

Elements of Luo Traditional Sacrifice: An Anthropological Approach

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INTRODUCTION

Every religion has some form of sacrifice. In fact, sacrifice is the most widespread of all rituals. It derived from two Latin words: “sacer”, which means holy, sacred or set apart and “facere,” which means to do or to make. So, to sacrifice is to make holy or to set something apart for supernatural powers. Most rituals imply an offering and quite often a blood sacrifice. A blood sacrifice is a displacement of mystical forces made possible by God himself, thanks to the intercession of a spirit, divinity or ancestor and the mediation of a priest for the satisfaction of the sacrificing community.

The blood of the victim, when poured on the altar, releases the vital force contained in it and feeds the spiritual beings directly alerted by the words of the priest. We have here an offering of food given to the sacred forces, which gives life to the sacrificing community through a common meal. We also have the words of the priest to the divinity or ancestor who intercedes to God. The response of God comes in an inverted way: it goes to the sacrificing community through the ancestor and the priest. Note here that God does not feed on the blood of the victim; God is the very source of the vital force; for him the vital force does not diminish.

It is the whole community, which performs what we can call the rite of diverted violence. When the animal is killed, sometimes very cruelly, the violence, which would be directed to people is done on the animal, which is their substitute. It is at the same time an elevated violence since it is transported from the profane to the sacred. It is also a transcended violence since it enables the community to transfer the grudges, rivalries, hatred, tension and the tendencies of aggression within it to an animal victim. This is the way the community “*deceives*” its own violence by directing it to victims which do not call for vengeance. All in all, sacrifice in whatever form is for respect of life, that is, in sacrifice, life is not lost; it just becomes sublime.

Sacrifice occupies a fundamental place in the practice of *African traditional* religion. It is through sacrifices that the *African* relates to the spiritual. The religious nature of African ritual, as historians of religions have stressed, is such that: “A ritual is religious, if it carries an ultimate value, meaning, sacrality and significance for someone, that is, if it somehow functions for someone as the foundation of what is considered real and sacred” (Richard 1978: 65).

SOME PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT THE LUO PEOPLE

These few pages are meant to give a brief understanding of the Luo people before we indulge ourselves into our main theme of sacrifice. We shall present briefly the history of the Luos; their religious life and worldview which entail the belief in one God, and the belief in the world of spirits.

A Brief History of the Luos

The Luo people belong to a large Nilotic group that lives within the Eastern and Central part of Africa. The Nilotic peoples are found in different areas settled in three distinct blocks: The first block comprises of the Shilluk, Nuer, Anuak and Dinka. They live in the southern part of Sudan. In the central zone are the Acholi, Alur, and Jo-Padhola. This group forms the second block and lives in Uganda. Finally, the Luo with whom we are concerned in this work form the third block and live around the shores of Lake Victoria, both in Kenya and Tanzania. [1] Many historians locate the start of the great Luo journey near the Nuer to the west of Bahr-el-Gebel in the Sudan. The Luo elders simply affirm that “We came from Sudan”. However, owing to the Luo’s Nilotic kith and kin in the said area, we can safely assert that that was their original home from whence the migration started.

The Luo left their original land in search of suitable pasture, being a nomadic group. The demographic increase and the fear of being absorbed by their neighbours are other possible reasons for their migration. Whatever the precise reason for their migration, the event left a permanent mark on the Luo immigration like the Exodus of the Hebrews. As the chosen people of Israel tell the story of their great journey across the desert for forty years to find the promised land, the Luo, too, narrate to their children the dangerous march made by their ancestors along the Nile to find *Nam Lolwe* (Lake Victoria), an inland sea which the British in the 19th C. named after their Queen Victoria. Up to the present moment, the attachment to this lake is still very strong among the Luo people. [2] For the Luo the lake is the cornucopia, the great horn of plenty from which flow richness and life in abundance.

Concerning the name Luo according to the tradition of the Luo elders, this name was derived from the fact that members of this group of Nilotes were constantly following one another in groups in search of better pastures. Their constant movement was determined by geographical conditions, like floods along the Nile and frequent droughts. Each time a lineage unit moved ahead, it was followed by another. Such migrations were usually taken along the rivers. Now the Luo word *luwo* designates “following after one another”. This same word is used for following along the river or mountain – *luwo bath aora*, *luwo bath got*. [3] They therefore refer to themselves as *oganda Luwo*, the people of Luo. To the elders this is the origin of the name Luo.

The Luo now constitutes the largest group of Nilotes and third largest tribe in Kenya where they are established mainly in 11 administrative districts around Lake Victoria (Siaya, Bondo, Nyando, Kisumu East, Kisumu West, Homa Bay, Migori, Rachuonyo, Suba, Rongo and Rarieda).

Belief in One God

The Luos are practically monotheists. It is important to note that the Luo people have an anthropomorphic conception of God. They believe in an almighty God who created the whole world. Among the indigenous Luos the existence of the Supreme Being, commonly referred to as *Nyasaye*, is taken as a matter of course. It is almost impossible to come across a Luo who will doubt the existence of *Nyasaye* or claim to be an atheist. An indigenous Luo has a belief in the existence of a self-existent being who is believed to be responsible for the creation and maintenance of heaven and earth, of men and women. For a Luo nothing happens by chance, everything that happens does so because it was willed so by the Supreme Being, *Nyasaye*. Man remains at the centre of all creation and all things were given to him by the creator. [4] *Nyasaye* is known to have various attributes which are expressed by other titles. Apart from being the Creator of all that exists (*Jachuech gik moko duto*), *Nyasaye* is known to be *unique*. This means that He is the only One and there is no other like him. It is for this uniqueness that the people have no graven images or pictorial paintings of Him. There are symbols or emblems of Him but no images, for nothing can

be compared to Him.

Nyasaye is immortal. He is ever-living. The Luo refer to *Nyasaye* as *Wuon ngima–Nyasach Ngima*, meaning, the Owner of life – God of life. It is unimaginable for the Owner of life to die. He is everlasting (*Nyasaye mochwere*).

The Luos know their God as One with whom nothing is impossible. *Nyasaye* is *omnipotent*. The Luo people refer to Him as *Nyasaye ma Ratego*, all powerful; He is Almighty. When *Nyasaye* sanctions something, it is easily done; but when something does not receive his blessings, it becomes impossible.

Nyasaye is also omniscient. The Supreme Being has knowledge of everything. He is all-wise, all-knowing, all-hearing, and all-seeing. He is believed to be able to discern the secret thoughts of the people and is capable of seeing hidden things. For the Luos it is *Nyasaye* that is wise, creatures are very ignorant.

In their anthropomorphic conception of God, the Luos see *Nyasaye* as holding the position of a very important King (*Ruoth*) who is also an impartial Judge (*Ja-N'gad bura*). As the Creator of all things, He reigns as King over all things, He will also be the Judge over all things. With this theme of being a judge, the Luos have a notion that through their sacrifices to *Nyasaye* they expiate all the evils which can lead them to any horrific judgement in the world to come.

Nyasaye is also transcendent. The Luos believe that the Supreme Being is high and far above the heads of all. He is not one among many but wholly other. However, we need to note and emphasize that although *Nyasaye* is transcendent, He is not removed from his people. On the contrary, He is conceived as a social being interested in the life and events of the people. He is not an unapproachable, remote God who created the world and left it for its fate, but One who is quite accessible and therefore, participates in his people's affairs including their sacrifices, in which he is the center and the goal, an encounter through which he shows his interest to the community, He can be called upon at anytime and anywhere because He is omnipresent. In other words, His transcendence does not rule out His immanence. This is a concept of God found in almost all parts of Africa, like the Yoruba of Nigeria.^[5]

There are many other attributes of God that we can enumerate as *Wuoro* (Father), a quality that depicts God as a universal Parent. He is also referred to as *Nyakalaga* (omnipresent).

However, it is important to note that *Nyasaye* is highly associated with the sun (*chien'g*) and the moon (*dwe*) because He dwells in the sky. The sun and the moon are understood as God's manifestations. Because of this there was a common morning ceremony in which the home elder would go outside his hut and spit in the direction of sunrise saying to himself, "*Thuu! Yie mondo itujna maber mondo ringra okwe, yamo makudho marach mondo okadhna gi chien.*" (Oh! Please, may you rise well for my body to be calm; let the bad winds blowing not take control over me). At the sunset he would as well pray, "*Thuu! Ipodhna maber mondo ayud gweth.*" (Oh! May you set well so that I get blessings).^[6] This was a prayer for the elder and for the whole of his family. This could also be performed by anyone in the family, but has been a common private practice.

The moon is as well significant to the Luo concept of God. It forms part of the sacred cosmos since the divine manifests himself as well as his greatness through it. When the new moon appears for the first time people are expected to spit towards it in order to ask for his blessings. An elder would say, "*Thuu! Aneni maber mondo ayudi ogogo moro.*" (Oh! May I see you well so that I may get a pearl), while a young man of marriageable age would say, "*Thuu! Aneni maber mondo apor kod nyako moro.*" (Oh! May I see you well so that I may elope with somebody's daughter). On the other hand, an old lady would say, "*Thuu! Aneni maber mondo kiny ayien'g* (Oh! May I see you well so that I get satisfied tomorrow), while a young lady would say, "*Thuu! Aneni maber mondo onyuoma*" (Oh! May I see you well so that I get married).^[7] It is

important from this point to stress that the Luos do not worship the sun and the moon as was depicted by some early writers, but they see these great works of *Nyasaye* and glorify him through these mighty works of creation which manifest his power and through which he continues to govern the universe. In fact the Luos see the sun to be ruling during the day and the moon to dominate the night as the two major administrative forces that God has put to serve man and other creation.

Belief in the World of Spirits

The Luos, like many other African societies, believe in the existence of the spiritual beings and the spiritual world. For them both the living and the non-living creatures, like some objects contain some form of spiritual powers. The spirits, according to them, are also other beings who populate our universe beside man and God, and whose roles can be good or bad for the community. They determine the destiny of those still living, hence good relationship is to be established with them. The Luo people believe that any fate that befalls the community, whether good or bad, has an influence of the spiritual forces. They associate any calamity that befalls an individual, family or community to some evil done by the party concerned or a mere negligence to appease the spirits of their ancestors. [8]

Although the spirits are respected and at times even feared by the people, they are still conceived as creatures. They were created by God and therefore subordinate to him and dependent upon him. This is to clarify the notion widespread among early writers and first missionaries who held the view that Luo people worshiped the spirits. We would rather clarify that the belief in the spirits especially the ancestral spirits, is to be understood in the light of veneration and not adoration, an action only reserved for *Nyasaye*.

The Luo believes in the existence of the spirits called *Juogi*. These spirits are divided into two main categories: (a) good spirits and (b) bad spirits which can either be known or unknown spirits.

ELEMENTS OF LUO TRADITIONAL SACRIFICE

Sacrificial Rite

Sacrifice as a ritual action requires a stipulated rite for its accomplishment. The rite in any sacrificial action gives it its form and order. Although the understanding of the term *rite* has undergone through various stages with a change of meaning and even practice, we shall limit ourselves to the religious meaning and understanding, so that whenever we talk of a rite in this work, we strictly mean a religious rite which excludes any secular use of the term. The Luo sacrificial system requires a rite to follow. There are several definitions and descriptions which have been attributed to rite. *The Dictionary of Religions* defines a rite as a system of actions and beliefs that has its beginning, intermediaries and has a specific goal and is directly in rapport with the supernatural beings. [9] The supernatural beings are capable of doing things which human beings are not in a position to perform. We can see that this kind of definition excludes routine activities and habits. In this context we should maintain that a rite is always a religious rite and the reference to the supernatural is the first binding procedure. For Luo people a rite is a cultural mode of expressing their life in relation to a Supernatural Being (*Nyasaye*), a being who is believed to be higher than that of the person or group performing it. It is based upon customs conditioned by history, geography and tradition and also varies with the national background of a given people. As a formal or ceremonial solemn act of observance, a sacrificial rite or procedure must be in accordance prescribed by Luo religious rule or custom.

Again, rite is described by Lang as a general concept for those religious acts that are accomplished in an identical mode in particular occasions and whose execution has been fixed from tradition or from prescription that can consist of gestures, word and use of objects. [10] This religious and supernatural reference to the rite is what is well maintained and practiced by the Luos. When a Luo speaks of a rite, he means that process that takes him and his community from the realm of the ordinary and natural to the realm

of extraordinary and supernatural. It is basically the sacrificial-ritual practice that unites the two worlds for a Luo. Hence for the Luos, a sacrificial rite is always a religious rite, in the process of sacrifice, that which brings them to union with their God (*Nyasaye*) and to their ancestors (*kwere*).

A rite is, therefore, one of the most important elements in the Luo sacrificial process. They follow a well stipulated procedure from the preparatory stage to the final stage of their sacrificial activity. We would as well note that for the Luo community, the sacrificial rite is not written in any text. It forms part of life of the society. It is an experience lived and never studied. Those who are not initiated into the rite do not attend the ritual process. The Luo sacrificial rite is also quite exclusive but hierarchical especially in sacrifices that embrace the whole community. Being a male dominated society, it excludes women and children (although in some rare cases a very limited number of elderly women could be invited to perform minor activities like preparing porridge which could be used during the sacrificial rite).

THE LUO TRADITIONAL RITE OF SACRIFICE

The Preparatory Stages.

Sacrifice requires preparation. Any activities and occasions that require any interaction with the divinity call for a great deal of preparation. Whenever the Luo people had felt that there was a need to offer a sacrifice, be it thanksgiving or expiatory, they had to prepare for it. The elders had to identify the person to give out the sacrificial animal on behalf of the community. Each participant had to prepare and to bring at least an animal (a ram or a cockerel, but not a goat which was majorly used to chase away the evil spirits, especially in cleansing sacrifices) to present before *Nyasaye* and the forefathers. [11] Neither was it to be a sick animal nor a malnourished one. It was to be selected from the fattest animals among the flock. The Luos used the expression *chiaye ma onge kod songa* to refer to “an animal without blemish” used for sacrifice. No one participated in the sacrifice with empty hands. [12]

The members also had to prepare themselves in order to be worthy and acceptable before the divinities. They had to observe certain taboos and codes of conduct, avoiding among other things sexual intercourse, cursing, quarrels and fights and abstain from taking some kinds of food and any form of alcoholic drinks three days before. They had to remain serene these days before the sacrificial event. It is as well important to note that the members selected elders of good reputation to be officiating the sacrificial action. This stems from the belief that anyone who is to officiate on festival occasions had to be ritually clean, faithful and sincere. They had to bear no malice against anybody. As it can be seen, very high moral standards were required by the presiding elder. The high moral standards were required not only for the officiating elder but also for all devotees and participants in the sacrifice.

The Luo Rite of Sacrifice.

In order to demonstrate very vividly how the Luo people performed their traditional sacrifice, we would wish to outline briefly how once a village that was threatened by a looming danger had to prevent it and expiate for their past sins that enraged *Nyasaye* and the forefathers. We would wish to cite an example of a preventive sacrifice which was also meant to revive the territory:

Onyando [13], a very powerful dealer in charms and a diviner, saw that the country was in danger: a terrible sickness was looming that would kill the people and the cattle; hunger was also threatening due to an impending insect invasion (locusts and cut-worms were coming to destroy the land); also evil people had put an evil spell on the land. Onyando, the charm dealer and a very powerful medicine man, sent a word to the respected chiefs and elders to gather the people at the foot of the *n'gou* (fig) trees Yadh Obel – the traditional shrine next to Mariri Primary School in Kabuoch. He then sent a word to Othech Alidhi (one of the elders) to offer a black bull with a white spot on its forehead. He called upon the other elders to offer

rams.

Only the elders were to come for the sacrifice. The young men were permitted to come and see but never to participate in the sacrificial event. This is a very important aspect for everyone who wishes to participate in a sacrificial function has to be initiated in it. People who do not belong to that particular clan or community are also never allowed to participate in the sacrificial activity. Women were not allowed to come for such serious sacrifices, just as any other male dominated society.

Early in the morning in the hallowed place of sacrifice, the people met together. Then three of the elders, including the charm dealer, stood around the bull and the rams. Each had to be in special garments [14] made of soften skins for the sacrifice; an apron on the front called *chieno*, another one on the back side called *chip*, and the one that wrapped around the waist called *olembo*. Over the left shoulder they wore a black goatskin called *asemba* with a front vest referred to as *onyege*. Also four string beads were worn across the shoulders. They then began to pray;

God, our Father, All present, look upon us, we are beseeching you. What have we done on this land? Please help us. Look on us well with the sacrifice we want to offer. Sun, you are the one God has given us, you are our good luck, you are our help; shine well upon this land; bless it, take away evil winds and go with them to the other side of the sea.

And to you our grandfathers, elders of this land (here they would name a few prominent departed elders and forefathers), you are the ones who brought us to this land. All of you, we beseech you, look upon us. Today we are offering you this sacrifice, *be happy with it and bless it*. In return, bring peace and prosperity to this land. Destroy the power of the coming evil. Bless for us the land.

At this point the bull and some of the small animals defecated (a sign that the animals had been accepted). Each of the elders took the dung from the animals and threw it towards the rising sun saying this form of prayer:

Oh *Nyasaye*, let your eye, the sun, shine on us well. Burry all the evils on the far side of the sea. May all our children receive peace.

And you our ancestors and elders (mentioning a few names of the prominent ones), we know that we have committed evil acts on the face of the earth where you placed us; we ask you to accept our sacrifice; eat it all of you; bless us and bless our nation; protect us from any evils and danger; grant us prosperity and fertility.

Each elder called upon to pray took the dung of the cow and the sheep and threw it towards the sun's rising, towards its setting, and also to the North as well as to the South while they worshipped *Nyasaye* and called upon the sun together with the names of the ancestors who first settled in the land. They asked for good luck, blessings, peace, abundant food and children. They cursed evil things asking that they go far away, beyond the land, beyond the lake.

They then tied the mouth of the cow with a rope and then killed it by hitting behind the head with a club, because they never wanted the cow to cry out. The small animals were strangled to death. They skinned the cow and pierced the stomach. The elders came close to inspect what was in the intestines of the bull. This would show them if there would still be danger or things are now alright. The elders ascertained that the grandfathers did not agree with it and that there could still be some trouble, though most of it had been averted. The bull was then slaughtered and the meat served up to small groups, extracting all the bones. The blood (*remo*) was well kept not to pour out as it was put into a special sacrificial pot called "*aguch remo*"

(the blood pot).

The meat was then placed in a basket. Everyone was quiet for a time. Then the charm dealer cut off four small pieces, dipped them in the blood and threw it towards the sun praying:

All powerful God, you are our help. And you the sun, rise for us well (he then threw another meat towards the setting sun) and set for us well.

Throwing another meat to the North and to the South he said:

May you embrace this our land, bless it; give it peace. Accept this sacrifice which we are today offering in this our land.

Then there was a complete silence for a while. Another elder then began to pray. He also spilled some blood on the ground with a small pot, took some meat and threw it all round saying:

Our forefathers, owners of the land (naming some of the prominent ones), come, this is your sacrifice. Please accept it; we are giving it to you; Call together all your brethren, come and eat it, so that you bring peace on earth. Bring good harvest for us all. Drive away all the evil from this land which you have placed us.

Then a third elder took some meat and threw it towards the sun and then to the four corners of the earth saying:

Oh Sun, the great eye of *Nyasaye*, you rise and set for us well. Our elders, we know that we have already done evil on the face of the earth where you placed us and breached your eternal taboos and precepts, accept our supplications, pardon us. Do not turn your back against us. Accept this our sacrifice; eat it all of you. Bless us and bless this our land. May this land in the near future bring us good harvest. Bring prosperity to our families and fertility to our women.

After that the elders began to eat a little bit of raw meat of the sacrifice as the rest of the people remained in silence. Having distributed the meat to various smaller groups, all the meat was roasted. They ate quickly while standing until they finished all the meat. The charm dealer said to the people, "Let not even a single bone be dropped." He then continued to pray:

We have already joined ourselves together in this sacrifice. Let no one return to his home with a bad spirit. Our forefathers, we admit our evils are many in this land where you brought us, forgive us; take them away from us. Bring us peace and blessings. Throw away all the evil winds, the evil spirits of the dead, together with evil people who are planning evil for this country. Let the looming troubles go far away from our territory.

Then one of the elders took the head of the cow and buried at the foot of the *N'gou* tree where they performed the sacrifice praying,

Take this victim and let our heads have peace and tranquility.

They then burnt all the bones in the fire. Then they shouted aloud as if in riot. The people then broke up and returned to their homes. The figure below summarizes the Luo expiatory process analyzed above right from the time a calamity is realized up to the time the sacrifice is concluded.



Figure 1. A Summary of the Luo Expiatory Process.

CONCLUSION

Actions of expiation have the specific purpose of setting aright the proper relationship between creature and creator which had been disturbed by sin. Whereas propitiation was a God-directed action, in which man is conceived as the agent, expiation is a creature directed action in which God alone is conceived of as the ultimate end.

It is fundamental to note that the notion of expiation within the Luo society is quite complex. It would comprise almost all the elements that are found in some other forms of sacrifice. In the very core of these other forms sacrifices the concept of expiation rested as the Luo people were conscious of the taboos and sins which always provoked the wrath of *Nyasaye* and that of the spirits. The expiatory sacrifice had an element of propitiation since it is aimed at averting the anger of the divinities and to purify the community from its contamination caused by the breach of a given taboo. Otherwise, without doing this the society was destined to undergo the wrath of *Nyasaye*. In addition, there is an element of prevention and protection in this form of sacrifice. The offering made is to prevent and protect the community from the imminent dangers and calamities. It is substitutive since the animal sacrificed replaces the society that ought to have suffered the consequences of its misbehavior for the breach of the taboo. The expiatory sacrifice is reconciliatory in its nature. Just as it brings peace and accord among the two parties horizontally, it also creates the vertical concordance with the divinities. The society which suffered division and enmity is now reunited in harmony and concordance. For the Luo people, disharmony here below causes also the disharmony with the divinities. In the same way, reconciliation among the members of the society presupposes reconciliation with the divine world. Again the expiatory sacrifice has an element of thanksgiving. This should be understood in the creatural feelings^[15] and understanding of the Luo people. The Luo person sees himself as nothing before the divine. He is simply a mere creature who should be rendering *Nyasaye* a pure homage for his life and existence and for the worldly benefits of which he is not worthy. Man receives this only for the good will of the divinities. He, therefore, has this innate feeling of giving thanks to God and rendering him an exceptional worship which the Luos can do only through sacrifice. ^[16]

We must not forget to mention that in all forms of sacrifices, there is a future dimension. A Luo offers sacrifices not only for the wellbeing of his present life but also to join his forefathers in the world of the ancestors. His good life here on earth and the religious practices centered upon the loyalty and sincerity in

sacrificial cult bring him close to the world of the ancestors. This would explain the fact of offering sacrifices for the dead so that they may be accepted and welcomed in the ancestral world if there were some deficiencies and hindrances that would delay the immediate entry into the world of the ancestors.

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FOOT NOTES

[1] ONGONGA, J. J, *Life and Death; A Christian/Luo Dialogue*, in *Spearhead* No. 78, Gaba Publications, Eldoret (Kenya) 1983, p. 6.

[2] *Ibid.*, 7.

[3] *Ibid.*, 8.

[4] OCHOLLA- AYAYO, A. B. C., *Traditional Ideology and Ethics Among the Southern Luo*, The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala 1976, p. 166.

[5] OMOSADE AWOLALU, J., *Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites*, Longman Group Limited, London 1979, p. 16.

[6] HAUGE, H., *Luo Religion and Folklore*, Scandinavian University Books, Oslo 1974, p. 64.

[7] MBOYA, P., *Luo Kitgi Gi Timbegi, A Handbook of Luo Customs*, Anyange Press Ltd, Kisumu 1983, p. 26.

[8] HAUGE, H., *Luo Religion and Folklore*, p. 112.

[9] SMITH, Z. JONATHAN (ed), *The Harper Collins Dictionary of Religion*, HarperCollins, New York 1995, pp. 930-932.

[10] Cf. TERRIN, A. N. (a cura di), *Una fenomenologia dei riti religiosi e secolari*, in *Riti religiosi e riti secolari*, Edizioni Messaggero, Padova 2007, p. 162; Cf. LANG, B., *Ritual/Ritus*, in CANCIK, H. - GLADIGOW, B. – KOHL, K. H. (a cura), *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbgriffe*, vol. IV, Kolhammer, Stuttgart 1998, p. 443.

[11] It is a very unique practice that the Luo people offer their sacrifices directly to (God) *Nyasaye*. In many African societies, sacrifices are directed to the ancestors who are God's representatives. However, even though they have the idea of God at the back of their mind, it is the ancestors who stay at the centre of the sacrificial event. But the Luos have *Nyasaye* who stays and the centre, with the collaboration of the ancestors as intermediaries in the sacrificial function.

[12] Cf. DRIBERG, J. H., *The Lango: A Nilotic Tribe of Uganda*, T. Fisher Unwin Ltd., London, pp. 216-244.

[13] These names are not real since the principal participants willed that they remain anonymous to the public. We have therefore adopted common names used by many people for anonymity.

[14] Cf. KIRWEN, C. M., *Theology of Luo Sacrifice: A Paper Presented at the T.E.C National Committee on Research*, Kurasini Seminar, Nairobi May, 22, 1978, p. 24. The whole process of the sacrifice was confirmed by our field research carried out between July and August 2007.

[15] OTTO, R., *Il sacro. L'irrazionale nell'idea del divino e la sua relazione al razionale*, Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore, Milano 1986, pp. 19-22.

[16] Cf. *Ibid.*