

# *Death and 'Inheritance' of widows*

*The reward of Life is Death...*



## Death



### Song by an Anyuak widow

I live alone  
This home is left empty  
I live alone here.  
The problem of this house is left to its fate.  
I sleep alone here  
The problem of this house is left alone.  
I sleep alone these days.  
The problem of this house is unsolved.  
As I prepare meals,  
I prepare meals for no reason.  
When I make beer,  
I make beer for no reason  
I live alone

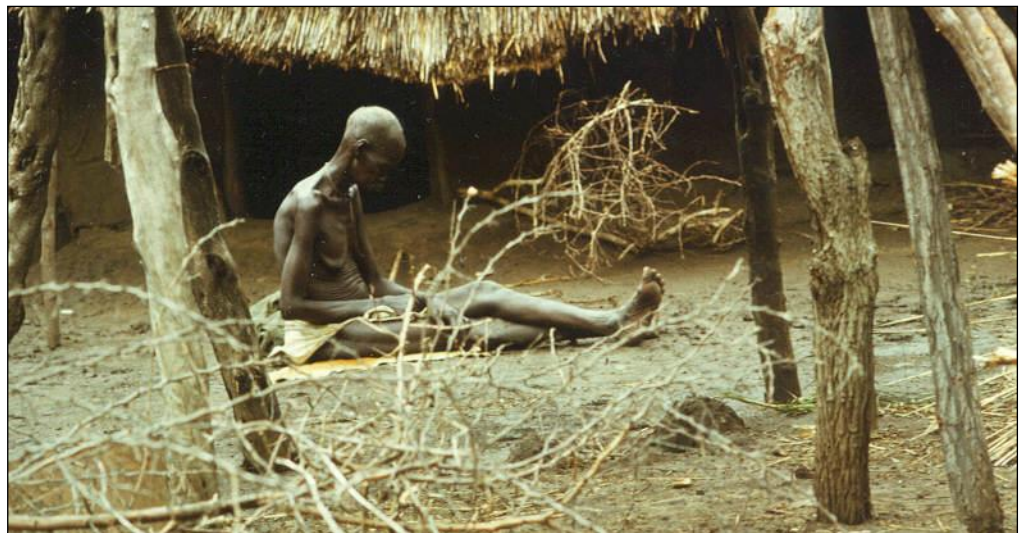
In the mind of the people living in the different parts of the Southern Sudan, death is not an end but the continuation of life, it is just a particularly significant stage in the existence of a person: through *procreation*, a person continues to live amongst the humans long after his own death and can even exercise his influence on the welfare of the people living above the earth. There exists a kind of intimacy between the living and the dead which allows the people to keep their courage when struggling for their daily survival. There is a very suggestive *Anyuak* term for 'people': they are sometimes called '*with-ngom*' which literally means the 'heads of the earth', thus projecting the idea of a humanity which is deeply rooted in the earth, sticking up their heads to the generally hostile sphere of the above, the sky... Names and songs of people

constantly remind of and refer to ancestors, to such an extent that one could believe that *people can understand their own identity only in relation to them*, as a kind of physical prolongation of those who have already completed their existence on earth: "*Whenever life is difficult*", an interlocutor from the *Ndogo-Sere* said, "*people go to the grave and pray to the ancestors, and pray for their support..*". If the solidarity between living and dead people gives people much moral strength and spiritual support, the sphere of death is yet also a frightening sphere of existence: because it is a *living* spiritual matter which is completely out of human control, one has to be very careful not to disturb it. *Angry ancestors* can become a real nuisance for their living relatives and bring them all kind of diseases, and even death. *Curses* are another source of evil found in the sphere of death: though a curse is sent while a person is still alive, it continues to work out of the person's grave and will reach its aim only after the person has died. Ancestors and curses being the two main causes to the suffering of the people, one can understand the importance of the relationship between the living and the dead: in case of any major problems, one should visit the grave, ask for forgiveness for the mistake and make some symbolic offering or even sacrifice. Respect of dead people is a question of life!

## The matter of death

Death *scares*, upsets the mind of people and interrupts the normal course of human life in a very dramatic manner. *Death is not natural*, - so there must always be a plausible reason for it! The idea that God (called *Jwok, Jok* etc. by the Nilotes) could be behind it has of course come to the mind of many people, but if that should be the case, the notion of God itself gets a negative connotation: if it should be so, it is better to be careful and to keep away from God in general but more particularly from all places where the presence of God is felt more strongly than elsewhere, as for example in hot springs, deep lakes, high trees etc. The relationship between God and the humans is a stressed, not a friendly one, and because the humans obviously possess less power than the spirits<sup>1</sup> one has to appease ‘hungry’ spirits by sharing things with them<sup>2</sup> or by making them sacrifices.

As ‘God’ and all other spiritual matters are rather vague, secrete and little known entities, people search the reasons for death in spheres which are more familiar to them, that is in the spheres where the human beings live and work, both in a



physical as well as in a spiritual way, while on earth or in thegrave, if living or dead... Alone or with the help of some diviners, people normally succeed in discovering the source of death and find it in a curse or in acts of witchcraft. Because death is a process which cannot get reversed, sacrifices and prayers will not be able to bring the dead person back to life, but at least they can appease offended spirits (such as the ones of ancestors) and make people hopeful that “*such a thing will never happen again*”. After the end of the mourning-period, all *Moruba* relatives (from father’s and from mother’s side) “*will sit together in order to discuss the problem which may have caused the death. If someone is found responsible, he/she will be rebuked and fined*”; but if people cannot identify any plausible cause, sacrifices or cursing will be the only means to restore ‘justice’.

Death is an impure, a dirty and – more importantly – an *infectious* matter. Nobody wants to come near to it. People who have been in direct touch with a dead body have become ‘impure’ for a while as well; they should not get close to children. Someone walking in the footsteps of a person

---

<sup>1</sup> They are almost all evil spirits; and if there are a few “good” ones amongst them, they are good because they are not so active, do not harm, are just there....

<sup>2</sup> There is the wide-spread tradition of throwing some part of the food or some quantity of beer to the ground as a symbolic gift to ‘God’.

who died either because of a disease or because of hunger will be infected and die of starvation as well (*Anyuak*). Death is a matter to avoid, in language and behaviour.<sup>3</sup>

Somebody who has killed another person has obviously put himself in a delicate situation: even if the killing occurred accidentally (for example during hunting, as it occasionally happens) and even if the killing was intentionally and done for a ‘good’ reason (in fighting), the man who is responsible for that death has stained himself with blood and may be a threat to the purity of other living matters: before continuing a normal life, such a person therefore needs to get purified.

## Different death-cases

### *Death of children*

The death of young children is a particularly cruel event.

When children belonging to the *Atuot*-community pass away at a tender age (after birth), *“they are buried by the women alone, but afterwards they will be given a name; this is to allow to marry them at a later time. Children who die after having passed the age of one will be buried in presence of the father and other relatives; they will later on marry a wife or a man in the name of the child.”*

### *Early death*

“In case of a young person”, one of our *Acholi* informants relates, *“there are a lot of cries and mourning, people saying that “he has missed his responsibilities”*”.



*“Any death of people in their mid-twenties and above is considered – by the *Atuot* – to be a tragic event, especially if the person was not killed in an official war, that is in a fight for the protection of the clan’s grazing or water points... In such a case the family will mourn with a lot of pride and songs will be created praising a man who had given his life to protect the clan.”*

---

<sup>3</sup> The matter of death can harm living persons or livestock, especially their fertility: people who have been in contact with death should therefore respect certain rules of behaviour. See here the paragraph on “Protection of livestock and crops” in the chapter on “Sickness and Disease”.

### *Shameful death*

For the *Atuot*, “The worst which can happen to a family is if a man has died because of starvation or anything else which could be related to food; or if he got killed while stealing or while committing any other shameful offence. Such shameful death is resented bitterly as rival clans will make songs in which the own clan gets scorned. The family of such a man will fall in disgrace inside the own clan; it can even compel a family to move to a place where they are not known” .

### *Accidental death*

For the people in the Sudan, the very notion of ‘accident’ does not exist. There must be a reason why such an ‘accident’ could happen, and this reason is always found in the spiritual, not the physical sphere: “It is believed that one of the spirits is angry or that a member of the dead person’s family has misbehaved, thereby causing the anger of some spirit.”, an *Atuot* explains: “sudden death, the disappearance of livestock, snake-bites, scorpion-stings or accidents made by children when falling from trees or doing any work at home fall into this same category of ‘accidents’”. “Such death-cases are particularly painful and sad happenings,” our *Atuot* friend relates, “and it will take usually a long time before people forget it. The mourning will be combined with prayers by the surviving family members for forgiveness.. Spiritual experts are hired to guard the family for a period of two months; these people, much feared by the spirits, would stay in the house of the dead person for two months, actually until the place is considered to be safe from any further spiritual attack.”

### *People who got killed*

If a person has been killed accidentally (such as during hunting), the family will mourn and normal procedures for getting the blood-price will be undertaken. Such death may not affect the good relationship between the family of the person responsible for the killing and the family of the killed man.

When any *Lokoya* is killed in the battlefield or by a wild animal, “he or she is buried outside the homestead. This is to prevent the blood of a ‘hot’ evil spirit from haunting the family members or bringing disease which may destroy them. The burial rites are similar to the ones of those who die a natural death. The grave-side is cleared of grass. The horoscope is fixed and is made out of ebony which cannot be easily destroyed by white ants.”<sup>4</sup>

In case an *Atuot* man has been murdered by an unknown person, we are told that “the dead man’s grave is guarded for fifteen days in order to prevent the killer from touching the soil of the grave. It is believed that, in this way, the spirit will follow the murderer up to his family and that all his doings will be cursed. If he is taken to court, he will not be in a position to deny and would not dare to take the oath... However, if the murderer is clever and manages to touch the soil of the grave before the period of fifteen days has elapsed, possibly telling the dead person that it had not been his intention to kill him, he is purified and nothing can happen to him... This would mean that the dead person himself has forgiven him and no one from the outside will be able to curse him. He would now be able to deny his action in court, and he could take the oath without having any fear.” And our informant concludes by stating that “eventually, such situations have

---

<sup>4</sup> Lomodong Lako, “The Lokoya of Sudan”, p.132

*always resulted in revenge by distant relatives who do not need to obey to the rules of the dead person's family. So people may request some distant cousin to do the revenge-killing."*

#### *Purification procedures after having killed somebody*

Killing spoils the purity of a person. To continue his life without fears and without causing harm to others, such a person will have to purify himself. *"A Didinga man who has killed a human Being",* for example, *"cannot touch a cow or a breast-feeding woman – because there is the fear that otherwise both would lose their milk"*. Such a person is a danger to the welfare of the family and in obvious need of purification. If a *Nuer* has killed a person (*"bier"* = killing a person), *"one has to report it to 'the father of the soil': he will then cut a piece of the person's thumb and a bull will be slaughtered; if the killing did not happen during fighting with foreign people, the person is kept in custody for his own safety<sup>5</sup>."*

Purification is also required from men who have been engaged in a war and may have killed some people; the following example is told by one of our *Atuot* interlocutors: *"Every person who has participated in an official tribal fight will have to admit the number of people he has killed and speak out their names... The blood-price will be paid collectively, clan by clan. In addition, relatives from both sides will later on perform other ceremonies during which they will purify themselves. In such a kind of war, there are no revenges after it was officially declared to have ended. If there was any attempt to seek revenge, this would be considered to be a crime and it would not lead to another war; such a person gets simply punished, will have no clan-support and be forced to pay the blood-price all by himself. People who - during this reconciliation-period - deny to have killed someone in the fight will be cursed and will have to face a lot of problems afterwards. In case they should confess after the period of truth has passed, they will have to pay the blood-price by themselves without getting any support from their clan."*

Note that these rules apply also to the *Dinka* and the *Nuer*, though only in the context of official tribal wars but not to the present civil war (because it was not initiated by tribal leaders). It seems that these rules have changed during the introduction of firearms: nobody wants to confess the number of people they killed, as it might be more than the clan can ever pay for.<sup>6</sup>

#### *Death of old persons*

Old people who are sick or unable to do the most elementary things during a long period of time eventually become an unbearable burden for the family which has to take care of them. If there is no hope for improvement of their health, people may take the decision to help that person to die: *"he doesn't know what he wants"*, the *Anyuak* would say, *"he doesn't want to live and he doesn't want to die"*... ...so they might suffocate the person by night... As most people die because of a sickness, such cases are surely rather exceptional. The *Acholi* explain that *"In case an old person*

---

<sup>5</sup> Because of fear of revenge, a murderer will not spend the night inside the hut; only women and boys who are not yet initiated are not a part of the revenge. The killing of a person has of course legal consequences. Amongst the *Nuer*, that person would have to pay a 'blood-price' consisting out of 120 heads of cattle as a compensation (100 cows go to the families of the killed person and 20 kept by the court) and he may have to spend five years in prison.

<sup>6</sup> In order to protect themselves from the spirits of the people they are going to kill during the war, some *Dinka* soldiers have apparently adopted the habit of urinating on the barrel of their guns... Others use to smear mud on their guns, thereby signalling that "they did not mean it"...

dies, there will be no mourning, no cries: people just dance and sing happily, saying that “he/she has been called”.

With the *Atuot*, old and ‘deadly tired’ people can ask themselves to be helped to die: “When old *Atuot* people reach the time when they can not swallow anymore without, however, being sick, they can request ‘*atheap*’<sup>7</sup>: in this ceremony, the old person is placed under the pole of the drum and people are dancing wildly around the drum, producing so much dust that the old person will slowly suffocate. After the person has died in this way, the dancing stops and people start to prepare for the slaughtering of the animals which were brought by the relatives; the meat will be eaten on the fourth day. The *atheap*-kind of death is considered to be very good by the relatives of the person who died<sup>8</sup>. The family does not mourn because the person is considered to have completed his time on earth and reached up to the end of human existence. Such cases are exceptional, many elderly people dying because of other diseases long before they could reach the stage of *atheap*.”



## Mourning the dead

### *Expressing one's sorrow*

A death-case is always a dramatic happening which causes deep grief to those who were near to the deceased person.

The news of a death-case is spread all over the village by the ear-piercing cries of women. While men keep silent and try to hide their tears, the women's sorrow and pain is expressed in a very gripping, dramatic manner which is physically shaking up everybody's mind. The crying can go on for days, slowly reducing in intensity: a mother having lost her child may sit and cry for a very long time, singing mourning-songs in which she enumerates the child's ancestors during all endless nights.

The mere physical expression of sadness after a death-case is shown by different cultures in different ways, but one can notice a number of similarities: practically all people (widow or widower and close relatives) express their grief by *shaving the head* and by respecting certain roles concerning their ‘clothes’. An *Azande* or a man or woman from the *Ndogo-Sere*, for example, would “*shave his head and dress in white*”, putting on banana-leaves, but a son of the *Ndogo-Sere* would dress in *black*.

The *Didinga* and the *Murle* shave their head after a death-case, the husband three days, the wife four days after the death has occurred. In case of the *Murle*, it is the mother of the dead husband who will shave the head of the late husband's wife.

---

<sup>7</sup> “*Atheap*” means ‘to make dust’.

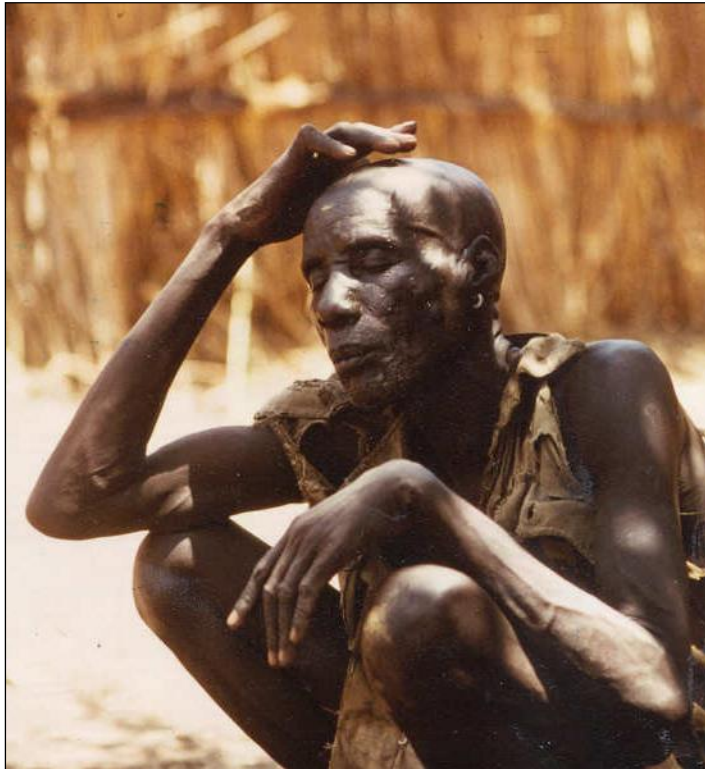
<sup>8</sup> The *Dinka* share with the *Atuot* a saying referring to the custom of ‘*atheap*’: when a old man want to encourage his young children, he would say “*jok e thuop etok yen ba nook*”, meaning that “only the disease of aging will kill you, nothing else!”.

While the *Ndogo-Sere* shave “*from time to time*”, the *Moruba* shave on the burial day only; when a man dies, the funeral rites and prayers go on for three days, but when a woman dies, the funeral rites and prayers end after four days only.

The *Didinga* widows put *ropes* around their neck as a sign of mourning.

The *Suri* put mud on their body; the *Anyuak*, the *Dinka*, the *Azande* and the *Balanda* all shave their head and remove beads and ornaments; this custom includes close relatives. An *Anyuak* woman is not wearing sandals during thirty days after her husband’s death while a *Balanda* widow will stay four days in the home.

After the death of a *Nuer* man, “*all his belongings are tied up and hung up in the hut. In case of the husband’s death, his wives will strip off all beads and put a rope around their neck for one month, that is until the funeral finishes. Afterwards, they will be given to the husband’s relatives*”.



The *Toposa* “*throw, within one hour, all the properties of the dead person into the middle of the hut and distribute them amongst the relatives: nothing should remind of the dead person’s physical existence. The widows’ dresses are to be changed, they wear an apron without hair as do the girls, they strip off all their beads and shave their head (only children and closest relatives, including sisters and brothers and half-sisters and half-brothers do it)*”.

Particularly interesting is the way the *Baka* are expressing their grief: “*There are three days festivities for a man’s death, four for a woman’s death. There will be dancing and singing. But people will not be happy, they just sing to remind the nearest relatives of the dead person that life goes on, want to bring relief to their troubled minds... This is*

*done even with children. Nowadays youth-groups of the church come to sing for three or four days, then they go back again. However, if it is the 1<sup>st</sup> born who died, there will be neither dancing nor singing: otherwise the mother will not give birth again.*”

Amongst all these different ways of expressing the situation of death which affects the behaviour of the survivors, the mourning of a husband in *Jiye* culture is of a specific sexual significance: “*A Jiye woman*”, we are told, “*removes after her husband’s death all her beads, shaves her head and washes all belongings; she will remain with only one skin, the one covering the back.*”

### *Mourning-period*

The *Suri*, the *Acholi*, the *Päri*, the *Baka*, the *Ingessana* or the *Moruba* all mourn during three days for a woman and four days for a man. The *Nuer* mourn one month and the *Murle* “*between one month to one year (the latter in case of an elderly person like the father, elder son and the wife); the Toposa mourn “between one year and one year and a half”, a Didinga-husband “for*



*about one year (but “nobody from the in-laws’ side would mourn”) and this because nobody should think that you are happy when your wife has passed away”, but the Ndogo-Sere mourn for “about two years”.*

During this period, special rules have to be observed, most of them concerning appearance and sexual life: the *Anyuak* would be ‘naked’, that is without any beads, arm-rings and other ornaments, the *Nuer* would likewise not oil their bodies and would not have sexual intercourse; the husband stays for one month - until the funeral is finished - before he is allowed to marry another wife.. The *Moruba* refrain from having sexual intercourse for up to one year and the same is the case with the *Didinga* who do it in order “*to express the respect and love they feel for the dead person*”. A *Murle* widow “*will not sleep with another man during two months (or more)*”, the dead wife of a *Suri* man “*has to wait five months until she can sleep with a man*”, and an *Anyuak* woman should not sleep with anyone during thirty days (if she does, she will get spindle-bone-disease). The *Dinka* widows “*should not have intercourse for one year*” and a *Toposa* man, after a death-case, “*becomes like a woman and is wailing for one year and a half, a period during which he will have no sex at all*”; our informant to add that “*this rule is very much respected*”. In case of a husband’s death and “*during the whole wailing-period of one and a half year, the Toposa women are not even cooking, the food is brought to them from outside*”.

The end of the mourning-period is often marked by special ceremonies in which sacrifices are made (with the *Murle*, for example, “*a bull gets killed by a particular person who is always dealing with death-cases*”) and which are “*to release the people from mourning*”. For very small children, the mourning period is generally short (five to fifteen days with the *Murle*) and the ceremonies do not take place.

People killed in official tribal wars are not mourned for long. “*Mourning such death is different*”, our *Atuot* informant tells, explaining that “*the Dinka and the Atuot do not carry the bodies of their dead men from the battle back home, they simple take their spear and beads which will have to be given to the dead man’s family as a confirmation of his death. Women are not allowed to cry aloud as they would normally do with other kind of death. The real morning is done when the war is over, when the fighting ground is visited and when people stay there for a month in order to carry out reconciliation-talks with the other side.*”

## Burial

Not all people are buried. With the *Murle*, only the family-members of the ‘red chiefs’ are buried while the commoners are simply taken to the forest. Old *Anyuak* men may wish not to be buried but want to rest in a tree. Persons of Nilotic origin who were killed during fighting are usually not buried but left at the place where they got killed; only their spears are taken home. The mourning for such men is different from the one performed when the dead body is near.

The *burial site* varies according to the people’s customs and beliefs, and also according to the person who died. *Anyuak* men who are much respected will be buried inside their hut. Likewise, *Nuer* and *Dinka* bury important people in the cattle-byre (‘*luak*’) spiritual leaders or chiefs in a public gathering place as for example the dancing-ground or the main cattle-camp: the spear-master from the *Luac Dinka* section called *Aguer Adale* had been buried in one of the region’s largest cattle camp.

While an *Ayuak* mother’s child is to be buried near to her hut, the *Atuot* bury children behind the house but within the compound. *Anyuak* babies are not buried deep out of fear that the mother’s

fertility would otherwise be buried as well. Most people want their beloved ones to be buried inside the compound, but *Dinka* and, *Nuer* bury their dead people in front of their homestead.. Burial rites vary from culture to culture, too much indeed to be differentiated here. The *Moruba* bury the dead body inside the compound, but “*the first death which occurs in a family is taken by the in-laws who will bury it. A field is prepared for the woman and handed over to her*”.



There are no coffins; the *Atuot* wrap the dead person in the skin of cow which had served the dead as a sleeping-mat; the closest relatives are to throw the first soil on the dead body.

The burial of a person usually takes place within a few hours. There are rules who is to carry the dead body out of the hut, who is to dig the grave etc. With the *Murle*, “*the oldest son is to fetch mud from the middle of the homestead and to put it on the dead father’s head; the senior wife is then to carry the head of her dead husband while the first son is carrying then dead man’s legs*”.

When digging the grave, if it happens in *Murle* culture, the *maternal uncle* is to initiate the work. The grave of a *Lokoya* is dug “*about seven feet deep and the body is laid inside lying on its left and the head facing the mountain of the village, which is the people’s genesis. Then one of the brothers smears oil on the mouth, chest and legs before the family is asked to take the last glance at the corpse of their departed member. Next they are asked to hrow small amounts of soil into*

*the rave as a sign of farewell, so that they will not forget the deceased. The Monyomiji, three on each side of the grave, push soil three or four times according to the sex of the deceased... ”<sup>9</sup>.*

Like most all other ethnic communities, the *Suri* and the *Azande* put a dead body to rest in a sleeping position; a *Zande* informant explains: “A man is buried with his head turned towards the east: this because he is looking for the morning, wants to get up for doing the work.. But a woman is buried with her head turned westwards: to the evening, when she is fetching water, making dinner, preparing for the night...”. The *Atuot*, when burying elderly and very young persons, turn the dead person’s legs towards their face and fold their arms. Strong people are buried with their face upwards and their legs and arms kept straight.

The *Sere* erect at the burial site “a racket (kind of table) and people put there the food which had been liked by the dead person. Whenever life is difficult, the *Sere*-people go to the grave and pray to the ancestors, and pray for their support.”

The grave is levelled at different times: already after three or four days in *Acholi* culture but only after one or two years in *Anyuak*- or *Balanda*-country.

The *Acholi* belong to those groups of people who investigate about possible reasons for the death-case: the elders of the family will meet and discuss; if they discover the cause, there will be a blessing-ceremony and the sacrifice of a goat.

## “Inheritance” of widows <sup>10</sup>



*“Wek abi hen col anek dol ke h kec wamath thioK”*  
“You will make me laugh before I bury my brother”

### DINKA PROVERB

“One time there was a man who died and his family including his young beautiful wife and a brother were profoundly aggrieved and mourning. People all came around from distant (places) to give the condolences. The brother particularly was overwhelmed by the loss so much that we was profusely crying and throwing himself down incessantly.

One of the visitors was observing that the wife left behind by the man was young and beautiful, and (as by tradition she was to be inherited by the brother), he reminded the brother not to cry too much for his brother had left him a beautiful woman. The brother then realised that and remarked “You will make me laugh before I bury my brother”. <sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Lomodong Lako, “The Lokoya of Sudan”, p.130f.

<sup>10</sup> The term ‘inheritance’ is slightly misleading because a man’s widows are actually not inherited but merely ‘taken up’ and cared for by other men (such as the husband’s younger brother, his sons, cousins etc.) but are still considered to be married to the dead husband.

<sup>11</sup> From: Ahoy Ngong: “Dinka Wisdom in Proverbs, Idioms and Metaphors”: proverb Nr.W.9.137 p.45 (his explanation: “Allow me first to bury my brother before I am reminded of good things bequeathed to me by brother”).

The legacy of a dead man consists out of purely material values on one side and his wives on the other side; it is the destiny of wives after a husband's death which is of significance when trying to gain some knowledge about customs related to sexuality. The following information has been provided by members of the different communities:

*Nuer:*

*"No son can 'inherit' his own mother nor any other of the father's wives who are being considered to be to him like a mother.*

*The widows go to the late husband's uncles. The age of a widow plays a role when deciding who will stay with whom. The women can choose the sons of their late husband; the women's uncles may give their advice. This is only done after one month has elapsed since the death of the husband. The Chuol-ceremony is to be performed (people come together again and settle the heritage: a bull is slaughtered at this occasion). The brother or the sister of the late father comes to settle the heritage: the youngest wife of the late husband is asked first to make her choice: all her children will then be named after her late husband. She can refuse and go outside, but still: her future children will be born in the late husband's name and carry his name."*

*Balanda:*

*"A brother of the late husband will build new homes for the widows. During three years, the widows stay alone, but then the husband's relatives are coming to ask the husband's brother if he wants to marry the woman; he will reply positively. She will stay three days in her home before moving to her husband's brother. But only one woman will stay with the husband's brother. After the death of that husband's brother, that woman cannot marry anymore but she can stay with any other man. All the other women can go wherever they like or they can stay with a son."*

*Lokoya:*

*"All widows and widowers will have to wait for one or two years before re-marrying. If there is someone in the family who decides to visit the late man's wife to acquaint himself with the children, the family can allow him to do so without any hesitation. After one or two years the relatives of the deceased gather at the house for the last funeral rite.... They also have to shave their hair a second time... The last shaving is to prevent the dead man's spirits and dreams from coming to disturb them. On this occasion, the wife of the departed is and whether she is willing to be inherited. If the answer is positive, she has to choose amongst the brothers of the late husband... The widow is seated before the relatives of the late husband. The names of her brothers-in-law are presented to her one at the time till she accepts one of them. If she does not want any, the names of the closest cousins are also called for her to choose from... But if the widow does not want to be inherited by any one of the members of the clans she is left alone to stay with the children."<sup>12</sup>*

*Didinga:*

*"The late husband's wives are considered by all the father's sons as "mothers" and are therefore not taken up by them. It is the late husband's brother or cousin (from either mother's or father's side) who can take one of the women; the others go to where the relative-community decides. The women express their wish and can decide with whom to stay. All the children*

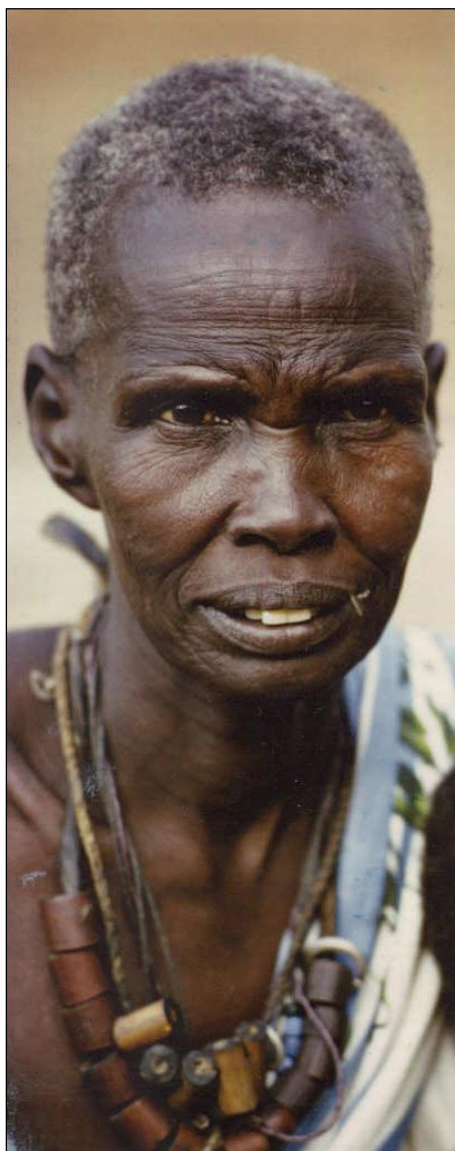
---

<sup>12</sup> Lomodong Lako, "The Lokoya of Sudan", p.133f.

*produced by these widows are considered to be the ones of the late husband and therefore carry his name”.*

*Anyuak:*

*“Before dying, the late husband will have told one of his age-group about his last will (‘lum-dhok’, ‘word of the mouth’), especially in what concerns his wives: in a griping ceremony, that last will is made public, the person carrying the message playing the role of the dead husband and talking in his place: “I am dead now....” The late husband’s wishes are much respected.”*



*Lango:*

*“The women are to make their choice to whom they want to go. After they have expressed their wishes, the clan comes together and declares what has been decided, and a goat is killed for blessing. Normally, a man’s widows go to his brothers or relatives”.*

*Murle:*

*“Of course, it is the most senior person in the family who decides, but all brothers could meet in order to discuss the future of the widows, and the widows can respond negatively or positively to the decision. The relatives may then consent to their wishes or force her to accept; in some cases, they can divorce themselves because they may encounter bad behaviour from the husband’s relatives. The men inheriting a widow are brothers or stepbrothers of the late husband. But the children of the woman will still ‘belong’ to the late husband”.*

*Acholi:*

*“The brothers “take” them, the elder brother is deciding where the women should go. The women can refuse, and in that case the brothers have to discuss. Normally, she will go to a brother who is already married. But she cannot go home to her own family, unless the bride-wealth would be paid back and this without any deduction for the children she might have given to the family of her late husband. This custom is shared by the Madi.”*

*Jiye:*

*“The oldest son is dividing the women amongst his brothers.”*

*Lopit:*

*“They wives are given to the nearest relatives. Both the husband’s brothers and the wives can make their choice.”*

*Avukaya :*

*“A widow is not to go home to her place nor anywhere else; she remains in the late husband’s place, together with all his brothers (she stays with one of them).”*

*Päri:*

*“The widows will be inherited by the husband’s brothers, the elders of the clan deciding.”*

*Moruba:*

*“The widows will stay in the house for one year, until the time when the mourning-period is over, when final prayers and dancing are taking place.”*

*After that period, the women are free to stay with the husband’s relatives, to go back to their parent’s home or anywhere they want.”*

*Ndogo-Sere:*

*“The women stay in their home until the funeral has taken place. Then, the women are asked about their wishes, are asked if they want to return to their parent’s home (her brothers’ places etc.) or if they want to stay with one of the husband’s relatives. Their choice depends on the previous relationship between the women and her in-laws. Some young brother to the husband may wish to take responsibility for the children (The children of the woman will belong to the husband’s brother).”*

*Ingessana:*

*“The wife of a dead husband is to be inherited by his brother, after a ceremony has been conducted. The choice of the man is to be made by the relatives of the late husband, especially the elders”.*

*Jur-Bel:*

*“The wives of a late husband will not go anywhere else. They stay in the compound of the late husband. The woman will refuse (to go anywhere else) because she had been given by her parents to that particular husband, and the relatives of the deceased husband will say the same. So she will stay with the children, if she has.”*

*Azande:*

*“The woman has the choice to remain with the husband’s brother or to go back to her home. The widows can marry again. Nowadays, she is free to sleep wherever she wants. Her small children will stay with her late husband’s relatives, but if nobody is there she will take them with her. Grown-up children may stay alone and marry.”*

*Toposa:*

*“The main thing is the perpetuation of the line, and that depends on males only. A married woman does not only belong to the husband but to the entire family. A widow is therefore taken care of by a relative (but not to one of the late father’s sons), but she can even go outside to get children there. But all her children will be born in the name of the dead husband. (It is only if the late husband has not yet paid the bride-wealth that she could marry another man).”*

*Dinka:*

*“The wives of a man will be given to his sons according to the late father’s last will; he may even give his wives to his brother’s sons. The women do often refuse. They are free to go anywhere, but have to leave the children behind. They cannot marry again.*

*A Dinka man can take over the wives of his mother’s brother after his death.”*