**Les Funérailles dans la Société Pougouli**

**du Burkina Faso**

**Funeral Customs in the Puguli society**

**of Burkina Faso**

Anita Warfel

March 8, 2012

SIL Burkina Faso

Research from 1998 to 2003

in Bonzan, Puguli   
(Province of Tuy)

**Funeral customs among the Puguli of Burkina Faso**

**Table of contents**

[Introduction 3](#_heading=h.2et92p0)

Puguli social organization [3](#_heading=h.tyjcwt)

Authority in Phuo society [4](#_heading=h.3dy6vkm)

[Funeral preparations in Phuo society 5](#_heading=h.qsh70q)

[Funeral rites for members of the Phuo society 5](#_heading=h.1t3h5sf)

The traditional funeral in Phuo society [7](#_heading=h.4d34og8)

[The stages of the Phuo funeral ceremony 7](#_heading=h.2s8eyo1)

[1. Phuíé khórìá "taking the funeral sack" (calling a diviner) 8](#_heading=h.17dp8vu)

[2. Zɛ́má kpɔ̃́ɔ̃̀lɔ́ "finding the balafon" (invitation to the balafonists) 9](#_heading=h.3rdcrjn)

[3. Zɛ́má hɛ́lɩ̀á or "correct placement of the balafon" 9](#_heading=h.26in1rg)

[4. Dàánɩ̄ zʋ̀ʋ̀lɔ́ "arriving at the home" or gathering of the family 9](#_heading=h.lnxbz9)

[5. Kííríē ŋmààlʋ́ "mark the taboos" or reveal the taboos 10](#_heading=h.35nkun2)

[6. Bólìá "begin the chanting" announcement of completion of the funeral 10](#_heading=h.1ksv4uv)

[7. Sɩ̀lɔ́ (rights of the maternal uncle) 10](#_heading=h.44sinio)

[Participation of family members in the Puguli society during a funeral 11](#_heading=h.3as4poj)

Other ceremonial customs12

Other information regarding funerals in the Puguli society12

[The rituals of the widower 13](#_heading=h.3j2qqm3)

[The rituals of the widow 13](#_heading=h.1y810tw)

[Conclusions 14](#_heading=h.4i7ojhp)

[ANNEX](#_heading=h.2xcytpi) 15

[Other Puguli beliefs on the sickness and death 15](#_heading=h.1ci93xb)

[1) The soul (*dʋ̀má*) of a sick person 15](#_heading=h.3whwml4)

[2) Phantoms in Puguli society 16](#_heading=h.2bn6wsx)

## Introduction

In this document, we present the results of research done between 1998 and 2003, during which we sought to discover the beliefs and customs regarding funerals in the Puguli society. We used two different methods for this research: observation and personal interviews with a local informant, the latter with the help of an interpreter. Our informant was an aged head of a family. We attended several funerals over a few years and made observations about the rites. Our informant explained the important traditional rites carried out at the moment of death of a member of the society and the beliefs regarding the purposes of the rites. From this research, we obtained a glimpse of the Puguli beliefs surrounding death and life after death.

## Puguli social organization

Puguli families are traditionally organized according to a patrilineal system. Father and sons live in the same compound (consisting of an arrangement of small separate or adjoining homes). When the sons marry, they bring their wife to live with them in the compound. Whenever there is a conflict among the brothers, one of them may choose to begin a new smaller compound.

The Puguli society as a whole is organized according to a patrilineal system (i.e., each member of the family is linked to the larger family of his father). The Puguli give a surname to a child according to the qualities of the ancestor of the father.

In Puguli society, inheritance passes traditionally from brother to brother according to birth order. Included in the inheritance are wives, children, and any physical possessions. This system is changing due to the influence of individualism. As a result, when sons separate from their father, the inheritance of these nuclear families passes from father to son with increasing frequency. Consequently, the brothers who have moved away from their family of origin prefer that all their material possessions pass to their own children.

At the head of every large related family unit is a grandfather (or patriarch), who is responsible for the entire unit (his family, including his sons and their wives and children). He directs the family’s affairs, makes decisions, and resolves problems for members of the family.

The related family unit consists of households (sons with their wives and children) belonging to the same clan. In each village there are one or more clans represented. Each clan of each village has a patriarch who deals with matters that concern its members (e.g., funeral ceremonies).

When someone dies, the family head prepares the funeral site in the outer courtyard of the deceased’s home. The family heads from the clan of the deceased’s father accede to the decisions made for the funeral by the head of the family in charge of the rituals. Gravediggers from the deceased’s extended family are responsible for the burial.

Special religious and occupational knowledge is passed from father to eldest son. The father ensures that his son is fully informed about details concerning religious customs and knowledge related to his occupation.

Since the Puguli society is patrilineal, a man’s paternal uncle has an important role in his life. The paternal uncle acts as a direct intermediary between him and his father in the areas of formal education and cultural training as well as inheritance in the case of the death of the father (his brother). If the father is unable to pay fees for education, the paternal uncle may offer to pay his nephew’s education fees. When the paternal uncle has work needing to be done, that uncle will hire his nephew, who is obliged to help his uncle before helping his own father.

Having analyzed the Puguli culture more profoundly, we noted another important relationship, that of the maternal uncle (*nɛ̀rá*) and his nephew (*nìó*). This maternal uncle will take on the role of advocate. When conflicts arise within a nephew’s family, especially between a son and his father, the maternal uncle will come to the nephew’s defense. Also, this uncle will offer goods to his nephew, such as steers for labor, pigs for food, work related supplies, and means of transportation (bicycles or motorcycles). The boy will work for his maternal uncle in the fields and do house construction.

The relationship between a boy and his maternal uncle is especially important in the event of the child’s death (*sɩ̀ɔ́*). At the time of death, his maternal uncles are called to authorize his burial. Their permission is essential for the burial to take place.

According to Puguli belief, supernatural powers exist. A man may seek power from a maternal or paternal relative, but more often through his maternal relative. In many cases, he will seek this supernatural power to take on the role of a diviner. When a funeral is being planned, the family of the deceased will consult with a diviner to determine the cause of death.

## Authority in the Puguli society

The Puguli still hold to their custom of inheritance for village land chiefs, that is, the role of land chief passes from father to son. The land chief presides over decisions relating to the allocation of land within the village and cropland that becomes available. The land chief is an essential role, especially in times of boundary disputes. In the event of the death of a chief, the role of land chief is assumed by his eldest son.

Usually, when there is a land dispute, the land chief will call together family heads to help gather information related to the allocation of the land. The disputing parties will hear the advice from the elders. Then, the decision will be made by consensus in the presence of the land chief.

In the event of the death of a member of the Puguli community, the head of the extended family of the deceased will inform the land chief. The land chief is expected to attend the funeral if he is not otherwise occupied, but plays no significant role in the ceremony.

## Preparations for a Puguli funeral

Puguli funerals are set up according to the economic status of the family. For the funeral ceremony of a member of a wealthy family, the head balafonist is allotted a goat for his services. The family also gives the maternal uncles offerings of animals- goats, sheep, or steer- for their fetishes.

Families with less means hold simple funerals. They may offer a chicken or cowrie shells for the head balafonist, rather than a goat. They may also offer chickens to the maternal uncles, instead of larger animals.

The local gravediggers set up the funeral structures. They build a tent (*phʋ̀á*) to honor the deceased and protect the corpse from the sun during the time of the funeral ceremony. While they set up the tent, the gravediggers will start to dig the tomb.

The site of the tomb will normally be in the cemetery near the house of the family unit. In the event of the death of the head of the family or another older member of the family for whom they want to remember, they will build a tomb above ground in the courtyard of the family head.

During the funeral ceremony, the corpse is placed facing east and in front of the main door of the house which is called *zàkpóō bɔ́nɩ̀á nʋ̀á*. If the deceased is a man, the corpse is placed up on a wooden platform 1.5 meters high. A tent is formed around the platform by hanging cloth items such as shirts, boubous (gowns) and blankets, which cover the top and three sides, leaving the front side open. If the deceased person is a woman, her corpse is seated on ground level with the tent (*phʋ̀á)* formed around her.

## Description of the funeral rites of a member of the Puguli society

On May 15, 2003, we witnessed the final day of the funeral ceremonies of a woman from the family of Itwedua, a resident of Bonzan. That day included the ritual of taboos. The event was characterized by strong demonstrations of ritual music by the balafonists as well as displays of mourning by the women of the family.

Before describing more of the details of the ceremonial rituals, we will include some symbolism and other significant elements of the Puguli funeral that occured on May 15.

What attracted the eye of a visitor from afar as they approach the ceremony was the shelter of the deceased. It is a type of tent secured by four branches serving as posts about two meters long. The roof of the shelter was made of four branches and then covered with blankets and large garments that were attached to the wood. This particular shelter had been placed to the west of the main area of the ceremony and faced the east. The back of the shelter as well as its south side were covered with large cloths. At the back of the shelter were five long branches set at equal distances from one another and aligned with the posts. The door of the shelter was protected by an old rug. Near the shelter sat an old balafon. Inside, on the southwest corner, was the traditional funeral basket wrapped in cloth. The upper opening of the basket was topped with a bundle of cloth. The basket formation along with the headdress represented the dead woman whose burial had taken place on May 13th. Next to the basket was a boy who sat there through the entire funeral celebration. Near the northeast side of the shelter was a large basket containing the deceased person’s clothes.

On the north side of the funeral area another shelter had been erected for the musicians. The balafon players and drummers playing tam-tams were seated facing one another at the back of the shelter. The entrance to the hangar opened onto the courtyard. Next to the drummer, other men who seemed to be accompanying them were seated.

When the musicians began playing, the women began to walk to the sound of a melancholy melody chanted by the musicians. The women, around 20 of them, walked together to the tent of the deceased, stopped for a moment, then turned around and headed toward the house opposite it about thirty meters from the tent. When the women stopped in front of the tent as well as in front of the house, the daughters of the deceased wailed loudly while the others cried more softly in low voices. When the women moved, they walked either two by two or three to three, holding hands. Sometimes, some separated and raised their arms to the sky in a sign of distress. The daughters of the deceased all wear a red pearl necklace. The deceased woman’s two daughters had worn it that day. Many women had kaolin-marked faces. A woman was holding a piece of pottery containing some kaolin. Those who arrived could use it to smear their faces. This totem celebration, which lasted about 15 minutes, was mainly characterized by lamentation and the march of women.

Other visitors arrived to comfort the family. To express their sympathy, the visitors went toward the shelter of the deceased and paused, some offering cowrie shells or coins. Next they went towards the musicians and found places to sit under the large tree at the south side of the courtyard. Certain visitors went to the head of the family, Itwedua, who was seated in his home courtyard. Several chairs were placed near Itwedua especially for visitors. Those attending were drinking millet beer or water and could buy peanuts if they wanted some. A few attendees took advantage of the opportunity to drink a stronger alcoholic beverage called “*zua-zua*”, commonly known as “Who pushed me.” In the large courtyard, women were busy preparing millet beer.

## The traditional Pugul funeral ceremony

When a Puguli man or woman dies, there are certain rites done by the family and other rites performed by members of the society. For the death of an adult, each step in the funeral ceremony is essential. But, for the death of a child, certain steps in the ceremony are not necessary.

The funerals, called (*dʋɩ́ɛ̄*), include specific rites, rigorously followed one after the other. We will describe all that apply to the death of an adult, respecting chronological order.

### The different stages of the Puguli funeral ceremony

The Puguli funeral ceremony includes the following six stages:

1. To identify the person responsible for the death of the deceased and the pardon required by that person responsible to appease the fetiches of the maternal uncles of the deceased. The name of this stage is (*Phuíé khórìá*).
2. Inviting the musicians (*Zɛ́má kpɔ̃́ɔ̃̀lɔ́).*
3. Opening the ceremony (*Zɛ́má hɛ́lɩ̀á*).
4. Presentation of gifts to the family of the deceased (*Dàánɩ̄ zʋ̀ʋ̀lɔ́*).
5. Presenting of the music for the family of the deceased (*Kííríē ŋmààlʋ́*).
6. Authorization for the burial (*Sɩ̀lɔ́*).

#### 1. Determining responsibility for the death (Phuíé khórìá) “unhooking the pouch”, (décrochage de la gibecière) “calling the diviner”

In the event of death of a family member, the head of the extended family is responsible for sending a messenger to a diviner (*vʋ̀rɩ́ɔ̄*) of a different clan requesting that he come to determine the cause of death and give the authorization to begin the funeral.

The messenger unhooks the special pouch for this ritual from the wall of the diviner’s house that consists of small objects endowed with powers necessary for divination. This pouch is 40 cm long and made of goat or sheep skin, or cloth.

According to the Puguli, the death of a person is never caused by natural means, even if the cause is natural. Even the death of an older person is deemed to have a supernatural cause. The cause of death must be determined before any part of the funeral ceremony is allowed to begin. The cause of death may be for example stealing or another wrong committed by the deceased or another member of the family. Or, the reason might equally be a secret act of sorcery committed by a sorcerer. If a member of the family violated a law and the head of the family has not made retribution, a curse might fall on the life of the family head and bring about his death.

In front of all the participants, the diviner uses a carved stick (*gólé*) and the objects from the leather pouch that will help determine what law was violated. The offense stated by the diviner will be accepted as the cause of death. The diviner does not name the violator publically.

After these rituals are completed, the nearest family member to the deceased can consult with another diviner to determine the name of the person who caused the death. The name of the violator will be kept secret.

The diviner will decide whether or not all that needs to be done has been accomplished before he will give permission to start the funeral ceremonies. If the offense committed is not too serious and if the members of the family are not showing great disagreement, including with the deceased, as well as with the griots who will be called, the funeral can begin. But, if the offense was serious, for example a violation of a village law (such as stealing of a fetish or its objects) or violating a family (such as adultery), the family of the deceased must offer the recompenses to the fetishes which the diviner will reveal.

The recompenses required for the offense, communicated by the intermediary of a fetich (*vɛ́rɛ́má*) or by the ancestors (*lálɩ́á*), normally consist of an animal sacrifice (*vʋɩ̀ ɔ̀gá*) or scattering the ashes (*thɔ̀rɔ́ tháàlʋ́*) at a certain place. These sacrifices are normally done after the funeral ceremonies.

#### 2. Zɛ́má kpɔ̃́ɔ̃̀lɔ́ "picking up the balafon" (invitation of the balafonist)

The chief of the main family sends a messenger to invite the balafonist (*zɛ̃̀-dúō*) normally used by the family. The main balafonist will choose the rest of his group that will play for the funeral ceremony. This group normally consists of two balafonists, two drummers (*gõ̀gò-dúō*) and a singer (*pháphɔ́ɔ̄*). Usually, the singer is one of the balafonists, but sometimes the two roles will be filled by two different persons. If there is no disagreement between the family of the deceased and the team of musicians (*ƴúó*), the musicians will begin preparing to come. Customarily, a certain amount of money (200 cowries or 1000 francs) is asked for by the musicians for travel expenses. The head of the extended family sends at least two members of his family to bring the balafons.

#### 3. Zɛ́má hɛ́lɩ̀á or "correct placement of the balafon"

This step represents the official commencement of the funeral ceremony. When the musicians arrive, they place the balafons in the area designated for the musicians and begin to sing the praises in honor of the deceased. To reimburse the balafonists during the ceremony, the parents of the deceased present them with a goat and a basin of millet. The funeral ceremonies continue for two or three days depending on the social rank of the deceased and the financial means of the family.

For children less than 15 years of age, only the two rituals mentioned above are performed for the funeral: *zɛ́má kpɔ̃́ɔ̃̀lɔ́* and *zɛ́má hɛ́lɩ̀á.* But for the case in which this is the mother's firstborn and the mother is still of childbearing age, there will be no funeral for the child. Because once the rites are performed, the Puguli believe that the soul of the child can no longer return to the world, because during the rites the soul goes to the place of the dead. According to the Puguli, the soul of every person is eternal and does not die. The soul of the child who does not receive a funeral awaits a new birth by this same woman in order to be able to return to this world.

#### 4. Dàánɩ̄ zʋ̀ʋ̀lɔ́ "entrance in the house" or family meeting

The head of the extended paternal family, representing the family of the deceased, presents to all the relatives who have come, all the goods received (animals, poultry, cowrie shells and money) by the family of the deceased for funeral expenses. After that, there is a collection of donations of any kind from other relatives and friends. The gifts are used to pay for the demands of the spirits of the maternal uncles (*silo*), sacrifices of pardon for the death of the deceased, and to give hospitality to visitors during the funeral ceremonies.

That part of the ceremony could last two days if all of the members of the family have not yet arrived or to ensure the musicians are sufficiently paid so that they will continue to play music.

#### 5. Kííríē ŋmààlʋ́ "fait de taper les interdits" ou présentation des interdits

The parents of the deceased invite the balafonists to play their traditional clan music. This music explains the specific taboos to the people gathered. The taboos include a list of restrictions, i.e., the prohibited activities of the extended family. Then, the balafonists play the traditional music of the maternal uncles of the deceased. At the end of this session, the parents give the required gifts to each group. The musicians receive something from the parents for having played the requested music, then the time of music ends.

#### 6. Bólìá "fait de chanter" ou annonce de la fin des funérailles announcement of the end of the funeral ceremony

The maternal uncles authorize the burial of a deceased man’s body. They must verify the cause of death and then certify that the requirements of their fetiches are announced. This special responsibility of the maternal uncles for burial of a nephew comes from their relationship as protector of their nephew until death. It is important for the maternal uncles to make certain that the burial is done correctly.

In the case of a deceased woman, the members of her father’s clan are authorized to handle the burial. Before the rituals take place, especially the *sɩ̀lɔ́*, the woman’s body will be buried.

If a woman dies outside of her village, she can be buried where she died. Her family could also bring the body into the village for burial. The place of burial is not significant, according to the Puguli, since the soul leaves the body at the time of death.

#### 7. Sɩ̀lɔ́ (droits de l'oncle maternel) rights of the maternal uncle

The ceremony related to the maternal uncle (*sɩ̀lɔ́)*, which takes place the day after the other funeral rituals, involves offering a contribution that the deceased person will inherit from the *lálɩ́á bʋá* (place of the dead beyond this world). This means that the deceased’s family traditionally offers to the maternal uncles (of his mother and his father) all that the fetishes of their clans require. These contributions consist of bottles of dolo (beer), cowrie shells, money, chicks, chickens, roosters, goats, sheep, or even steers, according to the status of the deceased.

Once all these obligatory funeral rituals are accomplished, the soul of the deceased, according to the Puguli, can attain the place of the ancestors (*lálɩ́á bʋá*). The journey of the soul to the site of the ancestors can last for two years.

## Participation of the members of the Puguli societe in the funeral ceremonies

Visitors come at the funeral ceremonies in order to express their condolenses to those in mourning. Family members express their shared grief by wailing if they are overcome and want to show their sentiments and the degree in which they are related to the deceased. Loud wailing (*órì*) expressed upon arriving and during the ceremony is a normal way for them to show their grief. But, there are other ways of expressing grief. Another way is to hold their hands on their heads with their arms extended to the side of their head. The men as well as the women can use this way of expressing grief. This gesture is shared by other ethnic groups. Another posture of mourning for the women upon arrival is to walk alongside each other with their arms hooked together.

Deciding to participate in the funeral of a deceased person depends on the reputation of that person. If a person has behaved badly - such as having been a brawler, disrespectful of others, not helpful toward others, or avoided the funeral of others, some people will not attend that person’s funeral.

The second day of the funeral, most of the visitors arrive. The visitors first pass by the tent of the deceased in order to express their sadness, tossing cowrie shells in honor of the deceased. They pause to stand in front of the musicians to listen to the praises of the deceased, and toss cowrie shells to recompense them.

Traditionally, the Puguli funerals lasted four days for important persons. Recently, the government of Burkina Faso imposed a limit of three days for the entire funeral. The Puguli honor important elders and heads of family by drawing out their funeral. For others, their funerals are limited to two days, or one.

The local villagers, the members of the clan of the deceased and friends and acquaintances assist in the funeral ceremony in order to give moral, financial, and material support to the family of the deceased. People from other villages are fed and given lodging by their friends in that village. But, strangers who arrive unexpectedly are cared for by the family of the deceased. The contribution for helping the family of the deceased is entirely voluntary. Family members who live in larger cities and have the means help with the funeral expenses for their family that are taking place in a village.

## Other traditional ceremonies

After the closing of the main funeral ceremony, there are other customs to carry out, called *bʋ̀ɔ̃́*. These rituals involving animal sacrifices and recompenses of cowrie shells are presented by the family to the land chief and the chief of the forest as offerings to seek pardon. These requirements are known and offered in every occurrence of death.

Friends of the deceased each bring a special offering, whether food or money, and imvolve seeking a successor who will inherit the place of friendship that was vacated by the deceased. This person must be from the family of the deceased.

The peers of the deceased who live in the same village will gather to show their fondness for the person by organizing a danse or a fight. They might also organize other activities that the deceased liked to do. This ceremonial gathering for the honor of the deceased is called the *khɛ̀nɛ́ɛ̄*.

At the start of a funeral, the family with a joking relationship to the deceased will attach cords to the ankles or collars on the neck of the siblings and children of the deceased so that the deceased will not be able to recognize them.

## Other information regarding the traditional Puguli funeral

If a member of the Puguli society is killed by a lightning strike or another violent cause, there are formalities to do before the start of the funeral, and before touching the body. According to the Puguli, the one who touches the dead body could undergo the same fate. In special cases, the diviner will determine the actual cause of death. Before touching the dead body, the family will call on someone from the village who knows how to bring the powder relating to the type of death. The expert in this area will know how to extract the bad power from the dead body.

If someone dies from a lightning strike, for example, the family will call on the rain chief to chase away the power that, according to the Puguli, always stays with the deceased until someone expels it. The rain chief will spread a black powder made from the grilled wood of a special kind of tree on the deceased, to chase away the power.

Families can also wait up to two years to organize a funeral if they cannot afford it at the time of death. According to the Puguli, if someone dies, and for lack of means, their funeral is postponed to a later date, the soul waits in another world until the time of the celebration of their funeral to join their ancestors.

According to the Puguli, a person who dies and who never receives a funeral celebration never rejoins his ancestors; it is returned to the váárɛ̄ thɛ́ɔ̄, the “region of dogs” which is, according to the Puguli, a place of torture where people fight and eat each other. Because this place is not pleasant, a dead person, if he does not receive a funeral celebration, returns to the family like a ghost to attack the living with misfortunes, in order to claim his rights and claim the celebration of his funeral ceremonies and its rituals. For this reason, funerals are considered an obligation among the Puguli.

## The rituals for widowers

Immediately after the death of his wife, the widower ties a rope around his head, dresses in a large traditional white boubou, and holds in his hand three sticks joined together. After the ceremonies, the widower is free to remove these funeral items.

When the period of mourning begins, the widower is no longer allowed to enter his room in his own house; he will be looked after by a former widower and stays with that person. A widower may only shake hands with people who have already lived through the experience of the loss of a wife, since, according to the Puguli, this is how the widower avoids transferring the same misfortune to another person. For the same reason, a widower should not eat from the same dish as others who have not yet suffered this kind of loss.

According to the requirements of the funeral rites, after all the ceremonies are completed, the widower's time of mourning ends. He is free to begin the customary remarriage procedures. A relative shaves his head, helps him take off his mourning clothes, and purifies him by washing him.

## The ritual for widows

At the beginning of the funeral rites, a widow is required to tie a rope around her head and dress in a large white boubou. Traditionally, the widow's mourning clothing was only a piece of white cloth worn around her body at the lower abdomen. She must hold four sticks tied together. After the ceremonies, the widow is free to remove these funeral items.

During the funeral rituals, the widow is not allowed to enter her room. She is looked after by a former widow with whom she must spend the nights of mourning. As with the widower, the widow may only shake hands with people who have already experienced the death of their husbands. Neither can she eat from the same dish as others who have not suffered the loss of a husband.

The widow, after the funeral rituals, is also required to observe other rituals for a period of about a year. She must not sit on the same bench with a person who has never been widowed, either widow or widower. She may not be transported on the back of someone’s bicycle or motorbike. She must wear ropes (*gĩ́ṍ*) for protection around her kidneys until she remarries. She must not have sex before her marriage of inheritance (to a a male inlaw).

The widow does not receive a formal divorce from the deceased because she must inherit a brother of the deceased who validly replaces the deceased. It is called *sɩ́lʋ̀á*, or more vulgarly *wɛ̃́-khàràmá*, which means "cutting the strings". It is a form of levirate.

The levirate or inheritance marriage is a ceremony where people who know the woman get together: the family of her late husband, her own family and her friends. The women sit in the widow's room while the men sit outside. A woman is assigned to go out and look for the clean rope of each brother of the deceased and bring them back to the widow. The widow will look and choose the rope of the one she prefers. This decision will be accepted by all participants in the ceremony.

The one who inherits the widow must take care of her and treat her like his own wife. The wife can choose not to remarry, but the ancestors will oblige her to remain linked to her husband's family. To do this, the woman chooses a child from the family to whom she will be socially linked, but to whom she will not become a wife. If, however, after having fulfilled all the customs, the widow is poorly treated, she may go and remarry elsewhere.

## Conclusions

We have dealt with some of the aspects of funeral ceremonies of the Puguli society as well as the customs pertaining to funerals and death. Further study is advised on related topics, such as the music of praise during funeral ceremonies, the supernatural among the Puguli, such as the concept of a soul and its displacement, and the place of ancestors and their regulations.

### ANNEX

## Other beliefs of the Puguli regarding sickness and death

Witchcraft exists in the Puguli (*phúō*) society. They believe that acts of witchcraft (*hɩ̀kpààrʋ́*) are powerful enough to kill a person, including throwing invisible poisoned arrows at someone. The sorcerer is not punished for these attacks, even if not everyone agrees with him, because it is never possible to give proof of them.

#### 1) The soul (*dʋ̀má*) of a sick person

According to the Puguli, a person's soul does not die. Furthermore, they believe that no one is susceptible to disease when the soul is still present, and that illness is not a part of normal life.

On the other hand, the Puguli believe that in the case in which a person commits a prohibition or that he/she offends the ancestors, the soul of that person becomes worried and is no longer at peace. If the person offends the ancestors, they can cause the soul to leave the body. In that case, the soul goes to the village, to the forest, or to another village.

According to the Puguli, the soul can appear in another body similar to that of the sick person. But, the soul and this new body are visible only to sorcerers (*hɩ̀kpààlʋ́*). The sorcerers are the only persons who can determine what has happened; then, they can warn the family.

According to the Puguli, when the soul leaves the body, the person begins to lose weight and becomes susceptible to diseases. According to their beliefs, it is possible that a sorcerer will encounter this walking soul and kill it. In this case, the person will die.

The members of the family can consult a diviner (*vʋ̀rɩ́ɔ̄*) who can suggest the restitution necessary to appease the fetish that the sick person has offended. This diviner is also likely to know who among all the diviners would have the power to bring the soul back to its original body.

We mentioned that the soul of the sick person leaves his body to inhabit a new supernatural body which resembles that of the original body. This soul does no harm to the living. It walks around for some time (up to about three months) before the sick person dies. The soul of a dying person joins the ancestors (*lálɩ́á bʋá*) after the funeral rites and then a period of about two years.

According to the Puguli, during the funeral of friends, the souls of all the ancestors of the family return, as well as the souls of friends. The Puguli also believe that the souls of the ancestors return to live in the new babies of the family.

#### 2) Phantoms in the Puguli society

Phantoms (*kpɔ́ná*) also exist, according to the Pougouli. They come out from people who are near death, and manifest themselves by moving about in a supernatural way. Phantoms can disturb healthy people physically and in other ways. They walk around for about three days before the sick person dies.

Some of these beliefs provide ideas for further research.