

## THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN COUNSELING VICTIMS OF ORGANIZED VIOLENCE

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### INTRODUCTION

This is a report of the author's examination of the role of religion in counseling victims of organized violence, as applied in three major services: (1) IRCT (International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims) in Malawi [Malawi-IRCT], (2) IPSER (International Psycho-social and Socio-Ecological Research Institute), psychosocial assistance program for refugees in Uganda [Uganda-IPSER], and (3) DW (Diakonisches Werk or the Social Service Agency of the Evangelical Church in Germany with its program of Psychosocial Centres for Refugees) in Germany [Germany-DW] from 1991-1996.

Desjarlais et al. (1995 p.146) have described the importance of social and cultural support systems in trauma experiences. That religious affiliation can serve as a protective factor with regard to stressors is widely recognized. Though such affiliation may be a source of social support, its primary effect may be to serve as an ideological form to structure psychological coping mechanisms.

Based on an anthropological study with refugees on the Thai-Kampuchean border, Reynell (Desjarlais, 1995) notes that people who had confidence in Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia and the resistance movement appeared to be more healthy than those who had not. Regarding her work in the Occupied Territories in Palestine, Punamaki (1986) reported that the "psychological process of healing ... drew strength from political and ideological commitment."

Langford (1980) describes the positive effects of reintroducing previously repressed cultural and spiritual practices in the treatment of seriously traumatized Kampuchean in a Thai border refugee camp. Similarly, Cambodian youths resettled within the United States and Australia reported that traditional religious beliefs and ritual were powerful resources in combatting painful memories of the past.

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Vesti and Kastrup (1992 p. 360) report that many torture survivors find solace in religious texts which address general humanitarian issues and emotions. Survivors sometimes wished to discuss "eternal questions" such as guilt, sin, and suicide as they relate to religion, or they may search for basic ethical and moral values in religious texts in order to regain a "basic belief in humanity" or to "find faith again." Vesti et al. (1992) warn that any psychotherapeutic labeling of religious experiences arising during torture as mere hallucinations or wishful thinking discloses an uninformed point of view.

Religious thoughts and activities in fact may be important coping or defense mechanisms. In some cases, religion is the prerequisite for survival. The comfort provided by a religious context may be critical for survivors of torture who receive information about the murder of family or friends. Consequently, disrespect for the spirituality of the survivors could seriously hamper the therapeutic process. Illustrating a supportive approach, Cunningham and SHove (1993) describe clients who are deeply religious people. One, a twenty-nine-year-old woman who was a political activist from a Middle Eastern country, interpreted most of her torture experiences in terms of her relationship with Allah and the idea of a just Islamic society. One method she initiated to regain a sense of empowerment was to meditate every night while wearing the traditional Muslim sackcloth which is used to purify oneself. She has also shown interest in developing an active group of compatriots who try to integrate within a religious framework an understanding of their shared persecution.

Lee and Lu (1989) have described culturally specific coping strategies of Asian immigrants and refugees as follows:

*Functional coping:* believing in "fate" and *karma*, recreating a flexible family support system and community support network; focusing on new dreams and new priorities; regaining self-worth through hard work; exercising self-control and self-discipline.

*Dysfunctional coping:* somatization; denial and silence; avoidance; projection; learned helplessness.

Cheung (1994) explains the coping style of "believing in 'fate' and *karma*" as referring to the Buddhist belief in reincarnation and the meaning of suffering. Those who had a strong sense of coherence were able to accept their trauma and suffering as necessary challenges to enable them to attain a higher state of being in the next world, and were thus protected from the development of PTSD.

Marsella and Dash-Scheuer (1988) described coping beliefs in Asian societies (Philippines, Taiwan, Korea, Hawaiian Americans, Japanese Americans) as follows: projection; acceptance; religion; optimistic fatalism; self-responsibility; perseverance; self-action; goal minimization; social support; subtle interpersonal strategies; value being placed on sociability and affiliation; avoidance; displaying apathy under stress; inactive, indirect problem solving; external locus of control; emphasizing group or environmental responsibility for problems and their resolution.

THE RELIGIOUS COPING APPROACH

In Western societies, coping and working through the trauma of organized violence is often focused on an intrapsychic conflict, a developmental disorder of personality, "learned behavior," and introspection/memorizing (internal conflict). In non-Western societies, however, there is less focus on working through the trauma because the conflict is conceptualized as in the environmental, situational aspects of conflicts. The suffering is perceived as external (often somatic, separated from personality), with the consequent projection/acting out (external conflict), and splitting off (cyclical, transforming) of the traumatic experience (Peltzer, 1996: 224ff.) (v. Table 1).

TABLE I  
COMPARISON OF RELIGIOUS HEALING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY APPROACHES TO TRAUMA  
(ADAPTED FROM PELTZER, 1996: 224)

NON-WESTERN RELIGIOUS HEALING	MODERN WESTERN PSYCHOTHERAPY
(1) External/situative conflict; Projection/acting out	Intrapsychic conflict; Introspection/memorizing
(2) Suffering perceived as external, often somatic, separated from personality	Developmental disorder of personality; "learned behavior"
(3) Splitting off (Cyclical, transforming)	Becoming integrated (linear, Id becomes Ego)
(4) Integration (social harmony)	Individuation (subjective harmony)

*The Non-Western Religious Healing Model*

The application of the religious healing model to coping styles of trauma victims, further delineated by the strategies recognized by Lee and Lu (1989), Cheung (1994), and Marsella and Dash-Schere (1988), leads to the following categorizations:

*External/situative conflict; Projection/acting out:* Focusing on new dreams and new priorities; displaying apathy under stress; denial and silence; avoidance; projection; inactive, indirect problem solving; self-action.

During imprisonment a Buddhist dreamed one night: "I was walking on a steep rocky mountain, I found myself falling to some level below, As I was lying there, I dreamt His Holiness the Dalai Lama was calling to me: 'What are you doing here? - come up I will help you. His Holiness pulled me up and as I was pulled up I awoke. And from there I got the feeling that I was certain I would come out alive from my ordeal" (Mathiasen & Lutzerm 1993).

Malawian torture survivors use statements such as, "*Mavuto anga onse ndichi-fukwa cha iwo*" (All my problems are because of them) or attribute their problems to witchcraft or hatred. Examples for the latter are: "I have mistrust with the chairman of MCP, who is still alive, that is why I am still in town," or "I am afraid he might bewitch me for he has failed to remove my life by creating a story that I had links with rebels."

*Suffering perceived as external, often somatic, separated from personality:* Soma-  
tization; optimistic fatalism; external locus of control.

Malawian torture survivors use metaphors referring to optimistic fatalism like *Pukutindi zimhu zo yendera lamulo* (Since they are things which move by/with the law, accept things as they are); *Ngakhale zimachuika ine sinditayamtima* (Although they happen, I don't lose heart).

*Splitting off (cyclical, transforming):* Believing in "fate" and *karma*; regaining self-worth through hard work; acceptance; perseverance; goal minimization.

Mathiasen and Lutzer (1993) state that the law of *karma* implies that what a person experiences in this life of suffering and happiness is caused by acts done previously either in this life or an earlier one.

A Tibetan torture survivor said: "When I was subjected to this kind of suffering, I felt that some misdeed which I had committed in my past life had now to be repaid, and I used to wish that more suffering would come so that more misdeeds would be cancelled away. So in that way, I was able to bear the sufferings. And then there was no real suffering as such. The feeling was that the suffering was going away."

Malawian torture survivors use metaphors like *Ndimayesetsa kuthamangitsa maganizo* (I try to chase away thoughts) Or *Maganizo onse amaftifutika* (All thoughts get rubbed off/erased). Furthermore, the religiously oriented Jehovah's Witnesses de-emphasize the trauma by putting their belief in God, a better future in life and after death (paradise) which is indicated in their use of aphorisms: *Sindidzakusiyapakuti ndine m'busa wabwino* (I shall never leave you for I am a good shepherd); *Zonse akudziwa ndi mulungu* (All God knows); *Ndimakhulupilira mulungoyekha* (I trust God only); *Mulungua Ubenazo, amasamalira anthu onse* (God has nothing, does not care, he cares for all people); *Nthawi inapita, mulungundiye amadziwazonse* (time went, God knows all),

*Integration (social harmony):* Value being placed on sociability and affiliation; subtle interpersonal strategies; emphasizing group or environmental responsibility for problems and their resolution.

A twenty-three-year-old Buddhist: When I am subjected to all this kind of suffering, I feel that I am not suffering for myself, but I am suffering for others too. So in that way even if I am subjected to all this kind of beating and torture-somehow it's going to help others (Mathiasen & Lutzer, 1993).

#### *An Ecological View of Trauma Recovery*

An ecological view of trauma recovery as proposed by Harvey (1996) also can be applied usefully to the categorization and interpretation of the recovery from trauma symptoms in Malawian torture survivors.

#### *Authority over the remembering process*

By reading the Bible the thoughts brush off.

### *Integration of memory/affect and "body"*

Whenever I remember about the past, I sometimes feel great for having survived the trials of Satan. The pain gets lessened. Psahn 55 Vs 22 reads: "Give all your troubles to God and he will make you happy again."

### *Affect tolerance*

These people did not know what they were doing, due to evil spirits/Satan.

We always discuss things in a group so the thoughts of the past no longer pain me, for it only expresses how Jehovah's Witnesses have triumphed over Satan's wish.

With all the pains that I have had, I only rush for the Bible since it gives hope for the future and it is the source of comfort. There are so many chapters that help me, and one of them is Rev. 21 Vs 4-5; it gives us the hope that "God will wipe all our tears," meaning that he shall remove all diseases in the body, which really makes me strong.

### *Symptom mastery*

I control by not walking alone for fear that other men would rape me again.

Medication.

Reduce sleeping problem because I read the Bible before sleeping.

Headaches are now decreasing because of the medication and faith in God.

As for my Christianity I quickly rush for the Bible and after reading I feel the thoughts going down, being forgotten little by little.

### *Self-esteem and self-cohesion*

This is my home country; a non-revenging attitude helps me a lot and I cope with prayers; also the neighbours here accept us (give even free water).

I do not blame myself for my problems for it was written that because of Jesus' name people will suffer in different ways.

Jesus said, "He who will suffer because of my name will have eternal life." Now with that I don't feel any shame and I don't feel any bad either.

There is nothing I did wrong. Jesus and his Apostles suffered a lot at the hands of others, so with this experience of mine I feel jovial to have been one of the sufferers on this earth.

### *Safe attachment*

Jesus said, "Forgive your enemies." I do forgive them, but it's they who do not have the spirit of forgiving me.

### *Meaningmaking("Why me")*

My problems have one meaning that is overcoming the temptations of Satan; that's why I have solace in God.

As a Jehovah's Witness I already learnt of this before it happened, so after happening, I knew that it was its own fulfillment through our scriptures.

I ask myself that "why did this happen to me?" Then I know that even before some people had suffered the same. and that Jesus said that in time to come such and such things will happen. and with me I don't worry.

### RELIGIOUS INTERVENTION

Religious intervention techniques have been used in the treatment of victims of organized violence. The following examples illustrate their application to those people who faced disappearance, death, rape, and PTSD.

#### *Disappearance and Death*

Mupinda (1995) describes traditional forms of coping in Zimbabwe with disappearances of people who left the country to join the liberation movements outside the country and did not return after the war. In a majority of cases, it is not known whether these people succeeded in joining the guerilla movements and died in combat or whether they disappeared on the way to or from their destinations.

It should be noted that as far as the affected families are concerned, how the member disappeared is of lesser consequence than the fact that they disappeared at all. The spiritual consequences that emanate from a disappearance and the attendant ramifications (whatever the circumstances of the disappearance) are what the families are concerned with most of all. Nonetheless, clarification of the fate of the disappeared member is a vital prerequisite for a process of healing. Healing cannot take place until a disappearance has been resolved. Death must first be established or confirmed. Furthermore, before commencing the appropriate rituals of bringing the spirit of the dead back home from the bush, the family first seeks confirmation of death through various means. Families of the disappeared person thus frequently put forth enormous effort and expense, including consultations with traditional healers, to discover what has happened to the missing family member. It is believed that the spirit of the disappeared member can possess, and speak through, a living family member, making known its demands. It is also believed that the fate of a disappeared member can be revealed through dreams and visions of the person's relatives.

In Shona family life, for example, death has very important social and spiritual consequences. All death (except in the very elderly) is seen as being caused by malevolent forces, whether these emanate from the family or from outside (e.g., witchcraft) and all death requires appeasement and ritual management. Where neither the body nor the cause of the death can be ascertained, it is expected that the family

will experience negative consequences, usually in the form of further sickness, death, or ill-fortune,

*Divination about whether the person is alive or dead.* A Madi traditional healer from Sudan may throw the cowrie shells six to eight times and also consult the ancestral spirits. As a result, it will be confirmed whether the person who had disappeared is alive or dead. When it is confirmed that the person is alive, then the patient will be reassured by the spirits not to worry and that their person will eventually come. If the person is dead, three stages may be followed. Stage one: the patient is prepared for the bad news: he or she is told that there is another problem which is coming soon, observing the patient's reaction, and then the patient may be told to come back another time so that one can communicate with the (dead) person. During the second stage, the patient is told about the death of their relative. Sometimes the patient comes back and finds out that his or her relative must have died. Then the cowrie shells are thrown to confirm that the person has died and consoling words are uttered to the patient (money given previously as a deposit is returned). On returning home the patient is told to write a message for the deceased and burn it together with some herbs. At the third stage, the relatives of the buried person consult the traditional healer in order to find out the cause of the death (e.g., curse from elders, disagreements/envy, spirits were not brought home by elders).

A man and a woman consulted a Madi healer in May 1995 about their son who had disappeared two years earlier. He was heard to have returned to Sudan in 1992. The ancestral spirits of the healer advised them not to go to Sudan since there was a letter coming to them. After a month they reported to the healer that they had received a letter telling them that their son had died four days ago. Now they wanted to go and see the grave of their son in Sudan. The ancestral spirits confirmed that they would go and come back safely,

An example of a disappearance reported by a traditional healer in Malawi:

In 1971, people were taken by soldiers from Mozambique and disappeared completely. Their relatives came to me and I did the following:

I collected some herbs composed of an old straw of sweet potato, and some top secret roots, and mixed. In the mixture was also a tail of a house lizard so that those people should remember home. They came with me to a road junction in the evening and I told them to (knee) down facing the direction where the soldiers passed. While in that position I instructed them to wash their heads while simultaneously saying: "Sympathize with us and come back home." After saying this they all came home with me leaving the container upside down at the junction. They were told not to look back.

I gave them some medicine, called "*Chimdima*" (the darkness) in Chewa, to be put in the porridge and each of them had to drink the stuff. They eventually reported that the people were released by soldiers and that they were in the village now, except one woman who became a wife of the gang leader. I called for them and the victims. I gave them some "medicine to settle the mind" to drink, and they went back home.

*Divination of family members} afflicted by spirits of disappeared/dead relative.* Family members may suffer from various mental and functional symptoms like

fainting, body weakness, feeling of running away, jerking body, headache, heart palpitation, or being confronted with a lot of misfortunes.

Madi divination, Sudan:

Family members are invited to sit on a goat's skin on the floor, Then the cowrie shells are thrown on the goat's skin about six:times. If the story told by the ancestral spirits is about a family member who was not buried it will be diagnosed as "*Oritilindiri*,"which means a spirit of a deceased family member who died away from home is seeking to reunite with the family members.

A case from the Shona is described by Mupinda (1995):

Mr. M. has a "standard two" education and was employed as a dental therapist assistant before being laid off during the war. He earns his livelihood from subsistence fanning. He was informed of the death of his two children, soon after independence, by former guerillas from his village who had witnessed the death of his son in a security forces ambush on the border with Mozambique. Some comrades had also witnessed the death of his daughter at Chimoio, Mozambique, during a security forces raid. After receiving the news and being overcome by grief Mr. M. did not consider that he needed to do anything about it.

He had not experienced any unusual problems till about two years ago, His two grandchildren began to suffer from a mysterious illness. They had nightmares and spoke in their sleep. They also reported various symptoms but no disease was diagnosed at the hospital. Mr. M. also reported that they behaved oddly. These occurrences propelled him to consult traditional healers who informed him that these problems were being caused by spirits of his two children which sought to be brought back home. For Mr. M. it was not possible to find the dead bodies of both of his children. His daughter had been buried in a mass grave in Mozambique and his son's body had been ferried away by security forces.

Mr. M. reported that the mysterious illness affecting his grandchildren stopped after the burial rites were performed. The [grand-]children were also no longer manifesting strange behaviors, he said, while pointing to the two graves which lay side by side on an anthill in a field to the west of the homestead. For Mr. M. his family can expect to enjoy the eternal protection from his kin who have gone before him.

A case from the Madi:

A woman consulted the traditional healer with her thirty-year-old son. She complained that her grandchildren were always sick and that her son had lots of misfortunes especially with his business. The ancestral spirits divined that all these things happened because of the husband, the son's father who was killed in the war. He had been shot dead and thrown into a river. Therefore the father's spirit were bringing all the misfortunes to her son. They were advised to perform the last funeral rite for the father.

*Rituals to bring the spirit of the dead, home.*

Shona culture:

Villages are invited to witness the symbolic burial of a goat's head wrapped in a piece of white cloth. Together with items of clothing belonging to the disappeared, the goat's head is buried in a proper grave with the respect accorded to the dead. All other procedures that



are normally conducted at the burial are followed including a cleansing ceremony where it is believed that the spirits of the disappeared person will rise with the power of the spirit to take their eternal place in the spirit world (*Nyakadzimu*) (Mupinda, 1995),

#### Madi culture:

A Maw healer from Sudan reports: First a tukul has to be erected for the deceased. Then both the paternal and maternal relatives have to be there, including the uncle of the deceased. A male goat has to be slaughtered and part of the meat (hind legs) are kept overnight hanging in the tukul meant for the deceased... Finally, the maternal uncles of the deceased have to say a word of curse to avoid such happening.

In the absence of the corpse and if no bones of the deceased can be discovered, a traditional burial with a fruit called "*Nyumaaur*:" is conducted. The *Nyumburi* fruit symbolizes the bones or corpse of the deceased closing the gate of death. It is just like a lock ending the whole thing about death and bringing a blessing to the well-being of the family members. During the funeral rite day the *Nyumburi* fruit is buried in the traditional manner corpses are buried including a fireplace set, uncles are given their cigarettes, and the previous ash of the fireplace collected and thrown off.

The family consultation may go as follows: The people related to the unburied person come to consult to find out if there are any problems with the deceased person, e.g., incomplete marriage (agreed bride price not yet paid) or problems with ancestors sometime back. After these consultations agreements are made about shortfalls to be addressed, a prayer is held, and a burial of the *Nyumburi* fruit is conducted,

#### A case in the Madi society:

A female refugee of forty years was brought to the traditional healer with mental confusion. She liked to run away, and her body had been jerking during the past seven days. It was divined that she was suffering from spirits of the deceased who disappeared during the war called "*Ortilindr!dri*." She was given some herbs and she started drinking fluids again. A ritual was performed for her in the presence of the relatives. She had to sit down on a chair and when the drum was beaten she jumped up to dance. A male goat was slaughtered and cooked. Beer was brewed and a pot placed in the mother's home to represent the deceased person. A small part of the food had to be put in that pot before anyone began to eat.

Westermeyer (1989) describes how grieving death at a distance presents special problems. Around the world, funeral practices serve a mental health function by demonstrating the finality of the event (through showing, cremating, or burying the body), through mutual support, via renegotiating kith and kin ties to replace obligations to and support from the deceased, and by initiating the period of grief work. The absence of a corpse and a funeral ritual undermines this culturally supported healing process. Grief therapy may be indicated in cases of missed, complicated, or delayed grief reactions. Patients can be guided in the process of grieving by urging they follow these steps:

(1) Undertake an appropriate ritual despite the absence of a corpse (e.g., a Catholic mass, sitting Jewish shiva, Theravada Buddhist ceremony with prayers and "cutting strings" for the deceased); (2) establish a symbolic presence of the deceased for a year or longer (e.g., an Asian ancestor altar, with a photograph of the deceased, his or her

favorite flowers, foods, or other objects); (3) discuss the deceased person with friends and family, reviewing the person's life, recalling happy as well as problematic events in the person's life.

### *Rape*

Rape victims typically complained about bodily pains, fear of having contracted a venereal disease, fear of pregnancy, and PTSD symptoms. Herbal treatments were given for bodily pains, treatment or preventions of a venereal disease, and PTSD symptoms.

Rituals and prayers of cleansing are used for rape victims in Sudan and Malawi in order to reduce bodily pains and PTSD symptoms. Cleansing rituals by a Madi traditional healer are as follows:

If it happened in the bush: The father of the raped girl is to bring a goat to the stream with the maternal uncle there. Call the name of the stream, pierce the goat to death in the bush, and leave it to rot; take the intestines of the goat, tell the spirits of the river to go back.

If it happened at home: The girl sits on a special stool, drums are beaten for the spirits of the river to come and possess the girl and tell the audience what they want to eat like greens, peas, chicken, drinks. When this happens, they bring a chicken and a goat. They start drumming and the girl goes round with the goat. The goat is killed and the evil spirits transferred to the goat are chased away. The head and legs of the goat are left under a tree; good spirits are called. The girl eats some of the goat and spits some out; the rest is eaten by the community.

The traditional healer goes to the bush where everyone can see and shakes a rattle called *tewe*; the spirits talk loud in the bush, the healer will ask, "Are you all here? You talk, we have remained. Thank you, go home in peace." In the process the husband is not told that his wife has been raped. If she became pregnant by the rapist, the child is believed to become a dead child.

A case in the Apostolic healing church, Malawi:

In 1975, a certain woman was raped by an MCP Chairman in the area of Mchesi in Lilongwe. The woman did not hide this from her husband who openly brought the case to us (church members). Due to the raping she believed she had an unknown disease causing pain in the genitals. She said that after the rape she immediately had bad dreams about the stressor, and sometimes had persecutory experiences. Even when she made love with her husband, she sometimes remembered the pains of that traumatic experience.

The party chairman said that if this woman really respected the president and the party, she had no chance of refusing the sexual intercourse because "*A-Malawi sitisankhana mtundu*" (Malawians do not select each other's tribe). Therefore love must not be refused (in a bushy area). The church members called for the woman to conduct prayers together, the reverend prayed: "Nothing is difficult before God and the Lord; we ask you to remove all the bad things from this woman. We recall that Jesus, your son was tempted but he succeeded. We also ask your Holy powers to descend and cleanse the woman. Almighty God, remove the evil powers of the party leaders so that our woman must eventually be free

as every human being, May this party chairman be removed from the chair, almighty God. But most of all, bring good health to this woman, bring good spirit on to her so that she must realize your powers and never be tempted again."

We prayed together for seven days, and every day the woman reported some good changes until the pains stopped. She never remembered the rapist nor the incident. She became a dedicated member of our church but later started going for party meetings again and the marriage was broken.

### *PTSD (Treatments by Traditional Healers)*

*Ritual treatments:* An example from the former Yugoslavia:

Loncarevic (1995: 141ff.) describes a Bosnian healer who uses instrumental medium divination which leads to identifying the type, origin, and symptoms of the trauma of the patient, such as sleeping problems, nervousness, anxiety, and similar traumatic symptoms. Thereafter with the help of Muslim prayers, rituals are performed involving four different body parts (head, chest, knees, and feet). For each body part a particular Koran verse is recited in order to remove the fear from the patient starting from the head, and moving through chest, knees, and then finally exorcised through the feet. At the end of the ritual the trauma is symbolically extinguished by dipping burning coal into a water bowl. The remaining ritual water will be given to the patient for daily use, namely to wash the body reenacting the original exorcising ritual.

A case in Mozambique:

Junior Efraime (1993: 41) reports about a traditional healer who was consulted by a boy who had killed people as a Ranamo soldier and now felt persecuted by the people he had killed. He also suffered from headache, loss of appetite, and body fatigue. The healer told the boy that he could only help him as a medium between the killed people and him. Thus, the deceased spoke to the boy. The boy apologized for what he had done and added that he had been forced to do so. The deceased demanded material compensation from the boy; he should go and see the relatives of the deceased and look after them. The cathartic effect was tremendous for the boy and his parents who also attended. They followed the advice of the killed persons. Since then he no longer suffered from nightmares and feelings of guilt. He also found a meaning and something to do in his life.

## COUNSELING AND PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC APPROACHES TO TRAUMA

### *Religious Counseling (Uganda-IPSER)*

Following the assessment of spiritual orientation and spiritual practice described by Hutton (1994), sixteen counselors in Uganda-IPSER were surveyed for their orientations and practices. Most counselors performed or attended a particular spiritual practice, such as attending services, praying, attending a spiritual group, reading spiritual material, etc. Most felt that they had had the feeling of being close to a powerful spiritual force, that their spiritual/religious orientation affected their counseling practice, and that it was important for the counselor to have a regular spiritual

or religious practice (e.g., prayer, fellowship). The commonly applied spiritual counseling techniques were: prayer, discussions of spiritual/religious issues, recommending specific spiritual/religious practice, recommending spiritual/religious books (The Bible), recommending *spiritual* (traditional or Christian) rituals. Two counselors described their approaches:

I use stories, cases, Bible quotations, proverbs, sayings, metaphors, etc., e.g., "Life is both a mixture of joy and sorrow" or "A twelve-year-old boy lost his father; he was shot by soldiers. He feels he is ready to join the military and take revenge. He suffers from sleepless nights, nightmares, loss of appetite. But he is a religious boy and according to the Bible, 'one should not pay back evil with evil.' By joining the military and seeking revenge-the father can't come back to life."

I told her that I understood her problems, first that she had no children. Secondly, she was a devoted Christian but then she lost the things [her possessions] in the church. Thirdly, that the brothers of the husband somehow persecuted her. So, regarding the loss of utensils in the church I told her that it was nothing, God even doesn't think of those things-those utensils don't serve God, they actually serve us human beings, maybe those who go there to serve Him, So many people have lost millions of things, talk of the priests themselves or the Bishops, talk of Y. diocese, how many vehicles did they lose'] how many houses, how much property did they leave? Do you think God will break on you harder than breaking on those? So you don't have to worry. If God can forgive sinners, people who are killers, and this and that, why not you? It was not your mistake. And about children, don't worry because there are many people also barren. It may not be your problem, maybe it could have been that because of the confusion there was no time to follow, to take you to a hospital (to follow up what was wrong), but that should not have worried you because your husband loved you and you are able to raise children, whom if it were not because of death would still point back and say that: "this is our stepmother:" so you should have been happy about that.

Regarding persecution, okay, your brothers-in-law are human beings who can have reactions like any other person. Of course the brother was staying with you in Sudan, and they themselves were safe in Zaire; they think that maybe it is you who is making the brother not come. But they could have blamed the brother instead because it is the brother who should have told you where to go. You follow the man, So don't take these things so seriously because they will break you down more. There are many people living in refugee camps but if all of them were seated near you and if each one was asked, "what is your problem? what is your problem?" perhaps you would come to find that there is somebody Who is carrying a more weighty problem. We are not trying to say that your problem is little-your problem is heavy. It needs cooperation, but it is you in the end who will improve your problem. I may talk, but if you don't take the words I tell you seriously, then it will not help.

### *Cross-cultural Religious Counseling (Uganda-IPSER)*

Since he is a believer in the traditional rites, it will be better to approach the elders who would perform rituals so that he gets psychologically free because his two brothers were killed (which he witnessed) unmarried, such that their spirit will not allow him to marry or have feelings for women.

A fourteen-year-old depressive girl: Some of her traumatic events were: when the SPLA destroyed their home and chased them away, and then the loss of their elder sister, the forced isolation from their grandfather when he left them, the death of their mother, the death of her grandfather, and then dropping out of school.

The traumatic symptoms were: screaming and becoming unconscious, convulsions, headaches, terrible nightmares about the grandfather, and not able to sleep in one house for several days.

Then I went with the client to a traditional healer who divined that the girl had strong spirits and that she was to become a diviner. The girl's grandfather was a strong diviner, so the grandfather died and his spirit was just moving; it had not found a real person to stay with, so the spirit had come to this girl and did not go back. Normally, rituals had to be done so that she can become a traditional healer, but since the girl refused as she was still young and going to school, the diviner suggested to "detain" the spirits to heal her quickly. Then the healer organized a sacrificial ritual for her with meat of a cow and goat. Some people were there drumming and then she was given a spear with two arrows. They drummed for a short time and she became possessed, then she was pushed where the diviner's spirits stayed. She was told to kneel while facing the diviner's spirit place. So from there she said they started rolling something on her, starting from her buttocks towards the head facing the diviner's spirit place. They did that four times until she fell down unconscious. So after some time she became conscious-the spirits were removed from her and transferred to the diviner's place.

Since then she only had one nightmare with someone talking to her saying, "If you don't accept us, you are not going anywhere." The healer advised her that if you have such a dream you also talk, saying, "I am young and I don't have anybody to assist me. So there is no place for you."

So when the client came to me I also advised her that since now she was a bit okay, she was able to go to school, and that she should put much emphasis on the studies because she had gone back to class seven and she had to work harder in order to pass. After one year follow-up she was still doing fine in school.

#### *Supervision (Uganda-IPSER)*

A nineteen-year-old female pastoral worker complains of headaches, sleeping problems; when she is alone she starts thinking too much and becomes sad. Now she cannot even go to school. She has one brother who is older than her and three older sisters. For four years her brother used to send her school fees, but this year he stopped and instead he sent her a dress. She feels useless and believes her brother hates her. Her father died and she stays with her mother here. Her other three sisters are all married and have children. She tried the health centre several times and they gave her some aspirins, but there was no improvement.

*Christian approach:* Advise her to pay a visit and invite her brother so that she can forgive him. In a Christian family, brother and sister assist each other and they care for each other's burden. However, her brother may have just migrated to town and she could see that he was still helping her by sending clothes. The Bible is quoted on learning how to forgive each other. She needs to forgive without anger or hatred. She should accept his dress and put her brother in her prayers so that he would begin to pay her school fees again, There could also

be "demons" of her dead grandfather troubling her and she would have to get the clergy man to have them chased away.

*Elders:* Tell the family elders about the problem with her brother so that a message could be sent to him.

*Traditional healer:* The spirit of her father was disturbing her, so beer needs to be brewed for him. Her brother's wife was against her but she is assured that she will be protected from these evil influences.

*Social work:* She should try to get involved in some income generating activities.

Later, upon evaluation she found the Christian approach most helpful for her.

### *Working Relationship with Traditional Healers*

Counselor:

I have to see the healer, get the reports from their patients in order to know how those healers work. Some healers do something good.

Mr. S. is a specialist in fractures, even doctors refer people to be taken to him.

I became an escort of a friend consulting an Islamic traditional healer, observed him to be cured, participated even in a healing ritual without any negative effect on me,

I took my brother to an Islamic traditional healer, against the will of my father, to be healed.

Born-again Counselor A:

I can escort a client on his own desire to the diviner.

Even if the healers do something good they still use evil powers, they themselves can inflict illness on the client.

Our faith cannot prohibit us from seeing a herbalist, but a diviner (we cannot see) since he uses spiritual powers which are against the Holy Spirit.

Born-again Counselor B:

As a young woman I found myself with a diviner, divining a lot of true things about me and wanting to give me protective medicine. I became frightened when he showed me a snake.

I refused the medicine, since I was saved and not believing them.

I do not want to escort a patient to a traditional healer for fear of becoming enticed to become a healer myself. Being involved in this is accepting satanic power and sinning against the Lord.

## CONCLUSION

Traditional and spiritual healers use ritual therapies that help victims of organized violence to "regain power," "cleanse themselves," "decrease shame, guilt, and rage," and use purification and flashback/nightmare-reducing herbal treatments. Rituals allow the transformation of identity and the dissolution of undesired symptoms.

The different basic construction principles of the rituals used here, according to Kruse and Dreesen (1995), can be described as:

A search for symbols, such as using a lizard; or the raped girl sits on a special stool; or taking a herb called "wash your back" to cleanse the client; or a traditional drink called "*Chirova*," to overcome war experiences.

Using all senses, e.g., prayers are spoken; a black chicken is hit on the person's head until it dies; burning a stone and putting the burnt stone into a mixture and as it produces a hissing sound the client must drink so that as the stone cools, his heart must be cooled again in order to remove the fear from him.

Involvement and choreography, such as the client is given some herbs to bathe at the rubbish heap while saying, "Everybody crosses the path and also eats leaves, therefore all the bad thoughts should be eaten up completely and forgotten."

Instruction for and evaluation of group- and self-experience, such as burning coal into a water bowl, drinking medicine with burnt stone, or the remaining ritual water being given to the patient for daily use.

Through ritual behavior, predictability, continuity, and control are sought. Many different forms of ritual exist including healing, purification, reconciliation, mourning/bereavement.

In view of the self-organization theory of cognition, rituals are of central importance for the construction of individual and social reality. Psychologically, rituals produce a stable basis of action in the uncertainty of situational change and in the complexity of social events (Kruse & Dreesen, 1995). Gilligan (1995) explores how the tradition of healing rituals may be used in psychotherapy by proposing a four-step model: (1) suggesting a ritual as a possible solution, (2) planning the ritual, (3) enacting the ritual, and (4) post-ritual activities. In this way rituals allow the transformation of identity and the dissolution of undesired symptoms.

Severe psychological trauma can dampen or destroy interest in religion, poetry, philosophy, history, music, or other subjects in which the survivor formerly found comfort and meaning. Restoring pre-trauma interests or developing new ones in artistic or spiritual realms can help survivors put their experiences into perspective and reintegrate themselves into the larger universe. Doing so can help survivors strengthen coping mechanisms and decrease the emotional numbing associated with trauma, as shown by Langford (1980).

Religion offers many persons comfort and strength to endure pain. Survivors who were or are religious may find that their religious beliefs can help them cope with their traumatic experience and its aftermath and may even give new significance to their ordeal. Clergy or therapists of the same religion can help survivors examine their experience from a religious perspective and come to terms with the impact their experience has had on their faith. They can also help them search for answers to questions about how human beings can do such terrible things to each other, their own behavior and relationships with others under stress, their relationship to God, God's role in their ordeal, and death and immortality. Such guidance may be especially important for those who were persecuted because of their religion.

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