

Lugbara Religion Revisited: A Study of Social Repair In West Nile, North-West Uganda

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Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

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Abstract

This thesis explores processes that have been described by scholars of transitional justice as post-war social repair. It interrogates the multifarious quests through which Lugbara people, living in the West Nile sub-region of north-west Uganda, seek to rebuild their intimate relationships and social lives, with recourse to explanations and therapies for suffering and misfortune. Scholars have recently found in such socio-cultural processes—which traverse the cosmological, social and economic landscape of everyday life—potential resources that could restore communal relations and assist post-war recovery. This thesis critically appraises this contention.

Whilst scholars are invested in abstracting metaphysical meaning to map causal relationships, Lugbara people are simply seeking answers to misfortunes which continue to befall them as individuals, families, and collectives: enquiring about what issues are *following* them, and how addressing wrong acts may heal bodily suffering and social wounds. Since many sicknesses are regarded as a phenomenological signal of violations within families and clans—enquiring about their cases is occasion for to discuss notions of responsibility, loss and social peace. For Lugbara people, managing misfortune and past injustices are entangled.

To understand the healing landscape of the present, this thesis draws on the past. A diachronic approach is deployed through re-evaluating writings on Lugbara ritual and practice described in *Lugbara Religion* by the mid-century anthropologist John Middleton. Like Middleton, this thesis is interested in how Lugbara people draw on logics

and explanations through interconsistent and pragmatic practice. This thesis critically appraises the methodological underpinnings and gendered assumptions which produced particular knowledge about Lugbara peoples in *Lugbara Religion*, and which have been transposed onto subsequent studies of healing in the region.

The body of this thesis presents novel ethnographic evidence which explores different faces of contemporary healing. Through a multi-sited ethnographic approach in villages across Arua and Maracha District, this enquiry explores how quests to “follow” suffering are structured amid unfolding post-war projects to revive – and resist – notions of Lugbara personhood and sociality premised on patriarchy and seniority. Concurrently, this thesis explores the fragility of these efforts in the face of ongoing loss, efforts that lead to the allocation of responsibility for illness through specific means and logics—that European scholars would term “witchcraft”.

Placing the historical record in conversation post-war healing shifts, this thesis engages with how long-standing social institutions endure in relation to post-war recovery, albeit through dynamic interaction with logics of faith and law, and creative internal struggles between generations, genders and believers.

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Translations

All translations used within this thesis follow the Ayivu variant of Lugbarati, except where interlocutors are directly quoted. See pp. 79-80 for discussion of dialectical variations.

<i>a'bi</i>	ancestors, grandfathers
<i>a'ii</i>	believe (accept)
<i>acife</i>	oracle
<i>da</i>	truth
<i>adra, abea, mua, yakani</i>	retributive forces
<i>Adro</i>	indigenous Divinity, Catholic God (maternal uncle)
<i>Adroa (Adro onzi)</i>	divine spirits, "small gods"
<i>Adroa o 'bapiri</i>	God the Creator
<i>ala (onyiru)</i>	good (clean)
<i>ali</i>	bridewealth
<i>alio</i>	poverty (lack of money or people)
<i>ambavu</i>	lineage (where foot treads)
<i>andraleti</i>	Dialect of low Lugbara
<i>anya</i>	millet
<i>aruba</i>	sickness induced by taking family to court
<i>askari</i>	guard, soldier (KiS)
<i>atrita</i>	curse
<i>avuti</i>	transfer after death of women
<i>azi</i>	Work
<i>azo</i>	sickness
<i>azo okopi ku</i>	sickness which doesn't end
<i>ba</i>	a person
<i>Balokole (or pomzifu)</i>	"Saved ones"
<i>ba'azaza</i>	mad person (orindi onzi)
<i>ba drapi 'bori</i>	people who have died
<i>ba ti</i>	sickness from mouth
<i>ba wara, ba ambo</i>	elder
<i>dede</i>	grandmother
<i>din dia</i>	plague
<i>dini</i>	Religion
<i>dra</i>	death
<i>drilonzi</i>	misfortune
<i>e'yo</i>	issue, word, deed
<i>e'yo ada</i>	truth
<i>Ekizibiti</i>	evidence (KiS)
<i>enyata (enyanya, enata, ba yi)</i>	poison
<i>enyati</i>	family, household neighbourhood
<i>enzo</i>	lie
<i>enzonia kani adani</i>	rumour
<i>ezata</i>	sin
<i>funyo</i>	groundnuts
<i>inzita</i>	discipline
<i>jo jok</i>	witchcraft (Alur)
<i>kafiri</i>	pagan (KiS)
<i>kaka</i>	maize
<i>kulia batu</i>	"people eaters" (Europeans)
<i>lire</i>	"that place" (Kampala)
<i>Lugbarati</i>	Lugbara language
<i>juru</i>	extended relatives

<i>mairungi</i>	khat
<i>maku</i>	Sweet potatoes
<i>Mazi</i>	killing spirit
<i>ma mu yi</i>	going over the water (migrating over the Nile)
<i>mundu</i>	European (something far away)
<i>mundu aro</i>	medicine of the whites (clinical medicine)
<i>mundu'ba (governmeti, KiS)</i>	people of the Europeans, government officials
<i>Mungu</i>	God (Anglican Faith)
<i>nebi</i>	prophet (Arabic)
<i>nyoka</i>	curse
<i>o'dipi</i>	male relatives (within subclan)
<i>ole</i>	envy or indignation
<i>oleu</i>	Witch/ wizard
<i>ole ro</i>	invoke ghosts (1950)
<i>ojo</i>	healer
<i>oku</i>	married woman
<i>onata</i>	grumbling
<i>ondu</i>	sorghum (1950 – oracle)
<i>onzi</i>	bad (ev)
<i>onziri</i>	the bad one, HIV/AIDS (also silimo, <i>azo onzi</i>)
<i>opi</i>	chief
<i>opi ozooni</i>	rainmaker
<i>opkoro</i>	strong/ strength (witchcraft)
<i>ori</i>	male ancestors or stone (sacrifice, snake)
<i>orindi</i>	spirit (formerly soul)
<i>ori ka</i>	ghostly vengeance
<i>osu</i>	beans
<i>oya (or kita, bari)</i>	communal work
<i>rota</i>	growth, collective development
<i>ru</i>	respect
<i>rua</i>	body
<i>rudu</i>	curse
<i>rua ala</i>	health (lit body which is clean)
<i>suru</i>	subclan/ clan
<i>tualu</i>	social harmony
<i>tukutuku (sima)</i>	Belgians
<i>uruleti</i>	dialect of high Lugbara
<i>Yakan, (ya to shake)</i>	colonial movement
<i>yi</i>	water (yi etia, beneath the water)
<i>za</i>	meat
<i>zamva</i>	unmarried woman

Abbreviations

AIM	African Inland Mission
ARRH	Arua Regional Referral Hospital
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation (UN)
FUNA	Former Uganda National Army
LCI	Local Councillor 1 (Village Chairman)
LCIII	Local Councillor 3 (Sub-County Chairman)
LCV	Local Councillor 5 (District Chairman)
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NRA	National Resistance Army
NRM	National Resistance Movement
OPEC	Pseudonym for Arua Smuggling Cartel
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome
TPDF	Tanzanian People's Defence Force
UN	United Nations
UNLA	Ugandan National Liberation Army
UNRF	Uganda National Resistance Movement
URA	Uganda Revenue Authorities
WFP	World Food Programme
WNBF	West Nile Bank Front



Chapter One

Introduction

This thesis explores processes that scholars of transitional justice have described as post-war social repair. It explores the multifarious quests through which Lugbara people, living in the West Nile sub-region of north-west Uganda, seek to rebuild their intimate relationships and social lives, with recourse to collective explanations for suffering and misfortune. Scholars have recently found in such socio-cultural processes—that traverse the cosmological, social and economic landscape of everyday life—potential resources that could restore communal relations, and assist post-war recovery. This thesis explores this contention in a post-conflict geography, where cosmological resources have been deeply embedded in experiences of reconstruction since the mid-1980s.

Whilst scholars are interested in the social implications of the metaphysical, Lugbara people are simply seeking answers to misfortunes which continue to befall them as individuals, families, and collectives. Simply put, how are people concerned with what is *following* them? How can bodily suffering and social wounds be healed?

“Every action has a repercussion here.”¹

For many Lugbara people, *azo* (sickness) and *drilonzi* (misfortune) have long held moral connotations, serving as signals of repercussions for social violations. Whilst clinical medicine provides answers to many maladies through tests or medication, *azo okopi ku* (‘sickness which doesn’t end’) or which culminates in *dra* (death) is often

¹ Commentary, co-worker, July 2016.

interpreted as signifying that ‘something is not right’ with respect to relations with the living or the dead.² In addressing affliction, Lugbara people pursue health and well-being, and seek an end to bodily or psychological suffering. Since processes of tracing and mending the ‘real’ cause of the *e’yo* (‘issue’, literally ‘word’ or ‘deed’) require collective clan participation and addressing a shared archive of intimate history, these processes represent efforts to simultaneously repair the social fabric and redraw the contours of social-moral worlds of the present. In so doing, Lugbara people define what it means to be *ba* (‘a person’), and to live in peaceable communion with others, a state defined by *tualu* (‘living together in harmony’).

“Now you hear, so and so has died and you see the dead body over there working for someone. Your soul is taken. Nothing like this was here before the war.”³

Following their return from exile in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lugbara people have recognised new agents and forces that cause suffering. These forces affect them not because of the deeds of an individual or their relations, but because of the envy and greed of others, who acquire resources for individual wealth and power. Post-return quests for health thus require managing human mediators of nefarious forces. This thesis explores the production of fears of human malevolence, alongside collective attempts to police new forms of internal terror. Achieving social harmony with respect to the cosmos often involves the violent remaking of a community’s limits.

² V. Das, *Affliction: Health, Disease, Poverty*. New York: Fordham UP, 2015.

³ I, Elder, Maracha, 12/05/2017 (OJ). A full list of interviews conducted for this thesis and a guide to interpreting the data categorisation system can be found in the relevant section of the bibliography.

This thesis explores how pursuits which Janzen has termed “quests for therapy” or which Ranger considers to constitute the “important practical work of reconstruction”, have been structured amid unfolding social projects that have sought to revive clan authority in the rural countryside.⁴ Concurrently, this thesis explores the fragility of efforts to structure society according to gerontocratic logics in the face of ongoing loss, efforts that lead to the allocation of responsibility for illness through specific means and logics—logics that European scholars would term ‘witchcraft’.

In exploring transformations in these intimate worlds, this thesis too revisits the academic portrayal of these people, re-evaluating writings on Lugbara ritual and practice described in the influential volume *Lugbara Religion* by the mid-century anthropologist John Middleton. Premised on colonial anthropological approaches emphasising the primacy of ‘tradition’, works such as Middleton’s have been critiqued for epitomising what Trouillot terms the “savage slot”: in emphasising cultural differences, these works produced “natives”, whilst ignoring both the violence of the colonial state and the anthropologist’s own position in producing bounded cultural worlds.⁵ Because Lugbara elders were involved in this project of constructing order, however, Middleton’s work provoked as much excitement as critique. This research revisits *Lugbara Religion* not as an objective portrayal of a society (since no such thing exists), but as an archive of intimate relations. It attends to the concealments within his

⁴ J.M. Janzen, *The Quest for Therapy: Medical Pluralism in Lower Zaire*, University of California Press: Berkley, 1982; T. Ranger: Afterword: War, Violence and Healing in Zimbabwe, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 18(3), 1992, pp.698-707, p.707

⁵ M-R. Trouillot, ‘Anthropology and the Savage Slot: The Poetics and Politics of Otherness’, in *Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, pp. 7-28. See also V. Das and D. Poole (eds.), *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 2004.

text, in light of subsequent theoretical developments.⁶ Concerned for the contemporary as well, this research furthermore explores how modernity has intersected with the social morphology of Lugbara clans, and their explanations for misfortune. Indeed, whether in the colonial era or the eras of Ugandan independence and civil war, these explanations (and their quests for healing) were never confined by a bounded locale, and have long been formed through encounters between people, the state, colonial pressures and entities, and market economies.⁷ I thus offer a novel diachronic perspective, given the dearth of scholarship on everyday recovery among Lugbara populations.

This thesis is a multi-sited ethnography based on fourteen months of ethnographic fieldwork in the Arua and Maracha Districts of West Nile.⁸ As defined within the terms of the Ugandan Constitution, Lugbara people form the majority ethnic group within the sub-region, representing 3.3% of the country's population, or 1.1 million people, living predominantly in these two districts. The core act of data collection involved investigating the management of suffering (individual and communal), unearthing its explanation, and tracing the outcomes of its resolution (or lack thereof). Much of this research involved interviews and focus groups that 'followed' efforts to manage suffering in a detached way, but at times I also witnessed the violence in homes and villages that emerged from efforts to address suffering and the past—including the riots that sought to overthrow the Roman Catholic bishop of Ediofe Diocese in September

⁶ For the concepts of "concealment" in colonial ethnography, see A.J. Browne, 'The Alur-ization of Aidan Southall – Contested Ethnonymic Traditions in North-Western Uganda', *History in Africa* 45 (2018), pp. 221-244.

⁷ B. Meyer, 'Comment on H. Englund and J. Leach, Ethnography and the Meta-Narratives of Modernity', *Current Anthropology*, 41:2 (2000), pp. 241-242

⁸ G.E. Marcus, 'Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995), pp. 95-117.

2016. This thesis describes these unfolding events in detail, and endeavours to understand both those actors who precipitated violence and those actors who resisted and lamented it. West Nile continues to be stereotyped as a “marginal place populated by inherently violent people”.⁹ This thesis rejects this characterisation, situating violence in the context of the denial of resources, healthcare, and recognition of Lugbara people’s claims for moral leadership.

In recent decades, international donors and scholars alike have grown increasingly interested in how populations transition out of violent conflict and reconstruct peaceable methods of living together. In lieu of political transition, Northern Uganda has provided the case study *par excellence* to examine processes of social repair.¹⁰ Enquiries focusing on the post-war context of Acholiland, following the retreat of the Lord’s Resistance Army in 2007, have unfolded as the field of transitional justice itself has been ‘localised’.¹¹ Increasingly, scholars seeking to understand how people forgive the wrongs of the past and move on focus not on formal courts and commissions but on local communities, and the messy politics of the ‘everyday’ through which forgiveness, or forgetting, is achieved.¹² Such a shift marks a radical departure from the legal beginnings of transitional justice, and Western-centric ideas of justice.

⁹ M. Leopold. *Inside West Nile*. Oxford: James Currey, 2005, p. 3.

¹⁰ A. Macdonald, ‘Transitional justice and political economies of survival in post-conflict northern Uganda’, *Development and Change* 48:2 (2017), pp. 286-311.

¹¹ R. Shaw and L. Waldorf, ‘Introduction: Localizing Transitional Justice’, in R. Shaw and L. Waldorf (eds.), *Localising Transitional Justice: Interventions and Priorities after Mass Violence*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford UP, 2010, pp. 3-26, p. 4.

¹² R. MacGinty, ‘Everyday peace: Bottom-up and local agency in conflict-affected societies’, *Security Dialogue* 45:6 (2014), pp. 548–564.

In Northern Uganda, the role of cosmologies has been newly positioned as a means for external actors to explore authentic local vocabularies of repair. This thesis seeks to contribute to this unfolding exploration through contributing evidence from West Nile, a region characterised as ‘post-conflict’ within Uganda’s development policy, but virtually neglected from present scholarly conversations about the North.¹³ The empirical evidence explored in this thesis comprises a powerful repository by which to view how community is made—or unmade—from the ground up, beyond the gaze of transitional justice entrepreneurs and international experts.¹⁴ Out of necessity, Lugbara people in this region have recovered from the past using their own resources; one key contribution herein is a response to the distinct lack of consideration for the role of clans in everyday peace-making within the transitional justice literature.¹⁵

At first glance, themes of sickness and suffering may seem remote from enquiries into post-conflict transition or justice. Yet according to the precepts of their life-worlds, Lugbara people see no clear distinction between *azo* (sickness) and the acts of acknowledging and forgiving the wrongs of the past: inhabiting a world where wrongful acts, lies and neglect are punished through *azo*, Lugbara people contend that human malevolence of many different origins can bring about suffering. Sickness is thus an apt gauge of social repair, since it serves as a phenomenological signal of violations within families and clans—directly bringing into focus both notions of responsibility and loss of social peace.

¹³ Government of Uganda, *Peace, Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda, 2007-2010*.

¹⁴ P.R. Alcalá and E. Baines, ‘Editorial Note’, *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 6:3 (2012), pp. 385–393.

¹⁵ B. Meier, ‘“Death Does Not Rot”: Transitional Justice and Local ‘Truths’ in the Aftermath of the War in Northern Uganda’, *Africa Spectrum* 48:2 (2013), pp. 25–50.

In this way, this thesis enters debates about the role of cosmologies in transitional justice as well. Though scholars have equated metaphysical explanations for suffering and trauma as “resources for development”, this thesis cautions against such an abstraction.¹⁶ Interrogating the production and application of Lugbarati concepts of souls, spirits and witches, I argue that the utility of these concepts to Lugbara people lies in their malleability, the ability of explanations to reflect personalities and social circumstances.¹⁷ As has long been argued in relation to customary law, codifying concepts transforms their meaning and detaches explanations from the original context of validation.¹⁸ This thesis contends that scholars have cherry-picked aspects of cosmological worlds to make arguments regarding social restoration—but in deeply divided contexts, metaphysical explanations can be harnessed for inclusion as well as exclusion. Oftentimes, the same Lugbara healers mediating restorative rituals also recruited cosmological explanations to justify the violent ostracisation of people from their ancestral lands. Quests for responsibility can thus generate new forms of inter-communal violence and injustice.

This thesis furthermore urges the appreciation of cosmologies that transcend periods of conflict. Cosmological praxes often resonate with Lugbara populations because of their historical repetition, their recurrence through successive colonial and post-colonial struggles, bearing the historical imprint of early colonial prophets and Christian pastors alike in mediating meaning. Indeed, Lugbara people used historically-constituted scripts

¹⁶ E. Baines, 'Spirits and social reconstruction after mass violence: rethinking transitional justice', *African Affairs* 109:436 (2010), pp. 409-430.

¹⁷ P. Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1997.

¹⁸ C. Leonardi, et al., *Local Justice in Southern Sudan*. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace and Rift Valley Institute, 2010.

to describe lingering “contagion” for disturbed souls or intra-clan debts that long predated present violent conflicts.¹⁹ In essence, justice or balance—according to Lugbara people themselves—requires considering the *longue-durée* of upheaval, rather than singular episodes. Much of this thesis therefore draws on the past to understand the present.

Similarly, medical physicians have sought to understand the processes described in this thesis through the lens of trauma. To be clear: this research is not a study of illness or disease seeking to categorise healing pathways or taxonomies of affliction. Nor does it import Western concepts of ‘trauma’ or ‘PTSD’ into a context where such ideas have no direct referent. Instead, this research departs from recent calls to ground enquiries into repair in concepts *relevant to those populations under investigation*.²⁰ Crucially, this enquiry takes what Whyte terms an “actor-oriented perspective”, working with a tapestry of local representatives including clan members, elders, diviners, pastors and even government officials to navigate how Lugbara people experience, analyse and act upon *azo* and *drilonzi* at the individual and collective level, and what such processes reveal about the changing nature of their society.²¹ Ultimately, the findings of this thesis contribute both to debates within transitional justice and development that focus on the nature of ‘everyday’ or the ‘ordinary’ in social repair, as well as trends in public health that challenge individualising psychological approaches to resilience.

¹⁹ L. Meinert and L. Grøn, ‘It Runs in the Family’. Exploring Contagious Kinship Connections’, *Ethnos* 85:4 (2020), pp. 581-594, p. 581.

²⁰ A. Macdonald, ‘From the ground up: what does the evidence tell us about local experiences of transitional justice’, *Transitional Justice Review* 1:3 (2015), pp. 72-121.

²¹ S.R. Whyte, *Questioning Misfortune: The Pragmatics of Uncertainty in Eastern Uganda*. Cambridge UP: Cambridge Studies in Medical Anthropology, 1997.

To clarify these terms, I now explore the unfolding terrain of the current debate.

1.2 Transitional Justice: Towards the 'local'?

In the three decades since its inception, the field of transitional justice has shifted considerably. A focus on institutional and legal reforms borne out of post-Cold War liberalism—instilled in truth commissions, prosecutions and reparations advocated in Latin America, Central Europe, Eastern Europe and South Africa—has shifted to encompass radically different mechanisms to deal with the perpetrators of mass atrocities and the aftermath of violent pasts.²² If transitional justice was once about regime change and democratic transition, since the early 2000s transitional justice has become enveloped in what MacGinty terms the “technocratic turn” of peace-building, applied by development and aid agencies alike as essential to the promotion of liberal democracies and post-conflict reconstruction.²³ Macdonald equates the professionalisation of transitional justice to a “depoliticisation”, a “tool-kit” increasingly “copied and pasted” across different contexts, transitional or not, and where states may not function as primary guarantors of security.²⁴ In view of this expanding terrain, two substantive evolutions have emerged. On the one hand, scholars have advocated for international trials, and on the other, for the value of exploring local

²² A. Macdonald, 'Transitional justice and political economies of survival'.

²³ R. MacGinty, 'Routine peace: Technocracy and peacebuilding', *Cooperation and Conflict* 47:3 (2012), pp. 287–308.

²⁴ A. MacDonal, 'Transitional justice and political economies of survival', p. 287. A shift in donor policy has been accompanied by a scholarly acknowledgement that in post-conflict and borderland states, a cacophony of institutions are involved in delivering justice and security. See for example, V. Boege, et al., *On Hybrid Political Orders and Emerging States: State Formation in the Context of 'Fragility'*, Berghof Handbook Dialogue No. 8, 2008; R. Luckman and T. Kirk, 'Security in hybrid political contexts: an end-user approach', London School of Economics Justice and Security Research Programme working paper 2, 2012. Available at <<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/56358/>>.

processes for social repair.²⁵ Uganda has become a “paradigmatic case of transitional justice without transition”.²⁶

These shifts within transitional justice stem from wider neoliberal tendencies towards the de-emphasis of the state as the primary instigator of development and justice, but are also a pragmatic response to the realities of contemporary armed conflict. Forms of violence differ across contexts, but war and conflict increasingly occur less between states than within them. Whilst contested, Kaldor’s idea of “new wars” denotes this post-Cold War shift whereby conflict is disproportionately waged by intra-state groups, in places where the state has lost legitimacy.²⁷ New wars are not fought on distant battlefields, but on internal war-scapes that increasingly imbricate civilians: recruited into rebel forces, subjected to acts of violence and retaliation, and displaced *en masse* into settlements (both domestically and across borders). As such, “new wars” result in devastating economic, social and psychological consequences for civilian populations, and fundamentally erode the everyday social fabric of families and communities.²⁸ Return entails new challenges of reintegration wherein “intimate enemies” are forced to live together, wherein populations have borne witness to horrific violence, or wherein populations must recover from the “social torture” of displacement.²⁹ Recovery is not just about accountability for perpetrators of violence, but about negotiating a fraught

²⁵ Shaw and Waldorf, ‘Introduction’, p. 4.

²⁶ A. Macdonald, ‘Transitional justice and political economies of survival’, p. 292.

²⁷ M. Kaldor, ‘In Defence of New Wars’, *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 2:1 (2013), pp. 1-16.

²⁸ D. Summerfield, ‘The Impact of War and Atrocity on Civilian Populations: Basic Principles for NGO Interventions and a Critique of Psychosocial Trauma Projects’, Relief and Rehabilitation Network Network Paper 14, 1996. Available at < <https://odihpn.org/wp-content/uploads/1996/04/networkpaper014.pdf>>.

²⁹ K. Theidon, *Intimate Enemies: Violence and Reconciliation in Peru*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012; C. Dolan, *Social Torture: The Case of Northern Uganda, 1986-2006*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009.

politics of mutuality after individuals and groups have occupied radically different roles within contemporary war-scapes, and after institutions of social solidarity have been undermined.

The extension of transitional justice to the local has partly been pragmatic, premised on harnessing justice systems that actually exist. Yet in examining recovery following intra-state wars, observers have tended to use reductive frames to view African contexts, emphasising the utility of local mechanisms of deemed to be traditional, customary, community-based or indigenous.³⁰ Early examples included the use of *gacaca* courts in Rwanda, which represented the promotion of traditional dispute resolution (albeit modernised) to manage the backlog of cases from the genocide. Comparable examples are the sanctioning of purification rites to reintegrate ex-combatants in Mozambique and Sierra Leone.³¹ Even the World Bank has lauded such community-based systems as a “best-fit” solution.³² In other cases, however, traditional institutions are viewed as supplementary to other justice processes, or even privileged above international courts and tribunals.³³ Yet donor consciousness can too easily assume causal links between the enactment of traditional justice and restoration of communal peace. The logic goes that whilst distanced forms of justice are inattentive to social repair and may promote renewed division, “traditional” forms of reconciliation or

³⁰ T. Allen and A. Macdonald, ‘Post-Conflict Traditional Justice: A Critical Overview’, London School of Economics Justice and Security Research Programme paper 3, 2013, p. 2. Available at <<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/56357/>>.

³¹ T. Bouta, G. Frerks, and I. Bannon, *Gender, Conflict and Development*. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2005.

³² World Bank, *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development*. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2011, p. 167; Allen and Macdonald, ‘Post-Conflict Traditional Justice’, p. 4.

³³ Macdonald, ‘From the ground up’, p. 103.

compensation are authentic, restorative avenues in post-war settings where neighbors depend on each other for social and economic support.³⁴

In Northern Uganda—a term generally referring to Acholiland, but also applied to West Nile and Karamoja—‘traditional justice’ is foregrounded in the government’s 2019 Transitional Justice Policy, and has garnered the participation of many international donors and NGOs, funding cultural associations and elders. Often, the legitimacy of these activities rests on what Armstrong terms “culturalist claims”, advanced by elite Ugandan political and religious actors who emphasised Acholi people as inherently forgiving.³⁵ The performance of public rituals, most popularly *mato oput* (drinking the bitter root), has showcased one culturally-specific means of delivering this forgiveness: in what Meier terms the “*mato oput*-hype”, after the cessation of hostilities, international, national and local aid agencies all sponsored the ritual.³⁶ For external actors, *mato oput* emerged as the quintessential symbol of an enculturated project of transitional justice. Yet countless scholars have highlighted disconnects between the performance of *mato oput* and its meaningful significance at clan level.³⁷ Not only was the actual purpose of *mato oput* (forgiveness following *accidental* killing) deemed illegitimate to cleanse the collective wrongdoing of war-crimes, but the fact that sacrificial animals were funded by NGOs delegitimised the entire process. Komujuni and Buscher note that *rwodi* (customary chiefs) became “brokers” caught between

³⁴ Shaw and Waldorf, ‘Introduction’, p. 4; N. Roht-Arriaza, ‘The new landscape of transitional justice’, in N. Roht-Arriaza and J. Mariezcurrena (eds.), *Transitional Justice in the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Truth versus Justice*. Cambridge UP, 2006, pp. 1-16, p. 12. See also A. Honwana, ‘Sealing the past, facing the future: Trauma healing in rural Mozambique’, *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives* 3 (1998), pp. 75-81.

³⁵ K. Armstrong, ‘Justice without Peace? International Justice and Conflict Resolution in Northern Uganda’, *Development and Change* 45:3 (2014), pp. 589-607, p. 590.

³⁶ Meier, ‘Death Does Not Rot’, supra note 4.

³⁷ *ibid.* 28. See also D-N. Tshimba, ‘Beyond the Mato Oput Tradition: embedded contestations in transitional justice for post-massacre Pajong, northern Uganda’, *Journal of African Conflicts and Peace Studies* 2:2 (2015), pp. 62-85.

donors, the Ugandan government, and Acholi communities in order to “capture aid”.³⁸ Moreover, as NGOs appropriated the ritual, it was both “desacralized” and “modernized”, separated from its cosmological context.³⁹ Branch decries the agenda as grounded in approaches to “ethno-justice”, which absolves the state from its responsibility in perpetuating conflict, as well as from obligations to post-war development—isolating Acholi people from wider political reparations.⁴⁰ In essence, *mato oput* satisfied the neo-colonial imaginations of external observers and donors, who then ignored its subsequent local impacts.⁴¹

Approaching traditional justice through the prism of tradition has served to reify the local as a “level” or a “hermetically sealed” space that speaks with one voice—“tradition”—at odds with the complexity and plurality of lived realities.⁴² Scholars such as Meier have argued this extrapolation of tradition may not engender reconciliation; for Alcalá and Baines, moreover, instrumentalising essentialised visions of tradition risks generating representational violence against those who have endured conflict.⁴³ When communities are excluded as “active participants” from transitional justice mechanisms, furthermore, Lundy and McGovern ask whose interests those interventions serve.⁴⁴ It is clear that on these grounds, only a deeper re-envisioning both of these concepts of

³⁸ S. Komujuni and K. Büscher, ‘In search of chiefly authority in ‘post-aid’ Acholiland: transformations of customary authorities in northern Uganda’, *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 14:1 (2020), pp. 103-124, p. 104.

³⁹ Meier, ‘Death Does Not Rot’, p. 28.

⁴⁰ A. Branch, ‘The Violence of Peace: Ethnojustice in Northern Uganda’, *Development and Change* 45:3 (2014), pp. 608-630.

⁴¹ Meier, ‘Death Does Not Rot’; T. Allen, ‘Ritual (Ab)use? Problems with Traditional Justice in Northern Uganda’, in: N. Waddell and P. Clark (eds.), *Courting Conflict? Justice, Peace and the ICC in Africa*, London: Royal African Society, 2008, pp. 47-53.

⁴² R. MacGinty, ‘Everyday Social Practices and Boundary-Making in Deeply Divided Societies’, *Civil Wars* 19:1 (2017), pp. 4-25.

⁴³ Alcalá and Baines, ‘Editorial Note’, p. 386.

⁴⁴ P. Lundy and M. McGovern, ‘Whose Justice? Rethinking Transitional Justice from the Bottom Up’, *Journal of Law and Society* 35:2 (2008), pp. 265-292, p. 266.

locality and of these mechanisms can promote equity and social repair. It is to this re-envisioning I now turn.

1.3 The Everyday as Radical Reorientation

Recognising the shortcomings of donor-driven approaches to local repair, an emerging literature has sought answers in the everyday processes. Scholars have increasingly demonstrated the dissonance between the normative underpinnings of transitional justice, and local understandings of reconciliation in post-conflict settings.⁴⁵ These studies offer a powerful evidence base, but risk widening a division between intellectual (often Western) assumptions of transitional justice and local, practical outcomes on the ground.⁴⁶ In response, a more radical approach takes the *everyday* as a point of departure to explore processes of social repair within reconstructing societies. These studies focus not on how transitional justice *should* look, nor on how groups rework transitional justice initiatives, nor even on alternative narratives to justice or reconciliation—but on the logics, practices and processes through which communities *actually* make life liveable following mass violence. Seeing great value in this approach, the present study is influenced by this body of work.

⁴⁵ In Sierra Leone, Shaw contrasts the western tradition of confession that dominates truth commissions, against notions of reconciliation among Mende communities premised upon the “attainment of a cool heart”. See R. Shaw, ‘Memory Frictions: Localising the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Sierra Leone,’ *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 1:2 (2007), pp. 183 -207. Kelsall notes that the decision of the Special Court for Sierra Leone to deal with issues of magic and the occult in favour of “material” crimes meant its decisions made little sense to communities. See also T. Kelsall, *Culture under Cross-Examination: International Justice and the Special Court for Sierra Leone*, Cambridge UP, 2009.

⁴⁶ L. Moe, ‘Hybrid and ‘Everyday’ Political Ordering: Constructing and Contesting Legitimacy in Somaliland’, *Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law* 43:63 (2011), pp. 143-77.

By its own admission, this study of the everyday lacks a coherent theoretical basis. Scholars often depart from Das' account of how victims remade their worlds after the extreme violence of the Partition of India in 1947.⁴⁷ In an oft-cited passage, Das argues that "life was not recovered through some grand gestures in the realm of the transcendent but through a descent into the ordinary".⁴⁸ Subsequently, studies of 'social suffering' have explored the realities of how "communities resume the task of living" and remake local worlds after mass violence, resisting colonising narratives within the parameters of community or trauma.⁴⁹ In essence, suffering is viewed not as the erasure of meaning, but as a starting point to create new meanings. Such studies regard suffering as it "transcends it [the body] as cultural representation, as transpersonal experience, and as the embodiment of collective memory".⁵⁰ Ordinary bodies, then, offer sites to study the production of cultural meaning. This thesis thus privileges the lived experience of suffering and charts the production of that socio-cultural meaning through action.

Other scholars have followed MacGinty's attempt to study the "banal" means through which peace is forged through everyday routines and practices.⁵¹ Reacting to the top-down institutional approach within the field of International Relations, MacGinty and colleagues have sought creative methodologies to capture everyday encounters and civilities that contribute to peace. This shift has resulted in a substantive reorientation of

⁴⁷ Alcalá and Baines, 'Editorial Note'.

⁴⁸ V. Das, *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006.

⁴⁹ V. Das and A. Kleinman, 'Introduction', in V. Das, et al. (eds.), *Remaking a World: Violence, Social Suffering, and Recovery*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001. pp. 1-30, p. 5.

⁵⁰ A. Kleinman, "Everything That Really Matters': Social Suffering, Subjectivity, and the Remaking of Human Experience in a Disordering World', *Harvard Theological Review* 90:3 (1997), pp. 315-335, p. 316.

⁵¹ MacGinty, 'Everyday peace'.

sites relevant to investigation: in Sierra Leone, taking notions of the ‘ordinary’ seriously, Martin notes that what may be most desired in post-war contexts is “a transition to a ‘new normal’”.⁵² In Sierra Leone’s Bombali District, “practicing normality” meant deliberately not engaging in the past, but rather partaking in future-looking activities including agriculture and religious organisations. MacDonald too highlights the importance of “political economies of survival”, constituted by a range of customs, institutions, practices and knowledges through which collectives “self-secure”, which could include savings groups, ritual or prayer.⁵³

Altogether, studies departing from how social repair actually looks, rather than how some believe it ought to look, have yielded crucial lessons. Scholars have shown how within localities, multiple visions of repair and reconstruction can co-exist.⁵⁴ Notions of ‘moving forward’ may emphasise (amongst other things) political redress, a return to moral norms, a prioritisation of the material aspects of reconstruction or cleansing spiritual imbalances. Granted, post-war localities remain permeated by power dynamics. Negotiating return may involve reinstating normative logics based on patriarchy or custom, logics that advance the agency of power holders whilst limiting marginal social groups from enacting redress. Within divided societies MacGinty draws attention to processes of “boundary making and maintenance” or “everyday borderworks” that are an essential component of everyday peace-making, and maintaining social

⁵² L.S. Martin, ‘Practicing Normality: An Examination of Unrecognizable Transitional Justice Mechanisms in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone’, *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 10:3 (2016), pp. 400-418.

⁵³ A. MacDonald, ‘Transitional justice and political economies of survival’, p. 287.

⁵⁴ S. Finnström, ‘Reconciliation Grown Bitter? War, Retribution, and Ritual Action in Northern Uganda’, in R. Shaw and L. Waldorf (eds.), *Localising Transitional Justice: Interventions and Priorities after Mass Violence*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford UP, 2010, pp. 135-156.

orthodoxies.⁵⁵ These processes may draw on pre-conflict social ideas (and may also arise within war-zones), yet following return provide a means for individuals to order their social worlds through the reification of categories. In Acholiland, these worlds are often legitimised on the basis of ‘tradition’, occurring away from the gaze of international experts, and are not inherently restorative. For example, Baines and Gauvin describe the fraught efforts with which two mothers advocated for their children born in the bush during the LRA war, seeking legitimacy from male clan elders to guarantee their children’s rights for the future. Porter, too, describes how Acholi visions of “social harmony” limit women from seeking redress for sexual violations during war. What emerges is a notion of the ‘everyday’ that is regulated and structured not by moral or juridical resolution, but by order-making. In contexts characterised by incomplete post-war transition, Marijan argues, these everyday peace-making strategies may be neither “progressive nor regressive”, but rather representative of attempts to navigate uncertainty.⁵⁶ Fundamentally, Alcalá and Baines argue that “everyday life is the site of violence, not just as it is imposed but also as it is embraced and reproduced”.⁵⁷

1.4 Cosmology as Resource for Everyday Repair?

The realities of post-war contexts have required scholars and development workers to engage with local ontologies, namely, ideas of justice, security, safety and harm that differ from rationalist, Eurocentric ideas and conventional enquiries in development.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ MacGinty, ‘Everyday peace’, p. 555; MacGinty, ‘Everyday Social Practices and Boundary-Making’.

⁵⁶ B. Marijan, ‘The politics of everyday peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Northern Ireland’, *Peacebuilding* 5:1 (2017), pp. 67-81.

⁵⁷ Alcalá and Baines, ‘Editorial Note’, p. 388.

⁵⁸ In 1980, Goulet compared development experts to “one-eyed giants” who disavowed non-scientific modes of rationality in favour of secular, linear, economic prescriptions. See D. Goulet, ‘Development experts: The one-eyed giants’, *World Development* 8:7-8 (1980), pp. 481-489, p. 481. Goulet concludes that “A growing chorus of voices, in rich and poor countries alike, proclaim that full human development is not possible without regard for essential

In recognising cosmological resources such as spirits and concepts of pollution, Western scholars have found both culturally-constituted scripts of ‘trauma’ and a means of recovering the moral, social and psychological impacts of conflict. Since for many African peoples, spiritual and physical entities, and material and immaterial events are mutually entangled, external notions of justice and security must engage with the spiritual dimensions of everyday existence.⁵⁹ This section reviews these encounters, paying particular attention to Northern Uganda and arguing that under the guise of the ‘everyday’ returnees have exhibited a marked bias towards the ‘extraordinary features’ of cosmological meaning.

Sylvester notes that “war experiences come in prosaic, profound, sickening, excruciating, and exhilarating ways”.⁶⁰ War and its associated upheavals are commonly understood to result in profound imbalances in the cosmos. Possessing spirits and spiritual hauntings, often manifesting in profound physical or mental suffering, have been understood as individual ‘embodiments’ of wider wrongdoing, pain or grief.⁶¹ Moving beyond the past necessitates acknowledging not just the physical impacts of war but the cleansing of social wounds through ritual or ceremonial means.⁶² Rituals

religious values.” (p. 488). Two decades after Goulet’s proclamation, Ver Beek labelled spirituality as a “development taboo”. K.A. Ver Beek, ‘Spirituality: a development taboo’, in D. Eade (ed.), *Development and Culture*, Oxford: Oxfam GB, 2002, pp. 60–77, p. 66. Jones and Petersen conclude that while much literature remains instrumental, it is primarily concerned with how FBOs “do development better”. See B. Jones and M.J. Petersen, ‘Instrumental, Narrow, Normative? Reviewing recent work on religion and development’, *Third World Quarterly* 32:7 (2011), pp. 1291-1306, p. 1291.

⁵⁹ R. O’Byrne. ‘Deities, Demons and Outsiders: The Cosmological Dimensions of (In)Security and (In)Justice in Pajok, South Sudan’, London School of Economics Justice and Security Research Programme paper 21, 2015. Available at <<https://www.gov.uk/research-for-development-outputs/deities-demons-and-outsiders-the-cosmological-dimensions-of-in-security-and-in-justice-in-pajok-south-sudan>>.

⁶⁰ C. Sylvester, ‘Pathways to experiencing war’, in C. Sylvester (ed.), *Experiencing War*, London: Routledge (War, Politics and Experience series), 2010, pp. 118-130, p.129.

⁶¹ H. Berents, ‘An embodied everyday peace in the midst of violence’, *Peacebuilding* 3:2 (2015), pp. 1-14.

⁶² V. Igreja, ‘Why are there so many drums playing until dawn?’ Exploring the role of Gamba spirits and healers in the post-war recovery period in Gorongosa, Central Mozambique’, *Transcultural Psychiatry* 40:4 (2003), pp. 459-487.

serve important functions such as facilitating psycho-social reintegration or articulating the past through the vernacular of spiritual agents, so as to facilitate reconciliation with families.⁶³

A key depiction of these relationships is Igreja's work in Gorongosa District, the epicentre of the Mozambiquan civil war between 1981-85. He describes a war-scape characterised by the forced recruitment of young men, by violence perpetuated between families, and by processes which Igreja terms the "disenfranchisement of the dead". Here, unburied dead and unobserved mortuary practices created cosmological imbalances between the dead and the living.⁶⁴ In the absence of state reparations but in view of these polluting influences, Igreja argues that *gamba* (pl. *magamba*) spirits provided a means for survivors to acknowledge and to collectively address wrongs committed during wartime. *Magamba* were understood to be the spirits of dead soldiers who returned to fight for justice among the living, and who generally possessed women, manifesting in physical injuries, torment and misfortunes. To resolve these possessions, survivors created "social spaces" to address war-related conflicts. *Gamba* healers facilitated ceremonies where families could voice unspoken war violations, often including events beyond the immediate source of possession. In essence, these gatherings served as moments to repair social infrastructure through acknowledging the past.⁶⁵ "[I]n their struggle for truth and justice," Igreja notes, "spirits powerfully bespeak the necessity of actively dealing with the horrors of civil war."⁶⁶

⁶³ S. McKay, 'Reconstructing fragile lives: Girls' social reintegration in northern Uganda and Sierra Leone', *Gender and Development* 12:3 (2004), pp. 19-30.

⁶⁴ Igreja, 'Why are there so many drums playing until dawn?', p. 465.

⁶⁵ *ibid.* p. 480.

⁶⁶ *ibid.* p. 481.

Similarly, in Northern Uganda, in Acholiland, numerous studies have highlighted the centrality of spiritual pollution in ordinary people's experience of recovery.⁶⁷ Incidences of *cen*, a form of 'ghostly vengeance,' often emanated from improperly-buried dead, resulting in hauntings and possession, as well as generalised misfortunes including disease and sickness. Wider transgressions against Acholi notions of the moral order—acts known as *kiir* ('abomination') that include murder, improper burial, fighting, sex in the wilderness and unbridled anger or curses—resulted in a state of pollution that could befall relatives of both victim and perpetrator. Such forces could affect not just families but entire lineages until the act was ritually cleansed.⁶⁸ For recent scholars investigating these dynamics, fears about moral transgressions tied to *cen* and *kiir* illustrate the multifaceted notions of violence enacted through war and through containment in displacement camps—as well as how the lingering after-effects of war disturbed everyday life post-return.

Within transitional justice, Baines has articulated the relationship between socio-cultural concepts such as *cen* and post-war recovery. For her, spirits such as *cen* and *kiir* exist as "expressions of injustice and reflect ordinary people's attempts to seek moral renewal and social repair".⁶⁹ By acknowledging such micro-level social-cultural resources, Acholi people both atone individually and recognise collectively the wrongs of the past, to "renew the social fabric".⁷⁰ Spirits in general and *cen* in particular thus

⁶⁷ Baines, 'Spirits and reconstruction after mass violence', p. 419; L. Victor and H. Porter 'Dirty things: spiritual pollution and life after the Lord's Resistance Army', *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 11:4 (2017), pp. 590-608.

⁶⁸ Baines, 'Spirits and reconstruction after mass violence'.

⁶⁹ *ibid.* p. 409.

⁷⁰ *ibid.* p. 412.

provide a language that enables traversing the ordinary landscape of forgiveness. In exploring the causes of *cen* through visiting *ajwaka* (female diviner-healers), Acholi people can confront the palimpsest of victimhood and culpability, where “bystanders, collaborators, informants, [and] forced perpetrators” are able to acknowledge incredible acts of violence during the war. As such, Baines encourages an engagement with cosmologies as a resource for transitional justice.

Following Baines, more and more studies using ethnography, survey methods or a combination of the two have documented the extent of *cen*, particularly among ex-combatants who had spent time in the bush, where transgressions of the moral order were frequent.⁷¹ As such, Porter and Victor note that *cen* has “become a kind of shorthand for all spiritual malady”; frequently used by NGO workers or as a means to understand reintegration in Northern Uganda.⁷² Whilst the cosmological situation in Northern Uganda is unique—owing largely to the ‘spiritual order’ of the LRA, Joseph Kony’s international targeting of Acholi moral values and the reported enticement of intra-communal crimes—the fetishisation of singular concepts and their assumed links to social repair perhaps tell a cautionary tale.⁷³ Such enquiries imply that cosmological concepts may be recruited for political agendas, or to embed transitional justice programming. Overwhelmingly, moreover, many studies of *cen* depart from particular

⁷¹ T.S. Betancourt, et al., ‘A qualitative study of mental health problems among children displaced by war in northern Uganda’, *Transcultural Psychiatry* 46:2 (2009), pp. 238–256; C. Blattman and J. Annan ‘Child combatants in northern Uganda: Reintegration myths and realities’, in R. Muggah (ed.), *Security and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Dealing with fighters in the aftermath of war*. London: Routledge Global Security Studies, 2009, pp. 103-126; B. Roberts et al. ‘An exploration of social determinants of health amongst internally displaced persons in northern Uganda’, *Conflict and Health* 3:10 (2009); F. Neuner, et al., ‘Haunted by ghosts: prevalence, predictors and outcomes of spirit possession experiences among former child soldiers and war-affected civilians in Northern Uganda’, *Social Science & Medicine* 75:3 (2012), pp. 548-554.

⁷² Victor and Porter, ‘Dirty things’, p. 594.

⁷³ K. Titeca, ‘The spiritual order of the LRA’, in T. Allen and K. Vlassenroot (eds.), *The Lord's Resistance Army: Myth and Reality*. London: Zed Press, 2010, pp. 59-73.

groups of victims, often ex-combatants, or similar spaces—Allen notes widespread ‘research fatigue’ within over-researched populations, often those residing near Gulu, in places accessible to researchers.⁷⁴ For O’Byrne, furthermore, the extent of this concept means that the “cosmological has therefore been primarily understood as either providing a context for or a mechanism for dealing with this protracted violence.”⁷⁵ Writ large, then, extrapolating entire cosmological systems in the image of war represents a severely reductive approach to describing such systems. In this way Meier’s concerns about transitional justice are clearly visible in the ‘cen-hype’ as well.

Based on a longer-term study, Victor and Porter note that *cen* is just one of many terms used to express cosmological imbalance.⁷⁶ Their Acholi informants often applied the term *ajwani* (‘dirty things’) to denote an imbalance, which could result from a number of agents—not just *cen*, but from *ajiji* (haunting memory), *tipu dano* (spirits of living or dead people), *ayweya* (spirits in the environment), *kwaro* (ancestors), or from Christian demons, devils or Satan. Categories are discerned pragmatically, often according to available remedies.⁷⁷ The multiplicity of guises in which cosmological agents travel between Acholi and Christian ontologies is the subject of two distinct studies:

O’Byrne’s account of Acholi personhood in Pajok, South Sudan, and Ventevogel et al.’s work among South Sudanese returnees. In response to types of suffering comparable to *cen* (or, to the authors, to PTSD), these respondents identified wide-ranging agents often related not to the atrocities of war but to intra-personal tensions. In

⁷⁴ T. Allen, et al., ‘What Happened to Children Who Returned from the Lord’s Resistance Army in Uganda?’, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, forthcoming, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fez116>.

⁷⁵ R.J. O’Byrne, *Becoming Christian: Personhood and Moral Cosmology in Acholi South Sudan*, PhD Thesis, Department of Anthropology, University College London, 2016, p. 67.

⁷⁶ Victor and Porter, ‘Dirty Things’.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p. 594.

Kwajena, respondents identified *moul* as an affliction induced by spirits of dead people, but also by other malevolent spirits, curses or violating taboos, and classified *wehie arir* as related to sorcery or witchcraft. In Yei, affliction was explained as *mamali*, caused by witchcraft or attack by water/forest spirits, or *ngengere*, again caused by witchcraft.⁷⁸ Taken together, these examples clearly show that in other post-conflict settings, diverse cosmologies are ordered in response to traumatic suffering following repair.

Scholars have furthermore questioned the inherently restorative potential of cosmological mechanisms. Weigink, foregrounding the violence of spiritual possession, urges against romanticising realities that involve the violent inhabitation of hosts, and healing practices that contribute as much to suffering as to restoration.⁷⁹ Of post-war Zimbabwe, Jeater describes how *ngozi* spirits associated with ‘madness’ provided a means for families of victims and perpetrators to reconcile after war. Her subsequent work, with Mashinge Jr., documented how the demands of *ngozi* have subsequently been placed “on the market”, providing a means for victims to extort ever-increasing reparations following wrongdoing.⁸⁰ To date, scholars have paid less attention to curses and other retributive uses of metaphysical agents. Examples such as *ngozi* both challenge ideas about the restorative focus within cosmologies and bring into focus the importance of reparations: Benyara describes how one family used the threat of *ngozi*

⁷⁸ P. Ventevogel, et al. ‘Madness or sadness? Local concepts of mental illness in four conflict-affected African communities’, *Conflict and Health* 7:3 (2013), pp. 1-16, p. 5.

⁷⁹ N. Weigink, ‘Violent Spirits and A Messy Peace: Against Romanticising Local Understandings and Practices of Peace in Mozambique’, in G. Millar (ed.), *Ethnographic Peace Research*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, pp. 137-157.

⁸⁰ D. Jeater and J.L. Mashinge Jr. ‘Can’t pay, won’t pay: occult conflicts over neoliberal social relations in contemporary Zimbabwe’, *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal* 2:2-3 (2017), pp. 263-278. In her extended work, Jeater describes how *ngozi* has come to mirror the interpretations of British colonists. Formerly, *ngozi* was not meant to punish perpetrators, but to encourage them to seek out victims’ families for restitution.

spirits, following a refusal to bury an assassinated family member involved in political resistance, to levy material compensation for a murder.⁸¹

Further questions arise over which social realities are excluded for research enquiry.⁸²

Whilst transitional justice scholars have lauded the restorative potential in ‘spirits’, they have kept silent on the management of intra-personal harm and forces that constitute ‘witchcraft’. That these forces are said to reside in the same cosmological universe only makes this silence louder.⁸³ Among the few examples are Igreja’s later work, exploring the transmutation of memories of violence and modern witchcraft beliefs into accusations of cannibalism in post-conflict Mozambique. Among the same Gorongosa communities where cosmological resources had been championed as restorative, violent histories served exclusionary practices as well. In a similar vein, Allen documents an accusation of vampirism in post-war Gulu—in the very Acholi communities heralded as inherently forgiving.⁸⁴

Given these parallels, it is worth noting the growing international ‘anti-witchcraft movement’, led primarily by human-rights activists. Often in the same spaces where cultural resources are lauded as restorative, activists condemn culture as precipitating violence. Rather than harness entities for development, activists have sought to legislate

⁸¹ E. Benyera, ‘Presenting ngozi as an Important Consideration in pursuing Transitional Justice for Victims: The Case of Moses Chokuda’, *Gender and Behaviour* 13:2 (2015), pp. 6760-6773.

⁸² V. Igreja and B. Dias-Lambranca, ‘Restorative justice and the role of *magamba* spirits in post-civil war Gorongosa, central Mozambique’, in L. Huyse and M. Salter, *Traditional Justice and Reconciliation after Violent Conflict: Learning from African Experiences*, Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2008, pp. 61-84, p. 68.

⁸³ R. Reis, ‘Children enacting idioms of witchcraft and spirit possession as a response to trauma: therapeutically beneficial, and for whom?’ *Transcultural Psychiatry* 50:5 (2013), pp. 622-643.

⁸⁴ T. Allen, ‘Vigilantes, Witches and Vampires: How Moral Populism Shapes Social Accountability in Northern Uganda’, *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 22:3 (2015), pp. 360-386.

against harmful traditional practices. In 2017, the UN held its first Experts Workshop on Witchcraft and Human Rights in Geneva, where experts grappled with how to define and contextualise witchcraft, as well as how to assist those ostracized by accusations—all driven at least in part by perceptions that violent anti-witchcraft action is increasing particularly in African countries and among diasporic populations.⁸⁵ Whilst this agenda views socio-cultural resources as a potentially negative risk-factor, these well-meaning experts abstract these forces from their social context, reifying witchcraft or spirit possession as a “belief” or a “culture”. In removing events from the contexts in which they occur, activists within this field risk re-exoticising cultural resources within tropes of otherness long decried by critical scholars. Moreover, this human-rights based approach silences the views of those who fear themselves affected by witchcraft.

To avoid these pitfalls, a more open-ended approach is required, one that foregrounds the interrelation between the metaphysical processes of ‘boundary making’ and forms of violence. Otherwise cosmological resources may be recruited without proper evaluation of their local resonance, and misinterpreted and misused as a result.

1.5 Towards the Everyday in West Nile

Within the Transitional Justice Policy of the Ugandan government, West Nile is classified as a “post-conflict” space where “armed rebellion ends, resumption of normality and realizing stability; development investment needed.”⁸⁶ Such ideas have

⁸⁵ See J. Fontein, “She appeared to be in some kind of trance’: Anthropology and the question of unknowability in a criminal trial’, *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4:1 (2014), pp. 75-103. There is an active debate between Gary Foxcroft and Adam Ashforth about the legal vs community perspective.

⁸⁶ Government of Uganda, *Peace, Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda*, p. vii.

power. Before I even arrived in Arua, numerous NGO representatives in Kampala categorised West Nile by its conflicts: one field officer for a national NGO presented me with a ‘conflict compendium’, created from the Government Transitional Justice Audit, which characterises Uganda’s peripheral regions by a series of upheavals. This guide, he suggested, was the best resource to understand developmental priorities in West Nile. One NGO worker warned me against travel to Arua, suggesting that “everyone is terrorised [by war] there”.⁸⁷ Instead he suggested I should study the issue of the ‘lost counties’ in Baganda, an issue in Uganda’s post-conflict past. Jones has identified bifurcated development narratives that frame Northern Uganda as a post-conflict region, and the south as a neoliberal success story.⁸⁸ Such distinctions have longer legacies, dating from the military recruitment and underdevelopment of the North during the colonial period.⁸⁹ Today, stereotypes about the North are reproduced through NGO work.

Within national consciousness, West Nile and its people still remain linked to the sensationalised violence of Idi Amin Dada, who hailed from the region. In his first address to the nation regarding COVID-19, President Yoweri Museveni offered that past as comparison, saying that “The ‘Corona-virus’ that time was the Amin regime”.⁹⁰ Such references silence the suffering that befell West Nilers after Amin’s downfall in

⁸⁷ Comment, NGO worker, Kampala, March 2016.

⁸⁸ B. Jones, *Beyond the State in Rural Uganda*, Edinburgh UP, 2009. See also T. Allen, ‘Northern Uganda Revisited’, *Africa* 76:3 (2006), pp. 427-436.

⁸⁹ Allen, ‘Northern Uganda Revisited’.

⁹⁰ ‘LIVE: President Museveni statement on COVID-19’, *The Independent*, 18 March 2020. Available at <<https://www.independent.co.ug/live-president-museveni-statement-on-covid-19/>>. In an interesting counterpoint, Bobi Wine, Kyadondo East MP, recently compared Museveni to Amin: ‘Idi Amin was a dictator but he did not destroy the infrastructure, he did not condone corruption.’ See A.R.A. Shaban, ‘Bobi Wine insists Museveni ‘drunk on power,’ worse than Amin’, www.africanews.com, 11 October 2010, available at <<https://www.africanews.com/2018/10/11/bobi-wine-insists-museveni-drunk-on-power-worse-than-idi-amin/>>.

1979, and the reprisals civilians faced at the hands of the soldiers of Obote II. A brief recap is helpful, as just as in Uganda's post-independence wars, civilians were imbricated in the battleground of this political conflict. During 1980-81, Obote's UNLA (particularly after the withdrawal of the TDPF) committed lootings, massacres, rapes and the destruction of property in the region. Violence intensified when civilians were caught in offensives between the UNLA and resistance from the former soldiers of Amin, in the Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF 1). Between 1980-86, populations were displaced *en masse* across international borders.

On March 28, 1986, the National Resistance Army (NRA) arrived peaceably in Arua town. Following the creation of NRA leader Yoweri Kaguta Museveni's government, limited national efforts were made to redress the violations of the past. The new Ugandan government spearheaded one of the first national Truth Commissions, the Commission of Inquiry into Violation of Human Rights, which from 1986-94 gathered testimonies on human rights violations that had occurred since independence (December 1962 – January 1986). The results of the enquiry were never made public.⁹¹ The installation of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) ushered in a period of alleged peace, but militant activity continued to destabilize civilians until the late 1990s. Rebel movements continued to operate despite rebuke: at a meeting on January 29, 1986, elders formally cursed rebels who continued to fight the NRA government, should they kill civilians, rape women or loot property.⁹²

⁹¹ J.R. Quinn, 'Social Reconstruction in Uganda: The Role of Customary Mechanisms in Transitional Justice', *Human Rights Review* 8 (2007), pp. 389–407.

⁹² Quoted by Jason Avutia in a June 1986 interview with Brigadier Wilson Toko, the then-leader of rebel factions, at the White Rhino Hotel in Arua: Toko had requested permission to fight the advancing NRA government, which elders denied in favour of "love, peace and development". See R. Drasimaku, 'Lugbara now want a king', *New*

From a political economy perspective, Bogner and Neubert argue that West Nilers have collectively been “denied justice”.⁹³ Certainly, if history is assessed according to the normative tenets of transitional justice, wherein to rebuild society violent pasts must be recognised, and justice served in some form to perpetrators of civilian violence, this is the case.⁹⁴ In the 2002 peace agreement with the UNRF II (Amin’s former soldiers), for example, terms favoured ex-combatants and infrastructure development for Yumbe (one of the main aims of the UNRF II was ending the region’s ‘backwardness’). Given their ties to development, veterans commanded respect and acknowledgement for their role as fighters.⁹⁵ Yet the agreement contained neither provisions for reparations for civilian victims, nor mention of punishing perpetrators. The authors do acknowledge a degree of subsequent political transformation, namely the creation of Yumbe District—formerly Arua District—a concession to the Aringa subgrouping of West Nile’s population (the same section that was home for most members of the UNRF II). Simultaneously, this endeavor served as a form of ‘post-conflict governance’, a means for the Ugandan state apparatus to establish itself along a remote border.

The agreements yielded other changes as well. During this research period, the Aringa Lugbara group (formerly known as the ‘Muslim Lugbara’), culturally ceded from the wider, predominantly Christian Lugbara population, appointing their own king. In

Vision, 29 July 2014, available at <<https://www.newvision.co.ug/news/1305586/lugbara-king>>. See also Interview 2, Jason Avutia, Lugbara Agofe 26/10/2016.

⁹³ A. Bogner and G. Rosenthal, ‘The “Untold” Stories of Outsiders and Their Significance for the Analysis of (Post-) Conflict Figurations. Interviews with Victims of Collective Violence in Northern Uganda (West Nile)’, *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 15:3 (2014), Article 4.

⁹⁴ Quinn, ‘Social Reconstruction in Uganda’

⁹⁵ Bogner and Neubert, ‘Negotiated Peace’, pp. 64-5.

essence, the processes described were remote from Lugbara people, though the creation of Yumbe District inspired other aspirations for autonomy from county groups within Arua District. In 2010, Maracha District (formerly Maracha County), with its majority Lugbara population, ceded from the wider Arua District. During this research, Terego County too was pursuing claims for separation. Despite expectations that Maracha District would bring services closer to the poor, most residents suggested that beyond the creation of a District Headquarters at Nyadri, this shift in status had brought little change to their lives.

Armstrong's culturalist claims regarding forgiveness, have on occasion, been evidenced by activists in West Nile's past. Northern Ugandan elites have drawn on the peace-making processes of West Nile as emblematic of the restorative potential of traditional resources. In 1986, Lugbara elders were involved in an inter-tribal reconciliation ceremony called *omo tong* ('the bending of spears'), to signify the cessation of "war or fighting between Acholi and Ma'di, Kakwa, Lugbara, or Alur of West Nile".⁹⁶ This meeting signified an end to revenge killings between Acholi people (under Amin), and Lugbara people (under Obote II). Those present took oaths not to fight each other, and ate together. Archbishop Odama of Gulu Diocese, an advocate for the restorative potential of traditional justice, lauded the event as archetypal traditional justice:

We have looked at the different tribes here, for example Alur, Acholi, Lugbara, Jonam, and we discovered that in all these groups they have reconciliation rites, even though they may call them by different names and their approaches vary... On that day we experienced peace and reconciliation and we bent spears as a gesture of an end to war, and today the bent spears are still here as you can see them.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ J.R. Quinn, 'The Thing behind the Thing: Christian Responses to Traditional Practices of Acknowledgement in Uganda', *Review of Faith & International Affairs* 8:1 (2010), pp. 3-12.

⁹⁷ Interview 19/01/10 cited in E.O. Opong, *NGO Peacebuilding in Northern Uganda: Interrogating Liberal Peace from the Ground*, PhD Thesis, Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, 2012, p. 259.

Leopold, a historical anthropologist confined to Arua in the late 1990s, described a 1992 rite of purification—*rua edezu* or *angu edezu* (to cleanse ‘the body’, or ‘the place’, adapted from post-feud rituals in the colonial period)—performed by a Council of Elders to lift a historical curse placed on Lugbara collaborators with the Belgians. The curse was blamed for the loss of life since this time, and the ritual involved reciting the names of those killed in West Nile thereafter.⁹⁸ Both rituals—the *rua edezu* and the *gomo tong*—were undertaken by elders who would be considered part of an Aruan educated elite. Unlike donor-driven ideals, these events entangle ideas of ritual with longer historical oppression, and represent pragmatic coalitions of functionaries in order to address the past. Yet these public rituals reveal little about everyday repair. These were not everyday mechanisms, which NGO analysts have struggled to describe. One ICC report, written by a Teregian contributor who extends the Acholi focus on ‘traditional’ reconciliation to Lugbara groups, lists systems of family and elder mediation that deal with land, adultery and poisoning. It is not entirely clear how these systems could be recruited into donor agendas, especially as these systems appear to be punitive, rather than restorative.

One final development worth noting has been donor funding for “cultural associations”. Among the Lugbara, this funding has benefited the Lugbara Kari, formed by elders who participated in *gomo tong*, as well as county-level elders’ associations—the Ayivu Elders and the Maracha Elders. These associations, which have written constitutions and administrative positions (including a “women’s officer”), primarily act as conduits

⁹⁸ Leopold reports that the curse condemned those who collaborated with the government to death. Leopold recalls that it contains the words: “She will affect him. He will fail. He will get his fate.” Very similar terms were used in ritual curses during the present research.

for donor funding. One Ayivu elder explained, “We are an arm of government”.⁹⁹ The work of these organisations resembles government style “sensitisations”, interventions that impose ideas of development through worship and training services. During this research, the Ayivu Elders were predominantly focused on service-provision and capacity building with South Sudanese people displaced to nearby border settlements, rather than on Lugbara “host communities”.¹⁰⁰ County-level associations, premised on former colonial chieftaincies and post-colonial state-led efforts to develop cultural representation, were embroiled in crises of legitimacy in part because of the fragility of state-sponsored efforts to build representation through “inventing” tradition in a segmentary society.¹⁰¹ Indicating the disconnect between these associations and everyday life, one participant in this research expressed appreciation that I as a researcher had not stopped at elders’ associations, but had come to learn from communities themselves.

In short, neither political analysis, nor cultural claims, nor the NGO industry have revealed much of substance about everyday social repair in this region. As Clark and Palmer note, generalized narratives of victimhood collapse enquiries into local and socio-cultural frames that follow different conflicts.¹⁰² Indeed, the Lugbara war story is ill-encapsulated by narratives of total victimhood. Prior to fleeing the UNLA, many Lugbara people witnessed horrific acts of torture and killing. The ensuing conflict destroyed missions, health facilities, government building and homes in Arua and

⁹⁹ I2, Mike Agondua, Leader of Ayivu Elders, 20/10/2016.

¹⁰⁰ I, SNV Programme Manager, Arua, 05/05/2016.

¹⁰¹ J. Odama, ‘Lugbara-Kari blames OPM over refugee killings’, *West Nile Web*, 23 September 2020. Available at <<https://www.westnileweb.com/news-a-analysis/arua/lugbara-kari-blames-opm-over-refugee-killings>>.

¹⁰² P. Clark and N. Palmer, ‘Introduction: Challenging Transitional Justice’, in N. Palmer, P. Clark, and D. Granville (eds.), *Critical Perspectives in Transitional Justice*, Cambridge, Antwerp, Portland: Intersentia, pp. 1-16, pp. 6-8.

across the countryside. Many former soldiers under Amin were, however, involved in resistance, and today former rebels do not hide their status. Indeed, as in Yumbe, they often occupy prominent public positions (including in the LRA peace negotiations). That said, rebels were largely drawn from Muslim fighters loyal to Amin, rather from Christian Lugbara (many of whom Amin purged from his army during the early years of his rule). Whilst the return from exile has involved the physical, moral and social rebuilding of lives and livelihoods—a major line of enquiry for this research—it has not involved dealing with ‘mass perpetrators’ in the midst of everyday life.

Whilst the post-Amin years featured profound destruction, which continued to be a feature of rebel insurgences along the border throughout the 1990s, many Lugbara people today do not see those decades as characterised solely by conflict (as external interveners and scholars such as Leopold suggest).¹⁰³ This pragmatic approach to repair is reflected in studies of the informal trade, in which many Lugbara men were able to use their exile connections to their advantage. Striking among life histories were the inequalities experienced during the war and after return. Many Maracha families described the post-war years as representing struggles similar to exile: people laboured to establish farming, and continued to die in large numbers.¹⁰⁴ Though statistics from the region are not available, given trends in Uganda more widely it is likely that many deaths clustered in households were caused by AIDS. In a framework where individual or family loss constitutes a collective loss to the clan, the immediate period of return thus ushered in localised upheavals which my interlocutors compared to the horrors of

¹⁰³ For a detailed account see R. Day, *The Fates of Rebels: Insurgencies in Uganda*, *Comparative Politics*, 43(4), (2011), p.439-458

¹⁰⁴ Bogner and Rosenthal, ‘The "Untold" Stories’, p. 4.

war. Amidst these tragedies, West Nilers were positioned amidst shifting aid flows to the East in Acholiland from the mid-1990s, (and latterly to the North in response to the South Sudanese war). One survivor of a massacre at Ombaci, the site of confrontation between the UNLA army and rebel troops, decried this lack of material support: “As human beings, you get jealous. In Gulu, they are doing workshops. You get jealous of their goats, cows—they get things there. But why are we here ignored? We suffered in Ombaci—we spilt the same blood as them over there, yet we get nothing”.¹⁰⁵

This thesis explores these moments to reflect on what it means to embark on everyday life following unacknowledged conflicts. It reflects on “ordinary” acts which do not necessarily pertain to periods of armed conflict in order to account for social repair. In order to do so, I depart from a influential study of Lugbara society conducted years before the abovementioned wars, a study conducted when healing practices lay at the centre of the creation and maintenance of a socio-cultural world. In so doing, I seek to document issues of change and continuity away from the confines of the transitional justice remit.

1.6 Change, Continuity and Ritual in Historic Context

As Knighton notes in his *longue-durée* study of Karamoja socio-cultural worlds, anthropologists are often more invested in transferring the findings of research synchronically than diachronically.¹⁰⁶ As noted in the first section of this introduction,

¹⁰⁵ I, Survivor, 25/05/2016 (OJ).

¹⁰⁶ B. Knighton, 'Globalizing Trends or Identities through Time? The *longue durée* in Karamojong Ethnography', *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 1:3 (2007), pp. 466-483.

however, any investigation of Lugbara society today requires calibration against the pole of John Middleton's work, which provides a means to explore change and continuity. Whilst Middleton was involved in an anthropological project that sought to salvage cultures amid their dissolution, the present study (specifically Chapter Three) encourages a reading of Middleton's work showcasing how elders strove to preserve particular moral understandings *against* change. Cleansing sickness, repairing relationships and death all sought to instil these ideas.¹⁰⁷ Revisiting Middleton's work, then, is not intended to contrast a simplified past with a more complex present, but rather to explore continuities in how Lugbara elders have exercised agency amid social flux. It compares post-return responses to strategies which existed before them.

Three decades after Middleton, Allen explored the potential of healing processes to employ significant violence, working among Ma'di communities who neighbour the Lugbara. Whilst Middleton's work elucidated order in a time of relative stability, Allen's was undertaken amidst the extreme difficulties of return from war. In the village where Allen resided, two female suspects were violently tortured to death, an event that opened up many more cases of such killings.¹⁰⁸ In seeking to explain this violence, Allen contested contemporary accounts of violence such as Turnbull's *Mountain People*—in which Turnbull set aside sociological analysis to instead explain horrific events during famine as stemming from individualist practices that abnegated family and communal bonds—and Harrell-Bond's *Imposing Aid*, which ascribes violent acts of mob justice to nutritional deficiencies and the failure of the humanitarian system.

¹⁰⁷ J. Middleton, 'Lugbara Death', in M. Bloch and J. Parry (eds.), *Death and the Regeneration of Life*. Cambridge UP, 1982, pp. 134-154.

¹⁰⁸ T. Allen, 'The Violence of Healing', *Sociologist* 47:2 (1997), pp. 101-128.

Rather, Allen describes violent events in the context of an archive of moral knowledge, “often not spoken of, by lying just beneath the surface of daily activity”.¹⁰⁹

To make this claim, Allen, like later scholars interested in post-war recovery, has engaged the idea of a “cultural archive” offered by James in *The Listening Ebony*.¹¹⁰ James explains how the Uduk people in South Sudan endured dramatic changes, including the incursion of Christianity and Islam, with reference to a body of moral knowledge about Uduk ways of being. In the face of change, this knowledge persists as a means of validation. Borrowing from Foucault, James advanced the idea of a “cultural archive”, a corpus of notions which constitute the moral world of being Uduk, but which “do not necessarily form, in themselves a system or an articulated theory, but like an archive, may constitute a lasting base of past reference and future validation. They may at times rest dormant but on occasion be drawn upon for the formation of new discourse”.¹¹¹ This cultural archive—expressed partly through commitment to the religious practices of the ‘Order of Ebony’—provided a means to endure change. Whilst society is continually in flux, bodies of knowledge that define people as individuals and as collectives endure.

Whilst James ties ideas of the cultural archive to the person and the body, Allen explores the notions of shared patrilineage, made manifest in payments of bridewealth, spirit possession and healing. But like James, Allen reads these ideas as moralities that

¹⁰⁹ T. Allen, ‘Violence and Moral Knowledge: Observing Social Trauma in Sudan and Uganda’, *Cambridge Journal of Anthropology* 13:2 (1988/1989), pp. 45-66, pp. 48-9.

¹¹⁰ J. De Berry. *Life after Loss: A Study of Post-War Recovery in Teso*, PhD Thesis, Department of Social Anthropology, LSE, 1999.

¹¹¹ W. James, *The Listening Ebony: Moral Knowledge, Religion, and Power among the Uduk of Sudan*. Oxford UP, 1988, p. 6.

are continually encoded in response to changing circumstances, serving to redraw contours of inclusion and exclusion within Ma'di communities. Whilst, like Middleton, Allen searches for the locus of the moral economy below constructed ethnicities, he engages with ideas of *kaka*, or 'clans' in a more flexible sense. In the context of post-exile return, he links the violent purge of female poisoners to the non-payment of bridewealth, which placed accused women outside of *kaka* and into the context of death—historical fears of *inyinya* (poisoning) thus led to these violent evictions. Crucially, community members did not fully condemn this violence, and those individuals who performed the killing were not held to account. Allen concludes that: “women, it seems, have consistently become casualties in the process of establishing networks of accountability”.¹¹² Allen's reading draws on Girard's ideas of the scapegoat to illuminate the functions of violence: since this violence drew on archives of shared knowledge, the killings served as a cathartic means of rebuilding community in difficult circumstances.

Middleton and Allen locate the maintenance of order—or its breakdown—in shared cultural resources. Whilst Middleton emphasises the possibilities for internal order-making in the suppression of masculine ambition regarding ancestry and notions of *ru* (respect), Allen understands wider cultural mechanisms through which marginal people can be excluded from communities. Both works bring into focus the continuing importance of ritual praxis—particularly tied to bridewealth and funerary rites, as well as performances of possession, integral to understanding the present research. This thesis finds notions of the cultural archive useful to interrogate social repair. Cases of

¹¹² Allen, 'Violence and Moral Knowledge', p. 63.

misfortune demand an interrogation of shared histories, of an accumulated repository of knowledge passed through clans relating to moral codes and ritual praxis. In the ritual field, this knowledge remains important because it is intimate: cultural archives relate not just to rituals, but to intimacies; of personalities and proclivities of living and dead relatives, debts and transfers following marriage and death, and histories and reparations done or undone between clans. This thesis is interested too in processes through which these histories are passed on through generations, in processes which Feuchtwang calls “intimate transmission”. It is concerned with culture, but as it pertains to the specificities of any person’s situations, extending in space and time.¹¹³ This thesis appreciates how, notions of personhood and belonging can remain powerful even if unfulfilled through ritual practice, existing as ideas which “follow”.

In approaching the practical work of construction, this study is inspired by the turn to pragmatic action advocated by Whyte. With reference to the management of suffering among Nyole people in Eastern Uganda, Whyte proposes this pragmatic approach as an antidote to earlier functional approaches, which for her represented a ‘spectator theory of knowledge’ (cf. Dewey), making ceremony (and certainties) out of the experiential aspects of suffering.¹¹⁴ Whilst suffering is engaged in the deciphering of social meaning, Whyte writes against an anthropology of practical reason premised the prioritisation of fixed cultural patterns.¹¹⁵ Rather, Whyte is concerned with how

¹¹³ S. Feuchtwang, ‘Haunting Memory: The Extension of Kinship Beyond the Nation’, in C.D. Cesari and A. Rigney (eds.), *Transnational Memory*. Berlin: de Gruyter, pp. 271-286.

¹¹⁴ S. R. Whyte, (1989). ‘Anthropological approaches to African misfortune: from religion to medicine’, in A. Jacobson-Widding and D. Westerlun (eds.), *Culture, experience and pluralism: essays on African ideas of illness and healing*. Uppsala: Department of Cultural Anthropology, 1989, pp. 289-301. See also S.R. Whyte, *Questioning Misfortune: The Pragmatics of Uncertainty in Eastern Uganda*. Cambridge UP: Cambridge Studies in Medical Anthropology, 1997, p. 3.

¹¹⁵ Whyte, ‘Questioning Misfortune’, p.3.

pragmatic approaches to addressing suffering mark an occasion to explore notions of personhood and social identity, collapsing boundaries between intellectual, spiritual and pursuits. As such, Whyte explores how Nyole people express agency through questioning suffering and assessing the causes of misfortune through what is at stake within their local moral worlds. Unlike Nyole peoples, the politics of asking among Lugbara people relies not on individualising divinatory traditions (though these do feature), but on coming together as collectives to ask, and decipher, the cause of misfortune. This thesis is thus interested in how individuals and collectives practically search for explanation to act within the overall framework of Lugbara society, it also considers how individuals act when these attempts fail.

Simultaneously, other scholars have noted how war and political violence relate to radical cultural changes. Jones for example, encapsulates the embrace of born-again Pentecostalism in post-war Teso, which provided a new script for ordinary people to break with the horrors of the past.¹¹⁶ Behrend, more interested in local realities of affliction, describes how the interventions of lay Charismatic Catholic movements produced new fears of occult forces in Torro, Western Uganda, amidst startling death rates from AIDS.¹¹⁷ Whilst both authors find evidence for transitions in pre-war contexts, these studies indicate how the emergence of new institutions produce and reframe cultural repertoires. The studies of Middleton, James, Allen and Whyte were undertaken among populations who had resisted conversion to Christianity (or Islam). Following return, many Lugbara people converted to Christianity, or embraced the

¹¹⁶ Jones, 'Beyond the State'.

¹¹⁷ H. Behrend, *Resurrecting Cannibals: The Catholic Church, Witch-Hunts, and the Production of Pagans in Western Uganda*. Suffolk: James Currey, 2011.

forms of born-again Christianity described by Jones and Behrend. People also recognise new forms of terror, which have infiltrated local society, and are feared because they have no precedent in lineage histories or experience. In understanding struggles over community, this thesis argues it is necessary to account for the influence of changing religious, and state institutions, and how these changes do, or do not interface with intimate archives. These entanglements are central in understanding evolution in sometimes violent forms of boundary-making in the context of the state-law. In efforts to remake community, Lugbara people reference not just intimate histories or ways of being, but engage “modern” technologies to make evidentiary claims as to the presence of the “enemy”. This thesis is thus interested in how new movements promote particular fears as to insiders to gain legitimacy post-war, as well as in historical struggles to define wrongdoing with reference to the state. To use Mogensen’s terms, this thesis understands culture as a forum where “multiple voices compete”.¹¹⁸ It is interested in pragmatic quests to define suffering, amidst increasing institutional complexity: in what Porter terms the “choreography” through which Lugbara people attempt social repair.¹¹⁹

1.6 Sites, Methods and Reflections

The fieldwork for this research comprised a total of fourteen months, split into three phases: May–July 2016, September–July 2017, and December–January 2018. These phases require some explanation, since the research design intentionally sought to respond to scholarly calls to creatively capture everyday dynamics.¹²⁰ Whilst this study

¹¹⁸ H.O. Mogensen, ‘The Resilience of *Juok*: Confronting Suffering in Eastern Uganda’, *Africa* 72:3 (2002), pp. 420-436.

¹¹⁹ H. Porter, ‘Moving toward ‘home’: love and relationships through war and displacement’, *Journal of Refugee Studies* (forthcoming).

¹²⁰ MacGinty, ‘Everyday peace’.

was designed as a means of investigating social repair, the physical sites of inquiry and what Amit terms their “limits” were constructed in conversation with events on the ground.¹²¹

The first phase dealt primarily with the NGO landscape and area cultural associations. After several months spent in Arua town and environs, it was evident that the post-war reconciliation projects onto which southern NGO workers put so much emphasis were not forthcoming. Members of the Ayivu Elders Association, who contributed much to the formation of this research, seldom referred to the war, but did reference the legitimacy of clans, cursing, theft and other cases pertinent to the study. One of Ayivu’s elders, himself having had anthropological training, began to ask questions about ‘John’ [Middleton], and on his request I convened a focus group that reassessed the representations within *Lugbara Religion*. Despite decrying representations of their ancestors’ “religion” (since Christianity now constituted *dini*), elders keenly re-enacted oracular consultations they had witnessed as young boys. Later conversations entangled notions of sickness with justice; provoked by the possibilities of order-making within *Lugbara Religion*, these elders lamented post-exile changes in moral behaviour, and the increasing burden of sickness on their communities.

After the focus group, I visited elders in their homes, taking detailed life histories, and developed a network of contacts, interviews and discussions in two villages on Arua’s periphery. Both elders and the village Local Councillor I (LCI) were enthusiastic that I should view processes “in the community”. On the ground, elders remained revered not

¹²¹ V. Amit, *Constructing the Field: Ethnographic Fieldwork in the Contemporary World*. London: Verso, 2000, p. 6.

for their secular roles in cultural associations, but as repositories of wisdom in issues of land and family, as well as for the mystical power of their curses.¹²² I continued to collect histories of bringing out *e'yo* (words or issues) into the public arena via sittings, reinforcing hierarchies of age that have long ordered communities, and found that the realities of power differed greatly from the bureaucratised authority presented in associations: rather, clan authority was reinforced through the exercise (or suggestion) of mystical power. Seven elders with whom relations were formed during this research, took on roles as advisors. Throughout this research, I visited them repeatedly to discuss the findings of this research.

Simultaneously, Christian groups were a prominent feature of the local moral landscape. Meetings typically began with prayers to *mungu* for protection and good fortune, and often I was asked if I was “saved.” Rather than imposing ideas of how social repair should look, these discussions pointed to scripts of moral probity and power beyond my initial formulations. Just as analysts have urged scholars to avoid assuming the primacy of the state in local functioning at Uganda’s borders, so too have they urged the avoidance of assuming traditional justice exists as a “cohesive and homogenised alternative to formal systems”.¹²³ In West Nile, sittings that responded to misfortune connected reparations of bodies, or familial disputes to public discussions of moral probity drawing on bodies of customary, Christian and legal logics. Moreover, the physical assembling of sittings was also transient: in view of a particular affliction or issue, the routine of a homestead could be disrupted by ecstatic healing prayers, a

¹²² For example, in my first months of field notes, fears about curses were raised on thirty-one separate occasions. Concerns about bridewealth were registered in thirteen.

¹²³ Allen and Macdonald, ‘Post-Conflict Traditional Justice’, p. 2.

funeral, or a delegation of elders sitting to resolve a dispute. Religious crusades could radically alter the daily rhythm of village life, as could improvised meetings to evict witches or poisoners. Far from static attachment to particular sites, sittings appeared in response to local crises of sickness, accusations or moral violations. These impromptu gatherings generated discussions of cosmological forces, past histories and moral norms, all refined with respect to the social landscape of the present.

Returning to Arua in September 2016, my second phase of research found a different mood, partly because of the issues facing Bishops Drandua and Odoki detailed in Chapter Nine. Inspired by the events of phase one, and the events of Ediofe, the research method switched to observing, documenting and interviewing events witnessed in sittings and other healing encounters. Cases I witnessed included witchcraft accusations, evictions, curses, land disputes, accusations of adultery, séances of diviners, religious crusades and healing ministries. Witnessing was key to understanding communal politics, enabling me to comprehend certain proceedings and ask relevant questions about others. Following Kapferer, the *event*—whether healing a body or disciplining behaviour—was foregrounded as the central tool in ethnographic analysis, a means by which I as an outsider could glimpse the complexities of cosmology and social relations.¹²⁴ Das discusses “critical events”, which—rather than serving as a mere template for wider cases—serve as “openings to new potentialities in the formation of social realities.”¹²⁵ Just as Das engages with conversations and media discourses around key events, I too documented the cacophony of perspectives emerging in response. Like

¹²⁴ B. Kapferer, ‘Introduction’, in B. Kapferer and L. Meinert (eds.), *In the Event – Toward an Anthropology of Generic Moments*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2015, pp. 1-28, pp. 1-2.

¹²⁵ V. Das, *Critical Events: An Anthropological Perspective on Contemporary India*. Oxford UP, 1997.

Das, I found that critical events were always sites of struggle in which differing ideas clashed with competing bodies of knowledge: frequently, clan histories, biblical knowledge and law. Events were thus a way to understand both the ordering of social life in critical moments, as well as to chart the difficulties in reconciling normative agendas based on Lugbara identity. Localities rarely proved the “limit” to enquiries, so to fully understand and historicise these events, I conducted interviews afterwards with pastors, sub-county parish chiefs, youth groups and others within and beyond sites.¹²⁶ Where relevant, local print and radio media were also recorded.

During the long second phase the geographical location of the research also shifted beyond Arua. Building on my connections, I continually visited one clan in Maracha, and a second clan in Terego.¹²⁷ From my base in Maracha, intentionally located near where Middleton had stayed seventy years prior, I was introduced to numerous surrounding communities, and followed emerging forms of anti-witchcraft action across the sub-county. Whilst many authorities were anxious about an outsider documenting witchcraft in a region already stigmatised within national schemas, many officials in Maracha were eager for me to engage with issues of public safety that were ignored by higher state authorities. One LC of Maracha noted that researchers usually “just ask their questions—this is the first time that anyone has come to talk to us and has allowed us to talk openly about these burning issues that are affecting our community.”¹²⁸ An LCIII, moreover, expressed concern that evictions needed “critical evaluation”.¹²⁹ As

¹²⁶ Amit, *Constructing the Field*, p. 6.

¹²⁷ In Terego, hostility between the clan and surrounding neighbours prevented similar freedoms, but I was able to follow internal clan events.

¹²⁸ FG, Ovujo, 30/05/2016 (OJ).

¹²⁹ I, LCIII, Nyadri, 18/02/2017.

Finnström noted in documenting Acholi cosmology, my role was rarely the evaluator these officials anticipated, but more of a “child” learning about causal explanations and frameworks for suffering.¹³⁰ This learning was encouraged by groups involved in evictions, who wanted to express realities which were suppressed by state authorities.

Additionally to tracing village events, I spent periods with two diviner-healers in Arua District. Since these were fora dominated by women, it was difficult to visit specialists in the sites where I was conducting long-term observations with elders. In meeting diviner-healers in Arua, however, I was able to access safe spaces where women articulated fears regarding misfortune. Elsewhere, I continued to meet with contacts in Arua, tracing familial dynamics and participating in household discussions where invited, as well as repeatedly interviewing six elders who lived in the sub-counties surrounding Arua town in order to develop a coherent baseline of data. Many insights arose from informal chats, though I never discussed the details of my observations with different communities, instead recording my notes in a private field diary whether I was working at my home base or in transit.

This mobile methodology responds to scholarly calls to study spiritual power on an “awkward scale”, what Comaroff and Comaroff here refer to the co-mingling of local, regional and transnational knowledge. Capturing the global and the local in the ethnographic gaze, I sought to directly engage the forms of authority mediating and localising Christianity and law: Ugandan pastors using Nigerian Pentecostal texts to

¹³⁰ S. Finnström, ‘In and Out of Culture: Fieldwork in War-torn Uganda’, *Critique of Anthropology* 21:3 (2001), pp. 247-258.

explain possession in Maracha, and elders improvising upon extant national law to respond to clan deviance.¹³¹ This multi-sited method responded furthermore to the unique dimensions of the context: to the aforementioned transience of spaces of reparation, to the mobility of Lugbara people, and to previous scholarship based on a single clan or healer. Indeed, previous researchers had reduced the noise of external logics to advance a cultural uniformity directly at odds with the contestations I had witnessed during the first phase of the research.¹³² Granted, multi-sited methods receive critique for the partial picture they offer the researcher, but developing a network of diverse sites afforded me the advantage that I was always *invited* to witness events. Though I did “parachute in” to many offices of authorities, and frequently moved from town to village, these invitations granted me entry to covert events such as clan sittings and divinatory séances—covert given both the critical commentary of Christian actors and outcomes that can contradict individual rights. Moreover, though an accepted part of everyday life, these were spaces where participants were addressing long-term suffering, issues with intimacy or where wrongdoers were forced to testify in front of communal members. Whilst not hidden, necessarily, these events retained an element of secrecy: the presence of an outsider was unusual.

The third and final phase of fieldwork involved following up on cases, and verifying findings with elders who had served as key advisors throughout the research process.

Overall, during this research, I conducted 233 interviews and 47 focus groups (many of

¹³¹ J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, ‘Ethnography on an Awkward Scale: Postcolonial Anthropology and the Violence of Abstraction’, *Ethnography* 4:2 (2003), pp. 147-179.

¹³² E.g. Middleton and Barnes-Dean. As discussed in Chapter Three, these works stand in stark contrast to ethnographic enterprises of missionaries, who report a plurality of spiritual forces, that increased as clinical medicine was established.

which were impromptu, happening in homesteads or trading centres), and documented 58 cases of attending to suffering within clans and 30 cases of divinatory healing.

Any presentation of local reality is in fact a representation, based on “intersubjective” content generated at the intersection of researcher and participant(s).¹³³ Being a white outsider in these intersections carries particular connotations in West Nile, thus it is here necessary to broach my own positionality. In Lugbarati, white Europeans are known as *mundu*, which literally means something ‘distant’, or ‘far away’. One Anglican priest told me that *mundu* identified someone who “walked differently”.¹³⁴ An alternative origin of *mundu* might be from the Lingala word “rifle”.¹³⁵ Such derivations point to a distance between Europeans and local populations that has historically fostered a lack of accountability and violence. Alongside this connotation, after recent humanitarian encounters, *mundu* has become associated with the distribution of resources. I was given the name *Aykoro* (joy), which is partly a cynical expression regarding the arrival of resources. Both this word *mundu* and the local archive of experiences with whiteness signified an inscription of difference that no amount of rapport-building would erase. Though I built solidarities and friendships with many different Lugbara of different ages, attended a church, registered in a village, and learnt basic Lugbarati, I could always be placed outside local life. In research sites I was not a stranger, but given the continual porosity of compounds and villagers by relatives and friends, I could always be *mundu*.

¹³³ M. Jackson, *The Politics of Storytelling: Violence, Transgression, and Intersubjectivity*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2002, p. 15.

¹³⁴ I, Reverend Kefaloli, 16/06/2017.

¹³⁵ J. Middleton, *The Lugbara of Uganda*. London: Holt, Rinehart and Wilson, 1965.

My position as a single woman researcher, moreover, troubled stated moral norms about family. In Lugbarati, *zamva* (woman) literally means ‘meat (*za*) to be eaten (*mva*)’. The movement of unmarried women and female traders provoked continual comment from elders, as did loitering (of anyone) around markets and trading centres, perceived as “idleness”. Though it is now an idealised fiction that women should remain in the home, and many women trade for survival, men decry their free movement and the perceived erosion of home life. Even in households of female teachers or government officials, gendered hierarchies are affirmed through household labour, the serving and consumption of food and in the ways in which women address men. Yet my daily routine was not structured by the discipline informing local moral norms. Often I was invited to eat with elders whilst women looked on from papyrus mats, and whilst for many women giving testimony before elders was a source of fear, given my privilege as a foreigner I was able to directly pose questions of elders. My desire to understand local realities continually superseded the constraints of hierarchy within them.

During my fieldwork I also worked with four different research assistants, who acted not only as translators, but as key interlocutors in revealing the meaning of statements said and unsaid. Mwambari notes that research assistants occupy particular positions in the generation of knowledge, and my assistants, at different stages of life and members of different Christian movements, had diverse opinions on notions of custom, possession and witchcraft.¹³⁶ These divergent perspectives emerged in what Arhem terms “participant reflection”, addressing cases in reflective group discussions.¹³⁷ Such

¹³⁶ D. Mwambari, ‘Local Positionality in the Production of Knowledge in Northern Uganda’, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 18 (2019): pp. 1-12.

¹³⁷ Cited in S. Finnström, *Living With Bad Surroundings: War, History, and Everyday Moments in Northern Uganda*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2008.

reflections have great utility in researching cosmological concepts different from the lifeworld of the researcher; Finnström describes how relationships built with assistants can lead to “intercultural understandings” that facilitate greater understanding of the gaps between two epistemological groundings.¹³⁸ Additionally, Lugbara people related to me more readily on account of my connections to my assistants. This work is indebted to their insights—indeed, I quote them directly at several points in this thesis—and the openings into local life they provided.

As Rutherford notes, in the field of action the politics between researcher and the-researched interfaces with political struggles *within* communities.¹³⁹ My assistants continually highlighted the difference between the hospitality I received as an outsider and the suspicion with which people treated each other: in my assistants’ words, “They [the informants] did not love each other”. Leopold, similarly, draws attention to a report written by a committee of elderly men describing the “evil things...that we West Nilers are capable of doing to each other”.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, my presence often elicited mention of envy from my interlocutors. One elder summarised: “I am telling you this because white people don’t have envy like black people have”.¹⁴¹ Envy, as I detail in later chapters, is a chief motivator for spiritual malice. As an outsider I was usually placed beyond the limits of this malice—I could not be affected by curses, or by many forms of witchcraft which “followed families”, nor could I inflict them. Whilst my identity served as a

¹³⁸ Finnström, ‘In and out of culture’.

¹³⁹ B. Rutherford, ‘To Find an African Witch: Anthropology, Modernity, and Witch-Finding in North-West Zimbabwe’, *Critique of Anthropology* 19:1 (1999), pp. 89-109.

¹⁴⁰ Leopold, *Inside West Nile*.

¹⁴¹ I, Elder, Buramali, 02/06/2016 (OJ).

dichotomy against which my informants constituted themselves, these statements reveal insights into the internal politics Rutherford highlights.

The complexities of researching invisible power—whether in Christianity, spirit possession or witchcraft—have been discussed as extensively as the forces themselves have been described.¹⁴² It is common in anthropological accounts to speak of a moment of *gestalt*, when a magical underbelly of invisible meaning, previously invisible, suddenly becomes apparent.¹⁴³ In Arua, this world was never hidden: such discussions are public, and people openly speak about many aspects of spiritual affliction.

Acknowledging the presence of this world necessitated a consideration of ethics that Roxburgh terms “spiritual care.”¹⁴⁴ Lugbara people I met, including my co-workers, tangibly experienced the effects of external forces, though I could neither feel their effects nor believe myself affected by them. Yet the fears of my assistants regarding particular eating-places, hills, markets and homes that did not “fear God” directed the path of this research. My assistants’ trepidations were productive, revealing local contours about *ala* (‘good’) and *onzi* (‘bad’) powers, and the ambiguities inbetween. Reflexively, this meant that the moral contours of Lugbara society mediated my access to that society: much of this research was conducted in households deemed to be *ala*, or God-fearing, with people cognisant of the forms of propriety described above. A visit to an *oyo* (witchdoctor) who advertised throughout Arua was unthinkable, as were encounters with herbalists and Christian diviners who had not been verified as *ala* by my colleagues. Even when healers had been verified, ambiguities continued. Whilst two

¹⁴² See for example H. West, *Ethnographic Sorcery*. University of Chicago Press, 2007.

¹⁴³ Geschiere, ‘Modernity of Witchcraft’

¹⁴⁴ S. Roxburgh, ‘Witchcraft and supernatural harm: navigating spiritual ethics in political science research’, *Qualitative Research* 19:6 (2019), pp. 703–717.

of my assistants sought counsel from female diviner-healers, with one offering her a regular tithe, another feared the source of her power, asking “Were her visions truly Christian?”¹⁴⁵ After a message during a cleansing service that someone present in her church doubted her power, moreover, this colleague refused to revisit her. These reactions allowed me to discern the complexity of religious contestation, and to disentangle the moral codes both of women and men, and of nominal and Saved Christians (a distinction unpacked in Chapter Four).

Clan leaders and diviner-healers were well versed both in concealing and legitimating mystical abilities. Many Christians were proficient in “giving testimony”, which Peterson regards as an ethnographic enterprise in itself, refining social moral contours through personal experience of sin, conversion and recovery.¹⁴⁶ Yet many seeking reparations were less confident: some were struggling with misfortunes or sickness. Often these fears were close to the surface, thus explaining problems in spirits provided what Jackson terms “a vital human strategy for sustaining a sense of agency in the face of disempowering circumstances.”¹⁴⁷ Roxburgh notes that spiritual care is continually negotiated, and given the plurality of forms metaphysical power can take, a single strategy can never suffice: my discussions necessitated speaking to others, careful introductions, continual empathy, and at times, withdrawal. Given the sensitivity of discussions, particularly surrounding death, throughout this research the protection of participants was always placed above accessing data.

¹⁴⁵ Personal Conversation with Co-worker, May 2017.

¹⁴⁶ D. Peterson, ‘Revivalism and dissent in colonial East Africa’, in K. Ward and E. Wild-Wood (eds.), *The East African Revival: Histories and Legacies.* , 2011, p.165.

¹⁴⁷ Jackson, *The Politics of Storytelling*, p. 15.

Anthropologists have noted that the presence of an outsider can serve to confirm occult fears, and have noted instances where outsiders become embroiled in occult drama.

Harrell-Bond’s palpable fear upon encountering a bag of powder thought to be poisonous during a spate of mass-evictions in the 1980s only served to confirm its potency.¹⁴⁸ In the Lugbara context, where danger has long been associated with spirits taking the form of a white person, my sudden presence could have presented a burden for local leaders trying to maintain order in their constituencies (it being a strange coincidence for white outsiders to appear in the midst of panic), and could directly affect the fate of suspects.¹⁴⁹ Consulting diviner-healers also served to legitimate prayers as treatment for conditions which, in my background, would necessitate medical attention. For this reason too, I chose to visit particular places repeatedly rather than spontaneously, and to repeatedly explain my status of researcher.

Interviews in this research were conducted in both English and Lugbara, with my assistants acting as translators given my only basic command of Lugbarati. Where necessary we explored the context of translations, as well as the development of certain terms which have evolved over time. For example:

Lugbarati	1950s	1970s	2016/7	Maracha variant
<i>abiba</i>	n/a	Removal of intestines through mystical means	witchcraft, causes running to water	Charm, purchased from Congo post-exile
<i>Adro</i>	Divine Spirit/ God in its early refractions	God	Christian God in Catholic tradition (<i>Mungu</i> in Anglican tradition)	
<i>Adroa</i>	Transcendent aspect of the Divinity	n/a	Small Gods, spirits (<i>Mungua</i> in Anglican tradition)	
<i>ole</i>	envy	envy	envy	

¹⁴⁸ T. Allen, ‘Understanding Alice: Uganda’s Holy Spirit Movement in context’, *Africa* 61:3 (1991), pp. 370-399; Behrend, *Resurrecting Cannibals*.

¹⁴⁹ I, Elder, Buramali, 02/07/2016.

<i>oleu</i>	witch	n/a	wizard, inappropriate mourner	<i>olegaga</i>
<i>ori</i>	Ancestors/ ancestral shrine	Ancestor	ritual/ traditional religion. <i>Orijo</i> = church; <i>orindi</i> = spirit	
<i>abiba</i>	n/a	Removal of intestines through mystical means	witchcraft, causes running to water	Charm, purchased from Congo post- exile
<i>enyata/ enyaya</i>	poison	poison	poison	<i>Enata</i> (poison also used)

Tracing the evolution and derivation of terms offered significant insight into changing local meanings. Whilst some sentiments have persisted (*ole*, *enyata*), other meanings have been altered by Christian evangelism and by imports of regional knowledge.

Moreover, Lugbarati is a tonal language, with specific words bearing different meanings depending on the context. In the same way, whether a substance promotes health or harm, depends on the sentence: thus *aro* ('medicine') can be *aro onzi* or *aro ala*, just as *orindi* ('spirit') can be *orindi onzi* or *orindi ala*, depending on what it does to people. The context-specific nature of words provides an apt metaphor for the manner in which deeds and sickness are assessed within their social context. During participant reflection, the social context continually elicited discussions of translation and terms.

Finally, it is important to note what this thesis is not. Much of the evidence discussed herein could be subsumed under the category of "structural violence".¹⁵⁰ Legacies of violence and underdevelopment have resulted in a chronically-underfunded public health system: biomedical care is accessed largely on a testing basis for specific conditions (malaria, typhoid, HIV/AIDS), and people manage many chronic conditions simply with antibiotics or painkillers. There is a fundamental shortage of diagnostic

¹⁵⁰ P. Farmer, 'An Anthropology of Structural Violence', *Current Anthropology* 45:3 (2004), pp. 305-325.

care, such that, as one physician noted, “chronic conditions go unattended”.¹⁵¹ This research project was approved by UNCST as a study of social repair and justice—not of public health or medicine—and it is within this remit that I embark. Throughout this research, Lugbara people addressed physical and psychological suffering through the dual frame of bodily restoration and social peace.¹⁵² Following Das and Whyte, I emphasise affliction as an everyday state through which life is endured.¹⁵³

This thesis argues that the explanation of suffering lies at the core of historical and contemporary Lugbara society, in that explaining sickness has endured as a means through which local society is brought together as well as torn apart. “Our society is sick,” one Lugbara elder said, lamenting the changes modernity has brought. Indeed, the pursuit of health is characterised by a host of emotional states—amongst them, pain, ritual, celebration and indeterminate waiting. This host, and its endurance through time, serves as the core body of data for this thesis.

1.7 Structure of Chapters

The structure of this thesis is as follows.

Part I explores histories of healing, reappraising Middleton’s *Lugbara Religion* and exploring broader histories of healing.

¹⁵¹ I, Doctor ARRH, 18/06/2017.

¹⁵² These findings crucially challenge recent WHO approaches to “traditional medicine”, which assume that indigenous therapies complement clinical treatment. As this thesis shows, this assumption neglects continual evolution in “traditional” therapies, and neglects the broader social contexts in which these therapies are enacted. See, WHO, *Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014-2023*, WHO: Geneva, 2013.

¹⁵³ Das, *Affliction*, p. 4.

Chapter Two places Arua and Maracha Districts in their historical context, outlining the turbulent phases of violence in the early colonial period, and exploring how the colonial government of the Ugandan Protectorate set in motion post-colonial legacies of underdevelopment. Overall, this chapter argues that violence and state formation have transformed, but not eroded, the intimate governance of clans, which is today redefined through by-laws as well as misfortunes that follow those who invite the state to intervene in familial affairs.

Chapter Three revisits John Middleton's *Lugbara Religion*. Exploring the intellectual and methodological underpinnings of the work, this chapter argues that its enduring value lies in the intimacy with which the anthropologist depicts an inter-consistent world. In Middleton's account, misfortune was used to enforce internal discipline, to manage inter-generational tensions, and to bolster the authority of clan elders. *Lugbara Religion* depicts not a discrete 'religious' world, but a lived system of practice that maintained its cohesion against the disruptive social policies of the colonial state. Significant here is the attention Middleton paid to how clans structure everyday life, a structure that is a central focus for later chapters.

Chapter Four explores healing as a site of moral struggle, through foregrounding historical encounters with divine prophets, Christian missionaries, Lugbara evangelists and post-exile charismatic leaders. As Christianity was enculturated throughout the colonial period, the explanation of suffering became a pivotal site upon which conversion depended. The chapter explores how colonial interventions permeate

through religious efforts to repair society post-war, noting the uncertainties that surround the channelling of divine power by ordinary Lugbara people.

Part II describes the evolution of attempts to ‘follow’ misfortunes, and restore social relations amidst chronic suffering.

Chapter Five explores how clan authorities have re-institutionalised the management of misfortune, following the return from wartime exile. Echoing the system of practice described by Middleton, the chapter argues that affliction has been brought into conversation both with debts owed to disturbed souls and with rites past and present. Couched in terms of intra-lineage responsibility, misfortune now lies at the centre of flows of village resources. Yet processes of recovery that rely on members’ (primarily males’) commitment to social solidarities are now in crisis on their own terms. This chapter illuminates the increasing gaps between those who believe debts and dues are ‘following them’, and the material and social distances between elders who serve as arbiters of intimate knowledge and instigators of repair. This chapter furthermore introduces notions of sicknesses of contagion that echo throughout the concepts of curses, witchcraft and poison described in the following chapters.

Chapter Six revisits the spiritual labour of female diviners. With diviners once portrayed as ambiguous, asocial characters, this chapter argues divinatory revelations work within the framework of patriarchy that forms the normative basis of Lugbara society, land distribution and household conduct. Read in conjunction with the preceding chapter, these studies explore the transformation of ‘traditional’ arbiters of misfortune amid

Christian critique, highlighting the fragmentation of normative social structures and inequalities that are a feature of post-exile reconstruction.

Part III explores post-war transitions in efforts to explain sudden death. These chapters critically assess the production of evidence for claims of inter-personal responsibility, transitions in mourning rites and negotiations with the state.

Chapter Seven explores the post-war emergence of *mazi*, a form of witchcraft that is understood to convert familial sacrifices into money. The chapter explores the multi-scalar production of these ideas, and the divergence between moral discourse and on-the-ground, inter-communal struggles of healing and evidence that produce the witch. In sum, this chapter reveals the emergent politics of generational contestation that challenges normative ideas of order.

Chapter Eight extends the exploration of sudden deaths to an analysis of poisoning claims. As with *mazi*, these accusations take shape following sudden deaths, but tracing suspects relies on intimate historical and familial knowledge, as well as material evidence of applying poisonous substances. The chapter explores furthermore how evictions of witchdoctors accused of such poisoning serve as encounters wherein clans negotiate and imagine state authority.

Finally, *Chapter Nine* explores the violence that ensued following the 2016 death of the Catholic bishop and war-protector Frederick Drandua. This chapter explores the politicisation of collective suffering, and explores the role of violence as a force for

post-war healing and memory. Following this final chapter, the appendices to the thesis provide supplementary material, including a booklet of supporting images that elucidate the worlds described in this thesis.

Part I: Words, Divinities and the Making of Moral Worlds

Chapter Two

Beyond a Violent Periphery: Clans and Enduring Change (1880-present)

Loyalties still lie to the family, to the tribe, or at most to the district, and there is much suspicion of the intentions of other groups... there is as yet but little sign of any sense of Uganda nationality or citizenship.

(West Nile District Report
1957:147)¹⁵⁴

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the history of the West Nile sub-region, focusing specifically on how external intrusions, state-building and war have transformed the social organisation vested in Lugbara clans living along the Uganda/DRC border from the precolonial period to the present.

In conventional historiographies by European and Ugandan scholars, West Nile is positioned as peripheral to the development of the Ugandan state, or as a violent, conflict-prone periphery, indelibly ascribed with the violence of Amin's regime.¹⁵⁵ The only comprehensive history of the region, Leopold's *Inside West Nile* (2005), explores how successive waves of violence are perceived as bestowing a "curse" on the region's people.¹⁵⁶ Through the telling of episodic upheavals, intended to disrupt associations of

¹⁵⁴ West Nile District Report 1957, TA Personal Archive, Loaned from Entebbe, Uganda p. 147.

¹⁵⁵ For example, R. Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda* (Cambridge UP, 2017), and P. Mutibwa, *Uganda Since Independence* (Africa World Press, 1992). Making explicit this distinction, A.B.K. Kasozi describes that prior to independence, the Ugandan state could be thought of as consisting of four "concentric rings": Buganda being the core region of capital accumulation, surrounded by a "semi-periphery of cash-crop growing regions (including Busoga), Bunyoro to which many West Nilers migrated, followed by labour supply regions including West Nile and the North (Karamoja is characterised as an unincorporated area). See A.B.K. Kasozi, *Social Origins of Violence in Uganda, 1964-1985* (London: McGill-Queen's UP, 1994), p. 117.

¹⁵⁶ Leopold, *Inside West Nile*.

West Nilers with violent militancy since the early colonial period, his account perpetuates a picture of a territory structured solely by external impositions, with little reference to how people themselves experienced change. Leopold's post-structural approach stands in stark contrast to the frames which Lugbara elders selected in the present research to tell their histories, through the development and migration of clans. Whilst these origin myths could have been regarded as 'mythico-histories', telling history through the prism of the clan marks an important resistance to Eurocentric focus on political histories, and introduces the importance of a 'cultural consciousness' developed in this thesis.¹⁵⁷

In privileging the continuity of local institutions, this chapter is interested in how social forms have been shaped by the specificities of West Nile's history. As suggested by the opening quotation, this disconnectedness is rooted in the colonial past: five years prior to independence in 1962, Lugbara residents recognised internal boundaries, based on connections to families or to local government, rather than to the wider Ugandan state. Today Lugbara-speakers refer to Kampala simply as *lire* ('that place'), which is accessed *ma mu yi* ('by going over the water'), indicating the Ugandan capital's continuing conceptual remoteness from everyday life. Colonial borders moreover divided Ugandan Lugbara from kin in Congo; resisting these changes, local connections to Eastern DRC often feature prominently in everyday commerce, security and kinship.

West Nile's isolation from wider Uganda is often explained by geographical distance—Arua town, West Nile's regional capital and the centre of British rule, lies 420km away

¹⁵⁷ S. Rasmussen, 'Mythico-History, Social Memory, and Praxis: Anthropological Approaches and Directions', *History Compass* 7 (2009), pp. 566-582, p. 570.

from the capital, separated from the central and southern regions by Murchison National Park and the Nile River—or by cultural differences, as populations in West Nile speak distinct languages, and lack the heritage of centralised authority present in Bagandan and Bunyoro kingdoms. West Nile was incorporated within British Protectorate boundaries in 1914, only three decades after control of the Bagandan Kingdom had been established. As this chapter shows, the isolation of West Nile has resulted not just from geography or its social tapestry, but from colonial policies of deliberate isolation and internal neglect.

Between 1914-62, West Nile was designated a closed district, which served as a “labour reserve” for the recruitment of young men to military forces and for plantation work outside the district.¹⁵⁸ Colonial policies produced a sense of political and economic marginalisation that has endured to the present, and that has been compounded by post-independence upheavals.¹⁵⁹ After the overthrow of Amin in 1979, civilians in West Nile (here referred to as “West Nilers”) suffered violent reprisals for the acts of his regime. In the 1980s, people fled *en masse* as “liberation” forces pillaged the region’s districts.

Since a return from exile in the 1980s, the expansion of local government under Museveni’s National Resistance Movement has contributed to widespread perceptions that the state should guarantee health, protection and security. Yet throughout this research, family heads and elders were equally involved in projects to reconstruct *suru* (clans) and moral development through new laws and sanctions. In so doing, visions of

¹⁵⁸ M. Leopold, ‘Crossing the line: 100 years of the North-West Uganda/South Sudan border’, *Journal of East African Studies* 3:3 (2011), pp. 464-478, p. 469.

¹⁵⁹ Leopold, ‘Crossing the line’, pp. 464-478.

rota (development), based on collective cooperation, flourished in the absence of state protections. Indicative of this self-reliance is the dual meaning of *alio* (poverty), which connotes not simply a lack of things, but a lack of people. This chapter traces the historical basis for internal structures of reliance.

To lay the groundwork for this thesis, this chapter takes a long view of history among Lugbara clans. The first section begins by reconstructing the nature of pre-colonial institutions, and experiences of plunder and epidemic diseases (1880-1920). With the onset of Protectorate rule in 1920, the chapter then explores the establishment of a new administration and the changes wrought by outsiders and British colonists, from 1920-1962. The third section of the chapter explores the upheavals of the post-colonial period, focusing specifically on war, displacement, and its aftermath from the 1960s to the 1980s. Finally, the chapter concludes by focusing on how clan authority has been re-institutionalised following the return from exile. Overall, this chapter sets the institutional history that structures quests to manage misfortune described in the following chapters.

Before proceeding, a note on terms is necessary. As this chapter indicates, the Lugbara identity—a term that has no literal meaning in Lugbarati—was introduced during the years of the British Protectorate. Prior to this, and during the early years of British rule, groups which would become known as the Lugbara were documented variously as the *Lubari*, *Lugwari*, *Lugwari* and *Logbara*. Whilst common ancestry was recognised in

origin myths, people identified by their clan or sub-clan of origin.¹⁶⁰ Whilst for the first two sections of this chapter the notion of a “Lugbara identity” is anachronistic, the term Lugbara is used simply for consistency’s sake.

Similarly, the term “clan” warrants attention. According to Middleton, in the 1950s Lugbara people distinguished between *suru* as clan or sub-clan, and *enyati* (literally ‘bread-breakers’), as the smaller cluster of households that cooperated in collective labour, and dwelt under the sanction of the ancestors.¹⁶¹ In the present research, *suru* is used to denote clan and sub-clan, with sub-clan delimited similarly to Middleton’s clusters. *Enyati*, by contrast, is here used flexibly to describe households, and occasionally neighbourhood. For consistency, sub-clan is used refers to groups of 3-4 generations of genealogically-related men, namely, the level at which group sanction and cooperation exists both in the past and today.

2.2 Reconstructing Precolonial Society

The clans that today constitute the Lugbara ethnic group originated from migrations of people from Bari-lands in the present-day Rejaf-Juba region of South Sudan.¹⁶² Lugbara origin myths are rich in migratory history, centred on the arrival of populations in the territory marked by two mountains, Mt Wati (then Eti) and Mt Liru.¹⁶³ According to these myths, groups formed from the migrations of two hero-ancestors, Jaki and

¹⁶⁰ I.O. Acidri, *The Impact of British Colonial Policies on the Lugbara of Arua District 1914-62*, MA Dissertation, Department of History and Political Science, Kyambogo University, 2016, p.41.

¹⁶¹ *Enyati* could also be called *ori’ba*, translated as ‘people of ancestors.’

¹⁶² A. Alidri, ‘Traditional Wisdom in Land Use and Resource Management among the Lugbara of Uganda: A Historical Perspective’, *SAGE Open* 6:3 (2016), pp. 1-13.

¹⁶³ Mt Wati is located in Terego sub-county, Arua District, and Mt Liru lies on the border of Koboko/Maracha Districts, separating Lugbara speakers from Kakwa speakers.

Dribidu. Jaki was the son of Yeke, who was descended from Gborogboro, the first man on earth, who settled near Mt Liru, on which he died. Jaki is regarded as the ancestor of the Kakwa people and the High Lugbara, who spoke a dialect of Lugbara (*uruleti*) similar to Keliko and Logo groups, who were the original inhabitants of the area.¹⁶⁴ Dribidu was the ancestor of the Low Lugbara, who spoke *andraleti*, a language closer to Ma'di (some Ma'di clans also trace their origins to him).

According to legend, Dribidu is said to have arrived with animals from Luo-land via Sudan, settling near the slopes of Mt Wati to graze his animals. Here Dribidu met a leper woman, Ofanyaru, whom he married after curing her sores with foreign treatments.¹⁶⁵ After paying bride-wealth, the marriage was legitimated, and their sons founded the Lugbara clans. Jaki and Dribidu had many sons, who produced the first Lugbara clans, and their graves remain on Mt Wati and Mt Liru. Though centuries old, these myths are replete with the ideas of mutuality, gender complementarity and healing raised in this thesis.¹⁶⁶ Additionally, these myths are emblematic of the fluidity of identities in West Nile: with the Lugbara sharing origins with the Kakwa and the Ma'di, and the group itself featuring a diversity of languages and customs.¹⁶⁷

Shiroya dates the arrival of settler groups to the late 16th century. He describes the period between the late 1700s and mid-1800s as a time of “Lugbaraization,” wherein

¹⁶⁴ Middleton, *The Lugbara of Uganda*, pp. 22-3.

¹⁶⁵ This narrative was offered by elders of several Maracha clans.

¹⁶⁶ Finnström, *Living with Bad Surroundings*.

¹⁶⁷ Bearing testament to such diverse origins and assimilation with neighbours, in the 1950s the missionary-turned-ethnographer J.P. Crazzolaro distinguished between two broad linguistic zones: *urule'bati* (high-land language) associated with the southern Ayivu County (including Vurra and Maracha), and *andrele'bati* (low-people language) associated with the east, with Terego.

the slow fusion of migrant settlers led to the consolidation of a shared language, customs and social philosophies.¹⁶⁸ Precolonial Lugbara society, he suggests, was accepting of newcomers: inter-ethnic trade existed, with Lugbara exchanging livestock and foodstuffs for iron hoes from Lendu blacksmiths. As populations migrated away from the Wati-Liru heartland further south, trade with Alur-speaking groups arose. Anyavu Market in Alurland was established by c.1870, where salt from Bunyoro and fish from Packwach were exchanged with food and livestock.¹⁶⁹ Though based on subsistence farming, these trades bolstered local economies.

During this period, Lugbara society had a largely acephalous structure. In the absence of centralised authority, everyday governance and subsistence was forged through settlement and solidarity within small patrilocal clusters, under the overall jurisdiction of an elder (*ba wara, ba ambo*). Usually, this unit did not surpass 3-4 generations of male relatives (known as *o'dipi*), plus their wives and children. Membership of these clusters included dead ancestors (*ori*), who heard the words of elders—a topic discussed in detail in later chapters—and punished the disobedience of the living with sickness.

Land being relatively abundant in the pre-colonial period, these clusters took the form of nucleated settlements, with dwellings surrounded by grazing lands for cattle and fields where sim sim, millet, sorghum, and root crops were grown. Agricultural labour was gendered, with specific tasks denoted for men and women. Additional labour was

¹⁶⁸ O.J.E. Shiroya, 'The Lugbara States - Politics, Economics and Warfare in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Transafrican Journal of History* 10:1/2 (1981), pp. 125-137, p.129.

¹⁶⁹ Trade was most intense with the group that would become the Ma'di-Ayivu (as opposed to the Ma'di to the east), a group that shared language with the Lugbara but which would be divided from them by colonial policy. Today the language of Ma'di-Ayivu is comprehensible to Lugbara speakers (more so than the Ma'di of Moyo).

provided by family members: *kitaa* (also *bari*, ‘work’) involved several family heads labouring in each other’s fields, a practice known as *oya* (communal labour) performed in return for food.¹⁷⁰ As families expanded, clusters would migrate away from their original clusters to less-populated areas. Patterns of settlement were flexible, and directly responsive to land pressures: when the carrying capacity of the land was exceeded, new settlements would form.

Settlement clusters were not isolated from wider society. As evident in the origin myth of the Low Lugbara, marriage rites were central to suturing the social landscape together. The transfer of *ali* (bridewealth) from the husband’s people to the wife’s people fostered a sense of obligation between sub-clans. Since clan intermarriage had long been prohibited on account of it presaging misfortune, unions often involved couplings beyond the nearby social horizon, meaning that men and women were typically affiliated with a wide-ranging group of relatives. Relations were affirmed too through rites at death, where, after the death of a married woman, *avuti* (one bull) was paid to compensate the woman’s clan. Outstanding dues at marriage or death could be a source of mock or real conflicts. These wider categories of relation, which also extended to neighbourhoods, were known collectively as *juru*. Disputes over land or women often resulted in feuds between younger clansmen. Elders emphasised wider connections as a strategy to mitigate violence.

Feuds between sub-clans, often involving traditional weaponry of bows and arrows, sometimes smeared with poisonous sap, were not uncommon. Most fighting was

¹⁷⁰ Acidri, *Impact of British Colonial Policies*, pp. 34-5.

between small groups of men, who would creep up on enemy parties with arrows. Reports of killing were often exaggerated, whereas in reality, Middleton notes, “[t]he shouting of abuse was often as important a way of letting off steam as actual wounding and killing”.¹⁷¹ In cases of persistent feuding between sub-clans (as well as during droughts and famine), rainmakers (*opi ozooni*), distributed at clan level, adjudicated between parties.¹⁷² Since rainmakers fled from Europeans, little is known about their roles in administering justice, yet in the precolonial period, records suggest these figures played critical roles in managing famine and inter-clan wars.¹⁷³

The basic morphology of precolonial Lugbara social structure was forged through segmented clans and sub-clans, with *enyati* forming the pattern of settlement. In essence, this structure was fluid and amorphous, responding to land and food security, as well as struggles for internal authority and conflicts between clans. Customary and ritual traditions were by no means uniform across the territory, even across the Wati-Liru heartland that would become designated as Lugbaraland by the first outsiders. In the precolonial period, any notion of a coherent Lugbara tribal group was a fiction.

2.3 Slavery, Ivory and Belgian Colonialism (1880 – 1911)

From roughly 1880 on, Lugbara populations became incorporated into wider political and economic systems. The following three decades would mark the arrival of sporadic

¹⁷¹ Middleton, *The Lugbara of Uganda*, p. 56.

¹⁷² L. Avua (1968) found that rainmakers played a considerable role in peace-time politics, and considerable variation in practices of rainmaking across Lugbaraland. In the early years of Protectorate rule, Assistant DC Driberg extracted rainstones from Maracha clans that resembled those used in Bari lands (Archival source: Pitt Rivers Museum).

¹⁷³ Shiroya, ‘The Lugbara States’, challenges notions of statelessness, arguing that by the 19th century, in select parts of Terego and Maracha, corporate groups were consolidated under the jurisdiction of an *opi* who made political decisions for the wider unit (p. 130).

violence that surpassed the relative restraint of local feuds. Whilst the impact of these upheavals and epidemic disease was profound, external actors made no effort to administer, or alter, the-pre-existing social tapestry. What follows is a brief overview of this period.

In the 1880s, Arabic slave raiders from Turco-Egyptian Sudan established posts among Kakwa communities north of Lugbaraland, launching excursions to abduct men, women, and children into a regional “tripartite trade” in people, guns and ivory.¹⁷⁴ The precise impact of these slavers on Lugbara populations remains unquantified. Middleton suggests that Lugbara populations were protected from the worst raids by their distance from Southern Sudan, with most abductions concentrated within today’s Kakwa, Kuku, and Ma’di communities that lay geographically closer.¹⁷⁵ Elders in the present research suggested that Northern populations in Maracha and Terego were subjected to sporadic raiding.¹⁷⁶ Stigand suggests that Kakwa rather than Arabic slavers took people and cattle from Lugbara groups near Mt Wati, but these raids happened after the turn of the 19th century.¹⁷⁷ Whilst it is impossible to determine the slavers’ impact, as in the wider region, during this period outsiders were largely feared. The resonance of this period is demonstrated by the fact that subsequent outsiders appearing across Lugbaraland would be known by as *kulia batu* (‘people eaters’).¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ Leopold, ‘Crossing the line’, p. 465. See also Middleton, ‘Some Effects of Colonial Rule among the Lugbara’, in Victor Turner (ed.), *Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960, Volume 3* (Cambridge UP, 1971). For a wider history of regional processes see C. Leonardi, ‘Paying ‘buckets of blood’ for the land: Moral debates over economy, war and state in Southern Sudan’, *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 49:2 (2011), pp. 215-240.

¹⁷⁵ See, for example, Middleton, ‘Social Change among the Lugbara of Uganda’, *Civilisations* 10:4 (1960), pp. 456-496.

¹⁷⁶ FG, Terego Elders, 08/06/2016 (OJ).

¹⁷⁷ C.H. Stigand, *Equatoria: The Lado Enclave*. London: Taylor & Francis Ltd., 1934, p. 89.

¹⁷⁸ J. Dobson, *Daybreak in West Nile*. West Nile: African Inland Mission, 1964; I, Elder, Arua, 10/05/2016 (OJ); FG, Terego, Elders, 08/06/2016 (OJ).

Following slave raiders came explorers. Junker, a Russian explorer, entered the “country of the Lubari” in 1877, his diaries featuring the first recorded use of the name.¹⁷⁹ In 1876, General Gordon, a British officer serving in Sudan, established an outpost at Wadelai (Moyo). In 1887, Emin Pasha, a German doctor turned Sudanese administrator, retreated to this post after fleeing the Madhist insurrection in Sudan. Emin employed Lugbara servants, and his Nubi troops raided northern Lugbara groups for subsistence. The subsequent Relief Expedition to recover Emin generated much controversy in Europe for the violence Europeans inflicted on local porters, which reportedly featured excessive flogging, torture, and cannibalism.¹⁸⁰ After leaving, Emin left his corpus of slave soldiers from Southern Sudan, who would form the Nubi, or Nubian, group. Later descendants of this group would be used as soldiers within the colonial army, and as chiefs to administer the Lugbara under British rule.¹⁸¹

Whilst these ventures failed significantly to alter the predominance of clans and sub-clans, Lugbara groups nevertheless experienced radical changes through the epidemic diseases outsiders introduced.¹⁸² From 1890, outbreaks of cerebro-spinal meningitis

¹⁷⁹ Annual Report, ‘Dr. Junker’s Journey in the Nyam Nyam Country’, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography*, 3:5 (1881), pp. 301-305, p. 301. This challenges Crazzolarà’s idea that ‘Logbara’ was introduced under the Belgian administration, extrapolated from the name of a small clan living in Aringa District (cited in A.G. King, *A History of West Nile District, Uganda: the effects of political penetration upon the eastern Alur and Lugbara between 1860 and 1959*. D.Phil, Department of History, University of Sussex, 1972, p. v.).

¹⁸⁰ J. Jameson, *Story of the Rear Column of the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition*. London: R.H Porter, 1890.

¹⁸¹ Cf. M. Leopold, ‘Legacies of Slavery in North-West Uganda: The Story of the ‘One-Elevens’’, *Africa* 76:2 (2006), pp. 180-199. Though descended from Emin’s soldiers, the Nubi identity became an elective one, defined by learning the Kunubi language, conversion to Islam, and the pursuit of a military calling. Many Lugbara thus opted to become Nubi. In 2017, talks between Nubi and Lugbara leaders to merge the cultural institutions of both groups were ongoing.

¹⁸² M. Lyons, ‘From ‘Death Camps’ to Cordon Sanitaire: The Development of Sleeping Sickness Policy in the Uele District of the Belgian Congo, 1903-1914’, *Journal of African History* 26:1 (1985), pp. 69-91.

became endemic in dry seasons, as well as outbreaks of smallpox and plague.¹⁸³ Rinderpest wiped out cattle herds from 1890-1920.¹⁸⁴ Mass mortality of humans and cattle swiftly altered the distribution of authority and agricultural productivity, resulting in famines (particularly severe in 1895) and the mass migration of northerners to the south.¹⁸⁵ Epidemic diseases were tied both to Europeans and to *Adro*, the Lugbara divinity.¹⁸⁶ Since mortality could not be explained through ancestral therapies, elders in the North visited a Kakwa prophet, Rembe, whose sacred Yakan water was believed to confer immunity from new diseases.

Alongside these vast changes, Emin's relief expedition had alerted European colonists to the economic potential of the region. Britain, France, Belgium and Germany competed diplomatically for territorial controls over the area, and eventually Belgian colonisers gained control. Under the Belgian Free State, Lugbara clans were encompassed within the Lado Enclave, along with South Sudan's Equatoria Province and part of today's Central African Republic. In 1900, Belgians set up an outpost in Ofude (Maracha), and later a second station at Alenzori to the west. To give an impression of the extent of the administration, by 1907 these posts were staffed by just seven Belgians, though 250 Congolese *askari* were deployed to pillage surrounding populations for sustenance. Indicative of the fear these soldiers engendered is their local title, *tukutuku*, after the discharging of a rifle, or *sima*, a derogatory label connoting the

¹⁸³ J. Middleton, 'The Yakan or Allah Water Cult among the Lugbara', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 93:1 (1963), pp. 80-108.

¹⁸⁴ Middleton, 'Some Effects of Colonial Rule', p. 8.

¹⁸⁵ King, *A History of West Nile District*, p. 45.

¹⁸⁶ Middleton, 'The Yakan or Allah Water Cult'.

hiss of a snake.¹⁸⁷ Today, clans in the vicinity of Ofude still record violent murders by the regime within their lineage histories.¹⁸⁸

In the countryside around Ofude, Belgians appointed *opi* (chiefs). Belgians took those appointed to represent the “traditional aristocracy,” but *opi* were not elders or rainmakers—rather, they were men who had become established through Yakan, outside lineage hierarchies. In an interview for this research, the great-grandson of one chief, Kamure, recollected the detail of his ancestors’ employ, recalling that “his main duties were to collect ornaments—gold, cattle, chicken, eggs—for the Belgians... The Belgians never introduced things like schools, hospitals—they were just collecting wealth, not any other things.”¹⁸⁹ *Opi* were regarded with suspicion, as collaborators who served the Belgian troops for personal gain rather than for clan interests.¹⁹⁰

Today, elders sharply contrast Belgian rule with the British Protectorate rule that followed. Unlike the British, the Belgians “did not bring order.”¹⁹¹ By 1911, the Belgian post at Ofude stood abandoned, and Lugbara territories were overrun by ivory and elephant poachers.¹⁹² Whilst one such hunter described the lack of regulation as engendering a “veritable paradise” for hunting parties, local populations were often terrorised by expeditions, and on occasion hunting parties burnt whole villages.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁷ A. King, ‘The Yakan Cult and Lugbara Response to Colonial Rule’, *Azania: Archaeological Research in Africa* 5:1 (1970), pp. 1-25.

¹⁸⁸ I, Elder, Alipi, 07/03/2017.

¹⁸⁹ I, Elder, Azipi 14/03/2017 (OJ).

¹⁹⁰ M. Leopold, ‘Why Are We Cursed?: Writing History and Making Peace in North West Uganda’, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 11:2 (2005), pp. 211-229.

¹⁹¹ FG, Maracha Elders, 28/06/2016.

¹⁹² R.E. McConnell, ‘Notes on the Lugwari tribe of Central Africa’, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 55 (1925), pp. 439-467, p. 439.

¹⁹³ C.H. Stigand, *Hunting the Elephant in Africa*, Safari Media Africa (1913). Select individuals were employed as porters to carry equipment and tusks; see W.B. Foran, ‘Edwardian Ivory Poachers over the Nile’, *African Affairs* 57: 227 (1958), pp. 125-134.

Poachers adopted similar patterns of pillage and violent extraction as the slave raiders and Belgian colonists before them.

Leopold promotes the idea of history as a “curse” upon West Nilers, and such a description adequately describes the encounters between Lugbara clans and outsiders up to this point. In slavers, poachers and Free State militaries, populations had been exposed to sporadic, brutal violence, and similar patterns of extractions. Whilst no attempt had been made to directly introduce any semblance of administration, allowing sub-clans to retain a position as the primary institution of governance, everyday life had been irreparably changed by disease, theft and slaughter. Prior to 1911, Lugbara clans had radically different experiences of mediating with colonising forces: clan leaders in the north had significantly more knowledge of both the perils and opportunities that outsiders could bring. As the next section shows, this divergent local history would feed into the dynamics of British rule.

2.4 Indirect rule under the British Protectorate (1914 – 1962)

Under the terms of the 1906 Anglo-Congolese Agreement, in 1911 Belgium ceded Lugbara territories to British control, administered as part of the Kajo Keji District of Southern Sudan. Though still remote from administrative centres, this incorporation brought an end to the free reign of ivory poachers in the region.¹⁹⁴ In 1914, Lugbara clans were incorporated into the boundaries of the Ugandan Protectorate as the West Nile District, separating Lugbara clans in what is now both Uganda and Congo (often

¹⁹⁴ Foran, ‘Edwardian Ivory Poachers’.

severing settlements of kin in the process). Clans on the Ugandan side of the border were placed under the control of a District Commissioner, with West Nile initially administered as Arua, Nebbi and Yumbe Districts, and with Lugbara populations contained within Arua District. With the district headquarters located in Arua, in the south—rather than Ofude at this juncture—clans were subject to “close administration” through indirect rule.¹⁹⁵ Designated as a ‘closed district’ with power vested in the Provincial Commissioner to regulate out-migration and to control movement within intra-district boundaries, this administration would have profound effects on Lugbara populations.¹⁹⁶

Though Lugbara populations had been afforded a “warlike” reputation by Belgian officials (perhaps on account of local resistance to violent rule), British administrators debunked such qualities. Stigand, in his pseudo-ethnographic account of the Lado Enclave, writes: “The Lugware are not a warlike people as far as I can see, whatever has been said to the contrary. Cohesion, and a military organisation, are essential to a warlike people, qualities which the Lugware lack altogether.”¹⁹⁷ Seeking to impose governance and “order”, Protectorate officials were more concerned with the lack of centralised authority within the segmentary social structure. By contrast to Alur groups organised into chiefdoms in the South, the observed imprecision between “tribes” and overall authority fed the administrators’ racial consciousness. One early survey

¹⁹⁵ Whilst Leopold, *Inside West Nile*, notes that Arua means prison (*aru*), Acidri notes that this term derived prior to British arrival. Reportedly, Aru served as a place where clans held captives during the 19th century.

¹⁹⁶ T. Allen, *A Study of Social Change and Upheaval Among the Ma'di of Uganda*, PhD Thesis, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Manchester, 1996, p. 118.

¹⁹⁷ Stigand, *Equatoria*, p. 80.

eschewed the Lugbara's sophisticated agricultural techniques, for example, to describe them as "among the least advanced of the African tribes".¹⁹⁸

Inspired by the challenge of bringing an "unchartered" territory within the Protectorate, the first District Commissioner of the British Protectorate, Alfred Evelyn Weatherhead (1914-22), zealously attempted to initiate indirect governance.¹⁹⁹ Given the fluid nature of identities in West Nile, constructing divisions between and within groups required significant creative license. The amorphous social context of sub-clans bore little relevance to the neat tribal distinctions that preoccupied British administrators. In ethnic terms, unlike other Ugandan districts that loosely conformed to a single linguistic and cultural group, West Nile featured considerable diversity. One initial survey identified eight tribal groups and languages, listed in order of size: Lugwari, Ma'di, Ai-ivu, Alur, Ma'di, Okebu, Kakwa and Lendu. But these "tribal" boundaries were not distinct: people speaking similar languages did not always live together, just as significant intermarriage and exchange took place between groups. Simply put, a fixed notion of tribe did not exist.²⁰⁰ Despite considerable ambiguities, county boundaries to separate West Nile's dominant linguistic groups—the Lugwari, Alur, Kakwa, and Ma'di—were simply imposed. At this point, the Lugbara identity became a reality attached to new territorial distinctions and the distribution of resources.

¹⁹⁸ McConnell, 'Notes on the Lugwari tribe', p. 467.

¹⁹⁹ Weatherhead spent 275 days of his first year of appointment touring the district and adjudicating inter-clan feuds—for which he garnered respect from Lugbara elders, who afforded him the title of *Jerekedi* and led to his incorporation into mythical schemas. Even today, several elders marked their histories by the arrival of Weatherhead. King, 'A History of West Nile District', p. 255.

²⁰⁰ Allen, 'A Study of Social Change'

Despite his efforts, the first years of Weatherhead's administration presented particular difficulties. He confessed in one early report to have "bitten off enough for two mouths with full sets of teeth to chew."²⁰¹ Weatherhead's tenure, and indeed the early years of colonial rule generally, would be defined by two primary dynamics: resistance from Lugbara groups, followed by a gradual if fitful acceptance, in which missions played a key role.

2.4.1: Resistance

In the early phases of resistance to Protectorate rule, southern and northern Lugbara clans differed considerably in their response. In the south, the administration was viewed as a "glorified band of elephant poachers who would pass on very shortly."²⁰² Upon encountering Protectorate parties, people fled to the bush, with several Ayivu clans mounting an attack on the District Headquarters in Arua.²⁰³ In response, Weatherhead and his Assistant DC Driberg took hostages to Arua Prison, and levied fines on resisters.²⁰⁴ Among the southern clans, Weatherhead struggled to find even "can-be" chiefs, given the significant migration to the area from the North under the Belgians: as he wrote in 1914-15, "the Lugwari are utterly unorganised, there are no chiefs, and it is impossible often to locate even a village headman."²⁰⁵ As a result, Weatherhead appointed agents or Lugbara from other areas to act as sub-county chiefs.

In the North, however, Lugbara men received the new officials with hospitality.

Officials found the former Belgian *opi* to command the attention of wider clans, and

²⁰¹ Archival source: Annual Report on the West Nile District for 1914-15, pp. 10-11.

²⁰² *ibid.* p. 9.

²⁰³ King, 'The Yakan Cult', p. 3.

²⁰⁴ In these endeavours Weatherhead was assisted by Assistant Commissioner Driberg, a man notorious for both violence and fabrication.

²⁰⁵ Archival source: Annual Report 1914-1915, p. 5.

thus appointed these men as sub-county chiefs under the new system. As early as 1917, local officials had instigated communal road-building and introduced taxation in kind. As King noted, this apparent complicity had, however, been a “superficial” period of calm.²⁰⁶ In 1919, colonial authorities were troubled by purported anti-colonial, militant activities related to Yakan—or, as the District officers termed it, the “Allah Water Cult.” An important background to note is the resurgence of epidemic disease in the early years of the Protectorate: in July 1917, 110 deaths from cerebrospinal meningitis were recorded in the southern Lugbara regions, but by the end of the year officials had given up counting, simply recording fatalities as “rife”.²⁰⁷ A devastating district-wide famine also occurred in 1917. The protective immunity attributed to Yakan acquired new resonance, its head dispensers being leaders of the movement, mediating between local populations and the state.

Protectorate officials were less interested in acknowledging responses to suffering than in the rumour that Yakan’s adherents were engaging in militant activities, including receiving rifles through membership. Versed in colonial resistance variously from Dinka populations and Emin Pascha’s troops in the 1880s, Yakan was interpreted by administrators as a form of Islamic-inspired resistance, which had become the colonial administrators’ “bogeyman.”²⁰⁸ When reports suggested the presence of Yakan-linked resistance in Udipi (Maracha), British officials violently suppressed the movement, reportedly hanged its prophet-leader Rembe, and deported the Yakan chiefs, replacing

²⁰⁶ King, ‘The Yakan Cult’, p. 6.

²⁰⁷ King, ‘A History of West Nile District’, p. 366.

²⁰⁸ King, ‘The Yakan Cult’, argues that this resemblance is evidence more of “cultural borrowing” than of connections between regional cults (p. 10).

them with Nubi chiefs loyal to the Protectorate.²⁰⁹ Though subsequent evidence suggests that Yakan's militant dimensions were over-exaggerated, this demonstration of state power ushered in a new phase of acceptance of colonial rule. In quashing Yakan, the Protectorate removed a substantial threat that could have significantly challenged the ritual authority of clan elders: by 1918, Yakan had instead become linked to the resurrection of dead ancestors, encroaching on elders' ritual jurisdiction.

2.4.2: *Acceptance*

After this initial period of pacification in the 1910s, overt resistance to Protectorate rule from Lugbara diminished from the 1920s on. The Lugbara historian Lulua Odu pragmatically reflects: “[t]here was little the people could do to reverse the trend of events. Eventually they had to submit and accept the changes of the new order.”²¹⁰ Over the following four decades, Protectorate governance would impose new forms of identity, law and economic activities on Lugbara people.

As noted above, British rule introduced a new political geography of counties and sub-counties. For Lugbara communities, their consolidation within Arua District did not readily translate to a coherent self-perception of tribal identity. Allen, in his historiography of the creation of the Moyo District, describes how Catholic missions and government became infused with a sense of “being Ma’di.”²¹¹ Yet among Lugbara speakers, throughout the colonial period a wider ethnic identity was entangled with distinct sub-county identities that grouped together people speaking similar dialects.

²⁰⁹ Nubi troops had proved their loyalty through military service, and could also communicate with officials in English (or Kiswahili). Indeed, the historiography of Yakan overwhelmingly relies on the testimony of one Nubi, Fadimulla Murjan, who emphasised its militant aspects. See Leopold, *Inside West Nile*.

²¹⁰ Lulua Odu, cited in Leopold, *Inside West Nile*, p. 71.

²¹¹ Allen, ‘A Study of Social Change’.

Moreover, for many in the countryside, the District Headquarters in Arua remained remote, with much of the work of government taking place at the sub-county level. In 1919, sub-county divisions included Aringa, Adumi, Ayivu, Bondo, Logiri, Luku, Koboko, Maracha, Ofude and Terego. These boundaries were revised over the colonial period to become Aringa, Ayivu, Vurra, Terego and Maracha. Given the pertinence of these identities, the redrawing of boundaries was often contested. For example, the subsuming of Ofude into Maracha Sub-County in 1948 caused bitterness among Ofudians, who protested that they had lost their chief. But the salience of these identities is such that one Lugbara biographer describes Lugbara identity as conforming to the collective of thirteen clans: six in Uganda, including Aringa, Ayivu, Ma'di, Vurra, Terego and Maracha.²¹² County boundaries are today substituted with the limits of clan descent. As Leonardi notes, “borderland inhabitants play a crucial role in giving meaning and value to national boundaries on the ground”: state boundaries are infused with a sense of identity.²¹³

In this new system, rural communities encountered new laws at the sub-county level. Whilst the DC and county chiefs, known as Sultans or *opi*, operated from Arua, daily administration involved sub-county chiefs known as a *wakil* or *joago*, educated men who served as a figurehead of government to rural clans. Further down, parish chiefs (*wakungu*) and village headmen reported to these *wakil*. The introduction of new laws, fines, and punishments, based not on social connections between parties but on the Ugandan Penal Code, were often a key feature of elders’ memories of the colonial

²¹² Aiko [pseudonym], “Lugbara Kari (The House of Lugbara), *Lugbara Culture Blog*, 23 November 2009. Available online:<http://lugbaraculture.blogspot.com/2009/11/lugbara-kari-house-of-lugbara_23.html>

²¹³ C. Leonardi, ‘Patchwork States: The Localization of State Territoriality on the South Sudan–Uganda Border, 1914–2014’, *Past & Present* 248:1 (2020), pp. 209–258, p. 211.

period. As a Lugbara scholar notes, state laws often criminalised aspects of society.²¹⁴

In view of the public punishments enacted by officials in the municipality, several elders remarked that caning was learnt from the British. Rural elders furthermore remembered government intervention in a host of disputes involving land, family and witchcraft, as well as fines for new categories of civil issues—including tax evasion, non-compliance with sleeping sickness inspections and communal labour.

The arrival of these courts, and the prohibition on feuds, brought important changes to inter-clan relations. Disputes over land, adultery and bridewealth—which would previously have been settled through feuding—were now settled through the moot courts presided over by parish or sub-county chiefs.²¹⁵ Life histories suggest that elders actively drew on these systems, though Middleton suggests the personalities of officials often led to variable functioning of these lower courts. Court settlements led to punishments for offenders, through fines or sentences unrelated to social connection, and were imposed onto clan forms of resolution. Those sub-county chiefs who spearheaded the new systems amassed cattle wealth and large homes, and were described by lineage elders as *opkoro*, connoting a strength tied to witchcraft, or as *mundu'ba* (people of the Europeans). For lineage elders, sub-county chiefs lay outside the traditional system.

A final fundamental change during the Protectorate period was the exposure of ordinary West Nilers to the monetary economy. From the outset, West Nile District had to

²¹⁴ W.O. Balikuddembe, Interview w Alidri Agatha, 'You are not criminal. It is the state criminalising you', DDRN Research Network. Available online:< <https://ddrn.dk/you-are-not-criminal-it-is-the-state-criminalising-you/>>

²¹⁵ Middleton, *The Lugbara of Uganda*, p. 54.

generate revenue for the colonial administration, which involved instituting a poll tax, beginning in 1918.²¹⁶ Given the lack of a monetary economy prior to 1914, instituting these measures proved difficult. Maracha elders recall fleeing over the Congo border to escape tax collection, and throughout the Protectorate period, tax evasion was one of the most common offences brought before courts.²¹⁷ To pay their taxes, young men were now forced to migrate, join the army, or move to the south to labour on sugar and sisal plantations owned by Indian and European capitalists, or even in the Kilembe copper mines in Western Uganda. These flows of migration continued through the Protectorate period until after independence in 1962: of the 183,000 Lugbara counted in a 1948 census, 12,200 resided outside of West Nile. In 1953, 27% of adult males in Maracha and 21% in Ayivu were employed as migrants. Whilst migration altered the balance of power for young men, at home, exposure to the monetary economy was limited by the overall restrictions of colonial policy.

2.4.3: Missions as Collaborators

As Protectorate rule solidified, the colonial state found an important partner in non-state actors: namely, Christian missionaries, who would become important providers of education and biomedicine, allowing selected Lugbara people to participate in emerging notions of Western modernity. Though this history is discussed in detail in Chapter Four, no overview of the region would be complete without a brief mention.

²¹⁶ King, in 'The Yakan Cult', regards tax collection as "the most vivid symbol of government", noting that the Yakan Cult revived in tandem with the first efforts to collect tax in 1918.

²¹⁷ Belgians introduced taxation in the western Lugbara region in 1912, but throughout their occupation in Lugbaraland extracted grain and livestock as tribute. The first store that opened in Arua operated through the exchange of crops for salt, soap, and cloth. In the first report of the District, Weatherhead notes the only currency in circulation was that paid out to those employed by the administration (1914/5 Annual Report, p. 2).

Weatherhead invited Anglican missionaries under the African Inland Mission to Arua in 1917, initially to assist in famine relief.²¹⁸ In 1918, AIM missionaries were followed by the Italian-speaking Comboni Fathers of the Catholic Church, also known as the Verona Fathers. As elsewhere in Uganda, Anglicans were understood to have a closer relationship with the colonial state than the Catholics: elders explained that “The Protestant church and the DC were working together.”²¹⁹ In the early years, white missionaries often met the same hostility as state officials. Take the following account of a Catholic elder aged 102, Zakayo, who witnessed their arrival, and who was “forcibly baptised”:

Actually the missionaries, when they came to Africa, they were forcibly making people convert. It was not a choice. They would pick you here, take you to Ediofe and baptise you. People were forced. They take you to either Ediofe or Mvara, depending on who found you first... I have forgotten the month. I saw missionaries with guns, when Padro Lino Negaretto came to build this church, he was moving with a gun. When he arrived on the church premises, he had a bag, the gun was in the bag. I saw it with my eyes.²²⁰

Rural populations resisted conversion; in their first decades in West Nile, missions had more success in evangelising a local elite through mission education. As indicative of the scale of their efforts, by the 1940s AIM missionaries had instigated 60 primary schools, 12 junior secondary schools, Mvara Senior Secondary School, and a teacher training college.²²¹ La Salandra notes that the Protestant approach downplayed sacraments and baptisms, instead focusing on social works such as medical care and school.²²² Catholics too opened up primary and secondary schools across Arua, in

²¹⁸ Unlike the rest of Uganda, Anglican missionaries were provided by the AIM, rather than the Church Missionary Society.

²¹⁹ FG, Ombavu, 07/03/2016 (OJ).

²²⁰ I, Elder, Arua, 10/04/2017 (OJ).

²²¹ Dobson, *Daybreak in West Nile*.

²²² Fr. Toni La Salandra, *The History of the Catholic Church in West Nile*, Comboni Missionary (n.d).

addition to multiple vocational training institutes. Until 1963, churches were responsible for the supervision of all schools in West Nile.²²³

Missions were also the main provider of medical services. Though there was already a government hospital and several dispensaries, the founding of Kuluva Hospital and its leprosy unit in the early 1950s was significant both in providing public health and as a site of Christian evangelism. Even today, though much of the structure has fallen into disrepair and the hospital is overcrowded, Kuluva is widely regarded as the leading provider of medical services in the region, above the Regional Referral Hospital. The Catholic Fathers also opened Ovujo Hospital, the largest medical facility in today's Maracha District, which remains under their care.

Both Anglican and Catholic missions operated according to a hierarchical structure, with mission headquarters in Arua presiding over parishes as they were gradually established. Whilst throughout the colonial period missions were regarded largely as an elite force, educating government civil servants and providing new options for young men wishing to break from lineage authority, church planting nevertheless occurred at an impressive rate in the countryside from the late 1930s on—a subject detailed at length in Chapter Four.

Leopold emphasises the colonial period as a time of rupture, yet Lugbara elders today speak of the colonial period as a time of relative prosperity. This comment refers both to

²²³ This also had the impact of excluding Muslims from education, and thus restricting progression within the colonial model. Meagher notes that the result was the emphasis on trade for the progression of Muslim West Nilers: K. Meagher, 'The hidden economy: informal and parallel trade in Northwestern Uganda', *Review of African Political Economy* 17:47 (1990), p. 66.

the upheavals that preceded the British administration and those that followed it. 1920-1962 marked a period of relative predictability and prosperity for Lugbara clans: epidemic diseases subsided (Lugbara regions being less affected by sleeping sickness than other parts of the district), and the legal frameworks of the state, together with the services of missions, provided a degree of regularity to people's lives.

Though incorporated within an overall extractive framework that generated new forms of inequality, in the countryside, clan elders were able to mediate many judicial and economic changes, preventing cases from reaching official courts (and avoiding fines and punishments). Young male migrants often sought the permission of their elders prior to move south, and decisions to migrate were often based on the financial needs of family clusters.²²⁴ Clans thus transformed in relation to the new administration, remaining key decision-makers in everyday life. One Lugbara scholar, Acidri, offers a useful comment on the impact of colonial changes. "Lugbara social relations and traditions based on kinship ties and intermarriages were not related to the whites in any way during this period [of] 1914-1962... the Lugbara never ate meat together with the British".²²⁵

2.5: War, Displacement, and Exile: Upheaval and Insecurity

²²⁴ Similarly, Middleton notes that in some locales, fighting persisted as a means of settling disputes, despite Protectorate legislation.

²²⁵ Acidri, *The Impact of British Colonial Policies*, p. 65. British authorities did not invent a system of centralised authority, unlike for example, in Acholiland. In 1922, an Alur prince, Jalwere Jalsiga, was appointed as Agofe Obim, a figurehead for the multi-ethnic district, with this post rotating around different ethnic representatives throughout the Protectorate period. Whilst in response to upheavals of the post-colonial period the Agofe emerged as a peacemaker, in general this position bore little relation to everyday life.

At the arrival of independence in 1962, West Nile remained under-developed compared to wider Uganda.²²⁶ From 1962 on, the opening-up of regional boundaries increased the volume of commerce through Arua, yet the modernising visions of Milton Obote failed to engender significant economic change to rural Lugbara clans, which remained centred on subsistence agriculture. The fate of West Nilers would irrevocably change following Obote's overthrow in 1971, by the then-Army Commander Idi Amin Dada, a Nubi soldier who hailed from West Nile. During Amin's rule, few substantive developments (beyond an airfield and a satellite) accrued to the region as whole, through the prominence of West Nilers in the army increased.²²⁷ A Maracha priest summarised that "[During Amin's rule] people did not want to go to school, they just wanted to join the army. The army was not following the rules—they could rob you, kill you for property, they were mistreating civilians—getting money was easy for soldiers."²²⁸ From 1975 this form of employ diminished, when internal fighting saw Nubi soldiers targeting their Lugbara and Ma'di counterparts. Yet West Niler troops were held accountable for the massacres of Acholi and Langi troops documented during Amin's regime.

Despite the limited local developmental gain, Amin's tenure did not bring the same economic devastation to West Nile recorded across wider Uganda.²²⁹ Moreover, West Nilers were spared the torture enacted by Amin's agents elsewhere in the country. The

²²⁶ M. Leopold, 'Sex, violence and history in the lives of Idi Amin: Postcolonial masculinity as masquerade', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 45:3 (2009), pp. 321-330.

²²⁷ United States Government, 'The Anguish of Northern Uganda - Section 2' (1997), available online at: <<https://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/anguish-northern-uganda-section-2>>. The report notes that the spoils of businesses confiscated from 50,000 Asians in 1972 were disproportionately shared by Amin's individual allies, rather than being used for development in West Nile.

²²⁸ I, Reverend, Maracha, 02/05/2017.

²²⁹ B. Jones, *Beyond the State in Rural Uganda*. Edinburgh UP, (2009)

senseless violence of his regime, exemplified by events such as the murder of the Anglican Archbishop Janani Luwum, and reports of cannibalism and other violent murders, have been sensationalised by Ugandan and European scholars.²³⁰ Today, many elders are reluctant to discuss the past. One elder recalled finding bodies dumped in Lukuma, Terego, suspected to be the work of Amin’s secret service: “So many bodies were found there... You do not even know who it is[.] In various places in Terego there were bodies found, no one knew who they were.”²³¹ Yet since West Nilers did not experience the level of violence reported elsewhere in Uganda, their memories of Amin and his agents have differed from accepted narratives. In interviews conducted for this research, some elders referred to Amin as “our brother”, whilst others praised the “strong” state under his regime, which dealt with “mini-skirts” and poisoners, for example.²³² By contrast to the present, elders recalled Amin’s regime as a time of relative order: “He [Amin] was a good leader. His problem was that he was not educated. If he had been educated like Obote and Museveni... Still he tried. With no education he did a lot... The current leadership—he [Museveni] is disguising himself as bringing democracy, but he is a dictator. His rule is punishment.”²³³ These mixed memories point in part to Amin’s origins within the region, but more broadly to the tragedies that befell West Nilers after Amin’s overthrow.

In October 1978, Amin mounted the ill-fated “Kagera War,” attempting to invade Tanzania. In response, a combined force of the Tanzanian People’s Defence Force (TPDF) and the Ugandan National Liberation Army (UNLA)—mainly Obote’s former

²³⁰ Leopold, ‘Sex, violence, and history’.

²³¹ I, Elder/wife, Abrici, 05/10/2016 (OJ).

²³² FG, Maracha, 28/06/2016 (OJ).

²³³ I, Elder, Druyer, 17/10/2016 (OJ).

soldiers—entered Uganda.²³⁴ The liberation force moved from Kampala through southern Uganda, as Amin’s former troops fled north to West Nile. Harrell-Bond notes that though efforts were made to disarm Amin’s troops and issue them with surrender certificates, many found the offer “galling,” and fled from the liberation forces.²³⁵ Fearing reprisals, civilians too fled the South to return home.

The Liberation Forces entered Arua in June 1979. Whilst many Ugandans acknowledged the TDFP/ UNLA force as freeing people from the tyranny of Amin’s rule, West Nilers did not. Because of prior attacks on Acholi and Langi soldiers, heavily represented in Obote’s forces, West Nilers collectively anticipated reprisals. As one elder explained, “We suffered because he [Amin] was from here, from us—though he was a Kakwa by tribe.”²³⁶ In response to the arrival of the Liberation Forces, by the end of 1979, over 30,000 West Nilers had fled to exile in Sudan, and 50,000 to Zaire.²³⁷ At this stage, many people opted to remain within Uganda: fearing food insecurities, many remembered hiding from soldiers during daytime.²³⁸ Local populations endeavoured to maintain normalcy, with 8000 school-aged students remaining enrolled in secondary schools.²³⁹ In interviews, elders echoed the established position of contemporary

²³⁴ Throughout his rule, Obote and troops loyal to him had lived in exile in Tanzania. President Nyerere had allowed the country to lie at the centre of efforts to consolidate forces to oust Amin. In response, Amin embarked on what was described as a “war of adventure” into Tanzania. This attack was short-lived, but entailed both casualties and the destruction of property.

²³⁵ B.E. Harrell-Bond, *Imposing Aid*. Oxford UP, 1986. She describes how many found these instructions “galling,” instead joining rebel factions.

²³⁶ I, Terego Chief, 3/07/2016.

²³⁷ J. Crisp, ‘Ugandan Refugees in Sudan and Zaire: The Problem of Repatriation’, *African Affairs* 85:339 (1986), pp. 163-180, p. 164.

²³⁸ Harrell-Bond, *Imposing Aid*.

²³⁹ *ibid.* p. 40.

reports, that the initial forces were involved in looting and destruction, but did not actively target civilians.²⁴⁰

As the TPDF withdrew, leaving the UNLA as the sole military presence, the security situation rapidly deteriorated in West Nile. Elders remember this “second war” as a time of extreme violence, when “the Acholi people were in charge. It was a kind of revenge mission for them to kill the Lugbaras.”²⁴¹ The intensification of conflict through 1980 was nominally blamed on quashing resistance from Amin’s former soldiers, who had formed rebel groups to oppose the UNLA. As Amin’s troops had fled home, two resistance factions operated in West Nile: the Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF), largely comprised of Aringa speakers from northern West Nile, and the Former Uganda National Army (FUNA), comprised mainly of Kakwa-speakers from the western parts of West Nile.²⁴² Today, Lugbara people refer to these groups as “rebels,” guerrillas, *azaka* (because of their head coverings which served as a means of identification), or “Aringa” (because rebels hailed from the Muslim-Lugbara).

After Obote’s re-election in late 1980, he made a rare public speech vowing to eradicate the “cult of killing” that had emerged in Amin’s Uganda, through “...hunt[ing] the terrorists and bandits in every district, in every county, in every village and in every home.”²⁴³ This call referred specifically to West Nile, and indeed, throughout 1980-81, civilians became caught in the crossfire. When the rebel groups occupied Arua in

²⁴⁰ Refugee Law Project, ‘Working Paper No. 12 – Negotiating Peace: Resolution of conflicts in Uganda’s West Nile region.’ First published 30 June 2004. Available online at: <<https://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/refugee-law-project-working-paper-no-12-negotiating-peace-resolution-conflicts-ugandas>>.

²⁴¹ I, Elder, Arua, 10/05/2016 (OJ).

²⁴² United States Government, ‘The Anguish of Northern Uganda.’

²⁴³ Reuters, ‘Obote Vows to End Ugandan Cult of Killing’, *New York Times*, 21 August 1981, Section A, p. 2.

October 1980, the UNLA intensified the killing and rape of civilians thereafter, including the killing of six people and one nun at the Ediofe Mission.²⁴⁴ Crisp's account of events in 1980-81 describes allegations that old and disabled people had been stoned to death, that whole families were burnt in their huts, and that dismembered bodies were displayed on branches of trees.²⁴⁵ As a result of this violence, hundreds of thousands of West Nilers sought safety in Sudan and Congo. Violence even found missions, bishops, and clergy, a key reason why many West Nilers today describe war as a punishment from God. A key event was the Ombaci Massacre in 1981, when UNLA soldiers opened fire on 1500 people sheltering in the mission, killing 53 civilians who were then buried in mass graves.

In all, close to 500,000 West Nilers fled into exile.²⁴⁶ Leopold notes that the exile of West Nilers in Sudan remains one of the most analysed refugee movements in African history.²⁴⁷ Yet with the exception of Tim Allen's work, scholars have taken international organisations as the object of their analysis. Harrell-Bond's *Imposing Aid* documents the emergency response in Kajo Keji, exposing the failure of the organisations to provide food security and safety, as well as the internal tension wrought by "forced urbanisation" of refugee populations within settlements.²⁴⁸ Despite these failings, and the conclusions that many survived by their own ingenuity as refugees in

²⁴⁴ Harrell-Bond, *Imposing Aid*, p. 41.

²⁴⁵ Crisp, 'Ugandan Refugees in Sudan and Zaire', pp. 164-5. I chose not to press any of my informants on the violence they witnessed, based on the fact that among a group of survivors of the Ombaci massacre, there were active campaigns for financial compensation. The reactivation of this consciousness seemed to be the result of the intervention of an international NGO, which had collected the names of survivors as well as the testimonies of some survivors, which had been collated into a short pamphlet (which I have consulted). My presence was directly associated with these prior efforts, and survivors, now elderly, remained hopeful of compensation.

²⁴⁶ Crisp, 'Ugandan Refugees in Sudan and Zaire'.

²⁴⁷ Leopold, 'Crossing the Line'.

²⁴⁸ Harrell-Bond, *Imposing Aid*, p.40

Sudan, West Nilers were now “visible”.²⁴⁹ By contrast, many Lugbara people in Ayivu and Maracha fled not to Sudan, but over the closer border to then-Zaire. Here, exile was largely “self-styled,” and though UNHCR had mounted an assistance programme, most settled outside of camps. In total, it is estimated that between 200,000-300,000 Ugandans fled to Zaire.²⁵⁰ Little attention has been paid to these dynamics.

Men and women who remembered exile in Congo recalled displacement as a time when people were thrown on their own resources; challenges and opportunities differed markedly according to personal connections. Lugbara clans residing near the border, many of whom share kinship connections with Congolese clans, referred to exile as a time when “we stayed with our family”.²⁵¹ Lodging and access to land was provided by relatives, and some families were able to intermittently cross over the border to harvest food from their gardens. Others fled as entire clans. One Maracha elder explained:

[We] went to exile in 1979, came back in 1982. Everyone went in this clan. We went together in one day. If you are in a clan like this you go together, if you live far from your clan you go alone. [During] that time, if you remain home you will be killed. Many animals were stolen in Congo, others died of sickness. The lucky ones came back with one or two. Many lost everything.²⁵²

Those lacking connections rented land in Arua town or in the Congolese countryside.

These uncertain surroundings presented many problems, including theft, violence, and intimidation from the Congolese *sudas* (soldiers). At various points, the UNLA entered Zaire to terrorise civilians.²⁵³ In this self-reliant and atomised landscape of exile, elders explained that Congolese churches, or impromptu churches improvised by exile

²⁴⁹ *ibid.* p. 8.

²⁵⁰ *ibid.* p. 42.

²⁵¹ I2, Elderly Women, Abrici, Arua, 25/09/2016 (OJ).

²⁵² FG, Nyarire, 13/03/2017 (OJ).

²⁵³ Harrell-Bond, *Imposing Aid*, p. 50.

Ugandan clergy under trees, played a key role in creating community and distributing material and spiritual aid. During this period the ascension of the church as provider significantly challenged the roles of clans in providing protection, but some elders still recalled convening funerary rites and encouraging marriages, to mitigate the threat of cattle theft between clans.

During exile, clan hierarchies were also challenged by the participation of young men and women in trade. Many Lugbara people remember being involved in petty trade, women in *kwete* brewing, or trade in foodstuffs at markets. The increase in exchange translated into visible developments in the landscape of displacement: Ariwara market was established in Zaire in 1979 to facilitate transactions between Ugandans and Congolese. The increasing involvement of younger generations in trade rather than agriculture promoted anxiety in elders: unlike colonial forms of migration that were (to an extent) mediated by family decision-making, recalling the exile period today, elders lament how young people were exposed to new “lifestyles.” Similarly, whilst many families sought to survive, exile simultaneously provided a moment for businessmen to participate in a lucrative trade in commodities over the Uganda/Congo border. Studies in the 1990s by MacGaffey and Meagher document the smuggling of gold, coffee, animals, vehicles, fuel and tea over the Uganda/Congo border, with this “triangular trade” extending between NE Congo, NW Uganda and up to Kenya.²⁵⁴

²⁵⁴ J. MacGaffey, *The Real Economy of Zaire*. London & Philadelphia: James Currey & University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991; Meagher, ‘The hidden economy’.

Unlike the “involuntary” return of Ugandans in Sudan documented by Allen, return from Congo was gradual, with many returning from mid-1982 onwards.²⁵⁵ In 1983, Congolese soldiers administered a “notice to quit” to self-settled refugees, presenting Ugandans with a choice either to return or to move to Sudan.²⁵⁶ For returnees from Congo, the experience yielded highly unequal outcomes for resettlement. This disparity is reflected in an FAO survey from the late 1980s that documented huge divergences in income across Arua District. These inequalities are made plain through a consideration for those included in cross-border trade, and those for whom return constituted a re-establishment of agriculture, which produced profound distinctions between town and the countryside. As Arua town’s markets flooded with commodities, and trade shifted from basic commodities to fuel, manufactured goods and even Chinese motorcycles, many farmers struggled to re-establish prosperity. Whilst involvement at different levels of trade—for example in cartels such as the ‘OPEC boys’—proffered a means to access cash, this trade did little to improve the lives of many farmers. Moreover, this trade was by nature secret, as making profit relied on taking advantage of tax differentials between borders, and on the relative isolation of West Nile in the 1980 and 90s which prevented effective policing from the Uganda Revenue Authorities.²⁵⁷

This world of trade remained remote from the realities of most rural families. One elderly woman explained that people survived through “God’s mercy alone.” Many struggled to rebuild their lives through ‘digging’ for subsistence and selling their surplus in local markets. Following return, this production was increasingly organised

²⁵⁵ Leopold, ‘Crossing the line’, p. 472; Harrell-Bond, *Imposing Aid*, p. 46.

²⁵⁶ Harrell-Bond, *Imposing Aid*, p. 51.

²⁵⁷ K. Titeca, ‘Tycoons and contraband: Informal cross-border trade in West Nile, north-western Uganda’, *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 6:1 (2012), pp. 47-63.

not within sub-clans, but at the level of the household. Collective forms of labour (*oya*) were barely functioning.²⁵⁸ Allen has described the difficulties for Ma'di refugees in Moyo; similarly, in the decades following exile, given the reputation of West Nilers in Uganda, opportunities to migrate to the South for work were curtailed.

Moreover, as noted in Chapter One, throughout the 1980s and 1990s Lugbara populations living along the Uganda/Congo border continued to suffer from ongoing insecurity. Of this new rebel activity, an LC of Maracha recalled:

When they were moving, if they were to find you—you might be digging in the garden—they will capture you and they will say 'you join us and fight against the government.' Then they would select some soldiers to take the abducted people back to camp. They would also come at night, break down doors and abduct.²⁵⁹

Whilst this violence had a distinct spatiality, elders more often referenced the violence of suffering in the two decades following return, whereby public health services had been decimated. New patterns of death emerged, where family members perished one by one. The trauma of these memories is evident in this account of one Ayivu man:

My parents died of HIV/AIDS. The 1979 war drove them apart: Mum took off to Bunia where she worked and Dad found safe refuge in Arua town after eloping with a Congolese lady there. We were left in the hands of an aunt. The family reunited fully in 1983 after the end of great turbulent moments. Both my parents came back with kids born out of wedlock. They did not live together as man and woman for long. They engaged in accusations and counter-accusations and constant fights over the source of HIV, the dreaded disease in the family. By the time I knew of it, I had already succumbed to the sickness, as little knowledge was known in regard to safeguarding against this disease—by then we called it *onziri* (the bad unwelcomed one). My three siblings born of Congolese parents were born HIV/AIDS positive. I fended for the family with no proper source of income. We lost both siblings at a tender age... My parents and siblings died in my arms and in a bad way. They exhibited unbearable pains and horrible symptoms with some oozing blood from bodily outlets, others

²⁵⁸ Allen, 'A Study of Social Change', pp. 251-3.

²⁵⁹ FG, Buramali, 09/07/2016 (OJ).

having no control over their bowels, others rotting while alive, boils on [their] body... They were buried like dogs.²⁶⁰

One public health worker reported that these deaths, now presumed to be from AIDS, were previously attributed to witchcraft, as well as to curses and unpaid bridewealth that were said to follow families. That deaths and suffering tended to cluster around particular families surely reinforced fears about contagion and family connections, fears described in Chapter Five.

Overall, in the decades following the return from exile, deep inequalities between town and countryside emerged: whilst traders engaged in what Titeca calls the “indigenous way to provide development” in lieu of formal state assistance, many rural households struggled to make ends meet.²⁶¹ Within the structure of the clan, the household became the central unit of security, with disparities echoing those experienced during exile.

2.6: Livelihoods and Authority in the Present Day

Present-day West Nile remains politically marginalised, apparent in the denial of infrastructure to the region. Only in 2017 was the spinal road that traverses the western perimeter of the district fully tarmacked, connecting people to the wider district.²⁶² In the countryside, only homes that can afford solar panels have access to power. The arrival of the road reflects West Nile’s changing political leadership: over the last two electoral cycles, NRM or independent candidates have won seats in Arua Municipality, and in selected rural county seats. By way of reward for their shifting political loyalties,

²⁶⁰ I, Arua Trader, 01/2018 (TO).

²⁶¹ Titeca, ‘Tycoons and contraband’, p. 50.

²⁶² H. Acernah, ‘An open letter to people of West Nile’, *Daily Monitor* (Op-Ed section), 19 May 2019. Available online at <<https://www.monitor.co.ug/OpEd/Commentary/An-open-letter-people-West-Nile/689364-5121452-px2qbqz/index.html>>.

the central government has afforded some “obedient” counties District status. These campaigns have drawn on colonial sub-county boundaries, to assert developmental claims to autonomy. In 2006, Maracha Sub-County, led by its NRM MP, asserted its autonomy from Arua District, seceding to become its own District.²⁶³ During this research, Teregians too were hopeful their county would gain District status: people and local politicians desired these new districts, hoping that the reallocation of budgets from Arua would “bring services to the poor.” The creation of Maracha District has led to the creation of an expansive (but unfinished) headquarters in Nyadri as well as the employment of an attachment of civil servants servicing the new district. While rural populations were initially hopeful about what a new district might mean, a decade’s lack of progress has given rise to the consensus that the promised benefits have brought little change to their everyday lives.

Whilst many Lugbara homes feature teachers, civil servants, businesspeople, soldiers or security guards, agricultural production continues to pervade everyday life. According to the 2014 Census, 94.4% of households in Maracha District were primarily involved in agricultural practices.²⁶⁴ Reflecting its introduction under the Protectorate rule as an anti-famine crop, cassava is the main subsistence crop, with other staples including *osu* (beans), *maku* (sweet potatoes), *kaka* (maize), *anya* (millet), *ondu* (sorghum) and *funyo* (groundnuts). More ambitious growers cultivate cabbages, onions, peppers and chillies. Lugbara people continue to keep livestock, including chickens, goats, and sheep, and

²⁶³ Terego was initially included, but rejoined Arua in 2011.

²⁶⁴ Uganda Bureau of Statistics, *National Population and Housing Census (2014)*, ‘Maracha Census Profile’, p. 27.

when affordable, cattle. Agricultural production is organised at the level of the household, but most homes sell and buy imported foodstuffs.

Inequalities pervade agricultural practice. On the one hand, wealthier men buy farms of many acres in southern sub-counties (Vurra is known as the “food basket”), often employing relatives as labourers and guards. Aruan men who live away from their ancestral lands frequently employ rural relatives, often clan sisters, to plant and harvest crops for them “at home.” Fluctuating prices provide potentially lucrative opportunities for those who have larger fields and who can afford transport: a bag of cassava can move between 90,000 and 150,000 UGS (25\$/40\$) between the season of planting and harvesting (respectively). Yet poorer households increasingly struggle to meet basic subsistence needs. Population increases, particularly in Maracha District and parts of Arua District, have also put significant pressure on land, leading to conflicts between and within clans and families. Moreover, climate change and the instability of rains makes planting seasons increasingly hard to predict.²⁶⁵ That some Maracha residents decried “famine in homes” in 2017, and rumours of deaths from the premature consumption of the cassava crop, is indicative of these emergent issues.²⁶⁶

Since a return from exile, in certain Maracha and Ayivu counties some households have opted to cultivate *mairungi* (khat). In recent years, markets for tobacco have also diminished. Growers reported that from 2014 companies refused to buy their crop on account of its low grade. Given the arduous nature of cultivating the crop, many have

²⁶⁵ I, LCV Maracha, 16/03/2017.

²⁶⁶ Radio Pacis Daily News Broadcast, 01/2019.

turned away from the trade, with the exception of parts of Terego. During this research, many young men worked as contractors, drivers or administrators for international NGOs servicing South-Sudanese refugees—although it was widely perceived that the bulk of these jobs were given to Bagandans rather than West Nilers, an injustice that led to violent resistance at the Imvepi refugee camp in Terego. Thus even despite land shortages and change, for many Lugbara who lack secondary or university education, subsistence agriculture continues to be the only practice that provides a modicum of certainty.

The continued focus on production organised at the household level has generated significant anxieties following the return from exile. Elders lament the indiscipline of younger generations, who often eschew agricultural labour for trading opportunities or “*mairungi*-eating”. Such concerns offer a scapegoat for the perceived decline in productivity, as well as mark a commentary on elders’ loss of authority. Numerically, young men far outnumber their elders: in 2014, 86.7% of the population of Arua District was below 40 years of age, with only 3.5% over 60.²⁶⁷ Elders in some Maracha District clans reported heightened violence from their juniors, blaming the consumption of drugs and alcohol for their lack of restraint. Modernity is seen as challenging hierarchies based on age, and elders frequently have to rely on un-cooperative or absent sons. The involvement of women too has brought significant changes to household relations: women increasingly sell surplus in county markets and trading centres, as well as participate in regional trade, importing foodstuffs from Ariwara in Congo to sell locally, or *engaga* (small fish) from Panyimur. Though most Lugbara men accept their

²⁶⁷ Uganda Bureau of Statistics, *National Population and Housing Census (2014)*, ‘Arua District’, p. 5.

wives' new roles given the need to raise cash for school fees and healthcare, new forms of mobility create moral discontents. A Catholic priest, Father Ambrose, summarised popular sentiment: "These women who are in business, they go in[to] business [and] abandon [their] home. They can stay one week outside buying fish or other produce. The home will look like a home without mother... She abandons the husband."²⁶⁸ Across the countryside, elders lamented the breakdown of marriages and the moral problems which had emerged since the return from exile.

In response to these moral fears, and to the perceived crisis of households abrogating collective responsibilities, elders (and often invested married sons) have sought to re-institute the clan as a disciplinary institution. Elders remain arbiters of land, marriage, and familial discipline, but in view of challenges to their words, a recent innovation in everyday order-making has arisen: most clans across Arua and Maracha have now adopted a semi-bureaucratised structure to promote moral order and peace. Since 2010, clans have adopted by-laws (written in English) that denote obligations and performances, mimicking the procedures of local government. Elders who head the clan are often given the position of "Advisor," supported by aspiring and able married sons, who may be given titles such as 'Clan Leader' and 'Assistant Leader' (mirroring titles given to local officials). Clan meetings are considered an essential demonstration of unity; these self-made regulations include prohibitions on theft, witchcraft, quarrelling and drinking (see Appendix D), and make plain the importance of morality and restraint in intimate relations. Echoing colonial courts, violations are punishable by caning and fines, though clan leaders recognise that enforcing these punishments is often difficult.

²⁶⁸ I, Catholic Father, 23/21/2017.

Often these by-laws are stamped by sub-counties. In other contexts, elders have turned to curses, drawing on mystical sanctions formerly used against violence and killing in the colonial period. During this fieldwork a feud between two clans in Ayivu District following an allegation of killing resulted in the displacement of one clan over the Congolese border. Reviving clan authority has thus drawn both on bureaucratic and spiritual tools, and sometimes on violence.

Clan authority has also been carved out amidst the establishment of local government. Following the decentralisation blueprints for Uganda, the local councillor systems run from village (LCI) to parish (LCII) to sub-county (LCIII) to district (LCV).²⁶⁹ The Local Councillor 1 (LCI) plays a fundamental role in everyday order-making, and is expected to bring development projects to the village level. LCIIIs often become involved in more complex cases, as do parish chiefs and sub-county chiefs. The chief system, inherited from the colonial era, exists separately from and yet parallel to the LC system: chiefs are technical government staff and receive a regular government salary, and are increasingly appointed through government recruitment. As in the past, “embedded officials,” who live where they serve, are seen as closer to the people than higher government actors, and their allegiance to communities often pits leaders against the state. Sub-counties remain the highest level at which most rural villages access services, but everyday affairs usually involve the LC and an assemblage of local officials drawn from the LC or technical chief system.

²⁶⁹ LCII and LCIV positions do exist, but I did not personally meet any of these officials.

Crucially, whilst this local government infrastructure exists, the arbitration of disputes often directly encourages the involvement of elders. Beyond the immediate environs of Arua town, most Lugbara people are afforded access to land through patrilineage, just as access to women remains mediated through men; as such, clans play a central role in arbitrating resources. Cases of “land wrangles”—a common term which Kandle notes disguises the potential violence of boundary disputes—are often passed back from sub-counties to be settled “at home.”²⁷⁰ Government officials often take the role of witnesses or mediators, but verdicts frequently rely on the wisdom of elders who have knowledge of the land, of migrations and of the boundaries in question. Those who fail to respect elders’ verdicts on land may incur a curse, which may result in death. One Lugbara saying holds that “if you fight over land, the land will eat you”.

Along with church councils, elders continue to play a central role in the resolution of family disputes, particularly in cases of adultery or violence between husband and wife. Indeed, taking conflicts between married couples or between brothers to the local government or police is believed to enact a misfortune called *aruba*—explained as manifesting leprosy-like sores, a persistent cough, or a generalised state of misfortune. Reversing *aruba* necessitates a cleansing ceremony, where animals are transferred by the party who sought the intervention of the court, with the elders then offering forgiveness after a shared meal. In the precolonial period, *aruba* was thought to manifest after brothers entered into continuous feuding, but today reflects a wider belief that going to court challenges the social balance between those related by blood. Of this

²⁷⁰ M. Kandle, “*We are Refugees in Our Own Homeland*”: *Land Dispossession and Resettlement Challenges in Post-Conflict Teso, Uganda*. PhD Thesis, Department of Cultural Anthropology, City University of New York, 2014.

system, elder Jaddar Olekua commented, “This system continues to be used to resolve conflicts and to take deterrent disciplinary measures against individuals or persons who conduct bad acts which cause disharmony and disunity in the Lugbara community.”²⁷¹

2.7 Conclusion

Taking the vantage point of the lineage, this chapter has situated political, social, and economic change for Lugbara peoples in historic context, foregrounding the reliance on local institutions to illuminate the subsequent chapters of this thesis. Simply put, for many Lugbara men and women, the *clan* continues to be the most important institution in times of crisis. Turning to clan members provides a means of inquiring into and resolving misfortune, and though the institution of the clan has been much transformed through colonial and postcolonial policies, groups continue to seek protection and rights through identification with the lineage. Yet Lugbara people also draw upon systems of local government and religious institutions in efforts to restore social imbalances.

Whilst scholars have caricatured West Nile as a “vacuum” of authority, this research has documented how different state, religious and clan actors are sought in particular contexts. Subsequent chapters of this thesis detail these actors’ roles: Chapter Four focuses specifically on how Christian institutions have interfaced with clans, and Chapter Eight details expectations of state intervention into accusations of poisoning, acts deemed criminal and beyond the scope of clan punishment. The next chapter

²⁷¹ Quoted in C. Aluma, ‘Lugbara Clan leaders decry oppressive norms’, *West Nile Web*, 2 October 2019. Available online at <<https://www.westnileweb.com/news-a-analysis/arua/lugbara-clan-leaders-decry-oppressive-norms>>. Of course, *aruba* also makes it difficult to report cases of gender-based violence, as highlighted by recent interest from Oxfam: see P.I. Chandini, ‘Hear my noise in the storm!’, Oxfam Blog, 19/03/2020, available online at <<https://uganda.oxfam.org/latest/blogs/hear-my-noise-storm>>

elucidates in greater depth how clans responded to the changes of the colonial period through tying the management of misfortune to intimate relations.

Chapter Three

Institutionalising Explanation: Ancestors and Ethnography in the Colonial-Context

“I had hardly realised that the Lugbara, although at first sight hardly a very religious people, discussed matters and concepts that we would call ‘religious’ in a great many situations that we would not speak of as being so.”

Middleton, 1970:46²⁷²

3.1 Introduction

Having laid a historical groundwork for Lugbara people in West Nile in the previous chapter, this chapter turns now to the central enquiry of this thesis: the management of misfortune. According to anthropological record, during the last decade of Protectorate rule, the dominant means of explaining sickness was through the activities of watchful, usually male, ancestors in the lineage, usually activated by the words of elders.

Detailing how this “cult of the dead” operated in theory and in practice, this chapter also explores how this mode of explaining sickness was institutionalised in a key ethnographic text, John Middleton’s *Lugbara Religion*, first published in 1960.

Accordingly, this analysis begins not merely by describing the indigenous healing system as a baseline from which to interpret present-day practices of health-seeking, but by appreciating how the colonial ethnographic mode produced particular truths, limits and systemisations in its analysis.

Considering the substantial critique of the structural-functionalist approach to anthropology and its modes of representation, this chapter offers a specific reading of

²⁷² J. Middleton, *The Study of the Lugbara: Expectation and Paradox in Anthropological Research*, New York, Holy Rinehart and Winston, 1970.

Middleton's work.²⁷³ On the one hand, this analysis approaches Lugbara ritual practice not as an enduring tradition, but as a pragmatic response to construct social solidarities and control human ambition, against the legacies of upheaval described in the preceding chapter. On the other, this chapter deconstructs the framing of this world as religious, instead understanding how a healing system, embedded in everyday life, was remade through social hierarchies and the words of elders. Approaching the ancestral system as *lived*, rather than discrete, permits an understanding of how expressions of power have endured long after ancestral shrines were abandoned during the war.

This chapter begins by situating the production of Middleton's text within its contemporary intellectual and methodological context. It then describes the dominant mode through which responsibility for chronic sickness—this “cult of the dead”—was ascertained in the 1950s. It goes on to explore how the realities of practice, yield important insights into the present. Finally, major studies into health and healing amongst Lugbara populations have built on Middleton's analysis: whilst scholars have built on empirical aspects of his work, this chapter urges a reading of *Lugbara Religion* as a theoretical text. An engagement with the interconsistency of *Lugbara Religion* permits an exploration of how traces of this system exist in the present.

3.2 Lugbara Religion and the Ethnographic Gaze

Middleton's research was positioned at the centre of an unfolding discipline of anthropology. For his D.Phil, he enrolled at the Oxford Institute of Social Anthropology, headed at the time by E. E. Evans-Pritchard, who was also his

²⁷³ A. Abramson and M. Holbraad, 'Contemporary Cosmologies, Critical Reimaginings', *Religion and Society: Advances in Research* 3 (2012): pp. 35-50.

supervisor.²⁷⁴ Evans-Pritchard's ethnographies had set the tone for European studies of African belief, and even today scholars continue to revisit and reinterpret these studies.²⁷⁵ His *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande* (1937), which presented witchcraft beliefs as a coherent empirical system that served to explain misfortune, is widely regarded as the foundational study in the study of African cosmology and witchcraft. In its contemporary context, the text was lauded as moving the study of occult practice beyond the realm of superstition, serving "to de-exoticise what may otherwise be deemed as exotic and strange."²⁷⁶ Evans-Pritchard was deeply concerned with how Azande belief systems were sustained and validated through practice: as Kapferer noted, "Azande practice was not a mere passive object for the demonstration of alien knowledge and theory, but was itself a source of knowledge and made active in both opening up horizons of understanding and challenging other analytic construction of the nature of human experience."²⁷⁷ Witchcraft has an alternate rationality, continually self-reinforced through lived experience; as a system of practice, accusations of witchcraft moreover provided a medium for Azande "commoners" to resolve disputes amongst themselves: accusations were made publicly, and were, in a sense, benign.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁴ This cohort contained scholars including Godfrey Lienhardt, John Beattie, Mary Douglas, and Frank Girling, who, in different ways, would shape the contours of colonial African anthropology.

²⁷⁵ See, for example, Thomas Beidelman who hails Evans-Pritchard as "the greatest ethnographer of all time"—cited in J.W. Burton, 'The Ghost of Malinowski in the Southern Sudan: Evans-Pritchard and Ethnographic Fieldwork', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 127:4 (1983), pp. 278- 289, p. 278. Many anthropologists continue to explore Evans-Pritchard's texts for new meanings, e.g. M.A. Mills, 'The opposite of witchcraft: Evans-Pritchard and the problem of the person', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19:1 (2013), pp. 18-33.

²⁷⁶ B. Kapferer, 'Introduction: Outside All Reason: Magic, Sorcery and Epistemology', *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Anthropology* 46:3 (2002), pp. 1- 30, p. 3.

²⁷⁷ *ibid.* p. 4.

²⁷⁸ Whilst the shortened version describes Azande beliefs in witchcraft as a coherent system of misfortune, his extended works explore questions of scepticism—both on the part of the anthropologist and the Azande themselves.

Evans-Pritchard's *Nuer Religion* (1940) further influenced Middleton's ethnography of Lugbara people. Middleton acknowledges this debt, and the cosmological similarities between the two groups, writing that "Evans-Pritchard once said to me—he didn't write it, as far as I know—that what we study is the concept and exercise of power: the Nuer saw their lives as guided by the power of spirits, and the Lugbara saw theirs as guided by the power of the ancestors."²⁷⁹ Taking the detailed heuristic of a segmentary society developed by his supervisor among Nuer populations, Middleton operationalised this heuristic to describe Lugbara social organisation.²⁸⁰ As in *Nuer Religion*, Middleton presents a ritual system in great length. Yet Middleton's central argument differed from the "ideational studies" of his predecessor.²⁸¹ Whereas Evans-Pritchard presented the Nuer belief in spirits and divinities as a theological system, Middleton's analysis was thoroughly sociological. Middleton observed that, for Lugbara populations, belief and ritual *only* made sense with reference to its social context. Cosmology as an abstract resource bore little relevance. In contrast to Evans-Pritchard's study, which emphasised a system of belief, Middleton concluded that "[The] Lugbara have no set of inter-consistent beliefs as to the nature of man and the world. Their beliefs are significant in given situations and their consistency lies in the way in which they are used in ritual action."²⁸² In this recognition, *Lugbara Religion* ultimately bears more resemblance to the analytic of Azande witchcraft, with a similar focus on knowledge production, on

²⁷⁹ D. Pellow, 'An Interview with John Middleton', *Current Anthropology* 40:2 (1999), pp. 217-229, p. 218.

²⁸⁰ E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1940. For a historicisation and critique, see A. Kuper, 'Lineage Theory: A Critical Retrospect', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 11 (1982), pp. 71-91, and A. Southall, 'The Illusion of Tribe', *Journal of African and Asian Studies* 5 (1970), pp. 28-50.

²⁸¹ T. Beidelman, Foreword to J. Middleton, *Lugbara Religion*, 3rd Edition. International African Institute, [1960] 1999.

²⁸² Middleton, *Lugbara Religion*, p. 25.

questions of practical action, and on preserving a corpus of indigenous belief against external change.

Middleton's interest in social structure was influenced by subsequent developments in anthropology. By the 1940s, a group of scholars known as the structural-functionalists had taken Evans-Pritchard's approach in a more theoretical direction. This group of anthropologists were primarily interested not in questions of validating knowledge, but in the social functions of belief systems, and of witchcraft in particular.²⁸³ Within these studies, witchcraft beliefs persisted because of their social use, serving as a "social-strain gauge" that served to reinforce order in small-scale societies. The father of the structural-functionalists (who collectively became known as the 'Manchester School'), Max Gluckman, was also a faculty member at Oxford during Middleton's enrolment. The following recollection from Middleton is revelatory of the shaping of his research prior to his fieldwork:

I was offered, one afternoon, a choice: to work among the Lugbara with Evans-Pritchard (E.-P. used to say they were closely related to the Azande—he called them the Lug-bwaaaa-ra) or among the Ndebele with Gluckman. They sat there opposite me and waited for my reply. Max Gluckman never held that decision against me and always counted me as one of his followers, which I have always regarded myself as being.²⁸⁴

Elements of structural-functionalism deeply influenced Middleton's understanding of Lugbara ritual. Indeed, one anthropological reviewer, Gellner, described *Lugbara Religion* as "a classic of the [structural-functionalist] genre... where "religion was seen as the cement of society."²⁸⁵ In the Lugbara context, social order was maintained not

²⁸³ For a summary see M. Douglas, 'Introduction: Thirty Years after Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic', in M. Douglas (ed.), *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*. Tavistock: London, 1970. pp. 1-13

²⁸⁴ Pellow, 'An Interview with John Middleton', p. 224.

²⁸⁵ D. Gellner, 'Anthropological approaches to the study of religion', in: P. Connolly (ed.), *Approaches to the Study of Religion*. London: Cassell, 1999, pp. 10-41, p. 19.

through witchcraft accusations (though such events did feature), but via elders' interpretations of sickness sent by lineage ancestors. Middleton explains that this "cult of the dead", his term for the process through which ancestral wrath is made manifest in relation to the acts of the living, "provides a logically consistent system and explains most sickness and provides a social and psychological response to it; it also provides sanctions against anti-social behaviour."²⁸⁶ Of funerary rites too, Middleton concludes, "A death disturbs the continuity of the lineage and mortuary rites are performed in order to restore this continuity".²⁸⁷ This language of functionalism threads throughout *Lugbara Religion*. Additionally, Middleton was deeply invested in comparisons of belief systems and social control between locales—a central endeavour of small-scale studies—later co-editing a volume on comparative witchcraft and sorcery beliefs with Phillip Winter.²⁸⁸ Such endeavours did advance anthropological theories, but often at the expense of acknowledging the diversity of vocabularies and beliefs between contexts.²⁸⁹

In the context of African independence movements in the mid-1960s, and with the rise of post-structural and postmodern thinking within anthropology, functionalist approaches soon became subject to multiple critiques. Critics condemned the projection of colonial imaginaries of tribe and indigeneity, as well as the denial of power dynamics between researcher/researched in these "salvage ethnographies".²⁹⁰ Moreover,

²⁸⁶ Middleton, *Lugbara Religion*, p. 129.

²⁸⁷ J. Middleton, 'Lugbara Death', in M. Bloch and J. Parry (eds.), *Death and the Regeneration of Life*. Cambridge UP, 1982, pp. 134-154, p.134

²⁸⁸ J. Middleton and P. Winter, *Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa*. Oxford: Routledge, 1963.

²⁸⁹ V.W. Turner, 'Witchcraft and sorcery: taxonomy versus dynamics', *Africa* 34:4 (1964), pp. 314-325.

²⁹⁰ Incidentally, this is not how surviving Lugbara men remember 'John' or 'Dzonnii', whom they recall as staying with people, and whose presence was connoted by *aa*, a verb not used for other Europeans.

functionalist theories were eschewed as reductionist, offering limited explanatory power to describe societies undergoing rapid change. Reviewing the contribution of this work in the 1970s, Mary Douglas concluded that “[the] relation between belief and society, instead of appearing as infinitely complex, subtle and fluid, was presented as a control system with a negative feedback.”²⁹¹ Having reduced witchcraft to mere social tensions, functional approaches were gradually abandoned.

Yet to reject Middleton’s work wholesale as an outmoded theory would neglect the detail and subtlety of his engagement, and the nuance within his ethnography.²⁹² Indeed, *Lugbara Religion* contains several elucidations of ritual action. Whilst the first three chapters describe how the “cult of the dead” functioned to maintain social order, a subsequent 100-page section called “The Field of Ritual Action” serves as a biographical account of how a group of elderly informants negotiated and practiced this system. Within these descriptions—which are almost entirely free from theory and read as a local archive—one can easily encounter struggles with intimacy, uncertainty, and pragmatic responses to change, all pertinent themes in studies in social healing to the present. That said, assumptions underpinning anthropology during the colonial era still engendered a particular ethnographic gaze: as noted, functionalism was both a theory and a method. I now turn to explore these entanglements in Middleton’s fieldwork and writing.

3.3 Method, Writing and Knowledge Production

²⁹¹ Douglas, ‘Introduction’, p. *xiv*.

²⁹² Contemporary critics commented that *Lugbara Religion* contained *too* much descriptive detail.

3.3.1 *Selecting Spaces and Voices*

The “whole society” approach to which Middleton subscribed relied on a pseudo-scientific delineation of territory, whereby events in a small locale, usually a rural village, were extrapolated to represent approximate realities for the wider tribal group. Middleton used the segmentary heuristic to describe political relations in a ‘stateless’ society—as Evans-Pritchard had developed with Nuer descent groups—to discern complex pattern of social relations greeting him in Lugbaraland. On the one hand, this approach, intended to facilitate synchronic analysis between societies, neglected to consider the historical relations unique to each space. Kuper argues that a myopic view of the patrilineage as dominating social interactions deeply obscured other connections, for example through marriage or to the wider neighbourhood.²⁹³

In Middleton’s works which adopt a descriptive approach to the wider landscape, these connections appear to have deep implications in everyday life, not just in the management of misfortune. In *The Study of the Lugbara: Expectation and Paradox in Anthropological Research*, for example, Middleton describes the complexity of ties between members of family clusters and other relatives, known collectively as *juru* (beyond the sanction of ancestors). He also notes the importance of connections developed through bridewealth payments. In the realm of healing, however, a landscape of prophets and diviners beyond blood relations received substantively less analysis. Indeed, on occasion, Middleton himself became involved in the management of sickness, evidence that connections beyond the lineage were consulted as a matter of

²⁹³ Kuper, ‘Lineage Theory’.

pragmatism. Coherence relied on the ethnographer's erasure of wider connections and religious innovations beyond the clan.

That said, family connections have their own legacies that endure to the present. Within sub-clans, Lugbara people were subject to forms of sickness that were sent to them because of their blood ties. Whilst other healers were consulted by choice, *enyati* were theatres of mystically-induced discipline and healing to which ordinary people were automatically bound. Though in *Lugbara Religion* Middleton presents clusters as closed systems, these spaces were in fact permeated by other debates about healing as well.

The "benign" perspective Middleton promoted regarding ancestral sickness reflects not only the (relative) stability of the colonial context, but the fact that his key interlocutors were elderly men with access to power. Moreover, there were clear parallels between elders' ideas of enforcing a social order, and the functional approach to anthropology that imagined such a state could exist. Middleton's admiration of his elderly men is evident; one description of a disobedient son of his chief informant is revealing: "[h]e was regarded as a good-for-nothing, wearing smart clothes, seducing girls and getting drunk in the company of his seniors."²⁹⁴

Middleton's work almost entirely excludes women, an omission whose responsibility he defers: "Since women have lower status than men in terms of lineage responsibilities, men would frequently say that I was wasting my time in writing down the names of women."²⁹⁵ Elders' words were said to carry more weight than those both of their sons

²⁹⁴ Middleton, *Lugbara Religion*, p. 159.

²⁹⁵ Middleton, *The Study of the Lugbara*, p. 33.

and of women, and Middleton's ethnography portrays the views of those with power, rather than those subject to the elders' discipline. A radically different view of cosmology would have been presented either from female diviners or from members of Christian spirit cults that operated in parallel to ancestral systems during this period (cf. Chapter Four). Overall, however, Middleton's work reflects notions of order-making embodied in elders' ideals. In interpreting his work, his insights must be read as reflecting notions of dominant power holders in society.

3.3.2: Under-theorisation of external change

A key criticism of colonial anthropology—and of the stateless society framework—is its portrayal of indigenous systems solely through the erasure of external change. The focus on small-scale units, in addition to downplaying wider social connections, precluded a focus on the state. For Das and Poole, the study of “stateless” societies in the colonial period was little more than a “quest to find order or reason... [which] makes use of a language of order that is inherited from—and indeed part of—the modern European state.”²⁹⁶ As discussed in the previous chapter, and as highlighted below in Araka's history, these changes had profound effects by the 1950s.

The anthropological paradigm (in tandem with colonial theories of ideas of state power) meant that tradition remained the central focus of Middleton's analysis. Yet other, more radical anthropologists working in Uganda around the same time as Middleton offered divergent portrayals, rejecting the functionalist approach and adopting critical views both on tradition and tribe. Adrian Southall, based in neighbouring Alurland during

²⁹⁶ V. Das and D. Poole, *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*. Sante Fe: School of American Research Press, 2004, p. 5.

Middleton's tenure in Lugbaraland, presents a belief system ruptured by the colonial state and missions.²⁹⁷ In later publications based on his experiences in Alurland, Southall expressed disdain for the privileging of political systems based on "tribe" to the occlusion of other forms of political organisation.²⁹⁸ Frank Girling too, who enrolled at Oxford with Middleton, presented an Acholi society ruptured and centralised around an "all-powerful district commissioner."²⁹⁹ For him, the Acholi identity, far from being traditional, was inherently modern. So controversial were Girling's findings that he struggled to pass his D.Phil. Finally, Otok p'Bitek, a Ugandan scholar who denounced the whole study of anthropology at Oxford as a racist enterprise, failed his D.Phil.³⁰⁰ The experiences of these latter two men clearly elucidate the potential dangers for any academic who too boldly challenged the core assumptions of the African anthropological focus on primitive societies which had been disrupted by colonial states. Even so, these anthropologists began to answer certain questions at the periphery of *Lugbara Religion*: questions regarding the spatiality of change, the invention of tribe, and the impact of the colonial administration.

Unlike his peers who revisited their methods, Middleton defended his approach. In an interview five decades after the publication of *Lugbara Religion*, he decried new trends in anthropological writing premised on representations:

Accounts of a writer's own sensibilities in the lives of the ordinary people are not ethnographies but travelogues. We are onlookers, guests, perhaps friends, comparativists, but it is those who are our hosts who are the objects of what we do, and it is for them as well as ourselves that we do it. We should recall the words of Georges Condominas, who wrote that the ethnographer should be the

²⁹⁷ A. Southall, *Alur Society: A Study in Processes and Types of Domination*. Cambridge: Heffer, 1956.

²⁹⁸ Southall, 'The Illusion of Tribe'.

²⁹⁹ T. Allen, 'Introduction – colonial encounters in Acholiland and Oxford: the anthropology of Frank Girling and Okot p'Bitek', in T. Allen (ed.), *Lawino's People: the Acholi of Uganda*. Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2019, pp. 1-29, p. 21.

³⁰⁰ *ibid.* p. 34.

historian of the subproletariat of the Third World: I agree with him. Surely we can do better than merely look at ourselves?³⁰¹

This not to say Middleton did not attend to issues of change. Over the course of his career Middleton became increasingly attentive to changes in government, as well as prophetic authority. His published books on the Lugbara present change in different ways: *Lugbara of Uganda* provides a descriptive portrait of other aspects of society, including colonial courts and missions, whilst *The Study of the Lugbara* also engages with the assistance of chiefs and officials in Arua in Middleton's own research.

The chief value of Middleton's insight lies not in ethnographies such as Girling's, which account for spatially-unfolding change, but rather how changes were refracted through personal relationships. In *Lugbara Religion*, the most detailed account, the imprint of external changes are clearly in view. The Araka family (a pseudonym) in central Maracha, where Middleton worked over a 15-month period, had been deeply affected by change. Lying close to Ofude, clans in the area had experienced both the violence of Belgian rule and the impacts of epidemics, and had learnt "the words of Yakan". An elder today recalled the spread of epidemic disease that caused the entire cluster to relocate in 1919: "We left that place because people were suffering from *din dia* (plague), people were dying at night. In the morning you find so-and-so has died."³⁰² By the arrival of Protectorate rule, Araka had lost almost one-third of its members, and all but three of its cattle. As noted earlier, it was in view of the intimate traumas of the early 20th century that elders conceived of the 1950s as a period of relative calm. Though far from Arua, by 1949 Middleton's Arakans recognised the

³⁰¹ D. Pellow, 'An Interview with John Middleton', p. 230.

³⁰² FG, Araka Clan, 13/3/2017, Lugbara (OJ).

political geography of sub-counties, and several male members of the cluster were employed by the colonial administration. The influence of Christianity, however, was less established, since Northern Lugbara generally experienced mission evangelism less directly than in the South. On arriving in Vurra, Middleton was actively dissuaded by AIM missionaries in the region, lest his work revive the “pagan” practices they had been trying to suppress for four decades.

From a consideration of this highly local portrait of the effects of the past, we can conclude that the stability of ancestral systems resulted from a particular moment. Middleton was documenting life in a “colonial society,” rather than a traditional one. As noted in Chapter Two, promoting discipline within the lineage was simultaneously a means of preserving elders’ authority and avoiding new punishments introduced under state law. Other changes (restricting movement and prohibiting feuds) had also created a context of relative regularity, and the sub-county administration worked in tandem with, rather than replaced, the authority of clan elders. Clans had thus reacted and responded to the colonial framework, rather than being timeless, traditional structures.

Through a consideration of the traces of external change noted in Middleton’s extended analysis, we can consider how colonial structures resounded through the minutiae of human interactions: Lugbara elders explained that it was Europeans who had first begun to “spoil their land.”³⁰³ Elders turned to the conservative ritual system both in spite of and because of the local effects of these encounters. A common refrain in Middleton’s work is that the words of the ancestors were known to elders, in contrast to the words of

³⁰³ Middleton, Foreword, *Lugbara of Uganda*, 3rd edition, p. 4.

the divinity and the English laws of the state. To foreground a conclusion in the background of *Lugbara Religion*: “Lugbara society is not a closed system, and changes occur in it due not only to recurrent deaths but also to factors that are outside it. Although men cannot prevent death, they can cope with it in terms of their own religious system and their notions about the ideal structure of their society.”³⁰⁴

3.3.3 *Language and Representation*

Alongside its other impacts, the ethnographic tradition furthermore structured the language used to represent a lived system of misfortune and moral authority into notions of religion, cults, sacrifice and worship that were palatable to European audiences. Though the difficulties of translation are universal to any context, such connotations of ceremony, adoration and separation did not marry with how Lugbara elders explained their own relationship to their ancestors. In the 1950s, Lugbara elders spoke about their ancestors in thoroughly human terms. Implicated in case of sickness, ancestors were spoken of by name, and on occasion referred to as *'ba drapi 'bori* (*'people who have died'*, emphasis mine). The theologian Dalfovo notes that the words that connoted ritual sacrifice—*ori owi* (to offer) or *ori nya* (to eat)—could equally be used to describe human activities.³⁰⁵ Lugbara people, Middleton observed, described their ancestors as exemplary humans: “Elders often quarrel among themselves like young men. They are men and all men have bad hearts. But the ancestors do not quarrel among themselves.” Or as an extension of the family: “If the dead are angry then their child will also be angry in his heart, as a child follows his father.”³⁰⁶ Such descriptions

³⁰⁴ Middleton, *Lugbara Religion*, p. 185.

³⁰⁵ A.T. Dalfovo, ‘Lugbara Ancestors’, *Anthropos* 92:4/6 (1997), pp. 485-500, p. 489.

³⁰⁶ Middleton, *Lugbara Religion*, p. 17, p. 138.

point to a human conception of dead ancestors, closer to Mbiti's notion of the "living dead," or what Kopytoff terms "ancestors as elders."³⁰⁷ Crucially too, ancestors usually worked in communion with the words and grievances of elders: this was a living system of authority.

The linguistic aspect here is key. Lugbara speakers recognised the idea of a distinct, imported religion, which was connoted by the Kiswahili term *dini*, introduced during the second half of the 20th century. By the 1950s, *dini* referred to Islam, Christianity, and previously, Yakan.³⁰⁸ As Dalfovo noted, speakers differentiated between religion as an imported, imposed concept, and the ancestors, who were understood to be "an undistinguished part of life and an undifferentiated component of society."³⁰⁹

Unsurprisingly, importing a religious vocabulary had particular consequences in a landscape undergoing intense Christian evangelism. Missionaries and Lugbara converts were involved in parallel processes of re-constructing ancestors as discrete "religious" systems, labelling them *kafiri* (pagan), and portraying this practice as opposed to Christianity.³¹⁰ Adherence to the ancestral system would become a means of marking Christians from non-Christians, which, as discussed in later chapters of this thesis, would acquire increased momentum following independence and war. In this way, however, the effects of ethnographic translation were paralleled by a local politics of disavowal.

³⁰⁷ I. Kopytoff, 'Ancestors as Elders in Africa', *Africa* 41:2 (1971), pp. 129-142.

³⁰⁸ A.T. Dalfovo, 'Religion among the Lugbara: The Triadic Source of Its Meaning', *Anthropos* 96 (2001), pp. 29-40, p. 31.

³⁰⁹ *ibid.* p. 34.

³¹⁰ *ibid.* p. 34.

Other translations presented particular problems. For example, deploying the term “God” to stand for a hierarchy of divinities, denoted by *Adro/Adroa*, conflated complex hierarchies of spirits tied to different forms of affliction.³¹¹ Translations of witchcraft and sorcery presented further issues, which are discussed in the later part of this thesis. But as with ideas about religion, these translations, also adopted by Christian missionaries and educated Lugbara-speakers, have today produced the worlds they describe, importing new ideas into local epistemologies.

Finally, the use of a religious vocabulary obscured alternative framings of health and well-being, framings that have subsequently been related to systems previously described as religion, elsewhere.³¹² Speaking of Bunyole, Uganda, Whyte poses the question of whether medical anthropology has increasingly come to cover issues that were formerly addressed by religious anthropology. For Whyte, herself a medical anthropologist, functional social anthropology—in its attentiveness to ceremony and structure—neglected to inquire into the realities of suffering and affliction.³¹³ Indeed, on one occasion, Middleton reminds the reader that Lugbara people actually do get sick. Yet today, many remember ancestors as being implicated in healing. An elder of Araka explained: “If there is problem—those days it was mainly sickness—we would slaughter a chicken and animal, the blood would be sprinkled on those stones whilst

³¹¹ J. Beattie, ‘Review of *Lugbara Religion*’, *American Anthropologist* 63 (1961), pp. 1390-1362.

³¹² T. Allen and L. Storm, ‘Quests for therapy in northern Uganda: Healing at Laropi revisited’, *Journal of East African Studies* 6:1 (2012), pp. 22-46.

³¹³ S.R. Whyte, ‘Anthropological approaches to African misfortune: from religion to medicine’, in A. Jacobson-Widding and D. Westerlun (eds.), *Culture, experience and pluralism: essays on African ideas of illness and healing*. Uppsala: Department of Cultural Anthropology, 1989.

mentioning the names—if it is you, so and so, then help us, let this sickness go, we were asking for help.”³¹⁴

3.4 Cult of the Dead: Healing and Social Reproduction

This section describes the ancestral systems of healing that dominated practice during the last decade of Protectorate rule. After providing a sketch of Lugbara spiritual infrastructure, the following section describes the realities of the ancestral system.

Before Middleton, other Europeans had described the extent of a material landscape connected to ancestors. During the early years of Protectorate rule, successive outsiders commented on a prolific landscape of stone shrines that surrounded Lugbara homesteads. Based on the prevalence of ancestral shrines, McConnell, a British colonial administrator, concluded in the 1920’s: “From cradle to grave the lives of the tribe are saturated with supernatural spirits...”³¹⁵ Before him, Chauncey Stigand, a chronicler of the peoples of the Lado Enclave, remarked of those clans living around Mt. Wati: “There is no clearly marked division between religious and superstitious practices; in fact religion is largely superstition, whilst superstition is often more or less religious.”³¹⁶ Egidio Ramponi, a Catholic missionary, described how this intimate system of shrines indicated a society beholden to the “wrath” of the ancestors.³¹⁷ For Middleton, this landscape was relevant not as a religious artefact, but as a catalyst for interactions within the social context.

³¹⁴ FG, Elders of Araka Clan, 13/3/2017, Lugbara (OJ).

³¹⁵ McConnell, ‘Notes on the Lugwari tribe’, p. 449.

³¹⁶ Stigand, *Equatoria*, p. 133.

³¹⁷ E. Ramponi, ‘Religion and Divination of the Logbara Tribe of North-Uganda’, *Anthropos* 32 (1937): pp. 571-594, 849-874.

Ancestors collectively were known as *a'bi* ('to go away'). *A'bi* could be both male and female, and were designated shrines as a collective, known as *a'biva*. Individually, ancestors were known as *ori* (which Middleton translates as 'ghost'). Ancestors designated *ori* were men who had borne children, and who usually had lived exemplary lives. After their death, stone slabs of granite arranged into the structure of a stone house were erected in memory of the deceased, structures which also took the term *ori*. When misfortune brought attention to individual deaths, diviners were consulted to commune with the dead in the bushland, in order to domesticate the soul of the deceased. The *ori*, the most important shrines, for recently deceased ancestors, were kept under the main granary in the household. Shrines were also designated for elderly female ancestors, and external shrines were maintained for distant lineage ancestors (See Figure 1).

Shrine name (ru)	Alternative names	Ancestral representative	Form
Paternal/ Maternal ancestors (within compound)			
<i>Ori</i> (ghosts)/ <i>orijo</i> (ghost huts)	<i>Orijo amboru</i> (big ghost shrine) – big sacrifices occur (usually <i>orijo</i>)	Internal ghost shrines representing recently deceased agnatic kin, placed under main granary, and most frequently implicated in sacrifice	Always small granite slabs, placed flat on the ground or built as a house of five stones (four walls plus a roof), Difference was because of cultural variation.
	<i>Orijo andesia</i> (I refuse to give) – only the sacrificer eats		
<i>A'biva</i> (the ancestors beneath)	<i>Vurutali, Rubangi</i>	Shrines for ancestral collectives. Though to represent the souls of male ancestors who had male children. Send sickness directly (<i>ori ka</i>)	Two flat stones. A special <i>a'biva</i> shrine is placed on the veranda of the senior wife's hut
<i>Anguvua</i>		Shrines for male ancestors without kin	No actual shrine, just said to be there
<i>Tali</i>	Also called the <i>angumatali</i> (personality of the territory)	Shrines for collective “personalities” of ancestors who have left male kin	Small cocoon-like shrine of dried mud six or nine inches high, with a single hole, the door
<i>Abego</i>		Shrines for a man or a woman who has recently died and who is helpless	Flat granite stone
Shrine for ancestors in mother's mother's line (within compound)			
<i>Okuori</i> (woman shrine)		Female-ghost shrines, thought to send sickness directly	Placed under the eaves of the senior women's hut. A man usually has shrines to his mother's mother and mother's sisters
Matrilineal shrines – all designated by mother's brother (within compound)			
<i>Lucugo</i>		Ghosts of mother's brother	
<i>Drilonzi</i>		Ghosts of mother's brother	Physically part of <i>lucugo</i> shrine
<i>Adro-ori</i> (<i>adro</i> =uncle)		Ghosts of mother's brother	Under eaves of man's mother's brothers hut
<i>Ambo</i>		Ancestor of a man's father's mothers' brother	Placed in the compound hedge; thought to be

			very strong and dangerous
External Lineage shrines (beyond compound)			
External shrines beyond the lineage, larger ritual congregations	<i>Rogbo</i> or <i>rogboko</i> (south) <i>kurugbu</i> (west), <i>orijo</i> (north/east)	Ghosts of distant ancestors; formerly of internal shrines	Two flat stones and an upright stone
<i>Dede</i>		Ghosts of great grandmother or ancestress (<i>dede</i>)	Three flat stones
<i>A'bi</i> (burial trees of the ancestors); <i>a'bi</i> = ancestor			Fig trees planted at the graves of important men and women. Some trees have a stone set under them
External Lineage shrines (beyond compound) II: Fertility shrines			
<i>Rogbo</i>	(<i>tiri</i> southern Lugbara, or <i>orubangi</i> – associated with Ma'di <i>Rubangi</i> , God).	Shrine to father of ancestress	Single flat granite stone with asiti grass planted near it, surrounded by a miniature fence of ekaraka sticks
<i>Eralengbo</i>	(associated shrine <i>tiri</i> , aloe-lime plant)	Shrine to father of ancestress	Old grinding stone of granite, hole worn through the centre. Inside the cattle kraal

Fig 1: Shrines among Lugbara clans near Ofude, as reported by Middleton in the 1950s (adapted from Lugbara Religion, p.46-61)

Sickness	Mechanism	Diagnosis	Treatment	
General sickness, fatigue, bodily wasting	<i>Ole ro</i> or <i>ori ka/kata</i>	oracle	Sacrifice, usually at <i>orijo</i>	Sacrifice involves ritual congregation.
Swellings of the body	Sent by ancestors as collectives	oracle	Sacrifice at <i>a'biva</i>	
Swellings of the body	Sent by ancestors as collectives	oracle	Sacrifice at <i>anguvua</i>	
Bad luck or misfortune in general, including lack of fertility of wives, livestock or crops, lack of success in hunting	Caused when a man's mother's brother thinks/ speaks 'bad words' against him. No invocation involved; thinking is enough. Caused by disrespect.	oracle	Ritual meal shared by mother's brother and sister's son to remove the sickness. Construction of a <i>lucugo</i> shrine and later sacrifice at it. The person who is responsible acknowledges he or she talked out of anger and says if this problem is as a	Sacrifice at maternal shrines involves no congregation. The affected person offers the animal for eating.

			result of the words I uttered let the misfortune go.	
Male impotence or menstrual disorders	As above	oracle	Construction and sacrifice of a <i>driilonzi</i> shrine	
Infertility	When man's mother's brothers' ancestors act through <i>ori ka</i> (no invocation)	oracle	Sacrifice at <i>adro-ori</i>	
Dysentery and diarrhoea	Ancestor of man's father's mother's brother brings sickness of its own accord.	oracle	Sacrifice at <i>ambo</i>	
Pneumonia	This was believed to be natural cause.	oracle	Sacrifices were made mostly a rum was slaughtered and eaten by a few close relatives.	
Sterility (of men)	Serious curse, can be any of above or sent by external ghosts through <i>ori ka</i>	oracle	Sacrifice depending on oracle, can include external ghost shrine	The maternal uncles bring animals to slaughter to eat and prayers are said by the aggrieved person who caused the problem.
Failure of women to conceive.	Ancestral power represented through fertility shrines	oracle	Sacrifice at fertility shrine beyond the compound	

Figure 2: Treatment Pathways according to Middleton, (Lugbara Religion p.41-71)

Ori were thought to see the behaviours and know the thoughts of their living descendants. Though stones were designated to a host of ancestors, being nominally linked to particular sicknesses, recently-deceased ancestors were thought to be “nearer” to the living and thus to send sickness more frequently. In everyday life, offerings of food and beer were placed on the *ori* as a sign of respect. Failing to do so was a sign of neglect, and could be a source of misfortune—but usually, discussions of the activity of ancestors invoked specific cases of sickness.

Though *ori* could send sickness independently through *ori ka* (ghostly vengeance), sickness normally necessitated invocation by their living descendants. Technically, any man whose father had died could invoke the ancestors to send sickness, but typically elders were expected to do so. To invoke the ancestors, an elder would sit near the shrines and *ole ro* (wail to the ghosts), though it was also thought that ancestors saw the discontent in elders' hearts without needing direct invocation. Elders did not publicly invoke the *ori*, a gesture which would be tantamount to *atrita* (curse); rather, this act was done in secret. Elders particularly gifted in ritual, usually the first son of the outgoing elder, were thought to be able to communicate most effectively with their ancestors. Indeed, legitimate authority to lead the family cluster was proved not just by an elder's exemplary character, but by his ability to send and reverse sickness via his ancestors. The authority of the living was thus validated by their connection to the dead.

Everyday life was structured around *ru* (respect), demonstrated through appreciation for hierarchies of seniority and patriarchy, and values of peace and propriety. This was a vision structured by *inzita* (discipline) and *azi* (work), which denoted responsibilities between senior and junior men, and between men and women. Harmony within the lineage was a condition measured principally by the "cool hearts," slow words, and the togetherness of family members—a state marked by restraint (and so the absence of sickness).³¹⁸ Elders invoked sickness in reaction to *ezata* (social sins) that violated this moral code, which could include quarrelling, fighting, disrespecting an elder, not sharing food or remittances, over-eating or a husband neglecting those under his care. Generally, *ori* were invoked against people living within the family cluster, the head

³¹⁸ Middleton, *Lugbara of Uganda*, p. 10.

elder being able to invoke against any male and female members. Women married into the cluster were thus technically subject to the authority of the elder heading their husband's clan, but also remained connected to ancestors of their natal clan. Hence, an elder would rarely invoke against his son's wife, since this would cross into the jurisdiction of another elder.³¹⁹ Viewed from elders' perspective, *ole ro* was understood as a form of social control, a reaction to the indignation borne out of moral violation.

When sickness appeared, the afflicted person appealed directly to the elder for help. Since the *ori* were invoked in secret, the arrival of affliction set in motion quests to discover the agent responsible, as well as the human sender. Discerning the agent required consulting oracles. A host of oracles existed, with the *acife* (rubbing-stick) being the most common type. Persistent cases required confirmation from chicken and rat oracles. Usually, elders consulted an oracle-holder beyond their social horizon, a measure intended to achieve an objective diagnosis. During consultations, an elder described the case, along with the names of the dead and living who were suspect. Evidently this consultation was not entirely divorced from the social knowledge of the inquirer, since the consultant described the terms of the case and the potential agents responsible, which determined the verdict. Sometimes, oracular tests were performed multiple times until an accepted verdict was attained. Despite these entanglements, Lugbara elders regarded oracles as providing important evidence: codifying suspicion into fact.

³¹⁹ It was however legitimate to invoke against a daughter elsewhere, since bridewealth had been transferred, though usually this was not done.

After the sick person had recovered, ritual sacrifices were performed to signify the cleansing of the social offence. Thus the rite removed the pollution created by the social sin, rather than stimulated recovery. The sacrifice marked the symbolic repair of the offence, which was only completed by communal eating. It was further believed that ancestors heard the public words of the case, and rejoiced at the harmony of the living.³²⁰

Such sacrifices had wider social implications: elders verbally reasserted the importance of moral behaviour, of paying bridewealth, of good marital relations, and of non-violence. Such addresses made explicit moral knowledge that was otherwise taken for granted. Words and proceedings at rituals had their own sensitivities: lies could invalidate the ritual and be a source of misfortune in themselves, as could the incorrect distribution of meat.³²¹ Significantly, rituals were not grand ceremonial affairs: Middleton, after attending his first sacrifice, commented, “I could not see why it was important to the Lugbara and what all the fuss was about.”³²² The power of these events lay in their subtle expression of hierarchies and alliances (elders from neighbouring clans often attended), and in the truth of the words there spoken. Even the most ritualistic aspect of processes to manage affliction were shrouded in social, rather than religious, significance.

3.5 Ritual Reality

³²⁰ *ibid.* p. 93.

³²¹ Middleton, *The Study of the Lugbara*, p. 93.

³²² *ibid.* p. 52.

Middleton's small-scale method has significant advantages in elucidating divergences between ritual knowledge as unquestionable truth (described in the system above), and empirical knowledge arising from practical experience. Crucially, whilst viewing the management of misfortune as a closed system provides little analytical insights into the present, focusing on the social and ritual realities of the system opens an exploration of the resonance of the system today.

3.5.1: *From Symptomatic to Social Aetiologies*

Whilst for Middleton it was possible to describe a system where particular ancestors were associated with particular forms of chronic sickness (Figure 2), in reality, ascertaining responsibility was driven by the social position of the afflicted individual. Lugbara elders recognised the power of their ancestors to enact sicknesses, whilst the social tapestry directed the diagnosis of misfortune. Indeed, elders spoke of *azo* entirely with reference to the social field surrounding the afflicted person, beginning their diagnosis with an analysis of the possibilities of strained social connections that could lead to invocation, activating sickness. Talk of sickness was saturated with consideration for pervading social context. This process is best elucidated by example:

Otoro cut a goat at his senior ghost shrines on behalf of his daughter, an adolescent girl who was suffering from severe menstrual bleeding, a complaint that would usually be considered the result of invocation of curses by maternal kin. But her mother's brother had visited her compound and had shown great affection for the girl, so that Otoro said that it could not come from that lineage. Okwaya told me that even so it might usually be expected that the mother's brother would be called to deny any evil intent in public before other possible agents would be considered; but that in this case 'Otoro does not have to remember the words of the territory where he gave his cattle (in bridewealth). Here in Araka there are many words and Olimani, our brother had spoken many words in his heart against Otoro.'³²³

³²³ Middleton, *Lugbara Religion*, p. 154.

This resolution of the menstrual bleeding of Otoro's daughter demonstrates the ability of intimate social knowledge, rather than specific symptoms, to influence the diagnosis of illness. Usually, excessive menstrual bleeding would be associated with curses from maternal kin (Otoro's wife's father's brothers). However, in this instance, because of good relations between Otoro and his wife's uncles, as evidenced by a recent visit, the daughter's sickness was interpreted with reference to prevailing conflicts among Araka's elders. In this case, Olimani, an aspiring elder, was ultimately held responsible. The cause of *azo* in this case was influenced by intra-lineage power struggles. Oracles confirmed the multiple social discussions circulating between elders about the potential agents of affliction.

3.5.2: *Controlling Male Ambition*

The above case, which substituted loose understandings of ancestral aetiologies for contests between elders, was purposefully selected as an illustration. It is not incidental that power struggles informed this case, since, according to Middleton, elders often competed for authority through manipulating the ritual system. As he explained:

A would-be elder therefore tried to invoke ghosts against his dependant frequently. That is to say, he interprets sickness that befalls members of his segment in that way. If he can consult the oracles he tends to put suggestions to them that will lead to his own invocation being given as the cause.³²⁴

Here, the specificities of Araka are important. During Middleton's observations, the cluster had tripled in size, and the head elder, Ondua, was nearing death (he died in

³²⁴ *ibid.* p. 226.

1951 during Middleton's fieldwork). Conflicts for lineage authority were rife, and the rate of ancestral invocation was abnormally high, as competitions for authority overrode other social conflicts. As noted earlier, the invocation of ancestors was normally a secret act, but during this time if an elder was prevented from consulting the oracles, he might openly declare that he had invoked the ancestors—which would then force that elder to put forward his name to the oracle operator. In response, elders whose positions were threatened would also claim to have invoked their ancestors. Such contests informed each other, producing ever more claims to invocation as the lineage came closer to segmentation.

At the same time, however, these contests could be interpreted not as legitimate invocations following acts of disobedience by undisciplined juniors, but as illegitimate invocations arising from envy. Middleton terms these illegitimate contests “witchcraft”, a translation that disguises the subtle nuances of interpretation: both legitimate and illegitimate sickness were motivated by *ole*. Yet, instead of preserving the social order, envy-driven invocation by a non-elder was seen as an anti-social force. Both ancestral and witchcraft-based sicknesses manifested in general symptoms of disease known as *oyizu* (‘growing thin’).³²⁵ Accusations of “witchcraft” were rarely spoken outright, but instead defined through careful monitoring of a peer's character. Ultimately, certainties regarding sickness were provided by the initiative and power of those who could prove its cause. A highly local politics of interpretation structured what constituted legitimate and illegitimate use of the system: rarely did accusations of witchcraft result in social exclusion.

³²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 70.

Middleton focused on conflicts between elders, but illegitimate sickness was also interpreted as caused by conflicts between young men and elders, and between young men within family clusters, particularly when the cluster was not close to segmentation. In particular, sons who had worked as migrants used witchcraft allegations to assert their independence. In the context of an emerging cash economy, the authority of households challenged that of the wider family cluster. Though migration decisions were often mediated by elders, the politics of cash remittances was a source of tension. Sons sometimes opted to send their earnings back to their mothers' brothers (i.e. outside the patrilineage) for safekeeping. In response, elders sought to discipline their sons through invoking the *ori* against them. When recalling the past, elders often associated the invocation of ancestors as a means to ensure discipline among junior men. Incidentally, elders explained that Middleton's own research assistant, Inus Yukwa, was subject to such invocation, following his decision to work for the police in Arua. Viewed as abrogating his responsibilities to the lineage, an elder of Araka invoked sickness upon him which resulted in a broken leg. Nonetheless, in defiance of this, Inus continued to work as a cook in Arua, where he was introduced to Middleton. So intense were these conflicts that elders sometimes accused young sons of acquiring forces for killing outside the district, known then as *elouja*. Of one such son it was said:

That Okavu is bad. He stays away for many months. Then one day he returns home. His heart has become bad there, perhaps he has learnt the words of *elouja*. Now he does not respect his father or his 'father' Ngoro. He comes to his father's compound and there refuses those words 'in the mouth of the ghost shrine.' Truly then Olimani thinks 'my son is now lost to me,' and he said the words and finished; we shall see.³²⁶

³²⁶ *ibid.* p. 163.

Simultaneously to legitimacy contests between elders, the *ori* were used to encourage young men to take responsibility for the roles in the lineage. Prior to colonial policies, it was unusual for a father to invoke against his own son: if married, the wife's clan members, to which the clan was tied through payment of bridewealth, would accuse the father of ruining security in the home by bringing sickness upon it.

Middleton notes how ordinary people used the ritual system as a means of ascertaining power. Indeed, in a later article, Middleton explores the possibilities for spiritual autonomy beyond the wills of competing elders.³²⁷ For young men, demonstrating that sickness was caused by spirit-possession rather than by ancestors offered opportunities for emancipation from the lineage. If women could prove they had been possessed by *Adro*, then through proving skills of divination they could achieve significant independent authority from the lineage. These claims would need to be validated through an accepted means—using the ritual system and sacrifice—but evidently, women and more marginalised men were able to advance particular explanations of sickness in order to assert their autonomy. These claims are further explored in Chapter Four.

It is also worth noting that only ten of the thirty-five cases Middleton observed were linked to ancestral invocation and lineage-related struggles (though Middleton explains these were the most significant cases). Additionally, elders made two sacrifices at external and fertility shrines, in response to general anxiety about harmony in the lineages. Five sacrifices were made by husbands to remedy the barrenness of their

³²⁷ J. Middleton, 'Rites of sacrifice among the Lugbara', *Systèmes de pensée en Afrique noire* 4 (1979), pp. 175-192.

wives, which allegedly stemmed from the ill-wishes of their maternal uncles. These ‘non-structural’ rites were of less interest to Middleton, but it seems a more participatory politics was at stake beyond lineage competition.

3.5.3: ‘Now the ghosts have shown us’: Institutionalising Misfortune

If functional anthropology was decried for substituting complexity for coherence, much of *Lugbara Religion* is nevertheless attentive to the messiness of struggles for intimacy in the colonial period. Araka was essentially a site where grudges between elders and their juniors played out, and where at the margins, ordinary people found the possibility for emancipation through the ancestral system. In the 1950s, explaining affliction with recourse to ancestors provided a shared language for living lineage members to struggle over responsibility, morality and legitimate leadership.

Under the changes brought by colonial rule, modernity had generated discontents among the accepted distribution of authority and age. At its most descriptive, Middleton’s work reveals the texture of these debates, and how ideas of ancestors provided a means to script and explain social tensions in relation to misfortune. Largely, these debates concerned the affairs of the living, rather than the dead. The role of the ancestors almost exclusively manifested with reference to the *words* of elders.

Throughout Middleton’s thick description, the “cult of the dead” was sustained since it provided a means to communicate shared values, within the hierarchical systems of eldership promoted by the colonial state.

Crucially, whilst the onset of sickness provided an opportunity to debate social tensions, it was through consulting oracles that these tensions could be organised. Siegel’s insight

into Azande oracles is useful: “The oracle here furnishes the magic word, the copula that allows anything to be linked to anything else. It not merely allows it, it stimulates such connections. It allows it to be authoritatively said that ‘X is a witch.’”³²⁸

Consulting oracles effectively provided an answer to close a given case, providing a certainty that mere discussions of living elders could not guarantee (particularly since elders were known to competitively sought to access ritual power). Oracles outsourced this confirmation to a specialist, an oracle operator beyond the social horizon, who could impartially confirm responsibility for sickness. Whilst Middleton’s ethnographic method and writing was inflected with ideas of order, the colonial setting, in tandem with oracles, provided a means to institutionalise elders’ views of misfortune. In subsequent decades, the stability of this system would experience profound change, in ways which anthropologists could no longer ignore: the increasing proximity of the state, biomedicine, churches, and trade, all radically shifting the distribution of authority, would together serve to deinstitutionalise explanations of misfortune.

3.5.4: “We do not know the words of Adro”: When Therapy Failed

Though Middleton’s observation of sacrifices illuminated cases where ancestral explanations resulted in bodily recovery, his descriptions exhibit the elders’ awareness that forces may be beyond their control. As elders pursued ancestral mechanisms, so too did these individuals contemplate the possibility of divine pollution that could not be reversed. Whilst elders held the monopoly on curing, these same individuals deeply questioned the limits of these systems in the face of colonial changes, worrying that divine pollution could affect lineages collectively. For example, of one case:

³²⁸ J. Siegel, *Naming the Witch*. Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 2006, p. 82.

Ondua fears that God has sent *nyoka* to our territory, so that our wives will not bear children, nor our cattle, and we shall become few men. Our children will go ‘to the other side’ (of Lake Albert, as labour migrants), and our land will be destroyed. But perhaps these are the words of our ancestors, to show us that our hearts are evil. Perhaps it is the work of the (government) chiefs, who eat our wealth in fines and tax. Now Ondua is *oroo* (the last surviving senior man), his heart is closed to die. But can a man die with trouble in his heart?³²⁹

Nyoka was a curse either from ancestors collectively or from God, resulting in a state of generalised tragedy that could not be reversed through sacrifice, and which could result in the end of a lineage. Following Whyte (1997), such uncertainties were not externalities written out of the system or a vague existential angst, but actively structured pursuits of certainty.³³⁰ Elders were aware of a multiplicity of forces that could be implicated in affliction, but pursued those routes available to them: the words of their ancestors which they *knew*. To use Whyte’s phraseology, Middleton’s work presents “people as actors trying to alleviate suffering rather than as spectators applying cultural, ritual, or religious truths.”³³¹ Karp, in a foreword to the 2nd Edition encapsulates Middleton’s work as demonstrating how Lugbara elders strove to reassert their visions of a moral order against modern changes: how individuals “attempt[ed] to understand [and act upon] their fate when that fate seems to surpass understanding.”³³²

Whilst chronic afflictions could be reversed with recourse to ancestors who “heard” the living, the actions of the divinity, *Adro*, were understood to manifest in forms of persistent suffering. In such cases, Lugbara people tried *mundu aro* (medicine of the whites), or visited *oyo*, female diviners, who used divine forces to manage afflictions. By contrast to the public nature of sacrifices, patients consulted *oyo* in the darkness of

³²⁹ Middleton, *Lugbara Religion*, p. 181.

³³⁰ Whyte, *Questioning Misfortune*, p. 19.

³³¹ *ibid.* p. 20.

³³² I. Karp, Foreword to *Lugbara Religion*, 2nd Edition, 1960 [1987], p. iv.

their huts. Viewed from the perspective of the patrilineage, their practice was shrouded in secrecy, yet scholars have since argued that female healers provided key vantage points to manage traumatic changes; these claims are the subject of Chapter Six. In a similar way, the water of Yakan, administered by the Kakwa prophet Rembe, had provided therapy during mass epidemics. Since forces associated with *Adro* were beyond elders' control, communion with this divinity required the intercession of particular authorities thought to have connections therein (cf. Chapter Four).³³³

3.6 Deinstitutionalising Misfortune: Subsequent Studies

Given the dearth of alternative sources on everyday life in West Nile, and subsequent destruction of archives in the war, Middleton's work provides a key portrait of the past. For this reason, students of medical anthropology, history and theology have all had to rely on and extrapolate from Middleton's findings more than they might have otherwise done, often drawing radical conclusions about social change. This section briefly summaries the key findings of multi-disciplinary studies conducted after Uganda's independence.

In the 1970s, under Amin's rule, the medical anthropologist Barnes-Dean carried out an ethnography of healing in the vicinity of Kuluva Hospital. Barnes-Dean worked mainly with two female *ojo* and recorded their methods of healing, which were largely performed through the administration of herbs. From her observations, Barnes-Dean drew the radical conclusion that "The traditional medical system has in a sense been

³³³ Middleton gradually refined the scope of his translation, from 'God' to 'Divinity' or 'Divine Spirit'.

turned inside out by culture contact”.³³⁴ Female healers—previously on the periphery of healing—were now at its centre. Ancestors were now rarely mentioned in relation to sickness, with most cases diagnosed as *enyanya* (poisoning, Vurra dialect). Whilst this work could be indicative of the attainment of Middleton’s hypothesis regarding the prevalence of sorcery in relation to social change, interpreting Barnes-Dean’s data requires caution. This location is significant: not only did Barnes-Dean work in an area where healing was likely influenced by the mission hospital, but even before the establishment of this facility, clans in this area had less distinct systems of ancestral shrines than in the north. Barnes-Dean uses Middleton’s work as a baseline, yet their two research areas had differing historical exposure to medical and religious practices. Despite recognising the limitations of Barnes-Dean’s work, Allen uses her observations regarding *enyanya* as antecedent indicators of the erosion of elders’ authority which he experienced in Laropi in the late 1980s.³³⁵ Overall, Allen concludes that whilst elders did assert ancestral explanations in cases of misfortune, such explanations were generally superseded by more modern diagnoses in Moyo.

Contrasting the simplistic portrait of change within Barnes-Dean’s work are the papers of a Catholic theologian and scholar, Titus Dalfovo. Drawing on songs, riddles, proverbs, and memories of tradition, Dalfovo presents a more complex cosmological system than Barnes-Dean. Dalfovo records the persistence of sacrificial rites, and locates fears of poisoning within a wider universe of misfortune.³³⁶ From Barnes-

³³⁴ V.L. Barnes-Dean, ‘Lugbara illness beliefs and social change’, *Africa* 56:3 (1986), pp. 334-351, p. 344.

³³⁵ T. Allen, ‘The Violence of Healing’, *Sociologus* 47:2 (1997), pp. 101-128.

³³⁶ A.T. Dalfovo, ‘Lugbara Proverbs and Ethics’, *Anthropos* 86:1/3 (1991), pp. 45-58.

Dean's and Dalfovo's work alone, it is clear that alongside the emergence of poisoning, new explanations, agents, and therapies existed following independence.

By contrast to these studies, the present thesis argues that elders remain deeply significant in the interpretation of misfortune. Resonating with the healing concepts of the past, the term for well-being in Lugbarati is *rua ala* (literally, 'a body which is good and clean'), with *rua* (body) deriving from *ru* (respect). Concepts of bodily health continue to be entangled with ideas of moral discipline, as Middleton showed, and elders continue to draw legitimacy from their ability to send and reverse sicknesses. Rather than responding to individual episodes of sickness, elders manage misfortunes that "follow" blood descendants. As evident of this moral world concealed by post-independence studies, a 2018 study found a key reason for illness given by patients presenting at the psychiatric unit in Arua Regional Referral Hospital was a curse delivered by family members.³³⁷ As Dalfovo found, in particular circumstances words continue to connote sickness.

Bearing testimony to the evolution, rather than dissolution, of the role of elders in managing misfortune are events in Araka that have transpired since Middleton's fieldwork. In March 2018, I interviewed two elders of the clan, one of whom remembered Middleton personally. These elders explained that the ancestral shrines were abandoned in the early years of independence, but Araka's elders still recognised the power of words driven by *ole*: "Everyone has *ole*, it is a curse. It is to control the

³³⁷ L. Verginer and B.H. Juen, 'Spiritual Explanatory Models of Mental Illness in West Nile, Uganda', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychiatry* 50:2 (2018), pp. 233-253.

family members, to impact morals in the family.”³³⁸ Yet in Araka, as across Maracha District, elders acknowledged that whilst their words retained power, their authority was no longer uncontested: “People behave how they want now. During those days, people feared elders—if you did anything wrong to them you could die, now people don’t respect elders.”³³⁹

Whilst Araka’s elders felt connected to Middleton’s accounts, they too recognised a host of agents of misfortune that are beyond their control. In Araka there are specific reasons why elders would resonate with a historical depiction of spatial order and cohesive local communities. In the background of our discussion, several homesteads in Araka lay in ruins. After the interview, my co-worker explained that several years ago the cluster had been involved in violence, news of which had travelled across the district. The homes of one male clan member had been burnt down following an allegation of a novel form of witchcraft associated with individual wealth accumulation. The allegation had been made public after a young boy within the family died, a death that was attributed to his relative. Elders subsequently cursed their own son, who fled to Arua town. Having formerly been a prosperous member of the clan, this man was now said to be “collecting foodstuff from the rubbish.” That in Arua the expelled man had no home to eat from was a sign of his status beyond family protection. If, for Middleton, witchcraft was a force that could be controlled within the local politics of lineage segmentation, today it is no longer seen as a force that can be internally controlled. To begin to explore the transitions in these logics, the next chapters of this thesis explore

³³⁸ FG, Araka, 13/03/2017 (OJ).

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

the importance of *dini* (religion), the dynamics of change peripheral to Middleton's analysis in the 1950s.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has both situated *Lugbara Religion* in its historic intellectual context and outlined its impacts on contemporary scholarship, in order to use a “whole society” account as a baseline for the present study. Whilst Middleton was deeply influenced by structural-functionalism, the nuance of his analysis still yields deep insights regarding the dissonance between theory and practice, the sociality of healing, and the means through which local struggles to explain misfortune remained encased within the prevailing politics of power (which, at that juncture, was control of the lineage). Fundamentally, in Middleton's work, the management of misfortune is most clearly seen as a *system of practice*, rather than as a material artefact, a distinct cosmology or coherent set of beliefs.

Though the segmentary heuristic can obscure the extent of social relations, *Lugbara Religion* reveals how familial and clan connections were of central importance in the resolution of misfortune. Lugbara people attributed suffering to interpersonal relations, which mattered because of the surveillance both of local ritual guardians and of the dead. Though Middleton calls this system “religion,” this was a lived, localised system. Moreover, the maintenance of intimate authority pivoted on the diagnosis of chronic sickness, a key reason why this system remained resilient, albeit transformed, under colonial authority.

Subsequent studies foregrounding Middleton's insights have concluded that, with the destruction of the ancestral system, new forms of healing based on biomedicine or witchcraft have prevailed. Yet the present research finds that, in lieu of the ancestral system, words and curses continue to bring about misfortune within the clan. Since the return from wartime exile, the diagnostic world in which the living suffer both from the words of the elders and from the indignation of the dead has been reconstituted. The result of destructive witchcraft allegations, such as the events which befell Araka seventy years after Middleton's departure, are still relevant to elders' social control—even if, in modernity, they also mark its limits.

Before turning to the post-return context, the next chapter explores the expansion of explanations of affliction connected to *dini* through historical and ethnographic methods. Drawing both on mission biographies and life-histories of Lugbara Christian converts—who unlike Middleton's conservative focus were preoccupied with change—the chapter records and explores the voices of those excluded from *Lugbara Religion*. If elders attempted to impose versions of society based on hierarchy and internal respect, throughout the colonial period external forms of knowledge were mobilised to challenge the primacy of the ancestors, and in so doing, reworked the local balance of power. Nonetheless, the power of *dini* can only be understood with reference to its relationship to the lineage: it is to this relationship I now turn.

Chapter Four

Dini as Social Project: Expressing and Policing Possession

4.1 Introduction

Whilst the previous chapter explored everyday mechanisms for social control premised on ancestors, discipline and clan knowledge, this chapter explores historical engagements with divine forces, embodied in the term *Adro* and its reproduction in practices of possession connected to *dini* (religion).³⁴⁰ This analysis is concerned with the social effects of individually channelled divine power from Yakan to Charismatic Christianity, and explores how these expressions of spiritual power have interacted with clan authority. On the one hand, this chapter engages with a spiritual landscape characterised by palimpsest, whereby practices of possession have been harnessed by social groups from the late-19th century to the present. On the other, it details historical resistance to spirit-inspired possession when practiced—often by men—in projects seen as challenging solidarities and obligations within normative ideas of social peace.

This approach is inspired by the approaches of African scholars of religion, including Okot p'Bitek and Bethwell Ogot, who urge a practice-based approach to

³⁴⁰ For an extensive discussion of regional and temporal diversity see A.T. Dalfovo, 'The Divinity among the Lugbara', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28:4 (1998), pp. 468-493. The transcendent aspect of the divinity was rendered through regional dialects: *Adro* (Ayivu), *Adroa* (Terego), *Adrou* (Vurra) and *Adroga* (Aringa). Middleton took *Adroa* as the Supreme God, and *Adro* for earthly spirits. Crazzolara, as part of Catholic efforts to indigenise the liturgy in the 1960s, adopted the Ayivu variant, which is the reverse. Crazzolara's selection was formed by his location in Arua, thus *Adro/adroa* has long been accepted by Lugbara Catholics as well as Anglicans. For the sake of comprehending sources taken from different geographical areas, I use *Adro* to connote the Supreme Being, and *adroa* to connote earthly forms (unless quoting from other sources).

conceptualising African religious concepts.³⁴¹ In the 1960s, p'Bitek lambasted European anthropologists and missionaries who sought to create coherence out of African cosmologies. Instead, p'Bitek was interested in how cosmology was *lived* and reproduced through ritual practice. In seeking definitive answers, outside investigators had sought to answer questions that practice did not ask, obscuring the very texture of what the concepts mean to those who use them in everyday life.³⁴² Whilst the previous chapter explored how answers to p'Bitek's concerns can be located in Middleton's writings on ancestral forces, less attention was paid within his texts to everyday participation in divine power. This binary opposition—between the lived realm of man, and the 'secret realm of God'—precluded an analysis of how social groups (male and female alike) beyond lineage elders harnessed spirit possession to make moral claims.

Since returning from exile, Lugbara people no longer maintain shrines to their ancestors within compounds. In the early years of the post-independence state, Lugbara Christian converts, instructed by mission education and directives from God, undertook personal crusades which targeted the *ori*. Since then, as in many other African geographies, Lugbara people have internalised missionary sentiments that venerating ancestors is representative of 'paganism' or 'traditional religion', the opposite to *dini* (Christianity).³⁴³ As this thesis shows, rupturing events have not served to erase the moral and spiritual authority of elders, yet, colonial struggles over power have deeply shaped ritual and religious practice to the present.

³⁴¹ O. p'Bitek, *Religion of the Central Luo*, East African Literature Bureau, 1971; B.A. Ogot, 'The concept of jok', *African Studies* 20:2 (1961), pp. 123-130. This approach too stands in contrast to Africanist scholars such as Mbiti, who have tried to find conceptual coherence between African indigenous religions and Christian theology.

³⁴² Mogensen, 'The Resilience of *Juok*'.

³⁴³ Behrend, 'Resurrecting Cannibals'

In relation to grassroots struggle over ritual authority, this chapter explores how clans have historically been involved in “*limiting*” practices of possession.³⁴⁴ To the present, Christian prophets who deploy theology in ways which challenge social peace may be deemed extremists and subject to violent exclusion. Thus the increasing freedom with which people can participate in divine practice is in itself an increasing source of post-return insecurity. This chapter explores how colonial histories of Christianity, as well as longstanding fears of divine power, have contributed to post-war anxieties, and occasional, policing of possession.

To locate this enquiry, this chapter first considers indigenous divine concepts, before exploring how these notions were implicated in Yakan, an exploration that develops in detail the healing dimensions of the ‘anti-government cult’ introduced in Chapter Two. Tracing the historical reverberations of Yakan, the chapter explores complex pre-war struggles over spiritually-inspired possession. Moving to the post-independence period, this chapter contrasts that history with self-reported cosmological realignments during the era of armed conflict in the 1980s, and the embrace of charismatic healing movements in mainline churches both in Arua town and the rural countryside following return. The chapter concludes with an ethnographic exploration of how these movements were resisted in the eviction of a male charismatic preacher near the Congo border.

4.2 *Adro*: From Abstractions to Action

³⁴⁴ L. Ravalde, "Deceiving the spirit: Engaging with the Holy Spirit in Catholic Uganda." *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute*, vol. 89 no. 1, 2019, p. 147-164, p.148

As Dalfovo noted, the task of recovering authentic indigenous concepts is impossible, given the the imprint of European translation and Christian evangelism which were fostering new meanings throughout period of documentation.³⁴⁵ In view of these complexities, this section attempts to best reconstruct ideas of divine forces prior to Christian encounters, whilst recognising this exercise to be a best estimation.

4.2.1 Concepts

In the 1950s, elders explained that they “did not know the words of Adro”. Despite the inherent secrecies around the divinity, accounts collated during the colonial period consistently agree that *Adro* was described as having both distant and earthly dimensions. On the one hand, *Adro* was defined as a transcendent, omnipotent being, and a positive, life-giving force responsible both for the creation of the universe and procreation. In this aspect, the divinity was referred to as *Adroa o ’bapiri* (‘God, the creator of man’), and said to be *eri* (not a person), existing in the sky, air, or wind, above and beyond human society.³⁴⁶ Lugbara theologians to date stress a belief in *Adroa o ’bapiri* as evidence for indigenous religiosity which paralleled Christian theology (and European missionaries’ failure to incorporate this belief as a reason for the initial rejection of Christianity).³⁴⁷ Based on interviews with Catholic Catechists in the late 1960s, Dalfovo suggests creatorial dimensions may reflect an import of Christian monotheism.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁵ Dalfovo, ‘Divinity among the Lugbara’.

³⁴⁶ Middleton, *Lugbara Religion*.

³⁴⁷ D. Cadri. *The Development of Small Christian Communities in the Catholic and Among the Lugbara People of Uganda After the Second Vatican Council*, PhD Dissertation, (Theology Department), Duquesne University, 2007.

³⁴⁸ Dalfovo, ‘Divinity among the Lugbara’, p.484. It is notable that many attempts to document cosmologies occurred in locations which had by that period been subject to several decades of mission evangelism.

More consistently, *Adro* was regarded as the ultimate architect of misfortune, being associated with collective crisis, including famine and mass death at the clan or population level, as well as individual suffering including infertility, incurable or disfiguring sickness, or “bad” deaths that were sudden, tragic, or inexplicable. In this earthly guise, *Adro* existed as a multitude of anthropoid spirits inhabiting bushes, streams, and hills in the uninhabited wilderness. Here, *Adro* was referred to either as *Adroa*, the diminutive form of *Adro*, as *Adroanzi* (‘children of the divinity’), or as *Adronzi* (‘evil aspect of the divinity’). *Adroa* was said to appear to people as a snake, or as lightning, but more commonly spoken of as appearing in disfigured human form: ‘...like a man, and very tall and white; but his body is cut down the centre and he has only one eye, one ear, one arm and one leg, on which he jumps about. He is very terrible to see.’³⁴⁹ In cases where the immanent aspects of the divinity appeared to people or collectives, it was taken to be an evil omen, and a signifier that the person or a whole clan may be close to death. It was said that *Adroa* followed people at night, ‘seizing’ them and afflicting sickness.³⁵⁰ What emerges from anthropological and theological descriptions pre-1950 is that *Adro* was used to denote states of mass tragedy, and *adroa* was used in lesser cases, to denote afflictions (beyond ancestral cure).

Lugbara people themselves had little difficulty in reconciling divine concepts, applying *Adro* or *adroa* where appropriate to unfortunate circumstances. Indeed, Odama, a Catholic Lugbara theologian, concluded in the 1960s, “Nobody knows what the exact

³⁴⁹ Middleton, *Lugbara Religion*, p.254; Dalfovo, ‘Divinity among the Lugbara’, p.471.

³⁵⁰ Middleton, *Lugbara Religion*, p.255.

relation between God and the lower spirits is”.³⁵¹ Yet in both guises *Adro* connoted crisis on a magnitude of scales: the entity was applied to circumstances beyond the control of ordinary people to explain mortality from epidemics, deaths from poisoning, and inexplicable possession—all of which became more common in Lugbaraland from the late 19th century. Unlike the ancestors, elders rarely made sacrifices to *Adro*, who it was thought could not hear the living, and operated independently of the will of ordinary people.³⁵² In both transcendent and immanent guises, it is significant that *Adro* was consistently articulated as dwelling conceptually and spatially outside human society—inhabiting the skies, the bushlands, hills or water-bodies, beyond the realm of homesteads and order.³⁵³ Also noteworthy is that mid-century fears of disfigured white spirits ‘seizing’ people in the bushland paralleled the violent colonial encounters of abduction. Indeed, Europeans were occasionally referred to as *Adro*, since like the divinity, white invaders came out of the bushland, taking people from their homes. Whilst on the one hand, as one Lugbara theologian noted, concepts of the divinity were powerfully symbolic of the violence of the colonial encounter, the parallel use of the term speaks to the experiential nature of the concept.³⁵⁴ Both *Adro* and Europeans inflicted suffering upon Lugbara people that they could not control.

³⁵¹ Cited in Dalfovo, ‘The Lugbara Concept of the Divinity’, p. 473.

³⁵² Dalfovo argues that the relationship between God and the ancestors is unclear. He makes that arguments that whilst some people were of the opinion that God lay behind the ancestors (and so ultimately, sacrifices were made to God, with the ancestor acting as intermediaries), other elders clearly asserted that they have only the ancestors in mind—arguing that food was given to the ancestors, and nothing was offered to *Adro*. See Dalfovo, ‘Divinity among the Lugbara’, p. 477. In Middleton’s work, a notable exception is made by elders in respect to their own mortality. Ondua, as he neared death, sacrificed a sheep to God in a solitary sacrifice, in effort to reverse his fate, hoping *Adro* would perhaps take notice. Diviners, by contrast, make sacrifices to *Adro*, specifically to the rivers where his anthropomorphic aspect is said to reside.

³⁵³ Following the years of war, terms have once again shifted. Catholics now render Almighty God as *Adro*, and *Adroa* now as the “small gods” that resided in trees, rivers and hills. Anglicans continue to use *Mungu* for God, and *mungua* (small gods) as well. Conversationally, both Anglicans and Catholics explain that affliction connected to *adroa/mungu* was associated with particular trees, streams and hills—which, if stared upon, could inflict boils, swellings or death. With modern development and population growth, however, this “wilderness” has been tamed, and the effects of *adro* are ascribed to the past.

³⁵⁴ S. Enyabo, *A Survey of Lugbara Spirit Beliefs*. Ma’ di-West Nile Diocese Archives, 1979.

4.2.2: Intermediaries

Beyond defining concepts, outsiders have focused on the relationship between ordinary people and the divine through studying intermediaries. As noted by Ogot and Ravalde, given the ambiguous powers of divinities and spirits – and their inherent unknowability, the interventions of human mediators are particularly important.³⁵⁵ Of the concept of *jok* (translated as Deity, God, spirit) among Nilotic peoples, Ogot notes that since man had no direct or personal relationship with God, ordinary people had to rely on mediators and prophets to interpret or control the divine.

For Lugbara people too, interpreting *Adro* has long relied on turning to functionaries, believed to do *Adro ma azini* ('the work of God'). People turned to these intermediaries to interpret suffering for which they have no answers or cure, and thus relied on others to access and interpret with the divine. Given the relationship of *Adro* to death, it is hardly surprising that these figures were considered ambiguous, or even dangerous: their practice involved handling power that could result either in miraculous recovery or death. As this thesis shows, for Lugbara people, dwelling too close to death has long carried the risk of being blamed for it.³⁵⁶

In the pre-colonial period, *opi-ozooni* (rainmakers) distributed across wider lineages embodied the separation between ordinary people and the divine. Rainmakers practiced in secret raingroves, which ordinary people could not enter. Though secret, it was

³⁵⁵ Ogot, 'The concept of jok'; L. Ravalde, 'Deceiving the spirit'

³⁵⁶ The notion of *aripe*, like rejoicing in death, derives from strange acts near graves, rejoicing in mourning, or strange phenomena that connote intra-personal accountability (See Chapters Seven through Nine for examples).

believed that rainmaking groves contained rain-pots wherein rainstones known as *si* (hail), thought to fall from the sky, were kept, as well as the bones of snakes, hyenas, and leopards and wild animals, all symbolic of the wilderness. The dangerous forces contained in raingroves were said to enable *opi-ezu* to commune with *Adro*, to bring rain, end famines or stop continuous feuds: all situations of crisis to which the living had no recourse. The office carried risks: according to Avua, rainmakers were physically beaten in persistent droughts: whilst their powers could provide solutions, as human beings, these men could suffer retribution if their interventions failed.³⁵⁷

Both the violent incursions of the colonial period and the epidemics that caused mass death were understood as incursions of *Adro*. Searching for cures to prevent mass mortality, ordinary people accepted the authority of prophets, who were usually considered dangerous. In a period of crisis, the unknown objects and practices of outside prophets were cautiously embraced. Rembe, a Kakwa prophet, was the most significant: his power was thought to emanate from his connection to divine forces, derived from his ownership of a secret pool near the Congolese border, which contained a mystical being which was half-human and half-snake. Rembe was said to possess feminine qualities, and divined using a *weke* (gourd), the first of its kind in Lugbaraland, himself falling into a wild state of possession. Decades later, Rembe's practices informed techniques of female divination, as Chapter Six details. Connections to the divinity were inscribed upon the practice of these functionaries, which not only involved secrecy, but the recycling of ambiguous objects and icons of the wilderness.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁷ Avua, L. 1968 "Droughtmaking among the Lugbara", *The Uganda Journal* 32 (1): 29-38

³⁵⁸ Chapter Six argues that whilst diviners may have emulated Rembe's practice, they often legitimated their activities on the basis of assisting the maintenance of patrilineal authority (through healing, but also through

Departing from available sources, scholars have paid significant attention to the performance and symbolism associated with rainmakers and prophets. Yet, at the beginning of the pre-colonial period, prophetic power was significant insofar as these intermediaries allowed *ordinary* people to participate in divine power, through imbibing water, experiencing possession, or accessing answers through visiting mediums. In periods of crisis, divine power was no longer held at a distance in intermediaries' words or in snake-oracles, but practiced and normalised through everyday participation in *dini*.

4.3 Yakan and Practicing Prophetic Knowledge (~1890-1919)

Appearing among Lugbara populations in the late 19th century, by the early years of the Protectorate state, Yakan had reportedly developed into a mass religious movement in Maracha and Terego. In the context of mass death from epidemics, a new cadre of Lugbara leaders localised the prophetic powers of Rembe, in symbolic performances which inverted the distribution of patrilineal authority. In a time of “collective despair”, people turned to dangerous metaphysical powers for healing, radically re-adapting moral norms in the process. By 1919, Yakan water was believed to offer immunity against diseases and the resurrection of dead ancestors and cattle, and reportedly even protection from Protectorate guns. This section revisits contemporary descriptions of Yakan, noting the practical and phenomenological antecedents that would later influence Christianity in the colonial period.

communing with the dead). The ulterior picture presented by Middleton may be somewhat exaggerated (see notes on his gendered schema).

Though the different forms of practice Yakan ushered in were inextricably linked to the spread of epidemic disease, as noted in Chapter Two, contemporary observers were preoccupied with the movement's potential to harbour anti-government resistance.³⁵⁹ This interpretation led to very real consequences: in 1919 Protectorate officials violently quashed Yakan, deporting its leaders and killing many adherents. Following these accounts, scholars have sought to explain rather than to challenge Yakan's militancy. King, for example, relates militant sensibilities within Yakan to the impulses of returning male soldiers from the King's African Rifles.³⁶⁰

More recently, scholars have revisited the proposition that Yakan was an anti-colonial resistance cult. Re-examining testimonies collected in 1919-20, along with DC Weatherhead's journals, Leopold suggests that Yakan's militancy was over-estimated, with information manipulated as a means of installing sub-county chiefs loyal to the British.³⁶¹ Whilst Leopold does not explore the ethnographic evidence to the contrary, he suggests that Yakan's *raison d'être* was likely related primarily to healing. Similarly, Vokes has reassessed the Nyabingi cult in southwest Uganda, arguing that violence was not the *raison d'être* for the colonial-era movements here either. For Vokes, the violence of Nyabingi was secondary to its legitimacy in redressing misfortunes.³⁶² In light of Leopold's reassessment, Vokes's reassessment seems pertinent to understanding Yakan; militancy was legitimated through its success at explaining misfortune.

³⁵⁹ Driberg's paper was most influential in this regard. Whilst presented as an anthropological account, he collected his data whilst on a fact-finding mission for the colonial administration. See: J.H. Driberg. 'Yakañ', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 61 (1931), pp. 413-420. Leopold notes that Driberg was prone to exaggeration. It is also notable that archival sources described Yakan as 'quiescent'.

³⁶⁰ King, 'The Yakan Cult'.

³⁶¹ Leopold, *Inside West Nile*.

³⁶² R. Vokes, *Ghosts of Kanungu: Fertility, Secrecy & Exchange in the Great Lakes of Africa*. James Currey: Suffolk, 2009, p. 14.

Moreover, by contrast to Nyabingi, where there is indisputable evidence of violent resistance, in the Lugbaraland, reporting regarding the militant aspects of Yakan is inconsistent.

Even accounts focusing on Yakan's militant dimensions attribute its origins as a healing cult, a pragmatic response to outbreaks of meningitis and other epidemics that brought mass mortality to Lugbaraland from the late 19th century. Meningitis was known as *ndindia*, and small-pox as *mua*, both terms that mean 'sickness' or 'sickness sent secretly.'³⁶³ These diseases could not be managed through the ancestral system, and so local leaders sought cures from elsewhere. References to curing as a means of turning to Yakan are replete within Middleton's 1963 account, which elicits elders' memories of participating in Yakan as young men. Elders explained that: "Men went to Kakwa to get the water because they were big men who wanted to help their people."³⁶⁴ Elders recalled Rembe's coming as linked with the resurgence of meningitis, explaining that just as deaths from epidemics came in the dry season, so, too, did the prophet.

It is important that, prior to 1917, Yakan had comparatively few adherents. Those possessed by the spirit were said to roam the country like *'ba azazaa* ('mad people'), and were often driven away to other places.³⁶⁵ Sources derive from the years of Protectorate rule, when the cult was revived following the resurgence of epidemic-fuelled mortality. The qualities attached to the water evolved from curing sickness to offering immunity from it, ushering in new forms of religious practice. Signifying this

³⁶³ Middleton, 'The Yakan or Allah Water Cult', p. 92.

³⁶⁴ *ibid.* p. 88.

³⁶⁵ *ibid.* p. 93.

evolution, Yakan became known as *dede* (grandmother), enculturated into the Lugbara language, and equated to the protection offered by a grandmother.³⁶⁶ As the protective, rather than reactive, dimensions of Yakan developed, membership became attached to the expression of ritual performances. As one eyewitness explained to Middleton: “They came from all [over] Maraca, and also other men. In the evening, every day, they danced, like a *koro*. The dance was called *yakani tuzu, a'bi ndua* (‘to dance yakan at the foot of the a'bi tree’).”³⁶⁷ As evidence of these comparisons, one elder compared Yakan to Catholic practice: “Rembe put his *a'bi* tree here, and one at Miutini, and people gathered there and sacrificed, like the Catholics do when they go to hear the Fathers.”³⁶⁸ Practices took on different forms across the region: among Lugbara communities in Congo, after drinking the water, the imbiber had to run at full speed away from the pot, “looking back on pain of death”.³⁶⁹ In Vurra, in 1920, after a serious outbreak of meningitis, a goat and a white calf (referred to as ‘the beasts of Yakan’) ornamented in the bracelets of a man who had died from meningitis, were involved in rites and chased into Mt Luku, symbolically chasing away disease.³⁷⁰ In localised ways, through Yakan, unique ritual expressions emerged among its adherents.

Vokes has argued that colonial tendencies of documenting alleged cults or secret societies transformed practices which were “a diffuse set of informal, and in many ways ephemeral, exchange networks” into “bounded and coherent” structures.³⁷¹ Thus,

³⁶⁶ *ibid.* p. 89.

³⁶⁷ *ibid.* p. 90.

³⁶⁸ *ibid.* p. 92.

³⁶⁹ Driberg, ‘Yakañ’, p. 417-9.

³⁷⁰ Middleton, ‘The Yakan or Allah Water Cult’, p. 92.

³⁷¹ Vokes, *Ghosts of Kanungu*, p. 15.

caution must be exercised in accounts that describe Yakan in terms of a coherent tiered system divided into three ranks, and replicated across space in all sub-clans of north-central Lugbaraland.

That said, sources and local recollection do confirm that whilst the power of Yakan was initially associated with Rembe, it was quickly indigenised into a local leadership structure in North Lugbaraland (though not in the south, for unknown reasons).³⁷²

Rembe's activities had been confined to particular places near Maracha, along the Lugbara/Kakwa border. Yakan's evolution relied on elders travelling to Kakwa County to buy the water to administer at home. This evolution is apparent in reported price differentials in the compound of a Kakwa dispenser, Lagoro, which Driberg visited in 1919. Reportedly, Lagoro's compound consisted of over 200 huts to accommodate overnight visitors, where Yakan water was dispensed in several tiers: people could pay one rupee to drink it on the spot or two rupees to take the water away, with higher costs, in animals, for dispensers.³⁷³ These price differentials at the source indicate the increasing development of local centres in Lugbaraland.³⁷⁴ Reportedly, Lagoro's water was preferred to Rembe's at that point, since deaths had been linked to the potency of the original Yakan water. According to Driberg, Lugbara adherents accused Rembe of poisoning the water, and launched a raid on his Kakwa tribe.³⁷⁵ The evidence suggests that whilst Lugbara people engaged with prophetic authority, they did so pragmatically, according to the health outcomes of imbibing the water from particular intermediators.

³⁷² Middleton, 'The Yakan or Allah Water Cult', p. 86.

³⁷³ Driberg, 'Yakañ', p. 416-7.

³⁷⁴ King, 'The Yakan Cult'.

³⁷⁵ Driberg, 'Yakañ', p. 417.

The practice of Yakan differed radically from the hierarchies and disciplines within systems of leadership. It was led by younger men, based on their ability to purchase the water, and through consuming it, ordinary men and women could become *yi' 'ba Adrogu*a, or 'people of spirit'.³⁷⁶ But crucially, the movement bought new possibilities for new forms of possession, as ordinary people demonstrated connection or inhabitation with the immanent aspects of *Adro*. Simultaneously, Yakan's adherents—male and female alike—tied shifting spiritual empowerment to the adoption of new moral norms. Men and women camped in the bush, danced, and had sexual intercourse regardless of clan affiliation (sexual relations between clan members usually being prohibited).³⁷⁷ Driberg too notes that Yakan water became linked to the resurrection of dead ancestors, indicative of its encroachment upon the segmentary lineage system. Middleton concludes that, as Yakan developed, it provided a vehicle to challenge the traditional form of social organisation. Ultimately, little is known about whether Yakan's adherents engaged with or entirely abandoned the ancestral system, but in crisis, though participating in Yakan, forms of possession were linked to the embrace of new moral codes.

Without historical records, it is not possible to ascertain whether Yakan was the only prophetic movement to take hold in the region.³⁷⁸ Acidri documents the remnants of other spiritual cults that were domesticated as shrines within homesteads in the manner of Yakan—including *mua*, *abea*, and *adra*—which were said to possess people throughout the colonial period.³⁷⁹ Today, forces once considered divine have been

³⁷⁶ Middleton, 'The Yakan or Allah Water Cult', p. 71.

³⁷⁷ *ibid.* p. 101.

³⁷⁸ Allen, 'Understanding Alice'.

³⁷⁹ Acidri, 'The Impact of British Colonial Policies'.

domesticated into the lineage order, said to offer protective qualities to clans who ‘own’ them, and to punish individuals who offend them. Violations result in the appearance of ‘normal’ (rather than ‘killing’) sicknesses, which often affect the stomach, and force the offender to come forward to seek inter-clan reparations. A century later, powers vested in Yakan have been fully domesticated by elders.

By the 1950s, elders who had been involved in Yakan expressed a degree of ambiguity as to the practice, explaining that they had been misled by the movement, and in their confusion, “clutched at any straw for confidence and help.”³⁸⁰ Despite this, elders maintained shrines within compounds and Rembe’s divination skills continued to manifest in female *ojo*, consulted when sickness required. The mass fervour associated with the movement would not recur until the arrival of Revival Christianity.³⁸¹ Such continuities have not escaped Lugbara people themselves. A descendant of Kamure (a Yakan chief), living near Ofude, recalled: ‘Rembe was so miraculous he could walk on water like Jesus... It was a kind of religion—people were dancing—like this one of Pentecostal churches.’³⁸² The comparison to Pentecostalism is not incidental, since these churches are today associated with wild outpourings of faith and healing, even in contrast to mainline Charismatic denominations. It is to this successor movement, its origins and its revivals, that I now turn.

4.4 Participating in Christianity: From Mission to Margins, 1918-1980

³⁸⁰ Middleton, ‘The Yakan or Allah Water Cult’, p. 90.

³⁸¹ C. Hoehler-Fatton, ‘Possessing Spirits, Powerful Water and Possible Continuities: Examples of Christian and Islamic fervour in Western Kenya prior to the East African Revival’, in K. Ward and E. Wild-Wood (eds.), *The East African Revival: Histories and Legacies*. London: Ashgate, 2011, pp. 73-88. Fountain Publishers: Kampala.

³⁸² I, Elder of Alipi Clan, Maracha, 7/03/2017.

4.4.1 Mungu and Modernity

Mission Christianity, introduced in South Lugbaraland in 1918, sharply contrasted with the fervour of Yakan. Chapter Two introduced Christian missions as an elite force, which appealed primarily to a new class of people who were educated in mission schools and treated in mission hospitals. In this guise, urban engagement with Christianity throughout the colonial period provided a means to access modernity through education and medicine.

The situation was different in the rural countryside. Despite the emphasis placed on a ‘militant’ approach to evangelism from both the Anglican Inland Mission and the Catholic Comboni Fathers, given competition with each other against paganism and the perceived threat of Islam from the North (fears of which were stoked equally by Yakan), preaching the gospel encountered significant obstacles.³⁸³ With limited manpower and limited capacity in local language, missions faced similar challenges to the state administration, and provoked similar antagonisms among local people. In removing young men from their homes for baptism and instruction at missions, missionaries mirrored state patterns of recruitment for the military and for plantations, tensions amplified by the simultaneous backdrop of state-sanctioned hostage-taking in the South. That European missionaries were conflated with those violent measures is evident in how, even today, both Catholic and Anglican elders explain that the first missionaries came “with guns.”³⁸⁴

³⁸³ Dobson, *Daybreak in West Nile*, p. 19.

³⁸⁴ I, Elder, Arua, 28/12 2017 (OJ).

Moreover, missionaries made little effort to enculturate Christianity within pre-existing practices, instead opposing customary funerals and marriages that lay at the core of social reproduction. This opposition was most striking in the rendering of *Mungu* to represent the Christian God. In response the complexities presented by an indigenous divinity which was dual, both Anglican and Catholic missionaries simply sidestepped the engagement with local terms, using the Kiswahili term *Mungu* (which Muslims also used for Allah) in their ministry.³⁸⁵ Missionaries advocated against the worship of other gods, including divine deities and ancestors. One Catholic priest in Vurra explained, “When the missionaries came—they started instructing our people [that] there are no gods in the mountains, valleys, hills—it is this same God who created everything.”³⁸⁶ Whilst identifying with *Mungu* did locate a Lugbara Christian within the modern world of mission and the state, these imported concepts gained limited traction across the countryside.

The work of Dalfovo on Lugbara songs and proverbs is indicative of the continuing importance of *Adro* in moments of crisis. Based on a sample of 769 songs collected in the late 1960s and early 1970s, 75 mentioned the divinity: 64 mentioning *Adro*, and 15 *Mungu*. Songs were generally sung at funerals; of the songs that mention *Adro* (in either guise), 42 mentioned death, and the remaining 22 mentioned afflictions of some nature. Alternatively *Mungu* was referred to as an “inspiration to abandon evil, a giver of peace... a term of reference for human behaviour and the one answering prayers”.³⁸⁷ *Adro* continued to be resonant in personal crisis. As Morgensen argued, in adding

³⁸⁵ Dalfovo notes that the term may have been introduced by Swahili traders in the 19th century.

³⁸⁶ I, Catholic Father, Ediofe, 18/05/2017.

³⁸⁷ Dalfovo, ‘The Divinity among the Lugbara’, p. 484-485.

additional terms, Christian evangelists simply added complexity to ideas of divine-forces that defied coherence.³⁸⁸

This is not to say that Christian evangelism had no impact, but that the arrival of missionaries, and *Mungu* did not automatically displace prior concepts of *Adro* (or of *ori*). Vokes' networked perspective through which divine knowledge spread through colonial prophetic movements is also useful to understand the means through which rural Lugbara people were exposed to Christianity. The most successful evangelists were for many years not those recruited by missions, but returning labour migrants, who had been exposed to Christianity in southern Uganda. Of one incident in Yole, Terego, in 1924, a missionary recalls: "Crowds of people gathered at Yole to hear him [the evangelist] preach... about the same time hundreds of people began coming to the mission station at Mvara."³⁸⁹ Unhindered by the language barriers facing European missionaries, 'sons of the soil' could more readily inspire conversion.³⁹⁰

In a similar way, the East African Revival – spread by Ugandan evangelists - would spread rapidly in Arua town, and later across the countryside. By the late 1940s, urban Revivalists, *Balokole*, meaning 'Saved Ones' in Luganda, or *pomzifu* (KiS. "the quiet ones") in Arua, espoused new forms of fervent worship. Theologically, Revivalists emphasised salvation through the cleansing qualities of Jesus' blood, accessible through the confession of sin, and giving testimony, to live a "new life in Christ".³⁹¹ According

³⁸⁸ Mogensen, 'The Resilience of *Juok*'.

³⁸⁹ Dobson, *Daybreak in West Nile*, p. 21.

³⁹⁰ Cadri, *The Development of Small Christian Communities*, p. 13.

³⁹¹ E. Wild-Wood, 'Why Strive for the Gospel? The Culture of the Chosen Evangelical Revival on the Northern Congo-Uganda Border', in K. Ward and E. Wild-Wood (eds.), *The East African Revival: Histories and Legacies*. Fountain Publishers: Kampala, 2010.

to Lugbara theologians, emphasising *Yesu* (Jesus) as personal saviour served to humanise the gospel, reconciling the ideas of remoteness that continued to be attached to *Mungu*. Beyond this, Revival no doubt appealed as well since it was predicated on horizontal participation of Europeans and Africans as ‘brethren’, as well as the equality of men and women within the movement—which appealed in urban contexts where households had established themselves beyond the lineage. Theologian Silvanus Wani, a West Niler who would become Bishop of Uganda after the murder of Archbishop Luwum during Amin’s regime, was associated with propelling the movement in Arua.

4.4.2 Possession and Moral Revival

By the mid-1950s, Christian revivals thriving in town began to have greater effects in the countryside. In 1949, a Bagandan doctor and Revivalist, Lubulwa Eliya, arrived in Arua.³⁹² Eliya, in partnership with a Ma’di doctor, promoted a strain of Revival based on “striving”, which involved an embrace of charisma, along with a provocative style of preaching using trumpets and other instruments. In Baganda, Eliya had fallen out of favour with mainstream Revivalists, in part because his movement openly critiqued the laxity of the mission church. In the North, however, his style of striving was well received. By contrast to elite-driven urban factions, strivers vehemently disavowed education and worldly wealth. Eliya himself often dressed in a sack, breaking codes around the usual forms of dress considered suitable for Christian Sunday worship. Strivers were not only committed to public evangelism, but to the denial of ambition associated with the colonial state and mission church. This new brand of Christianity

³⁹² *ibid.*

held great appeal to many rural people. Today, elders of Maracha and Arua, who had been involved in striving, afford Eliya the status of a prophet, similar to Rembe.

Scholars have attributed the success of Revival to its continuities between confession traditions and pre-existing customary norms around truth-telling. Yet Wild-Wood notes that Revival took on radically different forms within East African societies. Strivers exhibited “more exuberant and radical” means of expression, in forms of spirit-inspired possession that resembled Yakan.³⁹³ *Balokole* adherents filled with the Holy Spirit fell into a trance-like state, giving confessions whilst speaking in tongues. Revival was said to be “a thing that seizes a man like Yakan, so that he falls to the ground and speaks words of *Mungu*”.³⁹⁴ As with Yakan, participation provided a route for ordinary Lugbara people to access authority outside the patrilineage. Striving provided a means of spiritual empowerment for its adherents. Revival was often spread by women, who took on key roles in preaching, often validating their messages on the basis of being instructed by the Holy Spirit. At crusades, Revivalists connected divine communications, dreams and visions to healing through prayer.³⁹⁵

If contemporary scholars have emphasised the peculiarities of possession among Northern Revivalists, Lugbara people themselves—who participated in or who were brought up in Revivalist households—emphasised the strict moral codes and discipline involved in the movement. On a personal level, becoming “Saved” and receiving the gifts of the Spirit relied on confession, and subsequently adapting codes of monogamy,

³⁹³ *ibid.* p. 188.

³⁹⁴ Middleton, ‘Lugbara Religion’, p.,264

³⁹⁵ M. Lloyd, *A Wedge of Light: Revival in West Nile District*. Rugby, n.d.

accepting prohibitions on drinking and smoking, avoiding immoral places such as markets, adhering to bodily cleanliness and keeping a clean compound. Bruner notes that amidst changes in late-colonial Uganda, Revival was simultaneously a message of “eternal salvation”, and a means for adherents to exert control over changing family situations.³⁹⁶ Women, for example, could emphasise monogamy as homes became autonomous from the lineage, and migrant husbands became more mobile—allowing them to take another wife elsewhere. Among Lugbara *Balokole* too, the expression of possession was linked to enacting new moral ideals. For women, the insistence on cleanliness, fidelity, and the confession of sin provided a means for adherents to assert themselves as moral persons, aligning with, rather than contravening, ideas of discipline and respect, and of being *oku ala* (a good wife) at the core of Lugbara society. Though participating in divine power, spirit-inspired possession broadly supported wider notions of discipline advocated in clans.

4.4.3 Disavowing Ancestors

By the late years of the colonial state, Christianity was having other effects on moral praxis in the countryside. European missionaries equated prior practices associated with honouring the dead – including ancestral ‘worship’ as well as ritual dances performed at funerals – as “idolatrous” presenting a barrier to Christianity, modernity, and scientific medicine. Dobson encapsulates the Anglican view, which was characteristically detached from local circumstances: “Animism does not only bring fear, it also is a millstone round people’s necks preventing them from making progress”.³⁹⁷ As with Catholic missions elsewhere in Uganda, Comboni missionaries were more attentive to

³⁹⁶ J. Bruner, ‘The Testimony Must Begin in the Home’: The Life of Salvation and the Remaking of Homes in the East African Revival in Southern Uganda, c. 1930-1955’, *Journal of Religion in Africa* 44:3-4 (2014), pp. 309-332.

³⁹⁷ Dobson, *Daybreak in West Nile*, pp. 17-8.

local vocabularies, attempting to document prior religious systems.³⁹⁸ Yet even Ramponi reached the conclusion that ancestors were a source of fear for ordinary Lugbara people. By contrast to the human names and terms through which Lugbara elders spoke of their ancestors, the *ori* were now described collectively as *orindi*, spirits of the dead, or the ‘souls of the living-dead’ who could torment the living. Constructed as a religious other, missionaries labelled the *ori* as “things of Satan,” and those who venerated ancestors as *kafiri* (Kis ‘pagan’).³⁹⁹ According to missionaries, as Christians, Lugbara people should trust in God. Yet despite the vitriol directed at pre-existing practices, beyond preaching the virtues of Mungu, there was little direct action against such practices beyond the immediate vicinity of missions (in the South) through much of the colonial period.⁴⁰⁰

This changed as generations of Lugbara converts were educated in mission schools. Initially, converts were recruited to establish churches. As indicative of the success of these endeavours, by 1964 more than 400 Anglican churches had been established across West Nile, led by local clergy.⁴⁰¹ In the Catholic tradition too, from 1921 to 1958 many other mission stations were opened, with Lugbara Catholics taking on roles as catechists and lay teachers.⁴⁰²

By the late colonial period, male Christian converts operationalised earlier mission critiques in direct attacks on ancestral shrines. From the late 1940s in the South, and

³⁹⁸ E. Ramponi, ‘Religion and Divination of the Logbara Tribe of North-Uganda’, *Anthropos* 32 (1937): pp. 571-594, pp. 849-874.

³⁹⁹ Dalfovo, ‘Lugbara Ancestors’, p. 499.

⁴⁰⁰ Behrend, *Resurrecting Cannibals*, p. 4.

⁴⁰¹ Dobson, *Daybreak in West Nile*, p. 45.

⁴⁰² Cadri, *The Development of Small Christian Communities*, p. 17.

from the late 1950s in the North, zealous Lugbara converts undertook radical evangelical projects premised on the material destruction of shrines. Interviewees for this research explained that clerical leaders from both denominations, Protestant (Anglican) and Catholic, were involved in destroying shrines. Revivalists took a leading role; indeed, one elder recalls the divergence between Anglican converts and *Balokole*: “For them [Anglicans], they say these traditional issues can be left [alone]. But for Revival, all of these things were condemned.”⁴⁰³ Catholic Action groups participated in similar efforts. Given the prevalence of the ancestral system across the countryside, the destruction of shrines became a site of struggle between Christian evangelists and village elders. Elders today, some of whom witnessed this destruction, often recounted this history in narratives that the coming of *dini* was marked by the destruction of shrines.

Symbolically, the destruction of the *ori* served as a visible demonstration of the power of *Mungu*, the Christian deity. To give a sense of the power of these events, the following account from 1962, relayed by an Anglican church teacher and confirmed by other Maracha elders, is indicative. Owing to the power of the Kimeru shrine, a clan historically associated with rainmaking, these events are part not only of Kimeru clan history but also of the establishment of the Anglican church in Maracha.⁴⁰⁴

Reverend Canon Matia Anguandia [an Anglican Revivalist from Maracha] was the one who destroyed the small gods. He went to destroy the shrine when he was a headmaster at Nyoro Primary School. He was a Lugbara from Ayivu. This was in 1956. He was a committed Christian of the church, but he was serving as the headmaster of this school. When he heard of the Kimeru people still having a shrine, he went to destroy it. He was the only one who had the interest and courage. The Kimeru clan was regarded as having particularly strong power

⁴⁰³ I, Elder, Arua, 18/05/2016 (OJ).

⁴⁰⁴ FG, Kimeru, 31/05/2016 (OJ); I, Pastor, Kimeru, 13/03/2017.

compared to other clans. They were all worshipping the supreme power of Kimeru, the power to control the rain and weather.

Before he went he first stood and announced in church that he was going ‘to destroy that shrine the Kimeru people had.’ So when the Kimeru people heard what he had announced, they themselves said ‘our small god is more powerful than the god that he is serving.’ What happened, there were some bees, where the Chico quarry is now—there were bees in a certain cave. Those [Kimeru] people said that as he passes to that shrine—[at] this hill the bees will sting him to death. It was a threat, though even in reality those bees had strung someone to death. Before he went he sent information to his relatives that here he had found two things. The first was the bees at this quarry and the second one was the snake from that shrine. If the bees stung him to death, his people should not come and fight the Kimeru people, since he went to destroy the shrine out of his own will.

When he destroyed that shrine, nothing happened. It empowered the church teacher and the Christians of Nyoro church, that their God is supreme... He went to preach in Miridri, after two days he went to Baria, he also stayed for another two days and then moved to preach within the Kimeru clan. Then he went to Odravu to preach. He was preaching that the power of the Almighty God was greater than the power of the Devil that these people had been worshipping. After some time, after he preached in Kimeru, a church was established in Kimeru.

Echoing other accounts recorded during this research, this encounter demonstrates how specific events became theologically persuasive, both feeding into conversations of causality for misfortune and providing evidence to bolster Christian evangelism.

Ordinarily, it was considered taboo for the living even to carry the ancestral stones, for fear of provoking sickness from offended ancestors.⁴⁰⁵ In cases where ancestral shrines were abandoned, furthermore, it was thought that ancestors protested this abandonment through *ori ka* or *nyoka*, states of sickness that befell entire clans. The failure of these consequences to manifest proved the power of *Mungu* over the ancestral spirits—now designated as *orindi*, lesser spirits.

⁴⁰⁵ Enyabo, *A Survey of Lugbara Spirit Beliefs*, p. 7.

Recalling this history, Christian elders emphasised the triumphalism of their actions as converts. Yet, at the time, these efforts were considered unwelcome, interpreted by rural elders as threatening social stability. Even theologians report that after independence, *dini* was seen by many as a source of division. If young men who refused to share migrant earnings were suspected to be sorcerers, converts who targeted sites of social stability, were violently punished. Margaret Lloyd, the Anglican missionary, recounts how the leader of the Strivers in Maracha, after receiving divine instruction to destroy his father's "big spirit shrines," travelled to the countryside to do so and was subsequently beaten and left for dead by his family.⁴⁰⁶

In view of this resistance, efforts unfolded over decades on a clan-basis. In the South, where mission stations were concentrated, ancestors were abandoned decades before they would be abandoned in the North, in Maracha and Terego. Understandably, converts were reluctant to undertake radical action which carried significant personal cost, including the risk of ostracisation from the lineage and its associated social securities. Even when *ori* were destroyed, mass conversion within clans did not result. Some elders simply restored the *ori*, others organised the burning of Christian books in retaliation.⁴⁰⁷ In Maracha, many elders explained that they left the *ori* behind only as late as 1980, when fleeing war.⁴⁰⁸

Given the multiple functions of ancestors described in Chapter Three, this reluctance is understandable. Though castigated by Christians as "pagan", ancestral sites lay at the

⁴⁰⁶ Lloyd, *A Wedge of Light*, p. 71.

⁴⁰⁷ Enyabo, *A Survey of Lugbara Spirit Beliefs*.

⁴⁰⁸ FG, Pio, 02/03/2017 (OJ); I, Abiti, Kampala, 15/03/2016.

centre of social peace and cohesion, and provided elderly men with needed ritual status. Even today elders explained that the *ori* represented *a'bi* (grandfathers or, history). Unlike their educated sons, uneducated elders found little relevance in the advancements offered by Christian missions. It is significant too, that these events took place within an indigenisation of the church – a *Lugbarati* Bible being made available after independence, and within the Catholic church, from the late 1950s the term *Adro* being reintroduced into the Christian texts and songs (with *Adroa* for lesser divinities and spirits).⁴⁰⁹

Prior to war, it is clear that Lugbara people participated in Christianity through an increasing array of social projects. Through localised Christian practices, Lugbara people actively debated and reformed ideas of morality, propriety and belief. Directed by spiritual inspiration, some projects complemented ideas of discipline connected to the patrilineage, whilst others directly challenged them. Whilst the personal projects of reform undertaken by *Balokole* may have been perceived as odd, by contrast to the destruction of shrines, these activities did not pose a threat to *tualu* (togetherness). In all – spirit inspired activities were assessed not on account of its associations with a particular institution (be that mission Christianity, or Revivals) – but on how this power was practiced in the social context.

4.5: 'Let us believe in this God that has been brought': War and Exile

⁴⁰⁹ Similar positions were also taken in the Anglican Church under a Ma'di Bishop, Remelia Ringtho, who sought to better understand spirit beliefs in order to 'screen out' bad ideas rather than reject such notions wholesale. Anglican scholars set out to document the synergies between pre-existing practice and indigenous beliefs.

The experience of war and displacement from 1979-86 had profound effects on notions of divine protection. Hutchinson writes of inter-ethnic conflict in South Sudan in the 1990s, that amidst upheaval that surpasses explanations within moral limits, “one of the few things people can do to retain faith in the future and in themselves is to band together to create moral enclaves in which they collectively reaffirm their commitment to God's will—however defined.”⁴¹⁰ For Lugbara populations too, war and displacement were interpreted as indicative of divine causality. Within the warscape, when soldiers serving as agents of the state engendered abject terror in local populations, and the unstable economic and social circumstances of exile challenged elders’ moral authority, churches often provided a semblance of particular and spiritual security. In exile, too, Christian theologies provided a means to make sense of uncertain surroundings, and Christian converts often pragmatically asserted their identities as Christian to blend with Congolese.

Missionaries, who had previously been seen as imposing foreign ideas which challenged local society, protected people from this violence. Missions were directly targeted, and missionaries killed. Amidst the horrors of war, as civilians came under siege from both the UNLA and rebel factions, Lugbara people often turned to missions for sanctuary and support. Some 10,000 West Nilers had sought refuge at the Ombaci Catholic Mission, hoping that the presence of international missionaries and the Red Cross would confer safety. On 24th June 1981, however, UNLA soldiers entered the mission and opened fire on the civilians, resulting in the deaths of between 50-100

⁴¹⁰S. Hutchinson, ‘A Curse from God? Religious and political dimensions of the post-1991 rise of ethnic violence in South Sudan’, *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 39:2 (2001), pp. 307-331, p. 316.

people.⁴¹¹ The Catholic Mission in Lodonga, which lay at the front line between the UNLA army and rebel forces, was targeted by liberation forces with long-range weapons. Ediofe Mission, lying proximate to the UNLA barracks in Arua, was also raided: six people and one nun were killed, and rebels tortured Catholic priests.⁴¹² Today, there is a deep collective memory amongst Lugbara people that the church suffered *alongside* them, that missionaries protected people, and even “paid for people to live”. Indeed, it was often clergy who led those in exile back home, their knowledge that return would be safe being trusted over other authorities.⁴¹³

For Lugbara civilians, Christian identity was also given new import. Amin’s former soldiers, who formed the main internal resistance to the UNLA, were often identified (accurately or not) as ‘Muslims’. Thus, to be Muslim was to risk being identified as a rebel, and to risk being killed by the UNLA army. One Lugbara church teacher, a resident of Terego who was residing in Yumbe (a majority Muslim district) during the war, recalled: “God has been merciful to me. Even after the war, I had been paying my poll tax in Aringa. If anyone knew that, the soldiers would kill you on the spot, because they were saying the Aringas had caused the war”.⁴¹⁴

Whilst identifying as Christian conferred a degree of safety before going into exile, in the same way, Christian churches provided a means for elders to remedy insecurity in Congo. For example, identifying as a Christian leader also proffered a means of

⁴¹¹ ‘The 1981 Ombaci Massacre’, West Nile Web, 18 January 2018. Available at <<https://www.westnileweb.com/special-features/features/the-1981-ombaci-massacre>>.

⁴¹² Harrell-Bond, *Imposing Aid*.

⁴¹³ I, Elder, Arua, 26/01/2017.

⁴¹⁴ I, Elder, Onzivu, 10/05/2016 (OJ).

mediating with Congolese authorities. One catechist of St Joseph's Church in Aroi explained how Congolese *sudas* (soldiers) collected market dues through him and other catechists. Participating in these affairs gave him a voice to protect his fellow Ugandans, and to prevent *sudas* from "mistreating people".⁴¹⁵ Another Lugbara priest credited with healing abilities explained that his services were accessed by the Congolese.⁴¹⁶ Through engaging with church infrastructures, people used the resources available to them to survive, to integrate with the population and to protect their families.

Prior to war, mission evangelism and Revival had been cross-border enterprises: the AIM and Comboni Fathers had also been active in Congo, and the Striver movement had become established in Aru, DRC, as well. Amidst the uncertainties of exile, these connections provided a sense of continuity. One Catholic elder remembered how taking Holy Communion provided a source of stability, and given the similarities in Christian structures, many informants for this research explained that prayer in Congolese churches provided a means for ordinary people to proactively work towards return.⁴¹⁷ Moreover, as Pentecostal churches (which had also arrived in Arua during Amin's rule) were more established in Congo, both women and men recalled experiencing and connecting with new forms of ecstatic worship and immanent healing. One Revival leader, Manoa Ofuta explains how healing gifts emerged amidst continuing insecurities:

There was a gentleman— his brother was sick. It was during Amin's [rebel] army. He got sick somewhere and was sent home. They asked me to go and pray for him. God used me in a different form. His relatives had to come and find out what sickness was binding him. That was not my motive—those were cultural ways. I asked the owner of the home, 'I am a Church-man, I am a Church leader.

⁴¹⁵ I3 Elder, Aroi, 27/05 2016 (OJ).

⁴¹⁶ I, Methodist Minister/ Wife, Vurra, 24/05/2017.

⁴¹⁷ I3 Elder, Aroi, 27/05/2016 (OJ).

I have come with my team. These people should come out of this home, so I can come in.’ I said ‘We are going to pray as church men—I am going to lay my hands on the sick man, after those prayers – if you don’t believe that this man will get up—do not say amen.’ I laid my hands on him. The sick man saw a snake running. He was shouting ‘snake, snake, snake’. He couldn’t stand but after those prayers—he was standing and fighting the snake. From then on he could stand... they had been carrying him before that, that was physical healing.⁴¹⁸

Another woman explained how after several weeks of attendance she channelled her prayers towards afflictions within her family, laying hands on her husband to reverse his declining health. War temporality resettled relations of patriarchy and seniority, and to survive, people came to depend on each other in new ways, materially and spiritually. In a period where medical care was difficult to access, for many Lugbara people simply staying alive was evidence of God’s power. One elder, Caleb Ondoma, who remained in Uganda throughout the war, camped on the slopes of Mt Oci:

I didn’t go into exile ... We fled to Mt. Oci ... We were staying on the slopes of the mountains. We slept under trees. If it rained you covered yourself with leaves. At night we went back to Yole to get cassava from the garden. On the mountain, that was the most miraculous thing God did. There was no sickness, no malaria—much as people were in rain, the cold, being bitten by wild insects, there was no sickness during that period. That was God’s work. God has been merciful to me.⁴¹⁹

For many individuals, God’s power was made manifest in people’s ability to avoid disease, and remain with their families. This was not a recognition of the divine expressed through ceremony, but through the simple fact of staying alive.

When recalling the experience of war and displacement, many elders encapsulated their experiences in biblical scripts of punishment and redemption. These memories indicate the extent to which Christian theology provided a means to comprehend the horrors of

⁴¹⁸ I, Canon Manoa Ofuta and Samuel Ondua, Mvara, 14/03/2017.

⁴¹⁹ I6, Elder, Abrici, 9/06/2017 (OJ).

war. On the one hand, elders explained violence as a punishment for their previous rejection of *Mungu*. For example:

[We] saw exile as a punishment from God—people were taught [that] if you do not believe in God you will have misfortunes—and war is one of those things—so we understood that the war was because we had not been following God, and we started to believe...⁴²⁰

and

People conceived exile as a punishment from God because of [their] not listening to God.⁴²¹

On the other hand, Lugbara people internalised political explanations of conflict, whereby West Nilers were equated with the misdeeds of Amin's soldiers. This was expressed in biblical narratives of personal sin:

People understood that Ugandans had misbehaved so God was punishing them through war. During Amin's regime, the soldiers committed atrocities. Amin's soldiers were doing something against God's will.⁴²²

Such explanations simultaneously drew on Old Testament ideas of divine punishment and a punitive, omnipotent being—*Adro*, the ultimate arbiter of misfortune—as well as curses that could kill off entire clans. For other elders, notions of salvation and survival in Revivalist preaching gained new significance, providing an antidote to narratives of divine curses and punishment.

Many people lost their relatives and were told that God saves people. They came to believe that if we had believed in God earlier, maybe these things would not have happened—so let us believe in this God that has been brought.⁴²³

Either way, the specific dynamics of war in the 1980s brought new meaning to the role of Christian actors and institutions in ordinary people's lives, and so to the influence of the Christian theology premised on punishment or salvation. Elders consistently equated

⁴²⁰ FG, Elders, Pio, 02/03/2017 (OJ).

⁴²¹ I, Pastor, Kimeru, 13/03/2017.

⁴²² I, Elder, Terego, 02/06/2017 (OJ).

⁴²³ FG, Elders, Ombavu, 07/03/2017 (OJ).

war to the expression of an omnipotent being. Whilst these ideas had existed prior to war, when inflected through the prism of personal suffering and survival, elders explained that they came to *a'ii* ('believe', a term that also means 'accept') the *dini* first brought by missionaries.⁴²⁴

According to interviews across Maracha, after return, in view of Christian identities connected to war, and the hardships of return, there was little interest in reinstating the *ori*. The post-war years saw a significant increase in conversion to Christianity, or Christians opting to become Saved. Several elders explained that they accepted salvation, and became Saved, soon after passing back into Uganda, their safe return serving as evidence of God's mercy. One leader, Canon Manoa Ofuta, confirmed: "The Revival moved from the margins to the core".⁴²⁵ As Jones has argued with reference to Teso, ideas of beginning a "new life" dovetailed with people's need to break with the past, and in this case, a conflict seen as "revenge" for others' misdeeds.⁴²⁶

4.6 Post-Return Charismatic Revivals and their Limits

Since return from exile Christianity has become a major force in people's lives, governing propriety and moral standards. As a simple illustration, throughout this research, moral homes were often identified as "god-fearing". Presently, Christian practice is marked not by distinct institutional boundaries, but by complexity and borrowing between denominations, and revivals within them. This section outlines the

⁴²⁴ It is also of note that Juma Oris, the leader of WNBFB, the rebel group that caused insecurity in Maracha, was believed to be possessed by spirits, or to have control of powerful spirits. Later, Oris' spirit (whilst he was still alive) was named by Joseph Kony as one of the chief spirits possessing him, issuing him orders in battle. For West Nilers, this legacy points to the devastating effects that male-inspired possession can have in response to militancy.

⁴²⁵ I, Ofuta, Mvara, 15/03/2017.

⁴²⁶ Jones, *Beyond the State*.

texture of post-return revivals, and explores cross-denominational continuities in the social practice of charismatic power.⁴²⁷

Over decades of return, Revival has occupied a less prominent presence in West Nile. At one service in Maracha, the attendees lamented that the majority female presence did not encourage their husbands to join, hence the movement was dying. Diocesan leaders lamented that the Revival had failed to inspire leadership among younger Lugbara generations.

In part, this is because the moral piety of Revivalism has been replaced by other charismatic dimensions of Anglicanism. Influenced by Pentecostalism, the importance of being ‘born again’ was widely propagated by a new rank of aspiring Anglican leaders who rose to prominence after exile—men who had often worked as labour migrants, as government civil servants, or in the army. Whilst still promoting strict moral virtues, becoming ‘born again’ does not carry the strict moral imperative to condemn social sins (within the church or beyond it) as advocated by Revivalists.⁴²⁸

Selected influential Anglican leaders are credited with having healing gifts, though their practice is mainly confined to Arua’s urban churches. One Pastor noted the resistance of lay populations: “Anglicans have no holy spirit!”, and “people were saying we had brought another religion and maybe it is a kind of sect because God was doing

⁴²⁷ For example, Behrend, *Resurrecting Cannibals*, and C. Christiansen. ‘Conditional Certainty: Ugandan Charismatic Christians Striving for Health and Harmony’, in L. Haram and C. Yamba (eds.), *Dealing with Uncertainty in Contemporary African Lives*. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2009, pp.48-71, p. 49.

⁴²⁸ Socially, Revivalists continue to be distinguished by their plain speech, where any evil is condemned as the devil—after a fight with a husband, for example, a Revival member may say ‘the devil passed through my husband yesterday’. Leaders explained the movement was undergoing a crisis, since its leaders were ageing.

wonderful things”⁴²⁹ Influential leaders are involved in managing affliction through prayer and the laying on of hands, they also disavow extremists who ascribe every case of illness to ‘demonic possession’, and emphasise the need to seek treatment from healers.⁴³⁰ Revivalists often considered faith healing a source of insecurity: “People tend to follow signs and wonders... they hear that here they are getting healers... For us elders in the Revival, we are outnumbered. We just pray [for them]”.⁴³¹

It is the Catholic Church which has undergone significant post war revival in the Charismatic Catholic Renewal (CCR). If healing gifts in the Anglican tradition are accepted insofar as they are mediated by male pastors, the CCR represents mass participation in spiritual gifts, and places a direct emphasis on personal gifts through channelling the power of the Holy Spirit. One adherent explained, “your life should be spirit-filled, spirit-directed, spirit everything”, and an intercessor said, “you are standing in the gap between people and God, you take the burden of that person, their sins, and you communicate between that person, the situation and God.”⁴³² Given the Catholic Churches indigenisation of the liturgy, CCR members now speak of *Adro*.

The CCR in Uganda has been extensively described by scholars, this section explores its localisation in Arua town and the countryside.⁴³³ The CCR represents a local

⁴²⁹ I, Reverend Kefaloli, Arua, 16/06/2017.

⁴³⁰ The resistance to healing ministries was expressed by my interlocutors, and has also been the enquiry of young Anglican theological scholars. A 2009 dissertation by Acidri Leviticus was predicated on exploring the “unbelief, reluctance and prayerlessness” that caused Anglicans to reject healing and exorcism ministries, contrasting the rejection of such ministries in rural areas against its acceptance in urban areas. See A. Leviticus, *Healing and Exorcism Ministries in Vurra*, Department of Development, Uganda Christian University, 2009.

⁴³¹ I, Reverend, Mvara, 10/05/2016.

⁴³² I2, CCR Member, Nsyambia, 20/05/17; I, CCR, Vurra, 13/04/2017 (Z).

⁴³³ For example, Behrend, *Resurrecting Cannibals*, and C. Christiansen. ‘Conditional Certainty: Ugandan Charismatic Christians Striving for Health and Harmony’, in L. Haram and C. Yamba (eds.), *Dealing with Uncertainty in Contemporary African Lives*. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2009, pp.48-71, p. 49.

iteration of global Christianity. Charismatic gifts among lay Catholics were accepted by the Vatican in 1971. The CCR reached Arua until 1984, at the time led by a prayer group directed by the White Fathers (Catholic Missionaries) at Christ the King Parish in Arua. The movement pivots around the establishment of the Bethany Centre in 2000, which features weekly prolific displays of mass deliverance which echo earlier performances of *Balokole* and Yakan. Today, Bethany enjoys a reach far beyond CCR members: its healing masses draw Catholics, non-Catholics, Anglicans, and even Muslims. Each week, hundreds of supplicants gather, many clutching holy water, to be blessed by the priests. Alongside spiritual maladies, many suffer from visible injuries or chronic conditions. A Catholic explained,

When the person preaches you will see Christians being touched in various different ways. Some will begin shouting. Others will begin jumping. Others will become crying. Others will roll. When the preacher calls the name of Jesus, Jesus come down, Holy Spirit come down, you will see a lot of things happening. Individuals – some will be dancing, with noise, some rolling, some are very chaotic.⁴³⁴

As with Revival, CCR encompasses a revitalization of traditional styles of worship, featuring indigenous instruments and vigorous prayer. Services are led by male priests, who for some occupy a prophetic status in the regional imagination, and often yield miraculous bodily healing. CCR members, and those who seek healing from the movement, are overwhelmingly female, though all members acknowledge the transformative impact of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Often decisions to join the CCR were predicated on experiencing change through the cleansing of physical or mental afflictions, or domestic disquiet which prayerful revelation revealed to be caused by *orindi onzi*, *jo jok*, or *oleu*. As with Saved Anglicans, CCR members must abide by

⁴³⁴ I, Catholic, Arua, 15/06/2017.

strict moral codes regarding sexual and public behaviour. If these codes are broken, prayerful repentance is required. One Lugbara priest explained: “[s]in can be physical, can be spiritual—you need to end your past life, and begin your new life.”⁴³⁵ For its adherents, participation in the CCR is a deeply moral and spiritual endeavour.

The CCR (and Anglican faith healing) is accepted in so far as healing is practiced by collectives, and legitimated through affiliation to established mainline churches. This legitimation matters, since in the last decade, charismatic movements have taken a frontline role in confronting social problems, particularly in confronting witchdoctors residing in urban communities, and latterly, witches in rural areas (Chapter Six and Seven). Interventions, which destroy the “shrines” of witchdoctors, or remove evil objects from the houses of witches, replicate the destruction of the *ori* in the colonial period. In cases of *mazi*—a form of killing spirit which has emerged post war—CCR members may decamp to rural villages, praying, revealing and burning herbs and objects that represent evil. In lieu of ancestral worship as an other to Christian piety, witchcraft or visiting a witchdoctor has come to represent the opposite of Christian piety. Tacitly accepting customary rites of marriage and death formerly castigate by pre-war converts, the emphasis on witchcraft has served as a useful explanation of failures in prosperity in modern times. Yet, whilst colonial action targeted a material religious landscape, collective action now targets *individuals* suspected of malpractice. Yet, in particular context of localised crisis, charismatic healers are understood as performing important social functions by those who fear themselves affected by particular forms of “modern” witchcraft.

⁴³⁵ I, Priest, Bethany, 16/05/2017.

To return to Ravalde's insights, the powers and limits of deities and spirits are always mediated by the abilities of their human hosts.⁴³⁶ In view of Christian Revivals which explicitly sanction the inhabitation of human bodies by spirits, the role of mediators becomes critical. Just as followers of Yakan and Strivers were considered a fanatical movement by non-adherents (including mainline Anglicans) in the colonial period, tensions have emerged around practices of possession. Critiques as to uncontrolled possession were common parlance during this research. A command refrain heard throughout this research was: "Is that truly the Holy Spirit?". Approached with novel forms of spirit-mediated possession, Lugbara people widely questioned whether power was *ala* (good) or *onzi* (bad), seeking to determine whether this power contributed to social health, or division. Anxieties are not assisted by translational complexities. Catholics take the term *Orindi Ala* for Holy Spirit, and though existing on the primacy of its cleansing, simultaneously, *orindi* have long been recognised as lesser spirits, associated with madness, and since return, with white anthropoid apparitions reminiscent of older *adroa*. Inspired by Christian theologies, these forces are associated with *Satani*, rather than potentially ambiguous aspects of *Adro*. Lay Catholics sometimes refer to the CCR by the derogatory phrase 'the movement of the sick' – in relation to the movement's emphasis on healing affliction, and the dubious nature of the spiritual powers channelled by its adherents.

In this way, individual charisma, when practiced publicly, can be subject to social policing, particularly in villages where healers operate from their homes, residing on

⁴³⁶ Ravalde, 'Deceiving the spirit'.

ancestral land and subject to clan by-laws. In Ediofe, for example, the makeshift deliverance church of a female Lugbara Pentecostal preacher was destroyed, in an attack reportedly sanctioned by the Catholic Church.⁴³⁷ In one borderland clan, a self-styled Catholic *nebi* ('prophet'), named Zefa Joseph, was violently evicted on account of practicing his "religion".⁴³⁸ The details of the latter case are here summarised, since they elucidate the contours of tolerance of individual charismatic authority.

Zefa received his gifts - divine messages as visions, dreams or songs - after experiencing a strange affliction, which he explains as a period of *edezu* (cleansing), which instructed him to evangelise against sins, including violence, drinking adultery or poisoning. He travelled round as an itinerant prophet, and gained a significant following "at home". Zefa's experience and evangelical tones were common to Charismatic Catholics (and Saved Anglicans). Additionally Zefa too took a firm stance on animal transfers that constitute bridewealth, or reimbursements after death, also condemning the worldly authority of elders:

Our culture is somehow misleading. The sacrifices... they eat in the name of the deceased, or in the name of their lineage. When clans sit they slaughter animals in the name of praying and getting cleansing from ancestors—they will always mention the name of the ancestor as they say the prayers. They attempt to get healing from the ancestors, not from God...it is like they are imitating Jesus.⁴³⁹

Whilst these critiques echo those of Revivalists, and replicate contemporary claims made by CCR priests, Zefa marshalled these contestations into grassroots confrontation. Zefa isolated himself from his clan, refusing to partake in collective meals, leading to

⁴³⁷ I, Jennifer, Pentecostal Pastor, Ediofe (Arua), 29/12/2017, English/Lugbara (PN). Reportedly, one established Kampalan pastor was even chased from his service by town dwellers. The contours of these events are complex, and whilst neighbours drive violence, conflicts are often incited through church sermons.

⁴³⁸ I, Zefa Joseph, Arua, 18/05/2017 (DA); I, Relative, Arua, 15/06/2017.

⁴³⁹ Whilst CCR male priests advance these critiques, lay CCR members do not participate in them. All CCR members interviewed explained that they continued to observe customs around marriage and death related to "culture".

mounting tensions over his anti-social presence. Of his practice, a clan elder explained: “As he was bringing a vision, it was as if he was running mad”.⁴⁴⁰ His clan members (which overlapped with his church congregation) asserted that his powers were *onzi* (evil), and claimed Zefa was trying to ‘anoint himself like the Pope’. Following Zefa’s attempts to influence the proceedings around a clan funeral, in 2009, he and his family were evicted from their homes by clan members, who destroyed the huts within his compound and threatened him with physical violence.

Zefa’s relatives offered multiple explanations for his eviction. The funeral in question was of his nephew, his brother’s child, who had died in Kampala. Some soil had been returned to the clan such that the nephew could be buried at home, where burial rites, which reportedly included traditional dancing, ensued. According to one relative, people were angered that as the funerary rites were proceeding, Zefa was hosting a parallel prayer session at his home—a sign of disrespect, and a negation of Zefa’s kinship responsibilities. Another relative reported that Zefa suggested that the soil for the grave should be placed not in the ground, but in water, mirroring the sacrament of baptism. Yet another relative said that Zefa had begun to instruct his followers to use prayer, rather than medicine, in cases of sickness, even as his own wife seemed close to death (a situation which would warrant the intervention of the clan). Regardless of the *truth* of the event that precipitated violence, all explanations clearly elucidate that Zefa challenged fundamental tenets of peace, respect to the dead and the well-being of the living. Violence by his clan was thus aimed at the perceived assault on their social world, reflected in the practices of Zefa’s mission. Zefa’s alleged possession by the

⁴⁴⁰ I, Elders, Kamaka, 19/06/2017 (DA).

Holy Spirit provoked anxiety enough among his clan and church, but it was the precise texture involved in the practice of his power that ultimately led to violence.

The eviction of Zefa has historical antecedents. Whilst women have embraced radical forms of possession, it has rarely been marshalled in direct contravention to clan-work. In the colonial period, violent struggles were pursued by clan elders and their spirit-inspired sons, who mobilised divine intervention to attack symbolic anchors of ritual life. In many ways Zefa's struggles echo early post-independence rivalries played out by elders and their Christian sons over the moral probity of shrines. As in the past, Lugbara elders' approach challenges to their lifeworlds not in terms of abject cosmological strife, but as closely-observed struggles between people, outcomes and spirit-inspired mediators. Presently, many Lugbara people are cognisant that many leaders, prophetic or otherwise, use power to enact suffering beyond their control—be these prophetic pastors, witchdoctors, self-styled healers, or other actors such as politicians or businessmen. Yet Zefa brought messages *home*, challenging social peace and health within his clan.⁴⁴¹ As this thesis shows, through clans can provide support, these are also theatres of rigorous policing towards those who challenge *tualu*.

4.7 On Boundary-Making and Cosmologies

Middleton sought to accommodate this world of forces and intermediaries within his dualism of Lugbara thought, contrasting the world of the divine with the legible world of the patrilineage, and dividing persons, things and activities into “opposed, contrasted,

⁴⁴¹ The following chapter (Five) comments on CCR “Family Tree Healing” practices, which too take critiques of gerontocatic authority “home”. Though these practices are mainly urban, priests who had conducted them reported stark resistance from elders.

or complementary pairs” of *onzi* (bad) and *ala* (good), respectively.⁴⁴² The masculine sphere of order, morality, elders, ancestors, evidence and control was held in continual tension with an external sphere of disorder connected to *Adro*, associated with unpredictability, femininity and instability.⁴⁴³ For reference I summarise:

<i>Onzi</i>	<i>onyiru</i>
<i>Adro</i> , in the sky, above, outside and remote from men	The world of men
<i>Adro</i> , in the bushland, away from settlements, the place of wild animals	The homestead and settlement, home of lineage members (including dead ancestors)
Disorder	Order
Outside and lacking social control	Within social control
Individuals	Social persons
Women and femaleness	Men and maleness
Asocial, morally ignorant, mythical beings	Socialized genealogical beings
Bush and uncultivated land	Settlements and cultivated fields
Wild animals	Domestic animals

*Adapted from Dual Classification*⁴⁴⁴

In this way, writes Middleton, “Lugbara conceive of their society as a field of ordered relations in the dimensions of space and time, and also in a moral dimension. They see it as an area of order surrounded by disorder, the latter the domain of asocial and amoral chaos and of unpredictable power uncontrolled by members of society whether living or dead”.⁴⁴⁵ In essence, cosmological balance—first expressed by elders, then invested in the routinisation of lineage authority—was maintained through limiting dangerous spiritual forces beyond the control or knowledge of men. Middleton summarised:

“[The] Lugbara would like the two spheres to be kept separate, but this never happens

⁴⁴² J. Middleton, ‘Some Categories of Dual Classification among the Lugbara of Uganda’, *History of Religions* 7:3 (1968), pp. 187-208, p. 188.

⁴⁴³ Middleton, *Lugbara Religion*, p. 250.

⁴⁴⁴ Middleton, ‘Some Categories of Dual Classification’, pp. 193-5.

⁴⁴⁵ *ibid.* p. 197.

for very long, as their own experience of forces beyond their control tells them.”⁴⁴⁶

Balance, then, was maintained through limiting the effects of *Adro*, effects made continually manifest through suffering.

Middleton’s dualism has proved influential not only for subsequent studies of Lugbara illness or political history, but also to explain gendered patterns of possession across societies in Northern Uganda, in both everyday and extreme contexts.⁴⁴⁷ It has been interpreted as relating to a gendered commentary on the distribution and expression of divine power. These observations remain relevant, since expressions of divine power remain gendered: women do become possessed more frequently than men. With reference to the Acholi context, Finnstrom notes, observing the gendering of displays of emotion and possession, that, “womanhood was, more than manhood, intimately associated with Acholi cosmology and the local moral world.”⁴⁴⁸ For Acholi men – as for Lugbara men - emphasis was put on control, and demonstrating responsibility through restraint. Whilst Chapter Six explores the production of female possession, this chapter has explored the broad parameters of possession in historical and contemporary times, and the wider social engagements of divine praxis. It has suggested that an acceptance of possession pertains not to gendered essentialisms, but to the end results of how specific practices of possession are applied in everyday life.

⁴⁴⁶ Middleton, ‘Spirit Mediumship among the Lugbara’, p.222.

⁴⁴⁷ Barnes-Dean, ‘Lugbara illness beliefs’; King, ‘The Yakan Cult’

⁴⁴⁸ S. Finnstrom, Gendered War and Rumours of Saddam Hussein in Uganda, *Anthropology and Humanism*, 34(1), pp.61-70, p.64

Allen explains that Christianity has reconciled the ambiguity in divine power, translating forces which were perceived as *onzi* into social forces.⁴⁴⁹ Yet, viewing expressions such as Yakan – or Christianity – as stable institutions neglects to consider the dynamics and partial ways expressions are experienced in rural communities. It also ignores how the intention of individuals is subject to continual scrutiny (Chapter Seven and Eight). As in the period prior to war, complex Christian practices are understood less as abstract theology, but in their relation to their complementarity with evolving patrilineal securities and individual repute. With reference to Revival, and Christian practice throughout the colonial period, activities were welcomed in so far as they supported mutuality, and challenged when converts challenged the moral order of the patrilineage too directly. As this chapter has shown, the aspirations of Christian converts have been gendered in relation to the relative social power of actors to vocalise particular moral ideals.

Post-return charismatic revivals have increased the complexity with which global scripts of possession are localised into the grassroots. In the rural countryside, Lugbara people draw on ideas of Charismatic Christianity in vibrant ways, as prophets, intercessors and diviners, to provide protection, and sometimes to begin entirely new *dini*. Whilst this creative tapestry of divinely-inspired leaders may provide answers to people's misfortunes, spirit-inspired directives can in themselves become a source of insecurity. Such questions are particularly pertinent in the realm of healing or religion, since these practices govern life and death. For elders who remain answerable to the health of their clans, at times, this can involve instigating violent policing. Fears are not

⁴⁴⁹ Allen, 'Understanding Alice'.

solely directed along gendered lines – both women and men who exhibit charismatic power in anti-social ways can be sent away.

Discussing Middleton’s schema with Lugbara people, divisions between good and bad often elicited approval. One Lugbara elder confirmed, “Yes, there are good things and bad things”. Another elder explained, “It is not about philosophy, but about practical outcome.”⁴⁵⁰ Whereas Middleton understood states of good and bad to be oppositional, Lugbara people ascertain these verdicts on the basis of context and outcome. My interlocutors rarely debated the realities of power, but on how practice affects social well-being and health; whether prophets, diviners or pastors contributed or undermined *tualu* - mutuality. This is less of a struggle for cosmological balance or the ordering of specific categories, than a pursuit of life in relation to the human mediation of power.

Rather than assuming gendered essentialisms as reflecting whether power is good or bad, this thesis contends that an acceptance of possession—both in the past and present—relies on its social *outcome*. Reaching into the past, at particular moments of crisis – including mass epidemics and wartime: dangerous and distant spiritual forces and human authorities were consulted since they remedied situations of affliction.

During periods of relative stability - attaining cosmological balance depends on assessing how power is used by individual practitioners. Historically, the exercise of female possession and the suppression of male power exist side by side, but are related to the responsibilities and outcomes of how men and women have used power in relation to *Adro* or *Mungu*.

⁴⁵⁰ I, Haruna Ndema, 26/10/2016.

4.8: Conclusion

This chapter has explored historical expressions of possession and charisma in West Nile. Moving beyond attempts to define or classify divine concepts, this chapter has used the prism of practice to show how popular participation has long provided a means for “marginal” social groups to make claims regarding healing, and to rearticulate moral ideals of being. Whilst practices of possession, performed in Yakan, and Christian Revivals echo through crisis and peacetime alike, crisis ushers in radical realignments of practice and moral norms, periods of peacetime reflect the need to restore moral-spiritual balance through regulating the individual practice of power. Charismatic claims are limited and policed, according to their effects on *tualu*.

Thus this chapter has argued that the social acceptance of possession is dependent not necessarily upon its gendering, but upon how the outcome of individual practice is assessed by observers, collectives, and crucially, relatives. Thus, in contravening particular norms—including rites of marriage and death, or in encouraging practices that promote ill-health—self-styled prophets and healers may be subject to evictions, if their practice occurs within the jurisdiction of the clan.

Continuing the exploration of suffering, cosmology, and repair in the present day, the next chapter now turns to the reconstitution of clan-based explanations for misfortune. Considering how elders have reconstituted their authority following return, adds further explanatory meaning to the eviction of Zefa Joseph.

Part II: Explaining Azo: Chronic Sickness, Clans and Diviners

Chapter Five

***E'yo* that “follows”: the lingering world of moral affliction**

We still derive a lot from our social support systems which include our family and extended family, we wouldn't want to harm anything that would be contrary to that... At the end of the day, if there is a problem, when you die—even with modern treatment—you will still be buried by your own people. When you are sick, you aren't looked after by the government, you are looked after by your own people who come with those strong cultural values... it has tried to build some level of conformity—whether you like it or not you begin to conform to these norms.⁴⁵¹

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the evolution of explanations of misfortune befalling families and clans, and the role elders play in this process. If previous chapters provided historical and spiritual context for such acts, this analysis outlines changing contours of discipline and obligation that Lugbara elders offer in relation to sickness and misfortune in the present day. As suggested by the above quote offered by an Aruan doctor, care—including end-of-life care—is often provided by relatives, not by the government. Whilst this doctor reifies such conditions as static “cultural values” common to a public health approach, this research shows how Lugbara elders have advanced specific explanations for and responses to misfortune since the return from exile.

Explanations of elders revolve around tracing *e'yo* (words, or deeds), or failures of *azi* (work), as defined by normative clan visions of action and responsibility. In this realm, sickness follows a person because of who they are, and their relations to the living and

⁴⁵¹ I, Doctor, ARRH, 18/06/2017.

the dead. To use Meinert's words, the effects of disturbances "haunt" relatives, irrespective of distance.⁴⁵²

Previously, Chapter Three described how in the 1950s, individual afflictions were usually attributed to ancestral wrath, activated by the indignation of their elderly guardians. In the late colonial period, such efforts to manage affliction served simultaneously to heal social wounds engendered by offences, as well as to enforce disciplinary codes and affirm social hierarchies. Owing to the demands of the time, sickness was often related to the neglect of youthful male migrants. Subsequent studies have suggested that modern changes have eroded these internal mechanisms, and the explanatory power of clan elders regarding sickness.⁴⁵³

Yet I argue that, on the contrary, clan elders—often accompanied by their sons who have taken bureaucratised titles as 'clan leaders'—continue to be much invested in tracing and resolving misfortune. As Chapter Two illuminated, clan healing was a lived system of practice, whereby social events were debated in cases of sickness, and verdicts institutionalised through oracular consultation. This chapter argues that since the ancestral system was less about religious practices, and centrally about re-ordering and disciplining human relations, particular words and senior figures have continued to prove resilient both in the generation and resolution of misfortune.

⁴⁵² L. Meinert, 'Haunted Families after the War in Uganda: Doubt as Polyvalent Critique', *Ethnos* 85:4 (2020), pp. 595-611, p. 595.

⁴⁵³ Barnes-Dean, 'Lugbara illness beliefs'.

Evolving explanations of misfortune point to the continuing importance of family and clan in ensuring fortune through rights, resources and care in the countryside. In addition to the regulation of conduct, these curses enforce social and economic obligations, such as encouraging financial transfers at marriage and death—reinforcing the normative boundaries of clan-based social fabrics that are increasingly challenged by modern changes and generational rifts. Yet at the same time as many Lugbara people assert the primacy of these structures, the realities of what Baines and Gauvin term the “bankruptcies of lineages and sub-clans” are continually made apparent.⁴⁵⁴

This chapter begins by interrogating the notions that sickness may “follow” individuals, families and clans, describing a kind of shadow lineage of misfortune trailing the living members. Second, it goes on to describe three concepts applied to suffering: cursing, unpaid lineage transfers, and retributive acquisitions. Whilst many elders explained sickness as relating to particular social visions, this chapter finally explores how the idiom of “deciphering” such afflictions is currently in deep crisis.⁴⁵⁵ Amid increasing social fragmentation, and the limited social and financial investments of male clan members in tracing even critical afflictions, many cases remain left unattended. Within the fragilities of this system, other options are sought.

5.2 Evolving Idioms: Misfortunes that “Follow”

In cases of persistent affliction, many Lugbara explain that misfortune is “following” those individuals who suffer. Whilst Lugbara people accept that suffering can be caused

⁴⁵⁴ E. Baines and L.R. Gauvin, ‘Motherhood and Social Repair after War and Displacement in Northern Uganda’, *Journal of Refugee Studies* 27:2 (2014), pp. 282–300, p. 291.

⁴⁵⁵ Das, *Affliction*, p. 11.

by viruses, parasites, or infectious diseases, suffering can also be caused by words or curses brought about by one's own actions, or even by antecedent actions of living or dead family members that "follow" the living and necessitate cleansing. A useful analogy to understand transformations in misfortune comes in Meinert and Grøn's conceptualisation of "contagious kinship connections," where "diseases and other phenomena can be transmitted either with or without physical contact, but are often implied in a social bond or connections".⁴⁵⁶ Whilst relatives can provide health, security, and protection as care-givers and financial providers, social bonds can also breed misfortune.

The logics and consequences of misfortune described here stem largely from family members connected through blood, descent or marriage, and are "sticky," in that they are understood to remain with people throughout their lives. As Meinert and Grøn note, unlike friendship or business connections, blood ties cannot be abandoned or "cut completely," and indeed the neglect that would constitute this severing could be a source of misfortune in itself.⁴⁵⁷ The transmission of sickness is thus independent of space between individuals: elders interviewed for this research described settlements demanding that implicated individuals return "home" from the USA, Europe or even just Kampala to address issues. Whilst proximity can engender misfortune, the cases described here involve the violation of social bonds rather than dangerous encounters or touches. Importantly, to attend to suffering involves interrogating one's own actions and

⁴⁵⁶ Meinert and Grøn, 'It Runs in the Family', pp. 581-2.

⁴⁵⁷ *ibid.* p. 582.

moral position regarding marriages, deaths and inheritance—rather than physical contact.⁴⁵⁸

As families today extend across space, so, too, do ideas about sickness extend through time. Since misfortunes can also follow generations, contagious relations remain significant beyond the lifespan of any individual or living generation. Accepting that suffering can “follow” families often necessitates an opening up of the intimacies of familial heritage: pertinent events could reside months or years in the past, or could arise from the misconduct of kin, false allegations, eviction of wives, unpaid funerary debts, or marriage dues residing several generations back in lineage history. Thus violations of past and present provide resources that serve as critical events to generate present misfortunes. “Haunting” of living family members persists until the event is brought out into the open and resolved before a ritual congregation.⁴⁵⁹

In such cases of sickness, past histories of obligation or acts subject to examination can involve either descendants of one lineage or inter-lineage histories of marriage. Repair thus necessitates an open-ended “tracing” of the past, grounded in connections, but much evolved from the closed system Middleton described in the 1950s. If at that time ancestors were afforded the ability to affect and reverse sickness, and most cases concerned social violations or disputes among the living, today Lugbara people view suffering through an expanded social landscape of possible sources—particularly though histories of marriage, which through the transfer of bridewealth engenders obligations between different clans. Misfortune can be generated by unfulfilled

⁴⁵⁸ Cases of poisoning also follow inheritance. Whilst attacks are said to result from eating, abilities to poison are said to be inherited in the lineage (cf. Chapter Nine).

⁴⁵⁹ Meinert and Grøn, ‘It Runs in the Family’, p. 4.

obligations of the living, but also in relation to the past. The souls of one's ancestors do remain significant in that their discontent continues to be understood in relation to mystical sickness, which flows through blood ties, affecting living generations. In such cases, misfortune affects not just an individual, but "follows" family members, or members of entire clans. The gradual accumulation of misfortunes contributes to awareness of "something being not quite right."⁴⁶⁰

Whilst among Lugbara populations particular ideas about spirits and witchcraft have now been codified by the Christian church, forms of sickness discussed here continue to be described by a human vocabulary, often using the names of the relatives involved. Evading the imprint of Christian translations, sickness in this realm is not referred to as emanating from *orindi* (spirits) or witchcraft. Issues are often referred to as *e'yo* (words) "spoken against us," or alternatively from unpaid obligations, e.g., "this sickness results from bridewealth." The vocabulary comes from *suru*, and sickness is explicitly spoken of with reference to the unique relationship—the disturbed relation or rite—of each case. Certainly, the incidence of critical events—particularly unpaid dues and undone funerary rites—is indelibly entangled in circumstances of war and economic hardship that makes fulfilling these obligations difficult. But afflictions that "follow" emanate from the way in which external events have imprinted themselves upon human obligations between families: misfortune both describes, and is described by, reference to intimate relations.

⁴⁶⁰ Das, *Affliction*, p. 1.

In the cases I documented, the forms of suffering under enquiry included: persistent or continuous affliction that evaded medical treatment, reproductive disorders, and generalised misfortunes. Das's description of categories of affliction that flow through the everyday—becoming absorbed into daily life, whilst marking it with a sense of “foreboding”—well encapsulates how this sense manifested among my interlocutors.⁴⁶¹ At times, conditions can become critical, and on occasion, deaths could be attributed to underlying problems.

For Lugbara people, suffering itself is often relational, involving the patterning of these events across groups of relations: within homes, families, or across entire clans.

Individual cases of affliction were less significant than collective patterns: elders speak of individual affliction within the framework of collectives, namely, that “misfortunes are befalling *us*” (emphasis mine). At their core, states of affliction have a *relative* dimension: this sense of collective suffering accounts for the omission of these ideas from previous studies that have focused on individual patient pathways.⁴⁶² Powerful underlying anxieties and unease are gradually confirmed or neglected as cases of misfortune accrue, or fail to manifest, in particular families.

This distribution of sickness is not considered random; rather it directs an enquiry into the appropriate level of the past. In cases where families suffer (specifically women and children), the answer may lie in marriage settlements. Where entire clans suffer misfortune, then funerary rites or other events of the past may be implicated. Curses, for

⁴⁶¹ *ibid.* p. 19.

⁴⁶² For example, Barnes-Dean, ‘Lugbara illness beliefs’.

example, can affect clans across generations, flowing through the lineage until brought out and resolved. Though clans retain a monopoly on managing most sicknesses that “follow”, ideas of family haunting are borrowed from an array of specialists, and respond to real and perceived changes in both the distribution of affliction, and ways of explaining it within an increasingly plural diagnostic context.

5.2.1 Patterns of Affliction

Ideas about sickness following blood descent have been deeply influenced by observed patterns of sickness and mortality, following the return from exile. Many informants recounted that, in the two decades following return, new patterns of death emerged, wherein family members perished one by one. Whilst little is known about HIV/AIDS prevalence among Lugbara populations, Allen notes the overrepresentation of southern Ugandan within surveys of national prevalence, with 15 or 21 sentinel sites used up to the mid-1990s being located in the south and central regions of the country.⁴⁶³ Yet given national trends, it is likely that patterns of mortality clustered around families were caused by AIDS. One survey, led by Makerere scholars across the North in Arua, Soroti and Lira, reported high rates of AIDS-mortality among Lugbara respondents. Recorded mortality was significantly higher in Arua than in the other study sites: Arua (26.9%), whilst (9.7%) in Soroti or 12.9% in Lira.⁴⁶⁴ This high prevalence was linked by scholars both to the commercial boom that flourished during relative peace post-war, as well as to the marriage of women to soldiers. The survey reported AIDS mortality was

⁴⁶³ T. Allen, ‘AIDS and evidence: interrogating [corrected] some Ugandan myths’, *Journal of Biosocial Science* 38:1 (2006), pp. 7-28, p. 9.

⁴⁶⁴ N. Ayiga, et al., ‘Causes, patterns, differentials and consequences of AIDS mortality in Northern Uganda’, *The Continuing African HIV/AIDS Epidemic*, 1999, pp. 139-154, p. 146.

highest in “unstable marriages”, where the couple cohabited but were not formally married, and where bridewealth had not been transferred.⁴⁶⁵ Death was thus interpreted in contexts where normative social relations were unfulfilled, presented simultaneously as a medical and moral crisis.

In the present research, interviewees remembered that HIV/AIDS was recognised in Arua District beginning in the late 1980s. One former Community Health worker turned Anglican pastor, who worked at the first testing clinic set up by an American doctor, explained that these understandings emerged as testing was introduced in the district.⁴⁶⁶ Knowledge of HIV/AIDS does not match the arrival of the disease in the district, but rather the beginning of biomedical understandings of disease.⁴⁶⁷ Prior to this moment—and throughout the 1990s, before ARVs became available—the interviewee reported that these deaths, now presumed to be from AIDS, were previously attributed to witchcraft, as well as to curses and unpaid bridewealth that were said to follow families:

When HIV/AIDS started in West Nile, the population didn't know anything about it. They looked at it as witchcraft, being bewitched—that is how they looked at it. Even when they were tested, and told that they have the virus, they never believed and they still continued to look for ways of healing, because it was a new thing, and they never believed it. For those who believed it, they were traumatised. They didn't want to be identified as people who had this problem. Because the beginning of HIV, it is changing its way—in the beginning it would only take about 6 months for somebody to die... They resorted to traditional sort of things—if they will see, for example, your mother's dowry was not paid, that is why the uncles are talking—they will also go to the witchdoctor, who would tell them a different story. They looked it as a curse, more especially from their uncles, their unpaid debts. It caused them a lot of things, they attributed it to other things.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁵ *ibid.* p. 145.

⁴⁶⁶ I, Anglican Pastor/CHW, Ediofe, 14/06/2017.

⁴⁶⁷ In a similar way, a 1991 survey in Moyo reported that 90% of respondents knew of HIV/AIDS, which when compared to Allen's report that HIV/AIDS remained low even by the mid-1980s, suggest that a rapid uptake of public health messaging was slow to arrive in the West Nile region.

⁴⁶⁸ I, Anglican Pastor/ CHW, Ediofe, 14/06 2017. In a similar way, during the present research, when Hepatitis-B testing arrived in the region, suffering related to imbalanced relations shifted in relation to a positive diagnosis of

In other contexts, anthropologists and public health scholars have linked the dramatic death increase from AIDS to a rise in perceptions of witchcraft, or to shifting ideas of occult forces. In Chiawa, Zambia, Yamba explains that witchcraft—and witch-finding—provided a means for rural Africans to comprehend increasing death rates. He argues that efforts to explain excess mortality within families threw “cosmologies in turmoil”, culminating in killings by a witchfinder.⁴⁶⁹ Explanations mediated by local institutions can take on surprising forms: Behrend too links the rise of “cannibalism”, and efforts to purge witches associated with its practice, to the rise of Charismatic Catholic lay movements, whose activities bore new resonance amidst economic decline, state corruptions and mass death. She elucidates the dialectic relationship between the sense of panic from death and the production of explanation: “when the death rate is rising, this shifting of responsibility and guilt to the interior of communities increases discord, hatred and fear, sometimes to an unbearable extent.”⁴⁷⁰ In essence, the anthropological evidence suggests that across African contexts, people search for meaning in suffering through idioms of responsibility, idioms that have often transformed in relation to mass mortality from AIDS.

Among Lugbara populations, these tragedies have been linked to the production of new explanations under the guise of “spirit[s] which follow families” (Cf. Chapter Seven), but simultaneously, familial suffering has also been linked to the reassertion of older

Hepatitis-B. As indicative of shifts to public health medicine, Hepatitis-B was understood through the prism of HIV/AIDS, and was said to be “worse than HIV”.

⁴⁶⁹ C.B. Yamba, ‘Cosmologies in turmoil: witchfinding and AIDS in Chiawa, Zambia’, *Africa* 67:2 (1997), pp. 200-223, p. 200.

⁴⁷⁰ H. Behrend. ‘The Rise of Occult Powers, AIDS and the Roman Catholic Church in Western Uganda’, *Journal of Religion in Africa* 37:1 (2007), pp. 41-58, p. 46.

ideas of curses. Cheney argues that AIDS has had particular effects on understandings of kinship and the significance of “blood as a bodily substance of everyday significance”.⁴⁷¹ In this way, experiences of the late 1980s have affected understandings of contagion and family connections well into the present day. Since clan elders remain arbiters of explaining suffering and death, it is perhaps not surprising that explanations connected to curses and bridewealth regarding the extinction of clans pre-war—rather than witchcraft or poisoning, a charge of which many elders are reluctant to speak openly without evidence—began to be asserted in relation to deaths. Allen makes more direct links: in Moyo, he suggests that the same village councils who had earlier been involved in mediating debates about bridewealth, and sanctioning the eviction of women accused of poisoning, were involved in HIV/AIDS interventions. Perhaps because of this, *inyinya* was used interchangeably to describe deaths from AIDS and poisoning in the 1990s. Sanctioning the activities of councils which had been involved in the exclusion of women, and in reinforcing conservative norms, served to invigorate local institutions and understandings of affliction in unexpected ways.⁴⁷² In a similar way, Lugbara elders, in seeking to explain tragedies, leant on an established vocabulary of explanation.

At burials, if deaths are believed to be caused by AIDS, this would not be publicly revealed. Death from the disease continues to carry social stigma, in part because of the manner in which transmission is explained through government, NGO and church-led

⁴⁷¹ K. Cheney. “Blood Always Finds a Way Home’: AIDS Orphanhood and the Transformation of Kinship, Fosterage, and Children’s Circulation Strategies in Uganda’, in *Childhood, Youth and Migration* (Children’s Well-Being: Indicators and Research book series, CHIR volume 12). Switzerland: Springer International: pp. 245-259, p. 245.

⁴⁷² Allen, ‘AIDS and evidence’.

public health campaigns. During the period of this research, contracting HIV was continually tied to non-monogamous sexual behaviours, with campaigns warning of the dangers of intimate relations, and encouraging tests even within marriage. Yet, since 2003 anti-retroviral therapies have been cheaply and widely available from NGOs and clinics.⁴⁷³ As the aforementioned informant put it, “In the beginning it would only take about 6 months for somebody to die. But I am surprised that today people are staying with it, because many of those who were tested positive in the 1990’s are still alive today.”⁴⁷⁴ As ARVs became available, as across Uganda, in West Nile people stopped dying from AIDS in such dramatic numbers.⁴⁷⁵ Yet, post-war changing patterns of mortality continue to shape understandings of contagion. During the present research, deaths from a host of known biomedical conditions, including AIDS, malaria, hepatitis B and brucellosis, continue to be discussed in terms of something *following* the living. Explanation developed in relation to mass mortality in the 1990s retain relevance in explain sickness among the living (and in some cases, deaths).

5.2.2 *Linking Family to Affliction*

Other actors have participated in ideas of contagion flowing between extended family relations. On the one hand, searching through “family histories” directly parallels clinical and psychiatric practice. One mental health practitioner explained how when patients are admitted to Arua’s sole psychiatric facility, patient histories are taken that go back many generations. Many of those admitted, he noted, return home to search

⁴⁷³ S.R. Whyte, *Second Changes: Surviving AIDS in Uganda*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2014.

⁴⁷⁴ I, Obanya James, Anglican Pastor/CHW, Ediofe, 14/06/2017, English.

⁴⁷⁵ As indicative of the power of this life-saving medicine, during the 2016 election, one Maracha resident told me that people voted for Museveni believing he would personally supply the region with ‘life-saving ARVs’. Should he not be elected, residents were worried the supply of medicines would stop.

through family histories for curses and other sources of trouble: “[Patients] will really dig, they will dig and dig.”⁴⁷⁶ Yet whilst doctors and nurses adopted this mode of questioning in reference to histories of family mental illness or “stressors” linked to family breakdown, this doctor suggested that “75% of the patients we admit will attribute the cause of their problems to some traditional problems... ‘this is happening to my child, my father, my brother, because of a break in traditional norms’, which often included unpaid bridewealth or *avuti*, problems during funerary rites or curses”. Accordingly, this doctor suggested that even if medications were offered, most patients returned home to manage their illness.⁴⁷⁷

Other actors too have advanced explanations of inter-generational misfortune. Christian actors often explain misfortune with reference to fragmented family units, and lack of adherence to obligations within the nuclear family structure. Accordingly, many Christian actors have adopted family-based approaches to therapy, emphasising connections between broken relationships and suffering. Given the emphasis on the nuclear family and the primacy of the family unit, many clergy identify familial fragmentation as the root of misfortune. One renowned Anglican healer, Kefaloli, noted that if people came to him with suffering, he would dig through their family history. He explained:

What I have discovered is [that] listening is a therapy. People talk about their experiences. You begin to realise—can this be demonic? Did you go for treatment? Do you get bad dreams? Can you give me your life background—some are orphans, others want to go to school but are constrained financially, broken relationships are a key thing, it affects the whole family, mother abandoned the children, one of them passes on—they’ll need healing.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁶ I, Medical Doctor at ARRH, 18/06/17

⁴⁷⁷ *ibid.*; see also Verginer and Juen, ‘Spiritual Explanatory Models’.

⁴⁷⁸ I, Reverend Kefaloli, Ambiriambati Church (Arua), 16/06/2017.

Other actors make more even direct links between family ties and the inheritance of spiritual contagion. Charismatic Catholics assert that *orindi* (spirits) can linger in lineages, and that younger generations can suffer from the behaviour of their dead ancestors. In recent years, priests have offered specific therapies to target negative influences hidden in the “Family Tree” (described later in this chapter). Sessions involve extended families coming together to retell intimate histories, mimicking forms of collective discussion within clans, and using prayerful revelation to uncover acts that lie beyond the memory of those present. Ironically, these therapies often critique the tenets of normative clan processes, for example equating bridewealth payments to extortion and greed, as well as attacking the ritual authority of elders, declaiming curses as “satanic behaviour.” Overall, this therapy only reinforces ideas that the intimate familial past could be a reservoir of potential “roots” for misfortune. As one CCR priest at the Bethany Centre explained, “as grandchildren we are going through certain misfortunes, which are in our history... younger generations are “standing on” the acts and deeds of the great-grandparents.”⁴⁷⁹ According to this line of enquiry, misfortune is inherited “in the blood.” Though the process rescripts the agents and forms of reparations involved, this process represents a local innovation of global CCR practice, even as it mirrors clan traditions of tracing and resolving misfortune.

Crucially, however, clan elders remain the prime agents for cleaning sicknesses that follow: since they are the arbiters of intimate histories in which explanation resides. This chapter now examines the explanations attributed to misfortune, and places them in the context of changing notions of custom and political-economic conditions.

⁴⁷⁹ I, Father, Bethany, 16/05/2017.

5.3 Sources of Misfortune

5.3.1 Generating Misfortune: Cursing

When elders spoke of “issues” related to misfortune, they often used the term *e’yo*, which stands for ‘word’, but also ‘deed’ or ‘action’. If Lugbara people continue to turn to elders to explain their suffering, it is in part because they live in a social world where words themselves govern prospects for well-being. Like kinship relations, which hold the potential for both health and misfortune, so too can words, used in particular contexts, denote dual states of fortune and misfortune. This opposition finds its clearest expression in the outcomes of blessings and curses.⁴⁸⁰ According to the Lugbara theologian Obetia, “The two go together. A curse is the direct opposite of a blessing, having the same source and purpose: the promotion of right order for the good of all”.⁴⁸¹ Whilst blessings at critical life events are believed to promote *rota* (prosperity), curses can denote sickness and wider suffering.⁴⁸² Curses are said to come from God, legitimate when their utterance follows mistreatment, violence or social violations—acts that threaten mutuality, support and peace. In the colonial period, curses followed significant events such as feuds or non-payment of bridewealth, invoking a state of persistent pollution (*nyoka*) affecting an entire clan, and requiring collective rites to cleanse the territory.⁴⁸³ My interlocutors emphasised the primacy of curses as governing everyday behaviour. As with Finnström’s discussion of cursing in the Acholi context,

⁴⁸⁰ Blessings are connoted by *dri tiza*, or *asi ndrizefa*, literally, ‘to give good heart’.

⁴⁸¹ J. Obetia, *Worship and Christian Identity in Uganda: a study of the contextualization of worship in the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Independent Churches in the West Nile and Kampala areas of Uganda*. PhD Thesis, School of Theology & Religious Studies, University of Leeds, 2008. pp. 91-2.

⁴⁸² Curses are known as *atrita* in Ayivu/Terego, and *katri* in Maracha.

⁴⁸³ Obetia, *Worship and Christian Identity in Uganda*, p. 106.

curse function to preserve a collective moral order, at moments when normative ideas of respect, care and propriety are threatened by individual misbehaviour.⁴⁸⁴

Theoretically, the power to curse is vested in any individual who has been wrongly mistreated. One elder summarised: “Sicknesses are repercussions for mistreatment; if you are mistreated with no cause there is always a repercussion.”⁴⁸⁵ But curses are usually understood to follow violations of care or material support within a family unit, or violations of peace and internal security within a clan. In the context of a household, a curse may be placed upon a husband who fails to provide for his wife or children, who abandons the home, or who wrongly sends a wife away from a marriage. Curses can be uttered in everyday life, or take the form of direct protestation. In cases of neglect, children may curse their father, claiming: “You are the head of the family, the man, but you don’t like the girls in the family. These girls will curse—‘In future you should not like any girl, you should treat them the same way you have been mistreating us.’”⁴⁸⁶ Similarly, if abandoned by her husband, a woman can decry: “In case you marry another woman, you should treat them the same way you have treated me.” Spoken outright, these phrases refer to future prosperity, stating that poor treatment will come back to *haunt* its instigator. Curses follow failures to uphold normative responsibilities of care and support.

Within this framework, the power of cursing is vested in the vulnerable as well as the powerful: Obetia explains that the curses of women and minors have power precisely

⁴⁸⁴ Finnström, ‘Wars of the Past and Present’, p. 208

⁴⁸⁵ FG, Elders, Tara, 11/10/20126 (OJ).

⁴⁸⁶ I, Elder, Aroi, 28/10/2017 (OJ).

because of their marginal position.⁴⁸⁷ Curses of this nature can manifest as any continuous form of suffering, or afflictions including general weakness, sores, swelling, leprosy or madness. Yet the enactment of everyday curses—even in response to neglect—is shrouded in ambiguity. Whether or not a curse is enacted depends on the emotions and intentions of its utterer: someone with a “good heart” – or who identifies as a Saved Christian – is said to utter “good words”. Depending on the personalities discussed, the same mistreatment may or may not result in misfortune. Further ambiguity in this dynamic is found in Christian theology, whose evangelists condemn cursing. Instead, this theology holds, Christians should practice forgiveness, or “turn the other cheek” without seeking material redress for mistreatment.

Though the ability of anyone to curse is widely acknowledged, particular significance is afforded to curses uttered by elderly men. Elders in Ayivu and Maracha explained that ritual curses, which are unambiguously understood to cause sickness, became more frequent in the early years of independence. Prior to this period, curses were used in extra-familial matters, such as feuds or non-payment of bridewealth, but in the 1960s, elders recalibrated their moral authority in relation to internal affairs.⁴⁸⁸ Cursing was a punishment for “wrong acts” in which the offending individual (usually a junior son) had been warned, but had chosen to ignore the words and direction of his elders. For Lugbara elders, the increasing enactment of ritual curses from the 1960s on reflected very real fears that the social fabric was threatened by neglect and anti-social behaviours, as young men garnered increasing freedom from traditional lineage responsibilities. Around this time, Dalfovo reported Lugbara people explained sickness

⁴⁸⁷ Obetia, *Worship and Christian Identity in Uganda*, p. 106.

⁴⁸⁸ As discussed in the introduction, curses can also be effected beyond the lineage. Their use in novel political contexts represents the extension of intimate worlds outwards.

as *bati* (sickness ‘from the mouth’). Elders continued to direct sickness towards labour migrants who returned home for a sacrificial meal, where elders stressed the importance of “not forgetting those at home.”⁴⁸⁹

Today, whilst informal utterance or “pain in the hearts” of elders can be related to a curse, curses usually require a ritual sitting in which elders gather and the implicated individual sits “under the sun”: surrounded by a quorum of elders from across relevant clans.⁴⁹⁰ Curses are spoken bluntly, and contain a strong futurate element: [If truly you have done this], *oli ma nda mi* (‘the wind will follow you’) or “you should not make the sun to burn them”.⁴⁹¹ Curses of this sort can result in death or madness, the logic being that the offender is forced to retreat from communal life. Another elder illuminated this dimension by noting: “With the curse, you are not really living, you are dead. You are not a person.”⁴⁹²

As Whyte notes, the effects of curses are shrouded in uncertainty.⁴⁹³ Today, again, many elders accept that curses lack their former power, and the consequences take great time to manifest. Yet in exceptional circumstances, ritual curses continue. During this research I witnessed and recorded curses being delivered in cases of suspected adultery, land-grabbing and witchcraft. In all these cases warnings had been previously offered, and few alternative measures were available. Curses are sometimes referred to as *rudu* (prayers), and delivered in contexts where guilt or innocence is suspected but cannot be

⁴⁸⁹ Dalfovo, ‘Lugbara Ancestors’, p. 499.

⁴⁹⁰ FG, Araka, 13/03/2017 (OJ).

⁴⁹¹ I, Woman, Druyer, 12/05/2016; Adultery Case, Maracha, March 2017.

⁴⁹² I, Tara, Elder, 13/10/2016 (OJ).

⁴⁹³ Whyte, *Questioning Misfortune*, p. 172.

proved through evidence.⁴⁹⁴ In cases of witchcraft, community suspicions of a suspect are often overwhelming, but clan members acknowledge there is little material proof that can be directed to the local state. Similar issues of “concrete proof” arise in cases of adultery, where communities may have been surveying and discussing activities of the women involved (male adultery not being considered an offence), but the offending couple have not been “caught in the act.” The curse thus functions as an ordeal: whether an elder’s words manifest in sickness becomes proof of guilt: if indeed the accused is guilty, it is thought they will run mad or even die. If they are not guilty, then the test rebounds on the accuser, which can be either an individual or a clan.

Similarly, the enactment of curses today is often contested, with Christian evangelists condemning their use. Indeed, while *rozu* was once widely translated as “curse,” some Christian leaders translated the term as “to bewitch”.⁴⁹⁵ This shift in language is important, as it removes the morally normalizing nature of cursing integral to elders’ conceptions, instead moving the act to the immoral realm of witchcraft, where sickness is activated arbitrarily, or from envy and individualism. This inscription accounts as well for the shift to regarding sickness as *ba ti* (sickness ‘from the mouth’), indicative of the Christian imprint on local translations and on the use of Lugbarati terms: what were once simply words are now curses.

The following account from a land dispute in Terego elucidates how these contestations structure the enactment of ritual curses. The land of the first speaker, Isrome, had been

⁴⁹⁴ *Rudu* was formerly the name of a fertility shrine (certainly for clans of Maracha), indicating its power over social reproduction.

⁴⁹⁵ I, Aruan, 20/04/2016.

“grabbed” by a neighbouring family, who had been granted the plot for safety during the war.⁴⁹⁶ It was widely accepted that Isrome’s land had been encroached upon, following formal rulings and sittings of elders and government courts over a period of more than a decade. Yet Isrome continued to be threatened by the occupying party. After a sitting convened by both parties in the presence of local government officials failed to provide a resolution, Isrome, a church teacher, voiced using a curse as an option, since all other routes had failed. As the two parties were different sub-clans of a wider clan, this curse would be convened ritually, by an elder with overall authority for both lineages. This was met by contestation:

ISROME: There is nothing I can say now because I'm on target to be killed by the people who want to grab my land. [Isrome then opens a Bible and reads Numbers 27: 5-11. After he finishes reading the passage, he resumes speaking]. If my land is not given to me now let them wait for curse; I'll call my elders to come and curse.

LCIII: The church people don't talk about curse, if you take curse to work within a clan, there will be death here. I would suggest this land should remain for Isrome.

Police woman: I'm requesting you, Isrome, not to use curse as a solution. This meeting started with prayers; let's end in a way we started, in good faith. I will not come again for another meeting over this land; if you want violence, go ahead, if you need peace, let's find it. I'm requesting the OC to advise in this matter, much as it's not a police case.⁴⁹⁷

Isrome here appeals to an overall ritual elder to deliver a curse, legitimating the practice through referencing the Bible, yet he is countered by the sub-county LCIII acting as a witness, who distances himself from the curse. Importantly, however, in rejecting the action neither party denies the power of the curse, instead rejecting it on moral grounds precisely because these curses can confer death. With Christian discourse providing a

⁴⁹⁶ I, Elder, Terego, 02/06/2017 (OJ).

⁴⁹⁷ Land dispute, Terego, June 2017.

stage for the curse to be debated between these two parties, it is clear that these utterances retain their power—even if, in this case, no curse was ultimately delivered. As with the ancestral explanation, notions of cursing are positioned in ever-evolving debates over propriety and the relationship between human power and sickness. Christians tie the performance of these words to the moral status of their utterer.

Curses are believed to follow members of a lineage beyond the implicated individual, flowing through successive generations until living clan members collectively right the wrongs of the past. In this way, living members of a lineage are bound to the actions of their dead relatives, with curses tied to patterns of suffering and even premature deaths that affect both women and men. In such cases, elders must sit and trace through histories of their lineage to pinpoint the source of misfortune in the present. Misfortunes will continue until the parties come together to eat, and speak words to put the issue to rest. When such reparations are made, suturing the social fabric of the present is instigated by remembering the past.

Curses are also found in sifting through histories of obligation, identifying potential sources of violation: often, the mistreatment of women, specifically their eviction from the clan. In one Maracha clan, following a spate of collective misfortunes and the suicide of a husband, elders sat multiple times before uncovering the wrongful eviction of a woman, Nyapio, who had married into the clan many generations beforehand. Wrongfully evicted, Nyapio died in the wilderness—and on account of her mistreatment, her people cursed the members of Luge, since the obligations to protect a woman who had married into the clan had been violated. Nyapio's great-grandchildren were suffering for these actions. In this case, the delegation organised funerary rights

and payments to be made to the living maternal uncles: “The real ones are dead, [but] the lineage of uncles still remains”.⁴⁹⁸ Following Jeater’s observation in the context of Zimbabwean retributive spirits, “the claim is, in effect, a claim for the lineage, not the individual, to be reimbursed”.⁴⁹⁹ By making amends for the past, this Lugbara clan repaired the social wounds with living members of Nyapio’s lineage.

5.3.2 *Clan Transfers and Debts*

Beyond considering internal disciplinary procedures, elders were also preoccupied with affliction born out of unpaid transfers and debts, from marriages (contemporary or historic), deaths or fines—in short, tracing misfortune from inter-clan obligations. As one young professional in Arua explained, “We have inherited debts... but as brothers and sons we are going to pay—otherwise it will affect my children.”⁵⁰⁰ Crucially, clans are involved not just in remedying misfortunes wrought by misbehaviour, but by the failure of members to effect obligated transfers at marriages and deaths. Such obligations bind entire clans together, and so relatives across *suru* can suffer from their absence of fulfillment. In this way, misfortune provides an occasion for elders to debate not just internal histories but external ones, including histories of unfulfilled agreements between sub-clans.

Normative conceptions of Lugbara society rest on the fulfilment of particular obligations. As discussed briefly in Chapter Two, the most central transfer is *ali* (bridewealth), transferred from the husband’s people to the wife’s people after marriage. Since bridewealth represents the transfer of a woman’s reproductive rights to the

⁴⁹⁸ I, Male Catholic, Arua, 28/03/2017.

⁴⁹⁹ Jeater and Mashinge Jr., ‘Can’t pay, won’t pay’, p. 269.

⁵⁰⁰ I, Male Catholic, Arua, 28/03/2017.

husband's clan, cases wherein a married woman fails to conceive, experiences a difficult delivery, or suffers more generally in marriage are all interpreted as signs of uncles' discontent at outstanding payments. Misfortune here thus effects the reproductive life of the clan. As one elder explained: "The miraculous thing is that you will not die: you will be very thin, but that curse cannot kill you."⁵⁰¹ In cases where *ali* is unpaid, sickness is said to result from the *onata* (grumbling), rather than curses, of the wife's maternal uncles. This group of men is spoken of collectively as *adro/adropi*, invoking connection with the divinity and their power with regards to sickness.⁵⁰² Since it is these men who "eat the *ali*" in the transfer, their words have particular power in contesting its absence.⁵⁰³ In this instance, the mechanism of sickness is rarely translated as 'curse', but rather 'grumbling,' signifying the moral legitimacy of the claim. Indeed, even the most devout Christians interviewed on this matter affirmed the importance of bridewealth.

Though bridewealth is defended as "traditional," appearing even in Lugbara origin myths, its requirements have transformed according to changing times. Though one bull as the price of bridewealth has remained constant (*ali* literally means "bull of seduction"), other costs have fluctuated according to government policies and economic pressures. In precolonial times, wealth was expressed in animals: one elder recalled that in pre-colonial times the bridewealth transfers of his great-grandfather had been levied

⁵⁰¹ I, Elder, Aroi, 14/05/2016 (OJ).

⁵⁰² In a similar vein, misfortunes are said to accrue to children who grow up with their maternal uncles (with their mother's people), rather than their paternal relatives. My co-worker explained: "In such cases, things don't happen in a normal way, they normally say 'It is the curse of the maternal uncles' *adro ti* - You have grown from their place, eaten their food, there is an expectation" (fieldnotes, June 2016). There is a sense that children have grown out of place according to the patrilineage, and that the improper investment of resources has generated misfortune.

⁵⁰³ Any improper procedure connected to transfer of bridewealth can result in sickness. Today, if clansmen cannot attend the eating of the *ali*, uncooked meat is often ferried to them over long distances. One assistant commented that "meat" would be the most controversial topic to research in Arua.

at twelve cows, twelve goats, and 300 arrows, a sign of great prestige.⁵⁰⁴ During the early colonial period, rising costs and rinderpest outbreaks undoubtedly made such levels difficult to sustain, reportedly resulting in inter-clan feuds. Such revolts were quashed by Protectorate officials through fines: acting on visions of law and order, transfers were capped at three cows, two goats, and six cents.⁵⁰⁵ These restrictions seemed to have little impact, however, as one elder explained that it was common for ten cows to be given in the late colonial period.⁵⁰⁶

War and post-independence upheavals presented further barriers. Many elders explained that they lost animals during their flights into exile or at the hands of the Congolese authorities, animals that were never regained. Others explained that “people just married” away from the clan, without formalising the union in the conventional sense.⁵⁰⁷ Recognising the difficulties presented by these experiences, following the return from exile it became commonplace to transfer animals more slowly, over longer timeframes. A popular contemporary Lugbara saying encapsulates this change: “even a poor man can marry”, an inversion of the older proverb, “a person without cattle remains unmarried”.⁵⁰⁸

Whilst bridewealth is legitimated on the basis of social peace and the reproductive health of the clan, animals remain an important source of wealth, and inter-clan

⁵⁰⁴ I6, Elder, Abrici, 09/06/2017 (OJ).

⁵⁰⁵ These restrictions probably pertained as well to the desires of officials to protect their own taxation plans, since many labour migrants spent returning cash on bridewealth contributions.

⁵⁰⁶ I2, woman, Abrici, 25/09/2016 (OJ); I2, Leader, Maracha, 26/09/2016. Confirmed also by Middleton’s field notes.

⁵⁰⁷ FG, Terego Elders, 08/06/2016 (OJ). Additionally, I recorded two instances where forced marriages were arranged by boys’ fathers, since their cattle were threatened by war.

⁵⁰⁸ Dalfovo, ‘Lugbara Proverbs and Ethics’, p.47.

transfers are an important means of sustaining rural communities.⁵⁰⁹ Since return, the number of animals required for *ali* has continued to rise, and is the subject of often-tense negotiations during *aje* (the act of negotiating and paying bridewealth) between the male relatives of the husband and wife. Settlements today include heads of cattle, goats, and chickens, as well as money to recoup school fees and the loss of labour for the wife's clan.⁵¹⁰ An additional sum of cash, remarkably called 'malaria', is often added to recoup the costs a girl's family has spent on her healthcare.⁵¹¹ One Maracha clan offered this brazen explanation as to misfortune's relation to unpaid dues: "The words people utter cause that sickness. Their complaining—each time your daughter is taken and nothing is given for her. Yet you laboured to bring her up—all this talk can make her sick, generally people will not be feeling happy; they will be grumbling."⁵¹² Since it costs money to raise a girl, to recoup these expenses, clans negotiate increasingly high rates of bridewealth.

Given their import to the reproductive life of clans, bridewealth transfers are particularly sensitive matters, as are unpaid transfers at female deaths, known as *avuta*. Conventionally this takes the form of one cow, which is transferred from the clan of the husband to the clan of the wife after her death, to compensate for the loss of their daughter. This transfer, which has remained constant throughout the 20th century,

⁵⁰⁹ Contrary to the stance of much recent policy literature drawing attention to the links between bridewealth, the commoditisation of women, and abuse, for example: G. Hague, R.K. Thiara, and A. Turner, 'Brideprice and its links to domestic violence and poverty in Uganda: A participatory action research study', *Women's Studies International Forum* 34:6 (2011), pp. 550-561.

⁵¹⁰ N.B. Gormley, *Mission and development: imagined spaces for women*, PhD Thesis, Department of Geography, University of Edinburgh, 1998, p. 155.

⁵¹¹ *ibid.*

⁵¹² FG, Nyarire, 20/06 2016 (OJ/AC). The words spoken at here were considered blunt; rarely are processes couched in such overtly transactional terms.

effectively symbolises harmony between clans at death. The following example of a young man from Ayivu illustrates the practice:

In my lineage, my father has failed to settle in marriage. My mother has given birth to six of us, but they separated in the 1978 liberation war. Since then he got married, but he can't stay well. I was raised by my father, my mother got married again. She comes from Congo side, my father comes from Uganda side—the war contributed so much. When they separated, my mother got married to another person, they had one person but that person died...

Traditionally, when they don't clear certain [transfers]—when I marry here and when she dies and I don't pay, I don't give a token of appreciation in the form of cows—I think my father hasn't done something similar like that on their side. *Avuta* has to be paid. This issue has not come up, we are going to pay the *avuta*—my father isn't able—but as brothers and sons we are going to pay, otherwise it will affect my children... we have inherited debts.⁵¹³

In this instance, having inherited the debts of their parents, men within a sub-clan had rallied to raise animals to settle those debts, and to restore good relations between clans.

In this example, affluent members of the clan had taken it upon themselves to raise the *avuta* to remedy the past. In so doing, it is important to note that clansmen act not just to remedy the past but also to halt the progression of suffering which they believe will affect future generations. Also recorded in debts of this kind were historic fines levied on men for committing violence or neglecting their wives: on such occasions, if bridewealth has been paid, a woman may appeal to her relatives for a sitting. At such a sitting, the wife's elders levy fines on the husband depending on the level of mistreatment. If they remain unpaid, elders explain that these debts can follow the living, bringing sickness and death. Though these situations can present elders (and invested junior clansmen) with significant costs, enacting such settlements was explained as a means of pursuing inter-communal reconciliation, putting right the social wounds of the past to remedy suffering in the present.

⁵¹³ I, Male Catholic, Arua, 29/03/2017.

Today, the consequences of elders' words arise not just from internal discipline, but also from the absence of settlements at marriage and death. These transfers effectively solidify inter-clan relations and fortify marital productivity. As elders increasingly lament the dissolution of collective life, however, misfortune provides an occasion to reinforce critical obligations and attend to the future prosperity of a lineage. At a time when junior men may elope and marry away from their elders, misfortune provides elders the chance to assert the need to formalise marriage. On other occasions, though, elders are forced to confront complex inter-clan histories—such as locating curses resulting from mistreatment, thus resolving crisis through suturing frayed social relations.

5.3.3 Retributive Acquisitions

A third cluster of explanations arises when individuals are said to acquire spiritual forces or powers in order to punish those who have offended them. These forces took the names *adra*, *mua*, *yakani*, or *abea*, and their operation follows a similar retributive logic to curses in that their sickness serves to force the offender to seek forgiveness.⁵¹⁴ Offences commonly include theft, violence or adultery. For example:

When you go to steal someone's things without permission, they get you, you will be punished by *adra*.⁵¹⁵

This boy, he slept with a girl from a clan near Congo, but didn't pay. The clan were waiting patiently for him to pay. This clan near Congo was having *mua*—if you wrong them, they send *mua*—it comes and attacks you, beats you, strangles you, something comes and has sex with you in the night.⁵¹⁶

⁵¹⁴ A clear distinction is made between this family of forces and those which could be considered as witchcraft. Affliction stemming from this family of retributive forces is thought to follow offences, whereas in cases of witchcraft, there is little such intention.

⁵¹⁵ FG, Nyarire, 29/06/2016 (OJ/AO).

⁵¹⁶ I2, woman, Abrici, 27/09/2016 (OJ).

These terms denote a family of forces associated either with particular clans (*yakani* and *adra*), or are thought to be purchased from clans, usually in Congo (*mua* and *abea*).

Acquisitions are distinct, but follow similar retributive logics. As one elder explained:

“If I attack someone who has *adra*—it will be *adra* that attacks me, not *yakani*.”⁵¹⁷ *Adra*

is associated with clans in Arua and Maracha, *mua* and *abea* with clans in Congo or

near the Congo border, and *yakani* with clans in Terego.⁵¹⁸ According to Middleton,

these forces bear the historical legacies of colonial healing movements, which gradually become dissociated from their respective prophets and localized into the landscape

(such origins being evident in the term *yakani*). But crucially, these forces affect entire

lineages since they are said to pass down the lineage from the original owner to their

relatives, who become new hosts. It is thought that if these forces are not appeased, they

can even take the life of their current owner (and subsequently remain in the lineage). In

the context of affliction, then, retributive acquisitions require cleansing for perceived

offenses, or when a clan member has acquired these forces and subsequently fails to

‘appease’ it. Of a case where it was believed *mua* had been brought in to the clan, elders

explained: “That thing will start killing her immediate family. When it kills her

children, her immediate brothers and sisters, then it will move to kill the whole of [the

clan] if it is not resolved.”⁵¹⁹

Remedying the effects of these forces requires clan cooperation: since these forces

affect entire families, reparations are thus collective, with clan members seeking

forgiveness from the owner of the power. The gravity of the offence determines the

reparations, which is determined by the owner, but usually includes animals (cow, sheep

⁵¹⁷ I, Elders, Lujje, 18/02/2017 (OJ).

⁵¹⁸ During this research, some elders conflated with *mua* with *mazi*, since both are acquired in Congo.

⁵¹⁹ I, Elders, Lujje Clan, 18/02/2017 (OJ).

or goat) plus money. As one elder explained, “That thing will automatically leave you when the elders are happy; they will say ‘we have come here, now we are going home, let this thing leave you. It is their own thing; it will listen to them.’”⁵²⁰ Since these are inter-clan negotiations, there is the potential for extortion. In the cases I observed, elders were reluctant to table these settlements, owing to the expense of the transfers involved. Decisions to articulate the presence of particular forces were calculated with available resources in mind.

5.4 Accessing Repair: An Idiom in Crisis?

The above categories of explanation tie sickness to repercussions emanating from violations of discipline and obligation. Indeed, elders who have a privileged place in determining connections between past deeds and present misfortune often described explanations in terms that replicated ideas of order within the structural-functionalist view of anthropology—where the invocation of sickness served to reaffirm a moral order grounded in social responsibility. Explanations of sickness serve to draw increasingly mobile family members back “home” to address obligations. Sickness provides a moment to affirm normative visions of moral personhood, and the words, acts and duties that mark healthy relationships within and between *suru*.⁵²¹ Following Knighton, these events hold a “social memory”, and despite being in “rude health”, lie at the heart of Lugbara being.⁵²²

⁵²⁰ FG, Elders, Irivu, 31/05/2016 (OJ/AO).

⁵²¹ In a similar vein, so do clan by-laws act as symbols to retrench moral ideas at the point of their disappearance.

⁵²² Knighton, ‘Globalizing Trends’.

Yet, even where those who suffer are aware of outstanding debts, the past cannot always be remedied: owing to the high cost of repair, to struggles for knowledge in complex inter-clan relations, as well as to the deep imprint of social fragmentation in tracing misfortune. Before concluding this chapter, I attend to wider observations as to the realities of misfortunes across Maracha and Terego.

Repairing misfortune relies on the transfer of resources such as transfers of bridewealth, *avuta* and fines, all part of village economics. To resolve cases, it is said *ba suru ri ovu ki ni ayiko si ku* ('the clan should be given meat to eat'), or that *ba li anyapa ba suru ri pi ni* ('animals should be slaughtered for the clan').⁵²³ Issues are formally settled only when animals are ritually slaughtered, collectively consumed, and words are said that lay the issue to rest. Echoing the sacrificial rites described first by Middleton and later by Dalfovo, these events affirm social hierarchies between men, and are an opportunity to affirm clan visions of social peace. If divisions of work are not followed, and meat is not apportioned correctly, this too can be a source of misfortune. Naturally, economic constraints deeply effect possibilities for repair, as enacting redress is costly.

Reparations indicative of forgiveness rely on material contributions—specifically the transfer of animals—that mark the solidification of social bonds, yet acquiring these animals is often difficult in an increasingly monetised economy. Whilst bridewealth may be raised by a husband alone if he is wealthy enough, raising animals in other cases usually relies on collective efforts, as well as on donations from other male relatives.

Additionally, elders require fees to sit, or payment of their transport costs to do so.

Though transfers are defended according to symbolic and social explanations, the costs

⁵²³ (Saved) Christian Lugbara may say: *e'yo di le di anyapa ari ni* ('this issue now requires spilling animal blood'), emphasising the sacrificial nature of clan processes.

of remedying the past are often sidelined when it is struggle enough for many to subsist in the present.

In essence, this idiom of repair relies on structural cohesion and communication: on “coming together” to address the causes of sickness. Misfortune moves across families irrespective of distance; both the separation between family members and the erosion of clan solidarities present continual problems in addressing sickness. Thus from the perspective of those who are suffering, who are actively seeking to trace, and so repair, social wounds in relation to bodily or familial health, clan processes of healing were regarded as obsolete. Indeed, younger generations or town dwellers increasingly eschew clan affiliation, finding obligations such as marriage and funerary contributions onerous—yet crises of health and well-being are occasions to lament the dissolution of the same structures often have disregarded in daily life. For example, one young man explained, “Elders only reveal these things [the cause of sickness] at funerals,” and one woman echoed that, “Our culture is difficult; they [elders] will not point it [the cause of misfortune] out until someone dies.”⁵²⁴ These admissions highlight not only the deep hold of the “cultural” idiom of explanation, but also the perceived severity that many attribute to failing to address sicknesses that follow.

Feuchtwang notes that the transmission of ancestral memory relies on family commitment to cultivating sensibilities through the imparting of particular narrative tropes of memory between generations.⁵²⁵ Discerning the explanation for suffering

⁵²⁴ I, Male Catholic, Arua, 28/03/2017; I, CCR, Vurra, 27/03/2017.

⁵²⁵ Feuchtwang, ‘Haunting Memory’

relies on relatives and family members coming together to sift through recent and distant histories. Whilst discussions may proceed among members of the immediate household, who may ponder the cause of misfortune, initiating repair necessitates formal sittings, where the “issue” is brought out in the public realm. On an administrative basis, this requires the willing participation of clansmen. Since these meetings are now less regular in Lugbara society, the process of tracing misfortune now often unfolds over many months or years. This longer duration is not merely an issue of coming together, but rather of the incompleteness of the historical record needed to trace misfortune. The transmission of history relies on events being passed down from elders to sons: formerly, elders explained, they would “sit by the fire” to relay oral history to their sons, through songs and stories.⁵²⁶ Yet today, little attention is paid to such processes.

Nowadays, and particularly after exile, many elders—who were themselves labour migrants—have not received a complete record of clan settlements or curses that form the basis of intimate moral knowledge. Within any clan, few elders are regarded as having detailed historical knowledge. During this research, one Terego clan set aside time to reconstruct this knowledge, versions of events which were to be documented in a ‘handbook’—yet discussions during meetings of the past were deeply contested. Clan members themselves regularly question the partisan nature of elders’ knowledge. There are deep parallels between this system and efforts to reinforce customary land boundaries through drawing on traditional wisdom.⁵²⁷ Since in the management of

⁵²⁶ Obetia, *Worship and Christian Identity in Uganda*, p. 111.

⁵²⁷ C. Leonardi and M. Santschi, *Dividing Communities in South Sudan and Northern Uganda: Boundary disputes and land governance*. London: Rift Valley Institute (Contested Borderlands series), 2016.

sickness too, historical memory determines the distribution of resources, much is at state. In lieu of oracular confirmation, assessing the validity of information is a human enterprise. Scepticism of human-mediated power extends to the verdicts and words of elders.

The realities of repair depend greatly on the exact distribution of elders authority, and the attention of particular figures within a clan. In one Maracha clan, for instance, men actively sat and debated issues: throughout my fieldwork this clan intentionally sought to redress the suffering of its members, negotiating and making payments on deaths “following the lineage,” or paying bridewealth for chronically-ill clan daughters. Elders were supported by married sons, who returned home often and kept up with clan events—one particular elder who assisted in this research had served as a political organiser and a former LCIII aspirant; alongside his political affiliations, he was increasingly petitioned to address problems by his seniors. Yet in one Terego clan, the situation was different. Though elders there expressed fears regarding misfortune, since only one of three elders resided within the ancestral home, and the married sons worked as teachers and civil servants in Arua, it was more difficult to attend to the past. Thus whilst members were troubled by the lingering effects of a historical debt from mistreatment of a woman who married into the clan—an event taking place almost a century earlier, but that elders and married men had formally identified—throughout the entire period of this fieldwork, the issue was yet to be formally “tabled” in a sitting. Since this clan was also involved in ongoing land disputes, these more pressing events, which often bore their own connection to misfortune, took up most of their time.

Repair is furthermore constrained by customary restraints on *who* can speak about misfortune: a strict politics of voice governs who can bring or speak about issues publicly. Attending to critical events is almost exclusively a male realm, though on occasion elderly women (paternal and maternal aunties) who have witnessed the past may be invited to contribute memories out of necessity. Those without authority to speak live with the consequences of these worlds: it is often difficult for them, and for women in particular, to raise matters formally. Whilst any given person may begin to sense that “something is not right,” a disjuncture often remains between those who suffer and those who can begin to alleviate their problems.⁵²⁸ Whyte terms this “the innocent model of suffering,” whereby the suffering of women and children is proportioned differently to men. Women suffer as wives married to men, or because of the unpaid dues of male relatives. Yet women lack structural power to challenge their lack of voice in matters of custom.

In cases of bridewealth, for example, the possibility of misfortune, as well as the process of enacting settlements, resides within a complex field of familial sentiments and sensitivities. One elder of Arua described a situation where his daughter was suffering on account of “grumbling” by uncles over unpaid bridewealth:

It is true you as a parent have no problem, but [to] your clan brothers who have an eye for eating, such things can cause problems. But it is you, the father of the girl who will see it [sickness] for yourself. The animals you want to eat you cannot go and take by force, but you see your daughter suffering. This wealth is meant to be paid by [her] husband who is not part of the family—so are we going to let our daughter die? We must sit as brothers and pray, ‘if she is suffering because of the words I said, then I invoke my words.’ [Getting well] relies on the forgiving heart of my brother. Otherwise, when she dies he will also feel the pain.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁸ Meinert, ‘Haunted Families’, p.595

⁵²⁹ Interview, Elder, Ediofe, 24/11/2016.

Since it is the husband's responsibility to raise animals, a father could do little to instigate settlements. This situation is further compounded by an increasingly fragmented social context: for women who conceive children outside of formal clan marriage, the potential consequences of not paying bridewealth present a lingering worry. Yet it is up to their men to formalise the marriage before the clan. In many such cases, good relations are absent; in others, husbands may have departed from informal marriages, and have little interest in returning to pay dowry. Herein lies a critical issue: the fragmented realities of family life can not only perpetuate notions of sickness, but make its redress increasingly complicated. The social fragmentation that generates misfortune also prevents its redress.

5.5 Borrowing Frameworks: A note on Alternative Options

In some cases of pressing misfortune, sufferers act unilaterally. These were considered to be recent innovations by many, but I here describe alternative directions in relation to the tracing of misfortune. Excluded from collective discussions, individuals may try prayer, trans-night worship, religious counsel or consultation of a diviner-healer. With the exception of the final realm (discussed in the following chapter), many of these measures were only palliative, and the sense of underlying difficulty remained.⁵³⁰ In other cases, younger generations formed new coalitions, such as families simply coming together by themselves. Of one case of persistent misfortunes within a family, one sub-county chief explained how his family united without elders: "We said, if elders are

⁵³⁰ In divination settings, several women interviewed during this research rejected witchcraft as an explanation, on account of the knowledge that her bridewealth payments were outstanding: see Chapter Six.

causing a stumbling block—let us see what we can do as a family.”⁵³¹ In this case, brothers and sisters gathered among themselves to trace misfortune.

In other cases, young men took action. In one village near Arua, young men had come together to form their own conclusions about sickness. Lacking historical knowledge of transfers, these men were preoccupied with the changing freedoms of women and emergent forms of sickness—specifically, linking *azo* with evolving sexual relations, and the possibility of male sickness arising from women’s extra-marital sex. In Druyer, a group of married men (who retained the title “youth”) explained that a new sickness, *enima*, which manifested as shock, blackouts, and paralysis, resulted from the sexual behaviours of married women. The leader of the group, who had himself suffered from this affliction, explained that *enima* “...could affect her husband or her children, and is specifically activated if a woman commits adultery outside the home, returns, and cooks food for her husband. To resolve it, the woman has to bring a chicken.”⁵³² If the adulterous woman remained in the home, a ritual known as *ndu aduma* must be performed, whereby her relatives must return the bull given them to them as bridewealth (*ali*). If the woman produces a child, her relatives donate a further cow (an equivalent payment for a woman leaving and marrying another man). In one sense, this sickness could be read as a clan earning back cows they had transferred as bridewealth, but Druyer’s young men explained that their concern about the increasing rate of *enima* was great enough that they had formed a committee to educate women about the consequences of their sexual activities.⁵³³ These emergent explanations link observed

⁵³¹ I, Aruan, 30/04/2016.

⁵³² FG, Druyer, Arua, 18/05/2016.

⁵³³ FG, Druyer, 18/05/2016 (OJ); I, Assistant Leader, Biliafe, 2/06/2017

moral changes (or the perceptions thereof) to invert obligations associated with suffering. The social context drove explanations for suffering in new ways, which avoided deep interrogations of the past.

Finally, other sufferers in search of repair seek the intervention of Christian leaders, through the aforementioned Family Tree. These sittings echo those of elders, but are often driven by younger generations, who prepare themselves for a sitting both through prayer and through historical research into their origins, often over periods of greater than a year. One Aruan Catholic, Agnes, suggests the directions these enquiries take based on her own example: “My great-grandfather—they [the priests] start pressing: what were they known for? The good and the bad attributes: did they offer sacrifices?”⁵³⁴ In their reading of the past, charismatic actors imbue family histories with particular moral dimensions, which echo crusades against “idol worship” of the colonial period. Certain ancestors become subject to particular scrutiny, namely elders who practiced “sacrifices.” As one CCR member, Natalia, explained: “The ancestors—what they did in the past goes on affecting the next generation, [and the] next generation. If this is not dealt with in prayers, there is no hope... The ancestors—they first picked that god which is not the real God to worship and listen to.”⁵³⁵ Natalia furthermore contrasted the results of the Family Tree among Lugbara and Alur communities, explaining that the causes of misfortune were specific to different families, according to differences in social structures. Paying heed to the extensive

⁵³⁴ I, CCR Member, Arua, 28/03/2017.

⁵³⁵ I, CCR, Nsyambia, 27/03/2017

nature of elders' mediations of ancestral healing, Natalia explained that, for Lugbara people, "our ancestors were the government."⁵³⁶

Charismatic actors are preoccupied with "spiritual strongholds," effectively redefining family histories into a new language of spiritual restraints, often premised on individual sins. Repair in this context shifts the focus away from material reparations to neutralising spiritual agents through prayer and repentance for the acts of one's relatives.⁵³⁷ Whilst the Family Tree and lineage-tracing both agree on the fundamental "polluting" effects of past killing, adultery and violence, their interpretation of elders and payments is an important area of divergence. For example, Father Simon extended the vocabulary of shrine-worship to discuss bridewealth:

Traditionally, when a girl gets married in some cultures you will see a cow, goats are brought and are supposed to be slaughtered. The blood is put at the door, cows are slaughtered and the blood is cooked somewhere before the meat is cooked in a specific place. That is what we call idols. Those are spirits that our parents have got in touch with. When you please those spirits in that way you will be successful, [but] if you don't please them, there will be misfortune. People are deeply rooted in it.⁵³⁸

For many, however, this linguistic conversion of bridewealth into spirits was unconvincing. As the next chapter shows, many women turn to diviner-healers to produce evidence to approach elders regarding outstanding debt, rather than reject these customs. Natalia herself explained that though the Family Tree revealed unpaid bridewealth, alongside prayer an "appreciation" was made.

⁵³⁶ *ibid.*

⁵³⁷ I, Father, Bethany, 16/05/2017.

⁵³⁸ *ibid.*

Turning to elders or to the Church both provide a means of acting on the disturbances of the past, and a mechanism to interrogate internal histories. Both therapies react as well to a perceived sense of crisis within extended families, and both approaches reinforce local anxieties that the living can suffer because of the dead. Misfortune reifies these connections, which elders claim endure despite the physical distance between their urban and rural relations. When elders turn to history, just as when Charismatic priests direct families to consider their family tree, the past is reinvented through the moral messaging of the present. Hence elders emphasise animal transfers as the cornerstones of social peace (even if today they remain increasingly unpaid), and priests stress the pollution from the performance of past “idol worship.” The past is read with how people perceive moral probity in the present: it is in part because of these interventions that elders today are skeptical of the power of the CCR.

5.6 Conclusion

In the 1950s, Lugbara people lived in the conscious submission to their ancestors, guided in their will by the worlds of watchful elders’. Mutuality, or *tualu* was attained through the hierahcial structure of the clan, reified against a disciplinary colonial state, whose laws lacked the socially contingent judgement of clan elders. War marked the end of a long assault – fuelled by Christianity, colonisation and modernity, on the material sites where the *ori* resided. Since return, Lugbara people have lost the term to describe their ancestors. The *ori* has been subsumed into a Christian language of worship – the *ori’ba*, group protected by shrines, has become the *orijo* (church). For

younger generations, practices of venerating ancestors through shrines are indicative of a historical past, rather than a lived present.

Yet, as with other linguistic transitions, a shift in publicly articulated moralities contrasts to the deep meaning that the Lugbara ancestors continue to have, as experienced through the phenomenological effects of their discontent, which flow through generations, influencing the living. Debts are remembered by the name of relatives – indicating the intimacies and uniqueness of these “haunting memories” which account for their persistence. Despite the declining emphasis placed on the cultural transmission of intimate memory during everyday life, in moments of suffering, the lingering discontent of wronged dead male – and female – relatives continues to demand reparations between living parties. To use Igreja’s words, cosmological ideals reflect “non-linear” temporalities which do not reflect ideas within transitional justice of a “past of violence and a present for justice and closure”.⁵³⁹

Thus, contrary to previous studies, I argue that clans hold an enduring position both in interpreting chronic and fatal suffering, and in enacting redress. Elders, in tandem with interested sons, remain the social and moral centre of *suru*, and retain key roles in interpreting affliction among families and households. This chapter has shown how clans have collectively attempted to redefine explanations for misfortune following the return from exile, and second, how these explanations become increasingly contested due to social changes that not only offer competing opportunities to define and manage

⁵³⁹ V. Igreja, ‘Multiple Temporalities in Indigenous Justice and Healing Practices in Mozambique’, *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 6 (2012), pp. 404-422, p. 408.

affliction, but fray the physical and social cohesion of clan boundaries as well. Though according to local idiom contagious influences follow bloodlines irrespective of distance, in reality, social fragmentation and insecurities were deeply inscribed upon processes of repair. Often, debts haunting individuals remain ideational, and cannot be fulfilled because of material constraints.

Increasingly, other explanations are recruited to account for the roots of misfortune. These explanations may draw on the moral behaviour of the present, or on religious technologies to reveal previously hidden spiritual strongholds. This development unsettles notions that tie misfortune to the moral fabric: in selecting different therapists to mine the past for misfortune, Lugbara people opt to re-define not just the agent of sickness—the words of relatives, material debts, or spirits—but how to repair the social fabric of the present as well. Since the management of affliction continues to be imbued with social outcomes—such as the proper means of marrying, living together, and burying the dead—misfortune continues to be a terrain where claims to moral authority are actively negotiated. Mediating misfortune with recourse to either clan or church involves encoding personal histories in particular ways. No matter whether elders emphasise words or the dead as sources of broken moral order, or whether charismatic priests emphasise “spiritual disturbances” caused by individual sins, identifying material or spiritual disruptions provides critical opportunities to affirm or critique the primacy of lineage relations—and with it, seniority and power.

Having examined traditional, patriarchal mechanisms for the identification of suffering, the next chapter now turns to the domain of divination, exploring how women, as individuals, participate in evolving frameworks to explain misfortune.

Chapter Six

Female Divination Revisited

6.1: Introduction

Having explored contemporary Lugbara practices of clan health-seeking, this chapter now elucidates the importance of female agency in discerning and acting upon misfortune, through revisiting the forms of explanation embodied in female divination. Whilst the previous chapter described evolving ideas of misfortune in conjunction with clan elders, a space of predominantly male knowledge and action, this chapter details the attempts of female healers and sufferers to address misfortune. It is specifically interested in the social role of explanation for those who consult diviner-healers: therapy-seekers who are, overwhelmingly, women.

Chapter Three introduced gendered ascriptions in healing expressions. Whilst the forms of clan healing described in this chapter remain subject to a politics of restraint, premised on ‘slow words’ that embody ideals of leadership and order, the energy, rhythm, and pace of exuberant possession, revelation, and prayerful healing in the compound of diviner-healers provided a stark contrast. This chapter seeks to understand these expressions within the structures and constraints of women’s social worlds.

The first part of this chapter engages with the work of diviner-healers in historic and contemporary contexts. The chapter begins by reviewing the existing evidence that the work of female diviners lay in opposition to the moral realm of elders and ancestors.⁵⁴⁰ Building on the analysis in Chapter Three, this chapter then engages with how, through

⁵⁴⁰ D.M. Casale, ‘Women, Power, and Change in Lugbara (Uganda) Cosmology: A Reinterpretation’, *Anthropos* 77 (1982): 385–396; Barnes-Dean, ‘Lugbara illness beliefs’.

localising powers of Christian spirits, diviner-healers have transformed their roles to become what Redding terms “social healers”⁵⁴¹. This enquiry culminates in an exploration of two contemporary diviner-healers: Vivian Ambe, an Anglican “prophetess,” and Ezaru Mary, a Catholic “woman who prays.”

The second part of the chapter engages with the content of divinatory revelation. Engaging with process rather than outcome, the analysis positions women who consult diviner-healers as “not passive believers but sceptical agents with reflexive awareness of their own actions”.⁵⁴² Considering but moving beyond questions of “faith and belief”, it then explores how divinatory verdicts are interwoven into the familial and clan structures of therapy-seekers, providing a means for women to critique familial neglect within the limits of the moral world defined by husbands and elders.⁵⁴³ Challenging contextual scholarship that previously emphasised the asocial or transformative impact of female healing, this research thus argues that divination in fact reproduces the normative expectation of kinship relations: it is only through becoming a diviner-healer that women can transform their relative position in local society. Nonetheless, the process of tracing misfortune provides a means of acting within the restraints of women’s social worlds.

Since the changing vocabulary of healing is central to the debates presented in this chapter, a brief note on terms is necessary. In the colonial period, female healers took the term *oyo*, which in Lugbarati denotes ‘healer,’ and has been applied to specialists practicing herbal or clinical work (i.e. any practice unrelated to lineage histories).

⁵⁴¹ S. Redding, ‘Women as Diviners and as Christian Converts in Rural South Africa, c.1880-1963’, *Journal of African History* 57:3 (2016) pp. 367-389.

⁵⁴² H. MacDonald, ‘Believing sceptically: Rethinking health-seeking behaviours in central India’, in S. Levine (ed.), *Medicine and the Politics of Knowledge*, Cape town; HSRC Press, 2012, pp. 101-117, p. 102.

⁵⁴³ Victor and Porter, ‘Dirty things’.

Middleton translated this term as ‘diviner’. The term ‘medium’ could equally be applied, since *oyo* communicated with the divinity and associated spirits, as could the term ‘healer,’ since therapists explicitly dealt with afflictions in physical and mental health. Barnes-Dean translated *odzo* (the regional variation) as ‘herbalist,’ yet this translation related to a locally-specific portrait of female divinatory work. Following the return from war, Christian actors have translated *oyo* as ‘witchdoctor’. *Oyo* is now associated with healers who may be *onzi* (evil). Accordingly, female healers have distanced themselves from the term, using instead ‘prophetess’ or simply ‘Christian.’ The ambiguity is pervasive: those informants I interviewed who had consulted diviners had difficulty encapsulating their practice in a single word, referring to the specialists in this chapter as ‘people who can see things,’ ‘women who reveal the causes of *drilonzi* (misfortune),’ or simply *oku mungu ziza* (‘elderly woman who prays’). For those who trust in them, female healers are understood as divine mediums who can reveal the causes of suffering, and potentially reverse it.⁵⁴⁴ Given this emphasis on revelation alongside bodily healing, this chapter thus uses the term ‘diviner-healer.’

6.2: Diviner-Healers in Historic Context: Ambiguous and Adaptive Healers

Alongside clans, female diviner-healers have long played a role in interpreting and managing affliction among Lugbara populations. By the 1950s, female diviners known as *oyo* or *oyou* operated throughout rural Lugbaraland, their practices drawing on traditions of prophetic healing, possession, and revelation first exhibited by the prophet

⁵⁴⁴ Critics continue to use the term *oyo* in relation female diviner-healers to question the individualistic healing powers of female healers.

Rembe. Indeed, the name *oyo* was derived from *kamioyo*, a “gladiolus-like” bulb found in the wild bushland, which was added to Yakan water and to which Lugbara people attributed hallucinatory effects.⁵⁴⁵ Diviners were thought to be conduits for divine knowledge, able to mediate with *Adro*, and as such have access to words which elders “did not know”. Their services were sought in cases of suffering where oracles or European medicine had failed either to reveal the source of the issue or bring recovery.⁵⁴⁶

Historically, divination was an explicitly female pursuit. Skills of divination were said to be inherited down the female line, from a diviner to her eldest daughter. This transmission was evidenced after a woman was “seized by the spirit,” or “possessed by God” in the bushland.⁵⁴⁷ During this encounter, which typically occurred during adolescence, a young girl would wander round naked for several days in a trance-like state. After long tutelage from another diviner, a diviner would begin practicing from her hut, known as *adrojo*, where a shrine was constructed and a sheep was sacrificed by another female diviner elected as sponsor.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁵ The *oyo* bulb has long held mystical and ambiguous properties, being associated with healing as well as sorcery. See J. Middleton, ‘Secrecy in Lugbara Religion’, *History of Religions* 12:4 (1973), pp. 299-316, p. 306.

⁵⁴⁶ Middleton encapsulates these afflictions as “sorcery”, a problematic term since it has no direct referent in Lugbarati. See Chapter Seven for a discussion.

⁵⁴⁷ Elsewhere, Middleton describes how a woman could become a diviner if she legitimated her sickness via the ancestral shrines. In a 1979 article, Middleton noted that for a given woman who is sick: “she has a choice of showing that the sickness comes from the ancestors of her husband (a sign of her disobedience to him), her own ancestors (a sign of their protection of her against her husband) or a spirit who singles her out and thereby gives her a new identity or personality... [or] By being possessed by a spirit and coming under its protection, she can validate whatever decision she makes and can establish her independence.” It is difficult to understand how women could manipulate the ritual system, since in Middleton’s wider analysis its operation is used entirely by men, but this description is indicative of female agency within the patriarchal system, which was also exercised in their role of diviners. Cf. Middleton, ‘Rites of sacrifice among the Lugbara’, p. 190.

⁵⁴⁸ Middleton, *Lugbara Religion*, p. 249.

Ojo worked in darkness and secrecy, consulting on an individual basis. Exact practices differed: some *ojo* practiced through becoming possessed and “speaking to the spirits,” subsequently offering food “sacrifices” at bodies of water.⁵⁴⁹ Other diviners engaged in pseudo-medicinal forms of curing, which involved sucking out objects from the sick person’s body, drawing out “objects which they first secrete in their mouths or in twists of grass, and in which is captured the power of the sickness.”⁵⁵⁰ Such objects included parts of snake bodies, bones, worms or caterpillars, pieces of bird bone or beak, fungi, ants, pieces of quartz, or even obsidian, which embodied “ambiguity, the wild, or divine power”.⁵⁵¹ It is unclear whether specialists performed different services, or whether healers blended multiple practices, but by the late colonial period, when healers were legitimated by evidence of divine possession, it is clear that *ojo* exhibited what Ventevogel, et al. call an “entrepreneurial spirit,” blending healing traditions with older prophetic forms of possession.⁵⁵²

What united these practices was, according to Middleton, the “uncanny and dangerous” perceptions of *ojo*. Diviners’ practices embodied the near opposite of patrilineal sacrifices, where words and rites were publicly performed before a wider congregation. Women also played little role in patrilineal rituals, performing only minimal tasks of preparing porridge and beer offered to ancestors, it being taboo for women to prepare the sacrificial meat. These observations were derived from Middleton’s dualist concepts of ‘good’ and ‘bad’, which relied on essentialist divisions between the sexes. Thus

⁵⁴⁹ Middleton, ‘Rites of sacrifice among the Lugbara’.

⁵⁵⁰ Middleton, ‘Spirit Possession among the Lugbara’.

⁵⁵¹ Middleton, ‘Secrecy in Lugbara Religion’, pp. 306-7.

⁵⁵² P. Ventevogel, et al., ‘Change and continuity in Burundian divinatory healing’, *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 12:1 (2018): pp. 22-43.

Middleton associates women with *Adro*, the wild, and with a lack of control, summarising one elder's claim that "[w]omen are evil... They bring trouble to men, they do not know the words of the ancestors. Women are the things of *Adro* [God of the grassland]." ⁵⁵³ Middleton notes that women were said to be "lacking an *orindi* (soul)," and thus social responsibility of men. ⁵⁵⁴ Departing from his dualism, Middleton explains that *ojo* were feared on account of the uncontrollable forces perceived as vested in women. For Middleton, this unpredictability was transposed onto divinatory healing: which embodied the ambiguity of secrets and that of womanhood.

Casale revisits the gendered dimensions of Middleton's dualism between good and bad—a division not only specific to the Lugbara context, but common to distinctions between nature and culture prevalent in anthropology at the time—arguing against such a rigid, oppositional emplacement of the sexes. ⁵⁵⁵ Retracing the detail within *Lugbara Religion*, and building on the work of feminist scholars, she argues for a model of gender mutuality: an acknowledgement of the potential for women to act as conduits for ordinary people to manage change. Within this revisioning, Casale notes that women were perceived as both threatening but vital to male survival, in part because of their ability to harness both *constructive* and *destructive* healing forces. In the colonial context, women's association with sorcery and divination embodied the extremes of this potential: as sorcerers, women were suspected of preparing poisons derived from snakes, agents unknown to men that caused suffering and death. And yet as diviners, women were equally capable of channelling forces to manage these attacks, in addition

⁵⁵³ Middleton, *Lugbara Religion*, p. 248.

⁵⁵⁴ Middleton 'Some Categories of Dual Classification', p. 194.

⁵⁵⁵ Casale, 'Women, Power, and Change'.

to employing new forms of possession to restore individual health. Thus, reviewing these positions, it seems that neither women (nor divine possession) were inherently *onzi*. Casale points to the interpretation of power related to its use: for health or healing.⁵⁵⁶

Underplayed by both Middleton and Casale, however, were the links between the work of diviners and the performance of lineage rites. In some aspects of their role—particularly their ability to commune with dead ancestors—the work of female diviners was integral to male elders’ pursuit of moral order through ritual. For example, diviners were consulted to speak with recently-deceased ancestors, whose souls were thought to linger in the bushland after death, in order to domesticate their souls as *ori* in the homestead. When misfortunes aroused the memory of the deceased, elders who asked “where are our fathers and our father’s brothers?” consulted diviners to ‘speak’ with those relatives, constructing *ori* to bring ancestors into communion with the living.⁵⁵⁷ In this way *ojo* played an integral role in facilitating the continuity of the patrilineage.⁵⁵⁸ Such work reveals a more nuanced and adaptive dimension of divinatory work, which was integral to restoring lineage order at routinised moments of disorder, including death.

By the 1970s, according to Barnes-Dean, female *ojo* had moved to the centre of healing practice. Barnes-Dean explained that *ojo* were primarily concerned with the management of *enyata* (poisoning) by various means, as well as attending to physical

⁵⁵⁶ Notably too, several interviewees rejected the notion that women were *onzi*. This was a designation grounded in social behaviours.

⁵⁵⁷ Middleton, *Lugbara Religion*, p. 250.

⁵⁵⁸ Casale, ‘Women, Power, and Change’.

afflictions including skin lesions, boils, diarrhoea, headaches, and swellings, as well as *ofu* (leprosy). Though the legitimacy of diviners still stemmed from their connection to *Adro*, their practice now relied almost entirely on the administration of herbs gathered in the bush.⁵⁵⁹ As discussed above, it is likely that Barnes-Deans' work was heavily influenced by her proximity to Kuluva Hospital—given the entrepreneurial practice of individual healing, it is not unsurprising that therapists in her purview mimicked the dispensation of drugs at the hospital.

In 1979, an Anglican missionary described the work of female diviners in different terms.⁵⁶⁰ Documenting healing practitioners around Ayivu, Enyabo described how diviners were possessed in the conventional way by *Adro*, or by free, named spirits. He gives the example of a diviner, Andru, who was possessed by a spirit called 'Yindu,' whom she addressed as *opi asia* (the other lord). Around Ayivu, diviners were understood to contact souls (a rite known as *orindi ti sizu*), and to address cases of possession from *adroa* (divine spirits) residing in rivers, trees and hills—cases which required 'chasing out' these spirits and solitary sacrifices in the bushland or in bodies of water, as well as freeing *orindi onzi* (evil spirits), which possessed people with increased frequency. On occasion *oyo* were called upon to contact neglected ancestors: *oyo* were able to speak to and receive replies from dead relatives who had been neglected, determining the sacrificial offering needed to restore balance. For a male ancestor, an offering of a goat, sheep or cow, and for a female, offerings of crops. Following these sacrifices, elders would gather to speak on issues and feast to 'beat'

⁵⁵⁹ The importance of this divine connection is evidenced in the fact that *oyo* did not possess any herbal treatment to which "lay" or ordinary Lugbara people did not have access.

⁵⁶⁰ Enyabo, *A Survey of Lugbara Spirit Beliefs*.

away trouble, while a small portion was offered to the diviner as a “fee.” In this role, *oyo* performed important social roles, and were reportedly respected by the communities they served.

From these accounts, we can summarise that the practices of *oyo* represent an eclectic mix of historical prophetic knowledge and inspiration drawn variously from clinical, herbal, and prayerful techniques. Divination was never a static tradition: rather, it has exhibited great diversity at the level of individual practitioners who have assimilated “change and continuity” in their practice.⁵⁶¹ Practices of divinatory-healing evolved against increased access to *mundu aro* (European medicine), as well as through incorporating older traditions of herbal medicine and female possession. As healers, *oyo* mediated the space created by the gradual erosion of ancestral healing, at times supporting the maintenance of patrilineal authority through contacting ancestors, and at other times offering novel explanations for suffering—but always adapting their practice to the requirements of the contemporary situation. The evolution of diviners’ practice was simultaneously a “supply and demand issue”.⁵⁶² As perceptions of the forces at work in the colonial period changed, Lugbara people sought out the verdicts of specialists who could manage the effects of those forces.

6.3: Christianity and Commercialisation

A focus on indigeneity precluded the links between Christianity and female empowerment unfolding throughout the colonial period, most notable in Revival

⁵⁶¹ Ventevogel, et al., ‘Change and continuity’.

⁵⁶² Allen, ‘Understanding Alice’, p. 387.

(described in Chapter Four). Since the return from war, female divinatory practice is entangled with scripts and symbols of healing borrowed from Anglican or Catholic traditions. Female diviner-healers assert their abilities as “gifts” from *Mungu* or *Adro* and their revelations as enabled by the Holy Spirit.

After the return from war, female healers began to openly link their practice with Christianity. Writing from Moyo in the 1980s, Allen noted that *oyo* in the traditional sense were now virtually absent, with female healers—now identifying as *ajwaki* (pl., a term borrowed from Acholi speakers)—claiming possession from non-kin spirits or multiple spirits.⁵⁶³ Diviners asserted the moral probity of their practice by claiming their communication with spirits was mediated through the Christian God, whilst others compared their spirits to “angels.” Personally identifying as devout Christians served to iron out any ambiguities in the sources of diviners’ power, aligning their work with forces of good rather than evil.⁵⁶⁴

Important changes have occurred since the 1980s. Diviner-healers face increasing competition from healing ministries. The rise of the CCR has been significant: given its association with bodily healing, spiritual healing centres offer weekly deliverance services headed by a Catholic priest, where congregations (sometimes hundreds strong) are ministered to, and subsequently delivered *en masse* by teams of intercessors, who move throughout the assembled body. Public services (within mainline denominations) are not only free of cost, but are accepted, in that power is publicly ministered. The CCR has, furthermore, widened the parameters for possibilities of individual encounters with *orindi ala* (the Holy Spirit). The acceptance of healing gifts for CCR adherents

⁵⁶³ Allen and Storm, ‘Quests for therapy in northern Uganda’.

⁵⁶⁴ *ibid.*

presents a parallel to divinatory work, but is also a source of competition. After intense periods of prayer, confession and completion of a 'Life in the Spirit' seminar, adherents are afforded "gifts" from the Holy Spirit, which may include intercession or the ability to pray for those who are sick. One adherent described how these gifts allow ordinary people to stand "between God" and people's suffering. This encounter with the Holy Spirit resonates powerfully with the former possession of *ojo* in the bushland; through this route, possession by the Holy Spirit is today structured and, to an extent, accepted. Whilst the CCR typically encourages these gifts to be deployed in collective cleansing or during public crusades, increasingly women have taken up their own practice from their homes. At the margins, the distinction between intercessor and diviner-healer is often just a matter of emphasis, as the experiences of Ezaru Mary described below reveal.

6.3.1: Witchdoctors: Moral Panic and Modern Crusades

If Christianity ironed out ambiguities in diviners' positions as unverified mediators of dangerous powers, in a contemporary commercial context, Christian associations have raised new questions over diviners' moral probity. Today, diviner-healers' individual practice stands in tension with the acceptance of gifts that come through collective expression of Christian worship, such as the CCR. But more specifically, local perceptions of female healers who are understood to possess exceptional gifts have been affected by the recent, substantive condemnation of witchdoctors. Since the mid-2000s, Lugbara religious leaders have continually denounced visitations to witchdoctors as the

antithesis of being Christian.⁵⁶⁵ It has created new anxieties about the dangers of harm when visiting specialists whose power-sources are unknown.

This critique stems in part from a newly-emergent, increasingly commercialised field of healing that has arisen in the last decade. Since the opening up of West Nile after the cessation of the LRA bush war, specialists from Congo, Southern Uganda and Kenya—who cannot be verified by local recommendations—have settled in Arua and its surrounds, as well as along the Congo border.⁵⁶⁶ On billboards, banners on homes, and leaflets, these practitioners advertise cures for physical and mental afflictions, relationship problems, or male impotency. Whilst the number of outsiders publicly engaging in healing has increased, Christian condemnation of “witchdoctors” has certainly raised their profile, creating a “moral panic” around the effects of their unverified services.⁵⁶⁷ Pastors equate witchdoctors to “devil-workers” whose services may afford their consultants immense, miraculous healing, or punish unfaithful relationship partners—but these services come at a high cost, with individuals consulting evil “idols” including snakes and shrines, rather than channelling godly forces. Now a local personification of devil work, witchdoctors are often associated with sexual immorality, with rumours abounding that they have sex with female consultants. Other Christian pastors deploy a secular critique, painting witchdoctors as tricksters who extort from the desperate, charging excessive fees and exploiting people’s fears. Christian leaders explain that witchdoctors’ diagnoses promote divisions within families: “[They say] this problem is because your wife is doing this, your

⁵⁶⁵ *Arua Diocese Bulletin* No. 130, May/June 2013.

⁵⁶⁶ I2, LCI, Oleba, 19/10/2016.

⁵⁶⁷ E. Goode and N. Ben-Yehuda, ‘Moral Panics: Culture, Politics, and Social Construction’, *Annual Review of Sociology* 20 (1994), pp. 149-171.

husband is doing this—parading lies.”⁵⁶⁸ Witchdoctors are described as rupturing communal peace, and as such have become scapegoats upon which to blame many modern ills.

Since the mid-2000s, the “moral panic” surrounding these occult practitioners has been brought to life by collective actions to destroy “shrines” located in their premises, and on occasion, expelling them altogether. These events create public evidence of the evil that they describe, echoing the destruction of ancestral shrines in the early years of independence. They usually follow collective disasters, including frequent road deaths or inexplicable fires in Arua town and its periphery. In 2007, some zealous Anglican leaders had destroyed the “shrines” of two separate witchdoctors operating in Abrici, along the Arua-Kampala road. A pastor of Onzivu Church, who had been involved in a crusade, explained:

[In] their shrines they cover the room with red cloth. When you enter the room you can't see anything. They make the shrine, most of the shrines look alike. They make something like a granary—when you enter a shrine you throw 500. When you enter you find these 500 coins, a big amount—which explains how many people come here. And then they put things like a dead snake, dead chameleon, dead lizards to scare people... I found there was no evil power, he was conning people.⁵⁶⁹

After this pastor accused the witchdoctor of extortion, these raids produced extensive paraphernalia that served as symbols of evil, such as snakes, bones, and wild animals—all emblems formerly associated with *Adro*. Since this event, local government and public health officials have led even more raids. In a later event in 2016, reportedly hundreds of witchdoctors were evicted from Oli, an urban zone in Arua, after a spate of

⁵⁶⁸ I, Captain Aleni, Onzivu, 10/06/2017.

⁵⁶⁹ *ibid*. Interestingly, whilst this pastor “outed” the witchdoctor through demonstrating his lack of power, populations in the area feared that road deaths were the result of objects lingering in the ground post-eviction. Fears of witchdoctors revolve around ideas of extortion, but also from very real anxieties about what these individuals are capable of.

mysterious fires swept through the neighbourhood. These crusades have an instrumental value, in that government intervention here created a spectacle that effectively distracted press attention from the mishandling of relief aid. Other MPs have garnered support from championing evictions, which are seen as dealing with the root cause of urban residents' disquiet. But these evictions also make fears about witchdoctors real. Urban events affect perceptions of security in rural trading centres: reportedly, many of those evicted in 2016 fled to nearby trading centres, where many were subsequently evicted again. Such news also travels over the radio shows hosted by Anglican and Catholic denominations.

Of particular note is the flexibility as to who constitutes a witchdoctor. Though the label was first used in relation to foreign practitioners, the term can now be associated with any spiritual, herbal, or pseudo-medical healer who demonstrates inexplicable healing prowess. Critiques and accusations of witchcraft often target men—particularly those who practice techniques involving “sucking” objects out of bodies (resembling colonial-era divination), or those who “cut” the skin in the “traditional” way. Female healers can also be subject to condemnation within the church, or in their homes, as evident in the testimonies of diviner-healers below.

These debates not only create personal insecurities for those who exhibit healing gifts, but affect the market for healing as well. Just as in the past, partaking in sacrifices was considered un-Christian, today going to a witchdoctor is seen as seeking quick solutions from unverified sources instead of “trusting in God.” Indeed, testimonies of being ‘born again’ (such as Zaitun’s below) regularly explain how turning to God involved turning away from witchdoctors. Outsourcing one’s past and succumbing to the temptations of

a witchdoctor provides an easier testimony, after all, than publicly attesting to personal sins. MacDonald describes how sufferers approach a plural landscape of therapy with what she terms a “hybrid eclectic scepticism.” This consciousness, she argues, judges healing practice not according to “the decline of a ‘traditional’ worldview and its arbitrary replacement by another, the ‘modern’ complex”, but rather according to an evaluation of changing conditions, and the individual reputations of healers.⁵⁷⁰ Since my Lugbara interlocutors constantly evaluated decisions as to healing on the basis of changing information, diviner-healers must market themselves accordingly, and distance themselves from scepticism generated by the church.

As is clear, today divination is deeply entangled with Christian theology, practice and symbols. Illustrating this entanglement in more detail are the accounts of two female diviner-healers, Vivian Ambe and Ezaru Mary, as well as the reaction to an emergent form of healing, contemporary witchdoctors.

6.3.2: *Vivian Ambe: Anglican Prophetess*

Vivian Ambe is a self-styled Kakwa prophetess who works from her compound in Ewata, 4km from Arua town.⁵⁷¹ She is a former accountant with an NGO, influenced by Pentecostal practice from her time in South Sudan, as well as from watching the Nigerian evangelist T.B. Joshua on the television in her home. Vivian’s grandparents were regional Revival leaders, and she identifies as Anglican, regularly attending Onzivu Church. Her healing practice exhibits all of these influences. Vivian’s healing

⁵⁷⁰ MacDonald, ‘Believing sceptically’, p. 102.

⁵⁷¹ Ewata hosts diverse settlers and languages. During Protectorate rule the land was gifted to loyal Ma’di and Alur chiefs. Now, the original owners have sold their plots and many families rent.

gifts began to manifest after she returned from South Sudan in the wake of the 2013 war. She heads a household after her husband remarried in South Sudan.

According to Vivian, she received her healing gifts through devotion, fasting and prayers, as well as through tutelage with another urban diviner-healer, Mama Faith. “I just admired [Him] and wanted to hear God’s voice”, she explained. After cohabiting with Mama Faith, Vivian began to hear God’s “auditorial” voice on a regular basis. These commands instructed her to undertake a daily prayer routine, as well as to set up her own altar on her husband’s plot. In 2015, following divine instruction, she laid hands on the “festering wound” of a female consultant, which she explains was caused by “wizardry.” Subsequently Vivian gained a reputation for interceding in a case of mysterious fires that swept a neighbouring family in Ewata: her prayers featured visions that revealed the cause of misfortune to be outstanding payments surrounding the death of a woman who had married into the family. After settlements were made, the fires stopped.

Vivian’s practice is driven by divine revelations, but in individual cases, she lays hands on the head or affected body part of the consultant, using Christian paraphernalia as healing devices. Vivian explains this repertoire:

In the prayers, if the Holy Spirit leads me to use the Holy Water we use it. If not, we only pray. It can cover any situation depending on the guidance of the Holy Spirit... Holy Water acts as a point of contact between you and the person you have offended. [In] Ezekiel 36:25 onwards, [during] that time it was God who used the water to heal the Israelites. Salt is for cleansing, the same as water (2 Kings 2:19-25). If you go to hospital they put you on drip which is water, [and] when you are baptised they use water. It speaks a lot about water.⁵⁷²

⁵⁷² I, Vivian, Ewata, 22/06/2017.

Vivian's services appeal to elite and professional women, though her close followers were drawn from women involved in petty trade or service work within her local environs. Vivian divines publicly during 'services' at her home. Falling into a trance, she lays hands on her consultants, "speaking" to the harmful spirit in Arabic, English, Lugbara, Kakwa or Alur, depending on its origin. Her consultants subsequently fall down, shaking, barking like dogs, slithering like snakes or screaming and crying. When asked to explain these influences, Vivian reproduced localised Pentecostal scripts of affliction: of demons, free spirits, or *jo jok* (witchcraft). In individual cases, her diagnoses are often more culturally or socially attuned to the familial relations of the consultant.

6.3.3: *Ezaru Mary: Catholic-inspired healing*

Quite different explanations for healing gifts were offered by a second woman, Ezaru Mary, a Catholic-inspired diviner-healer who practices in Vurra. Following violence in her marriage, Mary returned to her ancestral home. Her arrival at home coincided with the spreading of a mysterious sickness, which caused her clan members to fall ill. Given the timing of these afflictions with Mary's return, rumours began to spread that she was bewitching her relatives, and moves were made to evict her. Yet as the eviction attempts were mounting, a strange sickness descended upon Mary. Returning to her hut, Mary testifies that she passed away and lay dead for three days. She explains: "This was a period of purification, it did not require any earthly intervention."⁵⁷³ All who tried to enter her hut were prevented from entering by God, in what would otherwise have been

⁵⁷³ I, Ezaru, Vurra, 22/05/2017, Lugbara (DA).

a gross violation of familial responsibility.⁵⁷⁴ During this period of cleansing or purification, she recalls receiving visions and images:

I felt a spirit descending on me in a cold way, it was tied to a rosary. I was rescued from the hands of evil. I was able to see Mary mother of Jesus, that cloth that was wrapped around Mary mother of Jesus [she points to a *Way of the Cross* poster] was wrapped around her. I was running. I was ahead of Mary mother of Jesus, who was lighter than me. I ran and ran until I found myself back home, in my home. This was a dream; I was running in a dream back to my physical body, which was here in the house. At some point I woke up, there was coldness in the house. I started to pray, but without the rosary. I was able to get a revelation of all the causes of death, all the causes of death right from my own family, my children, my parents, my grandparents. I was able to get all the traditions of the other cultures, I began to know them. I started asking ‘Is it the devil or the Holy Spirit using me?’ But because of Mary, I realised it was the Holy Spirit, not the devil.⁵⁷⁵

After coming back to life, Mary revealed these visions to her clan members. Their attitudes toward her remained ambiguous, but after Mary began to pray for her relatives, and sickness stopped affecting them, she was allowed to remain in her natal home. Like Vivian, today Mary practices from her hut in that natal home, which is adorned with posters of the Catholic bishop. She too uses salt and water: “The water together with the salt, you apply it and recite a prayer, mainly asking God to bless the water and the salt to remove the evil powers in people that manifest through sickness. When that water and salt is blessed, it is sent to the world to heal people. It is simple.”⁵⁷⁶ Mary regularly prays with her local CCR branch, and takes a role in collective purges against *mazi*, a new form of witchcraft (Chapter Seven).⁵⁷⁷

These divine encounters have their specificities, as do different denominational scripts. Vivian emphasises the protective qualities of Jesus’ blood, and drives out demons “in Jesus name,” often crying ‘*efu!*’ (‘Get out!’). Her instructions, moreover, are received in

⁵⁷⁴ The point being that if her body had been found, she would have been taken for burial .

⁵⁷⁵ I, Ezaru, Vurra, 22/05/2017, (DA).

⁵⁷⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁷⁷ Diviners as individuals rarely confront *mazi*, but rather as part of collectives.

visions or dreams where she hears “God’s auditorial voice.” Mary, however, emphasises that her powers come from Jesus, but her revelations are mediated through “Mother Mary.” Both women espouse the Holy Spirit as the agent of cleansing, which drives out “evil spirit[s]” and “witchcraft” in a spiritual fight that represents the battle between powers of good and evil. Similarly, both women stress the importance of faith and devotion of individuals in healing encounters: though their consultants are mainly drawn from across Christian denominations, some come from Islam as well. Furthermore, both healers continually defended their own position, denying personal power whilst presenting themselves as conduits for divine work.⁵⁷⁸ As Mary explained: “For me, it is a spiritual gift and it is also a fight. I get a number of satanic things. I will go and remove the physical things and burn them with fire. There is nothing like I have gone underwater or I am a witchdoctor, for me it is the Cross... it is costless.” Both diviner-healers explain that their practice is driven by levels of “sin” in local populations, which manifests in envy, witchcraft and curses. Their gifts are afforded by God as a means to combat these sentiments. As such, in addition to their healing practice, diviner-healers regularly become involved with communal quests against witchcraft, a positioning that protects their status as aligned with social peace.

As is clear, whilst contemporary diviner-healers do align themselves with Christianity, the moral ambiguity around individual practice presents an unstable space of practice. In order to protect their reputation and their trade, these women must exhibit their loyalty not only to Christian values, but also to wider ideas of social peace.

⁵⁷⁸ P. Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa*. London: Hurst & Company, 2015.

6.4: “I got my healing at Vivian’s place”: Three Journeys

Many consultants who visited diviner-healers explained that the decision was made after “medically, treatment had failed.”⁵⁷⁹ Sufferers sought relief for a range of conditions ranging from physical afflictions, mental disquiet and spiritual hauntings, to domestic disputes and employment issues. Today, diviner-healers are never associated with managing illness believed to be induced by *enyata* poisoning, nor with the management of HIV/AIDS or Hepatitis-B. In such cases, it is said that “prayers don’t work,” since poisons are “ingested” and “real,” and viruses are carried in the blood.⁵⁸⁰ To maintain their reputation, diviner-healers do not associate themselves with death or “critical” cases, but with chronic suffering or misfortune.

Those interviewed in this research were women who continued to visit diviner-healers. They did so on account of the “relief” that they experienced as pain faded, mobility was restored or domestic fates changed. Whilst people often testified publicly as to the completeness of their healing, in most cases, this self-reported success was not a specific, one-time event, but relied on continual prayer and return visits to the diviner-healer’s compound over a period of weeks or months. Diviner-healers attributed this process-based healing both to a consultant’s faith and to the qualities of their social ties: “Sometimes people are thrown down [by the Spirit] because they are bad, sometimes it is because people are doing bad things to them,” Vivian explained. She added that sometimes the faithful provided more enticing targets for the “devil’s work” or jealous

⁵⁷⁹ I, Vivian’s congregation, Ewata, 22/06/2017 (PN).

⁵⁸⁰ I, Reverend, Maracha, 02/05/2017. Only once did a consultant testify that Vivian had healed her Hepatitis-B infection, in a claim that Vivian herself quickly quieted. Cases of *enyata* are managed exclusively by male herbalists.

associates.⁵⁸¹ Whilst diviner-healers (and consultants) emphasised the role of faith and belief in divinatory healing, the following cases illuminates the process of kinship structures surrounding each case. Focusing on *journeys* rather than *testimonies*, and on events beyond the diviner-healer's compound, these cases reveal how divinatory verdicts intersect with wider social, economic and legal structures.

6.4.1: Nancy: Lingered Funerary Debts

Nancy relayed these details over several months, during which time she frequently prayed with Vivian. A Saved Anglican, Nancy explained that she had experienced many misfortunes over recent years. After marrying a Lugbara man in the mid-1990s, she had suffered problems after the difficult birth of her second son, after which intimacy with her husband became too painful. She sought diagnoses from clinics in Arua and Kuluva, but was given little explanation. Eventually her husband left the home and remarried in Nebbi. During her own struggles, Nancy's firstborn son was also suffering from learning difficulties after a tragic fall in the home, and her father died in a mysterious motorcycle accident. Though she had earned qualifications to undergraduate level, Nancy struggled to find employment and had lost several jobs. After these repeated misfortunes, she began to explore the causes for her suffering.

After seeking counsel from her elders, Nancy came to believe that the underlying issue arose from the funeral of her mother. Her mother had died from an ectopic pregnancy, but was buried at her maternal home in Maracha rather than at her husband's place. Nancy's father's people had refused to pay *avuta*, in part because her father's mother

⁵⁸¹ I, Vivian, Ewata, 23/12/2017 (PN).

was a Revival Christian, who vehemently disavowed such customs. The death was sudden, and the burial ended in violence between the two families, which necessitated police intervention. As the firstborn child, Nancy believed herself to be in line to receive misfortunes from the failed funerary rites. Though Nancy's elders were aware of the situation, they were reluctant to speak up. Nancy instead took a goat to her elders in an effort to reverse the situation, and also gave a significant contribution towards the purchase of a cow that could be used for cleansing. Despite this, the issue was not formerly tabled.

Following these events, Nancy began to seek more direct intervention. She began to seek counsel from priests in Arua, as well as sporadically attend the weekly healing ministry at Ambiriambati. Though these services lifted her spirits, Nancy explained that her "heart [still] pained." In early 2017, however, Nancy visited Vivian. After prayers and consultations, Vivian entertained the possibility that Nancy had been bewitched by her ex-husband's new wife, yet Nancy was unconvinced. After extensive prayer, Vivian revealed that Nancy needed to deal with the reparations around her mother's death. Nancy began to pray with Vivian repeatedly, explaining that being a woman, "it was very hard for me to enact the cultural things." Nancy explained that Vivian's prayers were directed "that someone will hear from my dad's side and will take this thing forward, so that I can be released from it."

During this same time, Nancy re-engaged with Kuluva Hospital. She found a diagnosis for her pain, which resulted from incorrect stitching and consequent problems after childbirth. This diagnosis, too, she attributed to Vivian's prayers. After finding employment with an international NGO, Nancy offered Vivian a tithe of 10% of her

salary. In our last meeting, Nancy was hoping to buy a plot of her own to assuage the economic insecurity she had experienced since leaving her husband. Moving away due to her new employment, Nancy gradually lost contact with Vivian. Though the “root” of the problem remained unsolved, in a renewed position of economic stability, Nancy was able to move on with her life.

6.4.2: Zaitun: Unpaid Bridewealth

The second case was narrated in Lugbara by Zaitun, a tailor in Arua, who after being healed became a pious follower of Vivian. Zaitun was raised as a Catholic, but had converted to Islam after marrying her husband. After being healed, she re-converted to the Christian faith, worshipping twice weekly at Vivian’s place.⁵⁸²

Zaitun explained: “Here [at Vivian’s place] is where I got my healing, and here is where I remain.” She started to feel sick in 1997, with pain beginning in her leg, as if an object had pierced her. After two to three months, the pain had spread to her back and was so intense she could not carry a baby on her back. She took tablets and was given injections, but nothing changed: “If I [took] tablets or drugs, I felt more ill than before,” she recalled. On the advice of her mother-in-law, Zaitun visited a specialist whom she described as an *oyo* (witchdoctor), who started removing objects—batteries, keys, broken bottles, metals, and wires—from her body (replicating the treatment of colonial female diviners). Subsequently, Zaitun did experience relief, but fell ill again. In the intermittent years, Zaitun explains that she delivered twelve children. She continued to

⁵⁸² I, Zaitun, Ewata, 07/02/2017 (PN).

visit different *ojo* around Arua: “I took so many herbs, roots, leaves, some fruits—all kinds of things. Still I had no healing.” Eventually she became bedridden, unable to bend, carry luggage, or cook. She had previously worked as a tailor, but was now unable to do this work either: “Because of this sickness I became very fat. People thought it was good health. I was always feeling like there was gas in me. I was always tired, I couldn’t move. I could not walk half a mile.” In 2016, her neighbour, after witnessing her suffering, told her about Vivian’s prayers.

Vivian prayed over Zaitun, and began to receive visions as to the cause of her affliction: “That [misfortunes] had happened behind me, with my grandparents. The vision was the bridewealth that was given for me, it was not enough. Some of the animals which were given died and they were supposed to be repaid. One of the animals died, [and] the *ali*, which was meant to be eaten by my husband’s clan, was not given.” Zaitun told her husband, who agreed to repay the bull and the cow that had died. After these transfers had been made and the *ali* eaten by her people, Zaitun explained, “My people even confessed that it is true they had been complaining, their *words* were causing the sickness.”

Zaitun continues to pray with Vivian, and accompanied her on a pilgrimage in 2017, where she was able to walk for several days. Of her experience and her belief, she concludes:

It is your faith. The prayers can only work with your faith. If you do not forgive those who have offended you, however much we pray for you, you will not get healed. If there is also a vision about you, if you have something to do with your maternal uncles or you have been cursed, if you do not do that forgiveness, it

will not work for you. It may or may not require eating [i.e. a formal sitting with elders].”⁵⁸³

For Zaitun, Vivian’s prayers worked in tandem with the enactment of cultural settlements. In contrast to Nancy, the attentiveness of her husband and relatives resulted in a perceived successful outcome.

6.4.3: Sharon: *Witchcraft and Vengeance*

Sharon narrated her experience in English and Lugbara from her business premises in Awindiri.⁵⁸⁴ She explained that her misfortune began when she was growing up, in Koboko. Her father had died, and she grew up with her mother’s people. Sharon’s mother had worked for the Arua government and on projects with German NGO workers, and had amassed considerable personal wealth. Before her abrupt death over a decade ago, Sharon’s mother had bought a commercial plot in Koboko, and had begun to cohabit with a new man from Ayivu. At the funeral, however, a fight over the unpaid bridewealth broke out, after which Sharon’s mother’s relatives took the animals by force. Amidst this disruption, there was no effort to ascertain inheritance rights for the building, which Sharon’s stepfather then claimed. Sharon’s maternal grandfather, a respected elder, warned that “Since [my daughter] has children, one day they will come and follow these things themselves.” Despite this warning, the stepfather began to rent the building himself. It is significant that the stepfather was known as a “notorious” man, who reportedly consulted witchdoctors.

⁵⁸³ I, Zaitun, Ewata, 07/02/2017 (PN).

⁵⁸⁴ I, Sharon, Ewata, 19/02/2017 (OJ).

Indeed, in mid-2015 Sharon and her siblings petitioned for a sitting with her stepfather, in which joint ownership could be discussed. Subsequently, the stepfather opened a case at Koboko police station, claiming that “My wife’s children are trying to kill me” (an alleged diversionary tactic so that he could continue to use the buildings). The police instructed that the matter should be settled at home with elders. In the intervening years, three formal sittings were held, yet no resolution was found. Sharon and her siblings decided to abandon the case, but local government officers within the family urged them to continue. As of January 2017, Sharon was awaiting a letter from Arua magistrates.

From 2015-17, though, misfortunes had begun to befall Sharon. Sharon believed that these events accrued to her because she was her mother’s firstborn, and so would stand to inherit the largest portion of the estate. In one mysterious accident, she was knocked off a bike, breaking her leg—and by her account, though no one had told him of the accident, her stepfather was reportedly celebrating at home with soda. He was rumoured to have suggested to his relatives: “Why are you crying? This is just the beginning!” After returning home, more misfortunes occurred. Fires began in her home, and on one occasion, a box containing the court documents caught alight. The family began to pray, and invited a female Anglican reverend to intercede for them as well.⁵⁸⁵

Some weeks after these events, Sharon and six of her family members were called to court, and on a complaint lodged by the stepfather, arrested for trespassing onto his property. Later, the case was thrown out, and Sharon returned to her home in Arua. Lamenting the continued costs of attending court, she explained: “I lost my husband

⁵⁸⁵ ObservationsPrayerful intervention, mysterious fires, February 2017, Ewata.

five years ago—I am the only one paying school fees for the children. It is a struggle.” But she was even more troubled by the continuing threats from her stepfather. After returning home, fires started again: as she recalled, “Other things started burning, until the whole house burnt down. [As] much as we involved many people to come and pray, Vivian, the other Christians in our church—things kept on burning. That is how we got to know this was about the ongoing struggle for my mother’s storage house.” Along with secular investigations by family members, Vivian’s revelation confirmed the stepfather’s involvement in the crimes.

At this point Sharon’s elders took greater interest. A sitting was hosted in Koboko, where elders fasted and prayed over the issue. Within these prayers, a curse was issued: “If it is really true that our daughter Sharon’s mother’s fingers were put in this structure [i.e. constructed the building], let him [the stepfather/culprit] come openly and confess, or let it be.” Another curse enjoined: “If it is true that it was this man doing these things, then these things should also go back to him. His things should also start burning.”

At Vivian’s compound, much excitement circulated about the cessation of the fires, yet Sharon’s trauma continued. Mysterious strangers visited her compound, offering gifts to Sharon’s children, and sending mysterious messages via phone. Word spread that her stepfather was talking openly, that “for the sake of that house he will kill someone.” Sharon explained that there would be repercussions for his use of the court against his family, as well as for him sending the fires (because of the curse), yet these effects would take time to manifest. She explained that the police could do nothing, “since no one has seen him [the stepfather] directly lighting the fire.” Some weeks after she narrated this story to me, Sharon left Arua.

6.5 From Peripheral Healing Practice to the Generation of Moral Knowledge

In the Lugbara context, scholars have primarily associated female divination with the management of secrets and asocial afflictions. This trend echoes the focus in much anthropological literature on the secrecy and “magic” of divination, whereby techniques serve to “reveal the unseen, articulate[s] the unheard”.⁵⁸⁶ For this reason, scholars have argued that sufferers deliberately consult diviner-healers beyond the immediate social horizon. MacDonald notes that culturally or geographically distant healers are often regarded as offering more credible answers, or stronger prayers.⁵⁸⁷ Stroeken, moreover, has argued that Sukuma therapy-seekers deliberately visit diviners beyond their locality, believing that distance between themselves and the diviners allows the “truth of the matter to be revealed”.⁵⁸⁸

For Lugbara women, however, the opposite is often true: quests for answers took place within the places where those seekers lived or worked. Whilst on the one hand these decisions were taken pragmatically against resource constraints, decisions were also taken on the basis that the source of diviner-healers’ insights could be validated, as could the strength of their healing powers. Indeed, for Lugbara women, distance actually bred suspicion. One Anglican consultant who was “healed” at Vivian’s place voiced suspicion as to Ezaru Mary’s power, recalling, “There was one [diviner] in

⁵⁸⁶ M. Winkelman and P.M. Peek, ‘Introduction: Divination and Healing Processes’, in M. Winkelman and P.M. Peek (eds.), *Divination and Healing: Potent Visions*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004, pp. 3-25, p. 15.

⁵⁸⁷ MacDonald, ‘Believing sceptically’.

⁵⁸⁸ K. Stroeken, ‘In Search of the Real: The Healing Contingency of Sukuma Divination’, in M. Winkelman and P.M. Peek (eds.), *Divination and Healing: Potent Visions*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004, pp. 29-54, p. 31.

Vurra, I heard that she had witch-powers and they chased [her] away.” Indeed, divination is often practiced within the neighbourhood. This of course means that diviner-healers are imbricated in the social field of their consultants, and often have prior knowledge of cases based on rumours or gossip that travel through villages and church communities. The encounter is never entirely anonymous.⁵⁸⁹ Rather than reveal the unknown, divination can thus serve to order pre-existing possibilities for affliction or misfortune: as such, this process provides a parallel to how elders collectively comb through family histories, assessing personalities and the likelihood of historic contagion. That said, unlike encounters with elders, diviner-healers’ abilities were regarded as fact since they were validated by their connection to the divine.

In some cases, however, seekers assessed their divinatory verdicts with scepticism, rejecting explanations of witchcraft or possession that were detached from the circumstances of their specific social bonds. For example, prior to consulting Vivian, Nancy was troubled by the events of her mother’s funerary rites, and the misfortunes which were accruing to her as the firstborn child. Nancy was born-again, and highly conversant regarding ideas of evil spirits. Yet when it came to her own case, she resisted Vivian’s suggestion that her misfortunes could have resulted from witchcraft from her husband’s new wife. Opting for witchcraft as an explanation would have been preferential, since prayer alone is believed to work in such cases (animal payments to elders not being required). But rather than seeking independent answers, Nancy, Sharon and Zaitun were instead searching for confirmation of their pre-existing concerns. In

⁵⁸⁹ Even in more distant cases, knowledge of misfortune spreads far beyond local limits. I was told of aspects of Sharon’s case from members of Onzivu’s church community, as well as from relatives in Maracha—the reputation of her stepfather was widely known.

contrast to the forms of divination Stroeken described, for Lugbara women divination worked most effectively when it served to formalise possibilities already known by the consultants (and probably also by the diviner-healer). Consultants proactively participated in their diagnoses, to the point of rejecting explanations that did not resonate with their own knowledge of what could cause suffering

For those who prayed with them, diviner-healers' credibility was located in the changes experienced following their prayers. These changes did not necessarily involve miraculous instances of bodily restoration, though diviner-healers did cite these examples. As one woman recounted: "I am thanking God for Vivian and all of those who pray with her. She has been to pray in my home. Before her, no one would pray in my home. I used to buy food alone for the home—now my husband buys food. Last Sunday he woke up at 5am and said, 'Are you going to church?' Vivian has the key to life!"⁵⁹⁰ In this situation, simple reconciliation within a marital relationship was evidence of Vivian's power. In the cases discussed above, focussing on processes rather than outcomes reveals that divination rarely served to fully eliminate a sufferer's sense of misfortune. Rather, within the wider structures of clan and law within which women exist, divination proffered a script to evidence—and so begin to address—mistreatment or injustice. Of thirty recorded cases in this research, nine verdicts revealed that clan reparations were necessary (Appendix D). In this sense, divination can be seen to operate within the patriarchal settlement framework of clan transfers. In the same way that diviners were used to contact ancestors in the early years of independence, their services have since adapted to women's exclusion, and the increasing material demands

⁵⁹⁰ I, Trader, Ewata, 27/01/2017 (PN).

of this framework following return. Following Peek, the power of divination lies in its ability to investigate and transmute the wider social context, where “a culture's most cherished values are adapted to the real world of continual flux.”⁵⁹¹ Rather than enacting radical change, as Casale suggested, divination remains strongly linked to the familial and clan structures within which individuals are imbricated.

As noted above, choices to consult a diviner-healer may be pragmatic due to resource constraints, but other dimensions inform these choices as well: namely, the politics of voice that govern the resolution of misfortune. Divination reinforces the position of the marginal within clan frameworks, a restrictive politics of which women are cogently aware. Women seek divination not only because it is free, but because it provides answers that may serve as an entry point to a moral system from which they are excluded. As described in the previous chapter, women suffer uniquely as wives or as daughters: in their quests for healing, many women sought not to radically change kinship structures, but to bring attention to their own position within them. On account of this imbrication, accessing divinatory services yielded mixed outcomes, depending on the individual woman's position regarding relatives, finances, and the willingness of others to enact wider repair. Whilst diviner-healers enabled women to draw attention to their own neglect, the transformative effect of this critique depended greatly upon the attentiveness of the familial institutions surrounding them.

The different fates of Nancy and Zaitun are instructive. In both cases, Vivian revealed that the misfortune stemmed from failure to complete customary sanctions: *avuta* and

⁵⁹¹ M. Winkelman and P.M. Peek, 'Introduction', p. 7.

ali, respectively. In Zaitun's case, her husband was receptive to the divinatory revelation, and mobilised animals to instigate a formal sitting. Accordingly, Zaitun was able to use the diagnosis to transform her state of sickness. In Nancy's case, however, raising cultural payments was more difficult, and her elders were reluctant to table the issue (despite her donations to them). Thus Nancy proceeded with prayer, and when her fortunes changed, attributed this change to Vivian's intervention. Yet should this change in the future, it is likely that Nancy would again turn to the unpaid debts around her mother's death as an unsolved root cause. As argued above, enacting reparations reproduces normative aspects of a moral order based on kinship. Similarly, in Sharon's case, given the inattention of the law to the lack of evidence surrounding witchcraft, and the powerlessness of her family to confront a wealthy stepfather, little could be done.

When Lugbara women sought the causes of affliction, they purposefully selected healers who could mediate within local moral worlds—approaches that stand in stark contrast to pastors of charismatic Christianity, who, as observed in Pentecostal communities elsewhere, often encourage their followers to “break with the past.”⁵⁹² As noted in Chapter Five, for example, tracing family misfortunes can lead to a verdict that radically challenges the moral standing of elders, by critiquing bridewealth and funerary payments. Yet diviner-healers are attentive to such frameworks, and to the implications of lingering debts. Whilst diviner-healers borrow from and perform different aspects of Charismatic Christianity, revelation remains highly culturally attuned. Moreover, diviner-healers' therapies often contained a strong punitive element. As Heald noted in

⁵⁹² B. Meyer, ‘Make a Complete Break with the Past.’ Memory and Post-Colonial Modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostalist Discourse’, *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28:3 (1998), pp. 316-349, p. 318.

Gisu communities in Uganda, divination retains a strong focus on individual vengeance.⁵⁹³ For example, in Sharon's case, where she believed her life to be at risk, prayer offered a means to manage the situation in lieu of governmental or elders' prohibitions. The tenor of Vivian's prayers mirrored the logic of the elders' cursing, as she instructed the "fire to be returned to its sender." Sometimes, after her prayers, she explained: "He [the stepfather] is now bedridden. His body is burning."⁵⁹⁴ The retributive logics of suffering for one's own actions thus echo elders' traditions of verbal justice through the *rudu* curse. Whilst Vivian celebrated this result, Sharon continued to bear the effects of her stepfather's witchcraft. Neither her elders' curses nor Vivian's prayers offered sufficient protection.

6.6 The Violence of Home-Life

In the case studies presented above, the women involved retained connections to their relatives and possessed relative wealth through employment in town. Yet many women who accessed diviner-healers did not enjoy such securities. In a further eight of the thirty recorded cases, misfortunes stemmed from problems in homes: quarrels with husbands, violence or the breakdown of marriages. In these cases, therapy-seekers sought not to redress cultural obligations but to stabilise their domestic lives. Again, context here is key, as compared to past generations home units have become increasingly autonomous, particularly in cases where couples rent away from their natal clans—indeed, the majority of women interviewed in diviners compounds fell into this

⁵⁹³ S. Heald, 'Divinatory Failure: the religious and social role of Gisu diviners', *Africa* 61:3 (Diviners, Seers and Prophets in Eastern Africa) (1991), pp. 299-317.

⁵⁹⁴ I, Vivian, Ewata, 07/02/2017 (PN).

category. Homes are sites riven by gender politics: labour is divided between men and women, with respect demonstrated through women's serving men, and the separation of eating practices and foods. One consultant of Vivian's explained that she did not directly look into her husband's eyes, instead bowing as she spoke to him. Whilst there is obvious variation depending on the personalities within homes, the increasing autonomy of household spaces creates new vulnerabilities. On a case-by-case basis, women—particularly women recently married or married away from clans—are often subject to the protection and provision afforded by their husbands, with little influence over distribution of their household's resources.

According to custom, clan relatives invest intensive labour into making both material provisions and moral assurances for new homes. Visits by relatives and vetting processes are finalised by the transfer of bridewealth. Despite the erosion of clan involvement in marriages, powerful moral templates pervade how women and men should relate to each other, as well as how homes should function on a daily basis: homes are to be non-violent spaces, where respect (*ru*) is demonstrated. Conventionally, in cases where a husband excessively mistreats or abandons his wife, he may be subject to discipline from his clan brothers and elders. This intervention is intended to restore peaceful relations, in order to prevent the wife petitioning her relatives in her natal home. For example, in one Terego clan in 2016, a young male clansman was called before his clan and caned after publicly beating his wife. The recent introduction of clan by-laws means that in some cases men can be subject to fines or caned for indiscriminate violence. Yet the enforcement of this intervention depends on the investment of the clan, and provides little security for married couples who live away from ancestral lands, or who have eloped without the transfer of bridewealth.

NGO workers interviewed during this research, working with human rights frameworks, expressed concern at high rates of domestic violence in Arua.⁵⁹⁵ Elders and local government alike blame this rise on increasing rates of alcoholism and spousal abandonment, and in response to these cases, Arua District officials drafted an ordinance in 2016 that sought to regulate times for drinking, to punish perpetrators of gender-based violence, and to ban the illegal sale of *waragi* (local gin) sachets. Despite this attention, according to the representatives of one of the few NGOs engaged in the field, much violence goes unreported even to LCIs, with even fewer cases being heard in courts.⁵⁹⁶ In part, this is because involving government in family disputes (rather than clan members) is thought to manifest in a state of sickness known as *aruba*, which requires cultural cleansing.

In Lugbara society many actors—from clan elders to Christian pastors—promoted visions of *tualu* based on hierarchies within homeshome. Often these interventions served to encourage peace at the expense of acknowledging mistreatment—a point illustrated by Porter’s analysis of post-rape interventions in Acholiland.⁵⁹⁷ Here, maintaining social harmony often served to silence the claims of individual women who had been raped during war or by their partners. In one intervention in Aroi, Arua, covered by the local press, a resident appealed to her fellow villagers: “Convince your husband, pull him towards yourself with good deeds, no one will change your husband apart from you, solve your issues with him in the bedroom and once he senses that you

⁵⁹⁵ I, Juliet Logose, HRC, 04/02/2016; I, SNV Programme Manager, Arua, 05/05/2016.

⁵⁹⁶ I, Uganda Law Society, Arua, 04/05/2016.

⁵⁹⁷ H. Porter, *After Rape: Violence, Justice and Social Harmony in Uganda* (The International African Library). Cambridge UP, 2016.

are unfazed by his acts, he will change.”⁵⁹⁸ Both Christian and secular cultural sensibilities promote a vision of heteronormativity in which the onus for peace and stability is placed on women. Vivian, too, explained the need for her female consultants to take care of their hygiene in order to keep hold of their husbands. Often the behaviour of women is blamed for the breakdown of social structures—in cases of elopement, for example, women who frequent markets are often blamed for promoting immorality. In each of these situations, women must cope with often difficult marital situations, with little recourse to other actors.

Diviner-healers emphasised this relational aspect of being in explaining their practice: women visited them, and experienced possession since they were “weaker” than men, had more “forgiving hearts than men”, or were more ready to “submit to the spirit”.⁵⁹⁹ Incidentally, returning to Middleton’s schema—diviners explained their practice not as pertaining not to essentialist ways of being, but because of the relational situations in which their female consultants’ lives were enmeshed. In a similar way, anthropologists have sought to explain female possession cults as historical and contemporary responses to patriarchal oppression and male dominance in public life. Female possession has been explained as response to subordination, or creative resistance to patriarchal values, mediated through historically accepted expressions.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁸ C. Aluma, ‘Residents attribute increased domestic violence to alcoholism, night discos’, *West Nile Web (Analysis)*, 10 December 2019. Available at < <https://www.westnileweb.com/news-a-analysis/arua/residents-attribute-increased-domestic-violence-to-alcoholism-night-discos>>.

⁵⁹⁹ I, Mary, Vurra, 22/05/2017 (DA); I, Vivian, Ewata, 23/12/2017 (PN).

⁶⁰⁰ For example, J. Boddy, ‘Spirit Possession Revisited: Beyond Instrumentality’, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23 (1994), pp. 407-343; E. Bourguignon, ‘Suffering and Healing, Subordination and Power: Women and Possession Trace’, *Ethos*, 32:4 (2004), pp. 557-574. Incidentally, elders often blamed male possession on the consumption of *mairungi* (khat), alcohol or other drugs, where the abrogation of responsibility is a choice. I have written about this in a forthcoming article with Anguyo and Odda.

Evidence of this coping pervaded conversation at Vivian's compound, and frequently fed into the content of divinatory verdicts. One woman, Grace, explained,

My husband wanted to strangle me and would continue until saliva was coming out of my mouth. He only stopped when one of the nearby neighbours came and rescued me after my mother-in-law suggested I should leave the home. I wanted a sitting with my elderly relatives, but my husband had not requested a sitting.⁶⁰¹

In this case, Vivian explained that Grace's husband was possessed by *orindi onzi*, the spirit of a dead person possessing him, inspiring him with uncontrollable anger and intent to kill his wife. Grace did not approach her husband, but after prayer with Vivian, the violence stopped. Possession provided a means to explain violence, outsourcing responsibility of the husband to a spiritual agent. Accordingly, through prayer, Grace could address this agent, and work towards peace when few other options were forthcoming. In multiple other cases, prayer addressed the need for "peace at home," providing a means for women proactively to address domestic disquiet.

Notably, coping strategies were present not just through prayer, but by the continued association of women with diviner-healers and healing communities. Diviner-healers often formed deep and extended relationships with their consultants, and Vivian's and Mary's own experiences of overcoming marital issues, highlighted continually in the sermons that accompanied weekly deliverance masses, offered inspiration to their visitors. Moreover, diviner-healers' compounds provided a place where women could cathartically discuss their own problems (the provision of food was an additional incentive to visit). Yet time within the compound still remained within the purview of watchful husbands, with some of Vivian's followers confiding that their husbands had

⁶⁰¹ I, Trader, Arua, 21/01/2017 (PN).

contested the time they spent at her place. In mid-2017, Vivian explained she had to curtail her increasingly lengthy healing ministries, since husbands were complaining their wives had no time to perform cooking and household work.

Both in the home, then, and in the clan, divinatory verdicts often served to reinforce a moral *status quo* that privileged the position of men. It is of note that both Mary and Vivian headed female households after separating from their husbands, occupying a position within local society that continues to be ambiguous. This position differentiated these women from the majority of other Charismatic Christians—including CCR intercessors who extol prayerful revelation—who reside in monogamous partnerships as a prerequisite for joining the movement. In Mary’s case, tangible insecurities arose when her return to her natal home coincided with the onset of mysterious sicknesses, and her clan sought to evict her. As noted, however, Mary’s gifts allowed her to reside with her clan, subverting suspicion of her own involvement with witchcraft, and as her reputation spread, she was invited to treat sicknesses across the District, receiving both hospitality and prestige. Mary spoke about the “envy” of people in her village, since despite being divorced and without status, she received many visitors who travelled to her home by car and motorbike. Vivian, too, after separating from her husband in South Sudan, lived with economic independence. Both women offered their services for free, but as an appreciation, satisfied consultants gave both women financial contributions. Since Vivian had afforded healing, many of her consultants feared that her interventions, if unrewarded, could turn against them. Indeed, developing gifts of divination provided economic security to women living in ambiguous social positions. In earlier eras too, diviners were often divorced or barren women, yet their powers of divination made them invaluable resources to the community.

Finally, the potential leverage that could emerge from healing gifts was evident in the number of Vivian's consultants who themselves, later, laid claim to healing powers. Just as Vivian began her career through praying with another Anglican prophet, Mama Faith, those whom Vivian healed also received visions and heard voices, instructing them as to their own power. One of Vivian's close followers, Opinia, explained: "When I came I was prayed for [and] I got healed but there was a revelation that God wanted to use me more greatly than just healing me, and that I needed to open my heart to God... God started using me until I am now preparing to initiate an altar in my own home."⁶⁰² Vivian tolerated these gifts, but also expressed frustration on more than one occasion—it was likely that Opinia would eventually take consultants away from her.⁶⁰³ Yet for Vivian to contest Opinia's revelation would be to undermine the veracity of her own account, a position that Vivian could not realistically adopt. Echoing the past, the modern diviner-healer's practice remains responsive to changing currents of public opinion: should another healer prove more powerful, their local status could quickly diminish.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the pasts and presents of Lugbara female divinatory healing. Prior accounts of female healing (e.g. Middleton) were structured by essentialist binaries between women and nature, but also neglected wider forms of female

⁶⁰² I, Vivian Ambe's Disciples, Ewata, 20/02/2017 (PN).

⁶⁰³ These revelations, which had befallen several women followers, differed from that of one man, Bosco. He lived with his maternal relatives adjacent to Vivian's home, but took his gifts in a different direction: "I don't take my children to hospital when they are sick but I pray for them, I use water, I use salt," he said. Interview, Bosco, Chief, 12/04/2017 (PN).

empowerment connected to Christian currents. Christianity served to legitimate the ambiguous position of divine healers. Yet, as Christian-inspired healers within an unstable terrain, this alignment has produced new ambiguities in an increasingly commercialised healing landscape. Engaging with these currents has transformed the work of diviner-healers, who now no longer treat cases of poisoning, or critical cases, but instead channel prayers and the Holy Spirit to reveal the causes of problems, in relation to chronic suffering.

Overwhelmingly, diviner-healers are consulted by women. This chapter placed divinatory revelations and healing within the wider life course of women, which in the context of suffering, remains affected by the entrenchment of patriarchal clan structures since return. Though women's suffering often stems from unpaid cultural debts and dues, women have little means to reverse this problem. Even so, as the diviner-healer's compound is a site of ecstatic energy, this chapter has shown how women pragmatically reject or apply verdicts as a means of confronting and repairing frayed domestic relations. This chapter has moved beyond the "magic" of divination, considering revelation within not only the immediate context of the diviner-healer's consultation, but the wider social position of women who are often already cognisant as to why affliction occurs.

Chapters Five and Six have described evolution in clan-based and divinatory healing: clans and diviner-healers alike are invested in the ordering of social knowledge, as a means of explaining chronic suffering. Whilst previous analyses have suggested that specific types of conditions necessitate different interventions (clans managing ancestral sicknesses, and diviners managing witchcraft and sorcery), these chapters have shown that decisions to consult clans or diviner-healers is heavily influenced by access, which

is often in turn informed by gender. Whilst much transformed by Christianity and societal changes, clans and diviner-healers remain legitimate options in managing intimate knowledge.

Part III: Death, Bereavement and Explaining Crisis

Chapter Seven

Contesting Sacrifices: Subjective Realities and Social Schisms in Anti-Witchcraft Action

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapters have explored how efforts to explain and act upon chronic sickness have aimed at reinforcing normative ideals of Lugbara society. The final three chapters of this thesis explore how efforts to explain sudden deaths, often with recourse to the same institutional landscape of healing, engender explanations that may erode clan and social protections for individuals. Since return, these explanations have increasingly been translated through the umbrella term *witchcraft*, though the term belongs to a non-European vocabulary whose development these chapters trace as well. Whilst scholars continue to describe these notions in terms of “belief,” I here seek to account for the production of ideas, in conjunction with crisis.⁶⁰⁴

Since returning from exile, the fears of and responses to witchcraft have transformed.. Amid reconstruction, new forms of witchcraft have provided idioms to explain unequal prosperity. On the one hand, Lugbara link war to metaphysical shifts: people widely recognised that new forms of witchcraft “followed” populations back from exile in Congo, where experiences of exile facilitated new opportunities to buy witchcraft on the market.⁶⁰⁵ On the other hand, older fears of poisoning continue to exist, but are managed in new ways, through improvising pseudo-legal structures to evict suspects. During this research, state officials were concerned about an alarming rate of increase in evictions, wherein local ontologies came into conflict with protections afforded by

⁶⁰⁴ R. Solomon, ‘Witch-killings and the Law in Uganda’, *Journal of Law and Religion* 35:2 (2020), pp. 270-296.

⁶⁰⁵ As with the sicknesses connected to *suru*, *mazi* is said to “follow” families.

human rights and state law.⁶⁰⁶ The following chapters explore the dynamics behind witchcraft claims, considering the evolution in their logics, as well as the institutions of healing and law involved in anti-witchcraft action.

As Turner (1964) noted long ago, dynamics of affliction and suffering are too often side-lined in analysis of witchcraft.⁶⁰⁷ Whilst, as in other contexts, Lugbara speakers use witchcraft in creative ways to describe power and change in public discourse, *accusations* against individuals that lead to evictions always follow sudden, successive “bad” deaths within families and sub-clans. Whilst much has changed following return, among rural populations deaths are managed at home, and elders and family members retain moral responsibility both in instigating funerary rights and in ascertaining responsibility for deaths. Sudden deaths evaded explanation via the logics predefined in this thesis. Instead, tragedies are explained through witchcraft or poisoning. Today, both prosperous and marginal members of a community may be accused of having a “hand in death”.

A primary goal of this chapter is to detail new fears of witchcraft “conversions” that allegedly bring individual family members into new wealth via the sacrifice of their loved ones, practices known locally as *mazi*.⁶⁰⁸ In the region, analysts have highlighted evolving forms of witchcraft related to consumption.⁶⁰⁹ This chapter focuses on the specific local practices that facilitate shifts in witchcraft discourse, and transform ideas into anti-witchcraft action among Lugbara populations. At the outset, I explore the

⁶⁰⁶ I, LCIII, Nyadri, 18/02/2017.

⁶⁰⁷ V.W. Turner, ‘Witchcraft and Sorcery: Taxonomy versus Dynamics’, *Africa* 34:4 (1964), pp. 314-325.

⁶⁰⁸ A. Apter, ‘Matrilineal motives: kinship, witchcraft, and repatriation among Congolese refugees’, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 18:1 (2012), pp. 22-44, p. 23.

⁶⁰⁹ Allen, ‘Vigilantes, Witches and Vampires’; Behrend, *Resurrecting Cannibals*.

shifting discursive terrain of witchcraft, before charting the landscape of metaphysical evidence mediated by healing practitioners and local authorities, evidence that establishes the presence of a “diabolical” threat *within* families. This chapter thus distinguishes between discourse and action: between ideas about witchcraft and their mobilisation in evicting suspects. Tracing the development of allegations, this chapter explores how evidence is mobilised by specific groups, and contested by others, amid contemporary social struggles. The analysis emphasises the uncertainties that prevail over an accusation which to many social groups is inconceivable, and which has no basis in lineage histories (often associated with forms of poisoning). Overall, I present the concept of witchcraft as a struggle to define health and healing mediated by complex interactions of social power and local politics.

7.2 Evolving Ideas about Witchcraft

The events described in this chapter and Chapter Eight were often referred to as witchcraft. As scholars have noted, the term presents particular challenges, invoking a particular European experience.⁶¹⁰ Yet the widespread use of the term by West Nilers necessitates attention. Since the colonial period, Lugbarati and English vocabularies have commingled, with ideas of witchcraft defined by European missionaries and taken up by Lugbara people educated in Christian schools. Bearing the imprint of a Christian inflection that has divided forces along broad lines of good and evil, with witchcraft signifying suffering driven by the evil, immoral intent of malicious individuals.

⁶¹⁰ M. Crick, ‘Anthropologists’ witchcraft: Symbolically defined or analytically undone?’ *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 10:3 (1979), pp. 139-146; P. Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1995.

In reality, the Lugbarati terms that denote witchcraft depend greatly on the moral authority of the speaker. Witchcraft is singularly able to communicate moral judgement in relation to the exercise of power. For example, a charismatic priest may define curses as witchcraft (translating *rozu* as ‘bewitch’), to destabilise elders’ moral claims as to social reproduction as individualistic and harmful. Similarly, the curing prayers of a diviner could be labelled as bewitching, reflecting the speaker’s perception of a healer’s moral probity. Generally, my interlocutors distinguished between restorative spiritual practices on the one hand, such as the moral invocation of sickness via elders’ cursing or the cleansing of affliction via godly means (by church people or diviner-healers), and ‘witchcraft’ on the other, namely, the immoral use of different powers to cause suffering by *individuals*. Whilst the former retained collective qualities, witchcraft arose from malignant individualism, greed or hatred, and was intended to destroy life.

Precisely because witchcraft carries different connotations, different groups instrumentalise it to emphasise their chosen points about society. Publicly, urban elites and district-level officials often deploy the term as a means of decrying the “backwardness” of the “village,” and the lack of understanding (or education) of rural populations, who challenge the law through witchcraft. Of the evictions described within these chapters, the Maracha LCV, Lawrence Abriga, lambasted his rural constituents, asking: “Why do you behave like pagans and illiterate people?” Affording his voters some credibility, he continued: “Avoid taking the law in your hands and allegations of linking every death to witchcraft; [this] stems from grudges and land wrangles which must stop.”⁶¹¹ As a Lugbara leader, Abriga recognises the links

⁶¹¹ G. Angupale, ‘Campaign against witchcraft ‘perception’ launched’, *West Nile Web*, 28 February 2019. Available at [<>](#).

between crisis and accusation. Yet he dismisses the truth of witchcraft, suggesting instead that fears of witchcraft are recruited to advance villagers' competition over land, which is increasingly scarce in Maracha. For Abriga, the solution was a series of district-wide "sensitisation" campaigns in 2019 that intended to eradicate "witchcraft perceptions." As Rutherford has noted, for all commentators on the subject, knowledge of witches is tied to the pursuit of authority.⁶¹²

Witchcraft is not just a term used by a distanced, English-speaking elite, but also by villagers who fear the effects of nefarious forces. My interlocutors used the term precisely because of its global resonance: unlike other words, 'witchcraft' is singularly able to communicate the scale of misfortune befalling them. Of the evictions here detailed, one elder of Maracha District decried: "What about this war on witchcraft, it is worse than this war with guns."⁶¹³ This elder invoked parallels between witchcraft evictions and the South Sudanese civil war, so that I would understand the scale of the events. His claim, moreover, is also a comment on West Nile's marginality: unlike refugees fleeing the "war with guns" who received humanitarian aid, the war on witchcraft in Maracha was largely ignored (despite its leading to killing within local ontologies of harm). Unlike Abriga, this elder drew attention to the facts of witchcraft as he understood them: his is a war based not on false allegations or irrationalities, but on the misdeeds of people within his sub-county. Hence, witchcraft is a term imbued with struggles between classes, and can be used to acknowledge or critique different conceptions of reality *within* Lugbara society.

⁶¹² B. Rutherford, 'To Find an African Witch: Anthropology, Modernity, and Witch-Finding in North-West Zimbabwe', *Critique of Anthropology* 19:1 (1999), pp. 89-109, p. 92.

⁶¹³ Comment, Elder, Field notes 03/2017.

Discussions in English sit ill at ease with the host of terms expressed in Lugbarati (and in neighbouring languages) that are now incorporated into everyday speech, terms that could refer to witchcraft. Whilst many scholars simply opt to use English translations, others urge a disaggregation of occult concepts.⁶¹⁴ My interlocutors distinguished between different types of occult forces, their impacts, and their temporalities. These terms evade discrete classification, yet my interlocutors widely distinguished between *old* and *new* types of witchcraft.

7.2.1 Old Witchcrafts

In the colonial era, forces termed ‘witchcraft’ were related to the sentiment of *ole*. Witchcraft was ambiguous, since *ole* could relate to socially-reconstituting sickness invoked by elders, or illegitimate sickness motivated by individualistic envy.⁶¹⁵ In Lugbarati, the male witch was known as *oleu*, and was often a competitive elder who envied power and resources. Defining witchcraft relied on social competitions between elders. Less ambiguity was afforded to malicious women who were thought to poison through food or through placing substances on doorways. Whilst an *oleu* could be reintegrated, female poisoners were either killed or sent back to their natal homes. These differing fates stemmed in part from their outcomes—whilst the envy of the *oleu* resulted in chronic wasting in the victim, the application of poison was linked to sudden death.⁶¹⁶

⁶¹⁴ G. ter Haar and S. Ellis, ‘The Occult Does Not Exist: A Response to Terence Ranger’, *Africa* 79:3 (2009), pp. 399-412; H. West, *Ethnographic Sorcery*.

⁶¹⁵ J. Middleton, ‘The Concept of ‘Bewitching’ in Lugbara’, *Africa* 25:3 (1955), pp. 252-260.

⁶¹⁶ Middleton, *Lugbara Religion*, p. 248.

Whilst in the context of the social field the *oleu* was a human who possessed an anti-social disposition, being spiteful or (by contrast) overly friendly, the term was also attached to manifestations of evil. Lugbara people admitted that while they did not know the words or deeds that constituted witchcraft, particular signs connoted the presence of these forces. Witches were identified by their anti-social behaviours—night-walking, vomiting blood, defecating on doorsteps, or destroying shrines—but their presence was also linked to more ethereal signifiers: by a light moving across distant fields, or by sightings of leopards, snakes, or wild-cats, animals into which the *oleu* could shape-shift and which then manifested to their victims in dreams.⁶¹⁷ Alternatively, *oleu* were said to bewitch with their evil-eyes, or to have lights glowing from their wrists or anus. Representations of inversion were assigned to distant social groups: witches from Logo or Keliko groups, called *kule* or *kole*, who lived to the west of Congolese Lugbara populations, were said to be white in colour, and to walk upside down. Strangers moving through the territory were also suspected to be *oleu*, who afflicted their victims by spitting on them during the daytime.⁶¹⁸ Since the intentions of these groups were not known, they could potentially be witches.⁶¹⁹ By the late colonial period, the relative fixity engendered by the restriction of movement within a closed district further fed into fears about outsiders: witchcraft applied to broad classes of insiders and outsiders alike.

As a psychic act, witchcraft was particularly adaptable to the specific mobilities generated by the colonial economy: witchcraft could work without the intimacies of

⁶¹⁷ Middleton, 'The Concept of 'Bewitching'', pp. 255-6.

⁶¹⁸ *ibid.* p. 256.

⁶¹⁹ *ibid.* p. 259.

eating or touching, long attributed to sorcery, and so could be attached to anonymous strangers, as well as family members who left ancestral lands. As Sanders notes, patterns of movement have long transformed idioms of witchcraft.⁶²⁰ Whilst the separations of the colonial era generated fears of outsiders bolstered by the Lugbara concept of the *oleu*, flows of migrant labour were also connected to the appearance of *new* forms of witchcraft, designated by new vocabularies. Returning migrants were associated with the acquisition of *elouja*, derived from the Alur term *lowjok* (magician). Elders feared that juniors, freed from the disciplinary powers of the lineage, might purchase *elouja* on the open market either in the South or in Congo. On his deathbed, Middleton's chief elderly informant instructed that young men formerly under his care "should not go to Congo and get evil things."⁶²¹ Along with labour migration "over the water," itinerant traders from Congo who frequented Arua's markets were feared as possessing *elouja*, understood as a power that could be acquired, but also that operated through knowledge of "words" learnt outside.⁶²² As noted, these fears were generated by the separation of groups following the demarcation of colonial borders—but prior to that, oracle poisons (used by elders in poison ordeals) as well as herbs had been collected from Congolese forests. In its association with places where ordinary people did not pass, *elouja* was thus an expression of the differential experiences of modernity, and the fears of those who remained geographically fixed, subject to the movement restriction in a closed district. Not only did *elouja* describe forms of magic brought in from outside expressed in a foreign vocabulary, but the notion marked a shift in attribution of intent as well. Whilst the *oleu* acted out of envy, migrants associated with

⁶²⁰ T. Sanders, 'Territorial and magical migrations in Tanzania,' in R. van Dijk, D. Foeken and M. de Bruijn (eds.), *Mobile Africa: Changing patterns of movement in Africa and beyond*. Leiden: Brill, 2001. pp. 27-46

⁶²¹ Middleton, *Lugbara Religion*, p. 183.

⁶²² *ibid.* p. 184.

elouja possessed relative wealth and acted out of disregard for ties of kinship and social bonds. As Middleton recognised, “*elouja* is a symbol of all that is unusual and uncanny, and is a response to social change.”⁶²³ Fears of *elouja* were indicative of the impact of modernity—and money—viewed through the prism of frayed social connections.

Following the colonial period, the terms evolved. *Oleu* is today translated as ‘wizard,’ and still represented the exercise of anti-social, masculine power, associated with shining lights, shape-shifting, and manifestations of attacking visions. Wizardry was consistently explained as a traumatic, haunting experience in which the victim could be “strangled,” but rarely was it considered lethal. In any case, elders explained that such occurrences were less common, since wizards were “chased” away by prayer.⁶²⁴ More commonly, *oleu* became an accusation levelled at mourners who seemed unduly joyful: in this context it was not translated as ‘witch,’ but indicated inappropriate displays of grief and general anti-social tendencies. The term *elouja* is no longer recognised, but *jo jok* or *joki joki* is a form of psychic power associated with Alur people. *Jo jok* is still understood as an imported concept, associated primarily with Alur populations in Arua town, Alur women married into Lugbara homes, and to outsiders and migrants. Whilst the term arose outside the Lugbara social body, it has now been localised into it: after witnessing an incidence of strangling in Maracha, my co-worker expressed surprise that “this thing is here now.”⁶²⁵ In such instances people usually turn to churches or diviner-healers, though on occasion elders are involved in sending away individuals directly

⁶²³ *ibid.* p. 247.

⁶²⁴ I, Elder, Abrici, 6/01/2018 (OJ); I, CCR, Vurra, 13/04/2017 (Z).

⁶²⁵ Co-worker commentary, 07/2016.

associated with older signifiers of witchcraft (night terrors, strangling, or defecating in victims' homes).

Whilst fears about witchcraft took shape within a changing colonial context, as described in Chapter Three, elders suppressed these accusations with recourse to the ancestral system. The actions of an *oleu* in causing chronic sickness were understood as one possibility among many. *Elouja*, too, was entertained as a possibility in cases of sickness, but there is no evidence for mass anti-witchcraft action against returning migrants (or strangers). This could stem in part from shifting colonial legislation: the 1912 Witchcraft Ordinance was largely intended to suppress both the accusations and the activities of witch-finders, featuring penalties both for witchdoctors as well as parties who accused others.⁶²⁶ But in the context of everyday clan proceedings, overt allegations against individuals were deeply taboo. Elders may have been troubled by the indiscipline of their juniors, but were undoubtedly reluctant to expel junior men on whose remittances they depended to pay taxes (and so to maintain health in the lineage). As such, *elouja* was usually discussed with scepticism. No mention of the term appears in research into healing and affliction in the early decades of independence. Barnes-Dean went as far as to say that witchcraft had disappeared from Lugbaraland by the early 1970s, replaced instead by claims of poisoning.⁶²⁷

⁶²⁶ R. Abrahams, 'A Modern Witch-Hunt among the Lango of Uganda', *Cambridge Journal of Anthropology* 10:1 (1985), pp. 32-44. As Chapter Nine shows, the application of this act is ambiguous. The state intervened in claims of poisoning in particular ways, whilst missions engaged in cleansing of witchcraft.

⁶²⁷ V.L. Barnes-Dean, *Illness Beliefs and Social Change: A Study of the Lugbara of Northwest Uganda*. PhD Dissertation, University of Hawaii, 1978.

Following the return from exile, anti-witchcraft action, pivoting on both new and old concepts, has not disappeared but transformed. As highlighted by diachronic ethnographers in the wider region, the experiences of post-independence hardships precipitated an increase in the potential violence of these anti-witchcraft eviction.⁶²⁸

7.2.2 New Witchcrafts

Lugbara people widely acknowledge that, since returning from exile, new forms of witchcraft can simply be bought on the market, with today's alleged purchasers identified not as *oleu*, but as having *dri onzi* ('dirty hands'). Echoing earlier fears of *elouja*, the acquisition of new witchcrafts is connected not to envy, but to individual desires for vengeance or consumption. Detached from the social context, new witchcrafts can be bought by anyone, used to destroy relationships and bewitch enemies, but are most commonly used for individual advancement at the expense of family members. For ordinary Lugbara people, these new understandings of witchcraft help to explain the rise of a "mysterious cabal" of elite persons including cross-border traders, politicians, musicians, construction workers and increasingly anyone who prospers without an educational background.⁶²⁹ These acquisitions, which could be powers or charms, are simply referred to as something that is *onzi* (bad). Alternatively, indicating their imposition into Lugbara society, these forces are rendered in foreign vocabularies: *mazi* (from Congo), *mayembe* (from Southern Uganda), *tonga tonga* (also from Congo), and *juju* (from Nigeria) are often used to explain the acquisition of wealth

⁶²⁸ Allen, 'The Violence of Healing'; M. Douglas, 'Sorcery Charges Unleashed: The Lele Revisited, 1987', *Africa* 69:2 (1999), pp. 177-193.

⁶²⁹ L. Victor, 'Those who go underwater: Indignation, sentiment, and ethical immanence in northern Uganda', *Anthropological Theory* 19:3 (2010), pp. 385-411.

or political power. These terms are used imprecisely, since ordinary people are by definition barred from accessing them on account of their cost.

In this modern nexus of witchcraft, *mazi* has become particularly prominent, and the dynamics through which it works most fully articulated. The term *mazi* is most probably derived from the Kiswahili or Lingala term *maji* (water), bearing reference to its origin of *mazi* in Congo.⁶³⁰ *Mazi* is understood as a deadly force, acquired *yi etia* (‘under the water’), which converts the blood of family members to money, wealth and status for its “owner.” *Mazi* is spoken of as an *orindi onzi*, an evil spirit, acquired by the wealthy from witchdoctors who facilitate underwater exchanges, in which the acquirer selects the names of close family members, often from within the nuclear unit, to be sacrificed. *Mazi* is understood to result in killing, whereby individual accumulation relies on “witchcraft conversions” that exchange “blood” to money. After being “taken by *mazi*,” victims are thought to be resurrected to “work” for their owner, either tilling their fields or working in “underwater factories”, generating their riches. Deals made with *mazi* are thought to be binding: if the purchased spirits are not appeased, the life of the owner will be taken instead.⁶³¹ As I detail below, the clarity with which such dynamics are described varies greatly across religious and social groups. Particular healers have the ability to reveal facets of *mazi* hidden from the ordinary population (as do survivors). Broadly, *mazi* is widely accepted as a modern terror. It has become a catch-all phrase to denote the sacrifices that fuel modern consumption, and as such may be applied to explain the success of anyone who prospers without explanation. *Mazi*, too, has a specific temporality: elders often say these spirits “followed us back from exile.”

⁶³⁰ Another suggested derivation was from work (*azi*) in Lugbarati. Ideas of water and work have long been entangled; for example, colonial migration was referred to as going ‘over the water’ (*ma mu yi*).

⁶³¹ Reflection, co-worker, 05/2017.

7.3 Witchcraft's Modernity

As Lugbara groups recognise witchcraft's increasing marketisation in modern times, so too have anthropologists insisted on reading the evolution of African witchcraft discourse in tandem with discourses of modernity, specifically, the inequalities and exclusions ushered in by capitalist market economies.⁶³² Calling attention to the recycled imaginaries of vampires, zombie workers and familial sacrifices, scholars have understood witchcraft not as a belief that resides within the social structure, but as a response to regional and global processes of accumulation. Witches have been theorised not as "traditional" enemies, but as "modernity's prototypical malcontents," or "icons of modernity". For those excluded from prosperity, witchcraft provides a means to critique consumption and inequalities, and the damage that capitalist economies are perceived to inflict on everyday life, family ties and social connections.

Analysts have warned against reproducing "modernity" as a universal condition, urging instead the emplacement of fears of modern development in particular places.⁶³³

Notions of sacrifice reverberate through West Nile's history, which throughout the colonial period involved the exploiting the bodies and labour of local populations, first in the slave trade and later in migration, to "work for" others. As Shaw notes, witchcraft serves as a vehicle to express histories of oppression in the present.⁶³⁴ Whilst building

⁶³² See, for example, Jean and John Comaroff, 'Introduction', in Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff (eds.), *Modernity and its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999. pp. xi-xxxvii, p. xxix. See also Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft*.

⁶³³ T. Sanders, 'Reconsidering Witchcraft: Postcolonial Africa and Analytic (Un)Certainties', *American Anthropologist* 105:2 (2003), pp. 338-352.

⁶³⁴ R. Shaw, 'The production of witchcraft/ witchcraft as production: memory, modernity and the slave trade in Sierra Leone', *American Ethnologist* 24:4 (1997), pp. 856-876.

on historical patterns of exploitation, the sacrifices within *mazi* represent a vernacular way to express how post-war development is perceived to have disproportionately benefitted local *insiders*, whilst excluding the majority of the population. Discursively, *mazi* provides a means to critique regional inequalities: for rural populations, Arua town has acquired a reputation as a place divorced from village morality, a place where nefarious forces can be bought on the market.

Yet there is more to the story than regional inequalities between town and village. The proximity of Arua District to international borders, and the nature of capitalist production over those borders, has appeared in specific ways within witchcraft discourse. The dominance of illegal smuggling as the engine for these developments is significant: not only does the clandestine movement of goods produce value in invisible and unstable ways, but the dynamics of this operation are inherently secret.⁶³⁵

Following the return from exile, since the accumulation of profit depended on traders' subterfuge, and rural populations witnessed the flows of commodities along *panya* roads without explanation (including the unexplained prosperity of relatives), it is unsurprising that ideas of *mazi* quickly adapted to supplement the logics of illegal supply chains. Rural *mazi* discourse mirrored these covert transactions: *mazi* spirits were bought from magical specialists in Congo, just as gold from traders was exchanged for cash and other goods; *mazi* shops were suddenly stocked in the morning,

⁶³⁵ Anxieties about trade and the occult are not entirely new. The *magendo* trade during Amin's regime was linked to rumours of body snatching by faceless intruders known as *kulia batu*, who were thought to use heads to raise buildings. *Kulia batu* were thought to come from Congo, or to be white people who exchanged bodies for money through regional or trans-African business networks. "This is when these issues of sacrifice started. These *kuela batu* would find you, grab you and take you away. If you resisted, they cut off your head, regardless of you being a person. Those people who overpowered you, they took you and you were never seen again." Interview, Anglican Elder, Abrici, 11/05/2016.

just as illicit deliveries from across the border commonly arrived under the cover of night to refresh merchants' supplies the next day.⁶³⁶ Illegal activity thus created a space for rumours of the occult to flourish. Beyond the discursive parallels, the first accusation of *mazi* was levelled at one of Arua's prominent tycoons in the early 1990s: as detailed in the next section, despite death threats from his clan members, this trader did not reveal his involvement in illicit trading, maintaining the separation between the world of trade and the world of *mazi*. The disjuncture in truth-claims between insiders and outsiders persists: one former trader, who strongly refuted the trade, claimed that:

Mazi—it is not true. These accusations are everywhere, but they come up because people don't understand about smuggling. In Arua here, the richest people have shops in town, but they are making so much money. It is all to do with smuggling, food stuffs, oil—they keep it in the village. So they are in town looking for contacts, and after making that contact, they will supply that person with bulk supplies. These rich people—the ones that have developed Arua—they are supplying all these people who sell small things here. You see them going round town in closed vehicles, distributing. But in the village, people don't understand these things, so they accuse them of *mazi*.⁶³⁷

Those who knew of the trade professed the innocence of the tycoons, unlike accusers, who found *mazi* a more plausible explanation. *Mazi* provides a means to critique economic exclusion, and feeds off of inherent secrecies in post-war development. But to equate *mazi* as a mirror to economic development precludes a focus on the institutions that have shaped this development, and how rumours (which surround many of Arua's wealthy traders, hoteliers and businessmen) do or do not translate into accusations.

Post-war modernity has affected the imaginaries of witchcraft in other ways. *Mazi* has taken shape amid the increasing role of Christian actors in offering spiritual protection,

⁶³⁶ Specific rumours were recounted to me about the owners of bus companies and other investments, but I have not recounted these to protect anonymity of those involved.

⁶³⁷ Conversation, male trader, Field notes, 06/2017.

bolstering a new, zealous leadership across denominations (cf. Chapter Four). The faith of many Christian leaders today has been formed not through mission education, but through exposure to different ideas in diverse geographies, including Pentecostalism in Southern Uganda, or during exile in Congo. In contrast to their predecessors who were interested primarily in condemning ancestor worship, contemporary pastors have focused their social condemnations on witchcraft and witchdoctors. My interlocutors suggested that ideas of “going underwater” in fact originated from Christian evangelists. As Mary, one elderly lady who spent seven years in Congo (returning around 1987) astutely explained, “When I came back from Congo, things in Arua were similar. [Though] there were now people prophesising against witchcraft and going under the water.”⁶³⁸ Ideas of sacrifice thus provide a metaphor for West Nile’s economic history, whilst simultaneously bearing the hallmarks of Christian legacies of disavowal. Exchanging people for wealth represented an extreme example of anti-Christian activity, which once took the form of elders’ sacrificial rites, and which now was attributed to a modern, immoral elite.

After exile, with a new generation of male leaders at the helm, Christian churches began to apply themselves to explaining the problems of modernity. Extractive witches provided an answer to explain the economic malaise experienced by the majority of the population—a significant expansion of misfortune away from direct sickness and towards broader concerns for well-being and economic development. Even for those whom the ‘prosperity gospel’ teachings have seemed unrealistic, following orthodox

⁶³⁸ I, Woman, Abrici, 09/05/2016 (OJ).

theology Christian evangelists regularly disavow excessive wealth and greed, preaching instead the sharing of wealth through legitimate channels including offertory.

Crucially, these ideas have been propagated over new public media, breaking former taboos on speaking about the subject. In the late 1980s, the Arua Catholic Diocese printed the names of accused witches in a weekly newspaper that was distributed in its services.⁶³⁹ Today, descriptions of witchcraft regularly resonate over the airwaves of local radio shows, with the two most popular stations being funded by the Anglican and Catholic dioceses. Rural homesteads regularly tune into Lugbara- and English-language shows that both report on witchcraft cases from a factual basis as well as make satirical comment on local events. Songs of local musicians also address issues of witchcraft: one popular song on the radio dissuades people from killing their family members, and another artist, King Weeda, has used the airwaves to rebut accusations of ‘going underwater’ levelled against him. Print media, too, bring stories of sacrifices from Kampala, and on occasion report on events across West Nile. One Ayivu suspect, Samuel Ocatre, explained that he had been hounded by journalists, with his case (and his name) published in the *Red Pepper* paper in 2014.⁶⁴⁰ Bookshops in Arua town sell sensationally-titled books that cover changing demonologies and instructions on ‘Healing the Family,’ as well as testimonies of reformed pastors who have broken with devilish underwater ties before turning to Christ. Since return, the exposure to ideas of malevolence has shifted profoundly. As Bonhomme observes regarding the circulation

⁶³⁹ T. Allen, ‘A Flight from Refuge: The Return of Refugees from Southern Sudan in Northwest Uganda in the late 1980s’, in T. Allen (ed.), *In Search of Cool Ground: War, Flight & Homecoming in Northeast Africa*. London: James Currey, 1996. pp. 220-261.

⁶⁴⁰ Allegation, June 2016, Arua.

of occult rumours in Gabon, not only do media outlets localise distant events, but “they also contribute to the social perception of the phenomenon.”⁶⁴¹

At the regional level, these changes are significant, making public new ideas which were formerly governed by a strict politics of speech. Yet as La Fontaine notes, there is a critical difference between a *belief* in witchcraft and *taking action* against malevolent forces.⁶⁴² As observed in this research, the messy politics of anti-witchcraft action resists correlation to a broad analytic such as “modernity”, or changing media currents.⁶⁴³ Within the field of action, a witch is a relative on whom many depend on for resources, and anti-witchcraft action was consistently contained within the family unit. Understanding evictions necessitates an engagement with how shifting ideas become plausible within specific familial contexts: with the logics that produce the witch.

7.4 Evolution of the Field of Action

To understand the diversity of local perspectives on anti-witchcraft action, it is essential to consider how what Neihaus terms “subjective realities”—whereby symbolic formulations become “clothed with an aura of factuality”—are produced in relation to suffering, and how these ideas are taken forward within a local political field.⁶⁴⁴

Behrend, too, urges attention to the forms of evidence mediating between discourse and

⁶⁴¹ J. Bonhomme, ‘The dangers of anonymity: Witchcraft, rumor, and modernity in Africa’, *Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2:2 (2012), pp. 205-233, p. 209. It is not that any occult rumour is accepted as truth. In fact, my Lugbara friends often rejected or questioned sensational media reports.

⁶⁴² J. La Fontaine, ‘Witchcraft in Bugisu’, in J. Middleton and E.H. Winter (eds.), *Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa*. London: Routledge, 1963. pp. 187-220, p. 198.

⁶⁴³ Sanders, ‘Reconsidering Witchcraft’.

⁶⁴⁴ I. Neihaus, ‘Witches and Zombies of the South African Lowveld: Discourse, Accusations and Subjective Reality’, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 11:2 (2005), pp. 191-210; See also Geertz, 1973: 90, cited in Neihaus, p. 203.

realities, asking how specific forms of proof codify and reproduce fears of the occult.⁶⁴⁵ These two interventions thus begin to bridge the gap between discourse and the field of action. Following in these footsteps, this section details the phases of the development of suspicions prior to accusations, as well as the scepticism and questioning around the production of evidence. Specifically, I now trace the therapies and technologies through which villagers tied notions of power acquired ‘under the water’ to episodes of local suffering.

7.4.1: *The First Allegation of Mazi*

The first accusation of *mazi* occurred in Arua town in the early 1990s. As the first reported case of a new witchcraft, these events mark the first moment that fears were translated into the contact of social action. The sequencing of the case is now part of Arua’s history, constituting a “subjective reality” of its own making. To traders, the accused, a man named Ondua, is known as one of Arua’s tycoons, a self-made man from humble beginnings who profited during exile. His family members, however, alleged that his wealth was acquired *yi etia*, from ‘under the water.’ After a spate of successive deaths within Ondua’s extended family, his brothers levelled death threats at him, claiming the deaths resulted from Ondua’s sacrifices to *mazi*. In response, Ondua convened a quorum of Ayivu’s most prominent elders, who ritually cursed him through a *rudu* prayer: “If truly you did this you will die within two weeks”. After he survived this death sentence, however, Ondua’s relatives continued to threaten his life. The case culminated when he fled to a local Anglican church, stripping out of his clothing and cursing himself before God: “God, I am as good as useless: if truly I have sacrificed

⁶⁴⁵ Behrend, *Resurrecting Cannibals*.

people, [then] take my life, the time to take my life is now.”⁶⁴⁶ Ondua’s nakedness during his self-cursing added a powerful cosmological and symbolic dimension to the act.⁶⁴⁷ As Abonga et al., explain, naked bodies carry the potential to “create an effect of shame through a performance of extreme frustration”.⁶⁴⁸ In Arua, such an exposure is usually attributed to marginalised persons, often elderly women, who use their nudity as a last resort to curse family members who have rendered them powerless through an abrogation of support.⁶⁴⁹ Ondua inverted this process, placing himself at the mercy of his relatives and neighbours, and bringing shame to those who accused him.⁶⁵⁰

The gravity of this performance diminished the violence against Ondua. An Aruan woman familiar with the case explained: “People didn’t believe him—but despite this, [they] thought that God was stronger than his evil. If he was living, this was God’s will.”⁶⁵¹ Though he was able to remain on his ancestral land, his economic ties with his extended family have been severed, and Aruans continue to fear him and his family. One young man described Ondua’s children as “wrong elements in society, because it’s believed they sacrifice people for wealth.”⁶⁵² Hinting at his changed reputation, Ondua himself conceded to me after the interview that “Since you are here, people will say you are the new cause of my wealth.”⁶⁵³

⁶⁴⁶ Accused, 16/06/2016 (PN).

⁶⁴⁷ F. Abonga, et al., ‘Naked Bodies and Collective Action: Repertoires of Protest in Uganda’s Militarised, Authoritarian Regime’, *Civil Wars* 22:2-3 (2020), pp. 198-223.

⁶⁴⁸ *ibid*, p. 201.

⁶⁴⁹ This is a form of protest which has been exhibited in numerous Ugandan contexts, recognised as such by my interlocutors. For example, in 2017, a naked protest from a collective of women in Kasese brought alarm during a focus group with Lugbara elders, who explained such events as one of the worst forms of curses.

⁶⁵⁰ In cursing himself, Ondua explicitly referenced the allegation levelled against him—unlike elders, who offered their curse without reference to the terms of the offence.

⁶⁵¹ Arua Resident, Field notes, 07/2016.

⁶⁵² *ibid*.

⁶⁵³ First Allegation of Mazi, Arua, 06/2016.

Accounts of conflict often differ between the accusers and the accused. The above narrative highlights both the injustice of the accusation and the complexities of containing a modern threat. Left unanswered is how, and why, Ondua's relatives launched allegations that not only resulted in violence, but ran counter to their own economic interests. Whilst Ondua maintained that his relatives acted out of *envy*—these events were by no means a “leveller”—economic ties between him and his extended family were severed.⁶⁵⁴ Subsequently Ondua explained that many of those who accused him have “run mad” or have passed away, outcomes which he attributes to the effects of the *rudu* curse, in light of their false allegations against him. The eviction held grave consequences, both for Ondua and for those who sought to evict him—impacting not just their own health but the long-term health of the clan.

7.4.2 Observing Inequitable Accumulation

In the field of accusation, economic differences between young men did contribute to a sense of suspicion. Reflecting on the increasing autonomy of the household as a unit of accumulation across the countryside, in the subclans where accusations unfolded, neighbouring clan members commented on the suspicious origins of the prosperity of their brothers. In this way, accusations of witchcraft among Lugbara populations follow a trend observed elsewhere in Africa, wherein the decline of collective collaboration creates a space for allegations of witchcraft between households.⁶⁵⁵ Without necessarily being privy to the dynamics of accumulation, relatives speculated on increases in others' wealth. Those accused were all men who had prospered to varying degrees, but

⁶⁵⁴ F. Golooba-Mootebi, 'Witchcraft, Social Cohesion and Participation in a South African Village', *Development and Change* 36:5 (2005), pp. 937-958.

⁶⁵⁵ See *ibid.* and Neihaus, 'Witches and Zombies'.

who often had larger houses, larger vehicles or more significant business holdings than their peers. Importantly, those accused had received little formal education, which is recognised as a legitimate, moral route to prosperity. Without formal education, these accused men shared the same disadvantages of others who struggled, raising the question: *why, then, did they prosper?* In contrast to the first case of *mazi*, here those accused increasingly had prospered through means which could be explained with recourse to legitimate productivity: tobacco, large-scale agriculture or local trade.

Two examples serve to illustrate the point. First, one man, Samuel, accused in 2010 in an Ayivu village whose economy was centred on tobacco, explained that quiet allegations surfaced as he prospered in tobacco-growing over the course of a decade. Having established his position as a middle-man, Samuel began selling his neighbours' crops to buyers in Arua.⁶⁵⁶ Tobacco is a difficult and tedious crop to grow, taking a full year of intensive work before the crop can be sold, and Samuel's own brothers struggled to make money from cash-cropping. As Samuel's fortunes grew and he acquired a shop and a farm, allegations began to spread.⁶⁵⁷ Second, another informant, David, explained that in the late 1990s, he began to trade cars between Uganda and South Sudan. His mobility provoked suspicion, particularly since he returned to his ancestral villages in vehicles that he would then sell in Sudan. Vehicles are both a coveted possession and a sign of status—that a family member would return with one would provoke much comment. Yet David was accused of witchcraft only after his business failed, when war in South Sudan made his business impossible. His relatives offered various

⁶⁵⁶ I, Accused, 13/06/2016 (PN).

⁶⁵⁷ I, Elder and Accused, 01/06/2016 (OJ).

explanations: after several deaths in his clan, they claimed that he was using *mazi* to recoup his lost gains.

Oftentimes, suspicions of *mazi* spread as rumours among those fixed in place, at home in the village. In the absence of those accused—typically mobile young men—relatives could only speculate on the source of their wealth. Indeed, many businessmen are cogently aware of the risks of their prosperity. To deflect such allegations, many explained that they paid or contributed school fees, bridewealth or healthcare support to their relatives. After a successful business deal, one suspect businessman slaughtered a cow, dividing the meat equally between villagers. Yet as suspicions mounted, these gestures, rather than demonstrating generosity, were interpreted as manipulative actions to deter attention from his evil-doing—as Middleton noted, the witch could be either anti-social or overly friendly.⁶⁵⁸ Giving gifts and alms in this case served to foment pre-existing suspicions: rather than exonerate the accused, participating in reciprocity among kin actually contributed to their guilt.

Since the 2000s, allegations of *mazi* have sped through surrounding rural villages. Accusations have now moved beyond trade, affecting men at lower echelons of Lugbara society, including those who have profited from (highly visible) agricultural production, as well as healers. Allegations have also spread as volumes of illicit cross-border trade have diminished, under the increasing regulation of the Uganda Revenue Authorities.⁶⁵⁹ Simple attributions to the secret engines of regional modernity, therefore, have limited

⁶⁵⁸ Middleton, 'The Concept of 'Bewitching' in Lugbara'.

⁶⁵⁹ Titeca, 'Tycoons and contraband'.

explanatory value in explaining the evolving spatiality of accusations into the countryside. Whilst inter-household commentaries on wealth produced a field of jealousy, disbelief, and fears of witchcraft in some cases, in other cases, those accused possessed no wealth at all.

7.4.3: *Metaphysical Evidence*

At times, suspicions of unease arising from economic inequalities were confirmed by metaphysical phenomena: by occult visions and sightings which were interpreted as indicating imminent danger. In one village, visions of white people were rumoured to emerge from certain streams. In another, a body of water turned blood-red, and in another case, 100-strong flocks of sheep were reportedly sighted on the road at night.⁶⁶⁰ In other cases, snakes appeared.⁶⁶¹ Rumours of these sightings circulated in homes in the area, creating a sense of panic that evil was at large. These visions evoke the terror generated by the appearance of white spirits, which during the colonial period was interpreted as an omen of death. Whilst previously anthropoid apparitions were thought to be immanent manifestations of divinity, these concepts were now attributed to *mazi*.⁶⁶² New concepts are made legible through conjuring and reworking old ideas of *Adro*: sightings believed to predict future deaths, which may befall specific clans.

In other cases, individuals' dreams and visions were interpreted as portents of tragedy. Such visions may involve a conjuring of the suspect; indeed, wizards have long been thought to appear in visions or dreams, or to appear in the hut of the victim. Lugbara

⁶⁶⁰ FG, Aree, 02/11/2016 (OJ).

⁶⁶¹ I, Security, Etoko, 9/11/2016 (OJ).

⁶⁶² Sheep were similarly sacrificed by diviners in difficult cases of affliction, and were rarely used in ancestral sacrifices.

people have long recognised the power of dreams to convey malevolent future events. Often, elderly women are associated with dreams that predict the future, but messages can appear to anyone. One herbalist accused of witchcraft, Peter, recounted a painful rumour spread around his village that he had acquired *mazi*, after his niece relayed the contents of a dream which showed Peter holding a coffin in his house, signalling that he had pulled a body out of the grave.⁶⁶³ Many of his clan believed that this was evidence of *mazi*: that the body would be resurrected. Peter explained that these visions ignited communal suspicions, though he believed his niece had been “bribed” by envious relatives.

Another young man, Ronnie, experienced a dream that signalled his being “taken by *mazi*.”⁶⁶⁴ He explained: “In a dream I saw a coffin: I was going to die, I would be buried in the coffin, because those people who have the *mazi* have not given up—they are still trying to affect me.” Not every vision or dream is accepted by the wider community. Whilst this dream served as a confirmation for Ronnie himself, who endeavoured to bring up “the issue of *mazi*” in clan meetings, his elders dismissed his hauntings on account of his “history of being mad” due to his *mairungi*-eating. A more sympathetic hearing was provided by his local Anglican church, who offered credence to his visions, and whose pastors organised prayers in his compound. Soon afterwards, Ronnie’s family members began seeing wild foxes and other visions, and suffering misfortunes: his father had a *boda boda* (motorbike taxi) accident and his brother was the victim of theft. Within his family, unusual visions and events precipitated the consciousness that

⁶⁶³ I, Accused, Maracha, 9/03/2017 (OJ).

⁶⁶⁴ I, Man, Etoko, 14/12/2017 (OJ).

they were under attack. As noted above, visions or sightings can ignite suspicions, but they can also be rejected on the basis of the social status of those who experience them.

In a context where it is taboo to know too much about witchcraft, survivors are a particularly valid source of testimony. Some young men who had been treated by herbalists recounted vivid accounts of “being taken.” A young trader named Wilfred, for instance, who worked at a trading centre near the border, has been the victim of several witchcraft attacks, elevating him to the status of ‘occult expert’ within his immediate environs:

[They] will bring back the whole body and put your spirit back in you—you will come back to life and you will work for them doing any kind of work for them, not necessarily evil, you might become a slave, doing digging, so [you are] still there for them, visible to them but not to your people. [They] won’t keep you in the same area you were working before. Your relative might see you, but you might not recognise the relative. In most cases you will not be normal like the way you were before. You can become abnormal, can become deaf, can be dumb, [you] can be anything. These stories about *mazi* are rampant, we do not know whether you are taken underwater, or how you are taken, if that they first make you to die and then they come at night and exhume your body or you just start running, you can even disappear into water, even very shallow water.⁶⁶⁵

Wilfred’s account offers a key detail as to why young men in his trading centre were being attacked: to be resurrected and involuntarily employed. Wilfred was an animated narrator, and though he explained that he was reluctant to speak about these events “openly,” he freely shared his experiences with his peers (and during this interview).

7.4.4 Healing Interventions

Many Christian actors, diviner-healers, and herbalists have participated in treating those who claim possession by *mazi* spirits. Some therapists have engaged directly in

⁶⁶⁵ I, Victims, Ovujo, 15/06/2016.

revealing the involvement of a close family member in these events. Of his experience in treating cases, one herbalist in Terego explained:

[For] *mazi*, things which come underwater, [healing] takes longer. For *mazi*, the person inflicted will always be violent, will always want to use force and run to a nearby body of water. After you have caught them, lay them down, cover them in a blanket, and cover the whole body and the head. Herbs from a broken pot are also covered, placed in a direction where the wind will blow so the person can inhale the herbs. As this is happening, it is likely the person will say the name of the person who is using *mazi* on them.⁶⁶⁶

In a similar way, diviner-healers' prayers often revealed individuals within localities who had gone underwater. As with the therapies discussed in the previous chapter, since diviner-healers often serve home clans or close communities, such revelations often serve to codify pre-existing knowledge, but knowledge backed in these cases by the authority of the Holy Spirit. One diviner-healer explained that she would not reveal the name publicly, but testimonies from communities suggested otherwise. Others sought cleansing at charismatic healing centres, where prayers induced a possession state where the afflicted person would scream the name of the accused. Healers draw on different ritual traditions, but often these interventions are orientated towards extracting the name of the human agent behind witchcraft. As with the veracity of dreams and visions, whether these experiences are considered credible rests both on the reputation of a healer and the social position of the sufferer. That these fears travel as rumours around homesteads, which actively debate their veracity, only increases their contingency.

In recent years, groups of Christians, often led by the CCR, move "home-to-home" to cleanse witchcraft. Indeed, without suggesting a definitive causal explanation, from the

⁶⁶⁶ I, Herbalist, Biliafe, 9/01/2017 (OJ)

2000s on evictions have spread first throughout Ayivu and then Maracha as Charismatic Christianity (and the CCR in particular) have become established. Behrend, for example, has documented how anti-witchcraft action spearheaded by a lay movement of Charismatic Christians served to reproduce fears of a cannibalistic form of witchcraft in western Uganda. Modern “crusades” brought out evidence in a “dramatic discourse of discovery”, which successfully produced scapegoats for communal fears of a novel threat.⁶⁶⁷ In Maracha District, CCR members adopted similar forms of ritual action as Behrend described: invitations for groups to “cleanse” neighbourhoods were generally mediated by elders, and though they were explained as “managing disunity” among village members, often these crusades were intended to manage difficult accusations in a non-violent way, or in situations where elders were compromised.

In one case, elders invited a charismatic group to pray following suspicions of an herbalist’s (named Peter) acquisition of *mazi*. Communal tensions rose after the death of a woman in 2016, followed by outbreaks of possession among young men in the clan, who had started “running mad,” shouting the name of the suspect and running to bodies of water (this being particularly concerning since such episodes are usually ascribed to women). Clan elders had permitted Peter to operate within the village, so their own authority to intervene was compromised.⁶⁶⁸ CCR members from across the district camped in the village and prayed for three days, moving from “home to home,” praying and cleansing each homestead. Items such as bottles, human hair, tree roots, sewing

⁶⁶⁷ H. Behrend, ‘Witchcraft, Evidence and the Localisation of the Roman Catholic Church in Western Uganda’, in R. Rottenburg, B. Schnepel and S. Shimada (eds.), *The Making and Unmaking of Differences: Anthropological, Sociological and Philosophical Perspectives*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2006. pp. 43-60, p. 44.

⁶⁶⁸ I, LCI, Pio, 09/03/2017 (OJ).

needles and *oyo* bulbs were extracted from almost every homestead, including from the homes of elders. These objects were removed, doused in holy water or salt, and burnt.

As with the lay Charismatic members Behrend described, CCR members were greatly concerned with the production of evidence. One CCR member explained: “The level of sin is so overwhelming. If someone here is able to say ‘you have this, there is evidence’ [then] this is happening.”⁶⁶⁹ One female member, who has been involved in many crusades to combat the nefarious powers of businessmen in her area, explained how seemingly benign herbs could indicate the presence of evil: “At night those things turn into evil spirits like *mazi* spirits in the image of white people, but their fingernails are not the normal ones—they are extremely slender, very long. I have seen them—sometimes as they pray some of the spirits go out. Come out of a person as they shake you.”⁶⁷⁰ Others described how in cases of *mazi* white spirits were seen emerging from rivers, echoing the collective forms of terror described above. In any case, in the context of these crusaders, the removal of objects or sighting of spirits are all evidence that codified these fears.

That said, in the two cases observed during this research, whilst these crusades did contribute to the recognition of local fears, they were ill-equipped to actually deal with the presence of a witch. Indeed, the evidence thereof, produced by predominantly Christian women, met an ambiguous reaction. Village men questioned the evidence obtained by Holy Spirit-filled Charismatics, with one elder insisting that many of the

⁶⁶⁹ I, Ezaru, Vurra, 22/05/2017 (DA/Z).

⁶⁷⁰ *ibid.*

herbs that had been burnt as witchcraft objects had in fact been bought for healing. Most of all, people resisted the escalation of an effort to ascertain individual responsibility into a collective purge. In situations where collective suspicions were directed towards an individual, the question became, why were clan members exposed as sinful *en masse*?

In Peter's case, he fled the village during the CCR crusade, absenting himself from cleansing. Some days later, eighteen adolescent girls who had partaken in the crusade fell into a state of possession after prayers at their high school, and began calling out Peter's name. Openly bringing out the name of a suspect by an individual is deeply taboo—yet in the possession-state, an individual is understood to be directed by the Holy Spirit, transcending that individual's full capacity and providing a medium for this critical information, and allowing them to break from the normal politics of speaking. These actions were concerning, since they vocalised pre-existing rumours that had been circulating about Peter. In an interview, the Headteacher of the school explained that the possession states confirmed that “people of this kind, doing things, want to get money by the blood of people.”⁶⁷¹ In response, the Headteacher invited an Anglican prayer group to intercede, to seek to neutralise the accusations. Interesting to note here is that these actors chose to take a private approach to individual accountability: as the Reverend leading the prayers conceded, “It is true that there must be somebody behind this, but we don't deal with such a person—we just pray.”⁶⁷² Whilst this approach was

⁶⁷¹ I, Headmaster, Maracha, 09/03/2017.

⁶⁷² I, Reverend, Koyi, 02/05/2017.

considered by elders to be less defamatory, and lauded as neutralising evil forces, ultimately it did not absolve Peter from suspicion.

Thus, observations about inequality were transformed into accusations when mediated through diverse traditions of healing. Whereas rumours about accumulation promoted suspicion, therapies and metaphysical signs were produced as a sources of evidence, which were increasingly interpreted as indicating the malevolence of particular individuals. Of similar episodes of possession in Acholiland, Victor has argued that possession outbreaks are representative of individual agency, in that subjects “refuse to be pathologised”.⁶⁷³ In a similar way, spirit possessions, dreams and visions provided a means for women, young men and schoolchildren to communicate their fears, in contexts where levying an accusation in plain speech could be subject to punishment from elders. Accumulations of signs affirmed perceptions of responsibility among particular social groups. Rather than explain deaths through biomedical explanations, more marginalised groups could express their anxieties through technologies of therapy. In so doing, they drew on older imaginaries of witchcraft and spiritual possession to legitimate a modern threat: as noted above, shared prior symbols legitimated the novelty of *mazi*.

Overall, rather than producing a coherent consensus, these interventions localised a sense of *mazi* among particular social groups: among relatives of victims, friends of survivors or participants in religious crusades. This spread, granted, met its own resistance—often from elders promoting formal sittings to bring out claims, or from the

⁶⁷³ Victor, ‘Those who go underwater’, p. 399.

family members of the accused. But key to observe here is that the incoherence of evidence production directly created a sense of unease. Following Das and Kleinman's observations on the origins of communal violence: "the rumours (...) unsettle the context to an extent that the perpetrators can begin to feel that they were the intended victims".⁶⁷⁴ Forms of evidence gradually produce the witch as an external threat, sowing the seeds of tension and uncertainty.

7.4.5 Funerary Rites as Cathartic Release

In the context of growing suspicions, sudden deaths, often patterned among family members, facilitated the transition from lingering uncertainties to public accusations against individuals. One resident summarised this sentiment among rural clans:

"Because of those deaths people were very hostile. It is not OK for there to be two deaths in one week."⁶⁷⁵ Intimate tragedies confirmed local fears that evil forces were at work, and fuelled by a context of collective bereavement, young men and relatives of the deceased mobilised subjective realities, bringing claims out into the open.

Crucially, what distinguished "good" deaths from deaths from *mazi* (as well as from deaths from poisoning) are the circumstances surrounding the moment of death. Prior to their death, particular signs were said to appear that someone is being taken to the underworld. For example, it was said a sacrificed corpse may "sweat," remaining warm, though lifeless, indicating that "organs were still working."⁶⁷⁶ Presumably this evidence was derived immediately after death, when rigor mortis had not yet set in, by those

⁶⁷⁴ Das and Kleinman, 'Introduction', p. 17.

⁶⁷⁵ I, Elders, Worubo, 03/03/2017 (OJ).

⁶⁷⁶ I, Victim, Oleba, 17/10/2016.

family members who washed and prepared the body for a funeral (most likely women, to whom this responsibility falls). In other cases, it was said that numbers appeared on the arms of the deceased, signs that the “underworld is taking you.” In cases where the deceased were adult men, the name of the *mazi* suspect was brought out when the dying cried out, “Why are you chasing me? Why are you taking me?” One young man explained that “Before the underworld takes you, you can see the image of the person who is trying to take you.” In other cases still, the deceased “ran mad,” running uncontrollably to water prior to death, and sometimes drowning as a result.⁶⁷⁷ These behaviours have become common currency, interpreted as signs of imminent death, that “*mazi* is following you, you will die and work with them.”⁶⁷⁸

In other cases, allegations of *mazi* followed particular patterns of death within the same home; the timing of these allegations consistently followed these deaths. David, a cross-border trader, explained:

Allegations started that I was being a bad person in the community, and as I no longer had money, that I was sacrificing children to make money. The first child was taken to hospital; without a diagnosis he was taken to a traditional healer but he later died. The second child died of meningitis, and so did the third. [All] the children died within three weeks of each other. The allegations started to come up after the death of the second child. All of the children were in the same home, my brother’s home. The deaths were a week apart.⁶⁷⁹

In David’s case, patterns of mortality were important drivers of allegations, as the deaths of children tend to surpass any idiomatic explanation of misfortune discussed in Chapter Five. Though the death of one child, generally after a longer sickness, may be cause for elders to assert the need for husbands to transfer bridewealth (alongside

⁶⁷⁷ I, Man, Oleba, 18/10/2016 (OJ).

⁶⁷⁸ FG, Pio, 02/03/2017 (OJ).

⁶⁷⁹ A.T. Dalfovo, *Logbara Dances and Songs*. From archive, Our Lady of Africa Mbuya Catholic Church [undated].

miscarriages or other failures to conceive), this explanation does not account for *sudden* deaths. In cases where elders attributed children's deaths to historic curses following the lineage, those deaths unfolded over a period of years. Within the idiom, this attribution affords the individual a chance to repent either for their own sins or for the actions of their ancestors that precipitated the curse. In the context of sudden, repeated deaths, however, no such explanations exist.

Today, funerary rites are presided over by Christian priests, but are performed at home, rather than in a church, and are handled by clans. As in the past, strict roles govern responsibilities at these events: the washing of the body, the digging of the grave, and the preparation of food. Beyond this ritual division of tasks (further detailed below), what is striking is the effort to ascertain individual responsibility following deaths. At the public funeral, attended by a broad suite of extended relatives and friends, those related to the deceased formally account for his or her treatment prior to death. What is most striking are the contemporary efforts to prove that the deceased was cared for. Public funerals, which proceed the burial, involve close family members (from the nuclear family, elders and invested relatives) and others connected to the deceased standing before the coffin and explaining the process of death. At these accountings, family members show that obligations were met and the deceased received adequate care - provided at home or in hospitals, their underlying medical conditions, and the engagement with other healers. Such interrogation provides a means of assuring mourners of the deceased's proper social relations and responsibilities during life.⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁸⁰ T. Vaitinen, et al. 'Care as everyday peacebuilding', *Peacebuilding* 7:2 (2019), pp. 194-209. Vaitinen et al. encourage a mundane focus on care as a lens to view everyday realities of peace.

Testimonies I observed often took several hours, but the sentiment is clear: relatives confirm that death was not the result of action by an individual. This process preserves the external reputation of the clan, and prevents any connotations of responsibility, or “having a hand in death.”

Following this public burial, after distant relatives have left, clan members sit together to comb through more specific circumstances of the death in an “evaluation.” In “good deaths,” for which there was a clear explanation, or the deceased was elderly, such discussions may simply reflect on the funeral proceedings, or outstanding clan dues in relation to the deceased. But in “bad deaths,” such as those that occurred suddenly, these discussions may descend into allegations. In such meetings, the normal politics of speech (dominated by elders) may be reversed: Whilst elders may offer explanations of curses, or unpaid lineage transfers past or present, younger generations increasingly put forward explanations of witchcraft. It is these explanations that young men (and women) can access—through observation, rumour or encounters that produce evidence of ill-doing. As one young man argued: “If this person would not hesitate to kill my son, would I just stay here and keep quiet?”⁶⁸¹ Finally, in cases of successive deaths, where subsequent meetings were sites of ever more vociferous claims to account for deaths, violent apprehensions against the suspect could result.

7.4.6 Resisting Responses

Attempts to evict suspected witches occurred in the context of bereavement and injustice, where communities marshalled claims for individual accountability. In this

⁶⁸¹ FG, Etoko, 22/11/2016 (OJ).

context, elders' insistence on "slow words," and the meetings they scheduled to address the issue, were perceived as inadequate by factions of the community who both mourned their relatives and perceived themselves to be under threat. Brothers of the deceased or young male relatives often formed allegiances with other young male clan members to violently express their claims. After allegations were made public, collectives often pressed not for evidentiary confirmation but for the removal of the suspect.

Prior to a death, elders were reluctant to table cases based merely on communal suspicions. Some elders expressed scepticism as to the veracity of claims of *mazi*. One elder of Aroi, for example, recalled,

When I first heard of *mazi* in Aroi, for me I interpreted it as a lie, that people were tarnishing the image of other people because of jealousy. When we heard of it, I went with the church people. We had a serious mass. We entered into the stream. We wanted to see what *mazi* looks like. We never saw anything. But people said they saw the *mazi* entering the water. They took off. For us we ran, we were making noise, we were crying, but we didn't see it.⁶⁸²

Despite not seeing evidence of *mazi*, this elder nevertheless joined in the ensuing panic—but the instance was a cleansing, rather than an eviction. Despite this participation, this elder openly refuted the citing of spirits made by other community members.

In other cases, elders expressed their concerns that accusations sprang not from witchcraft, but from the jealousy of peers. In this context, elders were concerned with risks of defamation or "blackmail," that is, spoiling the name of an innocent clan

⁶⁸² 16, Elder, Arua, 10/04/2017 (OJ).

member (namely, an individual who often provided material support to elders, as well as their own relatives). Elders also grappled with the consequences of false allegations that weaponised witchcraft as explanation. Evicting an innocent member of the clan could in itself become a source of misfortune that followed the lineage. Making a claim against an individual is tantamount to cursing them, which, to be reversed, requires a sitting (to cleanse sickness). Typically elders respond to witchcraft accusations through tracing ancestral connections, histories of clans, and intermarriages. Indeed, the poison cases discussed in the next chapter are often managed in this way. Yet the forms of proof brought out for *mazi* are ahistorical—resting (as noted above) on wealth accumulation, visions, spirits or dreams. These forms of evidence depart from the intimate familial knowledge with which elders usually deal. Inherently, claims of this nature are uncertain, with no definitive means of proving the truth. As one elder explained: “Using oracles to get culprits was better—now there are so many false accusations.”⁶⁸³ In lieu of an historical basis, and sceptical of the evidence, elders are reluctant to bring out issues that bring shame to their clans.

Even so, in some cases, curses continue to be used.⁶⁸⁴ Samuel, an accused man explained: “They [the accusers] wanted to beat me because I could not give a good statement—could not confess to something I had not done.” A confession could have assuaged violence, but those accused instead defended their innocence by providing accounts of their newfound wealth. In one case, the accused produced legitimate evidence from local banks of his loans and repayments, whilst in another the suspect confessed to illegally siphoning off petrol from a nearby Chinese quarry. These

⁶⁸³ I6, Elder, Aroi, 10/04/2017 (OJ).

⁶⁸⁴ Allegation, Arua, 06/2016.

explanations did not, however, satisfy their accusers or relatives, who were trying to allocate responsibility for death. Since the accusers were contesting suffering and death, claims had moved beyond the context of economic explanation. Moreover, sometimes collectives did not wait for the effects of the curse to manifest, mounting further attempts to evict the accused. After one sitting, Samuel testified that “My shop was destroyed—broken and looted—looters drank the beer, and took my wares to Kasese to sell in a different trading centre, even the things that I got from a bad source, they even took them and sold them.”⁶⁸⁵ Another accused man recalled, “The youth descended on me... [they] told me that things have transpired and I am the cause of the deaths in the family. I went back in the morning for the burial; people were still talking. Elders were trying to respond that the allegations were false.”⁶⁸⁶ Other suspects were attacked by gangs of young men, and in one case I documented, violence prevented elders from sitting.

It is significant, however, that though clans living on the Congolese border reported cases of *mazi*, these cases followed a different trajectory. Whilst since 2010, many clans across Maracha and Arua have condemned *mazi* (and poisoning) by banishment of 300km in clan by-laws, such laws are often unenforced. Yet those villages lying directly on the border had taken a more proactive approach to enforcing clan laws. In part, this was because of perceptions of heightened risks of theft, body-snatching and witchcraft from Congolese citizens crossing the border, as well as Ugandan collaborators who facilitated these transfers. Clans have taken a particularly punitive response by

⁶⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁸⁶ I, Elder/Accused, Arua, 01/06/2016 (OJ).

improvising security wings, local units that often involve village LCIs as well as married men and youths. These wings have been active in removing suspected thieves from Congo, as well as punishing Ugandans from neighbouring villages for theft. Suspects of *mazi* have been dealt with severely: in one clan in 2013, for example, a man who was caught sacrificing a sheep in darkness at the river was publicly caned as a “warning” for him to desist from “practicing evil.”⁶⁸⁷ Though these organised responses were outliers, this approach was able to address cases that did not include sudden or malicious deaths—and so avoid the heightened context of grief which could lead to violence. Furthermore, these security wings harnessed the power of youth in policing, who therefore worked with, rather than against, clan authority.

Perhaps reflecting their historical non-participation in witchcraft cases, state authorities kept their distance from allegations of *mazi*. Samuel, explained that he did report his case to police after fleeing to Arua, but the cost of their transport and allowances for the investigation was too great. As he recounted, “When policemen go to the village, there is no-one there and they cannot make arrests.” When they were present, however, state officials often disparaged communal opinion regarding *mazi* with reference to clinical explanations, attributing deaths to medical causes such as meningitis and hepatitis-B. One LCIII explained: “There are some illnesses that can put things in your mind like ‘so-and-so is trying to kill you’, yet it is a different sickness.”⁶⁸⁸ In one case in Oleba, an official blamed the delays in taking a child sick with hepatitis-B to hospital: “If they had brought him earlier, [he] could have been healed, all long-term sicknesses.”⁶⁸⁹ Not

⁶⁸⁷ I, Security, Etoko, 9/11/2016 (OJ).

⁶⁸⁸ I, Elder, Buramali, 02/05/2016 (OJ).

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

only did the verdict in this case rest upon a different rationale— clinical medicine—than the claims of villagers, but this official effectively blamed the child’s parents for his death. Drawing on biomedical rationales propagates very different ideas of accountability; in providing alternative explanations regarding capital or biomedicine, elders and state officials echoed the frustrations of the accused. For example, one evictee explained:

This man died of gout and high blood pressure. He was known to have had an ulcer, but was not getting treatment, instead [he was] sitting at home. He was eventually admitted and died in hospital. Doctors said what he died of was known. Yet the community said [to me], ‘You have sacrificed this man to get money.’⁶⁹⁰

During interviews, officials often provided similar testimonies to the accused who also omitted mention of name-calling, possession, and running to water by their relatives who had died. The issue is clear: in situations where people fear *mazi*, elders and state officials dismiss the subjective realities of their relatives who fear themselves subject to underwater powers.

7.5: Social Schisms in Anti-Witchcraft Action

Within the paradigm of functional anthropology, anti-witchcraft action was theorised in relation to the maintenance of social structure. Accusations were a conservative regulator, a means of articulating and responding to tensions, and so reproduced the contours of local societies. This theoretical approach was married to a contemporary colonial context in which—despite debates surrounding the acts—oracles codified social suspicions into fact, and the violence of witch-hunting remained suppressed by law. In cases of *mazi*, my interlocutors were deeply divided as to how to deal with

⁶⁹⁰ I, Accused, Arua, 16/05/2016.

suspects. The cases discussed here did not always result in eviction: oftentimes suspicions simply diffused, with a lingering suspicion that the accusations could again arise in the context of further suffering.

Moreover, as the subsequent witchcraft-as-modernity analytic recognises—in part a reaction to the inherent reductionism within the functionalist paradigm—locales do not simply reproduce ideas of suffering. But neither too do locales simply absorb new concepts wholesale. Witchcraft appears as a response as societies adapt and accommodate to penetrating global logics. In light of the complexities of witch-finding presented above, neither theoretical approach properly captures the unfolding contestations over forms of evidence, nor how different groups struggle to persuade and comprehend realities. A major gulf remains between discourses in the public sphere and the realities of the field of action. New realities are brought to life through the reification of recognised symbols and signs of danger. Older registers of healing unite new conversations about wealth, accumulation, and the potential conflict between individuals and their social connections. Through different mediums—dreams, possession, ritual therapies and public discussions—Lugbara people actively debate if and how wealth interfaces with their local environment. As Sanders notes, witchcraft's being *within* modernity and its being *about* modernity are not the same thing.⁶⁹¹

Modernity is not experienced homogeneously across space: instead, access to knowledge and power is governed by local social divisions. These social divisions lay at the heart of the explanatory power of the functional paradigm—wherein witchcraft maintained

⁶⁹¹ Sanders, 'Reconsidering Witchcraft'.

the social structure, but was discussed in ways so static that it belied the very struggles that disrupted those local power structures in the ritual field. Just as any society is characterised by restrictions on knowledge and speech, modernity here has resulted in profound divergences in experience within communities. These fractures appear visibly in patterns of suffering and access to care—in who lives and who dies—and consequently, in struggles to explain misfortune, which are today shaped by a politics of power. As I have shown, this politics is inherent in the construction of explanations for witchcraft.

Examining witch-finding in post-independence Zimbabwe, Rutherford draws attention to the disparity between anthropological theorising and the complexity of local realities. For him, these theoretical lenses disguise the “politics of witchcraft,” which involves an unfolding articulation of social identities and power relations within a given locale.⁶⁹² He brings attention to the extensive webs of power and multiple social projects within any locality involved in “finding, seeing and constituting African witches”.⁶⁹³ As in his case, the politics of the events in Lugbara families extend far beyond the locale in which they are enacted. Returning to the disavowal of Lawrence Abriga, the LCV mentioned at the start of this chapter, the state dismissal of these claims fuels the quests for evidence described within, quests wherein communities are forced to reify their fears. As the next chapter explores, the reactions of the state also contain their own politics, which are not easily collapsed into a simple refutation of witchcraft.

⁶⁹² Rutherford, ‘To Find an African Witch’, p. 92.

⁶⁹³ *ibid.* p. 93.

Like Rutherford, Auslander has described the complex reality of modern witch-finding, which he encapsulates as the attempts of collectives to redraw a “novel symbolic topography.”⁶⁹⁴ Rather than representing the enactments of modernity, witch-hunts are on his view a collision of symbolic repertoires of healing and sickness refracted through actors of state bureaucracy, schools, missions, and clinical medicine. Key here is how different symbolic repertoires are mediated by local schisms in society: attempts to expel a suspect rest on diverging conceptual frameworks across generations, genders, religious actors and relatives of the dead, as well as those managing funerary rites. In making claims as to the presence of *mazi*, each actor asserts individual expressions of belief, faith, and knowledge. The multi-vocal nature of subjective realities—expressed through spirits, dreams, herbal medicine and clinical medicine—are indicative of the multiple registers of reality within any given case or collective. Yet as death demands the determination of responsibility, such struggles provide a moment for forms of knowledge to become unsettled. On occasion, diviner-healers, who usually operate in private, are invited to occupy a public role in revealing guilt, redefining notions of sin. In moments of crisis, outbursts of possession usually ascribed to women become attached to young men. Unsettling notions of gendered control, crisis ushers in an alternate politics of voice, and of speaking the truth of events. What is to be proved, then, is entangled within affliction, but drawn into a complex choreography of social struggle.

⁶⁹⁴ M. Auslander, “Open the Wombs!': The Symbolic Politics of Modern Ngoni Witchfinding', in Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff (eds.), *Modernity and its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999. pp. 167-192, p. 170.

During my fieldwork, as suspicions of *mazi* transitioned to accusations, a deeper subject of debate became not just transgression but the indiscipline of young men. In the later phrases of accusation, a clear schism between elders and their juniors emerged. Young men, typically sceptical about such revelations, mobilised their claims in collective action. Whereas witchcraft has long been a means for elders to critique their juniors, by calling for *mazi* to be managed, young men confronted their elders openly with allegations, reversing prior hierarchies of speech. In times of panic, elders emphasise the importance of their wisdom, of the “slow words” that form their judgements, of waiting for curses to manifest and of protecting the reputation of the accused. These conflicts echo wider social critiques, wherein elders often lament the “idleness” of the youth, chastising them for theft and for *mairungi*-eating: “The youth just want to use drugs, [be] idle, don’t want to work... some of these thefts, people learn them from [their] peer group.”⁶⁹⁵ In one case, for instance, a meeting about *mazi* was turned on its head when elders asked a group of young men why they had accused the suspect. Rather than confirm who had spread the rumours, the young men explained that since they had been under the influence of alcohol and cannabis, they had not been in their “right senses.” Elders read these events as problematic not merely because of the possibility of witchcraft, but because of the underlying disorder in which the accusations emerged. In cases that turn to violence, moreover, young men reject this slower-paced decision-making, refusing to wait for customary outcomes of guilt.

The violence of young men should not be interpreted necessarily a rejection of authority—rather, it could equally be a call for protection from normative clan

⁶⁹⁵ I, LCI, Maracha, 10/11/2016 (OJ).

structures. Without stereotyping all youth, since the motivations of young men differed according to their perceived vulnerability to *mazi* (as well as other circumstances), one *jua kali* (Kiswahili, informal labour) youth group explained that they wanted elders to intervene to protect them. In other words, their resistance was instigated precisely because they felt unprotected. In several cases, bearing testament to this exclusion, young men organised meetings in the format of their elders to discuss these issues, co-opting structures of seniority for their own ends.

These struggles matter, given that the field of power surrounding evidence is central not only to constructing the witch, but to protecting the accused. In three cases where the accused were interviewed, these suspects had simply fled to other places, often seeking safety in Arua town, where property rights ensure a greater degree of security. Upon arriving in their new places, men were saved in local churches, which gave their neighbours confidence in their commitment to change.⁶⁹⁶ But as their new neighbours moreover did not bear the grudges of those at home, it was this newfound distance that fostered peace: the limitations of their new networks enabled these men to protect themselves. Granted, each of these three men reported deep psychological trauma from the experience of being rejected by their kin, explaining their isolation. As Samuel explained, “Automatically weakness and anger is there. But since they are there and I am here what can I do with that anger? Suicide cannot help you. But what can I do? I just stay here. I just pray.”⁶⁹⁷ Samuel’s shop, vandalised in the raid following the elders’ sitting, remains in ruins by the roadside, and has not been reclaimed.

⁶⁹⁶ I, Elder, Buramali, 18/10/2016 (OJ).

⁶⁹⁷ Allegation of Mazi, Arua, June 2016.

7.6 Conclusion

Ideas of witchcraft and of psychic harm have evolved greatly in Lugbara populations. Ambiguous fears centred on the context-specific notion of *ole* have solidified as fears of proximate occult markets, where bad spirits or substances can simply be bought. This chapter has situated this evolution against the unfolding developmental context of return, and the increasing illustration and condemnation of witchcraft within the public domain. As in other places, witchcraft has become associated with new forms of individual consumption.

Within the field of accusation, simple analytics such as modernity, tradition, certainty and uncertainty are disrupted. In the face of a novel threat, implausible to many Lugbara people, significant explanatory work must be done by sufferers, healers and relatives of the deceased to confirm a threat (and a suspect). Producing evidence often requires invoking long-standing traditional signifiers of death, including dreams and sightings of white spirits, as well as trusted revelatory therapists. The interpretation of this evidence is highly personal, resting on the social status of the individual, as well as broader social struggles between the rich and poor, women and men, and elders and young men.

Defining witchcraft is heavily imbricated in a local field of power politics. Through gradual contestations, rumours, suspicions and fears come into alignment to define the witch—but brought into contestation with sceptical elders, the fate of the accused is often uncertain.

Having covered this ground, the following chapter discusses accusations of poisoning (*enyata*), focusing on the role of the state in processing disputes. Treating *mazi* and

enyata as separate analytical categories is not to deny the continuities between similar events. Indeed, approaches to managing *mazi* have taken shape against longer histories of managing poisoning. Yet, the two notions contain different histories at the border. Whilst *mazi* in reality rests on previous fears of malevolence, it is regarded as novel. Poisoning, however, has long been a nefarious feature of life at the border. For these reasons, specialists whose evidence may carry weight for post-exile generations who fear *mazi*, are often excluded from the management of *enyata*. Critically, in poisoning cases, it is said, “You can’t pray—you have eaten that thing.”

Chapter Eight

Poisonous Encounters: Between Words of Community and State

There is no issue that angers people like poisoning.
Elder, Maracha District⁶⁹⁸

8.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the politics of intervention surrounding evictions, often of entire families, following allegations of *enyata* (poisoning). Whilst the previous chapter explored contestations around evidence for a novel threat, this chapter explores longer histories of dealing with an older one. In view of this archive of experience, this chapter explores how collectives attempt to translate poisoning, claims based on *e'yo ada* (communal truths) into evidentiary forms and standards perceived to be legible to the state – *ekizibiti* (*Kiswahili. evidence*). The chapter considers how this fraught exercise of translation reproduces understandings of local governance and state-power.

Poisoning has a long history in Lugbaraland; Barnes-Dean notes that poisoning was conceptualised as a “true” Lugbara illness.⁶⁹⁹ Echoing this reflection, interlocutors for this research explained that *enyata* “has always been here in our culture”.⁷⁰⁰ Bearing thus an intimate history in this area, poisoning maps onto a wider moral geography of danger: particular clans, places, and markets are associated with the threat. Managing the threat relies on tracing marriage relations, as well as connections to notorious markets or places. Accusations of poisoning remain deeply taboo, but since its

⁶⁹⁸ I, Elders, Worubo, 03/03/2017 (OJ).

⁶⁹⁹ Barnes-Dean, *Illness Beliefs and Social Change*, p. 19.

⁷⁰⁰ Reflection, Co-worker, September 2016.

management draws on histories of moral knowledge that “follow” individuals (as do lineage debts) in specific contexts, there are more coherent calls to evict suspects than in the cases described previously. Eviction continue to follow successive deaths, but rely on a different evidence trail than *mazi*. Whilst the previous chapter focused on popular action amongst social groups, this analysis focuses on how elders aim to control violence, whilst making claims heard by the state.

This is not to say that fears of poison constitute a natural facet of identity, as early colonial analysts documenting “belief” in Lugbaraland supposed. Leonardi artfully demonstrates the longer historical constitution of fears of poisoning emerging from flows of foreign knowledge, and their localisation into health crises along the Ugandan-South Sudanese border.⁷⁰¹ As this analysis details, poison has a history dating to the precolonial period in Lugbaraland. That said, terms and idioms of poisoning are not static; rather, as with fears of witchcraft, they have evolved over time. A host of Lugbara terms today are directly translated as ‘poison’; though these terms refer to acts that in essence involve ‘magic’, this family of terms is united by a simultaneous connection to any physical agent, food, or toxic substance applied through intimate gestures and encounters.

Though poison agents are thought to have become more numerous in modern times (including chemicals, fertilisers and alcohols), unlike *mazi*, Lugbara people emphasise the physicality of *enyata* rather than its psychic, spiritual dimensions. Accordingly, the

⁷⁰¹ C. Leonardi, ‘The Poison in the Ink: Poison Cases and the Moral Economy of Knowledge in 1930s Equatoria, Sudan’, *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 1:1 (2007), pp. 34-56.

landscape of spiritual therapists such as charismatic healers and diviner-healers are not considered legitimate authorities in the diagnosis or treatment of poison. Consistently, prayer is generally understood to be ineffective against poison: as I was told, “For poisoners you can’t pray; you have eaten that thing.”⁷⁰² Instead, herbalists are invited to manage afflictions, and clan authorities often use state-like procedures to evict suspects.

Scholars have noted the state-like dynamics involved in poisoning evictions.⁷⁰³ Across the Ugandan-South Sudanese borderlands, removals that were once achieved through violence or even killing now proceed through the format of state meetings, the production of ballot-boxes or the passing of by-laws. Given this expression of its visible emblems, Allen and Reid argue that these emergent mechanisms are representative of a bottom-up enthusiasm for democracy.⁷⁰⁴ Yet I and others have argued that so-called elections may be more representative of evolved or customary decision-making structures, in that collective voting proffers immunity to individual accusers.⁷⁰⁵

Evictions are thus sites where the rights of the majority who believe themselves to be affected by poison are preserved at the expense of the rights of the accused. The present study goes beyond an analysis of the mere *form* of evictions; rather, it explores wider discourses of fear and anticipation over state intervention, evidence production and commentaries on state scientific capacity. The level of analysis shifts beyond a consideration for local processes viewed in a vacuum to consider the wider institutional

⁷⁰² FC, Elders, Ovujo, 30/05/2016 (OJ).

⁷⁰³ E. Storer, R. O’Byrne, and K. Reid, ‘Poisoning at the periphery: Allocating responsibility across the Uganda/South Sudan borderlands’ *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal* 2:2-3 (2017), pp. 180-196; T. Allen and K. Reid, ‘Justice at the margins: Witches, poisoners and social accountability in northern Uganda’ *Medical Anthropology* 34:2 (2015), pp. 106-123.

⁷⁰⁴ Allen and Reid, ‘Justice at the margins’.

⁷⁰⁵ Storer et al., ‘Poisoning at the periphery’.

connections across space. Evictions took place not only with reference to fears of poisoning, but within a field of anticipation and anxiety about repercussions from the state.⁷⁰⁶ I explore the anxieties of those officials on the frontline, contrasted with the sentiments of communities in the midst of panic.

In what follows, I first explore three spheres of tradition—the intimate, the medicinal, and the judicial—that have constructed the materiality and criminality of poisoning. I then describe specific eviction strategies, drawing attention to the different forms of state intervention and interpretation from villagers. Finally, I expand this case analysis to encompass concerns from other cases, such as officials and collectives in Maracha and Arua Districts. I conclude by discussing the impact of critical moments where communal desires are challenged by sub-county authorities.

8.2: Intimate Histories

The previous chapter explored how mobilities and differential access to foreign specialists introduced dangerous forms of witchcraft into families, wherein secret deals made at a distance brought death into homes. Poisoning, however, relies on proximity and intimacy for its effect: on shared meals, touches, or greetings that invert everyday behaviours. Indeed, the very word *enyata* or *enyanya*—the term that corresponds to a general term for poison in Lugbarati—derives from *enya* (food). On a daily basis, the collective sharing of food among *enyati*, a flexible term that denotes any commensal

⁷⁰⁶ The national Witchcraft Act dictates that “[a]ny person who directly or indirectly threatens another with death by witchcraft or by any other supernatural means commits an offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for life”. This includes the use of substances intended to cause harm through “sorcery”. Technically, then, both witches and poisoners could be tried in court, but I never heard of any petition involving this law in Arua or Maracha. Instead it was cases of mob justice (against poisoners) that were brought before a jury.

unit including a household, age-set, or wider community, establishes solidarity between those whose intentions are known. Collective eating serves as a basic performance both of trust in daily relations, and of togetherness in ceremonial relations. Whilst the sharing of food holds subtle but powerful potential to affirm togetherness, in the presence of a poisoner this fundamental gesture holds danger: “death” could be put into one’s food. Poisoners are said to secretly contaminate food, or “trick” their victim into eating after declaring that they themselves are full. The poisoner ensnares the victim within a web of social norms: it is impossible to refuse the offer of food, since this rejection is effectively an accusation of poisoning. It is said that “we eat poison because of shyness.”⁷⁰⁷

Throughout the twentieth century, poisoning has retained a connection to female propensities. In the 1920s, co-wives were said to poison the food of their husbands or co-wives, acting out on envy instigated by their maltreatment.⁷⁰⁸ Such women were not known as *oleu*, a more ambiguous term applied to male witches, but as *ba’enyanya beri* (literally ‘women who poison’), emphasising the materiality of their acts. Given their access to food, women were said to place snake-resin in the food of their co-wives or husbands. Female suspects could be violently killed, and though Middleton explains this violence had diminished by the 1950s, elders today still recalled expulsions of female suspects throughout Protectorate rule. Among Lugbara and Ma’di populations in exile in Sudan, purges against suspected poisoners continued; after return, Allen has documented the violent killing of suspected female sorceresses in Laropi, among

⁷⁰⁷ Barnes-Dean, *Illness Beliefs and Social Change*, p. 133.

⁷⁰⁸ McConnell, ‘Notes on the Lugwari tribe’.

neighbouring Ma'di groups. In one particularly gruesome case, multiple women were tortured following the death of a child, who had reportedly been given poisonous food at a funeral.⁷⁰⁹ For Allen, in the 1980s, accusations of *inyinya* (the Ma'di translation) had become localised, and provided a means of "...talking about social relations, and rumours about who was poisoning whom underlined tensions which existed within and between homes."⁷¹⁰ Fears about poisoning were widespread, and in the context of suffering among families, carried the potential for extreme violence. Amidst the contemporary context of food insecurity and mortality, Allen's interlocutors continued to pay attention to intimacies, and the dangers domestic relations and gestures could bring. Despite the immediate epistemic uncertainties post-return, historical reputations of poisoning and suspicious activities remained under observation.

Such histories remain important, since Lugbara people explain that poisoning is inherited down the female line, and historical associations continue to "follow" women to the present. In one case in 2011, in a Maracha village on the border, a young man with bloodied hands was discovered burying a decapitated snake. Though caught red-handed, suspicion was directed towards his mother, a woman named Ole. The community alleged that the son was doing the violent work of his mother, or at the very least that she had taught her evil techniques to him. Ole was violently evicted, and the case prompted a further cleansing of four newlywed women in surrounding villages, who were sent back to their natal homes. Subsequently, clans in the area passed a by-

⁷⁰⁹ Allen, 'The Violence of Healing'.

⁷¹⁰ Allen, *A Study of Social Change*, p. 447.

law that women should not be married into a clan without a vetting process to check that their background was *ala* (clean).

Allegations of poisoning are linked to the moral ambiguities about the intents of women who are brought into the husband's lineage from outside. Since the early colonial period, clan processes to vet and verify the moral status of women have been eroded, potentially generating suspicion as to a new wife's character. Today, as bridewealth is often unpaid—as discussed in previous chapters—many women retain uncertain relations with their clansmen. The by-laws discussed above make plain concerns about what women may bring into the home, translating fears into pseudo-legal language. Following the discovery of the abovementioned snake, these issues became a matter not merely of moral discontent, but of public safety. Whereas Allen asserts the unknown potential of women in relation to accusation, during my fieldwork it was evident that the past follows particular women married into new homes, regardless of vetting. In the case referenced above, the mother's name—*Ole*—revealed that she was related to poisoners. It is not so much the unknown potential of new wives that is a problem, but the realisation that a suspected poisoner has been brought into a clan. Intimate knowledge of the past, traveling between clans, creates lingering fears, activated after the discovery of evidence or by direct suffering.

In contrast to previous accounts, however, fieldwork for this research revealed that in contemporary Lugbaraland, those accused of poisoning were not just women, but men as well. Nor did those accused consistently poison solely through food. Though it was sometimes alleged that men learnt techniques from their wives or mothers, to

understand these allegations it is important to understand wider fears about intimacies—and evidence—that have increasingly been tied to forms of poisoning.

Though fears about food-based poisons endure, by the 1970s the term *enyata* was used more widely to encompass other threats. Barnes-Dean, for instance, documented multiple forms of *enyata*: *adraka* was a form of poison thrown onto the body or left on a path that caused general malaise; *eseseva*, which caused roughness of the skin, was caused when someone stepped on the victim's shadow; and *wolo*, which caused vomiting, was said to have been acquired from the Alur tribe.⁷¹¹ Today, poison can be placed in fields or on doorsteps, resulting in wounds. The terms *ba yi* or *enata* refer to a poisonous substance being applied by the suspect through touching or greeting. These attacks are not confined to the field of immediate social relations, and can be committed by any proximate aggressors because of envy. Poison is a category that has gradually expanded to encompass fears of proximities more broadly; at its greatest scale, any unverified connection can harbour malevolence.

Just as witchcraft from foreigners has long been feared (as discussed in the previous chapter), Lugbara people too anticipate the potential of strangers to enact poisoning. Trading centres that host migrants are sites of new fears, and young men who eat at hotels fear that encounters with outsiders could lead to poisoning. Stories of cracking plates or disintegrating glass bottles have become currency that indicate poisonous attacks from outsiders. Fears of poisoning are no longer constrained by social

⁷¹¹ McConnell, 'Notes on the Lugwari tribe'.

connections, and changing patterns of consumption have mapped onto fears of new forms of poisoning.

Changing fears of intimacy have furthermore unfolded against anxieties about the increasing number of modern poison agents. Elders explained that, in the past, the most potent poison was extracted from the heads of snakes. For example, an elder recalled an eviction from (he estimates) 1952, where a suspect had confessed her mode of preparation:

When I was born there was someone in this clan, a woman who was known to be a poisoner. She trapped these big snakes. She prepared beans and pasted them. If you know this snake lives under this big tree. You put the beans there. That snake will come out and at first the smell of that food will be nice, later on it will die. They cut off the head, the tail, and put it to rot in a container. When it rots, that juice which comes, she uses for poison. There was a day she was arrested, that was her confession. The woman was arrested by the *suru*. They sent her away from here. She was sent away. I don't know if she was still alive. That same woman killed my elder brother.⁷¹²

This description is revealing, not only since it meticulously documents the means through which poisons are believed to be prepared, but also because it has endured over decades in the elder's memory. Delivered as a confession, this testimony has particular authority. Though snake resin is noted as a potent poison, today Lugbara people recognise that other poisons can simply be bought on the market without specialist preparation. Any number of toxic substances, including industrial chemicals, fertiliser and hair dye are recognised as potential poisons. A Teregian herbalist explained:

Mazi came to be known during exile. People got exposure to it during exile. There people were doing business, and they met others who have a business selling *mazi*. So people bought the *mazi* from them with money, and they brought it back here. Others acquired it from Sudan—they are all powerful there. People get poison from within. You could say that poisoning is within the

⁷¹² I, Elder, Aroi, 10/04/2017 (OJ).

Lugbara culture. It was being sold at Agora market some years ago, sold openly. My friend lives near there, he told me openly.⁷¹³

As briefly noted in the previous chapter, this account contrasts the origins of poisons versus those of *mazi*. Whilst both occult discourses echo fears about markets, elders differentiated between foreign poisons and internal ones: poison, crucially, can be acquired nearby. Important to this context is that related public discourses equate the return from exile to other substances, which are considered poisonous insofar as they produce anti-social effects.

Concerns about the poisonous effects of alcohol and *mairungi* were regular features of national and local concern: “These days people die and we relate it to poison because they drink sachets. Those sachets are poisonous: it is not that there is an intent to kill a person, the drink itself is poisonous.” It was rumoured that Indian traders were poisoning alcohol sachets as “revenge for Amin”, in retaliation for their expulsion during his rule.⁷¹⁴ It is not that these ideas directly suggest acts of intentional poisoning, but that such accusations are located in a wider economy wherein modernity is understood to mediate access to powerful substances with anti-social effects.

As is clear, since the colonial period, fears of poisoning—though retaining their connection to intimacy—have expanded in multiple directions. Yet key questions remain: how, for example, have these notions become evidenced? And why do certain populations still use these terms? To better understand these trajectories, I now turn to medical and juridical histories.

⁷¹³ I, Herbalist, Biliafe, 9/01/2017 (OJ).

⁷¹⁴ Commentary, Co-worker April 2017.

8.3: Medicinal Histories

As noted above, whilst fears of poisoning have spread to encompass new kinds of encounters and continue to feature mystical dimensions, such attacks—unlike local understandings of witchcraft—consistently emphasise the involvement of a physical agent. As one elderly man explained, distinguishing between *mazi* (‘devil spirit’) and poison, “[If] it is only the devil spirit, mention the name of Jesus—that spirit can leave you. But when you have eaten that poison, however much you pray it is not possible; [if] you have eaten it has gone to your blood, to your heart.”⁷¹⁵ Across Lugbaraland, different groups articulated clear therapy maps: prayers do not work, and instead, an herbalist must be consulted.

Evolving alongside fears of poisoning, however, are techniques of administering antidotes. In the colonial period, the practice of herbal medicine could be pursued by either male or female *ojo*. McConnell explains that “somewhat wild-looking” medicine men dominated approaches to healing in the 1920s: “At the onset of sickness they are called in, or, if they know of it, may go without being called. They make their living by this, and may really have some medical secrets.”⁷¹⁶ Throughout the colonial period, male and female *ojo* attended to a range of sicknesses through forms of divination accompanied by the administration of herbs. In the 1970s, Barnes-Dean articulated herbal therapies in more detail, noting that even in the vicinity of Kuluva Hospital, cases of *enyata*, alongside a host of other afflictions, were directed towards female herbalists (rather than to the hospital). This is perhaps surprising given that the

⁷¹⁵ I, Reverend, Koyi, 02/05/2017.

⁷¹⁶ McConnell, ‘Notes on the Lugwari tribe’, p. 464.

herbalists' fees were higher than the hospital's. According to Barnes-Dean, women collected remedies from the bush and attended to poisoning using a combination of herbs. Additionally, these *ojo* attended to lesions, boils, diarrhoea, swellings and worms, as well as gonorrhoea, measles and syphilis. Whilst Barnes-Dean attributes healing techniques in part to divine inheritance, her analysis suggests that therapy was primarily driven here by the application of herbs. In contrast to the healers mentioned by Middleton (though not by McConnell), healing had adopted clinical practices. In exile in South Sudan, Harrell-Bond suggested that the presence of Lugbara herbalists increased fears of poisoning allegations.

Since the return from exile, herbal therapies have continued to evolve. I interviewed five herbalists, all men, who had learnt their trade either from their relatives or from Congolese specialists. Strikingly, each of these practitioners explained that they did not manage “spiritual” issues, nor relationship issues. Accordingly, these men do not go by the title *ojo*, but by *aro nyaku vurife* (‘administering medicine from the soil’). Though herbs are often gathered from Congo, practitioners emphasised the clinical qualities of their practice: where available, treatment was packaged in biomedical containers, or in plastic bags in powdered form.⁷¹⁷ Some therapists explained that drugs should be taken at regular intervals or in specific quantities over period of weeks, and one Maracha practitioner had built a ward in his ancestral compound to accommodate inpatients, even administering treatment through IV drips.⁷¹⁸

⁷¹⁷ I, Herbalist, Oluffe, 27/11/2016.

⁷¹⁸ I, Herbalist, Kijomoro, 15/03/2017.

Herbalists legitimated themselves through mimicking clinical procedure in other ways as well. In their practice, men were often supported by local government, with herbalists keeping hold of certificates from the sub-county or letters of validation from their LC. The treatment repertoire of herbalists varied, but often included ulcers, wounds, eye problems, snake bites and leprosy. Selected therapists intervened in cases of sexual weakness (*abili*), madness (*orindi onzi*), and *mazi*. These conditions are treated through different herbal concoctions which are ingested in a tea, rubbed onto wounds, or inhaled in a vapour through the nose. Herbal medicine is more popular in the countryside than in town, but if poisoning is suspected, Aruans too will travel to a nearby herbalist. Herbalists retain a monopoly on treating poisoning cases, where poison has been ingested, stepped on or applied to the body. Often herbs are ingested, and induce vomiting in the victim, a reaction that provides evidence of the presence of a toxic agent. The same process was described in relation to treating snake bites: as one informant recounted, “There is an herb, you smash it and give the patient to drink. If the venom has reached the chest, you vomit; if you don’t vomit, it’s a problem.”⁷¹⁹ For cases of paralysis, herbs continue to be “cut into the blood.” One therapist explains:

First give the person some herbs to drink—to separate the blood, the bad blood from the good blood. When that is done I start using a razor blade to cut the paralysed part: when you cut that, you see the dirty blood coming out, it can be as black as this dress, then when it comes out, I rub some herbs on that cut. I do not cut it very wide, just small cuts. [The] patient says it is painful, but you do not cut much and since you are in pain as a sick person, you don’t care about the pain of the razor blade, it is like an injection. I cut the patient once and rub herbs twice over two days. It’s not a big cut like the native Lugbaras used to do. They used to make a big cut and there were no razor blades—they were using knives.⁷²⁰

⁷¹⁹ *ibid.*

⁷²⁰ I, Herbalist, Maracha, 27/11/2016 (OJ).

This description is revealing in that it reiterates local understandings of poison to reside “in the blood.” Also key to note is that this herbalist defends his approach as being modern compared to the “big cuts” of previous days, which are condemned by public health experts today.

As well as explaining their new techniques, herbalists also noted that their successful management of poisoning directly influences their reputation. One herbalist practicing near the Congolese border estimated he received ten suspected cases of poisoning per week, his practice promoted through the testimonies of ‘survivors.’ On occasion, treatments are publicly administered in the victim’s compound or in another public place. One recovered patient explains:

[The] herbalist came, [and] shaved the back of my head. Put it all over my head which started burning, black smoke coming from the whole of my head. I started to feel better. It happened in public outside—people knew about my sickness at that point so it didn’t matter that it was in public.”⁷²¹

Though the exact biochemistry of this reaction is unclear, and the interventions of herbalists do not elicit personal responsibility for sickness, these therapies nevertheless promote evidence of a physical agent in the blood. Physical ailments require physical remedies: interventions, which have a long history, reproduce material discourses in relation to *enyata*.

8.4: Judicial Histories

Individual attempts to survive poisoning necessarily intersect with collective responses to managing suspected poisoners. Tracing these judicial traditions—which have

⁷²¹ I, Victims, Maracha, 15/06/2016.

involved both individual ordeals and the participation of the state—explains why today, the reintegration or absolution of poisoning suspects through prayer or salvation is vehemently rejected. One elder remarked, “These people who confess in church will get a bigger beating.”⁷²² Of one suspect who became saved in church, after presenting a plastic cavera of poison during a service, the elder commented: “They want to camouflage themselves in God, since people here trust much in God. But in fact, they are doing some sort of magical practice that is not godly. They are doing business, using the name of God.”⁷²³ Similarly, “hiding” in the church is taken as evidence of guilt, just as when the wealthy who have acquired *mazi* give over-generously to people at home. Importantly, Lugbara people do not perceive poisoning as immoral but as *criminal*, as an act of attempted murder. For collectives who fear poisoning, poisoners place themselves beyond any ethic of care or correction which dwells within the *suru*. As with cases of killing beyond kinship, it is believed that individuals should be processed by the state, relevant precisely because its long arms extend beyond the limits of clan ties and familial justice.

From the colonial period on, state interventions in the field of poisoning emphasised the materiality of the crime. As in other colonial contexts, British colonial administrators were bound by a penal code that aimed not to prevent witchcraft, but to limit accusations. The Witchcraft Ordinance of 1912 (amended in 1921) largely aimed to suppress accusations of witchcraft, as well as activities of "witchdoctors" and "witch-

⁷²² I2, LCI, Ovujo, 30/10/16

⁷²³ I, Herbalist, Biliafe, 09/1/2017 (OJ).

finders". Yet whilst the evidence suggests that administrators dismissed witchcraft superstition, activities in response to poisoning treated crimes as material realities.

Prior to the advent of British rule, poisoning cases were managed through ordeals: tests convened by elders and the relatives of the victim. McConnell notes the use of respiratory poisons previously used in battle to try suspects, who were usually women.⁷²⁴ Elders administered poison ordeals, and if the suspect vomited, they would be presumed innocent. In this way, particular poisons had judicial uses, playing a role in divination and investigation.⁷²⁵ But because such ordeals often ended in death, they were outlawed by the Protectorate (the response being a shift to chicken oracles).⁷²⁶ In the colonial context, the inability to try poisoners in local courts accounts in part for the increasing violence of resolution: classifying a case as poison, rather than witchcraft, provided a route to manage tensions.

That said, the colonial state did directly intervene to confirm the “real criminality” of these cases.⁷²⁷ A 1921 Report by the Acting Provincial Commissioner of Northern Province described an “epidemic of murders” in Maracha and Terego Counties.⁷²⁸ According to the report, these murders were caused by women poisoning beer. Since the beer was brewed in secrecy, the Protectorate administration were cognisant of the literal dangers that these activities could bring to health (later passing legislation to reform

⁷²⁴ McConnell, ‘Notes on the Lugwari tribe’, p. 450.

⁷²⁵ Leonardi, ‘Poison in the Ink’, p. 40.

⁷²⁶ McConnell, ‘Notes on the Lugwari tribe’, p. 462.

⁷²⁷ Leonardi, ‘Poison in the Ink’ p. 35.

⁷²⁸ Report No. 869. Subject: Report on Tour in West Nile P.C., N.P. December 1920, to the Chief Secretary of Government in Entebbe, from the Acting Provincial Commissioner, Northern Province; the report notes “what one might describe as an epidemic of murders”.

them).⁷²⁹ In recording these claims, the Provincial Commissioner not only uses the word “murder,” but accepts local explanations for the deaths as fact. Moreover, the issue was discussed publicly in well-attended *Barazas* (local forums) in Arua, Maracha, Offude, Terego and Vurra, and the women found responsible served “heavy sentences.”⁷³⁰ The report concludes that should these sentences fail to serve as a deterrent, subsequent offenders would meet even longer sentences. In the report, the management of these murders is detailed after a short assessment of the ‘Allah Water Cult,’ an indication of their significance (given the scope of Yakan). In sentencing these women, Protectorate officials confirmed the explanations for killing circulating in the community.

Later dispatches suggest the administration’s continuing concern. In 1922, the Acting Chief Secretary of the Protectorate was so troubled by poisoning cases in Northern Uganda (specifically West Nile) that he requested the Provincial Commissioner for Northern Province to obtain information from D.C. Weatherhead as to the native methods of poisoning preparation.⁷³¹ Weatherhead discovered that four main types were used among Lugwari, Ma’di, Alur and Kakwa areas. Two of the four types were secret, with no-one admitting to knowledge of their preparation other than to suggest that they were made from snakes, frogs, chameleons and the glands of leopards.⁷³² The other two types were concocted from the seeds and sap of a certain tree (these were the poisons formerly used in ordeals).⁷³³ Samples of the latter two types were extracted and sent to Entebbe for testing, where one of them proved toxic.

⁷²⁹ Report of the Spirituous Liquor Committee, 26th January 1963, Archival Source

⁷³⁰ Report No. 869.

⁷³¹ ‘Acting Chief Secretary to PCNP 30.5.22 Native Affairs 7371’, cited in Allen, *A Study of Social Change*, p. 378.

⁷³² *ibid.*

⁷³³ ‘DC, West Nile to PCNP, 13/5/22’, cited in Allen, *A Study of Social Change*, p. 378.

As discussed below, in the present, state participation in collecting physical evidence served to vindicate local fears about poisoning. Multiple anthropologists have explained that their own hesitancy on encountering poisonous substances has reinforced notions of their potency and prevalence.⁷³⁴ Surely, then, the process of inquiring into and collecting poisons had similar impacts in the early years of British rule: since the colonial administration appeared to take accusations of poisoning seriously, this no doubt confirmed local fears.⁷³⁵ Writing of parallel events in Kajo Keji South Sudan, in the 1930s, Leonardi writes that “In struggling to differentiate actual criminal substances from ‘superstition,’ colonial officials were also unwittingly touching on very real local debates about the attractions of material substances and the dubious and gendered morality of the specialised knowledge that developed or deployed them.”⁷³⁶ In Kajo Keji, whilst fears about poisoning emanated from a context of suffering, sickness, and change, the involvement of chiefs and missionaries precipitated a panic that led to mass accusations, confirming the veracity of particular occult fears.

This participation accounts as well for why Lugbara populations increasingly used the term ‘poisoning’ to express anxieties about interpersonal grievances. Explaining local events as poisoning meant there were specific fora in which cases could be resolved. Allen suggests that in the colonial period Ma’di communities emphasised poisoning over any suggestion of magic in order to seek redress in local government courts. By the 1980s, Allen notes that ‘poison’ was used interchangeably with its Ma’di translation of *inyinya*, and claims that it regularly appeared in local fora to refer both to toxic

⁷³⁴ Harrell-Bond, *Imposing Aid*; Behrend, *Resurrecting Cannibals*.

⁷³⁵ Allen, *A Study of Social Change*, p. 398.

⁷³⁶ Leonardi, ‘Poison in the Ink’, p. 35.

chemicals and more magical techniques. Similarly, in Lugbaraland, by the 1970s, the term ‘poison’ was used for terms both magical and material. Despite local understandings traversing the material/magical, particular aspects of poisoning claims have been taken seriously: though other aspects of witchcraft have been dismissed, poisoning cases could be heard in court, and punished at a time when other local methods were overwhelmed.

Though traditionally clans dealt with cases of poisoning, elders in Maracha insisted that under Amin’s government, a “strong state” actively punished poisoners. Though it is difficult to make definitive connections, these new interventions could have been fuelled by new anti-witchcraft legislation. The Witchcraft Act of 1967 was very different from the colonial ordinance, placing emphasis on “repute” (reputation) as valid evidence for intention. The act also outlined stricter punishments for those practising witchcraft, including an exclusion order which prohibited the individual from entering or remaining in the area of offence for up to ten years. This shift also facilitated more draconian local responses: under Obote and Amin, elders explained that new ordeals were devised to try those accused. “You could take anything dirty from the deceased person—you wash clothes, that water is put with meat, it is cooked and everyone eats. Whoever had a hand in that death, they just die. If someone was caught red-handed with a snake, they could be forced to eat it raw.”⁷³⁷ Ordeals are important, since they serve as proof of truth: if the suspect is evicted, it is based on fact.

⁷³⁷ I, Elders, Maracha, 03/05/2017.

Since return, elders have become cognisant of the effects of false allegations. If wrongfully evicted, misfortunes follow those who evict. Since independence, sanctions were devised to combat false accusations, in a ritual process called *nguku soma*. Speaking out against a poisoner, should the accusation prove false, could bring sickness to the accuser which could pass through to their children and extended family. Thus to reverse this state of sickness, animals must be transferred from accuser to accused. Today, elders still try those who falsely accuse others of poisoning, with the expense of paying for this formal sitting providing a strong deterrent to profligate accusers. Indeed, clans were involved in intra-clan settlements to forgive past evictions of women, which continued to cause misfortune in the present.

In contrast to pre-war times, elders lamented that the state no longer protects them. Though the 1967 Witchcraft Act remains law, in interviews conducted for this research, communities claimed that the state protects those who poison rather than those who suffer from it. This is demonstrated through the refusal of police and state authorities to sanction the eviction of suspects. As one member of the Maracha District police relayed: “We tell them the law does not work like that, we are all citizens of Uganda, what about human rights?”⁷³⁸ Ordeals have become less popular, and are rarely used. But elders remain under pressure to expel suspected poisoners – who are often men who have right to land. As an exploration of the following cases of evictions revealed, the line between state and community is increasingly blurred in poisoning evictions.

⁷³⁸ IM, DPC, Nyadri, 26/05/2016.

8.5 Cases

The two cases described here unfolded in February 2017, among clans in Maracha.

8.5.1 Case A: *The Threat and Security of the State*

The first eviction was set in motion after a young man, Peter, was knocked down and killed on the road. This traffic accident was understood to be *drilonzi*, a term that connotes bad luck or a surprise event directed by human malice. Prior to his death, Peter had eaten potatoes prepared in the home of another villager, Simon; as noted above, death following the shared consumption of food is a common signifier of *enyata*. As sudden road accidents are often associated with poisoning in West Nile, this sequencing of events precipitated a search for accountability beyond the immediate physical cause of death. This particular accident was unusual furthermore because, as an onlooker explained, “There was no way he could have died—there was not any bleeding.”⁷³⁹

This was not the first death in the village. Several weeks earlier, the suicide of a young man was connected by community members to malicious intent. Before these deaths, the village had suffered many unexpected deaths, with the LC counting 14 deaths over a period of a decade. Each death was associated with one particular *aku* (home), of which Simon was a member. This family had isolated themselves from village affairs, but so had many other homes struggling with the demands of work. On occasion, family members had been rude to other villagers. Suspicions as to their involvement in poisoning were grave. These fears relied not merely on recognition of social neglect, but

⁷³⁹ I, LCI, Maracha, 17/02/2017 (OJ).

on tracing behaviour in the lineage of Simon's mother: as with other cases, it was thought that poisoning techniques had been inherited via the female line, and brought into the home through marriage. Just as a mother can teach her children correct moral behaviour, villagers reckoned, she could also teach them bad deeds—and since her husband had not sent her away, it was thought that he, too, was complicit, perhaps using his wife as a “fence” to hide his own evil intent. Though Simon's mother had ascended as a women's leader within the Catholic Church, villagers interpreted this not as evidence of moral virtue but as a diversion from her bad deeds. The family had been protected from accusations since Simon's father was one of two remaining elderly men in the village, and certain performances of deference were expected from junior villagers. Moreover, though intense suspicion and “quiet” rumours had arisen, there had been no explicit evidence of poisoning, such as eating, beforehand. The events of Peter's death provided a clear trail of evidence, releasing a crescendo of anger that had accumulated following the deaths of so many clan members, deaths which had rendered villagers powerless.⁷⁴⁰

After Peter's funeral, the clan members sat for an evaluation. Following a suspicious death, these meetings between relatives (after other visitors have left) can be tense. In this case, allegations were openly directed toward Simon and his family, linking them to other deaths. That evening, young men of the clan, plus the village LC and remaining elder, rushed to the family homes. The group was led by young men who shouted “Something dangerous has come” and “We don't want poison here.” There were no dissenting voices; the villagers were united in their will to destroy the home and evict

⁷⁴⁰ I, Evicted Family, 17/02/2017 (OJ/AC).

the family. After Simon was openly accused in the home, he responded only by saying, “If God knows, he will punish me accordingly.”⁷⁴¹ The crowd had little intention of outsourcing punishment; young men, apparently commanded by the LC and elder, grabbed hoes from neighbouring compounds and began to destroy the roof of the house, also throwing bricks and stones at the accused family. The family—twelve members in total—ran from the village to the home of their maternal uncles. This home was only several kilometres away, but it was beyond the jurisdiction of the angry crowd. This eviction also sparked subsequent evictions of the daughters of the family married elsewhere: of these events I was told, “They [other clans] are gathering all the rubbish.”⁷⁴²

Simon himself fled to the District police station with his wife, forcing an official response. The police moved from the sub-county headquarters to the village to find the group demolishing houses, and in a form of response that has now become common across Uganda, dispersed the crowd using tear gas. Simon sheltered for the night in the police station, but before joining the rest of his family, he wrote down the names of those who had been involved in the demolition, including the LC himself. Defending himself, he explained to the police (as he would later explain to me) that the eviction was a calculated measure by jealous clan members, who wanted to claim Simon’s fields.⁷⁴³

⁷⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁷⁴² Commentary, Research Assistant 02/2019.

⁷⁴³ I, Evicted Family, 17/02/2017 (OJ/AC).

Three men and three women on this list were arrested the following day at the main market in the district. When the home community learnt of what had happened, these arrests were perceived to be an injustice. An exasperated LC told me: “The police are the ones protecting bad people. They keep on saying that people should not take the law into their own hands and kill people—but these people are killing people. The police are promoting this evil work.”⁷⁴⁴ Members of the village hid away from home during the day, and youths posted themselves by the road to watch for the police, should they return.

To force the release of their fellow villagers, a group stormed the District police station in Nyadri town some days later. Their protest was ignored, and the District Police Commander (DPC) refused to address them, but passed on a message that “Nothing about poisoning is written in the law book.”⁷⁴⁵ The DPC instructed that he would send a message back to the village with the course of action to be followed. This message would never arrive, and in the interim, the clan members united to raise the 1.6M (450US\$) shillings needed to bail the six detained villagers out.

With the villagers released, and the report from the DPC that signalled the sub-county would not be involved in the allegations, it would seem that the state had failed the people of Nyadri. But despite the disengagement of officials, villagers continued to demand the attention of the sub-county, and the following week continued their investigation. They searched a hut, the roof of which had held firm during the

⁷⁴⁴ I, LCI, Maracha, 17/02/2017 (OJ).

⁷⁴⁵ IM, DPC, Nyadri, 26/05/2016.

demolition, and tested for poison. Two bottles of chemicals and a large *oyo*—the bulb formerly used by herbalists—were found hidden within. One elder explained, “Those things were tied. We feared to open it [the bottles] but some people picked [up] the[ir] courage and opened it. We took just a tiny drop of the liquid and put it on six grasshoppers. They died instantly.”⁷⁴⁶ A list of more than 100 names was also found with the chemicals. Of those listed, seven had already died. This discovery definitively confirmed the suspicions that the family had *aro onzi*, or poison.⁷⁴⁷

The sub-county was petitioned to collect the evidence. Drama ensued when the Officer in Charge (OC) went to collect the poison on his bike. Immediately after collecting it, the engine of his bike choked, and despite his efforts, it would not re-start. The village looked on as the OC was eventually forced to push his bike back to the sub-county HQ. A message reached the village that after delivering the poison the engine started again, without any intervention from a mechanic. People were overcome with laughter as they relayed these events to me.⁷⁴⁸ It was a triumph that vindicated the struggles within the village: the power of the poison had defeated the police. There was a palpable sense that the villagers had proven their case—would the state now take interest?

At the sub-county HQ, there was much confusion.⁷⁴⁹ When I visited the sub-county, the LCIII retrieved the poison from the bottom of a cabinet in his office, and brought it into the room where we had been speaking and placed it on the floor. The OC of the station was present, but refused to touch the poison. Eventually the LCIII unwrapped the

⁷⁴⁶ I, LCI, Maracha, 12/02/2017 (OJ).

⁷⁴⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁴⁸ Informal discussion, village youths, Maracha village, 02/2017 (OJ).

⁷⁴⁹ Visit to Sub-County, meeting with Officer in Charge and LCIII, 02/2017.

poison-containing vessels from the paper. He retrieved a large onion bulb (*ojo*) and two bottles of liquid, one red and one yellow. For a moment we all looked at the poison. My research assistant recoiled. At some point, the LCIII removed the lid of one of the bottles, whereupon a noxious smell filled the room and the OC left the room. “But is this really poison?” the LCIII asked. He explained that it is difficult to discern since the villagers recovered the poison from the house themselves, when they should have left it for the police to find. The OC then produced the list of names; throughout this encounter the officials’ anxiety over touching these objects was clear. The LCIII replaced the top on the bottle, and shaking his head, he placed it back in the office. Afterwards, I saw him rush outside to wash his hands with soap. When we spoke afterwards, he addressed me with what seemed like a question, “But even if there is evidence, as was brought here—that person could be using it to treat themselves herbally, or treating their crops. Many of our people grow *mairungi*; you need specific chemicals to grow that. Can we really kill each other?”⁷⁵⁰ At the sub-county HQ, profound fear of the poison was accompanied by unease over how to proceed.

Even though state officials disavowed the production of the two bottles as evidence, they still participated in the spectacle of collection that, in their eyes, legitimised the claim of the community, vindicating local fears of poison. The exercise undoubtedly mirrored extractions of the colonial state. Though state officials seemed to be acting out of fear, and tried to maintain distance even when the agent was presented to their office, these trepidations went unseen by villagers, who perceived that the poison had been swiftly sequestered away by the police.

⁷⁵⁰ I, LCIII, Nyadri, 18/02/2017.

No news ever reached the village as to the testing of the poisons, generating subsequent confusion as to why the district would not confirm the substances as poisonous, since evidence had been produced. There was anger in the village and intense questioning as to why, after all their efforts, such information was withheld.⁷⁵¹ Nine months later, when I revisited the clan, the suspects had not returned—moreover, people had stopped dying unexpectedly, so there was little interest in revisiting the past. Though during moments of panic the state had simultaneously provided both a threat and guarantee, the affair had now been folded into the rhythm of everyday life. The state faded into the background.

8.5.2 Case B: LCI under threat

The second case took a different form, with greater efforts to document and judicialise the eviction. Two women within one village (clan), had died in quick succession, after being greeted and ‘tapped on the shoulder’ by a certain man. This type of poisoning (known as *enata* or *ba yi*), is more magical. *Ba yi* is sometimes explained as involving the application of a substance, but there were never attempts to produce poison.⁷⁵² This suspect had also targeted the LCI, allegedly greeting him and his wife with suspicious words and a lingering greeting. After falling sick, the couple visited a local herbalist for treatment, to whom today they credit their survival. This attack made the LCI determined to act, as his allegiance lay with other victims in the community.

⁷⁵¹ I, Elders, Maracha, 03/03/2017.

⁷⁵² LCI, Alivu, 16/03/2017 (OJ).

Along with village elders, the LCI convened an “insecurity meeting” to discuss case B.⁷⁵³ The main action points on the agenda were simple: to determine 1) how people had died, and 2) who had caused their deaths. These questions may give the appearance of an open investigation, but reading the minutes of the meeting, it was evident these proceedings meant to codify pre-existing notions of guilt. Ninety people gathered—including the LC, a parish chief, elders and youth groups—with names recorded on an attendance register. The formal setting of the meeting seemed to provide a space for people to speak openly about their experiences, and a further five women came forward with allegations of misconduct. After the suspect greeted them suspiciously as well, they also proceeded to local herbalists where they were treated. In total, the suspect “had attempted to kill” nine people, of whom seven survived and two died. After people presented their experiences, the accused was given a chance to confess. He replied that “It is true that I have been playing with these women and greeting them in this way. But I did not know it would lead to sickness or death.”⁷⁵⁴ I was told that the suspect was not stable in his home, and had lived away in places notorious for witchcraft. Though his confession did not appertain to the specific deaths, it was seen to confirm his involvement. After these proceedings, those present were given the chance to vote publicly by raising their hands.

These proceedings look like what scholars have called “hybrid” or “best-fit”: evidence of an emergent indigenous architecture. It is important not to overstate this aspect of the proceedings, however—when I mentioned that voting appeared democratic, the LCI

⁷⁵³ Taken from Meeting Notes, Village B, February 2017, the meeting was recorded in Lugbara.

⁷⁵⁴ LCI, Alivu, 16/03/2017 (OJ).

was confused. This architecture was devised largely in fear of the state, as well as fear of sickness should an allegation prove false (as described above). By voting as collectives, the identities of individual accusers were protected; this apparatus is designed to exclude the accused in a manner that protects the majority.

Following this meeting, the suspect was marched out of the village to the border with the next parish, in compliance with by-laws written by the village council and stamped by the sub-county. Similar proceedings had been initiated when thieves were caught red-handed: they were marched around the limits of the village, often accompanied by drumming and cries of their names and crimes. In most cases, these parades were organised at least in part by a village LC. In Case B, when the suspect began to shout at those who were force-marching him, young people responded by hurling stones. His properties were not destroyed, and his son was allowed to stay (albeit under close surveillance).

Speaking soon after this event, the LCI was enthusiastic. He believed he had handled the proceedings well, resulting in no killing or destruction. Because of his intervention, he explained, "We did not take the law into our own hands." Moreover, safety and health had been restored to the village. Meeting the LCI some few weeks later, however, his manner had changed and he spoke quickly and nervously. He was worried that the violence of the eviction might reach the police. Outside village limits, perhaps the state could side with the evictee. He hesitated and explained his strategy: "If he comes back, we will use force to get rid of him. If he comes with the right government officials and the police, we will sit and show the minutes of the meeting and we will ask

them: “Is what this man is doing the right thing?”⁷⁵⁵ His explanation was fragile, and he was evidently worried about sanctioning the eviction: though the suspect had survived, the community had in fact taken the law into their own hands. With the suspect evicted, it was now the spectre of state punishment, rather than the fear of witchcraft, that lingered over the village, and over the LCI in particular. During collective panic, the community acted autonomously, but the potential threat of the state was subsequently imagined in its absence.

8.6: The splitting of the state

These cases bear the specificities of differing contexts of affliction, as well as the attentiveness of local authorities as to the threat of poison. Yet all cases share a concern for managing the threat of poisoning, as well as fears of repercussion from the state. As noted in case B, the imprint of the state is reflected in local processing structures, where the bureaucratic procedures of the state are mimicked at the local level as a means of controlling local emotions in an ordered fashion. Due to exposure to local government, and because emblems of the state have power, idealised images of order-making such as agendas, meetings, taking minutes and writing laws are increasingly an option. Beyond the *form* of these evictions, these events involved particular patterns of state engagement.

The above cases involved local authorities—embedded officials (LCI and parish chiefs) from the sub-country to the district level. Dealing with these evictions, particularly for

⁷⁵⁵ I, LCI, Alivu, 16/03/2017 (OJ).

those officials hailing from the area they served, was difficult: councillors feared poisoning, but they also feared the state. In this gap between local witchcraft epistemologies and state law, officials from LCI- LCIII (village to sub-county) levels offered ambiguous statements that could not implicate them directly on either side. A common practice seemed to be to neither confirm nor deny events, and to remain ontologically between the state and local experience. An LCIII explained:

I'm realising rampant evictions of the suspected sorcerers in the communities. We should all open out to address the problem before any death case has been reported in connection with that. The eviction is a big case of insecurity in this sub-county. And also witchcraft is becoming another big source of insecurity... so far we have five cases which have arisen this year, in two months... This issue of evicting people thought to be poisoners, around ten years ago it has been there, even twenty years ago it has been there—but this time it has become so common.⁷⁵⁶

The LCIII acknowledged the problems of evictions alongside the problem of witchcraft—but where does he himself stand? Speaking of the aforementioned cases, he continued:

There was this case of Village C, people say they caught him practising witchcraft, and jumping across a grave at night. A child died. In Case B someone had a hand in the death of a woman. The confession was accepted. It was peaceful. In Case A, I would term that 'accident' but our Lugbara people, when someone dies, they look for the cause. This leads them to destruction. Some of these cases, it is poisoning, and there is a case, but in others, I would see it a bit differently.⁷⁵⁷

Interestingly, the cases that the LCIII suggests are “real” are those lacking the physical agent of poison. At the sub-county level, those cases which were the least “scientific” within an empirical, rationalist framework were more persuasive than those where physical evidence had been produced.

⁷⁵⁶ I, LCIII, Nyadri, 18/02/2017.

⁷⁵⁷ *ibid.*

At the sub-county level, officials were versed in idioms of witchcraft, but could keep their distance from it through ambiguous comments. Yet those officials embedded in communities were subject to intense pressure to manage the problem. They feared being singled out as responsible for organising an eviction, but also feared being associated with violence. As one LCI claimed, “If LCs support a suspect, the community will say he is conniving with them.”⁷⁵⁸ Similarly, a parish chief recounted that

As a parish chief I also face the same challenges [as an LC and an elder] because I live in the community. There are things that are really bad in the community that we all know are bad. But because the community looks up to me, and I have an administrative role—if I tell them not to do something because it contravenes the government law, they say it is me who is supporting evil in the community.”⁷⁵⁹

The “spectre” of state punishment remained, but so too did the threat of poison.⁷⁶⁰

Embedded officials were caught between the collective will of their villagers and the personal allocation of responsibility from the state. That same parish chief explained his predicament:

Telling rumours to the police will give the police the chance to be alert in areas where there may be a problem. But there are cases where you report with evidence and nothing happens. When you are the eye of the government you are expected to report to the police in a silent way so the police can decide what to do.⁷⁶¹

Here the chief alludes to the fact that as a member of the state he should alert the security personnel about unfolding events (without the knowledge of his community), but if he did, he would be forced to give details of the local community that would place him at odds with its members. LCI and parish chiefs continually imbricated themselves

⁷⁵⁸ I, LCI, Alivu, 16/03/2017 (OJ).

⁷⁵⁹ I, Parish Chief, Maracha, 28/02/2017 (OJ).

⁷⁶⁰ B. Aretxaga, ‘Maddening States’, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32 (2003), pp. 393-410, p. 395.

⁷⁶¹ I, Parish Chief, Maracha, 28/02/2017 (OJ).

in this sphere of rumour rather than that of fact. Embedded officials generally avoided seeking intervention of higher state authorities.

Though in case B local officials did associate themselves with proceedings, speaking to LCIs and parish chiefs across Maracha District who had been involved in similar proceedings, I observed a reluctance to accept responsibility. Case B clearly elucidates the shifting temporalities of these anxieties for the LCI involved. More commonly, officials tried to distance themselves personally from local actions, blaming or implicating other officials. LCIs explained that parish chiefs had been the primary force behind evictions, and vice versa. Indeed, far from appearing as a unified force, officials at different levels maintained a careful distance from evictions. For the LCIII, this became apparent in a meeting he convened for LCIs across the sub-county. He explained that the meeting was necessary because of the “secrecy” of the LCI below him. The LCIII explained:

As an LCIII it is very hard to deal with this. You tell the community ‘don’t do this’ and yet they do their own things. We move in the community, but often they do their things secretly. When we get the information they are planning ‘a,b,c,d’ we go and disorganise them. For them, they will be acting secretly. It will be only when they are doing the action that it comes out.⁷⁶²

Interestingly, the LCI with whom I spoke believed the meeting would proffer advice on how to manage suspected poisoners, or at least to mitigate the threat of poisoning.⁷⁶³

Speaking to attendees of the meeting, his message was profoundly unclear: was he condemning the act of poisoning? Or the act of evicting?

⁷⁶² I, LCIII, Nyadri, 18/02/2017.

⁷⁶³ I, LCI, Alivu, 16/03/2017 (OJ).

Both at the sub-county and in local communities, for those serving the state at different levels, these evictions were a thorny issue. Rather than take credit for these local solutions, however, officials tried to pass blame to others nearby. These reactions are interesting in light of recent analysis from elsewhere, which suggests that the management of witchcraft proffers an important opportunity for local elites to entrench their power base.⁷⁶⁴ Whilst this could be true for the case of the Bishop described in the following chapters, this abstracted perspective, however, neglects both the trepidation officials hold towards witchcraft, as well as their deep anxieties about retribution by the state.

If in these cases the reactions of embedded officials were ambiguous, then the actual interventions of higher authorities were absent. The MP for Maracha East refused to be involved: a technocrat who spends more time in parliament than in his constituency, he explained his total reluctance to become embroiled in “mysterious” affairs, opting, rather, to leave them to those on the ground.⁷⁶⁵ The activities of the police, moreover, happened on an arbitrary basis. In case B, their authority was present as an idea—the threat of sanctions that did not arrive. In case A, their interventions were highly contradictory, discrediting community actions and intervening against public will.

At each of these levels, state practices were either poorly articulated or nonaligned. Nonetheless state power was invoked by officials who, in the midst of local panic, continually assessed their connection to law. Even though embedded officials

⁷⁶⁴ Allen, ‘Vigilantes, Witches, and Vampires’.

⁷⁶⁵ I, Maracha East MP, Arua, 20/06/2017.

sanctioned procedures to manage poisoning suspects knowing such proceedings contravened the law, the capacity of the state to enforce the law remained ever-present in their calculations. Though officials did not sever their ties with communities, they certainly endeavoured to distance themselves from events within them. What thus emerged was a shifting mosaic of state authority where representatives moved between local epistemologies and law, a mosaic whose portrait of the state was fractured at best.

8.7: Evidence and Imaginations of State Power: Perspectives from Below

Across these cases the state manifested as anything but unified, but what was striking was how collectives in the midst of local crisis continued to explain their plight in terms of evidence, imagining the state as coherent and rational. Countless times, villagers explained that the “*governmenti* always asks for evidence which isn’t there” or “*governmenti* works on evidence.” These statements echo observations elsewhere that the “bluntness” of state law makes it ill-equipped to deal with crimes that are, in essence, malleable and invisible. For example, Geschiere, based on analysis in Cameroon, concludes that the “basic problem for any legislative intervention in the field of witchcraft is what might be called its ‘circular’ character. Unequivocal terminology and clear-cut definitions are supposed to be crucial for any law-making.”⁷⁶⁶ In Maracha, communities recognised this issue— undeterred, people set about producing evidence to make their claims heard. In case A, this involved producing a physical poison agent, and in case B, efforts were made to formally codify social fact. In each case, local communities sought to translate local notions of wrongdoing into the evidentiary

⁷⁶⁶ P. Geschiere, ‘Witchcraft and the Limits of the Law’, in Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff (eds.), *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008, pp. 219-241, p. 223.

standards of the state. In essence, communities were performing the terms of the 1967 Witchcraft Act, producing evidence either of repute or of physical substances required to cause harm.

When action was not forthcoming, people exclaimed “there is no evidence”—meaning that there was no legal, visible evidence that the state could use. There was, however, a wealth of evidence based on social facts and inheritance. In each case, the evidence that suspects were doing evil work was profound, and had often been compiled over decades of observing family histories, or tracking the migrations of suspects. Particular signs had also been collated around death. The below description was offered by an interlocutor, following the death of her relative, who was thought to have been poisoned through water:

The body started to disintegrate, they took him to hospital—on the way he started to die—strange saliva was coming out of his mouth, and when people touched his skin it started to come off onto their skin, so they couldn’t touch him. Then his bottom half started coming off, his legs, arms, private parts were alone. [His] body was disintegrating. Did not reach hospital. Body was in a bad way and couldn’t be touched, so had to bury him very quickly.⁷⁶⁷

And in another case, community members describe how they had disaggregated a verdict of poisoning from suicide:

Elder: For the first one, it was not sickness, he committed suicide. He was looking for rope. His grandmother said ‘No, don’t take the rope of my goat, if you want to commit suicide go somewhere else.’ ... He came to the real home, he tried to get the rope of the sheep. He failed. He knew when his brother was there he would stop him doing it. He gave his brother 1000 shillings to go and booze. He said he would follow the brother to the trading centre later. Then from there he removed his shirt, he crossed the valley, there were some animals grazing. He removed the rope, he tied on a certain eucalyptus tree. Not very high, his feet were on the ground. A certain woman raised the alarm. He was already dead when the brother came. There was foam coming from his mouth,

⁷⁶⁷ Account of friend, shared 09/2017.

but his feet were on the ground... When the policeman cut him down, there wasn't a mark on the neck.

Researcher: So he hadn't died from the hanging?

Elder: It may be because of poison. When you strangle yourself there should be marks on the neck yet there was nothing. So he hadn't died that way... Perhaps he had eaten poison that had made him do it... At the funeral there were about 5-6 policemen there, they had checked the dead body. They were surprised because they checked his neck [but] there was nothing. They wanted us to take him for postmortem. But we said no, it was a waste of money. We should spend the money on the funeral instead. So we didn't do it, we had the funeral.⁷⁶⁸

The strong conviction that wrongdoing has occurred thus yields a chain of causation that links the suspect to an individual death, or even mass deaths. Yet the police—and by extension, the state—cannot act. One would expect a disavowal of the state, but in fact, the incompatibilities of these evidences seemed to provide an alibi for state inaction. In these circumstances, people defended the inaction of the state, uttering statements such as “the police can't act on rumours”, or something similar. The result is a complex delineation between the community in the social world where rumour abounds, and the role of the state—which is expected to act on visibilities and materialities—relying on forms of evidence that communities cannot produce. Such hierarchies of knowledge were developed to explain official inaction, affirming the distance of the state. Local collectives imagined the possibilities of state intervention to provide order in bureaucratic, rational and legal forms, but constructed their worlds in opposition to that order. The community was invoked as an inferior world of rumour, yet palpable aspirations for state intervention persisted.

⁷⁶⁸ I2, Worubu, 03/05/2017 (OJ/AC).

Perhaps the most acute longing for state intervention came in the desire for autopsies. Here the modern, scientific potential of the state was articulated as a distant certainty that could provide an ultimate settlement and vindication of community struggles. In cases of poisoning, death is invariably sudden and traumatic: “The dead body goes bad quickly. It swells and it might explode.”⁷⁶⁹ Again, communities often assume the presence of poisoning through a sudden or violent death. But a post-mortem by the state was regarded as better than those examinations and observations made in the village. On separate occasions I was told:

What is disconcerting [is that] even if the body is taken for post mortem, it is never disclosed. Maybe they don’t know what the poison is, or they can’t see it because it is magical.”⁷⁷⁰

The government people know that if they disclose a verdict that a death was from poisoning, it will cause violence in these communities. So they refuse to disclose [it] even if it they know it is from poisoning.⁷⁷¹

As described in Chapter Seven, it is considered a fundamental right for those who knew the deceased to know the cause of death, and funerals serve as a culturally-sanctioned process to publicly relay this knowledge. It is important that those present are satisfied with these testimonies. Outsourcing calls for this autopsy, for the body to be cut open and the poison revealed, speaks to an absolute desire for confirmation from the state. Though during this research I never learned of any cases in any context where a formal autopsy was conducted, there was never any doubt that the state, if willing, could provide this ultimate form of evidence.

⁷⁶⁹ I, Elder, Aroi, 28/12/2017 (OJ).

⁷⁷⁰ I2, Worubu, 03/05/2017 (OJ/AC).

⁷⁷¹ Commentary, Co-worker, 01/2017.

Sometimes, local events were compared to high-profile political deaths where prominent officials were allegedly poisoned by the government (which then refused to disclose any results). Rumours I was told suggested that plates (tableware) in the statehouse were believed to have been poisoned, or that poison was dissolved into the food, or even that bottles of poisoned water in the statehouse were served to critics of Museveni's regime. These stories demonstrated the power of the distant state not only to kill its opponents, but to withhold information of those deaths, and to keep its citizens in a prolonged state of uncertainty. I also heard stories of local state agents being poisoned whilst on the campaign trail. In such cases the causes of death were always kept secret. I was told furthermore that since such things happened in Kampala, the government would never care to intervene in a village setting. The state was understood as having power over access to bodily knowledge.

Again, however, despite being absent—and despite failing to perform any kind of supportive role towards affected communities—the possibility that the state could provide certainty remained present across different local iterations of resolution. After several months researching this topic, I asked one of my co-workers what he perceived to be the most appropriate solution to evictions. Though he acknowledged the difficulty, he told me:

I think the state should make a law against poisoning in order to deal with such offenders. The state always asks for evidence which is never there. I think the victims are enough as witness to poisoning challenges they face in their communities. Also, [as] the upper state doesn't live within the community, I think taking the words of the lower government officials like LC I, II and III is sufficient enough as evidence for the state to charge poisoners with murder.⁷⁷²

⁷⁷² Commentary, Co-worker, 06/2017.

Despite all we had seen in our research together, for him the solution was still a national law to prohibit poisoning. The intervention of the state was still on the horizon, and remained a distinct possibility for action in cases tantamount to murder.

8.7 Conclusion

The gravity of poisoning cases as criminal acts makes evictions an important site where experiences of authority and protection can be studied. Though social leaders throughout history have sought to control rumour and anger, and restore order following ‘bad’ deaths caused by forms of witchcraft, in contemporary West Nile, adding the gloss of state bureaucracy adds additional meaning to local proceedings. As discussed above, the precise strategies for identifying and evicting poisoners vary according to local dynamics; anti-witchcraft action will always evade large-scale analysis and equation to macro-concepts such as legitimacy, conformity and institutionalisation.

Throughout this enquiry, the resonance of the state was ever-present, and the position of its embedded officials proved surprisingly complex. For them, dealing with poisoners invoked a situation of epistemic uncertainty between fears of the threat of poisoning as played out in their lived experience, and fears of repercussions from sanctioning punishments that contravened state law. Between these competing views of the world, anxious officials endeavoured to protect their own positions, whilst simultaneously addressing local emergencies. Their actions took place in a space populated by fears and imaginings of ramifications of future consequences, balanced against desperate calls from below to end death in the immediate present. What emerged is thus a shifting

landscape of state authority, whereby ‘law’ as a regulatory device was continually re-negotiated in light of local circumstances.

That said, the involvement of the police, and the distant state who are not ‘of the soil,’ occupy different conceptions within the local mind. It is these more distanced figures who were conceived as the ‘government’ in everyday talk, whose inattention is generative more of bewilderment than falling into simple discourses of ‘failure’ or ‘success.’ Though the government prevents communities from solving their own problems, there are parallel sentiments that the government could provide answers, order and calm. In each case, however, the state appears as a powerful possibility for intervention.

In this ambiguous space—populated by affectations, rumours about order, potential autopsies and assertions of evidence—the state is conceived of as a unified entity capable of definitive action even though it appears and functions as anything but. Residents fall back on *a priori* narratives of vulnerability and neglect, internalising doubts as to their moral worlds before the state. Just as what constitutes evidence of poisoning is difficult to formally articulate yet still believed known by communities, the evidence base for effective state intervention remains elusive. But this uncertainty, instead of leading people to discount or discredit the state, can be seen as productive of particular ideas of and belief in state power.

Chapter Nine

Politicising the Past: A Tale of Two Bishops

“Drandua, people wanted to assassinate him, but he never brought soldiers to protect him. He protected people. This one [Odoki] is like a politician. He is like a politician, he is not a shepherd, he is a ruler. This one is not a shepherd. He is not. If you are a shepherd, you do not allow your flock to interface with you—you close them out with the support of the police. How many Christians go to you? Only police can visit! And over the past 40 years people have been accessing their bishop. During the war people took shelter in the church. That is where—that Ombaci massacre, people had to take refuge in the church, others took residence in the Bishop’s residence. Now people are running away from the church, because there is fire burning in the church. The army are now in the church, plain clothes security operatives—you get them at the pulpit. A sacred place and these are security operatives who go around raping girls.”⁷⁷³

9.1 Introduction

Previous chapters have shown how notions of witchcraft provide a means to comprehend and address loss within the framework of the clan. This chapter explores how, through inciting claims of witchcraft, a Catholic elite politicised the death of Bishop Emeritus Frederick Drandua, inciting violence from mourners and residents of the town of Ediofe against Bishop Sabino Ocan Odoki, the reigning bishop of Arua Catholic Diocese, on September 21, 2016.⁷⁷⁴

Whilst previous chapters have dealt largely with cases of individual misfortune or transgression, to round out the analysis of this thesis and offer useful avenues for further

⁷⁷³ I, Catholic Father, Ediofe, 25/12/2017.

⁷⁷⁴ Several elders who served as advisors for this research insisted this case was highly relevant to the research. Given the sensitive political nature of these events, all identifying details have been removed, and no references are made to interviews contained within the bibliography. I additionally interviewed an arrested ‘rioter’ who shared their experiences, but no mention is made of these details to preserve their anonymity. Attempts to interview Odoki were unsuccessful during the research period. I did, however, interview Catholic priests on both sides of the divide (their comments have been anonymised).

research, this chapter widens the scope to explore how clan ideas of responsibility can become politicised and result in collective violence. This politicisation can only be understood in relation to conflict-filled pasts, and the role of the Catholic Church in affording protection to ordinary civilians. Drandua's death and the unfolding riot served as what Argenti and Schramm term a "triggering event", resuscitating memories of war and reawakening consciousness of the past.⁷⁷⁵ Through funerary rites for his mourners, and through violence for the rioters, Drandua's death provided a moment to address West Nile's history of conflict in culturally resonant forms. When police disrupted these rites, reportedly under orders of Bishop Odoki, violent clashes unfolded.

This chapter first describes the riot, then moves backwards and forwards in time to explore the texture of local claims. Discontent regarding Odoki was linked to the priests who challenged his managerial style of administration. Acting as conduits to the laity, these priests aired individual grievances that sullied Odoki's reputation, who was portrayed as having the anti-social, individualistic tendencies of witches (described in Chapter Seven). This created doubts over the bishop's moral authority and precipitated public outpourings against him following Drandua's death, ultimately coalescing as allegations of witchcraft.

Following this scene-setting, I detail how different groups of priests and elites participated in inciting ill-repute, as well as the disjuncture between official discussions of diocesan changes and the witchcraft claims made on the ground. This account seeks as well to provide a counter-narrative of the riot to the version advanced in national

⁷⁷⁵ N. Argenti and K. Schramm, 'Introduction: Remembering Violence', in N. Argenti and K. Schramm (eds.), *Remembering Violence: Anthropological Perspectives on Intergenerational Transmission*. Brooklyn, NY: Berghahn Books, 2010, pp. 1-39, p. 11.

media, which described events as “chaos” or a “war”—this crisis narrative caricatured protestors with colonial tropes of “inherent violence” and irrationality, which served to silence both the contestation of moral authority and memories of a traumatic past.⁷⁷⁶ The chapter concludes with an anthropological reflection on transitions in expressions of loss, and a note on the violence of healing—connecting the events of this uprising to the evictions of previous chapters.

9.2 The Ediofe Uprising

The seeds of the uprising were planted in the events following Drandua’s passing on September 1, 2016.⁷⁷⁷ As Drandua’s body was brought to Arua, business in town came to a standstill, with thousands following the casket in a street procession to the Cathedral. Held at Ediofe Sacred Heart Cathedral on September 7, Drandua’s funeral was a deeply emotional event, attended by thousands of mourners from West Nile and beyond. The descriptions that follow come from multiple sources, first and foremost my own direct witness of the events during my fieldwork. I also make use of the widespread coverage in national media and local radio to flesh out this story and bring further context, as well as conversations and interviews with participants in the riot and in the clerical matters that surrounded it. These sources together provide a rounded portrait of this tumultuous event whilst preserving the anonymity of those involved.

⁷⁷⁶ *Daily Monitor*, ‘Bishop Drandua’s sister injured in cathedral scuffle’, 26 September 2016, Twitter post available at <<https://twitter.com/dailymonitor/status/780456844116500481>>; *The Observer*, ‘Gunfire at Ediofe cathedral, Christians attack bishop’s home’, 22 September 2016, available at <<https://observer.ug/news-headlines/46594-gunfire-at-ediofe-cathedral-as-christians-attack-bishop-s-home>>.

⁷⁷⁷ It is worth noting that there was also disagreement in the national press about the cause of death. Whilst the *Daily Monitor* reported diabetes as the cause, other sources named oesophageal cancer.

Catholic tradition dictates that as a former bishop, Drandua was to be buried within the Cathedral grounds. Following the funeral mass, a large group of predominantly Catholic mourners kept vigil by his body in Ediofe. This vigil marked an extension of normal clan burial practices, whereby visiting relatives may remain at the grave for days or even weeks after the death of a relative. Even after the death of an ordinary citizen, it is unthinkable to remove graveside mourners, who must be fed and accommodated as long as they remain, and who leave of their own accord.⁷⁷⁸ Given Drandua's prominence, people might well remain for several months—indeed, several weeks later, the group of mourners, largely comprised of young men, showed no signs of relinquishing their watch.

The presence of the “boys” at the gravesite was supported by Drandua's burial committee, a group comprised of prominent Catholics and urban elites, who explained that the mourners were involved in ongoing work to prepare the gravesite. Yet certain members of the Arua Diocese, who were perceived as representing the interests of Bishop Odoki, objected to the gathering.⁷⁷⁹ One Catholic sister explained over the radio that the mourners had turned the cathedral into a “disco”, playing music and demanding financial contributions for food whilst they “guarded” the grave.⁷⁸⁰ According to Diocesan spokespeople, both this antisocial drinking and the alleged extortion were not only disrespecting the dead, but disrupting ongoing renovations to Sacred Heart Cathedral.

⁷⁷⁸ These practices can carry a certain amount of tension, since mourners must be fed by relatives at home. But people's right to remain is accepted, and it is considered a 'curse' to ask them to retreat home.

⁷⁷⁹ *Daily Monitor*, 'Arua Diocese Crisis: 16 suspects taken to court', 22 September 2016, Twitter post available at <<https://twitter.com/DailyMonitor/status/779142251725271040>>.

⁷⁸⁰ Radio Pacis talk show, broadcast October 7, 2017.

Accordingly, on September 21, two weeks after the funeral, the police were called to forcibly remove the mourners. The police arrived during the night, whereupon the mourning party resisted the eviction. One of Drandua's relatives later explained, "We were sleeping in the Cathedral [and] praying divine mercy and rosary, but when the police came, they beat up people mercilessly accusing the youths of causing chaos in the church".⁷⁸¹ The mourners were soon joined by other residents, since, anticipating this attempt, a sub-group of mourners had stationed themselves at the church bell. Upon the arrival of the police at the gravesite, someone rang the bell. As one Ediofe resident explained, "This bell is never rung. This was a cry to war. It can be heard hundreds of miles away."⁷⁸² Though this claim may overestimate the bell's reach, since it was rung in the middle of the night, at a time not designated for mass, it did in fact awake people in Ediofe and neighbouring villages. Many rushed out of their houses and, willingly or unwillingly, became caught up in the uprising. Confronted by police, some protestors destroyed a temporary prayer structure outside the main cathedral, whilst others smashed parish offices and burned documents. Another group attempted to advance upon Bishop Odoki's residence, which lay behind the Cathedral, and remove him, but were prevented from entering by his military guard.⁷⁸³

Throughout the night of September 21, police responded to protestors with force. As in the police response to opposition rallies during the 2016 election, tear gas was fired repeatedly throughout the night. The police were joined by military forces, who began

⁷⁸¹ *Daily Monitor*, 'Bishop Drandua's sister'.

⁷⁸² Discussion, Ediofe resident, 09/2016

⁷⁸³ R. Ariaka, 'Arua RDC Asks Official to Resign Over Ediofe Riot', *Uganda Radio Network*, 13 October 2016. Available at < <https://ugandaradionetwork.net/story/rdc-asks-arua-acao-to-resign-over-ediofe-riot->>.

moving through homes in Ediofe, arresting dozens of people and transporting them to the central police station. National Police spokesperson Kaewsi would claim these were the ringleaders, but several of those arrested protested their innocence. They had simply been caught in the fray, and had not instigated violence.

By 8am the next morning (22nd September), the blasts of teargas and rubber bullets had died down, and the scene was relatively quiet. The police and army now occupied the parts of the road near the Cathedral, and residents coalesced on the banks of the road below. More military back-up arrived throughout the day, with the Ugandan National Police Chief Kayihura reportedly arriving in Arua. As the police and military presence increased, many Ediofe residents, now joined by other Aruans and relatives of Drandua, formed a blockade on Ediofe Road. Aruans believed the the police had also blocked other groups of relatives from joining the campaign at roadblocks in the countryside. In town, a stand-off ensued, with shops shut down and police blocking the crowd from approaching the bishop's residence and the Cathedral. Reportedly, the new bishop remained barricaded in his home, and did not come out to address the crowd. As the crowd of protestors continued to swell, protestors waved signs displaying phrases such as 'Get Odoki out of Arua', 'We want peace' and 'Odoki is a wizard'. After some hours, some people in the crowd began to throw small stones in the direction of the Cathedral; their revolt lasted several hours.

Though national papers referred to the event as "chaos", this obscured the fact that many did not partake in violence. During the nightly confrontations, many locals hid in their homes. During the standoff, many others simply watched, lamenting the heavy-

handed tactics of the police, the ‘wildness’ of the youth, the bishop, the priests, and even the Vatican for appointing a bishop who did not love his people. Opinion was split between decrying the “politics of the church” and the police, with particular concern over a woman who was struck in the back by a stray police bullet: “If this woman dies, who will be held accountable? Will it be the police, will it be the Bishop?”⁷⁸⁴ decried one resident. At one point an army general passed through the crowd, chastising the protestors and screaming, “Why are you behaving this way, you are Ugandans, why are you behaving like this?”⁷⁸⁵ Drawing on stereotypical ideas of the violence of West Nilers, some onlookers from Kampala concluded that “Lugbara fear nothing but rain.”⁷⁸⁶

After several hours, the crowd dispersed in the face of police blockades. In the following days, police passed through Ediofe villages, continuing to round up the purported ringleaders. Several people reported brutal injuries from beatings with sticks or bullet wounds from security forces. In the following days, stories of police brutality, theft and intimidation circulated in area communities, circulations confined largely to Ediofe’s homesteads given that the army maintained its presence at the Cathedral (and would for many months to come).

On September 24, twenty-three people who had been rounded up during the riot were charged with malicious damage to property, criminal trespass and reportedly,

⁷⁸⁴ Conversation with onlooker, 22/09/2016.

⁷⁸⁵ Observations from morning of 22/09/2016.

⁷⁸⁶ Observations from morning of 22/09/2016.

“disturbing the peace of the dead”.⁷⁸⁷ The then-DPC of Arua publicly explained: “They will be tried because we don’t want unlawful situations.”⁷⁸⁸ The internal affairs minister, Mario Obiga Kania, travelled to Arua as well, ruling out negotiations with the bishop and instead condemning the attackers. Many Christian leaders too condemned the riot, decrying that church issues should not be resolved through violence. In the eyes of the law, those who instigated violence would be charged and punished, but in view of the heavy-handed treatment by security forces, old trauma created new traumas for many residents of Ediofe.

In general, Ediofe residents fear the police. Thus, in exploring the dynamics of the riot, it is essential to consider what was at stake within the life-worlds of Drandua’s mourners: what could only be reconciled with violence that brought the risk of punishment by the law. To understand this, I now place this riot in a longer historical context, and describe the tensions precipitated by the perceived contrasts in the rule of two bishops.

9.3: Reviving the Past

Both Drandua’s death and the subsequent riot served as a “triggering event” that stimulated Lugbara people in Ediofe and beyond to discuss the events of the past. These memories reflect certain truths of the war, and the personal role Drandua played in

⁷⁸⁷ R. Ariaka, ‘Ediofe Rioters Face Charges,’ *Uganda Radio Network*, 22 September 2016. Available at <<https://ugandaradionetwork.net/story/23-ediofe-rioters-taken-to-court-as-igp-kale-kayihura-visits-arua-to-meet-aggrieved-parties>>.

⁷⁸⁸ R. Ariaka, ‘Ediofe Rioters Face Charges,’ *Uganda Radio Network*, 22 September 2016

offering civilians protection, but these conflict-based pasts were selectively recreated and reappraised in view of the perceived ‘corruption’ and strife within the diocese.⁷⁸⁹

As noted in Chapter Four, during the decades of war, many Anglican and Catholic leaders sought to protect ordinary people. In part, this reflects the dynamics of war, whereby Christian missions, where civilians had taken shelter, were targeted. The massacre at Ombaci Mission, where 100 people were reportedly killed, is emblematic both of the horrors of Obote’s army and the protection the church afforded. Fathers and priests protected civilians from the UNLA army, placing themselves in between soldiers and civilians, as well as dug graves for the dead. Ombaci is thus powerfully symbolic of how religious leaders advocated for and suffered alongside Lugbara people.

In the aftermath of Drandua’s death, Lugbara people recounted how religious leaders had played a central role in calling “liberation” forces to account, at a time when West Nile was politically isolated from Uganda. In one tribute by Dr Acemah, a prominent Lugbara intellectual remembered the advocacy of Bishop Tarantino, a white Catholic Father and Drandua’s predecessor: “I recall a stormy meeting Bishop Tarantino held with former president Milton Obote (RIP) at which the bishop roundly condemned UNLA for atrocities and gross human rights violations the army committed in West Nile.”⁷⁹⁰ When politicians and the state were discriminating against West Nilers because of their association with Amin, church leaders were protesting their suffering

⁷⁸⁹ Argenti and Schramm, ‘Introduction’, p. 2.

⁷⁹⁰ *Daily Monitor*, ‘Tribute to Bishop Emeritus’, 11 September 2016. Available at <<https://twitter.com/dailymonitor/status/774847615603183616>>

under Obote II. Following Verdery, “it is easier to rewrite history with dead people than with other kinds of symbols that are speechless”.⁷⁹¹

After the war ended in 1986, Drandua was appointed the first African Bishop, a powerful symbol amid post-war reconstruction efforts. For ordinary people, his appointment served as recognition of his service during the war. After his death, many elders shared personal accounts of how Drandua remained in Arua whilst others had fled into exile, how he offered money to soldiers to prevent them torturing civilians, and how he sheltered civilians in Ediofe Mission.⁷⁹² Throughout the 1990s, as rebel activity continued along the DRC and South Sudan borders, Drandua is said to have publicly urged rebel factions to hand over their arms, reconcile and work towards peace.⁷⁹³ One elder recalled that Drandua confronted Oyite-Ojok, the notoriously violent Chief of Staff in the UNLA army, saying “If you continue to kill people, you kill me too as the Bishop.”⁷⁹⁴ Another elder, exiled to Congo during the early years of Museveni’s rule, recalled that Drandua visited him and read Lugbara proverbs to bolster his strength to endure exile. These stories have had collective power, serving to mythologise Drandua as a regional hero. After his death, the collective consciousness around the war was transmitted to younger generations, bolstering a sense of shared identity between urban residents and mourners. As Feuchtwang notes, the “relations of intimacy” which feature in stories of the past, make memories more “vivid” than distanced political histories.⁷⁹⁵

⁷⁹¹ K. Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies*. New York: Columbia UP, 2000, p. 29.

⁷⁹² Comment, Elder, Ediofe, 01/2017

⁷⁹³ Ijoy, ‘Dissertation’ ; p. 60; Gormley, *Mission and development*, p. 90.

⁷⁹⁴ Comment, Elder, Arua, 11/2016

⁷⁹⁵ Feuchtwang, ‘Haunting Memory’, p. 259.

Following the return from exile, the Catholic Diocese, with Drandua at its helm, served as a channel for international aid for reconstruction. Lugbara people today credit this work to Drandua personally, who is associated with countless development schemes. Whereas his predecessor, Bishop Tarantino, had led a centralised mission, overseeing all activities from confirmations to tax returns, as Drandua enculturated his new administration, he spearheaded a “self-reliant church.”⁷⁹⁶ In the years following return, funds that Rome had withdrawn were replaced by flows of relief aid from foreign donors. In Gifford’s phrase, the Catholic Diocese was “NGO-ised”, acting as a central node from which these funds promoted development across Arua District.⁷⁹⁷ The Catholic mission became a major provider of a suite of development interventions, administered through a ‘Socio-economic Development Commission’ that oversaw agricultural, health, sanitation and environmental projects. Drandua aided both the opening of Centenary Bank and the construction of Radio Pacis, the Catholic radio station; so extensive was his developmental legacy that in 1996 a group of priests produced a memorandum accusing Drandua of prioritising socio-economic development over spiritual duties.⁷⁹⁸ But for ordinary people, witnesses of a transformation from a war-ravaged diocese to a functioning one, these initiatives were a powerful symbol of what benefits a bishop could levy in support of his people.⁷⁹⁹

⁷⁹⁶ The retirement of Bishop Tarantino meant the decline of external funds.

⁷⁹⁷ Gifford, *Christianity, Development, and Modernity*, p. 23.

⁷⁹⁸ Lazarus, I. (2003). *A Biography of Rt Rev. Frederick Drandua Bishop of Arua 1943-2003*, BA of Education, Kyambogo University, p. 59; Gormley, *Mission and development*, p. 106.

⁷⁹⁹ In this, the experience of West Nilers echoes the more recent experience of bishops in the Acholi Conflict. See H. Alava and J.S. Ssentongo, ‘Religious (de)politicisation in Uganda’s 2016 elections’, *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 10(4), (2016) pp.677-692.

Kassimir writes that the Catholic Church has positioned itself as the “moral conscience of the Ugandan nation”.⁸⁰⁰ Rather than subscribe to arguments that normatively ascribe religious institutions as powerful social actors, however, Kassimir argues it is essential to trace the precise dynamics and institutions that inform churches’ civil role within the public sphere—particularly in regional contexts. Based on an analysis of the colonial period, scholars have distinguished between the Ugandan Catholic Church as an advocate for the masses, often in opposition to the ruling party, and its Anglican counterpart, which was orientated more towards educating an elite class.⁸⁰¹ West Nile’s early colonial history indicates similar inflections: the Protectorate administration invited English-speaking Anglican missionaries, whereas the Italian Comboni Mission faced initial resistance and came of their own accord. Yet these historical differences should not be overstated, as both missions were deeply invested in grassroots engagement, as well as the provision of education and health.⁸⁰² Both missions operated furthermore through rigid hierarchies, which necessarily involved the recruitment of lay Christians in administrative roles to spread the faith.⁸⁰³

For West Nilers, the experience of war served to level, then ease, tensions between denominations. Alva notes too that the subsequent dismantling of multi-party politics under the NRM government has dismantled post-independence political connections the church once enjoyed.⁸⁰⁴ Today, both Anglican and Catholic bishops are seen as

⁸⁰⁰ R. Kassimir, ‘The social power of religious organization and civil society: The Catholic Church in Uganda’, *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 36:2 (1998), pp. 54-83, p. 57.

⁸⁰¹ See C. Summers, ‘Catholic Action and Ugandan Radicalism: Political Activism in Buganda, 1930-1950’, *Journal of Religion in Africa* 39: Fasc. 1 (2009), pp. 60-90.

⁸⁰² K. Ward, ‘The role of the Anglican and Catholic Churches in Uganda in public discourse on homosexuality and ethics’, *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 9:1 (2015), pp. 127-144, p. 129.

⁸⁰³ The Anglican structure was ‘Africanised’ prior to the Catholic Diocese, and an African Bishop appointed.

⁸⁰⁴ Alava and Ssentongo, ‘Religious (de)politicisation in Uganda’s 2016 elections’.

figureheads for all Lugbara people and West Nilers. Bishops serve as powerful figureheads for West Nilers—because of their role during the war, their participation in spiritual and material reconstruction, and lobbying for West Nile’s interests in the political sphere. Indeed, in the aftermath of the riot, Catholics, Anglicans and Muslims alike mourned and memorialised Drandua.

West Nilers are less interested in the denominational affiliations of their leaders, than on their personal contributions. Religious leaders are expected to lobby to reverse the marginal developmental position of the sub-region; as one elder put it, “Only those bishops who support the opposition are sharp”.⁸⁰⁵ For example, Joel Obetia, a former Anglican bishop who spoke at Drandua’s funeral, chastised the failure of government to provide cancer services, a call that was met with cheering from mourners. Five months earlier, the breakdown of Uganda’s only radiotherapy machine at Mulago Hospital had made national news: “Why don’t we suspend the purchase of cars for MPs and instead buy cancer [treatment] machines that can save lives?” Obetia asked.⁸⁰⁶ At the installation of another Anglican bishop, the incumbent advocated for the need to bring power to Arua.⁸⁰⁷ Nowadays, as political affiliations have shifted towards the ruling party (with NRM MPs elected across the district), the need for a bishop to advocate for people’s political rights is regarded as more important than ever. These expectations were formed in part because of the popular understandings of Drandua’s service—but the conflict in Arua Diocese too reflects wider histories of regional leadership.

⁸⁰⁵ Comment, Elder, Arua, November 2016

⁸⁰⁶ F.W. Okello, ‘Uganda: Bishop Faults Government on Cancer Machine, MPs Car Scheme’, *The Monitor*, 8 September 2016, available at <<https://allafrica.com/stories/201609080405.html>>.

⁸⁰⁷ Observations, Appointment of Anglican Bishop, Mvara, May 2017

9.4 Mobilising Division

From the moment of Bishop Sabino Odoki's installation in December 2010, rumours about his selection process spread. Though unproven, many explained that Odoki was appointed only after sealed Vatican correspondence was opened and leaked by a competitive Lugbara aspirant, correspondence naming Lugbara priests regarded as more appropriate successors to Drandua. As such, Rome was said to overhaul normal processes of selection, appointing instead another Northerner (Odoki) who had not previously been nominated to the Diocese. Whether this rumour is true, or whether it reflects the actual process of appointing bishops, mattered little to residents of Ediofe: in essence, this rumour suggested that Odoki had been illegitimately appointed due to internal inconsistencies, thereby challenging his moral authority from the outset.

As Drandua's health declined in 2010, Odoki was installed to replace him. Unlike Drandua, a Ma'di speaker who hailed from Uleppi, Odoki arrived from Gulu. According to the national press, it was his status as an Acholi outsider that made his rejection likely from the outset, given "tribal" enmities between Lugbara and Acholi groups. Commentators re-politicised West Nile's history of conflict, resuscitating accounts of Acholi vengeance for Amin's atrocities. Whilst Lugbara elders did, on occasion, explain war in these terms, inherent "tribal" grudges were never mentioned to me as motivation for the uprising.⁸⁰⁸ Indeed, as one civil-society leader who supported

⁸⁰⁸ *Uganda Christian News*, 'By the time you throw a stone at your Bishop, you have lost Christianity—Odoki', 27 September 2016. Available at < <https://www.ugchristiannews.com/by-the-time-you-throw-a-stone-at-your-bishop-you-have-lost-christianity-odoki/>>.

the protestors explained, “Generally the people in Arua like foreigners more than they [like] themselves...when people keep quiet, the same bishop does more ugly things day after day after day after day.”⁸⁰⁹ For this leader, Odoki’s status as an outsider encouraged silence rather than condemnation of his administration. Lugbara people who opposed the new bishop gave more personal reasons for their dissatisfaction, but it is important to place these grudges within the context of the changes Odoki ushered in, and how these changes were communicated to the laity.

It is important to note that Drandua’s “NGO-ised” approach to development was undergirded by decentralised administrative structures, and the devolution of financial accounting to parishes outside of Ediofe. White Fathers who had previously headed parishes were reassigned to administrative roles, and Lugbara priests took on leadership roles in parish and financial affairs, gaining new access to resources and authority. Drandua’s approach also made appointments in prosperous parishes even more comfortable. These roles matter deeply in local church governance, as priests serve on the frontline, and can communicate (in Lugbarati) positive or negative perceptions of the bishop to their flocks.

Under Odoki’s administration, these roles changed. Odoki undertook a radical restructuring of the administration that he inherited, most notably re-centralising activities that had been divested to parish councils and priests back to central control in Ediofe (recreating the structure under the White Fathers and Bishop Tarantino). Whereas, under Drandua, priests could apply for funding for development projects

⁸⁰⁹ I, Activist, Arua, 18/05/2017

within parishes, these powers were retracted under Odoki. According to Odoki, these measures sought to promote accountability for Diocesan finances, finances which he found in disarray. From below, however, this restructuring was viewed as an effort to centralise finances around the bishop himself—rather than the Diocese. As one opponent explained,

His [new] management is different and it doesn't match with the expectations of the Christians. He came up, in his wisdom everything was centralised, everything is focus[ed] on me [Odoki]—not on sacraments. Me. Everything, me, which is not the way we are brought up. He was the wrong choice for this Catholic community of Arua diocese.⁸¹⁰

Backlash was almost inevitable. A handful of priests who had been close to Drandua challenged Odoki's centralisation. Odoki responded by limiting priests' powers, establishing, for example, a decree that banned lay congregants from giving gifts to priests without first notifying the bishop's office. Priests resisted, and on July 4, 2012, Odoki filed a case at Arua Central Police Station, accusing four priests of hatching a plan to assassinate him. After police investigations found no evidence for the plot, the case was thrown out.

Retaliation continued. "Troublesome" priests were reassigned away from "home" parishes where they had long served, to "remote" posts, parishes which were either located in rural areas, or less well-funded.⁸¹¹ Though reassignment notices were issued by Ediofe Cathedral Parish Pastoral Council, priests understood these orders as coming directly from the bishop.⁸¹² Since those individuals who faced transfer were often close

⁸¹⁰ *Red Pepper*, The Untold Story: Why Christians Want Bishop Odoki Dead ASAP, 23rd September 2016.

⁸¹¹ *Red Pepper*, The Untold Story: Why Christians Want Bishop Odoki Dead ASAP, 23rd September 2016.

⁸¹² *Red Pepper*, 'Odoki Priest Dragged to Police', 12 February 2017. For this and all subsequent *Red Pepper* citations, online versions of the article are unavailable (the news outlet does not post all its stories online). All articles referenced henceforth exist as physical clippings in the possession of the author.

confidants of Drandua, and were either from Terego or from a single parish (Kamaka) in Maracha, claims arose that the bishop's management was indicative of tribalism.⁸¹³ When priests resisted these orders, moreover, they were either threatened with suspension or locked out of their clerical offices, in events that priests described to journalists as "evictions." Furthermore, in several cases when priests refused to leave after the notice period, police summons replaced pastoral ones. Faced with these new summons, priests turned themselves in to the magistrate's court, arguing that pastoral councils were impotent in the face of police eviction notices.⁸¹⁴

Though many of Arua's 103 priests supported Odoki, those who opposed him made public their discontent in these first years after his installation. What ensued were cases where priests contested their evictions through the courts, resulting in complex webs of resolution whereby judges often sent cases back to church councils, or to the Diocese for mediation. One priest, who had been implicated in the 2012 assassination claims, was subsequently reassigned to Micu Parish: upon refusing to go he was suspended, after which he sued the bishop for unlawful suspension and defamation. The Papal Nuncio dismissed the case, as did Arua Court in January 2017, the judge ruling that the church was an independent institution in which the state should not interfere.⁸¹⁵ Another priest contested his eviction from Ediofe by appealing to Arua police as well as to local media. Though in fact both bishop and priests had engaged the court, publicly priests lamented being "dragged" to court by the bishop. Of one hearing—which the bishop declined to attend, on account of it being in the court, rather than the church—the

⁸¹³ *Red Pepper*, People at the Centre of Bishop Odoki Woes Named, Northern Feature, October 16th 2016.

⁸¹⁴ *Red Pepper*, The Untold Story: Why Christians Want Bishop Odoki Dead ASAP, 23rd September 2016.

⁸¹⁵ *Radio Pacis Online*, 'Arua High Court has dismissed case against Bishop Sabino Odoki and the Trustees of Arua Diocese by Father Nakari Adiga', 12 January 2018, available at <<https://www.radiopacis.org/?p=10175>>.

salacious *Red Pepper* newspaper (associated with the opposition party to the NRM), reported that the bishop “snubbed” these meetings and was not interested in mediating.⁸¹⁶ In essence, Odoki was painted as a hypocritical leader, who used worldly means (the court) instead of following ecclesiastical channels to resolve disputes. This depiction gained traction, since for many Lugbara people turning to the court is a sign of guilt: one goes to court when such cases cannot be handled “at home,” through familial or embedded forms of justice that rest on truth-telling (cf. Chapter Two).

As opposition grew, several priests even requested to be buried in their home villages and parishes, rather than at the mission in Ediofe, as was the norm. The vitriol of affected priests is critical to explaining how popular perceptions regarding the bishop’s character spread. In an interview, one of these “evicted” Lugbara priests amply illuminated these tensions:

Right now he lives alone in the bishop’s house with soldiers. There are no priests with him. Sometimes he receives these young men, these deacons—that is just a camouflage—if you see the life of Jesus Christ, he was always with his apostles. If a bishop chooses to stay alone, you must put a question mark. Bishop Sabino is deep inside government, he is half-hearted in the church. That is why he is given soldiers. I am not spoiling his name, these are facts. If someone wants to prove [this] go and ask—who are these people in the compound? This bishop is very dishonest, he tells a lot of lies. Like my suspension. If scientific investigation is done you will find he has made many mistakes. We look forward to God’s intervention here. Rome may not be aware.”⁸¹⁷

During the interview, the priest tied his own mistreatment to judgements of Odoki’s character: conflating his individual suffering with wider ideas about the militancy of the bishop, and condemning Odoki’s tenure not only as contradicting Christian values of

⁸¹⁶ *Red Pepper* [Amvesi Cohen], ‘Bishop Odoki Snubs Talks Again’, 15 January 2017.

⁸¹⁷ I, Catholic Father, Ediofe Mission, 25/12/2017.

mercy, but as too secular. His critique was carefully structured to portray the bishop as violating normative Lugbara ideals, as being dishonest and isolated, both characteristics of the *oleu*.

Granted, conflicts between bishops and priests have a long history in both the Anglican and Catholic Dioceses in Arua. The personal accrual of wealth and sectarian appointments have long been difficult territories for bishops, reflecting tensions between the hierarchical structure of the church and the varying autonomy of parishes (or Archdeaconries in Anglicanism). In the case of one former Anglican bishop, documents held in the Ma'di-West Nile archive revealed allegations of clergy holding collections and violating clerical oaths, which then led to transfers and suspensions. One inflammatory message from an urban Archdeaconry condemned the militant aspects of this bishop: "You [Bishop] fear because of their education, frankness and popularity amongst their Christians."⁸¹⁸ The letter too accuses the bishop of appropriating Diocesan property. Verifying these conflicts in an interview, one retired urban reverend commented on the similarity between trials faced by Catholics and previous episodes in the post-war Anglican Diocese.⁸¹⁹

In Odoki's case, his use of clerical powers was a stark contrast to his predecessor's, as Drandua had courted more participatory relations with priests and with laity alike. That said, whilst these priests' disillusionment could easily inculcate negative perceptions among their flock, disillusionment alone could not incite mass violence. To understand

⁸¹⁸ Correspondence from Church of Uganda to The Rt. Rev. Enock Lee Drati, Bishop of Madi/West Nile Dicoese, 27/03/2001. From Madi-West Nile Archive, Mvara

⁸¹⁹ I, Pastor, Onzivu, 10/06/2017

this escalation, it is necessary to consider why lay Christians were guarding the grave, and the web of suspicions that the police eviction of mourners confirmed.

9.5 Death and its Discontents

Drandua's death was perceived as a collective loss. As one elder lamented, "If human beings had the power, they would not [have] let this Bishop Drandua die, but they had no power."⁸²⁰ Drandua's loss was managed through exploring the injustices that preceded his passing, even as anxieties about Odoki's moral leadership were transmuted into critiques of his care towards Drandua.

In the aftermath of his death, both Drandua's relatives and area priests voiced their concern, testifying that Drandua's retirement benefits had been suspended prior to his death. As a bishop, it was expected that Drandua would receive medical care outside Uganda, yet for most of his illness Drandua had been treated within Maracha District, being moved to Nsyamba Hospital in Kampala only weeks before his death.⁸²¹ Priests alleged that funds for life-saving treatment had been denied, and Bishop Odoki himself corroborated the claim, releasing a public statement confirming delays in Drandua's treatment.

We changed our plans and resorted to India. I instructed Fr Alfred Asiku and he got a hospital in India. They asked for CT scan of the late Bishop Emeritus Drandua which was sent, they described his sickness and put a cost of US \$25,000 (Shs82m) which we had by then. They put a condition for a guarantor to sign that in any case the cost of treatment rises, that person will pay and I said I will sign for the Bishop... The hospital administration put another condition

⁸²⁰ I, Elder, Ediofe, 01/2017.

⁸²¹ J. Driliga, 'Arua Bishop Drandua Airlifted to Kampala for Treatment', *New Vision*, 25 September 2014. Available at <<https://www.newvision.co.ug/news/1431788/arua-bishop-drandua-airlifted-treatment-kampala>>.

that we had to first carry out a medical test on the Bishop for a particular disease, which was [too] technical for me to understand, before he could be flown for treatment. The test was to be carried on September 1, 2016, but unfortunately the Bishop died. This issue that I never cared about the Bishop is totally wrong. I catered for the (hospital) bill all amounting to Shs15 million from the diocese.”⁸²²

While Odoki attributed these shortcomings to global Catholic bureaucracy, ordinary people spoke of his neglect in intrapersonal terms. Even ordinary people who could not know the dynamics of Diocesan finances expressed scepticism of these accounts. One activist explained,

The bishop emeritus left some money in an account in Rome. It was for the benefit of the public, it was supposed to be for a hospital. This was a hospital saving lives, it gave the public something. The past bishop valued human life. But now this one goes and grabs the money off, chews it, it doesn't reach the hospital—he has no respect for human life. If you can eat money that is meant to save your own, then you don't value human life. What else do you value? Dead people? Are you going to be a shepherd of dead Christians?⁸²³

As with local discourses of the supposed corruption of government agents, the diversion of money for personal gain would be tolerated. But in the context of Drandua's death, perceptions of greed or selfishness became instead insinuations of personal malevolence.

After Drandua's death, the burial committee, which included local government officials and civil society activists, participated in the discontents previously levelled at the Bishop by priests. As in family burial evaluations, these meetings provided a moment for those close to Drandua to discuss the circumstances of his death, and responsibilities of care. New rumours spread across Ediofe that Odoki planned to lay Drandua to rest not in the cathedral, but in Dondino Orphanage Centre, where he had been living before

⁸²² *Uganda Christian News*, 'By the time you throw a stone'.

⁸²³ Interview, Activist [Anonymised].

his death. Drandua's family confirmed these intentions, publicly insisting on burial within the Cathedral. As tensions grew, a meeting of the Burial Committee on September 5, 2016, ended in violence, when Odoki (along with the Archbishop of Gulu and the Vicar General of Arua Diocese) disrupted the meeting, reportedly to demand the sacking of the committee's chair. According to a local newspaper, the Christians present rejected the request, shut off the lights and "started thumping the men of God."⁸²⁴ Stones were thrown at the bishop, who was taken away in a waiting police car.

Odoki reacted by making a direct appeal to Museveni during a public address on September 12, 2016, at Muni University, where the president was in attendance. Recalling the events of the meeting, Odoki publicly branded his opponents as "a group of terrorists" who wanted to kill him.⁸²⁵ Odoki's public claims were also reproduced in a letter (addressed from the Bishop's office to the President) which was "leaked" and published in the *Red Pepper* newspaper.⁸²⁶ In this letter, Odoki alleged that a terrorist group led by Martin Andua and Patrick Pariyo (of Arua Catholic Centre) had adopted militant tactics and threatened his life. Following Odoki's address at Muni, Museveni ordered a legal investigation, and nine members of the burial committee were summoned to Arua Central Police Station to give statements. At this point, the police called for dialogue to solve the violence, which Odoki reportedly rejected.⁸²⁷ Not only did his militancy confirm Odoki's position as an "arm of the government" to many Lugbara people, but it also confirmed his lack of remorse. Publicly, Odoki derided these

⁸²⁴ *Red Pepper*, 'Shocking: Police Calls for Bishop Odoki's transfer', 21 September 2016.

⁸²⁵ *Red Pepper*, 'Police Calls for Bishop Odoki's transfer', 21 September 2016.

⁸²⁶ *Red Pepper*, 'Shocking: Bp Odoki's Secret Letter to M7 Leaks', 19 September 2016.

⁸²⁷ *Daily Monitor*, 'Reconciliation is key in pastoral work', 29 October 2016.

actions as anti-Christian: “By the time you throw a stone at your Bishop, you have lost Christianity. Arua is a persecuted Diocese. We have to pray to God to deliver us from this persecution.”⁸²⁸

Reflecting the divided tapestry of political allegiance within Arua, public officials differed in support for Odoki or the burial committee (interpreted by laity as supporters of the NRM or the opposition, respectively). The former Maracha MP, Alex Onzima warned all those attacking priests, saying: “Should any person in whatever position you hold continue to character assassinate a bishop or any other priest, I as an individual, will apply the law and you will be prosecuted.” At that same time other Lugbara people condemned the bishop’s approach, and the “disharmony” between him and Christians of Arua.⁸²⁹ Within this divisive landscape, Odoki remained protected by the government, against a rising tide of influential priests and officials. Ultimately, it was due to these events that Odoki’s residence was guarded by soldiers on the night of the riot. The military presence revived memories of the war that Drandua’s passing had reawakened; because of Bishop Odoki, Ediofe residents found themselves under a new occupation.

Christians of Ediofe encapsulated these conflicts not in political terms of terrorism or assassination, but in terms of responsibility for death. Though it is customary for gravesites to be guarded, the young men stationed at Drandua’s grave were in fact guarding his body, given the rumours of attempts to move the body for burial outside the Cathedral. But other rumours both fuelled and emerged from this watch that implicated Odoki directly in Drandua’s death. On the one hand, youths of Ediofe—loyal

⁸²⁸ *Uganda Christian News*, ‘By the time you throw a stone’.

⁸²⁹ *ibid.*

to Drandua—voiced concerns that Odoki intended to steal valuable objects from Drandua’s casket, including the jewels and the orb. Allegedly, these items were to be sold outside the district, to raise funds for Odoki’s home diocese in Gulu.⁸³⁰ Others thought that the bishop intended to steal the objects as a sacrifice to a powerful witchdoctor, who would exchange them for prestige and popularity equal to that of his predecessor. Still other youths alleged that Odoki had been seen jumping over Drandua’s grave, a sign known as *aripe* that connotes rejoicing in someone’s death, as well as a personal involvement in it. One friend explained that she had heard reports that the “Bishop was doing strange things late at night and he might be a wizard.” In one interview conducted for this research, a priest loved by Ediofe residents repeatedly referred to Odoki as a “witch,” indicating that authorities shared in these concerns.⁸³¹ These rumours provided a common currency to describe both Drandua’s death and Odoki’s “corrupt” tenure: one neighbour summarised that in these rumours, the bishop looked “less than human”.

Testifying to the power of these fears were declarations prior to the riot that mourners might attempt to evict, or even kill, the bishop. Though ultimately that did not take place, evicting mourners from Drandua’s grave essentially confirmed these fears, serving as an example of moral aberration across Arua. One male resident of Ediofe explained to me,

The thing this Bishop did is wrong. After our dear Bishop died... in Lugbara culture, people must be allowed to sit at the graveside, for one week, even for one month—but he chased them away after just one day. And he called for the police to come and get them, not during the day but at 12 or 1 at night, when it

⁸³⁰ In this, powerful comparisons were made to Gulu being a post-conflict beneficiary, i.e. there were comparisons between the bishop and aid.

⁸³¹ Commentary from Ediofe Residents, I, Catholic Father, 25/12/2017.

was dark. If you do not allow people to sit by the grave, in our culture, that means you have caused it.⁸³²

Many Aruans participated in occult rumours to describe relations between the two bishops. Multiple times, for instance, the details of Drandua's care offered opportunities for *enyata* (poisoning). These stories had multiple versions, and often engendered disbelief. One version relayed to me by friends in Maracha illustrates the intimacies of these stories: allegedly, Bishop Odoki had employed an Acholi or Langi nurse to administer poison to Drandua in his food, whilst he was admitted at Ovujo Hospital. Since the nurse hailed from the same ethnic group as Odoki, her collusion was more believable. According to the story, the nurse gave Drandua porridge, since that was all he could eat on account of his throat cancer. When this porridge burnt his oesophagus, Drandua reportedly said, "I hope that is not going to kill me."

9.6 The aftermath

In February 2017, the renovated Ediofe Cathedral reopened. At the ceremonial event the Arua Resident District Commissioner urged the Christians of Arua to "leave the ashes of the past and look for better things ahead".⁸³³ Presiding over his first public mass, including the ordination of five priests and six deacons, Odoki emphasised the importance of obedience to priests.⁸³⁴ At a later Palm Sunday mass, he preached on the need for discipline among the youth, who should not be "waylaid by those more

⁸³² Commentary, Ediofe Resident 22/09/017

⁸³³ *Observer*, Feb 26, 2017 Sacred heart of Jesus Cathedral Ediofe reopened

⁸³⁴ *Daily Monitor*, 'Bishop Odoki holds first open mass at Ediofe', 23 January 2017. Formerly available at <<https://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/Bishop-Odoki-holds-first-open-mass-Ediofe/688334-3783060-10cvmah/index.html>>.

powerful than them who are actively seeking to deceive them, the youth should not follow those who are doing the work of Satan.”⁸³⁵

Yet for local residents, grievances were far from forgotten. The rioters detained for “disturbing the peace of the dead”, a charge that revealed the capacity of the law to transcend distinctions between life and death, remained in jail. One female detainee, an Anglican woman who explained she had no involvement in the riot, lamented that her internment had put significant strain on her household: since she lived apart from her husband, her children had been cared for by her neighbours. During their internment, I was told this group was continually remanded to court for sentencing. The above detainee could not remember what the exact charges against her were, and mysteriously, the group were eventually released without charge (apparently papers were lost). I did not interview anyone involved in this process, but a priest suggested the release was mandated because of a lack of evidence as to particular individuals’ involvement.

Their release eased the sense of injustice among Ediofe residents, but the matter was not forgotten, particularly since the bishop remained in power. To demonstrate continuing protest of his legitimacy, local Christians attempted other forms of action. One group of Ediofe residents gathered at Drandua’s grave to curse the bishop, inverting ritual traditions of the elders.⁸³⁶ Other Christians avoided the Cathedral, and many refused to give offertory as well. Across religious lines, Ediofe residents took to calling themselves the “United States of Ediofe,” indicating their unified stance against Odoki. A further group of longstanding area residents mounted a claim to relinquish land that

⁸³⁵ Palm Sunday Mass 9th April 2017, Cathedral, from Field notes.

⁸³⁶ Red Pepper, Andrew Amvesi, *March 7th 2017, ‘Youth Curse BP Odoki at Dandua’s Grave*, North/ Eastern News

their ancestors had leased to the Diocese, to contest the “occupation of the Bishop.” All of these responses demonstrated continuing frustration at a leadership deemed to lack moral authority.

To date, Odoki remains the bishop of Arua Diocese, but throughout the duration of my fieldwork, his residence continued to be guarded by the Ugandan army. The presence of security served as a powerful reminder of the perceived illegitimacy of this appointment, and continued to evoke the protections of the past. Ediofe residents spoke of the new “occupation” that resembled the insecurities of the war era, reporting sporadic violence and rapes that came with this military presence. Whilst violence became a focal point for national media, and came to be a defining feature of the recounting of events locally, Ediofe residents used their moral power collectively and creatively to oppose the bishop long after the September 2016 riot—no matter how effective their efforts might be.

9.7 Death and Reconstituting Life?

Whilst these events were exceptional in scale, the riot provides a means to reflect more widely on experiences of post-war transitions in managing collective loss. Indeed, the politicisation of Drandua’s death by priests and urban elites evoked the processes for managing death—namely, through allocating responsibility—described in the preceding chapters.

Among Lugbara people, death has long marked a moment of cosmological and social confusion. Lugbara elders recalled the centrality of death dances, known as *ongo* (also

‘song’), in managing death. Rituals over life events were the purview of elders, but death dances were collective affairs, with roles assigned to both men and women, a performance that elucidated the complementarity between genders. Whilst men danced, discussed matters of the sub-clan and lineage, and enacted mock fights, women covered their faces in white ash and chalk, and publicly wailed as a display of mourning. But men and women also danced together, running out into the fields and mimicking the shooting of arrows whilst making *cere* calls—a means of threatening “revenge” on the forces of *Adro* which cause death, demonstrating defiance and the fact that “kinsmen and women stand together to protect the homesteads.”⁸³⁷ Such rites too reflected moments of moral confusion, when men and women normally prohibited from sexual relations would have sexual intercourse in the bushlands, regarded as dangerous spaces beyond compounds.

Middleton described death as representing the “unforeseeable and unavoidable intrusion into society of an external and suprahuman power, that of Divinity.”⁸³⁸ Death was an event beyond human comprehension, whose uncertainties were controlled by elaborate funerary rites. For Middleton, these rites were a means to ensure “the perpetuity of their own society, by ensuring the continuing fertility of its members living with a sense of order and authority”.⁸³⁹ Middleton was writing in a 1982 edited volume, *Death and the Regeneration of Life*, where the editors, Bloch and Parry, advocated for an understanding of death as recreating social-forms: “overcoming individual biological

⁸³⁷ Dalfovo, *Logbara Dances and Songs*, p. 149.

⁸³⁸ Middleton, ‘Lugbara Death’, p. 135.

⁸³⁹ *ibid.* p. 135.

mortality by reasserting lasting fundamental social values”.⁸⁴⁰ Dalfovo shared these assessments with his Lugbara interlocutors in the 1970s, who, rather than emphasising the structural-functional aspects of funerary rites, explained that ritual proceedings and dances were a means of managing collective grief.⁸⁴¹ Several elders explained that death dances were not directly orientated towards appeasing “spirits”, or forces of Adro, but, rather, “it was just to show their sadness for what had happened.”⁸⁴² In essence, death rituals provided opportunities to manage loss within the lineage—symbolically domesticating dangerous forces, as well as providing moments of cathartic release.

Elaborate rites and dances that followed death even after the return from exile have met with condemnation by Christian evangelists—one born-again Anglican elder recalled preaching and disrupting clan dances in Terego during the late 1980s, after being saved during the war. In the present-day, people rarely dance at funerals. As dancing was prohibited, rites increasingly incorporated violence, with relatives being involved in the violent destruction of the property, and crops and around the compound of the deceased, to memorialise the symbolic loss of a pillar of the family.⁸⁴³ In these instances, destruction is a culturally recognised performance of grief – serving a similar function to death dances of former days.

One common jibe, an external comment, which Lugbara people now offer of themselves goes that “Lugbaras love a dead body”. This indicates perceptions that great

⁸⁴⁰ L. Meinert and S.R. Whyte, ‘Creating the New Times: Reburials after War in Northern Uganda’, in R. Willerslev and D.R. Christensen (eds.), *Taming Time, Timing Death: Social Technologies and Ritual*. London: Routledge, 2013, pp. 175-193.

⁸⁴¹ Dalfovo, *Logbara Dances and Songs*.

⁸⁴² I, Elder, Abri, 10/06/2017 (OJ).

⁸⁴³ Dalfovo, *Logbara Dances and Songs*, p. 11.

energy continues to be invested in burial and funerary proceedings, which contrasts the abrogation of care among living clan members. Funerary rites involve bringing the dead “home”, and are attended by many relatives and associates. The events are significant in many ways: in accounting for care for the dead, in symbolising kinship ties, and ensuring future prosperity for the relatives of the dead: any disruption of bad words spoken during funerals can instigate misfortunes to “follow the living”. As noted by Meinert and Whyte, burial marks the “creations of temporal beginnings and continuities”.⁸⁴⁴

Understanding the violence at Ediofe necessitates a grounding not only in the past, but in the violence disruption to rites of mourning on the part of the Diocese, and the police. As discussed in previous chapters, it was from these post-mortuary evaluations that violence against suspects emerged. In the case of Drandua, the burial committee—and his relatives (a term defined flexibly since many Lugbara people consider Drandua a “father” or a “brother”)—had served as the evaluators of death.⁸⁴⁵ Clan proceedings were extended to the public level, “localising” the death amongst officials close to Drandua. Doubtless this meeting was disrupted by the Bishop because of the sensitivity of these events.

Violence was precipitated by the removal of graveside-mourners. In usual practice, relatives may site at the graveside for days or even a week, but for a public figure – loved as Drandua was – this process could extend for months. The violation of

⁸⁴⁴ Meinert and Whyte, ‘Creating the New Times’, p. 175.

⁸⁴⁵ See M. Bloch, The Moral and Tactical Meaning of Kinship Terms, *Man*, 6(1), (1971), pp.79-87

mourning processes, a fundamental right, served as the primary catalyst for revolt. Almost unanimously, lay Christians described this as a moral aberration. Whilst violence is usually contained within clans, this symbolic violence that denied mourners the right to grieve precipitated resistance well beyond clan limits: death, and the denial of right to moral ordering, translated to political dissent. In resisting this act, Lugbara people responded with physical violence to an act which was symbolically violent. In similar ways, since the return from exile, witchcraft has emerged as another means of coping with death through the allocation of responsibility: reordering human relations in relation to an expanded and ever-changing cosmos.

In part, this attribution could result from a number of different factors: the erosion of coping mechanisms, the emphasis on human responsibility through Christian teachings, or participation in new forms of evidence through charismatic healers and other specialists (see Chapter Seven). But it also pertains to the need to account for deaths that defy explanation, and the continual witness to tragedies within everyday life. In explaining death, Lugbara people seek to exert control over circumstances through the resources and logics available to them: moral, economic and political. The riot at Ediofe made these grievances explicitly politically, excavating memories of violent pasts usually hidden below the surface of the everyday. Yet in the previous chapter too, Lugbara people responded to suffering beyond their control through allocating responsibility, and actioning violence within their means.

9.8 Violence as Repair?

In West Nile, Allen has argued for a recognition of the *violence* of healing. Through observing violence, Allen notes a recognition of the potential for torture and killing to serve as a means of “establishing of interpersonal accountability and the re-emergence of viable communal life.”⁸⁴⁶ To make this argument, Allen draws on Girard’s controversial theory of the “scapegoat”: an individual exiled from the community, “sacrificed” to preserve the cohesion of the wider society. As Allen himself has noted, this position risks invoking a relativist stance which excuses violence. Taking a post-structural approach, Leopold deals historically with the interplay of these forces on West Nile, but suggests instead that historical waves of violence enacted upon West Nilers is reproduced in post-independence militancy.⁸⁴⁷ Between these two theories, West Nilers are positioned as either victims of themselves, or victims of their history.

De Faveri, in an ethnographic discussion of Kinshasa, connects witchcraft-related violence to the extreme hardships of economic poverty of urban life, and militancy of the Congolese state: “intersecting relations” through which violence enters everyday life through the acts of soldiers and the insecurity of everyday commerce.⁸⁴⁸ In this analysis, violence is neither solely communal nor historical, but is entangled in a politics of neglect refracted through everyday life. In a similar way, the uprising against Odoki elucidates how violence exists as a response to injustices perceived to accrue to West Nilers as a group, as well as through military occupation in the present. For Lugbara rioters, memories of the past, revived through the death of a ‘hero’ and his subsequent

⁸⁴⁶ Allen, ‘The Violence of Healing’, p. 101.

⁸⁴⁷ Leopold, *Inside West Nile*.

⁸⁴⁸ S. De Faveri, *Witchcraft, violence and everyday life: an ethnographic study of Kinshasa*, PhD Thesis, Department of Anthropology, Brunel University, 2015, p. 215.

mistreatment, along with the presence of soldiers in Ediofe, carried a duty to avenge injustices of the present.

Violence, moreover, provided a means to express political critique. Prior to this event, Ediofe residents often discussed politics in a ‘quiet’ way. Criticising a bishop perceived to be in collusion with the NRM was a means of exercising political citizenship: the political was refracted through the personal. In talking about death, West Nilers were actively critiquing state neglect, albeit through the language of witchcraft. And the violation of their own cultural worlds. But through attempting to overthrow—or kill—Odoki, violence became a call not just to avenge wrongful death, but to re-establish moral leadership in the present. Violence can have many purposes. Chapter Seven explored violence as an expression of internal dissent, Chapter Eight explores violence as a reaction to killers in the midst of communities. In this chapter, violence emerged as a means of exercising political critique. In the Ediofe riots, this violence of protest contrasted starkly with the force applied by state military and armies.

Yet, violence was only one means of participating in this critique, and it involved a select group of mourners and nearby Ediofe residents who responded to their call to arms. Participating in efforts to explain Drandua’s death were another means of exercising political citizenship. These conversations flowed across Arua and Maracha for many months after the riot, being powerfully symbolic of the present struggles West Nilers face: a dying bishop tricked by those authorities who were tasked with providing his care. Discussions over the withholding of Drandua’s pension fund were a means of speaking about wider political economies, whereby the West Nile sub-region has been

comparatively starved of development funds. Allegations of stolen items taken to Gulu echoed the concerns of activists seeking to bring attention to historical suffering in West Nile, who averred that funds were being diverted towards Acholiland. In this way, discourses of clerical struggles between bishops referenced broader developmental inequalities in West Nile, and an everyday politics of life and death wherein care is not forthcoming. This politics, critically, also permeates discussions of *mazi* (detailed in Chapter Seven), the term used to describe acquisitions within households—as well as to refer to powers acquired by politicians who overstay their terms and fail to bring change to ordinary people, by tycoons who prosper without sharing wealth, and by foreign contractors who build roads with such haste that ordinary people die in the process. Whilst witchcraft is thus a means of discussing power and change more broadly, violence arises from the mobilisation of evidence, within communities of action.

In such instances, witchcraft appears as a genuine threat, with violence a reaction to the fears of killers dwelling in the midst of communities—be those communities defined by clan or other markers. Recently, Bubant has called for an appreciation of confusion, obfuscation and disbelief in the study of witchcraft.⁸⁴⁹ In this way, the production of witchcraft is best understood as a multi-layered field where doubt and acceptance exist in tension. Doubts can be overcome on an individual basis, but they can also be overcome against the persistent tide of the social field. Violence was thus the end result of that tension of suspense and pontification, where the interventions of different interest groups first produce fears, then subsequently confirm the presence of the “enemy” within. In Odoki’s case, priests, local elites and members of the burial

⁸⁴⁹ N. Bubant, *The Empty Seashell: Witchcraft and Doubt on an Indonesian Island*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2014.

committee actively advanced allegations of suspicious behaviour and mismanagement, along with wider judgements as to the bishop's moral authority. Whilst in public, this language took the form of development and financial accountability, to the laity, these woes were translated into the language of witchcraft. Occult idioms provide a means to act both upon death and upon present injustices, distilling matters into struggles between people. Whilst ordinary people could not know the truth of fiscal matters (nor in other cases, could they access autopsies), these communities could still identify and claim signifiers of witchcraft. In this context, an individual's actions—namely, those of a bishop surrounded by hostile forces—confirms their guilt. In choosing the protection of government soldiers, Odoki confirmed ordinary people's suspicions. In this dynamic, any lingering doubts are overcome by the continual production of fear that makes the world it describes (evident in claims of *mazi*, and as has been historically constituted by state participation in claims of *enyata*). Diverse interests contribute both to the suspension of belief and to the consensus that nefarious forces are at work. Lingering, and multi-layered fields of tension precipitate violence.

For Lugbara people, oppositional binaries between peace and violence do not represent lived experience. Violent acts, rather, are assessed according to their context and their outcome – according to whether events support or uphold ideas of mutuality embodied in *tualu*. This principle can be extended outwards, and was evident in the manner in which many Ediofe residents tacitly supported the rioters' violence, but condemned the force of the military. It should be noted too that participation and tacit support are quite different things. Indeed, many residents remained in their homes during the riot, fearing reprisals from the troops—a reaction which could equally be tied to the traumas of the

past. In all the cases discussed in this thesis, attitudes to the moral probity of violence evolved over time. After the riot, many residents (and Aruans more widely) shifted their solidarity from supporting protestors to condemning violence. Elders explained that the events had brought shame on Arua, that violence had not brought matters out in the ‘proper’ way, and that it was generally deemed to be “un-Christian”. Distant observers began to chastise Ediofe not as a place of righteous struggle, but as an immoral, undisciplined part of town. Some lamented the “shame” the riot had brought to Lugbara people. Elders lamented the instabilities brought to the area in the continued occupation of the military by “young people,” which evoked their own memories of the instabilities of war and of exile. Over longer timescales, then, violence did not serve to establish a community, but rather fractured opinion among people involved in resistance.⁸⁵⁰

9.9 Conclusion

In sum, this chapter has provided an extended account of the revolt against Bishop Odoki in West Nile, an instance where seeking redress for misfortune became explicitly entangled in political critiques and memories of the past. Whilst previous chapters have explored how Lugbara people manage and mediate intimate losses, this chapter has shown how these idioms can invoke conflict-ridden pasts to exceptional result, engendering forms of violence beyond the boundaries of clans. In a contexts of great loss and grief, and outpourings of past trauma instigated by Bishop Drandua’s death, moral critique gained new resonance. A key dimension of this riot was how it

⁸⁵⁰ In a similar way, Allen describes revisiting those involved in violent healing during the late 1980s, and their marked silence on the matter: see Allen and Storm, ‘Quests for therapy in Northern Uganda’.

demonstrated the different scripts of accusation emanating from different echelons of society: state authorities and even priests expressed discontent through the language of financial mismanagement, an unusual but effective discourse, whilst other groups levied charges of corruption and neglect.

This exploration has, moreover, provided an entry point to understand witchcraft not as a uniform belief, but as a fact produced and subsequently mediated by different interest groups—groups that communicate injustice in culturally-recognised ways in order to prompt action. As in the poisoning cases described in the previous chapters, where communities called for autopsies, besieged priests called from external assistance – in “scientific investigations” or the intervention of Rome. Yet, this validation was not forthcoming. Ultimately, however, the riot against Odoki only created further injustices and insecurity, whereby Ediofe residents lived in fear of the military throughout the period of this research. Even if such an outcome was expected, that, too, became a new form of misfortune that Lugbara people would be forced to manage.

10.1 Conclusion

Through a series of historically and ethnographically-informed studies, this thesis has charted the endurance of moral ideals, as expressed through cosmology and practice among Lugbara populations in West Nile, Uganda. Central to Lugbara ideas of social peace are notions of *tualu*, a term which can refer to mutuality, harmony, or togetherness. This thesis has charted how this vision has been enforced and resisted over more than a century of therapeutic practice. I have argued how post-war social repair has been performed through a revitalisation and contestation of longstanding repertoires of healing traditions—traditions existent from the early intrusions of the Protectorate period up to the present day.

Traversing practices designated as “religious”—practices that have included systems of ancestor veneration, spirit-inspired possession movements, and modern evangelical Christianity—this thesis has shown how cosmological concepts become resonant when applied pragmatically, linking changing patterns of affliction to social changes. Rather than conceptualise cosmology as a “system”, recapitulating prior ethnographies, I have sought to show how social choreography leads to the production of *agents* and *explanations* between those who suffer and those who can explain affliction. Though explanations of misfortune may appear novel, their production rests on a grafting of new emphases onto past histories of healing.

This thesis has focused on processes through which social groups have remade their moral worlds against great change. In a borderland territory that scholars have portrayed either as violent or as a porous space over which goods and capital flow, this thesis has

explored how Lugbara elders draw on “sticky” logics of descent, to recreate family and clan structures amidst post-exilic social fragmentation.⁸⁵¹ This thesis has also undertaken the potentially exclusionary work of defining the limits of community with recourse to historical fears of poisoning, and newer fears of *mazi*. In paying attention to the socio-economic complexities and the multiplicity of cosmologies within villages, I have sought to avoid ethnographic approaches akin to what Appadurai terms “spatial incarceration”, whereby localities and cultures are reified as bounded and closed.⁸⁵² Rather, this thesis has explored how the fixity engendered both by colonial policies and by post-independence isolation of the West Nile sub-region has interfaced with differential mobilities, flows of external knowledge, and efforts to reinforce or sever intimate ties and obligations in increasingly fragmented social relations. In Shaw’s terms, this thesis reflects the local as the “centre from which the rest of the world is viewed”.⁸⁵³

10.2: Cultures of Repair?

Whilst I find that cosmological resources are deeply implicated in post-war repair, the evidence suggests that metaphysical resources have been reassembled in particular, even unique ways—ways that diverge sharply from the “hybrid” complementarity anticipated by experts of transitional justice who laud the restorative potential in socio-cultural resources. For Lugbara people, socio-cultural resources remain relevant in contexts that are continually negotiated and socially contingent. These regimes of

⁸⁵¹ Meinert and Grøn, ‘It Runs in the Family’.

⁸⁵² A. Appadurai, ‘Introduction: Place and Voice in Anthropological Theory’, *Cultural Anthropology* 3:1 (1988), pp. 16-20, p.37

⁸⁵³ Shaw and Waldorf, ‘Introduction’, p. 5.

knowledge are established both through internal moral histories of clans, and through encounter with other public authorities. Rather than simply performing ritual “truths”, practices to trace and cleanse lingering souls and spirits provide a means for Lugbara people to reconcile deeply-divided presents, and alleviate ongoing suffering.

Elders and clans retain central roles in explaining suffering, on account of access to archives of knowledge that are deeply personal, composed of historical layers of personalities, grievances and wrongdoing that have the power to explain the present. Since return from exile, the primacy of clans in tracing “haunting memories” and in reinforcing *tualu* has been challenged by a dynamic landscape of therapy, where an emergent class of therapists offers quick solutions through prayer or through payment. Suffering is treated in context-specific ways, where the particular faith of individuals is held in tension with the rapidly-changing fabric of local institutions. This local mosaic of intervention may include the words of elders who sit to resolve issues, the revelations of diviner-healers, dreams or visions, or the intercessions of clergy, but many of these actors actively contest evidentiary proof in favour of “subjective realities” that yield shifting explanations of healing and repair.⁸⁵⁴ This eclectic, ever-changing landscape defies codification: its power lies in its responsiveness to realities of patterns of suffering, in tandem with social change.

The socio-cultural landscape of Lugbara people defies rigid categorisation. Through an historical exploration of colonial and post-independence processes, this thesis has showed that external projects to create “ethnic” groups have been partial, and the locale

⁸⁵⁴ Neihaus, ‘Witches and Zombies’.

of moral ordering continues to reside at the level of the clan. Any coherent importation of culture neglects to consider fluid processes of boundary-making that characterise everyday life. Similarly, since return from exile, there has been little formal attempt to encourage social cohesion through the institution-building or traditional justice interventions that have been popularised in Acholiland. Donors (national or international) have not paid for rituals, nor have West Nile's cultural leaders advocated for a coherent vision of Lugbara culture. Indeed, cultural leaders continue to celebrate the diversity of customs among Lugbara peoples. In Madlingozi's words, there have been no "transitional justice entrepreneurs" to speak for victims, nor to produce particular narratives of victimhood. Ways of being among Lugbara people cannot thus easily be formulated into a "toolkit".

Despite these regional specificities, this thesis contends that the study of everyday, ground-level processes in a war-affected region has yielded significant contributions to transitional justice, challenging errant assumptions that cosmologies provide shared scripts to address the past and to mend broken relationships.

First, the "discovery" of cosmologies by experts of transitional justice and development as uniform neglects to the development of these resources in relation to long durations of institutional development. Quests to achieve balance deal different fates to different peoples. Assuming that cosmologies constitute *shared* languages disguises continual struggles over meaning within terms and concepts. As Finnström (and before him, Kapferer) urges, cosmology is not an abstract construct, but is instead produced through ongoing human creativity. Precisely because resources are contested, agents, terms and

concepts are both “interactive” and in “constant flux”.⁸⁵⁵ As Behrend notes, there is nothing inherent about the meaning of spirits or invisible agents.⁸⁵⁶ And as Geschiere argues regarding witchcraft, the resilience of invisible ideas of harm bespeaks the inherent *malleability* of such concepts, which can serve to reflect any manner of changing circumstance.⁸⁵⁷ Throughout recorded history in Lugbaraland, cosmology has been a site of struggle—between chiefs of prophetic cults, Christian converts and elders, as well as between urban and rural populations, and between genders and generations within them. The malleability of the invisible realm means it can be a medium through which both the marginal and the powerful may compete.⁸⁵⁸ The metaphysical has long provided a meant to contest moral orders; its utility thus persists precisely for its ability to carry multiple versions of morality. As Victor and Porter note, if cosmological resources serve as a means for post-war healing, it is “not only a matter of metaphysics or ontology, but of shifts in worldly power.”⁸⁵⁹

Second, in seeking to abstract “traditions” or polluting agents, development or justice “experts” risk repeating the exercises of state administrators-turned-ethnographers, anthropologists and missionaries. Driven by academic rigour or assumptions of other religions for Christianity to displace, these exercises sought to delimit concepts that were in essence fluid and phenomenological. Even more caution is warranted where

⁸⁵⁵ S. Finnström, ‘Wars of the Past and War in the Present: The Lord’s Resistance Movement/Army in Uganda’, *Africa* 76:2 (2006), pp. 200-220, p.202

⁸⁵⁶ Behrend, *Resurrecting Cannibals*.

⁸⁵⁷ P. Geschiere, *Witchcraft, Intimacy and Trust: Africa in Comparison*. University of Chicago Press, 2013, p. 13.

⁸⁵⁸ In a similar way, during COVID-19 the Virgin Mary appeared in a Maracha homestead, with many villagers breaking social distancing to witness the apparition. Contexts of crisis, both local and region, can usher in radical changes to healing practice. See: West Nile Web, ‘Security beefed in Maracha to prevent congregation at scene of alleged Virgin Mary appearance’, 12 May 2020. Available at <<https://www.westnileweb.com/news-analysis/maracha/security-beefed-in-maracha-to-prevent-congregation-at-scene-of-alleged-virgin-mary-appearance>>.

⁸⁵⁹ Victor and Porter, ‘Dirty Things’, p. 604.

these exercises, particularly when drawn into ongoing Christian evangelical exercise, serve to transform and embolden occult fears. As I have documented, spirits once understood to reside in nature have been modified into human-mediated killing spirits, and relatively benign ancestral forces have been transformed into curses.

Third, ritual practices are inherently related to resource distribution, and often constrained because of it. Clan-based diagnostics for misfortune are yoked to strategies for village prosperity: through demands for cattle, money and security through the ritual system. Middleton's work reveals this long history: in the late colonial period, sickness, understood as ancestral wrath, was instrumentalised to encourage reciprocity as capitalist processes eroded village solidarities.⁸⁶⁰ Throughout the 1950s and independence, elders used sickness as an occasion to insist on redistribution from migrant workers who had "forgotten" their obligations to those at home. Since the return from exile, sickness has been linked variously to outstanding settlements or to the disturbed dead, but still necessitates transfers between living parties. As Jeater notes, forced levies to encourage reparations can be put on the market, and recruited for extortion. Spiritual and material resources are entangled, and for this reason visions of social repair in the non-NGO-funded North lie in "rude health".⁸⁶¹ Material inequalities of the past and present still obstruct the attainment of balance with recourse to the cosmos, and living relations.

⁸⁶⁰ Middleton, *Lugbara Religion*.

⁸⁶¹ Knighton, 'Globalizing Trends'.

Fourth, in abstracting cosmology from lived relations, scholars miss the deep entanglement of resources and human agency. As Kapferer notes, many cosmologies are deeply “human-centric”; rather than existing as abstract notions above human society, ideas of sorcery (or witchcraft and poisoning) “fetishise human agency”. Post-return, Lugbara people have become engaged not in managing a world of forces beyond themselves, but in discerning human capacities for misfortune.⁸⁶² Lugbara people have long tied the possibility for material gain to individual intent. Post-exile quests to explain moral and economic decline have, then, engendered new forms of witch-finding, which explicitly seek to identify an individual with *dri onzi*, ‘dirty hands’. In highly unequal contexts of reconstruction, notions of killing spirits have been linked to communal quests to expel wealthy relatives. As one evicted family lamented, “We are refugees”.⁸⁶³ In contexts where death rates remain high, and loss of life is felt collectively, post-war transitions as viewed through the socio-cultural lens may not reflect the binaries of war and peace that external observers envisage. One might ask, to use Keen’s words: what is the difference between war and peace?⁸⁶⁴

Fifth and finally, in valorising the functions of approaches, the realities of suffering risk becoming side-lined. As Whyte noted long ago, functional anthropologists—in negating practical action and realities of affliction—made ceremony out of suffering. Within this thesis terms have evolved in relation to specific burdens of diseases. In separating health and justice as discrete realms of study, when in fact these two concepts are inextricably linked, there is a danger that ill-health is pushed to the margins as experts

⁸⁶² B. Kapferer, Sorcery, Modernity and the Constitutive Imaginary, *Social Analysis*, 46(3), (2002), pp.105-127, p.105

⁸⁶³ FG, Evicted Family, Maracha), 17/02/2017(OJ)

⁸⁶⁴ D. Keen. War and Peace: What’s the Difference? *International Peacekeeping*, 7(4), (2000), p.1-22. p.1

valorise social repair. Propelling these quests for explanation is the fact that West Nilers continue to die in significant numbers of diseases (such as plague and meningitis) that have been eradicated elsewhere, including in the South of Uganda.

Transitional justice may be the latest development project to search for finite meanings in Africa's lifeworlds, assuming authentic expressions of victimhood and notions that complement donor-driven notions of repair. Experts on the "rule of law" imagine that local justice systems can be pulled into "best-fit" scenarios, where actually-existing processes of grassroots justice complement national legal institutions. Yet this external gaze continues to create categories and abstractions out of complex realities that defy them. As this study has shown, lived realities transgress boundaries between justice, reparations, health and well-being.

10.3: The Contributions of this Study

First, this study presents novel empirical evidence for the dynamics of social repair in a chronically under-researched sub-region of Uganda. It has adopted a longitudinal approach to explore the evolution of quests for therapy through time, building on the insights of Middleton, Barnes-Dean and Allen, who described iterations of these journeys in West Nile at very different junctures of its history.

Second, whilst previous studies have suggested that post-independence development has undermined the authority of elders; and biomedicine has "simplified" quests for therapy, the evidence within this thesis suggests that clan-based mechanisms for

explaining affliction have endured among Lugbara peoples.⁸⁶⁵ Contrary to Barnes-Dean's suggestion that "[t]he traditional medical system has in a sense been turned inside out by culture contact", this thesis finds that elders have reconstituted their authorities following return.⁸⁶⁶ Reading Middleton's descriptions through the prism of pragmatic agency (cf. Whyte), rather than as representing an empirical and material truth, this thesis has explained the enduring power of *e'yo* (words) long after the cessation of direct ancestor veneration. This thesis has too engaged with the evolution of alternative healing traditions of divination and herbalism. It has demonstrated that diagnostic explanation among these healers has become increasingly siloed post-return (diviner-healers managing chronic conditions, and herbalists managing poisoning). Amidst this complexity, and changing vocabularies of healing, this thesis demonstrates the continued importance of collective approaches to suffering, and the ability of moral explanations to override evidentiary logics connected to clinical diagnosis.

Third, this thesis has demonstrated that the process of social repair can serve to entrench gendered inequalities. This interplay was demonstrated through an exploration of clan-diagnostics and divination. It has urged an attention to cultural restraints on voice and asking about misfortune, in understanding the options available to individual Lugbara people. Individualising studies that focus on particular therapists exclude a consideration for the overall structures of society within idioms of repair. Whilst this study suggests that aspects of the Lugbara gerontocracy have been weakened, gendered distinctions continue to pervade quests for therapy, as they do everyday life.

⁸⁶⁵ Allen and Storm, 'Quests for therapy in Northern Uganda'

⁸⁶⁶ Barnes-Dean, 'Lugbara illness beliefs', p. 344.

Fourth, this study has built on Allen's insights as to post-return violence, finding that patterns of exclusion related to witchcraft and poisoning continue. Yet increasingly, those accused are not the marginal, but men, often those who possess significant power. This thesis has furthermore established patterns in witch-finding in relation to changing traditions in managing and explaining sudden deaths. Anti-witchcraft action continues to occur within the framework of clans, since deaths and funerary rites continue to be managed at home, and losses are felt collectively within clans. In response, institutions have responded to control killings. On the one hand, elders have established new restraints on false allegations, and on the other, efforts to manage accusations of poisoning through state-like structures. Yet, given the extended duration over which evidence is produced, grief and anger following death, and the lack of recognition of witches as killers by the state, events continue to result in exclusion (though less often in killing).

This study has shown that in the decades following war, explanations and forms of "evictions" have been deeply influenced by institutional changes, and have been institutionalised as the NRM government has become established. I have urged an engagement with the multiplicity of logics through which witches are produced, and the internal discord surrounding this evidentiary production: that these are instances where communities experienced both state authority *and* the lack of protection from the NRM government. The final three chapters in particular aim to provide an evidence base to challenge recent calls to legislate against witchcraft.⁸⁶⁷

⁸⁶⁷ Solomon, 'Witch-Killings and the Law in Uganda'

Finally, this study has elucidated the dynamics of *everyday* repair. Intentionally, the study did seek out the usual subjects of studies, including ex-combatants and abductees. Whilst this approach responded to the dynamics of conflict amid Lugbara populations (where ex-combatants do not receive high levels of stigmatisation), it also sought to engage with ordinary healing—how civilians perceive cosmology and repair. These findings diverge significantly from scholars who have reified particular cleansing performances in relation to ex-combatants. This study has highlighted how the ordinary politics of “boundary-making” and violence involves civilian populations, as well as “intimate enemies”.⁸⁶⁸ Adopting this social perspective, causal links between customary authorities, socio-cultural resources and the reconstruction of everyday normality become less apparent.

10.4 A Forgotten Past?

Within development policy, priorities in West Nile continue to be framed according to the mantra of transitional justice. Yet this characterisation is at ill-odds with the actual measures to address the wounds of the past. War and exile of the 1980s preceded the explosion in the international transitional justice industry; accordingly, there has been little interest in gathering data on testimonies, atrocities and fatalities in this region. Unlike in Luwero or Acholiland, or with the rebel groups active in the region following return, the horrific events of the 1980s and the sporadic attacks of the 1990s remain unaddressed.⁸⁶⁹

⁸⁶⁸ MacGinty, ‘Boundary-Making’; Theidon, *Intimate Enemies*.

⁸⁶⁹ This, of course, stands in contrast to the often exaggerated death-counts which continue to be propagated about Amin’s rule.

In everyday life, people do not seek their bearings in conflict, nor necessarily in projects to overtly critique state neglect that has endured since then. This is partly a function of what Buckley-Zitzel terms “chosen amnesia”, where people put aside their grievances to get on with everyday relations.⁸⁷⁰ This politics has been encouraged not only by the lack of state acknowledgement of the past, but also by religious actors who have silenced overtly political narratives of revenge. Before his death, at an Ombaci commemoration organised by an NGO, even the revered Bishop Drandua urged those present that “There is need for all of us to rise above the bad days and forge ahead by doing good, forgiving and forgetting”.⁸⁷¹ This consciousness was reproduced when elders explained conflict as a curse: localising national sentiments of the violence of Amin’s regime back onto themselves.

In the wake of legacies of violence inflicted upon them, West Nilers have undertaken repair using the resources available. This has often involved the fierce policing of moral adherence, and harsh punishment for those who violate norms of *tualu* (social harmony)—whether prophets, poisoners, witches or even bishops. In lieu of political settlement, Lugbara people continue to pursue moral ordering themselves: as one elder once commented, “People evict based on power”.⁸⁷² In regulating their moral surroundings, moreover, many Lugbara people comment on the “witchcraft” of politicians, development experts and tycoons: idioms of witchcraft represent a means of

⁸⁷⁰ S. Buckley-Zitzel, ‘Remembering to Forget: Chosen Amnesia as a Strategy for Local Coexistence in Post-Genocide Rwanda’, *Africa* 76:2 (2006), pp. 131-150, p. 131.

⁸⁷¹ S. Ssenkaaba, ‘34 years later: more questions on Ombaci’, *Justice and Reconciliation Project* [online], 8 August 2015, available at: <<https://www.justiceandreconciliation.org/media/newsroom/in-the-news/2015/34-years-later-more-questions-on-ombaci/>>.

⁸⁷² Commentary, co-worker, March 2017.

comprehending continuing economic exclusion, the neglect by their own president, and the violence of development projects. These ideas extend far beyond locality, yet people reorganise their lifeworlds within the framework of clans that have historically governed moral responsibility and the enactment of violence.

Yet as the Ediofe riots indicate, shared ideas of cosmology can easily be politicised to result in violence, violence that seeks to reorder political accountability for those perceived to be immoral. Activated by wrongful death, underlying grievances spill out into public articulations of the past. The sense of injustice contained in the everyday is such that communal memories can be politicised into mass violence, by elites cognisant of—and embroiled in—idioms of socio-cultural responsibility. Seemingly apolitical scripts of souls and spirits are mobilised to political ends. In this respect, MacDonald asks whether in conflating social repair with transitional justice, experts are “making a virtue out of the necessary resources populations draw on to survive?”⁸⁷³ Whilst this thesis has encouraged a grounding in the logics and institutions which produce repair, the events at Ediofe indicate that local level-social processes do not necessarily constitute justice for the mass atrocities of the past.

The struggles described within this thesis clearly highlight that, in recovering from political crisis, Lugbara communities pursue quests for accountability that diverge from the discrete domains of justice typically of interest to outsiders. Where everyday life is lived without the predictable accountability and welfare assured by state institutions,

⁸⁷³ A. Macdonald, ‘From the ground up: what does the evidence tell us about local experiences of transitional justice?’, *Transitional Justice Review* 1:3 (2015), pp. 72-121.

Lugbara people continue to draw upon the resources available to them to construct viable, peaceable and productive presents.

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Appendix B: List of Interviews & Focus Groups

Footnotes include an abridged reference to interviews (I), focus groups (FG) and introductory meetings (IM). Where interviews were translated from Lugbarati, the translator reference is included in the quote (OJ, PN, DA). The full reference to the interviews is included in the list below.

List of Interviews and Focus Groups

Phase 1

Interview, Nelson Abiti, Uganda Museum (Kampala), 15th March 2016, English
Interview, Civil Servant (Arua), 30th April 2016, English
Interview, Deputy RDC, Toko Shuaib, (Arua), 2nd April 2016, English
Interview, RDC, Peter Debele, (Arua), 2nd May 2016, English
Interview, Deputy Commissioner of Local Government, 2nd May 2016, English
Introductory Meeting, Officer in Charge of Police and District Commissioner of Police, Jonathan Musinguzi, (Arua) 2nd May 2016, English
Meeting, Ayivu Elders, (Arua), 3th May 2016, English and Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
Introductory Meeting, ZOA (NGO), (Arua), May 3th 2016, English
Introductory Meeting, RICE (NGO), (Arua), May 3th 2016, English
Introductory Meeting, SNV (NGO), (Arua), May 3th 2016, English
Introductory Meeting, Uganda Law Society, (Arua), May 3th 2016, English
Introductory Meeting, Pastoral Coordinator, Ediofe Diocese, (Ediofe, Arua), May 3th 2016, English
Introductory Meeting, Ma'di and West Nile Diocese, (Mvara, Arua), May 3th 2016, English
Interview, Chief Magistrate, Arua Court, (Arua), May 4th 2016, English
Interview, Father Louis, Ediofe Diocese, (Arua) May 4th 2016, English
Interview, Father Tonino (Italian Missionary), Radio Pacis, (Arua), May 4th 2016, English
Interview, Legal Officer, Arua Court, (Arua), May 4th 2016, English
Interview, Samsa, Uganda Law Society (Arua), May 4th 2016, English
Interview, Jonathan Musinguzi, District Commissioner of Police, (Arua), May 4th 2016, English
Interview, Bosco, Human Rights Commission, (Arua), May 4th 2016, English
Interview, Juliet Logose, Human Rights Commission, (Arua), May 4th 2016, English
Interview, Hilda, SNV Programme Manager, (Arua), May 5th 2016, English
Focus Group, Ayivu Elders Association, (15 participants), May 6th 2015, Lugbara/English (Osuta Jimmy)
Interview, Lecturer at MUBS, May 8th 2016, English
Informal Focus Group, Abrici Households, Onzivu, Arua, May 9th 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
Informal Meeting, Nelson Abiti, Uganda Museum, (Arua), May 9th 2016, English
Interview, Mary, Elderly Lady, Abrici, Onzivu, (Arua), May 9th 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
Interview, Anglican Elder and wife, Abrici, Onzivu, (Arua), May 9th 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Anglican Elder, Abrici, Onzivu, (Arua), May 10th 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Anglican Reverend and Elder, Mvara, (Arua), May 10th 2016, English/ Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Anglican Elder, Abrici, Onzivu, (Arua), May 11th 2016, English

Interview, NGO Worker, CEFORD, (Arua), May 11th 2016, English

Interview, Drateru Maureen, Druyer, Pajulu, (Arua), May 12th 2016, English

Interview, Cristine, Local Speaker, Druyer, Pajulu, (Arua), May 12th 2016, English

Interview, Elder and eldest son, Aroi, (Arua), 14th May 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview 2 Elder (clan elder, Catholic Catechist), Aroi, (Arua), 15th May 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Introductory Meetings, LC and elders of Druyer, (Arua), 16th May 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Elder (Anglican Church Teacher, Clan elder), Druyer, (Arua), 17th May 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, LC Druyer, Druyer (Arua), 17th May 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Elder and son, Druyer, (Arua), 17th May 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Focus Group, Youth Association of Druyer, (Arua), 18th May 2016, English/ Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Elder at home, Druyer (Arua), 18th May 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Elders at Druyer (Arua), 18th May 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Focus Group, Christian Women's Association, Vurra, 19th May 2016, Lugbara (Patricia)

Focus Group, Druyer Community, 19th May 2016, Lugbara (Patricia)

Interview, Elderly Lady, Druyer, 19th May 2016, Lugbara (Patricia)

Informal Interviews and Observations, Ombaci Memorial Mass, 20th May 2016 (Osuta Jimmy)

Focus Group 2 Youth Association of Druyer, (Arua), 23rd May 2016, English/ Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Elder at home, Druyer (Arua), 23rd May 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview 2, Interview, Drateru Maureen, Druyer, Pajulu, (Arua), May 23rd 2016, English

Observations and informal Interviews, Development Meeting, Ediofe Diocese, May 25th 2016

Interviews, LCIII Court Officials, (Arua), May 25th 2016, English

Interview, Survivor, Ombaci Massacre, May 25th 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Representative, West Nile Kony Victims Association, May 25th 2016, English

Introductory Meeting, DPC Nyadri (Maracha), May 26th 2016, English

Interview 3 Elder, Aroi, (Arua), May 27th 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview 2, Elder, Druyer (Arua), May 30th 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Focus Group, LC and elders of Ovujjo Trading Centre (Maracha), May 30th 2016, English/ Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, 2, Lecturer, MUBS, (Arua) May 30th 2016, English

Focus Group, Elders of Iriyu Clan, (Maracha), May 31st 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy/ Afuonzi Charles)

Focus Group, Elders of Kimeru Clan, (Maracha), May 31st 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy/ Afuonzi Charles)

Interview, elder and man accused of mazi, (Arua), June 1st, 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Focus Group, Ovujjo Community, (Maracha) June 2nd, 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Informal Interviews, Ayivu Elders, (Arua) June 4th, 2016, English/ Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, LC/ Medical Student of Ovujjo, (Maracha), June 5th, 2016, English

Focus Group, Jua Kali Youth Group, Ovujjo, (Maracha), June 5th, 2016, English/ Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Focus Group, Elders of Adongo-Ayika Clan, (Maracha), June 7th 2016, English/ Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy/ Afuonzi Charles)

Interview, Resident of Onzivu, (Arua) June 7th 2016, Lugbara (Patricia)

Focus Group, Terego Elders Association, (Arua) June 8th 2016, English/ Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Man accused of mazi at home in Onzivu, (Arua) June 13th 2016, Lugbara (Patricia)

Focus Group x4, Christians of Ovujjo, (Maracha) June 13th 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, LC Abrici, Onzivu, (Arua) June 13th 2016, English/ Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Observations and Informal Interviews, Ayivu Elders Association at Cultural Gathering, Ondramacu, (Arua) June 13th June 2016

Interview, Victims, Ovujjo, (Maracha) June 15th, 2016, English

Focus Group, Teachers at Buramali School, (Maracha) June 15th 2016, English

Interview, Headteacher at Buramali School, (Maracha) June 15th 2016, English

Interview, Man accused of mazi, (Arua), June 16th 2016, English

Interview, family members of accused, (Arua), June 16th 2016, English

Focus Group 2, Jua Kali Youth Group, Ovujjo, (Maracha), June 19th 2016, English/ Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview 3, elder Aroi, (Arua), June 23rd 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview 2, elder Druyer, (Arua), June 24th 2016, Lugbara, (Osuta Jimmy)

Focus Group, LC Council, Buramali, (Maracha), June 27th 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Focus Group, Maracha Elders Association, (Maracha) June 28th, 2016, English

Focus Group, Elders, Nyarire Clan, (Maracha), June 29th 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy/ Afuonzi Charles)

Focus Group, Teachers at Buramali School, (Maracha) July 1st 2016, English

Focus Group, Teachers, (Arua), July 1st 2016, English

Interview, Elder of Buramali (Maracha), July 2nd 2016, Lugbara, (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Terego Chief, (Arua), July 3rd 2016, English

Focus Group 2, Maracha Elders Association, (Maracha) July 4th, English/ Lugbara, (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview 3, elder Druyer, (Arua), July 5th 2016, Lugbara, (Osuta Jimmy)

Focus Group, Buramali Community, (Maracha), July 9th 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Focus Group 2, Teachers, (Arua), July 9th 2016, English

Focus Group 2, Nyarire Clan, (Maracha), July 10th 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy/ Afuonzi Charles)

Focus Group 3, Kimeru Clan, (Maracha), July 10th 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy/ Afuonzi Charles)

Phase 2

Interview, Elder of Abrici, Onzivu, (Arua), September 18th 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview 4, Elder of Aroi, (Arua), September 19th 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview 3, Maureen, Druyer, Pajulu, (Arua), September 19th 2016, English

Focus Group 3, Druyer Youth Association, (Arua) September 19th 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview 5, Elder of Druyer, Pajulu, (Arua), September 19th 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Introductory meeting, Community of Jacinto Cell, September 20th 2016, English/ Lugbara (Patricia)

Focus Group 3, Ayivu Elders Association, (Arua), September 21st 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Leader of Maracha Elders Association, (Arua), September 21st 2016, English

Observations/ informal interviews, Ediofe Riot and aftermath, September 22nd - 24th, English/ Lugbara

Interview 2, Tony Odda, Civil Servant (Arua), 24th September 2016, English

Interview, LC Ediofe, (Arua), 24th September 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Focus Group 3, Teachers, (Arua), 24th September 2016, English

Focus Group, Residents of Jacinto Cell, 25th September 2016, Lugbara (Patricia)

Interview 2, Elderly woman, Abrici, Onzivu, (Arua) 25th September 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview 2, Elder of Abrici, Onzivu, (Arua), 25th September 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview 2, Leader of Maracha Elders Association, (Arua), September 26st 2016, English

Focus Group 2, Residents of Jacinto Cell, 27th September 2016, Lugbara (Patricia)

Introductory Meetings and Interviews in Maracha's 8 sub-counties, (Maracha), 28-30th September 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy in the presence of Anzilo Angelo)

Interview, Female Resident, Aroi, (Arua) 30th September 2016, English

Interview 2, Man accused of mazi on farm in Vurra, (Arua) 3rd October 2016, Lugbara (Patricia)

Interview, Family Members of accused on farm in Vurra (Arua), 3rd October 2016, Lugbara (Patricia)

Interview, Elder of Ayivu Elders Association, (Arua), 4th October 2016, English

Interview, Youth President of Elders Ayivu Association, (Arua), 5th October 2016, English

Interview 2, Anglican Elder and wife, Abrici, Onzivu, (Arua), 5th October 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Introductory Meeting, Jason Avutia, Lugbara Agofe, at his home in Mvara, 5th October 2016, English

Interviews with Residents of Jacinto Cell, 6th October 2016, Lugbara (Patricia)

Interview with LCI of Jacinto Cell, 6th October 2016, Lugbara (Patricia)

Interview, Mike Agondua, Leader of Ayivu Elders, 6th October 2016, English

Interview, Elder of Ayivu Elders Association (Former WNBf), 6th October 2016, English

Focus Group 4, Teachers, (Arua), 6th October 2016, English

Interview, Miria Charles, Elder of Nyadri (Maracha), 7th October 2016, English

Interview, Elder of Nyadri at S/C HQ, (Maracha), 7th October 2016, English
 Informal Interview, Jason Avutia, Lugbara Agofe, at his home in Mvara, 7th October 2016, English
 Interview 2, Elder of Ayivu Elders Association (former WNBf), in Ediofe, (Arua) 8th October 2016, English
 Interview 2, Leader of Maracha Elders Association, (Arua), 8th October 2016, English
 Interview 3, Elder of Abrici, (Arua), 8th October 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Focus Group, Elders of Tara, (Maracha), 11th October 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, Elder of Tara, (Maracha), 13th October 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, Pentecostal Preacher (Arua), 13th October 2016, English
 Focus Group, Residents of Jacinto Cell, 14th October 2016, Lugbara (Patricia)
 Interview, LCI, Kenya Cell, 14th October 2016, English/ Lugbara (Patricia)
 Interview 4, Elder of Druyer, 17th October 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, LCI Oleba Trading Centre, (Maracha), 17th October 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, Victim of Witchcraft Oleba, (Maracha), 17th October 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, Young Man, Oleba, (Maracha), 18th October 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Focus Group, Young men of Oleba, (Maracha), 18th October 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, Female Catechist, Buramali, (Maracha), 18th October 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview 2, LCI Oleba Trading Centre, (Maracha), 19th October 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview 4, Elder of Abrici, (Arua), 19th October 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview 2 (informal), Mike Agondua, Leader of Ayivu Elders, 20th October 2016, English
 Interview 3, Elder of Ayivu Elders Association, in Ediofe, (Arua) 20th October 2016, English
 Focus Group, Young Man, Oleba, (Maracha), 21st October 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, Man Accused of Mazi, (Maracha), 21st October 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview 2, Jason Avutia, Lugbara Agofe, at his home in Mvara, 26th October 2016, English
 Interview, Haruna Ndema, Lugbara Kari Prime Minister, Mvara (Arua), 26th October 2016, English
 Interview 2 LCI Ovujjo, (Maracha), 30th October 2016, English
 Interview, Teacher, Ovujjo, (Maracha), 30th October 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview 3, Elder of Ayivu Elders Association (Former WNBf), (Arua), 31st October 2016, English
 Interview, Elder of Nyadri (Former Soldier of Amin), (Maracha), 1st November 2016, English/ Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, LCI Etoko, (Maracha), 1st November 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Focus Group, Etoko Clan, (Maracha), 1st November 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Focus Group, Aree Clan, (Maracha), 2nd November 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, Elder, Aree Clan, (Maracha), 2nd November 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview 3, Drateru Marueen at home in Druyer, (Arua), 3rd November 2016, English

Interview 1, Hon. Dick Nyaa, Mvara, (Arua), 3rd November 2016 (English)

Interview 4, Elder of Ayivu Elders Association (Former WNBF), (Arua), 3rd November 2016, English

Interview, Political Mobiliser, Maracha, 8th November 2016, English

Interview, Elder of Etoko Clan, 9th November 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Security Wing of Etoko Clan, 9th November 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview 2, Man accused of mazi, Maracha, 9th November 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, LCI, Paranga Clan, Maracha, 10th November 2016, English/ Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, LCII Etoko Parish, 11th November 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Anglican Theologian, Ma'di and West Nile Diocese, English, 21st November 2016, English

Interview, Diocesan Coordinator, Ma'di and West Nile Diocese, English, 21st November 2016, English

Interview, Youth Coordinator, Oleba, (Maracha), 21st November 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Son of elder, Etoko Clan, (Maracha), 21st November 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Focus Group, Young men of Etoko Clan, (Maracha), 22nd November 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Household in dispute, Etoko, (Maracha), 22nd November 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Elder Ediofe, (Arua), 24th November 2016, English

Interview 5, Elder of Abrici (Arua), 24th November 2016, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Sub-County Chief, Oleba, (Maracha), 25th November 2016, English

Interview, Elder, Catholic Oleba, (Maracha), 25th November 2016, English

Interview, Herbalist Oluffe, (Maracha), 27th November 2016, Lugbara, (Osuta Jimmy and Chris)

Interview, Ezatia Susan (Lugbara Kari), (Arua), 30th November 2016, English

Interview, Tuku Ismael (Lugbara Kari), (Arua), 2nd December 2016, English

Interview, Dick Nyaa, Social Centre, (Arua), 2nd December 2016, English

Interview, Alequa Jaffery, (Arua), 3rd December 2016, English

Interview, Pastor Justin, (Arua), 3rd December 2016, English

Interview 6, Gad, Druyer, (Arua), 5th December 2016, Lugbara, (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview 3, Mike Agondua, (Arua), 5th December 2016, Lugbara, (Osuta Jimmy)

Focus Group, Catholic Action, Oluvu Mission, (Maracha), 7th December 2016, Lugbara, (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Wilson Onzama, Lugbara Intellectual, (Arua), 8th December, English

Interview 3, Mary, Elderly Lady of Abrici, Onzivu, (Arua), 9th December, Lugbara, (Osuta Jimmy)

Focus Group, Young men of Etoko Clan, (Maracha), 14th December, Lugbara, (Osuta Jimmy)

Focus Group, Young men of Etoko-Aree Clan (Maracha), 14th December, Lugbara, (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, young man, Etoko clan, (Maracha), 14th December, Lugbara, (Osuta Jimmy)

Focus Group, By-law writers, Etoko-Nico Clan (Maracha), 15th December, Lugbara, (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, LC, Etoko-Nico Clan, (Maracha), 15th December, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Trader, Oleba, (Maracha), 15th December, English/ Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Onzima Gabriel (teacher and elder of Maracha), 16th December 2016, English

Interview, David Avaga, Ambiriambati Parish, (Arua), 16th December 2016, English

Interview, Ronnie Oja, Pastor of Lifeline Ministries, (Arua), 21st December 2016, English

Interview, Father John, Spiritual Healing Centre (and Policeman), (Arua), 22nd December 2016, English

Interview, Female Catechist, Onzivu, (Arua), 22nd December 2016, Lugbara (David Angualia)

Interview, Male Catechist, Christ the King, (Arua), 22nd December 2016, Lugbara (David Angualia)

Interview, Ambrose, Elder of the Catholic Church and Church Teacher, 23rd December 2017

Interview, LCI Paranga Village, (Maracha), 23rd December 2016, Lugbara (Jimmy Osuta)

Interview, (Acting) Head of Paranga Clan, (Maracha), 23rd December 2016, Lugbara (Jimmy Osuta)

Interview, Isrum, Elder, Biliafe, Terego, (Arua) 8th January 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Elder, Biliafe, Terego, (Arua) 8th January 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Elder Lady, Biliafe, Terego, (Arua) 8th January 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Herbalist, Biliafe, Terego, (Arua), 9th January 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Young man, Biliafe, Terego, (Arua), 9th January 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Focus Group, Family, Biliafe, Terego, (Arua) 10th January 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Focus Group, Elderly Women, Biliafe, Terego, (Arua), 10th January 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Recovered Accident Victim, Ediofe, (Arua), 16th January 2017, English

Interview, Resident of Jacinto Cell, (Arua), 16th January 2017, Lugbara (Patricia)

Interview, Engo Alfred, Ediofe, (Arua), 21st January 2017, English

Interview, LCI Oleba, (Maracha), 21st January 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Elder, Kebir Cell, (Arua), 23rd January 2017, English/ Lugbara (Patricia)

Interview 2, LCI of Ediofe (and family), 24th January 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Adigaa Bernard, Anglican Healer, (Arua) 25th January 2017, English

Interview, Water Engineer/ Upcoming Cultural Leader, (Arua), 26th January 26th 2017, English

Interview, Vincent Omba, Elder of Ediofe, (Arua) 26th January 2017, English

Interview, Catholic Alur Catechist, (Arua), 27th January 2017, Lugbara (David Angualia)

Interview, Female Trader, Ewata, (Arua), 27th January 2017, Lugbara (Patricia)

Interview, Female Trader, Ewata, (Arua), 27th January 2017, Lugbara (Patricia)

Interview 2, Dick Nyai, (Arua), 27th January 2017, English

Introduction Interview, Vivian Ambe, Ewata, (Arua), 29th January 2017, English/ Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Vivian Ambe, Ewata, (Arua), 7th February 2017, Lugbara (Patricia)
 Interview, Zaitun, Ewata, (Arua), 7th February 2017, Lugbara (Patricia)
 Interview, Elders of Clan A, (Maracha), 12th February 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, Male Catechist, (Maracha), 12th February 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, LCI of Worubo, (Maracha), 12th February 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Focus Group, Clans in Border Dispute, Odramacacu, (Arua), 13th February 2017,
 Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, Evicted Man, (Maracha), 17th February 2017, (Maracha), Lugbara (Osuta
 Jimmy)
 Focus Group, Evicted Family, (Maracha), 17th February 2017, (Maracha), Lugbara
 (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, LC Alivu B, (Maracha), 17th February 2017, (Maracha), Lugbara (Osuta
 Jimmy)
 Focus Group, Young Men of Alivu B, 17th February 2017, (Maracha), Lugbara (Osuta
 Jimmy)
 Interview, LCIII Nyadri, (Maracha), 18th February 2017, English
 Interview, Elders of Lujje Clan, (Maracha), 18th February 2017, (Maracha), Lugbara
 (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview 2, Alequa Jaffery, (Arua), 18th February 2017, (Arua), English
 Interview, Sharon, Ewata, (Arua), 19th February 2017, (Arua), Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, LCIII Nyadri, (Maracha), 20th February 2017, English
 Interviews, Vivian Ambe's Disciplines, Ewata, (Arua), 20th February 2017, Lugbara
 (Patricia)
 Interview 2, Sharon, Ewata, (Arua), 19th February 2017, (Arua), Lugbara (Osuta
 Jimmy)
 Interview, Parish Chief, Nyadri, (Maracha), 28th February 2017, Lugbara (Osuta
 Jimmy)
 Focus Group, Elders of Pio Clan, (Maracha), 2nd March 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, Elder of Pio Clan, (Maracha), 3rd March 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, Elders of Worubo, (Maracha), 3rd March 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Focus Group, Elders of Pabora Clan, (Maracha), 4th March 2017, Lugbara (Osuta
 Jimmy)
 Interview, Man affected by Adro, (Arua), 5th March 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Focus Group, Elders of Ombavu Clan, (Maracha), 7th March 2017, Lugbara (Osuta
 Jimmy)
 Interview, Elder of Alipi Clan, (Maracha), 7th March 2017
 Interview, Vivian Ambe's congregation, Ewata (Arua), 21st March 2017, Lugbara
 (Patricia)
 Focus Group, Christian Leaders of Maracha Archdeaconary, (Maracha), 8th March
 2017 English/ Lugbara, (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview 2, Miria Charles, (Maracha), 8th March 2017, English/ Lugbara (Osuta
 Jimmy)
 Interview, Headmaster, Oluffe Secondary School, (Maracha), 9th March 2017, English
 Interview, Accused Herbalist, (Maracha), 9th March 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, LCI, Pio Clan, (Maracha), 9th March 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, Parish "Security Officer" Pio Clan, (Maracha), 9th March 2017, Lugbara
 (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, Mama Faith, Oli Division, (Arua), 10th March 2017 Lugbara (Patricia)

Interview Obetia, Oli Division, (Arua), 10th March 2017 Lugbara (Patricia)
 Focus Group, Elders of Araka Clan, 13th March 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Focus Group 3, Nyarire Clan, (Maracha), 13th March 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, Anglican Pastor of Kimeru Clan, (Maracha), 13th March 2017, English
 Interview, Elder, Azipi Clan, (Maracha), 14th March 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, Clan Elder, Emvua Clan, (Maracha), 14th March 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, Herbalist, Kijomoro Sub-County, (Maracha), 15th March 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, Lawrence Ariga, LCV, Nyadri Sub-County, (Maracha), 16th March 2017, English
 Interview 2, Elder/ LCI Alivu B, (Maracha), 16th March 2017, English
 Introductory Meeting, Ezaru Mary, Vurra, (Arua), 18th May 2017, Lugbara, (Angualia David)
 Interview, CCR Counsellor, Nysambia, (Arua), 27th March 2017, Lugbara (David Angualia)
 Interview, Natalia, CCR Member, (Nsyambia), (Arua), 27th March 2017, English/ Lugbara (Angualia David)
 Interview, Agnes, Female CCR Member, Arua town (Arua), 28th March 2017, English
 Interview, Male Catholic, Arua town (Arua), 28th March 2017, English
 Interview, Female Catechist, Nsyamic, (Arua), 28th March 2017, Lugbara (David Angualia)
 Focus Group, Galenji Clan, Ayivuni, (Arua), 29th March 2017, Lugbara (David Angualia)
 Interview, Haruna Ndema, Social Centre (Arua), 10th April 2017, English
 Interview 6, Catholic Elder, Aroi, (Arua) 10th April 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview 2, Ezatia Susan, (Arua), 11th April 2017, English
 Interview, Bosco, Chief Discipline of Vivian, (Arua), 12th April 2017, Lugbara (Patricia)
 Interview, Female CCR Member, Vurra, (Arua), 13th April 2017, Lugbara (Zonette)
 Interview, Female CCR Member, Vurra, (Arua), 13th April 2017, Lugbara (Zonette)
 Interview, Female CCR Member, Vurra, (Arua), 13th April 2017, Lugbara (Zonette)
 Interview 7, Anglican Elder, Druyer, (Arua), 14th April 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, Jailed Protestor, (Arua), 28th April, 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview 3, Alequa Jaffery, (Arua), May 1st 2017, English
 Interview, Reverend of Koyi Church (Maracha), May 2nd 2017, English
 Focus Group, Members of Koyi Anglican Revival (Maracha), May 2nd 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, Elders, Koyi Revival and Lujje Clan, May 3rd 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview 2, Elders of Worubo Clan, (Maracha), May 3rd 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview 3, Vincent Omba, Ediofe, (Arua), May 5th 2017, English
 Introductory Meeting, Father Castro, Ediofe Diocese, (Arua), 9th May 2017, English
 Interview, Elder of Lujje, (Maracha), 12th May 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, Father Castro, Ediofe Diocese, (Arua), 16th May 2017, English
 Interview, Father Simon, Bethany Centre, (Arua), 16th May 2017, English
 Interview, Hon Malon Avutia, Sub County Chairperson, Pajulu, (Arua), 17th May 2017, English
 Interview, Catholic Leaders, (Arua), 17th May 2017, English

Interview, Father Stephen, Arivu Parish, Vurra, (Arua), 18th May 2017, English
 Interview, Zefa Joseph, Nsyambia, (Arua), 18th May 2017, Lugbara (David Angualia)
 Interview, Civil Society Activist, Cafeteria, (Arua), 18th May 2017, English
 Interview, Father Lazarus, Ediofe Diocese, (Arua) 19th May 2017, English
 Interview 2, Natalia Etoru, CCR Leader, Nsyambia, (Arua), 20th May 2017, English
 Interview, Ezaru Mary, Vurra, (Arua), 22nd May 2017, Lugbara (David Angualia/
 Zonette)
 Interview, Methodist Minister and Wife, Vurra, (Arua), 24th May 2017, (w Tom
 Lowman)
 Interview, Isrum, Elder of Terego, (Arua) 2nd June 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, Assistant Clan Leader, Odravu, Biliafe, Terego, (Arua), English/ Lugbara
 (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview 2, Isrum, Elder of Terego, (Arua) 7th June 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, Resident of Biliage, Terego, (Arua), 7th June 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, Retired Female Teacher, Lujje, (Maracha), 8th June 2017, English/ Lugbara
 (Osuta Jimmy)
 Focus Group, Lujje Elders, (Maracha), 8th June 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview 6, Anglican Elder, Abrici, 9th June 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)
 Interview, Captain Aleni, Onzivu Church, 10th June 2017, English
 Interview, Dick Nyai, (Arua), 13th June 2017, English
 Interview, Former Trader, (Arua), 14th June 2017, Lugbara (David Angualia)
 Interview, Outgoing Director ARRH, 14th June 2017, English
 Interview, Obanya James, Anglican Pastor/ CHW, Ediofe, 14th June 2017, English
 Interview, Charles Asiki, Former Mayor of Arua Municipality, (Arua), 15th June 2017,
 English
 Interview, Reverend Kefaloli, Ambiriamati Church, (Arua), 16th June 2017, English
 Interview, Relative of Zefa Joseph/ Public Health Officer, 15th June 2017, English
 Interview, 18th June, Medical Doctor at ARRH, (English)
 Focus Group, Elders of Kamaka, 19th June 2017, (Maracha), Lugbara (David Angualia)
 Interview, Officer, AIDS Information Centre, 20th June 2017, English
 Interview James Acidri, MP, Maracha East Constituency, (Arua), English
 Interview, Vivian Ambe, Ewata, (Arua), 22nd June 2017, Lugbara/ English (Patricia)
 Interview, Vivian Ambe's congregation, Ewata, (Arua), 22nd June 2017, Lugbara
 (Patricia)
 Interview, Elder of Biliafe, Terego, 24th June 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Phase 3.

Interview, (informal), Vivian Ambe's congregation, Ewata, (Arua), 19th December
 2017, Lugbara/ (Patricia)
 Interview, Ezaru Mary, Vurra, (Arua), 22nd December 2017, Lugbara (David Angualia)
 Interview, Zefa Joseph, Nsyambia, (Arua), 22nd December 2017, Lugbara (David
 Angualia)
 Interview, Vivian Ambe, Ewata, (Arua), 23rd December 2017, English/ Lugbara
 (Patricia)
 Interviews (informal), Vivian Ambe's congregation, Ewata, (Arua), 23rd December
 2017, Lugbara/ (Patricia)
 Interview, Catholic Elder, Aroi, (Arua), 28th December 2017, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Interview, Jennifer, Pentecostal Pastor, Ediofe, (Arua) 29th December, 2017, English/
Lugbara (Patricia)
Follow-up interviews, families of Maracha, (Maracha), 1-3rd January 2018, Lugbara
(Osuta Jimmy with Afuonzi Charles)
Focus Group, Families of Odravu Clan, Biliafe, Terego, (Arua), 4th January 2018,
English
Interview, Hon Dick Nyai, Mvara, (Arua), 5th January 2018, English
Interview, Vivian Ambe, Ewata, (Arua), 5th January 2018, Lugbara/ English (Patricia)
Interview, Anglican Elder, Abrici, (Arua), 6th January 2018, Lugbara (Osuta Jimmy)

Appendix C: Images



Plate One: Mike Agondua, appointed chief of the Ayivu elders, and descendant of a chiefly lineage, displays the agreed structure of the association. The association had an extensive written manifesto as well, and had registered with the government (10/06/2016).



Plate Two: 'Tooth can lost, be careful': a sign marks a treacherous point on a road between Terego and Maracha (29/06/2016).



Plate Three: Clan Feast between clans of Maracha and Logiri (in Maracha), to celebrate the marriage of a wealthy clan member (20/05/2017).



Plate Four: Men of a Maracha clan slaughter a female cow, transferred as part of an *ali* (bridewealth) payment, to reverse the misfortunes befalling a daughter of the clan and her children (05/01/2017).



Plate Five: Sitting convened in Maracha, close to the Congo border, concerning a false allegation of poisoning made by a visiting catechist towards a clan member. Subsequently, the catechist was relocated to a different parish (02/01/2017).



Plate Six: Homes of a family destroyed following a poisoning eviction in one Maracha Sub-County (20/03/2017).



Plate Seven: Poisons that a community handed to sub-county police (Chapter Nine, Case A). The *oyo* is a bulb long connected to divine power, which today retains a certain ambiguity. The bulb can be used by herbalists to cure attacks of poison, but it can also be used as a source of poison. Chemical poisons were also handed over to the sub-county (17/02/2017).

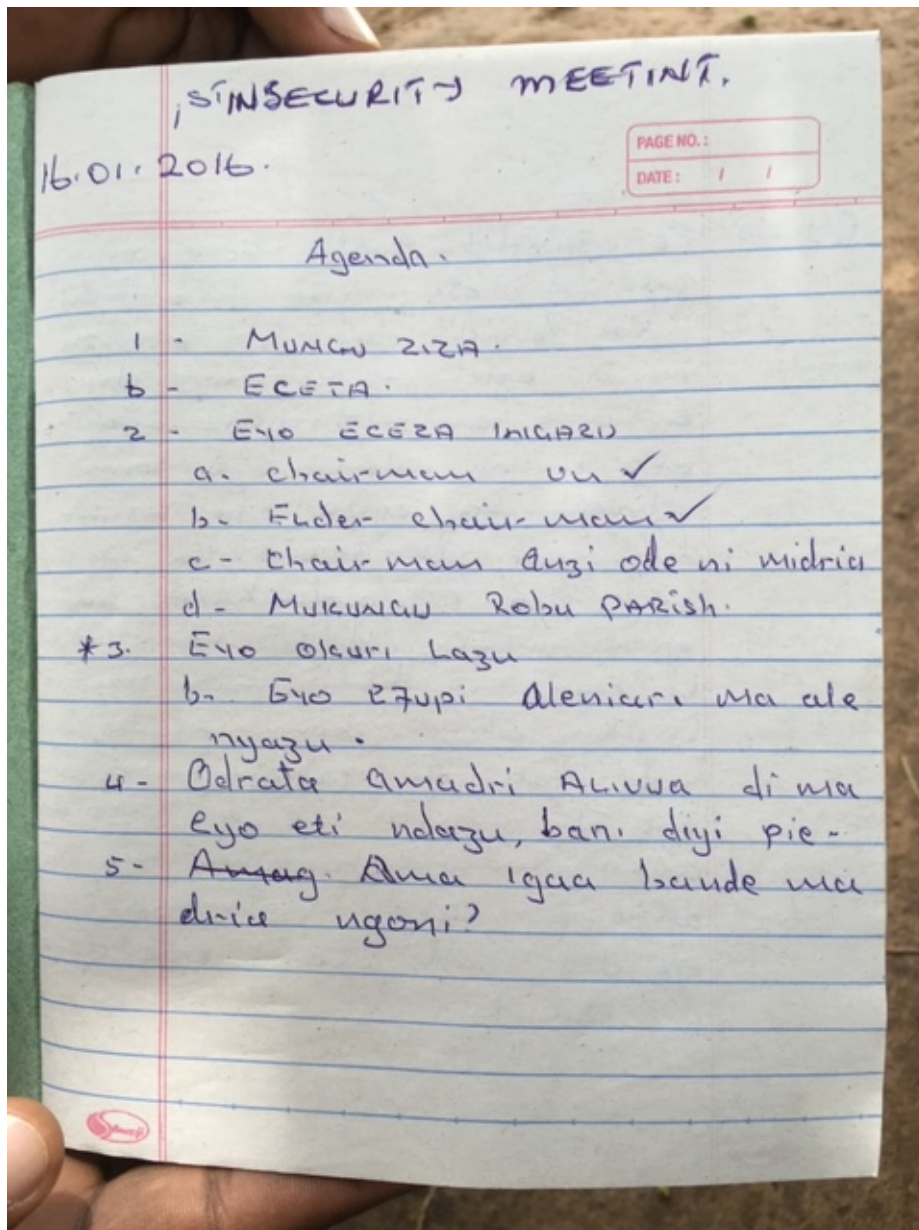


Plate Eight: Notes of an “insecurity meeting” to evict poisoners (17/02/2017).



Plate Nine: Land Dispute, Terego Clan. The meeting was attending by two sub-clans, descended from the overall Yole clan. Land was gifted from the original inhabitants to members of the sub-clan during the war. Subsequently, the new arrived clan had increased in size, encroaching on boundaries agreed through sittings post-war. The meeting, attended by state officials as “witnesses”, descended into disarray, with young men representing the encroaching clan threatening violence, after the elder whose land was being encroached upon threatened a curse to resolve the issue (20/07/2017).



Plate Ten: Vivian Ambe and her newly-constructed “altar” within her compound. Vivian is surrounded by a selection of her intercessors and her regular followers, mostly drawn from the neighbourhood (21/02/2017).



Plate Eleven: Vivian Ambe lays hands on an afflicted woman in her compound (07/02/2017).



Plate Twelve: Holy Water brought by Vivian's followers. Over the course of my observations, Vivian innovated in her practice to incorporate praying over water brought from home. Attendants then sprinkled this water on damaged body parts, or on the threshold of their homes (22/07/2017).



Plate Thirteen: Ezar Mary, a Catholic inspired diviner-healer, pictured in her hut in Vurra, in her natal home, where she practices her healing (22/05/2017).



Plate Fourteen: Elder of Maracha stands near granary. Rarely are such “traditional” granaries present in homesteads.



Plate Fifteen: Revival Service in Koyi Maracha. At the service, women present were chastised for failing to spread the movement to their husbands.



Plate Sixteen: The stand-off in Ediofe 22/09/2016. Here, the rioters have regrouped, and as this photo was taken, it was unclear whether the protestors would charge the Cathedral, now guarded by police and military.

Appendix D: Cases

Date	Details	Location	Notes
May 2016	Sickness and misfortunes accrued to family because of unpaid dowry	Arua	Resolved through collective meal
May 2016	Curse from disowned auntie	Arua	
May 2016	Disputes over wealth	Arua	Elders not trusted, family collectively managed below them
May 2016	Curse from elder to son who did not share wealth	Arua	Ongoing
May 2016	Curse over marriage away from clan	Arua	Death of child, awaiting sitting
May 2016	Daughter cursed by father for wrong marriage	Terego	Reparations made, recovery
May 2016	Prominent Uncle curses marriage after not being appreciated	Arua/ Terego	Reparations made after c-section
May 2016	Elders intervene in murder case, preventing police charges	Arua	
May 2016	Misfortunes, unpaid avuta following death of mother	Arua	Ongoing reparations, elders inattentive
May 2016	Poisoning of wife and husband	Arua	Rumours of daughter-in-laws involvement, no allegation
May 2016	Disciplining of a neglectful son/ father	Terego	canes
May 2016	Curse following burning of house, Ayivu Elder	Arua	
May 2016	Curse, Ayivu Elders, following theft of animals	Arua	
May 2016 (historic)	Curse of mazi suspect	Arua	Two accusers died, accepted allegation was false, man reintroduced to community
May 2016 (historic)	Accusation of wizardry after death of girlfriend. Man placed under community surveillance	Arua	Suspect fled into self-imposed exile
May 2016 (historic)	Curse arising from intermarriage	Arua	
May 2016	Suspected wizardry following stranglings	Arua	Community surveillance

May 2016 (historic)	Curse following children of a mother who had lied before elders	Arua	Resolved recently, curse passed in 1960s
May 2016	Cases of shock in men following female adultery	Arua	Ritual meal
May 2016	Bewitching of family member	Arua	Victim relocated from Terego to Arua
May 2016	Chronically ill man Arua, attributed to jealousy of brother	Arua	Verbal forgiveness
May 2016	Poisoning eviction	Maracha	Five deaths, suspects (outsiders) selected by ballot and evicted
May 2016	Women defecated in home, elders sat and demanded payment from father	Maracha	
June 2016	Mazi curse	Arua	Cursed, reintegrated
June 2016 (historic)	Mazi curse	Arua	Cursed deceased
June 2016 (historic)	First allegation of mazi	Arua	Cursed, reintegrated
June 2016	Allegation of mazi	Arua	Suspect moved from countryside to town
June 2016	Strangling at school in Buramali	Maracha	Ongoing, prayers
September 2016	Disturbed Funeral rites	Terego	pending
September 2016	Sickness in children following unpaid dowry	Arua	Ongoing, intervention at funeral
September 2016	Family sitting over fate of wife who had left marriage	Arua	
September 2016	Mysterious fires, eviction of witchdoctors	Jacinto Cell, Arua	
September 2016	Allegations against Catholic Bishop		
September 2016	Poisoning case	Maracha	Family evicted
October 2016 (historic)	Poisoning case	Maracha	Police man killed
October 2016	Bewitching of women in trading centre	Maracha	prayers
October 2016 (historic)	Case of mazi	Congo border (Maracha)	Clan discipline (visions/ no deaths)
October 2016	Case of mazi	Congo border (Maracha)	Cross-border force formed
October 2016	Suspicion of mazi in Onzivu	Arua	
November 2016 - January 2017	Suspicion of mazi in home	Maracha	Prayers for home in January
December 2016	Home under siege from mazi	Maracha	

December 2016	Reclaiming bride-wealth across Congo border	Maracha	Cross-border raid to seize cattle
January 2017	Unpaid bridewealth	Arua	
January 2017	Sitting over false allegation of poisoning	Maracha	apology
February 2017	Poisoning Case	Maracha	Police involvement
February 2017	Poisoning Case	Maracha	Elders' sitting
February 2017	Poisoning Case	Maracha	Elders' sitting
March 2017	Adultery Case	Maracha	Curse placed on wife
March 2017	Poisoning Case	Maracha	Houses destroyed
March 2017	Mysterious house fires	Marcha	
March 2017 (historic)	Mysterious house fires	Marcha	
April 2017	Clan Feud	Arua	
May 2017	Mua case	Maracha	
May 2017	Misfortunes from unpaid bridewealth		
May 2017	Unpaid avuti	Arua	
June 2017	Land dispute, Terego	Arua	Curse disputed

Observations

June 2016	Diocesan Development meeting	Arua
June 2016	Crowning of Aringa King	Yumbe
May 2016	Miracle Crusade, mass casting out of "witchcraft" by visiting Pentecostal pastor	Arua
September 2016	International Peace Day	Arua
September 2016	Funeral, Terego	Terego
September 2016	Swearing in of Anglican Bishop	Arua
October 2016	Independence Day Celebrations	Arua/ Maracha
October 2016	Funeral rites in Onzivu	Arua
October 2016	House burning in Onzivu	Arua
October 2016	Thanks-giving post recovery in Onzivu	Arua
October 2016	Pentecostal Conference, Ediofe	Arua
November 2016	Funeral, Aroi	Arua
November 2016	Funeral Ediofe	Arua

November 2016	Thief Parade, Ediofe	Arua
November 2016	Marriage Introduction, Yole Clan	Terego (Arua)
December 2016	Mass Baptism, Onzivu Church	Arua
December 2016	LCV Thanksgiving	Maracha
December 2016	Annual Pilgrimage to Lodonga Minor Basilica	Yumbe
January 2017	Transfer of Ali, Buramali, Maracha	Maracha
January 2017	Sitting over false allegation of poisoning	Maracha
January 2017	Healing Mass, Simbili Eucharist Centre	Maracha
January 2017	New Dawn Crusade, Bethany Centre	Arua
January 2017	By-Law Writing, Terego	Arua
February 2017	Funeral, Adumi	Arua
Feb 2017 (-Jan 2018)	Healing Ministry, Vivian Ambe's Compound, Ewata	Arua
February 2017	Prayerful intervention, mysterious fires	Arua
February 2017	Ediofe Cathedral Consecration	Arua
March 2017	Mazi accusation against herbalist	Maracha
March 2017	Adultery Case	Maracha
March 2017	Vivian Ambe plus disciples, prayer pilgrimage to Goli	Nebbi
March 2017	Bethany weekly healing mass	Arua
April 2017	Easter Celebrations	Arua
May 2017	Healing Ministry, Ezaru Mary's Hut, Vurra	Arua
May 2017	Marriage Feast, Maracha	Maracha
May 2017	By-Law reading, Terego	Arua
June 2017	Land dispute, Terego	Arua

<i>Case</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Diviner</i>	<i>Explained by diviner or consultant</i>	<i>Affliction</i>	<i>Cause</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
1	Jan 17	Vivian	Grace (C)	Husband attacking wife	Orindi onzi possessing husband	Peace in home
2	Jan 17	Vivian	Grace sister	mother-in-law tried to send away, and for husband to marry an Alur	Prayers	peace
2	Jan 17	Vivian	Bosco (C)	Fires in home	Unpaid <i>avuta</i>	Clan reparations made
3	Feb 17	Vivian (plus other intercessors from Onzivu)	Sharon (C)	Mysterious fire, <i>boda boda</i> accident	Stepfather was a witchdoctor	Fires extinguished, Sharon returned to Koboko in April 2017
4	Feb 17	Vivian	Male Testimony	Unspecified misfortune	Revelation – because of visiting witchdoctors (spent 5M). Vivian instructed him to give 350,000 – 1/10 of the amount given to witchdoctors to God.	Peace at heart
5	Feb 17	Vivian	Female Testimony	Could not walk, stepped on a thorn (signifier of witchcraft)	Prayers, revelation about thorn	Can walk
6	Feb 17	Vivian	Female Testimony	Drunk, unemployed husband	Prayers	Job in Rwanda
7	Feb 17	Vivian	Female consultation	General sickness	Prayers over water, settle dispute with maternal relatives.	Settle with relatives, outcome unclear
8	Feb 17	Vivian	Female consultation	Unhappiness in marriage	in-laws saying, ‘what a tiny woman’.	n/a
9	Feb 17	Vivian	Female Consultation	General misfortune	“too much trouble here”	n/a
5	March 17	Vivian	Drajoru Beatrice (C)	Lameness plus neglect from husband	Charms in home manifesting in lizards, rats, cockroaches	Objects revealed, peace in home
6	March 17	Vivian	Amanio Rose (C)	No money in home, causing “heart to burn”	Prayers	Peace in heart, still no money
7	March 17	Vivian	Testimony (C)	Tension in home	Unspecified	Change in behaviours
8	March 17	Vivian	Atizuyo Viola (C)	Unspecified sickness, medication failed	Prayers - cause revealed by not specified	recovery

9	March 17	Vivian	Opinia Gertrude (C)	Unspecified sickness, medication failed	Prayers – not open to God	recovery
10	March 17	Vivian	Ajidiru Stella (C)	Weakness, arrogance of husband	Prayers	Peaceful relationship with husband, plus confidence: “[E]ven if there is sickness and poverty, I say ‘Jehovah, let your will be done.’”
11	April 17	Vivian	Testimony Elder Woman	Daughter’s child had oral thrush, temperate	Child washed with anointing water	Child recovered to attend school
12	April 17	Vivian	Testimony Matea (male)	Lameness, leg pain and unpaid debts	Prayers – unspecified	Pain relief, awaiting money
13	April 17	Vivian	Scovia Testimony	Unable to sell produce	Sprinkled holy water on foods	Began to sell
14	April 17	Vivan	Female Testimony	No business	Prayers	Received an order to make 500+ sportswear items
15	April 17	Vivian	Female testimony	Infertility	Prayers reveal snakes in womb because husband had visited witchdoctor	conceived
16	April 17	Vivian	Elderly Woman	Daughter bed-ridden for 5-months	Prayers	Can walk
17	April 17	Vivian	Patricia (C)	Breakdown of marriage, lack of job	Improper burial of mother	Awarded contract with NGO some months later
18	April 17	Vivian	Phillip (C)	Back pain, X-ray showed “bones were locking”. Took medicine for 1.5 years, no change	Anointing oil placed on back	No pain
18	May 17 (H)	Mary (personal experience)	Mary (D)	Sickness (mistook for HIV-positive)	Non-payment of bridewealth	Animals paid, sickness reversed

19	May 17 (H)	Mary	Mary (D)	Deaths and mysterious sickness in clan	step-mother acquired mayembe spirits from witchdoctor	Further deaths stopped
20	May 17	Mary	Rucu Jessica (C)	Unspecified	Sacrificed to mazi; local man let had acquired mazi	Prayers led to recovery and business collapsed
21	May 17	Mary	Anonymous woman (C)	Unspecified misfortunes	Prayers	Recovery in home
22	June 17	Vivian	Zaitun (C)	Lameness	Bridewealth debts	Mobility restored
25	Dec 17	Mary	Mary (D) – personal vision	Brother tried to chop with panga	No visions, payers with Father Mulago	Violence stopped, brother greets Mary
26	December 2017	Mary	Mary (D)	3 miscarriages	Mother-in-law acquired charms, removed from compound in Terego	pregnant
	December 2017	Mary	Mary (D)	Stepping on thorn, mysterious sickness	Aruba, curse results when family members take each other to court	Sitting arranged
27	December 2017	Mary	Mary (D)	Female school pupil, vomiting blood	Mazi spirits	Pupil recovered, vomiting transferred to Mary
28	December 2017	Mary	Mary (D)	Possession of pupils in Manibe school	Mazi spirits	Recovery of pupils
29	December 2017	Mary	Mary (D)	“deadly sickness” of girl in Ajia	Abiba	Prayers, girl recovered
30	January 18	Vivan	Nguma Grant (C)	Swelling of stomach; discharges from hospital	Mua acquired by grandmother	Stomach swelling decreased

