



“Bones in the Wrong Soil”: An Idiomatic Metaphour for Reflecting on the African Psychology of Death and the Afterlife

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Abstract

In his book, *African Religions and Philosophy*, Professor John S. Mbiti boldly affirms that in Africa people die only in body and not in spirit. In making such a generalized claim about Africans and their notions of death and the afterlife Mbiti appears to suggest the implication that in Africa people die only to continue living, everything being equal, as ancestors or members of the *living-dead*. This critical essay aims to demonstrate how the African psychology of death and the afterlife is encapsulated in Mbiti's (1969) assertion and how an aspect of it could be found dominating the thoughts and anxieties of displaced Ugandan refugees whose relatives died and were buried in their refugee camps away from their ancestral home. To interrogate this theme, some pertinent questions and answers relating to African understanding of the conditions of possibility for a successful experience in afterlife will be drawn from the incisive article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon published in 2015.

Keywords: *‘Bones in the Wrong Soil’; African Religions and Philosophy; Death and the Afterlife; Ancestors; Members of the Living-dead; Ugandan Refugees*

INTRODUCTION

Professor John S. Mbiti, in his famous book, *African Religions and Philosophy*, published in 1969, boldly affirms that in Africa people die but only in body and not in spirit. In taking a careful look at such a terse and profound statement, one discovers that it suggests the implication that in Africa, people die in order to continue living as ancestors or members of the living-dead. This conclusion, incidentally, is not to be seen or classified as one of those fads coming out of Africa largely to be scorned at, given that “a majority of humankind”, according to Siegel (1980, p. 914), “rejects the hypothesis of annihilation at

death.” (See article by Ronald K. Siegel, entitled *The Psychology of Life After Death*, p. 914, published in October 1980, in the *American Psychologist*).

In this article, I aim to interrogate this aspect of the African psychology of death and the afterlife alluded to by Mbiti (1969) through the aid of a close reading of an important article related to that theme authored by Ina Rehema Jahn and Matthew Wilhelm-Solomon, entitled: “Bones in the wrong soil”: reburial, belonging, and disinterred cosmologies in post-conflict northern Uganda”, published in 2015, in *Critical African Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2, pages 182–201. The specific objective of the lecture is to demonstrate how the African psychology of death and the afterlife encapsulated in Mbiti’s (1969) observation highlighted above can be found echoed and implicated in the thoughts and anxieties of displaced Ugandan refugees whose relatives died and were buried in their refugee camps away from their ancestral home. And why the surviving relatives of these deceased believed they needed to take the remains of their deceased relatives back home for a reburial process.

To serve as a methodology for interrogating this theme, some pertinent questions and answers relating to African understanding of the conditions of possibility for a successful experience in afterlife will be drawn upon from the important article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon published in 2015. The questions that come to mind are highlighted below and will be responded to shortly in the order in which they are listed.

(1) Why do indigenous Africans strive to organize a reburial for their relatives who died and were buried away from their ancestral or marital land due to the impact of war?

(2) Of what importance are such reburials to the spirit of those who died and were buried ‘in the wrong soil’ or in a foreign land?

(3) What does ‘a bad death’ mean for the people of Africa as noted in the article under study? And what is the implication of dying ‘a bad death’ as understood by the Acholi people of Uganda studied?

(4) In the view of Meinert and Whyte (2013,a, b), the widespread emergence of post-conflict reburials in Acholiland is centred on the notion of ‘time-work’. Briefly explain what they mean by the notion of time work.

(5) Describe in detail the ritual of reburial as highlighted in the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon (2015), indicating the ritual materials, the ritual agents, and the systematic process that is followed to effect a successful post-conflict reburial ritual?

(6) Briefly explain how development initiatives are related to the challenge of reburials in post-conflict camps/lands in Africa. Use the difficulties and complications caused by JICA project to clarify the negative impact of rushed deadlines that Development Agencies such as the JICA gave to the people in effecting the reburials to recover the land for development process.

It is believed that offering effective and relevant answers to these questions will make clearer to readers and enhance the significance and educational value of the important article authored by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon on the important theme of reburials in the African context.

DISCUSSION

Given below is a systematic response to each of the questions highlighted above, drawing as earlier mentioned from a careful reading of the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon (2015) from which those questions were taken in the first place. In proceeding in this way, attention will now be directed to Research Question 1.

Research Question 1: *Why do indigenous Africans strive to organize a reburial for their family relatives who died and were buried away from their ancestral or marital land due to the impact of war?*

In responding to this question, some pertinent brief background information would appear beneficial. This is because as highlighted in the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon (2015), the war between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Ugandan Government, which devastated the Northern region of the country for 20 years (1986 to 2006), left obvious evidence of the losses and traumas of that war. According to the article under reference, among the remnants of the war are the physical remains of those who died in the displacement camps and were buried away from their ancestral or marital land; a situation commonly described by former camp inhabitants as 'bones in the wrong soil'; an eloquent metaphorical testimony that has been captured in the title of the article by Jahn and Wilhelm-Solomon (2015) under study. For example, the two authors have noted in their article that in the cosmology of the local Acholi people, these 'displaced' burials greatly aggrieved the spirits of the dead to the extent that former residents tended to attribute the outbreaks of fire and illness, among other maladies, to the bones left behind in the camps. Against this background, Indigenous Africans, such as the Acholi people of Uganda, strive to organize reburials for their relatives who died away from home due to war. They do this as highlighted in the article under study, "to restore cosmic order, appease ancestral spirits, and facilitate psychological closure." Such reburials are driven by the Africentric belief that being buried in a foreign soil—such as in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps or in the foreign bush away from their ancestral home (Frontein, 2010, 2011)—prevents the deceased from continuing their journey to the world of their living-dead; and if such anomaly is not corrected with the ritual of reburial will prevent them from finally joining and having a resting place in the world of their ancestors. (Mbiti, 1969; Jindra & Noret, 2011; Lubkemann, 2007).

This is considered a negative circumstance that all indigenous Africans in general, and the Acholi people in particular, believe can spell doom or bring misfortune, nightmares, and trauma to the living.

Thus highlighting in more detail the key reasons behind the practice of reburials particularly in the context of the Acholi people and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) conflict, the following could be discerned in the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon (2015):

Spiritual Re-emplacement of "Bones in the Wrong Soil": The Acholi belief system in particular and that of the Africans' in general, requires that the deceased be buried near their ancestral home (gang) to be properly integrated into the spirit world (Dolan, 2009; Mbiti, 1969; Hammond, 2004; Odoki, 1997). On the contrary, burying them away from this location means their spirits will remain unsettled; a phenomenon that is believed to cause "bad surroundings" (piny marac)—that is to say, *a state of continued spiritual disorder, bad luck, and illness for the living relatives of the deceased*

Preventing Misfortune and Haunting: This relates to the strong belief among the Acholi, that the spirits of those who died violent or improper deaths (cen) can haunt the living (Lomo & Hovil, 2004). And the Acholi people's understanding is that this situation could only be redressed by the ritual of reburial and the accompanying cleansing ceremonies (often involving the slaughter of animals) that act as a ritual to stop the haunting and bring peace to both the deceased and their community (Shipton, 2009).

Psychological and Emotional Healing: This point is drawn from an indication in the article by Jahn and Wilhelm-Solomon (2015) that the 20-year conflict in Northern Uganda broke down traditional social structures. For this reason the practice of reburials was meant to act like a place-making ritual aimed at promoting a post-conflict, psychosocial support mechanism that allows returnees to process trauma, feel safe, and rebuild their lives after the conflict.

Reclaiming Ancestral Identity and Land: Again as noted in the article by Jahn & Wilhem-Solomon (2015), being buried in one's home land is closely linked to land ownership and community belonging. In that way, by successfully moving the remains of their relatives who died and were buried in foreign lands,

the Acholi are able to help their deceased buried in foreign soil to reassert their connection to their ancestral or marital land and enable them to reclaim their heritage at the end of the war (Fontein, 2010, 2011).

Appeasing the Dead through Ting Orup: As noted in Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon's article; for those whose bodies cannot be fully exhumed, a symbolic reburial called ting orup (that is, "carrying of the stick") is used as a means of 'transporting' the spirit from the foreign place of death to their ancestral home (Odoki, 1997; Hockey, et al., 2012; Hockey, et al. 2010).

In sum, then, in relation to the question under attention, among the Acholi, as among other Africans, reburials are often not merely about moving physical remains of the dead that were buried in foreign soil, but are critically needed for purposes of transitioning unsettled 'spirits' of their deceased into ancestor spirits (Mbiti, 1969), and in that way reconcile the living with their dead relatives and their past.

Research Question 2: *Of what importance are such reburials to the spirit of those who died and were buried in the wrong soil or in a foreign land?*

As highlighted in the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon (2015), in terms of the importance to the spirit of the improperly buried deceased for being reburied in the right soil it was noted that reburials attract the following benefits:

Promotion of peace and rest for the spirit of the deceased: The reburial ritual, which often involves taking of soil or bone of the deceased, from their initial foreign grave or at other times use of a symbolic branch (like the buffalo thorn, among the Zulu of South Africa) to guide the improperly buried spirit, accords the spirit of the deceased with a "final resting place" (yindlu yo hetelela) that brings them peace (Finnstrom, 2008; Mbiti, 1969).

Facilitation of the deceased's transition to the status of ancestorhood: As noted in the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon (2015), without the correct burial rites in the proper soil, a soul in the Africentric perspective is doomed to wander as a ghost and may be expelled or tortured by established ancestors. Proper reburial allows them to join the honoured membership of the living dead (Mbiti, 1969), who protect the living.

An attempt to end familial vengeance: Again as noted in the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon (2015), where a person died violently or was denied a proper burial because the death took place in a foreign land, their spirit might be active in seeking vengeance. But through reburial the spirit concerned becomes appeased, facilitating its readiness to become a guardian rather than a tormenting spirit.

Identity Restoration or Promotion of Regenerative Effect: Reburial is intended to reaffirm the deceased's membership in their familial, ancestral home, thereby protecting their legacy and preventing them from being forgotten or damned forever (Bloch & Parry, 1982). These indications mean that reburials in post-conflict period are crucial for the Acholi people. They are practiced to appease the spirits angered by improper burials in IDP camps. Such reburials have capacity to transition the dead from "unsettled" states where they were buried in a foreign land to their ancestral place where they can have peaceful rest (Mbiti, 1969; Van Gennep, 1960). Such a practice helps to prevent vengeful spirits (cen) from causing misfortune now that they have been assisted to re-establish essential spiritual harmony and belonging with their ancestral land (Mbiti, 1969).

To highlight other aspects of the significance of the reburial rites, the following points can be noted in the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon (2015); namely, that through such reburials the following become possible:

Appeasing of Aggrieved Spirits: Improper burials in refugee camps or "wrong soil" are believed to leave spirits stuck and therefore restless, angry, and capable of causing illness, misfortune, and, in some

cases, even untimely death to their surviving relatives. Through reburials these anomalies are halted as the aggrieved spirits are appeased (Hammond, 2004).

Establishing 'True' Burial: Traditionally, as noted from other extant literature (Hammond, 2004), proper burial within one's ancestral homestead is recommended and required for a spirit to be at peace after the death of the body (Mbiti, 1969). Reburials as highlighted in the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon correct the cosmological disorder brought about by one being buried in a foreign land. This helps the spirit of the dead to continue their journey into the rightful place of their ancestral home (Mbiti, 1969).

Ending Cen and Misfortune: As noted in the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon (2015), reburials which often involve traditional rites, aim to prevent cen—which is a form of vengeful spirit possession or spiritual pollution—from causing further disruption to the living (Finnstrom, 2008).

Re-Establishing Belonging: Again, as discernible in the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon, reburials act as a bridge for healing for both the spirit of the dead and the community; helping to reintegrate the spirits with their land and ancestral kin after years of displacement in the foreign land.

Achieving Spiritual Peace:

The above indications mean that the reburial process of moving remains of the deceased from their temporary camp graves to proper final resting place is intended to allow the reburied spirits to attain long-awaited peace; the peace of resting in the land of their fathers and in the company of their ancestors (Mbiti, 1969).

Research Question 3: *What does 'a bad death' mean for the people of Africa as noted in the article under study? What is the implication of dying 'a bad death', as understood by the Acholi people of Uganda studied?*

A careful reading of the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon (2015) under study suggests that in the African context, particularly among the Acholi people of Northern Uganda, there are two kinds of death: 'a good death' and 'a bad death'. In response to the question under reference, 'a bad death' as understood in many African cultures refers to deaths:

At premature/young age: This means that in many African cultures a bad death entails the problem of dying young, before reaching a ripe old age.

Death from murder, accidents, suicide, or by being burned or drowned (Finnstrom, 2008).

Death from a shameful/fearsome disease or illness: This involves the problem of dying from diseases that cause disfigurement or stigma, such as leprosy or HIV/AIDS.

Death from a spiritual unrest: As can be noted in many extant literature in Africa other than the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon, 'a bad death' is believed to be caused by curses or broken taboos (Odoki, 1997) and it results in the deceased becoming a wandering or malevolent ghost rather than a respected ancestor. Indeed, in more specific terms, a 'bad death' (or mutunu) for the Acholi, as mentioned in the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon (2015), "refers to dying away from one's ancestral land—like in IDP camps or battlefields during war—without proper burial rites, causing the spirit concerned to become a harmful, restless ghost (cen) rather than an ancestor." In other worlds, 'a bad death' as highlighted in article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon (2015), comes about through:

Geographical Misplacement: This phrase refers to bodies buried in "foreign" camp soil rather than in the ancestral, marital land, thereby breaking the crucial connection between the deceased, their kin, and their land (Finnstrom, 2008; Mbiti, 1969).

Violent/Premature Death: Encompassing the ominous circumstance of dying from accidents, war, lightning, or murder; all of which occurs before one's time, resulting in the spirit holding anger.

Lack of Closure: Such deaths were believed to be uncelebrated, preventing the proper rituals that turn a deceased person into an ancestor (Mbiti, 1969).

Thus, among the implications of dying 'a bad death' in Acholiland as can be discerned in the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon (2015), include the danger of:

Emergence of Cen (Vengeful Spirits): The spirits of those who died bad deaths do not find peace; they become cen, which are considered extremely evil, dangerous, and vengeful.

Cosmological Pollution: This is because the presence of the restless/ disgruntled spirits disrupts the balance of the community, causing misfortune, illness, and even premature deaths among the living (Finnstrom, 2008).

Their inability to be Ancestors: Since they were not properly buried, these spirits could not transition to the land of the ancestors (Mbiti, 1969).

Need for Reburial: Being firstly buried in the "wrong soil" dictates a need for, often traumatic, exhumation and reburial, to relocate the bones to their rightful ancestral place to appease the spirit, and set them forth on their road to becoming an ancestor (Odoki, 1997; Mbiti, 1969).

Research Question 4: *In the view of Meinert and Whyte (2013), the widespread emergence of post-conflict reburials in Acholiland is centred on the notion of 'time-work'. Briefly explain what they mean by the concept of time work.*

In the view of Meinert and Whyte (2013), as highlighted in the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon (2015) under study, the widespread emergence of post-conflict reburials in Acholiland is centred on the notion of 'time-work'. By the term 'time-work' they mean the exercise of trying to bracket out or close a traumatic past by returning the spirit of their dead relatives to where they belong; namely their ancestral land from which they were earlier forced to flee because of war.

In conceptualizing reburials as an effort to create new 'temporal beginnings and continuities' (p. 175), the authors, Meinert and Whyte (2013) emphasize the restorative properties of such reburial practices; noting that they are aimed at bringing an end to the disorder of being stuck in a foreign soil, and marking the beginning of new, peaceful, times of helping these spirits to continue their journey to their ancestral home (Mbiti, 1969).

Given the above understanding the two authors argue, reburials, particularly as recognized among the Acholi, draw their importance from being regarded as 'technologies of time manipulation' (Meinert and Whyte, 2013). Understood in this way, the rites of reburials are seen to be part of a wider attempt in a post-conflict situation to re-establish social and cosmological orders in a moment of transition. Such reburials in the context of post-conflict northern Uganda created landscapes of belonging. This means that according to Meinert and Whyte (2013), "time-work" refers to the active, ritualistic process by which Acholi people in post-conflict Northern Uganda reordered their lives and attempted to close the traumatic chapter of the war.

This process, according to them, is characterized as a 'technology of time manipulation' involving the physical reburial of bones from displacement sites to ancestral homes (Whyte, et al. 2014). In this way the key aspects of time-work among the Acholi people of Uganda include the notion of:

Restorative Action: This means that reburials, as timework constitute a purposeful effort to end disorder, or to 'bracket out' a traumatic past, and mark a new, peaceful, beginning for those who died and were buried in foreign soil (Bloch & Party, 1982)

Re- 'placing' the Dead: That is, by moving remains of the deceased from 'wrong soil' (camps or random sites) to traditional patrilineal homes, the people are putting the dead in the proper soil thereby reconstructing their social structures, kinship ties, and belonging (Odoki, 1997).

Cosmological and Temporal Work: This means that the phenomenon of time-work, according to Meinert and Whyte (2013), works simultaneously on different timescales, addressing past trauma, managing the present, and shaping potential futures for the deceased in foreign soil. In this way, *time-work*, is a means of repairing relationships and alleviating spiritual contamination—such as cen (spirits of the vengeful dead)—caused by the conflict and the tragedy of being buried 'in the wrong soil' (Finnistrom, 2008).

These indications imply, essentially, that Meinert and Whyte (2013) are of the view that reburials among the Acholi people of Uganda are not just traditional rituals, but rather a 'time-work' effort, which entails a deliberate attempt by those concerned to create temporal continuity for the deceased formerly buried and stuck in the wrong soil or foreign land, after years of disruption (Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon, 2015).

Research Question 5: *Describe in detail the ritual of reburial as highlighted in the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon (2015), indicating the ritual materials, the ritual agents, and the process that is followed to effect a successful post-conflict reburial process?*

In relation to this question, the first point to make is that as indicated in the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon (2015), in post-conflict Acholiland, the reburial process is a "home-bringing" process designed to move spirits from the "wrong soil" of IDP camps back to ancestral homes, utilizing an orup (wooden stick) as a vessel for the spirit to be transported by male family members (serving as ritual agents). The process specifically involves the ritual of taking and transporting soil and the orup (ritual materials) to a new gravesite, followed by cleansing rituals (ritual process) to ensure spiritual peace, family reunification, and the successful transformation of the spirit of the deceased from a formerly spirit haunting ghost into a protective ancestor.

Indeed, in Acholiland, northern Uganda, as noted in the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon (2015), reburials can take different forms, but ritual labour and engagement with the soil are always involved. Here it is noteworthy to point out that as highlighted in the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon (2015), such reburials do not always involve a physical exhumation of the bodies, but are necessarily effected through more complex associations between the soil, the spirits of the dead, and the bodily remains (Van Gennep, [1909] , 1960). Consequently, as ancestral spirits are believed to be intrinsically tied up with bones of the dead, such bones as well as the wooden sticks used to level soil on graves (orup) [as ritual materials] may become the material to 'carry' the spirit of the dead safely from the former IDP camp back home to enable them to be in a position to join their ancestors (Jindra & Noret, 2011).

Ritual Agents used in the Reburial Process in Africa generally

Given below are ritual agents and materials used among the Acholi and even in some other African cultures in the reburial process as highlighted in the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon (2015). In terms of ritual agents, the reburial process is generally led by those with authority over spiritual and communal matters such as:

Family elders/heads as ritual agents: These manage the practical aspects of exhumation (where applicable), the reburial process itself, and the accompanying rituals, such as negotiating with the ancestors.

Traditional healers/sangomas: In the southern African contexts, specifically, that is to say, apart from what happens among the Acholi, these agents are called into action when there is need to appease the ancestors and manage the restless spirits of the deceased to be reburied.

Community/Clans: Both among the Acholi and other indigenous African communities in general, collective participation is considered vital to ensure that the deceased is properly honoured by the community they belong to.

Ritual Materials used in reburial among the Acholi and other African cultures:

As noted in the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon (2015), and from data from other studies (Odoki, 1997) the following, among others, constitute the variety of ritual materials that are used in many instances where reburial rituals are called for:

Traditional Beer (Umqombothi): Brewed for ancestral libations to welcome the spirit back and to show respect.

Livestock (Sheep/Cow/Goat): Slain for cleansing ceremonies, with the skin often used to cover the 'coffin' or bones.

Fresh Cloth/Wrapping: The exhumed bones are rewrapped in new, clean cloth (often white) to signify renewal.

Soil/Dirt: Some traditions, apart from the Acholi, involve taking of soil from the original grave and placing it in a container to accompany the body home. (Douglas, 1966).

Cleansing Herbs/Aloe: Again, in some African groups, apart from the Acholi, this is used in water to wash mourners and tools (like shovels/picks) to banish the "darkness" of death.

Process of Post-Conflict Reburial in Africa generally:

As highlighted earlier in this discussion successful reburial, particularly among the Acholi as noted in the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon (2015) follows a structured, multi-stage process, essentially similar to practices like umbuyiso in Zimbabwe or famadihana in Madagascar, often including the following:

Consultation and Notification: This means that before the reburial process is embarked on the diviners or family elders in some African cultures are consulted to ensure the ancestors are agreeable to the exhumation (where applicable).

Exhumation and Cleansing: Where, as in some cases, the body is exhumed, some cleansing rituals are performed to remove the violence from the remains.

Repatriation and Reintroduction: This requires, in some African cultures, that the remains should first be taken to the family home and, often, allowed to stay there overnight, in order to allow the spirit to reconnect with its home.

The "Home-Bringing" Ritual: In most reburial processes, a beast is slaughtered, and a home-bringing ceremony is performed to formally invite the ancestor to protect the living and formally end the mourning period (Odoki, 1979; Bloch & Parry, 1982).

Final Burial: In most reburial rituals, remains of the deceased are fetched from where it was originally interred and finally re-buried, often with personal items, followed in some cultures by an unveiling of a tombstone that is done later to symbolize permanent rest and honour for the spirit of reburied deceased.

Research Question 6: *Briefly explain how Development Initiatives are related to the challenge of reburials in post-conflict camps/lands in Africa. Use the difficulties and complications caused by JICA project to clarify the negative impact of rushed deadlines that Development Agencies such as the JICA gave to the people in effecting the reburials to recover the land for development process.*

As highlighted in the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon (2015), Development Initiatives in Northern Uganda usually faced the challenge of reburials because the recovery of land—often contaminated with graves from Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps—is essential for reconstruction, farming, and rehabilitation (Branch, 2011; Brun, 2001). However, rushed deadlines imposed by Development Agencies, such as JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency), frequently conflicted with local cultural, spiritual, and psychosocial needs for proper reburial, turning "bones in the wrong soil" into a source of ongoing trauma and conflict.

Indeed, the menace suffered by the displaced Acholi locals at the hands of Development Initiatives was noted to include the following:

Reburial Considered as Obstruction:

Graves in former IDP camps were treated as obstacles to development, land commercialization, and infrastructure expansion. And the time it takes to plan adequately for proper reburial after the war is considered a time wasting process antagonistic to development initiatives (Branch, 2011; Brun, 2001).

Problem of Competing Temporalities: Development agencies operated on fast-paced, donor-driven project timelines, while local communities require time-consuming, culturally specific rituals to rebury the dead, move spirits, and heal from war trauma.

Given the above scenario, some of the negative effects of JICA rushed deadlines and other complications for the locals as noted in the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon (2015) include:

Neglect of Cultural Rites: Rushed timelines often mean "bones are moved in the wrong soil," creating more problems for the locals; as it still separates deceased bones from ancestral or familial lands, which causes emotional distress and cultural offense (Whyte, et al., 2014; Whyte, et al., 2013b).

Social Disruption: Projects that rush reburials to secure land often fail to allow the locals time for the comprehensive traditional healing or community consultations needed, potentially reigniting local conflicts over land tenure (Whyte, et al. 2014; Whyte, et al., 2013b).

Focus on Structure rather than on People's Spiritual Connection to their Land and the Deceased: Another challenge faced by the locals in post-conflict reburials as highlighted in the article under study is similar to development-induced displacements elsewhere in Africa, in which projects can prioritize the physical infrastructure over the local populace's spiritual connection to the land and the deceased (Whyte, et al., 2014; Whyte et al., 2013b).

In sum, then, when Development Agencies give priority to fast-tracked development projects, the necessary reburial processes are often truncated, resulting in traumatic experiences, the desecration of cultural practices, and enduring social tension regarding the 'wrongful' handling of the deceased (Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon, 2015).

CONCLUSION

In reaching to this stage the whole discussion can now be concluded by way of highlighting the significance of proper burial rites in the overall destiny of the spirit of the deceased as understood in Africa. Commenting in this regard and as can be discerned from the article by Jahn & Wilhelm-Solomon's (2015) and other existing literature on the same theme, one can say that burial rites are understood in Africa as a whole as being of strategic importance to the spirit of the deceased (Bloch & Parry, 1982). Consequently, when properly conducted it generates four crucial NADE effects: *Notification, Attestation, Distinction, and Endorsement*.

A brief clarification of these four dimensional effects emerging from the performance of proper burial rites in the economy and destiny of the spirit of the deceased in the African context is offered below:

Notification: By this is meant that it is through the burial rites conducted for the deceased that the ancestors are officially notified of the person's passing and therefore that the period of the deceased person's citizenship in the land of the living has come to an end.

Attestation: By according a proper burial to a deceased, the members of the deceased family and the community at large attest to the ancestors that the deceased has died of a good standing or an ordinary death, having lived honourably while on earth, and so deserves to be admitted into the company and the citizenship of the ancestral world.

Distinction: While in almost all cases, there are some specific regular processes to be followed in giving a deceased person a proper burial, the thickness of the processes entered into in each case vary according to the status of the one who died. In this way, each deceased person is accorded a burial process that befits his/her status or rank in life: elderly or young, ordinary citizen or a ruler, male or female, married or unmarried, wealthy or poor, etc. These classifications are crucial for proper placement of the spirit of the deceased in the world of the ancestors.

In that way, through the quality of the burial accorded to a given deceased person by the living; the ancestors are able to discern the rank or status to be accorded to the deceased person in the land of the ancestors. This process implies the understanding in Africa that the ancestral world is like the world of the living, such that one's status in the land of the living determines the status which the one will be accorded in the land of the living-dead. In that way, a king here in the land of the living, like among the Nri (in Nigeria) will end up with a royal status accorded to him in the land of the living-dead. (Shaw, 1977).

Endorsement (by the ancestors)

Under this heading the understanding in Africa is that the voice of the living is usually in sync with the voice of the ancestors since the codes of conduct that moderate the life of the living are those that have been endorsed or laid down by the ancestors of old. Hence, all the burial rite decisions that are made by the living; including the decision about those who deserve to be buried, and who do not (which are often the fate of those who died out of suicide) are endorsed by the ancestors.

In sum then, these four interrelated effects arising from the processes of according the deceased in good standing a proper burial underscores the basis why enormous effort is made among many indigenous groups in the South and other regions of Africa, to ensure that those who died in a foreign land and were buried in a wrong soil such as happened during the 20-year war period in Northern Uganda, are fetched back home for proper reburial of their remains. This is to ensure that the spirits of such deceased relatives could continue in their journey to their ancestral home (Mbiti, 1969).

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