

On-site Education of Practical Languages for Area Studies

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Graduate School of Asian and African Areas Studies

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On My Research theme and/or Language Training

I am conducting my research in northern Uganda. My study aims to explore how conflicts are resolved by the Acholi people who live in northern Uganda, under the influences of the national government and international aid groups, such as NGOs. In their conflict resolution process, they utilize a kind of community justice, or alternative justice, that is different from the Western judicial system. Acholi people have their own customary conflict resolution systems. When a conflict breaks out in a community, they try to hold several mediation meetings in order not only to decide the amount of compensation, but also to let people's tension cool and reconcile. Usually when the case is a murder, after the compensation is provided, a ritual for reconciliation is carried out (Girling 1960). These days, the government and some NGOs support and encourage this process of reconciliation through traditional chiefs and Ker Kwaro Acholi (KKA: an organization of traditional chiefs). On the other hand, local people try to utilize nation's judicial system as well. That is, people make choice on their own initiatives judging their social conditions. Through these investigations, this study probes how reconciliation and social healing are materialized by the Acholi people.

At first, I will study about an Acholi word, *kwor*. In recent conflict mediations, an expression of *culo kwor* is usually used for 'paying compensation' according to the booklets of customary law published by KKA (KKA n.d.). However, this expression means 'obtaining compensation' or 'taking one's revenge' by an earlier study (Girling 1960). Another study translated *kwor* as 'enmity' (Malandra 1956). The term *kwor* is the key concept of the Acholi people in making compensation and resolving conflicts.

Secondly, I will clarify the process of fixing the amount of compensation and the role of participants, by attending mediation meetings. Especially, it is necessity to understand the role of all participants' statements and the account of their statements through dialogues in mediations. So I will clarify what is crucial when the objectives of mediations are achieved. Furthermore, the ways of bringing about reconciliation will be also clarified by interviews.

I will carry out a research on how KKA was established, with special reference to the changes in the national policy, the support from international aid agencies, and the local people's own interests. KKA published a booklet on the Acholi customary law (KKA n.d.). It is important to trace how this booklet was materialized and who determined its details. In many other communities in Africa, customary law is not written and very flexible. So the fact that the Acholi customary law was written is worth considering.



Traditional chief and his family



Ritual for reconciliation

However, the most important thing is how ordinary people think about it and how it works in mediations. Moreover, I will clarify how traditional authorities can demonstrate their ability as leaders in relation to this written customary law.

I must take the national judicial system into consideration, and compare it with the local mediations among the Acholi. I will ask for the support of Gulu high court and local council court in order to obtain data of annual number of indictments and their details. I will also collect experiences of people who resolved the issues in courts. Then I will find out how people choose between modern courts and local mediations.



Paying compensation



Sesame harvest

References:

- Girling, K, F (1960) The Acholi of Uganda. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
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- Malandra, Alfred (1956) English-Lwoo (Acholi) Dictionary. Kalongo: Verona Fathers.