

OFF-TOPIC ARTICLES

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RENATO BOCCASSINO, BIRTH AND DEATH AMONG THE ACIOLI: ETHNOGRAPHY ON DISPLAY**ABSTRACT**

This paper presents a series of reflections which have come to light through the preparation and the setting up of an exhibition made up of a selection of photographs taken by Renato Boccassino in Uganda in 1933-34. The Italian ethnologist produced extensive ethnographic documentation about the Acholi people including, in addition to the photographs, notebooks, diaries of his fieldwork, postcards and some sound recordings. The perspective was to bring out the fieldwork methodology and the ethnographic approach of Renato Boccassino.

KEYWORDS

Acholi, Exhibition, Ethnography, Photography, Uganda, Boccassino

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INTRODUCTION

The presentation of the 2015 edition of the journal “Voci – Annuario di scienze umane”, which took place at the Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione (ICCD) in Roma on 18 October 2016¹, offered the occasion to organize an exhibition with a selection of the ethnographic photographs taken by Renato Boccassino (1904-1976) in the north of Uganda, of the Acioli, a nilotic people speaking a language in the *Luo* family, during a year of intense field work in 1933 and 1934. The corpus of archived material of which the photographs are part, was donated by the daughter of the ethnologist, Maria Boccassino, to the ICCD² on two separate dates, in 2006 (M.A.F.O.S Comunicazioni 2006) and in 2015 (Ricci 2015: 231). The materials were first described by Elena Musumeci and Laura Petrone (Musumeci and Petrone 2015).

This collection records a period of nearly fifty years from 1927 to 1975 including handwritten and typed material, printed works and manuscripts, along with a large iconographic component made up of negative photographs and prints, postcards, drawings, maps and more. The most extensive and richest part dates to the years 1932-35 during Boccassino’s preparation for and the carrying out of his field work in Uganda.

A first review of Boccassino’s photographic corpus was made for the publication of 53 images in the “Camera oscura” section of “Voci” (Ricci 2015: 227-249 and 241-299); the theme of that selection concerns ceremonial practices and objects inherent in the birth and death of the Acioli, with a special focus on the “births” of twins.

The high level of technical quality of the images becomes apparent when examining only the negatives – mostly 9x12 film sheets – and some prints on paper. Taking in consideration the improvisational nature of the shots, the “setting” and limits of the field, Boccassino’s achievement is truly surprising especially under the difficult conditions Uganda presented in the 1930s and the idea to organize an exhibition naturally emerges immediately after first visual contact. As preliminary work on the archive corpus progressed, this first impulse was reaffirmed and extended to the many other types of material present, all of high documentary interest and of a certain scientific, historical and cultural quality: the need to realize an exhibition to reveal Renato Boccassino’s ethnographic approach in Uganda became clear. Every piece of paper, every image, every binder, every notebook, every folder, etc., is a dense and layered recipient of information on Boccassino’s research, on his course of study, on

¹ The presentation, the photographic exhibition (October 18 – November 18, 2016) and the publication in this paper of the Boccassino’s photographs were made possible thanks to the availability of the director of ICCD architect Laura Moro to whom I owe my most appreciated thanks. Also Fabio Dei, Giovanni Fiorentino and Cecilia Pennacini attended the presentation and to whom I most warmly thank. All the photos mentioned in this article are in the photo-essay.

² The volumes were donated to the Library of the Dipartimento di Storia, Cultura, Religioni (Department of History, Culture, and Religion) of the Sapienza University of Rome.

his contacts and his networks of intricate relationships, and on the dynamics of his way of accurately and precisely working in every minute detail. Some examples can clarify what is intended. On the backs of most of the folders, usually cardboard, were pre-inventory, notes and lists that refer to its content; on the back of each photograph are the alpha-numeric sequence that identifies the negative (Ricci 2015: 233), the captions and any other notes; the various field note records are individually classified and each refers to the others forming a network of links between the documents: for example, a dense notebook full of land records served to compile the log of photographic negatives (Ricci 2015: 232-233). A large field notebook was first drawn up in 1933-34 using only half pages and at a later date, in the 1960s, the other half page was used by Boccassino when reviewing his research activity. There are nine additional notebooks of handwritten transcripts of oral documents: chants, tales and interviews. These materials are transcribed by alternating lines of the acioli language with literal translations, word-by-word mostly in English, but also in Italian, on each page according to a recurring procedure in the ethnological field (Pavanello 2010: 164- 167, 177-178). They are written reports of sound recordings made on wax cylinders by Boccassino and unfortunately almost all of them have been lost. A file in the Historical Archive of the Istituto Centrale per i Beni Sonori e Audiovisivi (ICBSA) contains a letter pertaining to the agreement between Boccassino, the Discoteca di Stato and the Phonogramm-Archiv in Berlin – with the then responsible Marius Schneider – and other organizations regarding the sound recordings made on wax cylinders with the Edison phonograph (Ricci 2015: 229-231).

Renato Boccassino's work materials are not limited only to those present at ICCD. The exploration of the collection has revealed a complex geographical and institutional "pluri-localization" in which his scientific and professional studies have taken place. He visited the main ethnographic museums in Europe – Berlin, Cologne, Hamburg, Leipzig, Dresden, Stuttgart, Amsterdam, Brussels, London, Oxford, Cambridge, Prague, Florence – collecting materials; he was the director and supervisor of the prehistoric ethnographic museum "Luigi Pigorini" in Rome, where the acioli objects he had collected in Uganda can be found along with the materials related to their exhibition in the previous museum of the Collegio Romano; he collaborated intensively with the Istituto De Propaganda Fide on a project on Catholic ethnology

for the Vatican which was directed by the German scholar father, Wilhelm Schmidt; he held several university teaching assignments.

All of his various relationships have given rise to epistolary exchanges, some of which have already been published: with Ernesto de Martino (Pompeo 1996), with Raffaele Pettazzoni (Dore 2013), with Marius Schneider (Ricci 2015). In a letter sent to Pettazzoni from Uganda on July 3, 1933, Boccassino makes significant references to the use of the camera as an ethnographic research tool and also to cinema and sound recordings (Dore 2013: 182); each testify to the awareness of the methodological multimedia setting which he had acquired following study stays in France, with Mauss, and in England with Seligman and Malinowski (Ricci 2015: 228-229) and which he considered indispensable for the realization of sound ethnographic practice.

SOME NOTES ON METHODOLOGY

Why put on an exhibition of ethnographic photographs? After all they are exclusively designed for the purpose of research and study and not for aesthetics or purposes of expression. This seemingly rhetorical question actually refers to cultural and scientific motivations; its answer can not ignore the communicative intent of such an exhibition and, above all, must take into account the motives behind a photographic shot which determined its existence.

I asked Francesco Faeta, as well as other colleagues³, in the aftermath to give me some impressions on this experience, and to put forth some considerations on the value of the exhibition in its context and how it conditions the very meaning of the images on show. Faeta answered:

For the author of images, [...] to be in the space of a gallery means to accept, consciously or unconsciously, a very marked *shifting* of meaning, a transliteration of meanings, the scope of which can not be foreseen beforehand. The gallery is seen as a venue for the elaboration of the communicative and relational diversity of photography with respect to the book or the screen, which are equally public forms of fruition, but certainly conceived of with a shorter “aura of spectacle”, by a different fruition regime, by a psycho-perceptual condition of completely another order (written communication of 21/4/17).

³Luigi M. Lombardi Satriani, Mariano Pavanello, Cecilia Pennacini, Pino Schirripa, Alberto Sobrero. Their testimonies are partially reported in Ricci (in print) and all the interventions are available online in their entirety on the ICCD internet site: www.iccd.beniculturali.it/index.php?it/505/relazioni-articoli-ed-estratti/relazioniarticoliestratti_553f3b128018b/61.

Our first consideration concerns the author of the images, Boccassino, who, in this case was not the creator of the exhibition, nor did he imagine the photographs would be for exhibition purposes, intending them to be documentary support for his ethnographic research. We will return later to this aspect. That Boccassino's photographs were made as documentary sources (Faeta 2015: 29-34) is made clear by the use the author put them to.

A second aspect concerns the subjects represented in the photographs. In the exhibition there is only one perspective. This being because the photographs were taken by one single author, and because they were limited to a specific aspect of the spiritual life of a people. Not taking into account all the possible components, the exhibition focuses on funeral ideology, not on the Acioli people.

At the basis of the realization of the exhibition there are, as mentioned above, some elements which include scientific study and the didactic intent of gathering and spreading the cognitive knowledge hidden within the documentary corpus; but, above all, it is a first attempt to expose the ethnographic research methods developed by Boccassino. Although there are strong quantitative limits which will be addressed later, the exhibition, according to the impressions expressed by Mariano Pavanello:

essentially offers a testament to an extremely accurate ethnography. This is what struck me, because in fact this is an aspect of Boccassino's intellectual and scientific biography, which is very little known [...].

And there was also a *damnatio memoriae* to some extent, probably because of this very orthodox orientation, from the point of view of what was the official Catholic position, towards ethnographic research, strongly linked to the missionary (interview of 27/2/17).

The scientific value that can today be attributed to the work of Renato Boccassino lies precisely in the corpus of materials present at the ICCD and resides in the skills he had in the field. He produced ethnographic documentation of high scientific value which, through his own archiving and arrangements, has become a corpus of documentary sources of dense historical and ethnographic value. Giving her impression of the exhibition Cecilia Pennacini says:

Boccassino's photographs are quite a useful documentation of Ugandan society in the 1930s. Not

much of this kind of documentation exists on Uganda. There are visual repositories on colonial Uganda but I have never seen a coherent ethnographic corpus like this produced by a professional anthropologist (interview of 26/2/17).

After observing the photographs, reading the field notebooks, listening to the rare audio fragments, and also listening to the moving but at the same time not over-indulging testimony of his daughter Maria Boccassino, a rethinking of Boccassino's best-known writings resulted in the perception of two distinct orientations, of two different and separate ideologies present simultaneously in the same person, one with which he conducted field research and the other when he presented the results (Alliegro 2011; Leone 1980 e 1985; Pompeo 1995).

To re-propose the work of Renato Boccassino is to re-position, at least from ethnographic perspective, the presence of this ethnologist in the history of Italian anthropological studies.

His photographs constitute, the best means for such a relocation. The technical expertise with which they have been made and the resulting aesthetic and compositional qualities that have already been mentioned should be sufficient to understand the methodological precision with which the photographic tool was used in the field to build a careful ethnographic study attending to the smallest detail⁴. The opportunity to see the details in the images and to analyze them, attracted the attention and aroused the curiosity of the students of anthropological degree courses who visited the exhibition (see photos n. 21-22). The abundant use of the photographic sequence, even many shots, despite the technical and productive limits inherent in those years, is one of the outstanding features in the methodological awareness with which Boccassino produced the photographs:

For a long time I would like to have had a small movie camera to collect the ceremonies in full. [...] It is useless to list all the advantage that having the most important ceremonies on a film would have had so that they could be reproduced at any time (Dore 2013: 182).

Photography, despite its ambiguous and contradictory infidelity to nature tells very much and very little of the subjects it depicts, reproducing morphological aspects of reality which offer "something on which to base every form of interpretation" (Faeta 2015: 39); this is true as much for

⁴ "Photography - writes Francesco Faeta (1996: 33) - has an extraordinary power of fixing detail: it helps the eye to distinguish what is the best path to knowing." See also Wright (1994: 123) for Malinowski's photographic work.

the photographer who snaps the shot, as for the scholar who later studies it. On the surface of the photograph, many elements of a dialogue between the photographer and the subjects represented therein are interspersed and contextualized. The context in which the photograph was produced is as relevant as the ideologies of the author as those of the subjects: a “document of second level”/ “documento di secondo livello” (Lombardi Satriani 1997: 135,). Photographs, then, are at the same time source and document. They constitute the attestation of a presence, both of the phenomenal reality represented in them, and of the perspective that guided the photographer of the shot. They represent a formidable object of study as well as an important support for the study, always able to provide a complex set of data and information.

As has already been pointed out, Boccassino’s collection was organized by Boccassino himself in archival form. The nature of this documentation on the one hand and the source of the photographic corpus on the other greatly enhances the complex network of referrals which exist among the elements of the collection. As far as possible, an attempt to present this in the exhibition layout was attempted, as will be discussed later.

Boccassino’s observations and study of the photographic materials also reveals a complex set of temporal relationships, both didactic as well as anagraphic in the date and, sometimes, in the time of the shot; his is seen especially in those most closely associated with the chronological distance between the time of the shot and the observation of the photograph which vary from a widening stratification of time in the image, to “a compression of Time” (Barthes 1980: 96, “una compressione del Tempo”). By showing such particular detail Renato Boccassino’s photographs in the archive offer the scholar a historiographic location of the images but, at the same time for the today’s observer, the photographs fall within a complicated temporal pattern. They are placed technologically and historically at a precise historical point in the first half of the twentieth century, but as has been already emphasized, (Ricci: 2015: 234), the camera used by Boccassino was already technologically “anachronistic” when he used it. A good many of the published photographs have been used by the author more than thirty years after their original creation for a full range of scientific projects (Boccassino, 1960, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1966, 1973) and with an “allochronic” extreme margin (Fabian 2000) due to their ethnographic use in the texts accompanying the images.

Some of photographs show the coexistence of chronologically contradictory aspects of life (a surprising car sometimes found among the village huts, “urban” clothes worn by some of the people visible in the research setting etc.), made even more so since they are not contextualized in the archaicizing and unhistorical setting of the Italian ethnologist which follows the British ethnographic monograph model of the early decades of the twentieth century.

For the reasons so far exemplified here Renato Boccassino’s photographs are able to offer a “thick description” (Faeta 2015: 35-41) which helps us to understand as much the Acioli people whom he studied in the 1930s, as the ethnographer himself.

Through the choices made for the installation of the exhibition, it was possible to start a process of re-thinking of Boccassino’s ethnographic research and a reformulation of the a new and the real “archaic” temporality of the images which are a suggestive testimony of a distant past and still present in the spectacular 70x100 magnifications (photos n. 1-6). In fact, the six photographs at the beginning of the exhibition had the task of putting the visitors in touch with the Acioli world of those years with impressive force by their ability to bring out the most minute details in the images, without, if it can be said so, the use of “allochronistic tricks”.

Reflecting on the exhibition Alberto Sobrero writes:

They will not be technically perfect images but it’s just their imperfection, the residue of imperfection, which will reveal the story of what produced them, the depth of the research. It is, in fact, to take the work not as a document of the past, but as a product between past and present, in distant times which speak and correct each other. (written communication of 22/9/17).

Rendering the six images an even more poignant testimony were the listening of recordings made by Boccassino, and luckily found in the ICBSA, which were added to the exhibition. As has already been reported (Ricci 2015: 229-231) Boccassino recorded 85 wax cylinders and, to these, correspond notebooks with transcripts of songs and other oral documents. Following some unfortunate events, the recorded material suffered serious damage and seemed to be apparently lost. Recently a digitization of the cylinders which was kept at ICBSA was discovered of three documents, generally inventoried as “African

⁵ A special warm thanks to Mrs. Jackline Apio, and Mrs. Joy Muwanse together.

⁶ The three cylinders and the related result of their audio file reversals are inventoried as follows: 199956, collocation 1Y 14, duration about 3'32" (it is the one with the recording recognized as a funeral dirge); 199971, placement 1Y 28, duration about 3'17"; 199989, placement 1Y 76, duration about 1'40". Of the last two, however, the language context has been acknowledged as belonging to Acioli. I thank Luciano D'Aleo, Head of ICBSA's conservation, restoration and conservation area for his availability and information provided.

⁷ The collection is still in the process of being inventoried and therefore the possibility of choices was limited to the materials which had been already inventoried.

songs". A staff member at the Uganda Embassy in Rome⁵ was able to verify that the three cylinders contain song recordings in that language and by comparing the words acknowledged by the native interlocutor with the lyrics of the songs transcribed by Boccassino, one of the recorded texts could be safely identified as a funeral song for the death of a young woman⁶.

During the presentation of the 2015 edition of the journal "Voci" which preceded the inauguration of the exhibition the three recordings were listened to for the first time. The reactions of the audience in the room where the six great photographs were also displayed was noteworthy. Firstly was that of Maria Boccassino, who was very surprised and excited about the discovery. All were in agreement in recognizing the strong sense of identity and approach to context due to perception combined with the sounds heard in the hall and the pictures seen on the walls. The two perceptual modes enhanced each other through multi-sensory perception. In fact, the joint experience of viewing photographs and listening to sound recordings gives the user a cognitive and emotional overload that goes beyond the mere sum of the two individual experiences (Ricci 2007). The continuation of the visit benefited from this spectacular opening as a gateway leading to fully apprehending the many aspects of the ethnographic work which had been carried out more than eighty years before.

AN ETHNOGRAPHY ON DISPLAY: NOTES ON THE INSTALLATION

It is particularly important to note that the layout and archival arrangement with which the

exhibition was designed and realized were based on preliminary studies and analysis⁷. They must be taken as a starting point for the necessary work to be done which would enable a better understanding of, an until now, unknown part of the history of anthropological studies in Italy. For the exhibition a selection of twenty photographs were chosen from among the fifty-three images published in "Voci". The project, as already, has been mentioned foresaw the creation of six 70x100 cm. magnifications printed on Forex panels with rear support brackets to distance them from the wall giving them the effect of being projected. Fourteen additional magnifications of 30x40 cm. were mounted on *passe-partout* and framed. The size and dimensions of the reproductions were chosen to optimize their ability to render even the tiniest detail more readable.

From a philological point of view, probably the choice to digitize and enlarge photographic images which had been made with an apparatus and with film from more than eighty years ago⁸ to such measurements, may seem controversial; in our case, however, the choice was tied to scientific and didactic intentions which orientated the exhibition's setting and which in this situation generated positive feedback.

The very high-definition digitization process performed in the ICCD's photographic laboratory produced surprising results and enhanced the selected images above all expectations. Therefore, it was considered possible to propose an exhibition which would highlight in such a spectacular way, the technical quality and scientific precision evidenced in the resulting documentary of Renato Boccassino's photographs.

When deciding how to extrapolate the images to be enlarged to 70x100, the photographs in the corpus were individuated based on their aesthetic quality and type of subject and those which could best become single images, or even sometimes part of groups or sequences, without losing their documentary effect or distorting their ethnographic value were chosen.

If I like a picture, if it disturbs me, I'll linger over it. What do I do all the time that it is in front of me? I look at it, scrutinize it, as if wanting to know more about the thing or person it portrays (Barthes, 1980: 99)⁹.

From these words by Roland Barthes the opening section of the six giant photographs were imagined at the beginning of the exhibition: the iconographic "baggage" which would offer the viewer a significant impact, an aesthetic and emotional charge which would arouse in him this same underlying desire. At the same time, by the astonishing effect, the six great photographs could effectively deliver the density of ethnographic content and the detailed quality of their identification.

The rest of the visit is laid out as an in-depth study of the themes pertinent to ethnography and a review of the methods of collecting and organizing field research data. The 30x40 photographs were grouped in two series: the first of six images concerning the birth of twins (photos n. 7-12); the second of eight images look at ritual behaviour surrounding death (photos n. 13-20).

The given information covered an introductory presentation panel of the author and his work and smaller

⁸ A portable Ica reflex 755 camera, from approximately 1915, with Carl Zeiss Tessar fixed lens 4.5/150 mm.

⁹ English translation from the Italian edition: "Se una foto mi piace, se mi turba, io v'indugio sopra. Che cosa faccio per tutto il tempo che me ne sto davanti a lei? La guardo, la scruto, come se volessi saperne di più sulla cosa o sulla persona che essa ritrae".

descriptive panels for each image or set of images (see the captions of the photos). The choice to provide ample information, rather than synthetic captions was agreed upon by the ICCD¹⁰ workgroup in order to offer, as fully as possible, the ethnographic data contextualized for each image.

The relationship between written text, particularly the captions of ethnographic photographs, and the images themselves have been repeatedly referred to as significant elements of the importance the researcher attributed to the iconographic aspect of his ethnography, both in the context of the printed publication, and in exhibition. The multivalent nature of the photographic image has given rise to very different forms of relationship between written texts and photographic texts: for example in the works by Malinowski (Young, 1998; Ricci, 2004; Marano, 2007) by Gregory Bateson alone (Marcus, 1988: 302-303, Ricci, 2006, Marano, 2007), and with Margaret Mead (Bateson, Mead, 1942, Sullivan, 1999, Ricci, 2006, Marano, 2007) and by Ernesto de Martino (Faeta, 1999). Photographic exhibition space represents a further context within which writing and photography find a place of encounter and alliance. The captions of an exhibition, when not only brief notes on the images, should be a fruitful place of “inter-textuality” in which the different levels of documentation to which the photographs can be traced communicate. They should be kept in the heuristic context in which the author has placed them. “From the point of view of one who is engaged in a representation, the recognition of the inter-textuality becomes an indispensable moment for the consistency and richness of the representation” (Marano, 2007: 57).

Besides the archival photographic data, the original captions written by Renato Boccassino on the back of the archived prints were also added on descriptive panels; in some cases these are present in some of his articles (Boccassino, 1960, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1966, 1973). Many of which quotations have already been cited above. The writings from 1960 to 1966, all titled *Contributo allo studio dell'ergologia delle popolazioni nilotiche e nilo-camitiche*, (Contribution to the Study of the Ergology of Nilotic and Nilo-Camite Populations) are devoted to aspects of the material culture and lifestyle not only of the Acioli but also of other peoples of the same area. They include photographs taken in the field by Boccassino, as well as a lot of his other iconographic material which has been collected in museums all over Europe.

¹⁰ All work for the exhibition was accomplished with a team of workers from the Valuation Service of the Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale in the ICCD coordinated by Maria Rosaria Palombi. The group included: Fabio Ascenzi, Massimo Cutrupi, Antonio Di Carlo, Gloria Tammeo and Stefano Valentini. Elena Berardi, who is the person in charge of the Service, offered her assistance for the use of photographic collections and catalogues always making access to the Boccassino Collection possible.

These include: weapons of war and hunting practices, architecture and constructional technologies, food preparation and household utensils, weaved plant fibers, agricultural implements for collection and transport as well as various tools (digging sticks, portable stools, etc.), ceramics, carvings and woodcarving tools, clothing and ornaments, instruments for music and dance, games, pipes, masks and funeral statues. Their reading assumes, in the intentions of the author, a dense and complex use of photographs and other iconographic materials, along with an ethnographic description for the images with “attachments”. The written text is, in fact, an explanatory medium, sometimes with limited autonomy, with respect to the iconographic text. Captions, often weighty and full of minute details, are completely subordinate to the images.

The 1973 essay titled *Il culto dei defunti praticato dagli Acioli dell'Uganda*, (The Cult of the Deceased among the Acioli of Uganda), was particularly useful for its theme which was closely related to that of the exhibition and for the presence of the wide range of its images. The essay is about one of the aspects of which Boccassino must have given a lot of attention. It also appears differently from his previous works because it concerns exclusively the Acioli and their funeral rituals¹¹, described with close attention to the personal behaviours of individual people.

As can be deduced from observation of the images and from what he writes, Boccassino directs his attention not merely to record data in a didactic and generalizing way but the elements of the rite are observed and analyzed also in the individual perspective. The singular person is portrayed as a unique individual, through the family roles, the social status and the specific ceremonial functions within which each of them is seen. While remaining anchored to the objective descriptive form of British monographs, the ethnographic narrative comes closer to its human subjects, and their individuality. Their exposure in the ethnographic record shows Boccassino's significant moments of reflexivity and his presence in the scenes of his research. The description of the funeral customs at the death of a child, taken with his camera, provides an example of the particular wealth of emotional involvement which permeates his written text:

I refer to this as I observed in Pajule in November 1933.

A child is suffering from severe head and neck pain; the parents believe that someone has poisoned him and the mother takes him to the medi-

¹¹ Particular attention to the religious aspects and the funeral practices of Acioli is already evident in the letters which were sent to Raffele Pettazoni preceding the trip to Uganda: “I will devote particular attention to the important aspect of religion. In the end, I would like to develop a personal idea of the Supreme Being, to see its relationships with death, with the cult of the dead which is so strong among the nilotics” (Dore 2013: 181).

cine man (*ajwaka*), so that he can extract the poison; the medicine man examines the child and replies that the child has not been poisoned, but has a serious illness and prescribes that they bring him home. [...] The child dies before the mother returns to the village. They buried him by custom, outside the mother's hut, near the door. [...] The women of the family, gathered with the mother in her hut, weeping with true feeling and sincerity. A touching moment strikes me when the old grandmother, almost blind, crawling along drags herself to the tomb slowly and sits next to it to stay near to her grandchild saying the child should continue to be loved. I approach and look at her and I will never forget her and how much affection and pain there was in that grandmother's heart (Boccassino, 1973: 54).

The burial of a child who was cared for by a blind grandmother in all affairs. Boccassino must have followed the two with particular attention, as evidenced by the caption on another pair of photographs: "A grandchild who leads his almost blind grandmother to the water closet" (Boccassino, 1973: 19).

At the same time the geographical and territorial references also restore the cultural specificity of the different locations visited, highlighting the differences and similarities. Boccassino highlights his self-perception as a field researcher, as well as his role as a person who has inter-relations with other people. Motivational considerations concerning his position as personal guest in the dynamics of the social relations of the different villages which he has studied are frequent. An example is his inclusion in the sharing of the parts of a sacrificed ox at a funeral banquet, which he labels among the forms of the ritual with religious implications:

The ox is shared as follows: a) the ox owner receives the head, thigh, back leg, heart, and lungs; b) those who skin the ox, receive part of the internal organs; c) the boy who watches the livestock every day receives a thigh; d) the person who buries the deceased, the neck; e) legs and thighs are boiled for the banquet and offered to the people who have come to the funeral; a piece over the thigh (the ham) is served to the sisters of the deceased, also present at the lament; f) even those who led the ox in the village receive a piece of meat. As they divide the flesh according to custom, the leader of the ceremony, an elderly man

named Lolingamoy, also offers me, a guest of the village, a gift and says aloud: "Give a piece of meat to this white man; you see that Lubanga assists us, sending us this white man to help us!" They give me a piece of thigh and apologize for not giving me a bigger one because there are many people who attend the funeral banquet. I thank them and offer a gift of cigarettes in return which everyone accepts with pleasure. Lolingamoy's spontaneous act is in line with the Acioli's treatment of guests. [...] But Lolingamoy's gift is presented as a sudden and spontaneous expression of gratitude to Lubanga (Boccassino, 1973: 45, 50-51).

Boccassino's photographs reflect his organization of thought and communicate that thought also in the written documents, which together provide a complex representation of his ethnographic approach. With good educational and communicative results, the exhibition points faithfully to the skills and positive ways of working of this Italian ethnologist. Recalling once again the chronological distance of about forty years from the time of his work in the field to the writing of the article, a re-formulation of memory, based on a summary of those memories with the help of his field notebooks and, probably in larger measure of the photographs, comes to mind¹². Scrolling through the large half-page field notebook mentioned earlier, and checking the connections already referred to confirms the meticulous working method of its author. In fact, on these, in the two halves where the pages are divided, both contextual and contemporary references appear from the time of the work in Uganda, references from different types of documents, including photographs, as well as annotations and keys from the rereading of the same documents forty years later.

The closing section of the exhibition was devoted to the display of other documents and objects that make up the Boccassino Collection. They were chosen to exemplify and express, as completely as possible, the intricate nature of the various "media" in the collection, using dialogue in an inter-textual exhibition strategy among its various components. In two large horizontal display cases were placed the notebooks, drawings, prints, as well as two wooden storage boxes in which Boccassino kept a collection of postcards and negatives, along with a case containing the film frames and some colored filters. Separately a camera was set up upon a tripod, as if it were ready for use, although, as it is easy to deduce from the photographs, Boccassino photographed freely.

¹² As it would have happened, for example, for Malinowski (1935: 461; Wright 1994) or de Martino (Faeta, 1999).

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