

## FIGHTING SPIRITS

By Barbara Meier (University of Münster, Germany)

'Human beings fight human beings. Spirits fight spirits. You can't fight a spirit.'  
(Esther Aol Luk)

What do difficulties during pregnancies, repeated road accidents, constant family quarrels, returning rebels, and a traumatised society after 28 years of violence have in common?

Spirits have an impact on every sphere of social life among the Acholi in northern Uganda. Ancestral spirits protect individuals, families, clans and the entire Acholi society. They are challenged by wild, anti-social spirits that cause misfortune and suffering in Acholi communities. A carefully maintained exchange process is the only way to safeguard a balanced relationship and keep the social and natural environment in order.

When things get out of control calamities like epidemics, bloodshed, barrenness, and other afflictions befall communities. The wild spirits take control by taking possession of individuals, diviners and rebel leaders. In northern Uganda such a situation has led to a brutal war between the rebel group the 'Lord's Resistance Army' of Joseph Kony and the state's army ever since the takeover of power by the current President Yoweri Museveni in 1986. The rebels left the region in 2006 and people gradually returned to their destroyed villages. To rebuild their livelihoods people call on their ancestors once again for support and protection.



### A film by:

Barbara Meier, social anthropologist (director, author, project head) Phillipp Offermann, (camera, sound, editing) Kinyera Paddy Banyar, (subtitle translation, assistance) Philips Ogwang Clipper, Sabina Lawiro, Mathew Watmon, Odida (music)

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