Rhodes-Livingstone Papers, No. 21, 1951.

J. A. Barnes, *History in a Changing Society*, Rhodes-Livingstone Journal, No. 11, 1951.