

## CONFLICT AND POWER IN THE *MONYOMIJI* SYSTEMS OF SOUTH SUDAN

Complementary opposition as a morphogenetic principle of age organization<sup>1</sup>

by Simon Simonse

In the debate on the structure of East African age systems the *monyomiji* systems of south-eastern Sudan have so far played no role. This is regrettable not only because they present some unique features worthy of study in themselves, but also because they are an important link in the chain of East African age systems which make them valuable for regional comparison.

Early observers completely overlooked the age system. Neither Baker nor Emin Pasha, both of whom spent time among the Lotuho and Lokoya, made any mention of the *monyomiji*. The first district-administrators of the area after it was taken over by the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Lord Raglan and J. H. Driberg, make no mention of it. The Seligmans, who spent part of the winter of 1920-21 among the Lotuho, only make brief mention of the *monyomiji*: three pages on age-grades, age-sets and generational succession (1926:14-17) compared with ten on kingship.

In 1937, a longer account, written by two administrators of Torit District appears as part of Nalder's ethnographic survey (1937:91-98 and in 1940/42 *Anthropos* published a general ethnographic article by the missionary Molinaro (1940/41:173-175). Other ethnographic material left by the missionaries Pazzaglia and Muratori were later brought together in two doctoral theses written by students of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milano (Paolucci, 1970; Novelli, 1970).

The Lotuho were included in the list of locations to which the first batch of trained British post-war anthropologists was sent<sup>2</sup>, but it so happened that Ms. Elinor Mac-Hatton, after spending two years in Ilyeu, Eastern Lotuho, during 1951-1952 and 1953-1954, did not pursue her career as an anthropologist after she married the last British District Commissioner of Torit.

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<sup>2</sup> Other members of this 'generation-set' of anthropologists who worked in societies with age-systems are Godfrey Lienhardt (Dinka and Anuak), Jean Buxton (Mandari), Philip Gulliver (Turkana). We can also include administrators turned anthropologists like P.P. Howell (Shilluk), and B.A. Lewis (Murle).

Only after the Addis Ababa did anthropologists appear again in the *monyomiji* area which had been one of the main battlefields of the Civil War: Andreas Grüb among the Plains Lotuho of the kingdom of Loronyo (1992), Eisei Kurimoto among the Pari (a dozen of articles in Japanese and English) and myself, based among the Lulubo, but studying kingship among the Lotuho and Lokoya (1992).

The limited interest must be attributable to the obsession of the early observers with kingship as an indication of evolutionary progress. Seligman himself was deeply involved in the debate on divine kingship after he had provided Frazer with the core empirical material of *The Golden Bough*, on Shilluk regicide. Grüb, in his monograph of the Lotuho criticizes the early ethnographers of the area like Seligman their Eurocentric focus on kingship: 'The observer sees what he is accustomed to see in Europe: individual dominance' (Grüb, 1992:128).

On the other hand, since travelers were usually the guests of kings they were ill-placed to make observations on the age organization. 1995 saw the publication of the first monograph written by a retired Lokoya *monyemiji* (sg. of *monyomiji*): '*Lokoya of Sudan, Culture and Ethnic Government*', Philip Lomodong Lako. Significantly, the book's cover shows a drawing of a *monyemiji* in full dancing gear.

The *monyomiji* age systems are, with some variations, practiced by all the Lotuho speaking peoples (Lokoya, Lopit, comprising the Ngaboli, Dorik, Ngotira and Lomiya), the Lokwaa, Imotong, Dongotono, Logir, Lorwama and Ketebo (all six together called 'Lango'), the Lotuho proper and the Horiok). The system has also been adopted by communities bordering on the Lotuho speakers: by the Pari and by many of the Acholi communities inside Sudan, both speakers of Lwo languages, the Madi-speaking Lulubo, and the Surma speaking Tenet, the Bari of Ngangala.

The Lotuho proper have the largest political units among the communities sharing the *monyomiji* age system. Since the middle of the nineteenth century the Lotuho are divided into three kingdoms: Loudo, the smallest and for a long time a separate unit, and two kingdoms which are successors to the historical kingdom of Imatari: Tirangore, comprising five villages under the dynasty of Hujang, and Loronyo with 14 villages under the Mayya dynasty. The current queen Ihure, who succeeded to the throne of Mayya after the death of her husband in 1959, has not been recognized by a number of sections in Loronyo itself; a dynastic rival has set himself up as a rainmaker/king. In the other societies practicing *monyomiji* rule, kingdoms vary from eight villages to a single, large, village.

The Lotuho live in large compact villages, often counting more than a thousand inhabitants, consisting of a number of sections (*amangatim*, sg, *amangat*). Each section has its

own political ritual infrastructure: drum-house, pole-shrine, dancing-ground, meeting-points for *monyomiji* and *aduri-horwong* (juniors aspiring to *monyomiji*-hood, etc... A number of villages are united under a king or rainmaker (*hobu*).

According to the typology proposed by Bernardi (1985:42) the Lotuho and related peoples qualify to rank among the societies where the age system is a 'primary model' of political organisation. Applying the more restrictive criteria proposed by Tornay (1988:285) who criticizes Bernardi for including societies where the role of the age system is subordinated to the central authority of the king or chief, as is the case with the Nyakyusa age-villages and the Zulu age-based regiments, the Lotuho still qualify as a 'primary model'.

In the Lotuho area the ruling *monyomiji*, the ruling generation, is not subordinate to the king. They are his principal interlocutors and, frequently, his opponents. Their opposition can lead to deposing or even to the killing the king<sup>3</sup>. The king and the *monyomiji* are engaged in a political game in which either can be loser or a winner.

In historical times when the Lotuho or Lokoya kings wanted to strengthen their position they did not rely on the *monyomiji*. They formed their own armies consisting of clients whose loyalty was bought by the gift of firearms. Kings and *monyomiji* often pursued opposed interests. At the turn of the century, a few years after a series of spectacular victories by his *Awusu*, the royal army, king Lomoro of Tirangore was expelled from his village by the *monyomiji* accused of causing drought. Had the *monyomiji* identified with their king's victories this should, at least in his own village, have given him enough credit to politically survive a season of drought.

### **The *monyomiji*: age-grade, generation-set and alternation**

The term *monyomiji* (sg. *monyemiji*), the 'fathers' or 'owners' (*mony*) of the village (*amiji*), may refer to different categories of men depending on the context in which it is used. In the first place it refers to the age-grade of men who have completed the initiation at the level of the village-section (*amangat*). It follows the grade of *eito horwong* (pl. *aduri horwong*) in which a boy stays for about five years. To become an *eito horwong* a boy simply digs a hole in front of his mother's house. As an *eito-horwong* he is bullied to perform all sorts of menial duties to the *monyomiji* of his section.

Initiation at the sectional level is presided over by the *amonye mangat*, the Master of the Section, while the initiative for it is taken by the father of the initiand. It is a straightforward purificatory sacrifice, performed at around the age of 18, either individually or for a small group

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<sup>3</sup> For studies of cases of regicide: Kurimoto, 1986 and Simonse, 1992:345-373.

of coevals from the same *amangat*. The Master of the Section applies the rumen of the white he-goat, provided by the father, to the initiate's body to purify him before he is introduced to the section's drum house.<sup>4</sup>

At the end of the ritual year, all members of the section who have been initiated in the course of the year are given a group name. The occasion is called *najingana* ('entering') and qualifies a man to marry and to take part in war. During his first years as an initiate he should only play a supportive role in war, taking food-supplies to the warring *monyomiji* (Novelli, 1973:600) and being responsible for the protection of the herds.

Every four or five years these newly admitted *monyomiji* are united in one village age-set in a ceremony presided over by the Master of the Village (*amonyemiji*). When four successive age-sets have been formed it is time to unite and push for the retirement of the age-sets making up the generation in power. The word *monyomiji* is also used to refer to the four age-sets who rule the village and the country for a period of 22 years. After this they hand over power to a new generation. English-speaking informants normally refer to them as 'the ruling generation'.

About a year after the changeover in the village, power is handed over at the level of the kingdom, a ceremony presided over by the king. This royal *nefira*, which is supposed to take place every 22 years, is considered by the Lotuho the most spectacular celebration they have.

At the level of the kingdom, those who have undergone only the sectional and the village ceremonies are called *olojingat* ('those of the initiation') as distinct from those who have been handed over power in the *nefira*. For the *nefirat* the *olojingat* are still apprentices.

As noted above, the meaning of the term *monyomiji* depends on the context: the same man who claims services from the *aduri horwong* of his section as a *monyemiji*, may be ridiculed by *monyomiji* at the level of the kingdom are, as a mere initiate (*olojingat*).

At the *nefira* -the ceremony at which the fire is kindled from which all individual hearths will be lighted- the age-sets of the various villages are united into a single 'generation' with a name given by the king. They will be responsible for the well-being of the country for a period of 22 years. Since admission to this group does not depend on age or achievement the term 'generation' is appropriate, although the idea that successive political generations should coincide with generations in the family and on the level of descent, is absent.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Unlike the people of the Maa group, their nearest linguistic relatives, the Lotuho do not practice any form of circumcision. In this respect they are closer to the Ateker systems, where sacrifice and a collective transition from son-status to father status, and not circumcision, marks the transition to full manhood.

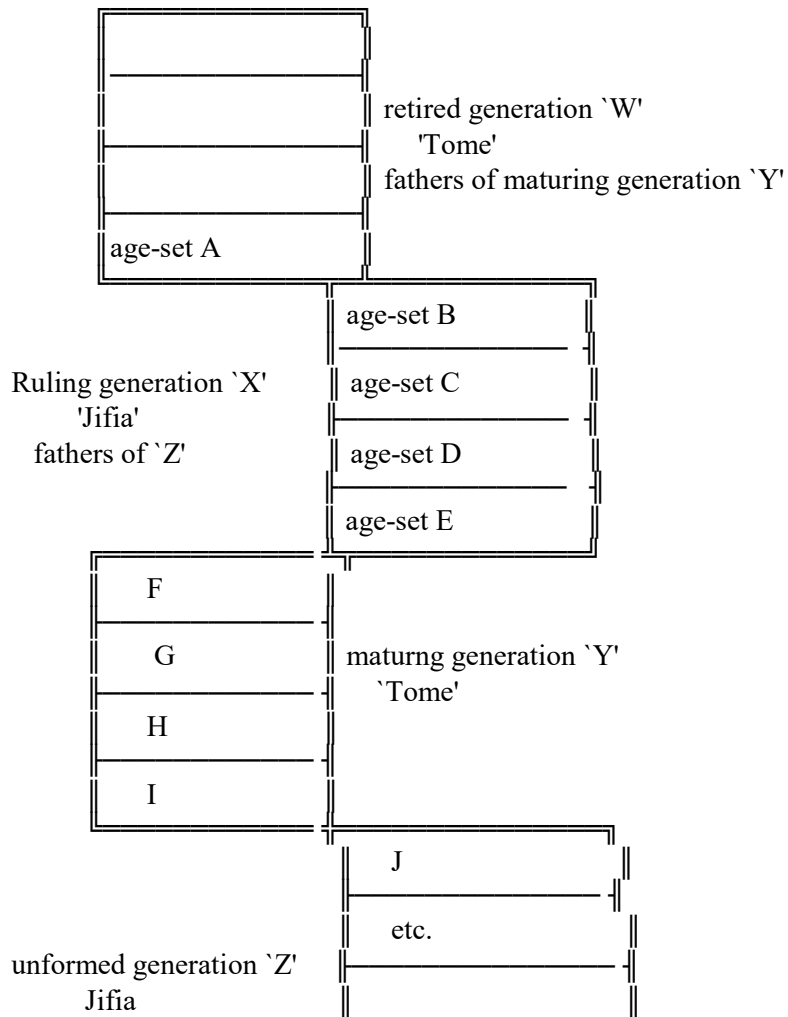
<sup>5</sup> A significant number of the members of alternating generation-sets do have fathers belonging to the same ascending generation, and sons belonging to the same descending generation. With an interval of 22 years and considering the relatively low rate of polygyny and the young age at marriage, it is likely that a majority of the members of generation C, classified as *Tome*, will be children of A, also *Tome*, while most of their children will be in E. I leave it to others to make this calculation.

Figure 1: *Age-set formation and generational succession among the Lotuho over 25 years' span: from left to right: progression of named age-sets through successive grades; from top to bottom: composition of male population over named age-sets and generations at intervals of five years; age-sets belonging to monyomiji are shaded*

Name of Age-set	Year 4 of <i>nefira</i>	Year 9 of <i>nefira</i>	Year 14 of <i>nefira</i>	Year 19 of <i>nefira</i>	Year 2 of New <i>nefira</i>
A	The grade of retired elders ( <i>amarwak</i> ), especially its <i>efirat</i> age-set, play an advisory role to the new <i>monyomiji</i>	The aging, retired elders gradually withdraw from playing an active political role	Elders retired	Elders retired	Elders of a increasingly scarce and retired
B	<i>Ahou</i> (head) of <i>monyomiji</i> -set named X at <i>nefira</i> (B-E)	<i>De iure</i> and <i>de facto</i> leaders of the ruling generation	In charge as <i>ahou</i> of <i>monyomiji</i>	In charge as <i>ahou</i> of <i>monyomij</i>	Retired together with age-sets C, D and E
C	<i>Amurut</i> (neck) of <i>monyomiji</i> -set X	<i>Amurut</i> of <i>monyomiji</i>	<i>Amurut</i> of <i>monyomiji</i>	<i>Amurut</i> of <i>monyomiji</i>	Retired, together with B, D and E
D	<i>Monyomiji etahunih</i> or <i>asuhe</i> (breast) or <i>nehiji</i> (middle) of X	<i>Etahunih</i> of <i>monyomiji</i>	<i>Etahunih</i> of <i>monyomiji</i>	<i>Etahunih</i> of <i>monyomiji</i>	Retired, together with B, C and E.
E	<i>Efirat</i> of X, will act as advisors to <i>ahou</i> F of Y <i>monyomii</i>	<i>Efirat</i> of <i>monyomiji</i>	<i>Efirat</i> of <i>monyomiji</i>	<i>Efirat</i> of <i>monyomiji</i>	Retired; advisors of age-set F of new <i>monyomiji</i> Y
F	<i>Aduri-horwon</i> of future Y	Most have passed <i>najingana</i> , and are in age-grade of <i>monyomiji</i>	<i>Olojingat</i> ( <i>monyomiji</i> of the initiation, but not of <i>nefira</i> )	<i>Olojingat</i>	Two years ago F became <i>monyomiji ahou</i> of Y, after waiting for 15 years
G	Not yet formed	<i>Aduri-horwon</i> of future Y	Most have passed <i>najingana</i> and are now in the age-grade of <i>monyomiji</i>	<i>Olojingat</i>	<i>Monyomiji amurut</i> seniors of G waited for more than 10 years to take over
H	Not yet formed	not yet formed	<i>aduri-horwon</i> of future Y	Recently undergone <i>najingana</i>	<i>Monyomiji asuhe</i> seniors of H waited for over 5 years as <i>olojingat</i>
I	Not yet formed	Not yet formed	Not yet formed	<i>Aduri-horwon</i>	<i>Monyomiji efirat</i> included in <i>monyomiji-set y</i> during <i>nefira</i>
J	not yet formed	not yet formed	not yet formed	not yet formed	<i>aduri-horwon</i> of future Z

It should be clear, however, that recruitment to the *monyomiji* is solely on the basis of membership of the previously formed village age-sets.

Figure 2: *Succession of the alternating Lotuho generations and their age-sets of Figure 1. Represented is the situation during the time span when the age-sets B, C, D and E which form generation X are in charge as monyomiji.*



The idea of a filial link between alternating generations exists. Partly this is a corollary of the antagonism between adjacent generations. 'Fathers' are expected to help their 'sons' in their quest for power. In Lotuho this fundamental logic has resulted in the idea of two parallel 'set-lines', named after the generation whose succession to power caused the downfall of Imatari ('Tome') and who spread from the old centre to the various, still existing villages. The Jifia were their

successors.

*Asik* (pl. *nahasik*), 'house' is the term used both for age-set and for the alternating generation. Members of the same 'house' should assist one another. The novices who are bullied by the *monyomiji* can expect help from the retired *amarwak* (elders). The retired elders are expected to use their influence to facilitate the rise to power of their 'sons', and to protect them against excessive demands imposed by the ruling generation. According to information collected by Pazzaglia, each *asik* has its own songs. From the age of *eito-horwong* a boy knows which alternation he will belong to and will learn its songs. Most of the songs give expression to the rivalry between the alternations.

Next to this filial rhetoric applied to alternations the relationship between the *monyomiji* - 'fathers of the village'- and the rest of society, is expressed as an adult-child relationship. The retired elders are equated with mere children under the care of the *monyomiji*. While the mechanism behind the solidarity between alternating generation is compelling we should not make too much of the different idioms in which the awareness of the mechanism is expressed. When I asked the *monyomiji* of Loming which of their generations was Tome and which one Jifia, the question did not ring a bell.

To underline the organic unity of the generation, its age-sets are put in a hierarchical order. The oldest, the 'head' (*ahou*), and the second, the *amurut* (neck), play a leading role in village affairs. The last two, the breast (*asuhe*) or the 'middle' (*nehiji*), and the *efirat*, those who have joined in the year of the *nefira*<sup>6</sup>) are assigned responsibilities of a more executive character. Each age-set is entitled to particular portions of meat at sacrificial meals, partially reflecting the body parts after which they have been labelled.

We need therefore to distinguish between the *monyomiji* as an age-grade and the *monyomiji* as a generation or alternation succeeding to power. A man who enters the *monyomiji* age-grade at 20 may have to wait till he is 40 before he is allowed to speak in assemblies of the 'ruling generation' of his village. However, those who wait longest will have the most senior positions among the *monyomiji* when they finally take over power. A man who has waited for 20 years must be a senior *ahou*.

Among the Lulubo, Lokoya and Pari, who have cycles of relatively short duration (12-16 years), there is no explicit idea of a filial link between alternating sets of *monyomiji*. However, they do have a cyclical conception of succession and retirement. The retired elders are equated to

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<sup>6</sup> *Efirat* is the term used for the age-set initiated immediately before the *nefira*. When it is used in opposition to *olojingat* it refers to those young men who have undergone *najingana* and who have at least been incorporated as *monyomiji* at the village level.

children and the *monyomiji* should provide them with the same kind of attention and protection.

While the basic structure of the *monyomiji* system is the same among the different societies practising it, there is considerable variation in the concrete elaboration of the age system: in the procedures of recruitment, in the length of the period of rule, in the presence or absence of an overlap between successive generations, and in the synchronisation of the transfer of power between different territorial levels (section, village, kingdom).

The Lulubo, Lokoya, Pari and northern Lopit (Dorik and Ngaboli) do not have initiation rituals into the *monyomiji* age-grade at the sectional level. Only men who have participated in the changeover ceremony are *monyomiji*.

Among the *monyomiji* societies the interval between handing over ceremonies is the longest among the Lotuho. Among the Lulubo and Lokoya the political situation and demographic pressures seem to play a more important role in determining the moment of handing over power. Power is transferred when the young ones 'are strong enough' or when the *monyomiji* are failing in strength. Strength is relative and measured in the matching of numbers.

The Lokoya and Lulubo are more accommodating with regard to the individual preferences of the candidate *monyomiji*: by paying a fine and a goat for purification, elder members of the age-sets immediately following those of the new generation may be incorporated in the junior age-set of the new *monyomiji* set. Sometimes members of a junior age-set, entitled to *monyomiji* membership, prefer to wait till the next handing over ceremony, in order to be among the leading age-set, the *ahou* (Lokoya: *nahu*) of the *monyomiji*. All in all, some of the peripheral systems, though less elaborate, create the impression of a greater flexibility.

The age system of the Pari is characterized by a period of overlap between the rule of successive generations. A full cycle consists of six age-sets. The cycle begins with the transfer of power to four age-sets, the two senior ones forming the 'head' (*wic*). After a period of about ten years the two senior sets retire, leaving power in the hands of the two remaining sets, aptly named the 'rethatchers' or 'followers' (*tengo*) and to two newly recruited ones (Kurimoto, 1995a: 306). In compensation for the short duration and the relative insignificance of their role of *monyomiji*, the two most junior sets are expected to play an enhanced role as elders-advisors to the 'head' of the next *monyomiji*. New initiatives, a change in the style of government, are expected only from the 'head'.

In the timing of the transfer ceremony there is an attempt at synchronisation between neighbouring political units. In the west the Pari normally take the lead followed by the Lokoya of Liria and the Lulubo. Among the Lotuho, the Loudo are the first to celebrate the *nefira*. As a result of the synchronicity *monyomiji* who travel to other villages of other community or ethnic groups will normally find approximate age-mates in their meat-group (Kurimoto, 1998;31-50).



The Lotuho stand out in the length of the cycle. Most of the other societies practising the *monyomiji* system have shorter cycles, or, like the Pari and Lopit, break it up in two sequences. Among the Lulubo and Lokoya the cycle is usually shorter: between 12 and 18 years, for four age-sets, as compared with the Pari cycle of 20 years and six age-sets. Half-way the head ('wic') age-sets are retired to make place for the 'rethatchers' ('tengo') and two more junior age-sets who are admitted to *monyomiji*-hood when the followers take over (Kurimoto, 1995:306). From the point of view of the Lotuho *monyomiji* their western counterparts give in, too easily, to the pressure of their juniors. The secret of the longer cycle of the Lotuho is the fact that they run their system on two different levels: the initiation into the *monyomiji* age-grade at the sectional level, on the one hand, and the succession to generational power at the village and kingdom levels, on the other. Neither the Pari nor the Lulubo and Lokoya have an initiation into *monyomiji*-hood preceding the ceremony of the transfer of power.

With four age-sets making a *monyomiji*-set and a twenty-two year span of rule, the average length of the period that Lotuho age-sets are open for recruitment is between 5 and 6 years. The period of recruitment of Pari age-sets is much shorter. In 1985 Kurimoto recorded not less than 21 age-sets in existence. The average duration of an age-set's period recruitment would be between three and four years. As among the Lokoya and Lulubo, the average duration of rule of a generation depends more on political and demographic factors than among the Lotuho.

The age-range of the Anyua *monyomiji*-set in 1985, eight years after it had taken power, was between 38.9 years and 52.3 years. So Pari *monyomiji* begin their rule mostly in their thirties and they retire in their late forties and early fifties. By the time a Pari generation takes power, its successor age-sets have already been formed. In 1985 Kurimoto registered as many as nine junior age-sets (Kurimoto, 1995: 266) lining up to take over from Anyua. Basing ourselves on informants' statements, comparable figures for the age of Lotuho *monyomiji* -which are not available- would show a range from 20-45 years at the time of the *nefira* and 40-65 at retirement.

Figure 3: Age-set formation and generational succession among the *Pari* over a period of 20 years. The shaded blocks are the sets forming the ruling generation.

Name of age-set	4 years after changeover	14 years after changeover	24 years after changeover
A	Elders ( <i>cidonge</i> ) who retired 4 years ago	Retired 10 years ago	Retired 20 years ago
B	<i>Wic</i> (head) <i>monyomiji</i> in charge; or <i>geedo</i> ('builders') Right hand set;	<i>Wic</i> have retired, but still act in capacity of advisors to new <i>monyomiji</i>	Fully retired ( <i>cidonge</i> )
C	<i>Wic</i> (left-hand set) <i>monyomiji</i>	Idem	Idem
D	<i>Tengo</i> ('rethatchers'), right hand set	In charge of community for the last 8 years	Fully retired for last 2 years
E	<i>Tengo</i> , left hand set	Idem	Idem
F	Elder age-set of young men in <i>awope</i> grade	Together with g added to <i>monyomiji</i> grade when d and e took power	Fully retired
G	Junior age-set of <i>awope</i> grade	Idem	Idem
H	Age-set of young men in <i>awope</i> grade	Future <i>wic</i> (head); characterised by high aspirations and expectations	Has taken control of the country as right-hand set of <i>wic</i>
I	Age-set in <i>awope</i>	Idem, left hand	Left-hand <i>wic</i>
J	Age-set in <i>awope</i>	<i>Awope</i>	J and k age-sets were added to the <i>wic</i> , one year after g & h had taken over power
K	Age-set in <i>awope</i>	<i>Awope</i>	J: right-hand section of future <i>tengo</i>
L	In formation	<i>Awope</i>	K: left-hand section of future <i>tengo</i>

Figure 4: *Age-grades, age-sets and monyomiji-sets among the Lokoya and Lulubo. Age-set blocks of monyomiji are shaded. Age-sets are identified by the piece of the sacrificial animal they are entitled to.*

<i>Name age-set</i>	<i>4 years after changeover (Lokoya terms)</i>	<i>14 years after changeover (Lulubo terms)</i>	<i>24 years after changeover</i>
A	For last 4 years <i>oholobolok</i>	Retired elders <i>temeji</i> (Lul.)	Retired
B	<i>Nahu</i> (head)	Retired	Retired
C	<i>Omurut</i> (neck)	Retired	Retired
D	<i>Asuhe</i> (breast)	Retired	Retired
E	<i>Alisang</i>	Retired	Retired
F	Age-set in grade of <i>otwat</i> (Lokoya: juniors)	<i>Gole</i> (hindquarters, best part reserved for king and <i>monyomiji</i> )	Will soon retire or already retired
G	Age-set in <i>otwat</i> grade	<i>Juju</i> (Lulubo, breast.)	Will soon retire or already retired control of the country
H	Age-set in <i>otwat</i> grade	<i>'Di</i> (Lulubo: head)	Will soon retire or already retired
I	Age-set in <i>otwat</i> grade	<i>Tuku</i> or <i>gele</i> (Lulubo: shoulder)	Will soon retire or already retired
J	Age-set in formation	Age-set in <i>teto</i> (Lulubo: juniors) grade	About to take over or already in power
K	Age-set in formation	Age-set in <i>teto</i> grade	About to take over or already in power

### **The functions of the *monyomiji***

The *monyomiji* form the core institutional framework of the village. They are responsible for the welfare of the community, for its security, peace, moral integrity, and also its harmony with cosmic forces. The word 'responsible' here is used in a strong sense: when things go wrong, when enemies are not kept at bay, when there is drought, the *monyomiji* are blamed and have to account for their policies. They may be called to account by the king, by the juniors aspiring to power, and, especially in the case of disasters affecting the food situation (drought, crop-pests, crop eating animals), by an emergency assembly of the women. A poor performance on the part of a particular generation may lead to reshuffles of its officials or to its premature retirement.

Intellectuals from *monyomiji* societies enjoy drawing parallels between the structure of modern democratic republican systems and government by the *monyomiji*. The following equations are made by Philip Lomodong from Liria in his 1995 monograph on Lokoya culture. While the assembly of all *monyomiji* is defined as the legislative power, the two most senior age-sets of the *monyomiji* (including the 'head') form the executive power. The two junior age-sets form the army. The rainmaker/king is the President of the State. He also chairs an inner cabinet consisting of seven ritual specialists (Master of Grain, Master of War, Master of Winds etc.). Information between the cabinet and the *monyomiji* of the different sections is passed through the *ololongolier* ('emissaries', 'messengers') called the Information Ministry by Lomodong. The *monyomiji Nahu* of each section represent the central authority at the local level (Lomodong, 1995: 25-28).

Lomodong also refers to an unwritten 'constitution' of the *monyomiji*, the *Oiring lo Monyomiji*. Since I never heard of it during my field work in the early 1980s, I assume that it is a newly established 'code'. Lomodong explicitly adds that the text refers to present conditions and can be further adapted to modern developments. Since it gives a vivid impression of the duties of the *monyomiji* and of the style in which these are promulgated I reproduce Lomodong's translation:

1. Every 12 or 20 years the *Monyomiji* shall change the government.
2. The *Monyomiji* shall nominate two of their members from each camp<sup>7</sup> to the *Monyomiji* Inner Council which comprises the *Monyomiji* and the Chief Priests.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Obali*, village section, the equivalent of the Lotuho *amangat*.

<sup>8</sup> These are the 'compartmental kings' of the community: the Rainmaker, the Master of Grain, the Master of the Land, the Master of Bows (war), and the Master of the Winds, in Liria collectively called *Ovalahojok*, the Fingers of God (Simonse, 1992:264-281).

3. The *Monyomiji* shall beat an alarm drum if an enemy or wild beasts attack people or goats.
4. The *Monyomiji* shall whistle if an enemy or a lion attacks. A drum is beaten to alert the people.
5. Anyone who kills somebody shall compensate by giving a daughter or cows.
6. The *Monyomiji* shall punish the people who violate the laws of the state<sup>9</sup>
7. Accidental killing of a person shall be paid for by sincere apology in addition to handing over some goats or cows for 'cooling' the hearts of the deceased person.
8. The *Monyomiji* shall declare war on an enemy when they deem fit. The case shall first be forwarded to the Chief of Defence for consultation and blessing.<sup>10</sup>
9. The *Monyomiji* shall arrange to dig a field belonging to the Chief of Rain.
10. The *Monyomiji* shall supervise the function of the Chiefs throughout the year.
11. The *Monyomiji* shall oppose the elopement of the wife of the Chief or of his son. This is because of the fear of *adufio*, the withholding of rain, the 'pouring' of epidemics onto the village or the loss of crops or animals.
12. The *monyomiji* shall make sure that their hunting grounds are not infiltrated by others, rivers not fished in and fruit trees not harvested from.
13. The *Monyomiji* shall respond to the alarm of *ohiribo*<sup>11</sup> which advises chiefs to perform their duties.
14. The *Monyomiji* shall stage the funeral dance (*otuhe*) for Chiefs, important elders<sup>12</sup> and the *Monyomiji*.
15. The *Monyomiji* shall pay homage to the family of a deceased colleague.
16. When the Chief dies, the *Monyomiji* shall stage the funeral rites and dance to mourn him or her.
17. The *Monyomiji* shall cooperate in communal projects like digging water reservoirs for animals and wells for people, as well as in fighting fire.
18. The Chief of Rain shall be the President of the *Monyomiji* cabinet or council. He shall be appointed or removed whenever the *Monyomiji* deem fit.
19. When there is a grain harvest, the camps shall contribute grain to the Rain Chief.

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<sup>9</sup> *Hamiji*: territorial community consisting of a number of sections and sharing a king and a *monyomiji* council, also 'ruling generation'.

<sup>10</sup> *Ohobu latang*, the Master of Bows, one of the 'Fingers of God'.

<sup>11</sup> The beginning of the rainy season

<sup>12</sup> *Ohoboloni*, elder with local, usually sectional, ritual responsibilities, not belonging to the 'Fingers of God'.

20. The *Monyomiji* shall question, arrest and fine those who do not obey the orders and conventions of the village.

The document illustrates the duality in the source of legitimate power: on the one hand the authority of the *monyomiji* in the age system, on the other the authority of the various *ohobu* of which the *ohobu lohaju*, the Rainmaker<sup>13</sup>, is the most important. Each powers keeps the other in check: Three articles deal with the duties of the *monyomiji* vis-à-vis their king (9, 16, 19), while three others (10, 13, 18) deal with the supervisory powers of the *monyomiji* over the king including the power to remove him. While he cannot remove the *monyomiji*, the king can punish them by his power of *adufio*, sending disasters such as drought, epidemics, etc. The fear of *adufio* is the main lever of respect for the king (11). The other Masters also have the power of *adufio* within the limits of their domain (poor crops, barrenness, missing arrows, storms, etc.) Other commandments deal with war (3,4,12), internal peacekeeping and settlement of disputes (5,6,7,20), as well as communal labour (17) and respect for the dead (14, 15).

Rain is a primary public concern and the king is feared, blamed or idolized according to the weather. Rain is the central issue in an annually repeated moral drama lasting from the onset of the rain till the end, in which the king and the *monyomiji* are the main actors. If he is 'good', the rains are timely and plentiful. His displeasure, however, has immediate meteorological effects. If it is triggered by the misdeeds of his subjects, the prime duty of the *monyomiji* is to remedy the situation. The king may also be 'evil'. That is when the *monyomiji* have to take drastic action.

There is a fair degree of overlap between the public duties of the king and the *monyomiji*. Both are responsible for maintaining the unity and peace in the village. Both play a role in settling conflicts, both are expected to be above sectional and clan interests. The glory of a particular king's reign is tied up with the fortunes of the *monyomiji* set with which his name is associated. Oral history indicated that new *monyomiji*-sets installed a new king, of their own choice.

### **Age-set antagonism and generational succession**

The word-choice of informants immediately betrays the antagonistic character of the changeover

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<sup>13</sup> Because of the power vested in the role of the various *ohobwok* (pl.of *ohobu*), I favour the translation 'Master', analogous to the 'Spearmasters' of the Dinka. Since the Master of Rain is everywhere the most powerful master I reserve the title 'king' for him. In the *monyomiji* area the Lokoya and the Lulubo stand out by the variety of *ohobwok* to whom they pay homage.

ceremony. The older generation is 'pushed out', power is taken away' from the elders, the village is 'seized', a 'new era' begins. Educated informants repeatedly described the ceremony of transfer of power as a 'revolution'. Junior generations of certain villages enjoyed repeating their claim that they were more 'revolutionary' than anybody else.

The names of age-sets aspiring to power are often chosen to express defiance to the ruling generation, of authority in general, and of the powers of elderly man. The *monyomiji* who took over power in Lowe (Lokoya) in 1959 called themselves *Thimomonye* ('Those who ignore their fathers'). Those in Ngulere in the same year called themselves *Lofohitu* ('Immune to Sorcery').

The larger the junior generation, the more intense the antagonism. When during the last years of a generation's rule the numbers of its successor-generation equal or surpass its own numbers, reciprocal challenges and clashes will become more frequent. The importance of numbers is reflected in age-set and generation names: *Naboro* (Lotuho: sand), *Ama* (Lotuho: locusts), *Dotiti* (Lotuho: a long line of people), *Iru* (Lotuho: swarm of birds).

New age-sets are formed in opposition to the sets adjacent to them. Among the Lulubo and Lokoya where the first steps towards age-set formation are quite informal, groups of age-mates of the same section join in herding small livestock. While out in the field they engage in sports and goat-fights. When the group is getting large there will be a tendency for its senior members to exclude the juniors from certain activities, or for the juniors to show their independence and proclaim their own identity.

Stick-fights between adjacent age-sets of juniors are common (see Kurimoto, 1995a:286 for a case-history). Stick-fights between sets of the same age of neighbouring sections may even be more frequent (Kurimoto, 1995:288-290). The size of rival age-sets is an important factor in determining the break-off point for the formation of new junior age-sets. The consequence of a split in an existing age-set is a weaker position in stick-fights and competitive sports.

When the average age is around 18 the sectional age-sets unite at the level of the village under a new, more inclusive, name and flag. By assuming communal duties -cleaning and repair of village infrastructure- they present themselves to the community as aspiring to *monyomiji*-hood.

The Lotuho-system is more formalized on this point: after a boy has reached the age-grade of *aduri-horwon* and has been included in an age-set he is the legitimate target for bullying by the *monyomiji* of the *amangat*. Juniors are sent on all sorts of errands. Apart from known prohibitions (not eating groundnut-paste in public, not entering the drum-house and staying clear of the assembly platforms of the *monyomiji*, they may at any moment be faced with new prohibitions issued by the *monyomiji* and be punished for non-compliance. Punishments consist

of beatings and fines varying from the simple provision of a bowl of beer to the forcible removal of small livestock. If one member of the group misbehaves punishment is preferably administered in such a way that the entire group suffers. Relations with girls are a special concern in this permanent supervision. Unmarried girls are said to belong to the *monyomiji*. Till the day of initiation, the *monyomiji* exercise permanent pressure on the juniors. Before the day of his initiation can be fixed, the novice is presented with a bill of outstanding misdeeds for which he will have to apologize by paying fines (Grüb, 1992:135).

The model for the administration of punishments is the raid. In carrying out these punitive expeditions use is made of antagonism between adjacent age-sets. *Olojingat*, who are expected to be more intransigent than full *monyomiji*, are entrusted with the punishment of *aduri horwon* offenders. In turn the *olojingat* are bullied by the *monyomiji efi rat* (the most junior age-set of the *monyomiji*): the dance that concludes the initiation on the sectional level is forcefully interrupted by the *monyomiji efi rat*. The new *olojingat* are chased away from the dancing ground with the message that they still have a long way to go before their *nefi ra*. While the *olojingat* terrorize the *aduri horwon*, and the full-blown *monyomiji* continue to treat the *olojingat* as minors, the tension between the *monyomiji* and the future generation-set, builds up as the numbers of the junior generation and the initiated age-sets increase.

There is, however one notable exception, mentioned by Grüb (1992:139), to this capitalization on the rivalry of adjacent age-sets: during the period immediately preceding the *nefi ra*, the *efi rat* of the new alternation practise, together with the *aduri horwong*, a dance mimicking the expulsion from power of the incumbent *monyomiji*. They also join in training in club fighting, running, and wrestling. Grüb does not comment, but we can assume that this will lay a basis for the later cooperation between the retired *efi rat*, who will act as advisors to the *monyomiji* and the next *ahou*.

In the atmosphere of confrontation and vigilance created by this tension, age-sets grow into unified blocks with a strong sense of internal egalitarianism and with effective informal leadership patterns. During the years preceding the *nefi ra* the junior generation tries to make a name for itself by carrying out raids, often against the will of the ruling *monyomiji* and the king. During the same period, stick-fights between alternations are frequent. This is the time when the forces of the ruling and the succeeding alternations match. Before the last *nefi ra*, which was scheduled for October 1976, the police had to intervene several times in clashes triggered by attempts of the ruling *monyomiji* to postpone the date of the transfer of power by one more year. In the end the old generation compromised and agreed to have the *nefi ra* in 1976.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Torit People's Rural Council, Monthly Report, January 1976, Southern Records Office, Juba, *Torit District Files*.



Normally such confrontations should only be mock-battles. Frequently, however, the situation gets out of hand and men are injured, or even killed. Mock-battles are part of the handing-over ceremony both at the village and kingdom level.

At the *nefira* presided over by the king there is a mock-battle between *efirat* on one side and *olojingat* on the other, from which the *olojingat* are supposed to emerge victorious. This battle is fought with sticks and shields the day before the kindling of the new fire by the king. The fight is said to be very fierce, since the new alternation is expected to take its revenge for all the unfair treatment they have been subjected to during their minority as *olojingat* and *aduri horwon*. Injuries were common and fatal casualties did occur, sometimes leading to postponement of the transfer of power.<sup>15</sup> Grüb, without quoting dates and places, mentions a case of a *nefira* where the drum was grabbed by force, instead of being ceremonially rolled from the side of the retiring elders to the new *monyomiji*. He was also informed of instances where the *monyomiji* were simply chased from the village, and power was usurped without ceremony (1992:140).

The struggle for power between generations is not only fought in open confrontations. There is a lot of intrigue: curses, suspicions of curses, smear campaigns, etc. In the mid-1980s the Anyua *monyomiji* of Lafon were accused of deliberately withholding the rain to prevent the transfer of power to the younger generation. A good harvest is the condition for holding the ceremonies. In Lokiliri (Lulubo) the Limojo around 1910 did the opposite: they secretly caused drought to discredit the ruling *monyomiji*. The conspiracy was discovered, and the rain-princes involved had to flee abroad (Simonse: 1992:176).

### **Complementary opposition as a political achievement**

Age systems constitute a political arena that has many features in common with the much better documented arena of competition between territorial units or lineage segments. Territorial organization among the Lotuho speakers is structured as 'complementary opposition'. Village-sections receive help from the sections of their own moiety if attacked by sections of opposite moieties. In conflicts between villages, all the village-sections of both moieties will join together to face the common outsider (Simonse, 1992:143-164).

Similarly, conflicts between adjacent age-sets will receive no priority when a confrontation is on with age-sets of the competing generation. The bond between the retired elders –whose younger age-sets are still virile- and the juniors who are *olojingat* or *aduri-horwon*

<sup>15</sup> Because of the occasional casualties the colonial government prohibited the practice of mock-battles and replaced them with more choreographic alternatives (Nalder, 1937:101, Simonse, 1992:184). Such a mock-battle was witnessed by Peter Molloy in Loguruny and described in his travelogue on South Sudan (1957: 182-4)

establishes a power-balance during the period the rising generation is too small to face the *monyomiji* alone. In fact, the complementary opposition model provides a perfect explanation of the alliance between alternating sets, a feature of age systems called 'a mysterious phenomenon' by the formalistic Stewart (1977:125). Once we admit the competitiveness of age-set relations, a dimension that is completely overlooked by Stewart, it is one of the easiest aspects of the age system to account for.

The issue of the bond between alternations has been dealt with by Abrahams in a similar way: According to the principle that 'the enemies of my enemies should be my friends' alternate generation-sets cooperate in a context where relations between proximal sets are characterized by antagonism (Abrahams, 1978: 50-55). In contrast to the *monyomiji* systems, the Labwor prescribe that fathers and son should not be members of proximal generations.

Earlier we used the term 'set-lines' to refer to the allied alternations of the Lotuho. It is the term that used by Baxter to translate the Oromo word *gogesa*, the successive generation-sets (*luuba*) that are linked by paternal descent (Baxter, 1987:156-159). If the principle of complementary opposition accounts for the generation of alternating set-lines, it should also be able to explain set-lines with four intermediary sets as in the *gada* age-system.

By a shortening of the duration of the period that a generation-set occupies in one grade, the number of sets taking part in the system will be multiplied. Assuming that the relations between these more numerous sets are also structured by alliance and opposition -for example opposition of both alliance partners to the alliance to the two sets senior and the two sets junior to them- a larger number of set-lines, in our example five, will be created: the situation of the *gada* system. If we run the system with three set-lines we have the Dassanetch age system (Almagor, 1989).

This explanation of the emergence of age systems with multiple set-lines is more economical than the one proposed by Müller-Dempf. Müller argued that the conflict between junior and senior age-sets that split the Ngitikoi generation of the Toposa in two, created two *de facto* generation-set lines. For generation-set lines to emerge Müller's model assumes (i) an unprogrammed conflict between age-sets of the same generation, and (ii) a successful resolution of the conflict resulting in the decision that the power or Fatherhood of the country will henceforth rotate between the age-sets who are parties to the conflict, and (iii) a mutual agreement on the shortening of the period of rule or fatherhood. While it is possible that these conditions, after some time, will be fulfilled, it is not likely that this will happen very easily four times in a row. The current conflict in Toposa, dating 1880, has yet to be resolved (Müller-Dempf, 1991:566). I therefore put forward my explanation of the origin of the system -- as a

systematic effect of complementary opposition-- as a more economic one.

The interesting implication, not only of my explanatory model but also of that of Müller, is that the origin of the *gada* systems, which because of their apparent artificiality seem products of conscious social engineering, can be explained in terms of political process. Whatever they are now, in origin they were not 'cognitive systems'.

Similarly, there is no need to turn to binary cognition to account for the dualism in age systems, as structuralists may be inclined to do. A dual organization of sets emerges as the contingent result of a concrete social process, which binary symbolism may, of course, appropriate in such a way that the process that gave rise to the dualism is no longer immediately recognizable.

During the period immediately preceding the changeover, the forces of the junior generation and the *monyomiji* are matched. The moment power -the ultimate political prize- will be handed over depends on the numbers of the new generation and on the way the confrontations are managed. A *monyomiji*-set which is disgruntled with the poor style of its juniors, may decide to postpone the handing over of power, while a corrupt and weak *monyomiji* set may be expelled before its time is over.

In some polities of the Lotuho-speakers there is a remarkable correspondence between the segmentation of the age system and that of territorial system. Both are three-tiered. The age-set corresponds to the section, the smaller units of both systems. While village-sections are polarized in moieties age-sets are always in pairs, the senior age-set being associated with the right and the junior one with the left. Alternations correspond to villages. *Amiji*, the Lotuho word for village, is also used to refer to the alternations.<sup>16</sup>

Strategies to express and control rivalry between groups are the same in the arena of territorial groups as in that of age-groups. The prohibition of spears in fights between age-sets and sections, the staging of mock fights, competition in sports and dances, etc. However, an important difference between territorial 'complementary opposition' and age-set antagonism is the regular oscillation of the age system between states of mutual competition and hierarchical order. The periods preceding and immediately following ceremonies of initiation and transfer of power are marked by increased tension between age-sets and generation-sets. After the new set has made its political point, a period of relative calm follows in which relations between age and generation sets are regulated by the hierarchy of the grading system. Transition ceremonies have

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<sup>16</sup> The social system of the Logir, who inhabit the East flank of the Dongotono Mountain, is, in another way, a replica of the age-organization: two rain-kingdoms each headed by a Rainmaker/King and each consisting of four villages (Simonse, 1992:187).

a similar effect on the general political climate to that of elections in a parliamentary democracy. As in modern democracies domestic tensions spill over into foreign relations. But in inter-societal generational politics the younger generation always takes the role of the 'hawks', while the *monyomiji* who are due to be retired and the elders, are the 'doves'. A typical conflict was the attack, in 1955, of the new *monyomiji* of the Tirangore kingdom, on the men of the rivalling Lotuho kingdom while they were celebrating their *nefira*. The life-cycle of a 'set' is simultaneously marked by various stages of competition and a changing insertion in the successive grades of the system.

From an overall functional point of view, it could be stated that social cohesion of Lotuho society is served in two ways by the organized opposition of age-sets and generation-sets. It serves the internal consensus of age-sets and generation-sets who are made to confront one another in a more or less orderly way. Secondly - as in the classical Nuer case- it creates bonds of solidarity which cross-cut territorial divisions. From the functionalist sociological angle, it would be interesting to find out whether periods of heightened inter-generational tension correspond to periods with a lower rate of conflict between territorial divisions, and vice-versa.

Since Evans-Pritchard demonstrated in *The Nuer* that segmentary societies are able to create political stability over wide areas by a process in which conflicting groups control the scope of the conflict by matching the forces they bring into field, segmentary systems have been the object of anthropological admiration. Here were people who did not give up their sovereignty to an agent monopolizing the use of physical force, in order to cope with conflict, but who used conflict creatively and with restraint. This admiration has been responsible for the disregard of the possibility that segmentary systems may not work, when no balance is struck between conflicting parties and a weaker party is annihilated.

Segmentary systems are extremely vulnerable. Whether a balance of forces is reached in a conflict, and whether the recognition of this balance will lead to a halt of the violence, necessarily depends on a number of factors including policy decisions by the participants in the conflict. A balance of forces can be easily broken when external allies, whose power is disproportional to the level on which the conflict is fought, want to intervene. This is what happened when in the nineteenth century the rivalling Bari kingdoms invited foreign armies to fight on their sides. Interestingly, in the Bari case, the balancing dynamic continued to work. Because of the rivalry, first between trading companies, and later between the Egyptian government and the Mahdists, each party found its own foreign ally. The overall level of violence rose tremendously, because of the introduction of firearms, with disastrous effects for the Bari population (Simons, 1992:306-311). More commonly, only one of the two protagonists was

able to mobilize the support of a powerful ally, usually with disastrous consequences for the weaker side.

The balance of power between generations can also be lost. According to historical tradition two large population centres of the Lotuho-speakers, Segele and Imatari<sup>17</sup>, have disappeared because of one of the generations called in a disproportionately powerful ally, thus upsetting the usual balance: Segele was destroyed as a result of a conflict between the *monyomiji* and the *aduri-horwon*. The *monyomiji* killed two *aduri-horwon* ringleaders in an exemplary punishment. Both were princes, who had refused to carry out orders of the *monyomiji*. The queen, their mother, requested king Ngalamitiho of Imatari, the traditional rival of Segele, to wreak a terrible revenge upon the *monyomiji* of Segele. She was not satisfied when *Ohonyemorok*, the ruling generation of Imatari at the time, offered to go on a punitive expedition; she asked for the successor generation to be added to the military force. All the gates of Segele were sealed off by the enemy, large numbers were killed, and the village was burnt and never recovered.

In the case of Imatari the conflict was between the ruling generation *Miriyang* and their successors *Tome*. One day the young men challenged the authority of the *monyomiji* by dancing with girls of their own age in the dancing ground: an act strictly prohibited for non-*monyomiji*. When the boys were found out they fled with the girls to Dongotono where, according to one version of the story, they obtained wives by way of sister exchange. In this way they married, bypassing their fathers' bride-wealth and authority. The *monyomiji* wanted to take revenge for this insult by attacking the Dongotono who had offered them refuge, but king Ngalamitiho who wanted to keep the peace, stopped them. The rebellious generation challenged Ngalamitiho's weak attitude proclaimed his son Ohurak as king. When Ngalamitiho heard the song, he cursed his son and his people. Ohurak and Tome succeeded in expelling Ngalamitiho from Imatari. He fled to the Toposa, the arch-enemies of the Lotuho. He returned later with a Toposa army and encircled Imatari. The people fled to the king's palace which was used as a fortress. Ngalamitiho ordered the walls of his palace to be pushed over. As the palace was overrun Ngalamitiho disappeared -in lightning according to the story- and Ohurak was killed. The Lotuho then dispersed to the different villages they still occupy today.

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<sup>17</sup> Segele was the centre from where, according to a Lotuho tradition, the Lokoya and Lopit originated. It was located in the plains to the west of the Lopit range. Imatari, located in the plains between the Dongotono and Imatong mountains was the village from which the Plains Lotuho believe to have originated. According to calculations based on inter-generational intervals of 22 years Imatari came to its end around the year 1830. Segele must have been destroyed some 30 years earlier. Possibly it was later, because in 1860 'Matari' was mentioned to the French explorer Peney as one of the districts of 'Lotouka' and 'Suguerle' appears on a map drawn by the MacDonald expedition in 1898.

To the extent that the stories reflect historical events, they show the precariousness of the inter-generational power balance, even under conditions that have not yet been marked by the introduction of firearms or the presence of foreign armies. To the extent that the stories are legendary, they show how the Lotuho conceive of generational conflict. It starts with a demonstrative take-over of the public facilities of Imatari: the village dancing ground which includes the village shrine and drumhouse. This is followed by an armed confrontation between the competing generations (which is stopped by the king at the last moment); on top of that there is the challenge of the *aduri-horwon* of the monopoly of the *monyomiji* over the services of the *odwo*, the unmarried girls.

For the purposes of our argument there are two lessons to be drawn from these stories. In the first place, that the antagonism between 'sets' is not just a ritual or ceremonial drama but a political struggle that is fought with all available means. Secondly, that the political equilibrium between generation-sets is not given. It has to be achieved, as the outcome of political action or political restraint.

### **The *monyomiji* in the contemporary political context**

When the *monyomiji*-systems make the headlines, it is usually because of the rebellious behaviour of the juniors, as in Imatari and Segele a century and a half ago. Colonial records indicate that most of the resistance to the imposition of colonial rule came, not so much from the *monyomiji*, but from the juniors. The colonial powers used to deal with the kings. Most kings in the *monyomiji* area welcomed the colonial powers because the new ally strengthened their position in relation to the *monyomiji* (Simonse, 1992:246-248). Since the king and *monyomiji* were normally on speaking terms, most disagreements were sorted out between them. Not so with the youngsters.

In Lokoya, for example, gangs of 'young bloods' continued to attack mail carriers, government patrols, and the team constructing the telegraph line from Mongalla to Torit. It later turned out that the gangs were led by the son of the king of Ilyangari (Simonse, 1992:177). When he was found out, the chief of Ilyangari -- unlike Ngalamitiho in Imatari -- chose to side with his rebel son, thus necessitating the British to dispatch one more Lokoya patrol.

The political radicalism generated by the *nefira* celebrations of the mid-1950s is likely to have contributed to the rebel activity which, during the late 1950s, was largely concentrated in Torit District, and more particularly in the Lotuho area. A number of attacks on government targets took place even before the Torit Mutiny (18 August 1955) which is conventionally taken to mark the start of the civil war. The *nefira* of Torit and the villages in the immediate vicinity

took place on 10 October 1954, the royal *nefira* at Hoding, on 5 May 1955, while the royal *nefira* of Tirangore had taken place in September 1953. In the months preceding the *nefira* at Hoding a series of arson attacks occurred in Torit and surroundings: in January the Local Government Centre and the American Mission Hospital in Lohutok were set on fire, in February the houses of the District Commissioner and a high-ranking military officer were burnt down. The northern District Commissioner accused the Head Chief of Torit District, the highest 'native authority' among the Lotuho, of instigating the attack on the D.C.'s house. The attacks were carried out by a group of around 500 men consisting of a core of mutineers assisted by a majority of local warriors. The latter, we may safely assume -were *monyomiji* of the 1954/55 levy (Simonse, 1992: 312-4).

During the second wave of fighting in the Civil War, around 1965, the Lulubo and Lokoya men enrolling in the Anyanya, on the whole, belonged to age-sets which had not yet reached *monyomiji*-status. This created a situation in which members of the junior age-grade were in position to issue commands and requisition food from the Kwara 'in power' (1958-1975). According to one member of the Kwara in Lokiliri (Lulubo) this was a humiliating experience. Many Kwara lost interest in being *monyomiji* and were ready to hand over power to their successors at the first opportunity that presented itself.

This scenario was repeated at the beginning of the current civil war. Kurimoto (1994:106-9) provides an analysis of the mobilization of the Pari juniors into the Sudan People's Liberation Army. Out of more than 2500 Pari men who joined the SPLA, only 10 were *monyomiji* when they enrolled. Dissatisfaction with the rule of Anyua (1977-1988) was great among the junior generation. Anyua was blamed for the years of drought which in 1984 had led to the murder of the rain queen. In 1985 the juniors felt they were ready to take over. But their aspirations were typically ignored by the *monyomiji*. They were keen to find ways to impress Anyua with their ability to take responsibility of village affairs. The recruitment by the SPLA was very timely. The activities of the Pari contingent in the SPLA were at their peak between 1985 and 1989. In 1988 Madan took over from Anyua. During the same period the juniors of the Lokoya and the Lulubo, largely for the same reasons, tried to enrol as government militias because their communities had been the first targets of attacks by the Pari SPLA.

The period of political radicalism of the juniors normally extends to some years after the transfer of power. In the election campaign for the Regional Assemblies in 1982 young candidates generally appealed to the old-time generational antagonism by presenting themselves as supporters of a new generational style of rule.

## Conclusions

In summarizing I would like to underline the following points:

1. The *monyomiji* age systems of the Equatorian east bank of the Nile are simultaneously structured by an oppositional and a hierarchical principle. The oppositional dynamic operates at several levels of inclusion, in such a way that, in the context of a provocation, lower-level divisions ('sets') are overruled by the more inclusive connections. The hierarchical principle provides a non-conflictual mode of interaction between sets and members of different sets. It gives rise to a linear progression of grades, in which juniors are expected to yield to their seniors. Concurrently, occupation of the next senior grade is the main stake in the competition between sets.
2. From a diachronic angle, the *monyomiji* system corresponds to a cycle in which, during a first phase, the amplification and exacerbation of antagonism between the maturing and retiring generation overrule the available possibilities for hierarchy. In a second phase the antagonism discharges into an institutionalized crisis, in which the old incumbents of power are removed, and a new hierarchical order is established.

This cycle is simultaneously political and ritual. At the political level it brings about a circulation of elites. Each new generation is full of idealism and is convinced it can do better than its predecessor. During the running-up to the transfer of power the juniors capitalize on the weaknesses of the rule of the sitting *monyomiji* in order to discredit them. Now, in their own time, they will implement a political programme that gives better guarantees for the security, peace, welfare, etc. of the community.

As a ritual cycle the *monyomiji* system achieves an exemplary transformation of potentially violent interaction into ordered hierarchy. The transmutation is operated through sacrifice, 'by passing through the ox' as the Maasai would say (Spencer, 1988:184). The most elementary hierarchical ordering is the allocation of age-sets to the various portions of the sacrificial animal, by turning them into 'meat-groups'.

The various stages of the cycle are given theatrical expression in a wide variety of songs, dances, and mock fights. The provocative and sportsmanlike style of these cultural manifestations explains the appeal the *monyomiji* societies have for the Western observer.



3. The stability of the relationships established by the age system depends on a balance of oppositional and hierarchical interactions. When antagonism is no longer kept in check by a modicum of hierarchy, conflicts will run out of hand -as in the case of the fall of Imatari. On the other hand, when hierarchical relations rigidify and are no longer renewed in a ritual or political reversal, they will either become oppressive or become a formality incapable of providing a deeply felt sense of social order. The conception of social stability used here obviously derives from the intuitions of Gregory Bateson who in his *Naven* analysed social equilibrium as the combined result of 'symmetrical' social processes tending towards increased antagonism and 'asymmetrical', 'complementary' processes favouring mutual accommodation (Bateson, 1958:171-197). The importance of the contrast between a symmetrical and an asymmetrical dynamic in age systems has been highlighted both by Spencer in his distinction between the models of 'opposing streams' and the 'gerontocratic ladder' (1975) and by Abrahams when he distinguishes 'linear' from 'polar' qualities in the relation between successive generations (1978:52-3).
  
4. The *monyomiji* systems are striking by the scope they give to the free play of age antagonism. In this they betray their common cultural roots with the Maasai whose age system was the first to be analysed in terms of complementary opposition (Gulliver, 1963:59; Jacobs, 1965:294). In the continuum between Maa systems with a 'gerontocratic' (Samburu) and an 'oppositional' (Arusha) bias, they are certainly closer to the latter.

In contrast to the *monyomiji*-systems where generational confrontation is generally concentrated in one major politico-ritual climax per cycle, open age-set confrontations in the Maasai system occur at four points during the cycle: in the opening of a new age-set of *murran* in the establishment of their *manyata*, in the run-up to the *eunoto* sacrifice marking the transition to senior *murran* status, and finally in the *olngesher* ceremony in which the *murran* are promoted to elderhood. While in the *monyomiji* area the promotion of one group means the simultaneous retirement of the other, the Maasai cycle allows for more overlap. Because of the double alliance between junior *murran* and firestick-elders and between senior *murran* and senior elders, the boundary between junior and senior age-sets is less sharply drawn.

In comparison with the peoples of the Karimojong cluster the *monyomiji* systems are striking by their relative youthfulness and organisational compactness. By dropping the requirement that successive generations should reflect paternity and filiation in the

kinship system, the interlocking of age-sets, generations, and age-grades is as good as it could be. There is no discrepancy between the roles attributed on the basis of age and generation, and no loopholes for hidden gerontocratic agendas, as in the Karimojong cluster where the age-sets play a role in the social division of labour while the generation-sets have a *de facto* ritual role (Tornay, 1979). No age system retires its elders so completely from public life as the *monyomiji* systems.

5. The *monyomiji* systems offer no support to the thesis defended by Baxter and Almagor that age systems, by giving legitimacy to the exploitative interests of a privileged group, are a superstructural phenomenon. In Lotuho the family-elders who control the cattle with which their sons marry and who receive the bride-service for their daughters will normally belong to the age-grade of the *amarwak* (retired elders). To effectuate their claims as household-heads, they rely on their agnatic kin, not on the *monyomiji*. Conflict between lineages or sub-clans will typically be settled by the king/rainmaker or by another ritual expert. The *monyomiji* system has no hidden interface with the lineage system or with economic organization. The *monyomiji* are what they say they are: enemies of interests and inclinations that may negatively affect the cohesion of the community. Problems are typically formulated in terms of hostile forces which need to be confronted. Typical solutions are the imposition of fines, bans on specified activities, curses, raids, ultimatums, executions. The bold radicalism of their style of intervention does not tally with the calculated protection of private interests (of elders, of lineages, of the king, of individuals).
  
6. We have seen that the impact of the *monyomiji* age systems in the modern political and military context is attributable to their antagonistic structure, their political radicalism, and the powerful *esprit de corps* that is formed during years of confrontation between seniors and juniors. Because of their disadvantaged position in the age-organization the juniors who have not yet achieved *monyomiji*-hood are more likely to rally behind new political and military initiatives.

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