

**ROOTS OF THE LAND,
LEGACY OF A NAME**

*The Oral and Documented Heritage of the AOLO Family
of Omosingo Oitela (formerly Owoikinoi),
Ongatunyo, Eastern Uganda*

As narrated by

Mzee ORONE GIRIGORIO

(Son of Kongai Victoria, Grandson of AOLO)

Extracted, compiled, and preserved by

OPEENY GODFREY

Youngest Son of Mzee Orone Girigorio | Great-Grandson of AOLO

Period Covered: 1930 – 2024

First Edition | For Family and Posterity | The Girigori family

|

A Note from the Compiler

This document is the product of many long conversations — some held quietly over evening meals, others pressed into the hours before dawn — between me, Opeeny Godfrey, and my late father, Mzee Orone Girigorio. My father passed away in 2024, and what you hold in your hands is, in the most sacred sense, his voice preserved.

My father was a wise and brave man, but one thing troubled him deeply: the fear that his children — and especially me, the youngest — did not fully grasp how we came to occupy the land on which we now stand. He would return to this subject again and again, sometimes gently, sometimes with the sting of a man who feared his warnings would go unheeded. His concern was not born of paranoia. It was born of lived wisdom: he knew that those without memory of their roots are the most vulnerable to those who would uproot them.

So, I sat down with him. I listened carefully. I asked the questions that needed asking, and I have tried honestly to record what he told me. He is the original and true source of this history — I am only its keeper.

There are questions within this document that remain unanswered. My father gave me references — men and women I can consult — and those names are carefully listed here. I hold these open questions not as failures, but as an inheritance: questions my father trusted me to pursue.

If our great-great-grandfather AOLO could visit us today, I believe he would shake his head slowly, then walk with his chest out and his chin raised — proud of how far his bloodline has come. May every generation of this family carry that same pride forward. The Ateso call this spirit *emuria kolia*.

— *Opeeny Godfrey, Compiler and Youngest Son of Mzee Orone Girigorio*

What Kind of Document Is This?

A question worth addressing before we begin: into which category does this document fall? Is it a book? A memoir? A legal record? A documentary?

In the tradition of the world's most respected historians and oral scholars, this document is best classified as an Oral History Record and Family Heritage Chronicle. It draws from the

discipline of oral historiography — the structured preservation of history as passed down by living witnesses — combined with elements of a genealogical register, a land tenure record, and a personal memoir.

It is not a legal will, though it carries legal weight in terms of land tenure and customary law under the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda. It is not a novel, though it carries the warmth and intimacy of one. It is, most precisely, a primary source document — and like all primary sources, it is most powerful when read with the questions it raises kept alive, not silenced.

Future generations: read this as your foundation, not your ceiling.

Foreword: On Land, Identity, and Memory

Land in Eastern Uganda is not merely property. It is identity. It is the soil in which the ancestors rest; it is the boundary that marks not just where a family lives, but who a family is. To lose memory of the land is, in the Ateso tradition, to lose part of the self.

The history recorded in the pages that follow covers a period of nearly a century — from the early 1930s, when Mzee AOLO distributed his land among his children, to 2024, when his great-grandson Opeeny Godfrey sat for the final time with his father Mzee Orone Girigorio and committed this history to paper.

At the heart of this story is a single act of love and trust: AOLO, a man of property and standing, called his daughter Kongai Victoria to him and said — "Daughter, here is your share of the land. Build it with your husband." That declaration, made before witnesses in the 1930s, is the root of everything that follows.

Under the customary law of the Iteso people, and affirmed by the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, land professed and occupied by an individual for a period exceeding five years — especially when declared before witnesses — carries full legal and moral standing. The witnesses to AOLO's declaration are recorded in this very document. Their testimony endures.

Chapter One: The House of Aciria — Origins of the Family

To understand where the Girigori family stands today, one must first understand the broader clan structure from which they emerge. The story begins not with Okorikol Elario and not even with Kongai victoria, but with an earlier generation — with a man named AOLO, who gave rise to Aciria the father of I baat Gaudesio and Ojuri Angoman, Kongai Victoria who gave rise to Orone Girigorio and Olinga Joseph, and Erikarido Obwalinga who at the time relocated to Aketa in Usuk, Katakwi district.

Erikarido Obwalinga, after relocating to Aketa at the invitation of a close friend, settled and built a family. His children included Elangot, AOLO, Inyait, Adeke, and Kongai — the last named being born of a sub-family branch identified locally as Apuuton.

Elangot, the eldest, extended the family line further by giving rise to Oguma and Anapi, both of the Usuk Aketa Aledei community.

It is through AOLO — Erikarido Obwalinga's son — that the main line of this narrative runs. AOLO settled at the land now known as Omosingo Oitela, formerly called Owoikinoi, and it is from this ground that the Girigori family story takes root.

The Children of Aciria

Among the important figures connected to this line is Aciria, a man who fathered several children across two households. Through his first woman, Icomot Aistina, Aciria fathered Ibaat Gaudesio and Ojur, the latter popularly known in the community as Angoman notable with a weird bad, Ojur did not like us, at some point he even attempted to kill my father with gun since he was a soldier at the time.

Through his second woman, Suzanna, came Obwalinga and Imokot.

Aciria, therefore, had two women: Icomot Aistina and Suzanna.

Who Was Ijoot Anderes?

Ijoot Anderes was a Catholic catechist active in the early 1990s, who diligently served the Almighty God and his people in the areas of Akurao in Toroma, where he maintained his family home; in Kokorio, within the present-day Kapujan Sub-County; and in other surrounding areas not fully enumerated here.

He is listed as the first and foremost of the eyewitnesses to the land distribution events of the 1930s — a testament to the trust and standing he held within the community.

Chapter Two: AOLO's Land — The Boundaries of Our Heritage

The land that belongs to the Girigori family today did not come from nowhere. It has a history of boundaries, of neighbours, and of contested and confirmed claims. Understanding those boundaries is understanding the family's legal and moral standing.

The land began from the point where Okorikol egweritonon built, extending to Abudoni Ilemutu — a landmark also known from Gweri, and referred to by many in the community as egweritonon.

The Northern Boundary — Mzee Joolikinoi

To the North, AOLO's land bordered the holding of Mzee Joolikinoi. Joolikinoi is remembered in oral tradition as a man who suffered from what is medically known as hydroceles — locally called Akuwe — an abnormal accumulation of fluid in the membrane surrounding a testicle. His health condition, unusual enough to earn its own place in communal memory, helps identify him as a distinct historical figure.

In the late 1990s and into the early 21st century, Joolikinoi's former land became the home of a woman known as Maria — more commonly called Imaajani. Maria earned this nickname in the 1990s because of her well-known habit of drinking hot tea leaves — without sugar — at all hours of the day and night. The Ateso word amajani refers specifically to already-prepared, hot-boiled tea leaves; and such was Maria's devotion to this drink that her name became synonymous with it. Maria's home now forms a recognizable landmark along the boundary of what was once AOLO's land.

The Eastern Boundary — Epalit and the Tree Ekarukei

Joolikinoi's former land bordered Epalit. The border between these holdings ran up to a tree called Ekarukei, which marks the present boundary of Maria's land. Epalit is identified in this account as Toronyaze Epalit — beyond that identification, the narrator chose not to elaborate further at the time of recording.

What is noted, however, is that Toronyaze Epalit maintained a close relationship with a man named Ilokot — and it is believed that this relationship is the reason Epalit passed her portion

of land to Maria. Ilokot was the brother of Agrippina Adeke. Agrippina Adeke was herself the wife of Mzee Olinga, who lived to the South-East of Orone Girigorio's holding — in what is today known as the Emegu Pampas land. Mzee Olinga is further purported to be a brother of Imalingat Eseru, who occupied land to the West.

Who Is Maria?

Maria is the daughter of Ilokot Eromano. Of further significance is the fact that Ilokot Eromano and a man named Asani are brothers. The relationship between Asani, Epalit, and Joolikinoi remains a point of further inquiry, and any reader with knowledge of this connection is encouraged to contribute to the record.

Unanswered Question: *Who is Asani, and what is the full nature of his relationship with Ilokot Eromano, Epalit, and Joolikinoi?*

One important and painful land matter must also be noted: it is recorded that Epalit took possession of a portion of AOLO's land — including the area known as Okarukei or Ekarukei — which currently borders the holding of Okorikol Charles, grandson of AOLO. This is a matter that the family is aware of and must continue to pursue through appropriate channels.

The Western and North-Western Boundaries

To the West, AOLO's land bordered the holdings of Imalingat Eseru, Olinga, and Obongutu. To the North-West, the boundary ran along the land of Ekirido.

The Name Owoikinoi

Before settling into the current era, all of this land was collectively known as Owoikinoi. It was a place of abundant wildlife, particularly famous for hunters pursuing the amori — one of the fastest-running wild animals known to that region. The name Owoikinoi carries with it a sense of vitality and natural abundance — a reminder of what this land was before it was divided, cultivated, and settled by the families whose stories are told here.

Chapter Three: The Distribution of Land — AOLO's Declaration

Mzee AOLO, as is the custom of any parent who possesses property and wishes to act with fairness and foresight, called his children to him and distributed his land among them. Among those who received a share was his daughter, Kongai Victoria.

It is documented and affirmed by eyewitnesses that Kongai Victoria received her share of land in or around the years 1930 to 1933. AOLO's words, as preserved in oral tradition, were direct and unambiguous: "Daughter, here is your share of the land. Build it with your husband."

The parcel of land given to Kongai Victoria comprised approximately 12 hectares, bounded by Imalingat Eseru to the West and by Maria's land to the East, extending in the direction of atapar Na apolon — a larger water catchment area — near the present-day home of Mzee Ibaat Gaudesio, the son of Aciria.

This act of land gifting, carried out in the presence of named witnesses, carries full weight under Ugandan customary law. The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda affirms that land occupied in good faith for a period exceeding five years, especially when declared before witnesses, cannot be arbitrarily challenged. Kongai Victoria occupied and developed this land for decades. Her descendants — the Girigori family — have continued to occupy it. The claim is solid, the witnesses are recorded, and the history is now written.

A Note on Erikarido Obwalinga and the Question of Names

A degree of confusion exists in the oral record regarding the names Obwalinga and Ekirido. Was Obwalinga also called Ekirido? And if so, who was the other Obwalinga in the record? These questions are noted honestly and await further research.

Unanswered Question: *Was Obwalinga also called Ekirido? If so, who was the second Obwalinga referenced in the family accounts?*

What is known clearly is this: Erikarido Obwalinga experienced a personal disagreement with his brother Aciria — the nature of which is not fully recorded here. As a result of this rift, Kongai Victoria, acting as a peacemaking sister, called Erikarido to stay with her for a period of time. He eventually departed for Aketa. Years later, when he died, he was brought back to be buried on the land where his blood sister Kongai Victoria had built — specifically at the site of a guava tree (locally known as Omapera), which had been marked with ejebur as a boundary marker. This burial site is located in the area of Omosingo Oitela, formerly known as Owoikinoi.

Unanswered Question: *Before Erikarido Obwalinga migrated to Aketa, where exactly was his original share of land? And upon his return and burial at his sister's land, what became of his original share?*

The Birth of the Girigori Line — Orone Girigorio

Kongai Victoria married Okorikol — known in the community as Elario Okorikol — a man whose origins traced back to Ongatunyo, of the Irarak Itudai Clan. Together, they gave birth to two sons: Orone Girigori and Olinga Joseph.

Unanswered Question: *Where does the name Olinga originate? Is its use in this family connected to the Mzee Olinga referenced in the boundary descriptions?*

Unanswered Question: *Where in the Irarak Itudai clan does the name Orone originate? What is its meaning or historical significance?*

It was Okorikol Elario — father — and Kongai Victoria — mother — who gave rise to Orone Girigori. Orone would become the father of what is today known as the Girigori family.

The present-day Ongatunyo Primary School, including the borehole area that serves the surrounding community, stands on or near land associated with this lineage — a physical landmark connecting the past to the present.

In recognition of his character and trustworthiness, Kongai Victoria named Orone Girigori as her heir and successor before she passed away. This declaration was made publicly and is upheld by those who witnessed it. Kongai Victoria passed away around 1997 or 1998.

Orone Girigorio — Life, Marriage, and Legacy

Orone Girigori was born on the 4th of April, 1933. He married around 1970, taking as his wife ADIE Medelena, a woman from the Ipirin Clan, Orimai Parish, Kapujan Sub-County — specifically from the present-day Apeero village, located across the Toroma–Soroti road. The parents of ADIE Medelena were Opeded Basilio and Anyait Agrippina.

In the late 1990s, Mzee Orone Girigori — following the example of his grandfather AOLO before him — distributed his inheritance among his seven children. There were four sons and three daughters.

The four sons are:

- Okorikol Charles — Rest in Peace, departed 2012
- Olinga Joseph
- Ojakol Mike — Rest in Peace, departed 2003
- Opeeny Godfrey — the compiler of this document (<https://opeeny.github.io>)

The three daughters are:

- Kongai Mary Justine
- Anume Betty
- Anyait Pscovia

Mzee Orone Girigorio passed away in 2024, leaving behind this history as his most enduring gift to his children and to all generations that follow. He was a man who understood that land and memory are the same thing — and he fought, through words and careful witnessing, to ensure that neither was ever lost.

The Eyewitnesses (Ajenak) — 1930 to 1933

The following twelve individuals were present and bore witness at the time Mzee AOLO distributed his land, and in particular when he formally assigned Kongai Victoria her share. Their names are recorded here as a matter of historical and legal significance. Eyewitness testimony in oral cultures carries the weight of a signed deed.

1. Ijoot Anderes
2. Bernard Opumar
3. Ipiyo Obana (Arai Ejaikit Apugan Egaru)
4. Ilabirito Koluo (Father to Ocubala)
5. Eseru Imalingat
6. Leo Obongut
7. Ekirido Oridok
8. Gerepasio Ocen
9. Ebanyu
10. Erikarido Obwalinga
11. Aciria Ciproano
12. Okwakol Augustino – Secretary / Chairman of the Clan

Note: Several of these eyewitnesses are identified as having their origins from the Ongatunyo area, of the Irarak Clan.

References — People to Consult

In the wisdom of a good father, Mzee Orone Girigorio did not leave his son with only a history — he left him with living references. The following individuals have direct knowledge of events, relationships, or boundary matters described in this document. Should any question arise — regarding land, lineage, or any aspect of this record — these are the people to approach.

- Ijoot Victor
- Ebanyu Aden
- Regina, Mother to Olupot
- Aisowa Okiror
- Ojakol – Ominya
- Aleper – Ominya
- Opio Erei – Ominya
- Kongai Mary Imaajani
- Ocubaala – Ominya
- Epolon Adupete – Omosingo
- Epolon Emesu – Omosingo Abata
- Okorikol John (Mzee John) – From Ongatunyo

Unanswered Question: *Among the family relatives, who relocated and established themselves in Palisa? Is it Okee?*

Open Questions for Future Research

As noted throughout this document, several questions remain unanswered. They are gathered here so that future family members, researchers, and community elders can take up the work of completing the record. These questions are not failures — they are invitations.

- Where did AOLO originate before settling at Owoikinoi? What was his clan affiliation and journey prior to establishing his household?
- Who is Asani, and how does he relate to Epalit and Joolikinoi?
- Was Obwalinga also known as Ekirido, and if so, who is the second Obwalinga in the record?
- Where was Erikarido Obwalinga's original land share before he migrated to Aketa?
- What is the full history and origin of the name Olinga within this family line?
- What is the origin and meaning of the name Orone in the Irarak Itudai clan?
- Who among the family relatives relocated and established themselves in Palisa — is it Okee?

Key Notes for the Record

The following points are recorded as essential anchors for the family's understanding of its heritage:

- Okorikol — the father of Orone Girigorio — originated from Irarak, Itudai Clan of Ongatunyo Ominya.
 - AOLO's own origins, and the full story of how he came to settle at Owoikinoi, remain a point of research. Where did AOLO come from before this land?
 - The Girigori family descends directly from AOLO through his daughter Kongai Victoria — AOLO gave her the land, she built upon it, and the family has occupied it in good faith ever since.
 - The land declaration was made publicly, before named witnesses, around 1930–1933 — this is legally significant under Ugandan customary and constitutional law.
 - The relationship between AOLO, his line, and the Irarak Itudai Clan of Ongatunyo is a defining thread of this family's identity.
-

Closing Reflection

My father, Mzee Orone Girigorio, lived 91 years on this earth. He was born on the land that AOLO gave to his mother, and he died on it. In between, he raised seven children, buried two of his sons, farmed the soil, and kept the memory of our origins alive in the only way he knew how — by telling the story, over and over, to anyone who would listen.

He told me this story many times. Sometimes I listened fully; sometimes — and I say this with honest regret — I did not. He noticed. He said so. But he was patient, because he was a father, and because he trusted that one day I would sit down and do exactly what I have done here.

This document is for my children, and for their children, and for all the generations of the Girigori family that will walk this land long after we are gone. Read it. Ask questions. Find the people listed here. Add to it. Correct it where it needs correction. But never, ever, let it be forgotten.

If our great-great-grandfather AOLO walked among us today, I believe he would look at what this family has become — and he would nod slowly, and walk tall. Emuria kolia.

Compiled and written by Opeeny Godfrey, youngest son of Mzee Orone Girigorio.

Son of the land of Omosingo Oitela. Great-grandson of AOLO.

For the family. For the land. For the generations.

Roots of the Land, Legacy of a Name • AOLO Family Heritage • 1930–2024