# SYMBOLS OF SUFFERING AND SILENCE

## MEMORIALISATION IN UGANDA AND BEYOND

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**THESIS ABSTRACT**

This thesis consists of a collection of seven essays that address issues of representation, memorialisation and symbolic reparations. Employing a primarily ethnographic approach, it reveals different forms and functions of memory in the aftermath of mass violence. Together, these essays argue for a more nuanced way of understanding how governments, survivors, heritage practitioners, humanitarians, artists and development actors utilise conflict memories, sometimes revealing narrative gaps entrenched in silence. These insights are useful for a better conceptualisation of symbolic repair within the fields of transitional justice, critical heritage and memory studies.

Each essay, addresses different geographical and material aspects of conflict memory to create a mosaic of perspectives with a primary focus on Uganda. The Ugandan case studies explore three regions of the country: the Luwero Triangle, Northern Uganda and the Rwenzori Mountain region. Each case shows the need to approach memory work with different types of evidence, including museum displays, monuments, material culture remains from humanitarian assistance, oral literature, sites of trauma, artworks and popular culture. Such evidence both informs the analysis and extends the kinds of data suitable for critical heritage research.

Taken together, the essays in this thesis argue that in nations recovering from multiple violent conflicts, whose recovery is absent of holistic state-driven processes for memorialisation, it is critical to understand the everyday negotiations of memory as well as the artistic approaches to repair. Furthermore, the collection highlights the significant role that globalised systems of representation, assistance and peacebuilding have on memory projects within and outside the Ugandan context. Overall, this thesis constitutes a critique of the expectations placed on memory work to repair societies, given the contextual and political barriers to implementing conventional memory projects. By its end, it advocates for a less didactic and more dialogical approach to memorialisation, making space for meaningful work that does not mimic Euro-American models of remembrance.

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## ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| ADF | Allied Democratic Front |
| ARLPI | Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative |
| AVSI | Associazione Volontari per il Servizio Internazionale |
| DGF | Democratic Governance Facility |
| GoU | Government of Uganda |
| HIV/AIDS | Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection and Acquired |
| ICC | International Criminal Court |
| ICRC | International Committee for the Red Cross |
| IDP | Internally Displaced Person |
| INGO | International Nongovernmental Organisation |
| JRP | Justice and Reconciliation Project |
| LRA | Lord's Resistance Army |
| CMM | Commission for Museums and Monuments |
| NALU | National Army for the Liberation of Uganda |
| NMPDC | National Memory and Peace Documentation Centre |
| NGO | Non-governmental Organization |
| NRA | National Resistance Army |
| NRM | National Resistance Movement |
| ObB | Obudingha bwa Bamba (Kingdom of Bamba) |
| ObR | Obusinga bwa Rwenzururu (Kingdom of Rwenzururu) |
| RLP | Refugee Law Project |
| TJ | Transitional Justice |
| TT | Travelling Testimonies |
| TVF | Trust Fund for Victims |
| UPDF | Uganda Peoples Defence Force |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNOCHA | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |
| WFP | World Food Programme |

# PART I

**INTRODUCTION**

## INTRODUCTION

Caring for the deceased is one of the oldest human behaviours known. Recognising that the dead are indicators of shared humanity, UNESCO has listed numerous sites of burial on its World Heritage List. Like physical sites of the entombed, rock art and funerary effigies have also been part of the symbolic ways societies represent and commune with ancestors, rendering the dead present. In the last century, new symbolic repertories have emerged to commemorate death by recognising the perils of modern warfare. However, a proliferation of traumatic memory that is embedded in modern memorials has been contested, revealing a range of political struggles and power dynamics.

Different scholarly approaches are used to study past violence and memorialisation. Anthropologists, sociologists, historians, linguists, psychoanalysts and neuroscientists have each been concerned with *how* cultures, communities and individuals remember: asking what is transmitted, what is triggering and if it is possible to have a collective memory. In the fields of political science, international relations and law, scholars have focused on how memory and memorialisation contribute to (or disrupt) efforts for justice, peacebuilding, reconciliation, nation-building and truth-seeking. Art historians, architects and heritage scholars tend to focus on the aesthetic and material forms of remembrance that symbolically represent the past into the present. In recognition of this broad and interlinking set of literatures, the essays that form this PhD are fundamentally interdisciplinary, yet rooted in applied anthropological methods, for example the practice of curating memorials in collaboration with war-affected people.

The core focus of this doctoral research is on the social dynamics between the authors of memorial heritage in Uganda—victims, survivors, government officials, ex-combatants, international and private donors,

families of the deceased, solidarity groups, humanitarian agencies and artists—and the spatial, material, or intangible memorials they produce. Through interviews, participant observation, curation and visual culture analysis, I look critically at the agendas of memorial makers in order to evaluate their work in a post-conflict context, adopting Viejo-Rose's (2013) claim that the majority of post-conflict scenarios are never fully "post-", and must instead be understood as occupying an arc of time rather than a clear breakage with the past. I interrogate memorialisation furthermore in light of transitional justice's recent inclusion of symbolic reparations, as well as the desire to include memorials into peacebuilding efforts after war. This line of inquiry asks, for example: is listing a mass grave on a national "register of sites" a ruling government's way of apologising, or is it a concessionary outcome of traumatised communities' demands?

This collection of six essays aims to investigate a range of memorial processes (memorialisation) and contemporary scholarly work on memory to better understand the role of sites, symbols and intangible heritage in both short-term and long-term contexts of post-war Uganda. The focus is on mass violence committed in three regional conflicts (Luwero, Northern Uganda, and the Rwenzori Mountain region) as well as associated forms of violence like forced displacement. The conflict lens for this research is in distinct to other work on large-scale death or loss resulting from epidemics like HIV and AIDS, Ebola, natural disasters such as earthquakes or floods, or conjoined natural-political events such as mass starvation. Yet all these catastrophic losses are recognised as unique when compared to socially acceptable rates of mortality, and are often commemorated as social events. As heritage and mortuary scholars have shown, the ways in which we treat our dead individually and the ways in which nations fashion heroes, for example, are

substantially different. Sometimes the marker for a particular slain “hero” lies removed from their place of death, or in other cases their family has no relationship with the monument. While mass graves can also be symbolic markers of a nation’s collective loss, many casualties of war do not have dignified burials.

In modern wars dead bodies have typically been honoured in aesthetic forms such as walls of names, monuments, or annual days of remembrance. These recognisable symbols are meant to reinforce the citizen’s alliance with the state in a collective memory. In such instances, the dead become agents invoked both through narratives and through symbols to inform citizens of the legacies of unrest in past times. In extreme cases like the Holocaust or Rwandan genocide against the Tutsis, the dead bodies and the condition of their demise can become agents of state control over the past.[1] Verdery (1999) terms this as “the political lives of dead bodies” whereby mass mortality and abnormal death become symbolic capital in which “nationalism is thus a kind of ancestor worship, a system of patrilineal kinship, in which national heroes occupy the place of clan elders in defining the nation as a noble lineage”(46). Importantly for my analysis, the conflicts addressed are civil and regional wars within Uganda. The case studies I discuss have experienced state and international military action or negligence, as well as being influenced by a host of international aid agencies working in the aftermath of war. Such a complex post-conflict context means that commemoration can be susceptible to the aesthetic influence of a multiplicity of actors. As such, the political lives of dead bodies extend from intimate family dynamics into mediated realms like digital social media campaigns to fundraise for distant sufferers.

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1. See Reyntjens 2010; Major 2015; Said 2004, to name a few.

Scholars have come to understand that political negotiations concerned with past violence are mediated through and beyond the body or the grave as a primary site of trauma. This is an intangible component that Major and Fontein (2015) describe as the "corporealities of violence". In their view, it is in the enactment of the in-between space of the body and the political sphere that meaningful interpretation can be rooted. Stepputat (2014) has, in this regard, insisted that to see how the dead are governed, one must analyse the materialities of human remains—never assuming any consistent logic to how each abnormal death is treated. Accordingly, this doctoral research examines what remains of and what surrounds the dead, in particular the symbolic representations of mass violence, or the erasure of that reality, leaving traces of traumatic events that endure in people's everyday lives.

To contextualise violence and memory within processes of nation-building, eminent memory scholar Pierre Nora (1989) has called symbolic spaces the *lieux de mémoire*, translated as "sites of memory" (7). In Nora's context of France, the projects of remembrance create new social contracts beyond the direct communication between the living and the dead: contracts such as between the citizen and the state, between a victim and a perpetrator. Nora further defines a sense of newness whereby remembrance efforts are rooted in a moral imperative that invokes a universalising "duty to remember"—an imperative that differs sharply from the culturally-specific funerary practices typically investigated by anthropologists and archaeologists. Such sites are, essentially, political projects, and nowhere more than in at sites of mass death or mass violence—sites that form a major portion of the case studies for this doctoral research.

While the framing of memorials as political agents may be mainstream for heritage scholars, human rights and development actors

often consider memorials as benevolent or necessary spaces for people to grieve over their dead, frequently including memorials in the list of moves for accountability through symbolic recognition. Such collective grieving is assumed to usher society into a kind of shared understanding of the past, and as a necessary part of building liberal democracy after transition from war or authoritarian governance (de Greiff 2009). The process of recognition imbued to memorials is a soft-justice for the slain, articulated through a perceived truth that resides in marked graves, and including the normative assumption that gravesites will be visited and revered in a sombre, habitual way. As this research demonstrates, memorialisation, even within one country, is hardly universal: indeed, these practices can even co-opt the dead for the end of material redistribution in post-war contexts. To be clear, this is not because the dead fail to occupy an important space within local cosmologies.

To be specific, most Euro-American forms of memorialisation do not adhere to everyday engagements Ugandans have with the dead.[2] As a result, commemorative events at mass gravesites can be turned into staging grounds for other social and political negotiations relating to material reparations or ongoing efforts for self-determination. In the absence of material reparations or political transition, however, war-affected peoples across Uganda manoeuvre in creative ways to access the public goods that their state has denied them. Adopting European and North American memorial aesthetics, within peacebuilding programs is one way in which survivors access post-war reconstruction support. Building on what Caravani (2018) has termed "aid literacy" in the context of the Karamojong populations in Uganda, alliances formed around memorials are part of a larger process of negotiating aid to

2. Euro-American is a term that encapsulates mostly Western European and North American systems that are often referred to as 'western' or 'global north.' I prefer to use the term Euro-American because it more accurately locates the social issues. Note that in Uganda the term "western" has its own intra-national cultural, linguistic, and political meaning.

assist in narrating violent pasts. For Edmondson (2018) this reality casts a "shadow of empire", producing a cyclical relationship between the collaborative presentation of atrocity and the desire for moving beyond abject suffering.[3]

When negotiating the duty to remember collective violence, post-conflict societies are almost always challenged with the question of whether to remember the loss or to support efforts to forget, to "move on". In the absence of memorialisation, conditions of silence and erasure manifest, leaving gaps in cultural memory that can further marginalise victims or even produce spiritual unrest from unidentified human remains. Uganda as a site for research shows a simultaneous building and unbuilding of the shared conflict histories with both sites of memory that narrate a national mythology and at the same time memorial sites that are political targets during ongoing moments of unrest. These complex realties pose challenges to transitional justice actors working within the country who advocate for, and implement, projects around memorialisation, as well as groups whose war-histories are suppressed. As a result, it brings into question whose duty is it to remember and who has the power to represent the past.

If, then, societies are to remember their slain peoples—and the kinds of violence that occurred beyond bodily harm such as displacement, misrepresentation, or cultural attacks—what form and function would that memorial process take? In the six essays that follow, I interrogate this question directly, analysing both tangible and intangible memorial processes to present a multitude of remembrance strategies—strategies that range from remembering forced displacement through aid rations to emergent artistic practices for renegotiating representational wounds in Uganda. Memorialisation can take the forms

3. Edmondson is building off of Fassin and Rechman's (2009) work on the production of victims as part of a social projects for governance under the umbrella of trauma.

of solidarity, performativity in rites and rituals, or the shaping of national or ethnonational identity. Examining remembrance through museums, monuments, material culture, public commemorations, oral history and contemporary art occupies an intersection between the fields of cultural memory studies, critical heritage research and transitional justice.

Underpinning this research is the notion that yoking memories of past violence into the present, through strategies for remembrance, employs the dead to address certain social, cultural and political needs. I recognise that as a scholar of memory and a maker of memorial exhibitions, I am implicated in the politics of memory. I take a decided position that is on the one hand critical of my practice and those who employ the duty to remember as a tool for peacebuilding, while on the other hand revealing silenced pasts of marginalised survivors of conflict as form of decolonial scholarship. Indeed, memory work is not a neutral practice, either as a researcher or curator. There are certain dilemmas inherent in collecting data around past conflicts as well as ongoing civil unrest. My characterisation of memorialisation as process, coupled with my reflexivity, means that PhD contribution, while potent in it's articulation, is also humble in it's claims. As discussed in the methodology sections, I recognise the co-produced nature of this work, making it most evident in the two co-authored essays. Overall, there is a gathering-in of local knowledges to make space for new ways of understanding memorialisation in Uganda.

## Converging Scholarship: Between Cultural Memory, Heritage Research and Transitional Justice

To lay the background for this research, in what follows I present some of the ways in which scholarship on memorialisation has emerged over time and across disciplines. I address different academic approaches to the study of memorialisation, including the

work done on and in African contexts. An interdisciplinary introduction of scholarship charts a trajectory for this collection of essays, revealing how a investigation into memorial processes in Uganda requires an understanding of cultural memory studies, heritage research and transitional justice. These fields are read as companions to each other, done in such a way that theoretical anchors and empirical analysis converge. There are plenty of debates that can be found in within cultural memory studies, heritage research and transitional justice. Rather than belabouring any specific ones, I have chosen to highlight the usefulness of certain perspectives while paying attention to the work done in different African contexts.

When examining African conflicts, there is a tendency to employ memories across social science disciplines to explain historical, cultural, or political trends without paying much attention to the narrative or material conditions of recall (Becker 2011). In response to this trend, a rich, albeit small, literature has emerged to explore different issues in memory, heritage and transition as they relate to memorialisation. I here outline some of these key contributions before explaining how the thesis enhances and extends this work. Note that while the set of essays in this thesis refers to ethnographies of burial or funerary rites that should be associated with a study on memorialisation, I do not specifically focus on issues of "ritual" or "ancestor veneration" mainly because I do not want to reduce or essentialise people into ethnic typologies in which such ethnographic research is often formed. My study does take into account unique cultural ways of remembering, being primarily concerned with how the politics of memorialisation is entangled with broader, often global, issues in Uganda.

Erll's (2008) description of cultural memory studies is a useful framework because it is not locked into ethnographic ways of knowing.

Rather she explains a transdisciplinary area of research that is focused on "those ways of making sense of the past which are intentional and performed through narrative, and which go hand in hand with the construction of identities" (2).[4] My research builds on this by investigating how memory is socially constructed and instrumentalised in the material world, through different forms of memorialisation. The recent distinction of cultural memory studies, within this collection of essays, is thus read alongside two other emergent scholarly fields, heritage research and transitional justice. While none of these fields deals exclusively with conflict-related memory, they have all become concerned with the role memory and its many manifestations have to play in addressing past violence. In research terms, the question asked is: for what purpose is memory activated?

Much of the scholarship on post-war memorialisation is often highly theoretical and frequently focused on the experiences of Europeans and North Americans in post-WWII contexts. As a result of the so called "memory-boom", exhibitions and memorials around the Holocaust, and genocide more broadly, have been a central part of how societies confront violence after the events of war or oppression. In the process of transition out of war and authoritarian rule, spaces of memory are incorporated into strategies for peacebuilding under the assertion that visitors will learn from the events of mass atrocities, and therefore subscribe to the tenet of "never again" (Brett, Bickford, Sevecenko and Rios 2007). Yet there is increasing interest in evaluating how monuments and memorial museums achieve these aims of healing and reconciliation (Buckley- Zistel and Schafer et al. 2015; Apsel and Sodaro

4. Halbwachs's is known for developing ideas of collective memory within French sociological theory, whereas Jeffery Olick is credited with expanding the term and scholarly work into a more present debate around conflict related memory in social contexts. Discussions on cultural memory studies have been developed by Adleia Assmann and contributors to key volumes such as Memory in the Global Age (2010) and Cultural memory studies: an international and interdisciplinary handbook (2008).

et al. 2020. Indeed, post-conflict and post-colonial countries in Africa have become part of a commemorative phenomenon Gabowitsch (2017) calls "replicating atonement", a kind of global movement that has "political pressures within asymmetrical power relations, with effects that range from the emancipatory to the repressive" (3). The present systems of display and alliances of memory that originated in the 1980s create particular frameworks of aesthetics and meaning, and now appear in exhibitions that themselves become tangible markers of human-rights solidarity.

There remains a gap scholarship for understanding contemporary memorialisation, leaving ample room for my contributions in two ways: first, my methods and conclusions are drawn from practice-based insights, and second, my case studies are not only African in geography but often postcolonial, providing a contrast to the majority of case studies found in the literature. Useful for the essays in this collection is the most recent era of memory studies that has taken into account issues of forgetting, counter-monuments, grassroots memorials and affect. This decolonial, contextually-embedded work opens up needed space for analysis on African struggles for independence, self-determination and reparations.

I aim to take a decolonizing approach to this literature overview, only giving a brief space to the dearth of Euro-American studies on memory and memorialisation and challenging the perspectives of memory-positivists who overprescribe what memory can and should do. As is made clear in the later section on methodology and methods, this thesis relies mostly on, and departs from, lived experiences, both my own as a curator and those of people who survived conflict in Uganda. In this way, I follow Tuhiwai Smith's warning to academic researchers to pay attention to the powers of imperialism and colonialism that are realised

through investigations undertaken by outsiders (2012). Conversely, she encourages a perspective that understands theory as a generative process between indigenous needs and efforts for co-production.

*Memory Studies*

Over the last fifty years history, anthropology, sociology and many other disciplines have all engaged "the memory-turn", resulting in a vast literature that interrogates the phenomenological, cosmopolitan and transnational aspects of memory-based research. According to Huyssen (2015), the "global spread of memory discourses first emerged in the 1970s, gained steam in the 1980s, and reached inflationary proportions in the 1990s" (27). Winter (2000) has termed this period the "memory boom" to describe a professional and scholarly preoccupation with post-war memory. Soyinka, however, approached it as part of an active set of political negotiations, pronouncing a "fever of atonement" for guilty parties and through processes of blame and shame that relate to reconciliation and truth (1998, 90). According to Berliner (2005), however, no comprehensive anthropological tracing of the memory-turn has yet taken place. This is because memory studies has no specificdisciplinary anchor, instead requiring each scholar to select which aspects of the field are useful for their inquiry.

Much of the modern scholarship on memory departs from the philosophical work of Halbwachs (1980; 1992) who sought to understand a socially-informed collective memory. His contributions give credence to the social and political dimensions of memory recall as they manifested in language, religion, family, class and other shared social groupings. Like both Nora and Halbwachs, Bloch (1998; 2012), an anthropologist, was concerned with the ways in which memory could be utilised for interpreting culture. Furthermore, Misztal (1989) and Connerton (2009) have been pivotal in trying to outline the specific mechanisms

by which societies remember and forget. Expanding this work, scholars have also detailed how memory can be linked to issues of time, narrative and discourse, specifically with the capacity to articulate the past in the present (Ricoeur 2004, Klien 2000). In particular, theorists have focused in on violence and trauma as it related to social projects of remembrance (Antze and Lambek et al. 1996).

Nikro and Hegasy (2017) are critical of much of the foundational literature on memory, especially Halbawachs. They argue that too many scholars have tried to fixate a social construct for studying memory that does not hold. In their work on Lebanon and Morocco, they argue for a more processual and indexical approach. In their view, such an approach can make space for more marginal voices, often found outside the analytical lens of the nation-state or within alternative forms of evidence expressed through popular culture or efforts for justice from victims. Similarly, Azoulay (2020) advocates for a process of historical inquiry in which the researcher stops transferring ways of knowing from imperial structures into postcolonial spaces. She describes this "unlearning" as a mechanism to complicate the go-to scholarly forms of evidence used to describe experiences or identities as fixed facts or events.

Such critiques are valuable because discourses around events of past wars often follow a binary reading of history around victors and losers. In this way memorials are used either to show sameness or to define an "other" (Booth 2006). Shared trauma is then remembered on behalf of the state or amongst allies to project a universality onto individuals (Huyssen 2011). Shared identity construction through the recruitment of a collective memory can break with the trauma and encourage ideas of progress (Kattago 2015). Progress of post-war reconstruction is then shared as a collective memory beyond the state

into a perceived human way of relating to and remembering past violence. This process of universalising shared trauma has become part of the foundation for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a protocol that acts as a normative framework for international law and codes of ethics for humanitarian and development intervention (Jay Winter 2013).

Despite this effort to enshrine memory into shared identities, memorials are often constructed for a range of aims. According to Sontag (2003) memory does not have an intrinsically collective characteristic, rather the interpretations of the past are a political act mediated by images and narratives. Booth (2006) explains how memory can be instrumentalised to create social contracts or institute civic habits through memorials. What is important for the analysis presented throughout the essays is how the instrumentalisation of traumatic memories produce certain types of histories (Caruth 1991) or work to govern the dead (Stepputat 2014). Furthermore, these memory scholars provide a framework to understand the impacts of memory work and determine how they interact with strategies for repair (Edkins 2003), reconciliation (Rigney 2012) or transnational solidarity (Rigney 2018).

Memory studies scholars show how power struggles are illuminated through a tracing of the intentions of actors involved in memory-recall of violent pasts. As part of the memory-turn, historians of African nations have described how liberation movements unbuild the colonial narrative imposed upon African peoples. In doing so, the independence and the identity formations of the post-colony authorise a new discourse, often centred on the power of a new elite base. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems (2009) describe in the Zimbabwean context how citizen identity has been fashioned around revolutionary movements in the aftermath of war. In Werbner's (1998) edited volume *Memory in the Post-colony*,

for instance, contributors develop a set of analyses that investigates the material and social conditions for remembering as a critique of power espoused in the colonial era. Becker (2011), furthermore, has reflected on trends in memory scholarship in east and Southern Africa to show new trajectories for research. Such as how defining the "hero-isiation" is in the independence projects of countries like Zimbabwe and Namibia (Becker and Lenz, 2013). These contributions to the literature show that the destabilising of colonial power, however necessary, often gave way for new elites to assume authority over historical interpretation that often consolidated the past into a moment of independence.

Interestingly, memory work in post-colonial Africa has often followed the imperial formula of remembrance: national days of commemoration, public monuments, museums, exhibitions and even school curricula all fall within the remit of aligning citizens with perceived, agreed-upon values in remembering the past. These forms of transmission create a "state memory" that situates the citizen's identity within its sovereign sense of heritage, as belonging to iconic state symbols and ideas (Nora 1996; Ricoeur 2004). Memory applied "from above" constitutes what Bell (2003) calls a "governing mythology" (64) whereby the transitional state decides which past is to be remembered, when it can be voiced, and what material constitutes acceptable, valid forms of representation. As described in Essay One, actions concretised into history without any traces of contestation build up what Smith (2006) has conceptualised as an "authorised heritage discourse": such discourse is critical to national identity, and demarcates the icons and symbols used to signify the state.

Erll's (2010) conceptualisation of a "symbolic order" of cultural memory is useful for investigating the governance of memory in the aftermath of civil conflicts. She describes the order as including "the

media, institutions, and practices by which social groups construct a shared past" (5). The symbolic orders can compose the units for "communicative memory" (Jan Assmann 2011) and "instructive forgetting" (Connerton 2008). In Jan Assmann's schema, the transmission of past events determines what *should* be remembered, just as in Connerton's schema, the process of forgetting signals what *could* be remembered. Together Jan Assmann and Connerton help to lay out the intentions for representation (remember to learn), as well as the limitations (only particular histories are represented). The transmission and selection of traumatic histories thus becomes part of how narratives and images become politically utilised (Edkins 2003). The forms of witnessing gleaned from first-hand accounts can be transformed into a post-event memory, eventually assimilated into a cultural imaginings (Marianne Hirsch 2012; Jan Assmann 2003).

Authors writing about Africa have been able to expand the scholarship on conflict memory to develop context-specific readings of symbolic orders. Ndebele (1998) urges greater attention to narrative and representational capacities for understanding mass violence so that experiential truths can be valued as much as forensic ones. Similarly, Coetzee and Nuttall (1998) have outlined the aesthetic relationships to belonging in post-apartheid South Africa. Kasfir (2005) explains how contemporary artists in Kenya use their mediums to both make sense of the Embassy Bombings as well as to chart a peaceable further without terror. Scholars like Ezeigbo (2000) and Soyinka (1998) turn to fiction for new terrains of imagining a post-civil war Nigeria, one that recognises the unsettled nature of history in the country but still resists the erasure of Biafran stories from historical records. This work forms part of a body of literature spanning across different contexts within post-colonial Africa that derives evidence from survivors, everyday citizens and

contemporary artworks. Such scholarship counterbalances the historical focus on elites from a state-centred point of view.

*Heritage Research*

As has been described above, memory studies scholarship pays attention to the narrative and power relations embedded in the recall of violent pasts, as well as the social phenomenology of shared identity formation. Heritage research, when tending to difficult histories, is often concerned with the interpretations of tangible remains that are found in places like battlefields, mass graves or physical sites designed for the representation of conflict memory such as museums or monuments. The two areas of research are intricately connected, yet divergent in certain respects. This is mostly true in the interdisciplinary nature of the fields, for example an archaeologist or architect would conduct heritage research whereas a sociologist or linguist would more likely be rooted in memory studies. As Viejo-Rose points out the social and political debates in memory scholarship help to contextualise heritage as more than "old things" (2015, 2).

Heritage scholarship has developed a useful vocabulary for analysing memorials and the attendant interpretations. Disagreement about perspectives of a perceived shared past has been referred to as "dissonant heritage" (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996). Or as Sharon Macdonald (2009) has observed, memories of war and memorial manifestations together create a "difficult heritage" that becomes less about venerating heroes and more about understanding (even rehearsing) the pain—as Turnbridge and Ashworth call it, "heritage that hurts". This pain can reside in the idea of places as affective agents, meaning that a given place or its difficult heritage can trigger non-discursive, sensorial reactions.

Riffing off of ethnographic work, scholars describe "encounters" between heritage and audiences who survived conflict and those who are tourists. In this way, heritage sites and museums in particular, create a "contact zone" (Clifford 1997). These zones recognise an imbalance of power often associated with the colonial collection of indigenous objects and the civilising mission of museums in the colonial era. Heritage scholars within this tradition of thinking understand that the process of collecting and interpreting culture has developed from a particular vantage point to exhibit the other (Kratz and Karp 2006).

Museums and monuments have been the heritage of colonial pasts left to African nations and as well as spaces where new memorials have been erected (Peterson 2015). For the purpose of this thesis I move beyond the debates of what to do with colonial heritage in the post-independence era, and towards a better understand the newly constructed, site-specific interpretations conflict. These tangible and intangible forms of heritage express traumatic histories, sometimes with the aims of healing communities. One famous museological example that has received much attention in the literature is the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre in Rwanda. Memorial work in Rwanda has become a go-to case study for scholars working on conflict in Africa.

Many scholars have written about this iconic heritage site as a representation of the genocide against the Tutsis as well as a space to align identity formations built on a solidarity of shared trauma. The exhibits within the museum are deeply personal and full of historical descriptors used to communicate the human scale of the tragedy (Jinks 2014). What is interesting for my research is the ways in which scholars observe the transnational and donor-influenced aspects of this memorial development (Sodaro 2011). Ibreck (2013) explains that donors worked to shape the memorial project, in part because of the politics of regret

(Olick 2007). In this regard, Giblin (2017) points out that the KGMC does more than just supports the state and survivors, it also participates in legitimising the "never again" narrative to dignitaries and foreign nationals.

Discussions of memorial heritage as shown by the case of Rwanda reveals a tension between ensuring the new national identity, supporting survivors and developing the universal aims of never again. Reading monuments and memorial sites in a way that reveals the power of who has the authority to recall the past in public places points directly to a politics of memory. Thus, the socio-political analysis by scholars such as Olick (2007), Misztal (2003), Barkan (2001), and Bell (2006), is compatible with the heritage research that is focused on the material culture of post war remembrance projects. Their work tends to define how and why memories are transformed into political tools, or how memorials become necessary for the formation of identities within societies or nations. In particular they identify guilt, shame or solidarity as driving forces for consolidating memory within memorials. The socially constructed binding agents identified by these scholars work to answer "why" societies would choose to remember, invoking a range of moral imperatives not necessarily explicit in the post-war projects.

There is also a shared understanding amongst scholars that memorials often do things that they were not originally intended for. Ndebele (2010), Marschall (2004) and Tunamsifu (2018) point out the ways in which memorials in South Africa and DRC respectively keep present a discourse of reparations, serving as a locus of debate for the needs of transitioning societies. In these instances the memorials were designed to venerate heroes or remember casualties of war. However, their continued presence in a public space paired with the unfulfilled promises of repair meant that they were used places for contestation. This blended destabilisation of memorials is clearly revealed

in the “fallism” movement that began in South Africa and has held an interlinking relationship between protests, education, inequality and monumental heritage (Frank and Ristic 2020). These texts point to a more recent turn in scholarship that tends to perpetually unsettled pasts whereby symbolic spaces show a range of negotiations such as the needs of adequate, multi-vocal, representation and the survivor needs for material reparation. In some cases the images and interpretive text become narrative agents for the dead who cannot speak (Scary 1985).

*Transitional Justice*

The utilitarian role of memorials and traumatic memories is most clearly seen in peacebuilding efforts that views victim participation in memorials as a form of justice. According to Ricoeur (2004), “It is justice that turns memory into a project; and it is this same project of justice that gives the form of the future and of the imperative to the duty of memory” (87). Transitional justice (TJ), charts a path for memory to be employed for just aims. Social transformation within TJ works through memory by externalising trauma as a form of witness, truth-telling and means of creating symbolic repair. The aim is to support democratic transitions by offering an adaptive set of mechanisms that can shape institutions to ignite social healing (Teitel 2003). Officially-recognised pillars of TJ include lustration, judicial initiatives, truth-telling, institutional reform, traditional justice, reparations and, crucially, memorialisation. The 2011 World Development Report referenced TJ as a system that can “define a healthy new form of nationhood”, and made explicit reference to how Germany has warned of “the dangers of totalitarianism” in part through “the establishment of sites of remembrance and education throughout the country, including former concentration camps” (166). It is within this framework of transitional justice as a toolkit—employed across Uganda—for peacebuilding, state-building and social cohesion that normative

ideas and lived realities interact.

At present, tensions between peacebuilding scholars and practitioners show a disconnect between principles and actions. Discourses embedded in UN principles, guidelines and reports push back against everyday lived counter-discourses (Zanotti 2011). Negotiating the usefulness of the past for the present and future creates a form of Habermasian public deliberation (1992, 1998), in which peaceable democratic communities require healthy open debates to discuss issues of importance. Key to this research is witnessing horizontal negotiations across diverse memory groups: such negotiations demonstrate that memory, as a set of propositions and actions regarding past conflicts, can refashion national narratives and expand thinking about sites of violence beyond the physical space into larger geographic and social terrains. Put simply, ideal democratic societies would have transparent process of memorial commissioning as well as open debate around the usefulness of memorials for peace in the transitional society. Described in Essay One, Uganda is not a ideal context to see this utopian use of memory for democratic aims. Through a complication of national memory I show how the original intentions of ruling elites are undermined by TJ projects, even decades after the conflict is over.

Such a tension is present in many post-colonial African states that have inherited Euro-American formats for nation-building that include designated heritage sites and a museology of understanding the past through codified, expert-driven interpretations of history. Transitional justice, moreover, has been popularised in post-war Africa; here memorialisation and symbolic reparations are part of recommendations built into truth commissions or new legislation. The International Center for Transitional Justice currently cites 15 African nations under their umbrella

of work.[5] In examining issues of memory and memorialisation after mass violence, the dominance of South Africa as a case study is striking. Rwanda, too, has become an iconic African case study. This is not unsurprising, given their well-documented projects of transitional justice in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, and the hybrid approach of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the Gacaca Courts. Working in these contexts one must recognise the post-colonial, global and transnational nature of memorial practices within nation-building and transitional justice.

Despite the rich literature on transitional justice in Africa, significant gaps remain in its conceptualisation of "symbolic reparations" and subsequent strategies for implementation (Bukeima 2012, Hamber 2012). Pablo de Grieff, the UN Special Rapporteur for the Right to Remedy and Reparation, explained that this is because the field is dominated by lawyers and political scientists whose work tends towards more conventional aspects of justice, even if these actors do recognise the need for engaging the symbolic needs of transition.[6] It is precisely this gap that the volume *Memorials in Times of Transition* (Buckley-Zistel and Schäfer et al. 2014) addresses. Other edited volumes and special issues in publications such as *The International Journal of Transitional Justice* have sought to explore different features of memorialisation within transitional justice, such as the performative aspects or the interrogation of artistic endeavours and aesthetic terrains.[7] This "symbolic turn" recognises that: "To ignore or overlook culture is to deprive ourselves of a valuable prism for understanding and responding more appropriately to the complex TJ needs of each specific society" (Mani 2011, 547). Put simply, in order to

5. ICTJ lists: Algeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Burundi, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, the Gambia, Kenya, Liberia, Morocco, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, South Sudan, Tunisia and Uganda.

6. de Greiff, Report by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, A/69/518, 8 October 2014.

7. See *The International Journal of Transitional Justice,* Volume 14, Special Issue on Arts, March 2020.

approach a meaningful system of reparations, an appropriate response to symbolic repair must understand the cultural terms and conditions of harm done during a given conflict.

Symbolic reparations are not merely as Torpey (2006) has articulated "to make whole what has been smashed," because sometimes the harm done destroys cultural mechanisms so completely that societies cannot remember their rituals and rites prior to the violence (Killean and Moffett 2020). Thus an approach to symbolic reparations might require the making of new traditions rather than a mere restoration of the past that has been irrevocably changed by the conflict. This tension within the field is a key avenue of inquiry for my research, given that on the one hand newness is accepted as central to the discourse of post-war nation-building projects, yet on the other hand traditional approaches to symbolic reparations remain fixated on realist (if not legalistic) and quantifiable representations of the past.

When non-state actors engage the authority and ownership of yoking memory form past conflicts into the present for the building of heritage it often implies a pointed aim. Pablo de Greiff (2004) has referred to "cultural interventions" to describe those contributions to transition after authoritarian rule or war. Such interventions often lie outside mainstream institutional reconstruction efforts of TJ and reflect different ways of communicating the past in the present. De Greiff argues for a more rigorous engagement with these types of interventions to arrive at a place where victims can be more visible within a society through memorials as a kind of reflexive-examination of violent pasts (11-26). Such work is part of the victim-centred approach undertaken by transitional justice actors. However, little attention is being paid to the role of memory and heritage in the cultural interventions.

Bringing together de Greiff's notion of cultural intervention with

the development of heritage in Africa shows a long legacy of outsider involvement in the development of new shared identities after conflict. Such examples include the remaking of national museums that house controversial collections in Kenya (Lagat 2017), collaborations with scholars who seek out decolonial investigations in South Africa (Boast 2011), or the creation of exhibitions about historical leaders in Uganda (Peterson, Vokes and Abiti 2021). Following scholarship that recognises the agents involved in memorial development, I can return to the question of power embedded in the guiding research question of: Who makes memorials in Uganda? The tension between visualising victim experiences and doubling down on national discourse, that are identified in the literature on cultural memory and heritage, become seemingly irreconcilable in the Ugandan context. Despite the frictions, however, the political negations continue over who owns the past and therefore who has the right to narrate it.

Together, the range of scholarship from cultural memory studies and heritage research has helped me define an approach to memorialisation that seeks out meaning at sites of trauma, paying attention to the social concerns that surround them and recognising that there are often multiple and competing interpretations of historical events. As a result, memory- and heritage-based investigations require a certain ability to read into the power structures that dictate public expressions of past violence. As a researcher of these ongoing processes and former curator of exhibitions under the TJ umbrella, I tend to critique the state-authorised narratives in Uganda. In doing so, my scholarship contributes to an unsettling of the past by documenting evidence that may contradict the governing mythology or advocate for other forms of liberation. I undertake an evaluation of symbolic orders manifesting across different case studies, revealing a set of culturally-based

interventions.

*Contributions and Ways Forward*

In this overview three fields three field of literature have converged: cultural memory studies, heritage research and transitional justice. Together they provide a framework for my study of memorialisation in Uganda. I integrate this scholarship throughout the essays by both tending to the global administrators of authorised heritage as well as the more nuanced and local relevance or rejection of memory projects. There is value in both the foundational contributions of memory scholars and the contemporary critiques. I employ these in two ways. First, the early memory scholars developed a useful language for the field, one that is based on their observations of how museums, archives, testimonies, monuments and sites relate to a cultural or national understanding of conflict. The scholarship emanating from post-colonial settings is helpful for this thesis because the research expands debates into contexts where conflicts are still ongoing or where transitions have been incomplete. Incorporating both strands of scholarship to address different issues means that this thesis progresses from a more normative discussion on memory and counter-memory in the contemporary nation, as seen in Essay One, to analysing contemporary artworks as visual interventions in Essay Six. It is from a blended foundation that I am able to derive theory from evidence.

My work builds upon the literature on post-colonial civil conflicts. An effective avenue for such inquiry recognises that there is a moral fragility of a transitional state emerging from civil conflict. Such moral fragility can be challenged or undermined even within the mainstream technologies of TJ memorialisation. A selection of victim-centred narratives built from TJ work often contradicts the hero narratives of rebel-turned-leaders. As a result the governing of memory requires

citizens to reject certain aspects of the past, leading Edkins (2003) to argue that trauma "must be forgotten if the sovereign power of the modern state is to remain unchallenged" (230). Elaborated in context of Uganda, the un-building of a state-sponsored linear narrative takes place in three distinct ways. First, and most common, is the omission of particular "truths" from public representation. Second is the suspension of memory over time, either hidden in landscapes or lost with generations that are forgotten or silenced. Third is the counter-memory of solidarity groups who seek to disrupt the dominant narratives (Werbner 1998, Young 1997).

A major goal of this research is thus to fill gaps in the literature addressing transitional justice and the politics of memory in Africa. Theoretical and regional analysis brings together a range of authors to show a negotiation between normative frameworks for peacebuilding, healing and reconciliation. Such frameworks are manifested in memorials processes. Investigations into nationalism, identity formation and popular resistance illustrate the theoretical complexities of how memory and memorials become part of war-affected peoples' coming to terms with trauma. Such illustration informs the ways in which we can more effectively build peaceful, democratic social contracts that are hinged on dignified representation and recognition. Finally, the cross-sections of literature provide an opportunity to hone in on memorial processes as a significant arena for larger issues of development politics and social repair after conflict.

There are unavoidable limitations to the overview of literatures provided above. First, it includes mostly Anglophone literature written primarily by authors residing in Western Europe and North America. This is partly because of my linguistic limitations, but also because the fields that have emerged to produce the binding themes of this

thesis—namely cultural memory studies, critical heritage research and transitional justice—have grown out of debates over social-cultural and legal phenomena emerging from post-WWI and WWII realities.[8] That said, my foundational aim to work in a decolonizing way means that I seek to include different knowledge registers such as oral traditions and contemporary art within the thesis. In a move away from ethnic essentialism, the present approach recognises contextual nuance while highlighting global systems of remembrance and representation.

This thesis extends the work of scholars who tune into the memorial needs of survivors, who are part of a community of practice on the continent (Naidu 2004a, 2004b; Buikema 2012) and who are invested in the public history approach taken by Rassool (2006; 2010) and others. Within the many studies of South Africa and Rwanda, as well as in Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Kenya, I am inspired by those scholars who seek to understand the experiences of people whose accounts have not always been told: who survived their respective conflicts, and who now have opinions about the role of memorials, or have practices embedded in the process of memorial creation. My brief discussion of the trends in scholarship concerned with African contexts of transition and memory, sets in motion the later analysis around the form and function of memorial strategies and critiques in Uganda.

As I argue throughout the essays below, more actors than just the state are involved in memorialisation. Recognising that most nations have been built on a historical background of suffering, rebellion and war, I depart with the understanding that the imagination of a citizen has been aligned to the memorials that are associated with state-driven

8. Heritage research, led by archaeologists has a much deeper literature across the continent. Conversely, in 2019 there was the initiation of the Africa branch of the Memory Studies Association, and I was in dialogue with the organisers about African "memory scholars" for their inaugural conference that revealed the narrow categorisation did not include different traditions of practice that were not rooted in the Euro-American frame.

identities. Conversely, investigations into humanitarian agencies reveal an industry built on trying to prevent mortality in times of conflict and crisis—and on failing, then being required to inter the remains of their beneficiaries. Peacekeepers are tasked with preventing mass violence, while development actors aim to make the lives of survivors more fulfilling. Throughout all this, religious institutions are tasked with the job of maintaining dignity and hope. Within Uganda, all these disciplines and professions are invested in transitional justice, they are therefore essential for any reflection on the memorial heritage of places impacted by historical and present-day violence. In a spiritual sense, conflict transcends the dead body; equally, in a structural sense, conflict makes decoding the uses and valuation of the past a complex and often difficult undertaking. Ultimately, the mediation of such suffering and its aftermath lies at the core of my research.

**Outlining the Thesis**

To realise this undertaking, the collection of essays below has a series of unifying concerns across different geopolitical anchor points. Each piece of this mosaic addresses a distinct geographic and thematic area of study. The essays in Part II begin with the national context of Uganda and the Luwero Triangle before moving to the most widely researched conflict in the country between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Government of Uganda (GoU). As the mosaic is pieced together in Part III, the reader draws closer to the contextual nuances of remembrance. Paring essays set in Northern Uganda and the Rwenzori Mountain region contrasts a contemporary snapshot into globally integrated memorials processes with locally specific conflict heritage that has been built over 100 years. The final section, Part IV, brings the reader into a practitioner-based framework, with essays on exhibition making and contemporary artworks. This thesis format seeks to present a

range of approaches in which everyday experiences of war are read in conversation with global debates on representation and transition.

Specific conceptual anchors also position the empirical evidence. In some instances, they my attempt to give language to the phenomena being presented: Essay Two explores the insistence that material culture of humanitarian assistance is part of a "memory complex" informed by more than just a collection of sites. In other cases, the essays grapple with existing concepts in memory literature such as amnesia or aphasia (Essay One), notions offered by transitional justice like "symbolic reparations" (Essay Three), and the future-facing aims towards "aesthetic justice" (Essay Five).

Essay One, asks: is memorialisation in Uganda replication atonement or presenting something new? In "Uganda's Challenge to Forget: A Return to Memory in Luwero", I trace the monuments that were erected by the liberation movement to commemorate their "bush war" from 1981-1986. I argue that hegemonic narratives—supported by monuments, elite discourse and national days of commemoration—are directly challenged by processes of transitional justice that seek out a more everyday, victim-centred negotiation with the past. Among the contributions of this essay is the documentation of how, over time, political power is subtly eroded by unfulfilled promises revealed in new investigations into alternative truths.

Following this more conventional work on nationalism and monuments, Essay Two, entitled "Humanitarian Remains: Erasure and the Everyday of Camp Life in Uganda", turns to material culture and theexperience of internal displacement. I contend that displacement camps and their material effects can and should be considered in discussions of memorialisation in Uganda. As the essay points out, however, to make this inclusion would implicate humanitarian agencies

in the prolonged suffering of populations in the region. Therefore I argue that only a sensitivity to issues of forgetting and the everyday can fully read the material landscapes of war—advocating both for this approach to be included in memorialisation efforts, and for a closer examination into the role humanitarian agencies play in memory work (intentionally or unintentionally).

Together, these two essays in Part II critique national and global systems of conflict representation. The active agents in memorialisation across these essays are: national systems of memorialising mass death, international agencies with historical documentation of displacement, survivors and material cultures informing new modes of interpreting the past. This critique thus creates an arc of representation that is further explored in the two essays of Part III, addressing activism and resistance.

Essay Three, "Advocacy Memorials: Linking Symbolic and Material Reparations in Uganda", is a core essay of this collection. It pointedly addresses the notion of symbolic reparations, and queries its very conceptualisation in practice. I undertake this query by examining not just commemorative sites—a standard approach within this field—but events in which survivors have created direct links between the symbolic and material notions of reparation that have been separated in the transitional justice domain. Highlighting how war survivors create—or perhaps more accurately, re-create—these links demonstrates a kind of agency that seeks to renegotiate the terms of reparation in specific transitional contexts.

Essay Four, "Resisting the Record: Memorial Landscapes and Oral Histories of the Rwenzururu", is co-authored with educator and oral historian Wilson Bwambale. Together we investigate oral histories and memorial landscapes as evidence for understanding a century-long movement for self-determination against colonial rule and post-

colonialoppression in the Rwenzori region of Uganda. We argue that understanding the Rwenzururu movement within a context of memorial heritage enables us to see how certain sentiments remain in tangible and intangible realms of memory. Locating this relationship within resistance shows, furthermore, how cultural memory becomes politically activated in current conflicts with the Ugandan government.

Part IV is a more practice-based set of essays that focuses on exhibition making and artistic production. Essay Five, “Exhibition Making as Aesthetic Justice: The Case of Memorial Production in Uganda”, reflects on my curatorial work before starting this doctoral research, and places it within a broader peacebuilding paradigm. Here I present a form of dialogical curation that promotes a new form of memorialisation, one that encourages constant negotiation of the past in the present. This essay shows how intimate and vulnerable spaces, whereby curatorial authority is transferred to survivors, can create opportunities for new forms of recognition to emerge.

Finally, Essay Six, “Repairing Representational Wounds: Artistic and Curatorial Approaches to Transitional Moments” is another co-authored piece, developed in collaboration with artist Bathsheba Okwenje. Here we contend that legacies of humanitarian efforts have created representational wounds that obstruct survivors from imagining forms of memorialisation outside the lens of trauma. Reflecting on a prior collaboration for the *When We Return* exhibition, mounted in Gulu Town in 2019, we offer ways of presenting the past and the present that foreground a treatment of care and a recognition of symbolic repair as process rather than arrival.

With diverse geopolitical contexts, but unified concerns, this collection of essays charts the subfields of cultural memory as they appear in cultural heritage, artistic practice and symbolic repair after

mass violence in Uganda. My contribution reflects a longstanding need to shift the centre of this scholarship from Western Europe and North America to Africa. In so doing, I directly critique the ways in which development actors employ traumatic memory for their peacebuilding efforts. Moreover, a better understanding of normative assumptions and localised strategies for remembrance is gained by uniting conceptual work on representation and repair with empirical evidence from these case studies.

Interrogating the impacts of mainstream memorialisation efforts allows a critical evaluation of the often presumed tenet that "more memory = more truth = more justice = more reconciliation" (Thiedon 2009: 295). Positioning humanitarian and development actors within the political economy of memorialisation enables us as scholars and practitioners to ask whether support for memory projects is aligned with the state or is, in fact, working to undermine it. Consequently, I investigate how memorials embody notions of advocacy, accountability and representation that are relevant for survivor populations—or if memorial production has ulterior motives, such as gaining political leverage or pursuing the mimicry of other national templates.

Together, these essays promote a more comparative wayof understanding physical memorials, intangible processes of memory recall and unexpected memory remains (what I term "residues" below). In so doing, they build up a series of theoretical contributions useful in developing a more Afro-centric approach to memory studies in the contexts of nations like Uganda, whose perpetrators of violence remain at the highest levels of power, who have not experienced successful transitions to democracy and where cultures of memorial conservation are not necessarily practiced or nationally-financed. Sites, modes of remembering by individuals and groups, archives, material cultures and

contemporary artworks all serve as different forms of evidence to better understand the dynamics of remembrance not just in Uganda, but across the entire continent.

## Methodology and Methods

Taking into account the three areas of research outlined above, I here draw in methodological insights scholars have made in those multidisciplinary fields of cultural memory studies, heritage research and transitional justice. In particular, I claim a curatorial approach to the research in both situating my knowledge and as a technical way of collecting data. Harding (1987) makes the distinction between the ethos of research and the technicalities of how research is conducted, commenting on the conflation of methodology, method and epistemology. She argues for a more defined, reflexive and feminist approach to research that creates "an androcentric form of listening, observing and examining" (2). This section tends to these three points that Harding identifies through a grounding of my positionality and in detailing how curation can be used as a research method.

The notion of immersive process critically underpins my research into memorial heritage in Uganda. Participation in exhibition making, visiting commemorations and digitising archives of survivors forms a series of mnemonic activations used to access the terms and conditions of symbolic reparations. By working alongside memorial stakeholders, I am better able to grasp their visions and understand the reasons why some memorials are said to "work" and others are not. Louis Bickford has called these intentions the "explanatory logics" that are illustrated within the "private/reflective" and "public/educative" categories (2014, 495). These logics often manifest through modes of representation and participatory exchange. Jan Assmann and Czaplicka (1995) have encouraged researchers to look into"communicative memory" as a way

of recognising the nonspecialised and everyday modes of adopting, transforming and transmitting narratives. In their conceptualisation the narrator and the listener can trade roles. Cultural representations of memory, therefore, position what is inherently ever-changing in oral modes of transmitting memory. Thus my approach to research is one that has been responsive to the people who I work with.

I also take inspiration from feminist and decolonial scholars who insist on a framing research within a larger discourses on power and politics by positioning one's knowledge-base. Beyond reflexivity, my methodology is often a reading of aesthetic conventions embedded in memorialisation that can identify a particular gaze upon the subjects of trauma. Such work reveals where the knowledge is *situated*—and according to Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis (2002) the place in which the knowledge is situated necessarily impacts the parameters of imagination. There are inequalities that this work must recognise, especially following Tuhiwai Smith's proclamation that "Research is one of the ways in which the underlying code of imperialism and colonialism is both regulated and realised" (2012, 8). In her view, researching indigenous peoples or conditions of colonisation, dispossession and violence require the researcher to engage in new ways that respect the power embedded in the research process. In this way my investigation, on the one hand, pays attention to the disciplinary, temporal and political challenges of researching memorialisation as a white foreigner in a post-colonial, post-conflict African nation and, on the other hand, critiques externally or donor-supported memorial projects that are rooted in imported aesthetics.

The methodological considerations addressed in this section show how a curatorial approach of collecting material through case studies and collaborative-making can build up an interconnected narrative

about memorialisation through the evidence presented in the essays. Following this discussion of methodology (which also details dilemmas and limitations), I offer a brief outline of the types of evidence that can be interrogated from this methodological approach.

## Curation as Method

Like academic research, curating is a process of investigation. It asks specific questions of artists, archives and material culture as a form of cultural sense-making. The assemblages of materials displayed in memorial contexts are part of a symbolic order defined by a curatorial brief. Relating to difficult pasts, curating knowledge and making narratives of conflict is challenging. Just as a researcher working in insecure settings, a curator is required to be selective about what questions we ask and to create an ethical due-diligence in how we frame the material uncovered so that it can be related to public audiences. According to Bal (2012), this type of work constitutes a "curatorial act" in the tradition of speech acts and image acts that has inherent political relationships to public discourses. Pink (2013) would refer to this work as a series of "visual interventions" in which the materials on display are also active participants in the research process. Curation as research method, does not necessarily require a physical manifestation of the curators findings in the form of an exhibition (Gao 2020).

According to Lehrer, Milton and Patterson (2011) "Thinking about curation not only as selection, design, and interpretation, but as care-taking—as a kind of intimate, intersubjective, interrelational obligation" (4). Taking into account the duty of care, there are ethical questions that arise in terms of whose memories are being interpreted? How can atrocity be represented in a dignified way? Does the work of presenting the past in the present contribute to justice aims of those who contribute to the exhibition? Vorster (2018) describes how a single object, Judith

Mason's *Blue Dress*, can be imbued with historical inaccuracies, but still be employed as a national symbol within the art collection of the Constitutional Court in South Africa. Voster was challenged as a curator to adequately care for the object while also caring for the narrative that the object represented, acknowledging that sometimes these things were in contradiction. Through the process of curation she is able to participate in the negotiation of narrative that are part of transitional justice work within a cultural intervention.

My curatorial work within Uganda has aimed to complicate narratives by making space for insights into evidence that is not exclusively reliant on testimonial-based historical inquiry. I have tried to navigate many of the issues described above since I began work in Uganda in 2010. At that time I was invited by an educational NGO to curate an exhibition about the history of a national park, that was also the site of violence dating back to pre-colonial times. In 2012, I began to work on projects that were classified as part of transitional justice efforts to remember the wars of Uganda. The research involved in this type of exhibition-making required investigating the different forms of memorialisation in the national and local contexts. I spent time in the national archives, government printers and district records offices searching for materials that could help narrate the past. The images, extracts of records and presidential speeches were then turned into display objects. Most importantly the narratives were shaped by consultations with community organisations, ex-combatants and elders who described the wars first-hand. These individuals also presented materials for collection and display. I described this methodology at that time as "community driven narratives" (2012) whereby the narratives of wars in Luwero, Northern Uganda, Rwenzori Mountain Region and West Nile were fluid, dynamic and dialogical.

For seven years prior to the PhD project I was an active participant in selecting materials to be on display in public spaces or housed in collections. It is through this curatorial work that I have developed a kind of hybrid methodology, coming to understand the difficulties of achieving symbolic repair, something that often seemed impossible in contexts of pressing material needs. It is also through my experiences with the dilemmas of co-creating memorials that I decided to undertake a PhD as a way of making theoretically-informed ways of curating.

## Research in the Academy

At the onset of this doctoral research, I understood that I needed to acquire additional methodological tools to shape a new vantage point. I developed a set of guiding research questions to focus a deeper inquiry. I anchored my investigation into three core questions:

1. Who makes memorials in Uganda?
2. What are the intentions behind those productions?
3. Do the memorials constitute symbolic reparations?

To answer such questions I returned to Uganda between 2016-2019. My collaborative exhibition making was coupled with participant observation in joining commemorative events in Uganda to observe and interview participants. In addition, I collaborated with memory workers to develop archives or to preserve tangible and intangible heritage related to conflict. I went back to sites where I had previously worked in Uganda as well as seeking out new contributions and voices for this research. The deeper inquiry as a researcher alongside the collaborative-making as a curator constitutes a blended type of engagement that shapes what is remembered and informs how that remembering happens.

According to Radstone (2000), the social and cultural approach to memory work is liminal, requiring "hybridised methods" (13). Kuhn

(2009) has summarised memory work as an intentional sharing of and making public certain aspects of the past, often through visual or performative means. Adopting the visual approach implies a certain level of solidarity and recognition by the researcher to be able to analyse the processes of memorialisation. The visual is complimented by the ethnographic reading of the material landscape (Navaro-Yashin 2009) and the intimate affective relationships found in the remains of war (Filippucci 2009). Bringing the material and landscape perspectives together to form a shared narrative is what Shaw(2002) and Basu (2013) term "memoryscapes". Within these memoryscapes, difficult pasts can be understood by tracing physical, archival and material layers from the perspective of those living in the present.

That said, at times such a trace can be difficult, if not impossible, to obtain, thus it is useful to apply Björkdahl, et al.'s (2017) call for an analytical framework rooted in mnemonic formations around sites, agents, narratives and events (SANE). Their SANE framework departs from the notion that conflict can be geographically located in sites, given meaning by agents (both professional and ordinary), reproduced through emplaced narratives and publicly recognized through events. Following this suggestion, I can expand Carrier's (2000) interpretations of Nora's *lieux de mémoire* as methodological. Such an approach ultimately offers a more robust, multidimensional analysis, interpreting both the physical place itself and the creation of localities through histories, objects and ideas (Appadurai 1997).

In examining monuments and space, this thesis is rooted in semiotics, the foundational inquiry into meanings. Sørensen and Carmen (2009) have argued, that heritage studies suffers from a lack of methodological work in this area. They do, however, recognise that museum studies is well-positioned to take on this approach: semiotics,

in their view, is a key part of the material component of the textual, people-oriented and material triad for undertaking heritage-based research methods. Other memory scholars, however, have suggested that semiotic work is too heavily tied to analyses of nation-building (Erll 2011; Sturken 1997). They argue that sites and nations are an over-researched framework, and that there is valuable scope beyond the go-to framework of analysis focused on the relationships between the citizen and museums, monuments, archives, battlefields and sites of trauma.

In this collection of essays, I am equally concerned with both sets of issues, the semiotic and the mnemonic. Throughout Part II, I follow themore traditional approaches that analyse representation, as well as examine the meaning of sites of trauma as they generate narratives of citizen/state identity formation (Essay One). I then depart into more enmeshed relationships between sites of humanitarian assistance (displacement camps) and the material remains there left behind (Essay Two). Coupling the material culture of displacement with narratives of humanitarian assistance allows for a dual reading of the local and the global. The essays that make up Part II are inspired by scholars that employ methodological understandings of globalisation and the forces of multiplicity in both mnemonic and semiotic readings of culture (Appadurai 2000; Levy and Sznaider 2006).

In Parts III and IV, I critique the forces of globalisation as they play out in aid assistance and donor-driven peacebuilding efforts, paying particular attention to the agency of ordinary, everyday people in memorialisation. In this way, I employ both the anthropological grounding in lived realities and the transitional justice turn to the local. Tracing the tensions and intersections of global-local dynamics within memorialisation processes helps to reveal where the power truly lies. Addressing the forms of politics that inhabit both the daily lived realities

of memory and the global politics of memorialisation can enter what Comaroff and Comoraff (2003) call the “awkward scale”: this scale diverges from the ethnographer’s reliance on the local as the singular source of knowledge to include registers such as media sources, legislation, or even overarching discursive trends for analysis.

Scale, however, is also internal, whereby an individual can occupy many places of diversity and oppression in what Crenshaw (1989) famously coined as “intersectionality”. Feminist and post-colonial thinkers after Crenshaw have helped to shape methodological inquiries to recognise how nationality, race, class, gender, sexuality and other markers all influence what material is shared and what is made inaccessible. This is more than an ethical approach: rather, methodologically it insists, first, that context cannot be glossed over, and second, that each moment of observation, participation, or interview constitutes an encounter. For Viejo-Rose (2015), scale is helpful for distinguishing between memory and heritage, in order to define the difference between recall and identity. Finally, addressing scale allows for the categorisations of memory provided in the binaries of individual/collective, public/private or iconic/everyday and so on. While there is a global move towards abolishing binaries, they still retain a degree of usefulness for the contemporary researcher when analysing categories of power.

Every mode of memorialisation creates moments of encounter in the present between the individual and the material remains of war, the monumental representations of conflict, or the affective relations produced.[9] Methodologically, following Askins and Pain (2011), I ask what happens in this moment of contact, inquiring into key

9. See Philipp, Schorch. 2013. “Contact zones, third spaces, and the act of interpretation.” And Message, Kylie. 2013”. Contentious Politics and Museums as Contact Zones. For a debate on this in the context of museology.

differences across social groups experiencing asymmetries of power and representation. Importantly, many such asymmetrical groups congregate at commemorations, demarcating a contact zone for deciphering power dynamics. As the following essays show, I have found these encounters especially useful for a critique of transitional justice that prioritises victim-centred work but often fails to attend to victim or survivor-centred needs within commemorative events.

As a curator I have been involved in creating certain moments of contact that have aesthetic mediators. Encouraging people to engage with other war histories, other than their own, has in Uganda created a comparative set of insights. The convergence of personal effects to narrate the individual experiences with artworks that collectivise or abstract historical events further expands the scales of knowledge and interpretation. Visual and material symbols of conflict aid the memory process, especially in African contexts where metaphors can be representation of truth (Ndebele 1998). So too are exhibitions a space for contestation where visitors often commented on what wasn't there, what had been missing from the story. Paying attention to those omissions in representation steered the research into new directions.

This research draws on what is present and what is remembered in memorial processes, it also makes a methodological turn towards absence, loss and forgetting. As the title of this body of work contends, what is presented can also be symbolic of what is absent. Bille, et al.'s (2010) text entitled *The Anthropology of Absence* explains how ethnographers can gain crucial insights through observing affective relationships between the loss of things, people and places. Aleida Assmann (2014) furthermore advocates for a reading of cultural memory that addresses the tensions between remembering and forgetting in both passive and active forms, creating a kind of matrix

for analysis. Essays in this collection develop a discussion around silence through absence, aphasia, or erasure. They map the tensions between intentional forgetting on a national level, such as in the case of the Luwero Bush War in Uganda, and between more passive forms of forgetting induced when humanitarian actors leave a conflict zone. Observing silences in different contexts across Uganda reveals narrative voids, opening up new avenues for scholarship andsymbolic repair. As has been explained by many of the people I work with, the new methodologies for revealing historical gaps can create space for stories to be told in a way that recognises the harm done by silencing.

Challenges and Positions

Making audible the silences presents a set of dilemmas that are compounded by the positionality of the researcher. I will briefly address these issues to clarify the conditions of how I have accessed my evidence. This section briefly outlines some concerns that arouse during my investigation of memorial processes in Uganda.

Being an outsider in the context I research has both strengths and weaknesses. First, returning to Uganda as a PhD researcher has meant that I was able to distance myself from the affiliations I previously held with NGOs and community outreach programs (2010-2016). As others working in parts of Uganda impacted by war and humanitarian assistance have observed, different conflicts and interactions with other foreign aid workers can produce local expectations, and rehearsed narratives (Finnström 2001; Verma 2012; Titeca 2019), therefore it was vital to remain reflexive and firmly rooted in my ethical positions.

As a white Anglophone foreign national in a former colonial protectorate, I was undoubtedly subject to social expectations of wealth and education that held true in many contexts of inequality. That said,

unlike other foreign nationals, I have in some instances been considered an insider, having worked with colleagues and formed strong bonds with communities across Uganda for many years. I speak fluent Kiswahili, the military lingua franca, a skill that has provided unique insights into combatant perspectives. I also have a basic command of Acholi, Lukonjo and Luganda, languages spoken in the three regional field sites of my research. My familiarity with remote regions and efforts to speak local languages rapidly ingratiated me to memorial actors and survivor communities.

Shaw, Waldorf and Hazan (2010) urge researchers to "acknowledge the risks of both silence *and* testimony in chronically insecure conditions" (14). Understanding the conditions of each area has meant that my fieldwork was structured around a rotation of engagement rather than the traditional ethnographic long-term stay. In particular, given the political insecurity of the Rwenzori region since 2016 I decided on a system of no more than two weeks of travel and interviews in the area spaced across every three to four months. This also allowed for a more comparative approach to research.

There is a further methodological challenge in the silence and presence of knowledge as a researcher. The selection of research questions, extraction of quotes from interviews and building of an argument within my essays each take a different political position. Essay One highlights the fragility of state-driven narratives by recognising and eliciting perspectives that show a quiet disharmony between survivors within Luwero and elites in power. Here and in Essay Three, I omitted many interviews or direct examples to ensure protection of respondents. In focusing on experiential silences of marginalised people who have been displaced or disenfranchised I decidedly advocate for better representation of their perspectives in the very act of writing this PhD. As

I point out in Essay Two, Five and Six I also contribute to the making of memory in my research practice, therefore giving some momentum to the acts of recognition for past harms.

My critical stance has not been developed in isolation. Each of the arguments made across the thesis has been co-produced in some form. In Essay Three and Five, I have been directly influenced by the claims and intentions of people living in Northern Uganda and the Rwenzori Mountain region respectively. In this regard my academic framing of the points brought about puts everyday experiences into scholarly debates.

To navigate such research and stay focused on the goals of the PhD project, I was guided in part by the work of Comaroff and Comaroff (2003) who propose a multi-dimensional positioning of the researcher. They argue that one must "elucidate the motivation, the meaning, and the consequences"of social actions for the purpose of producing sound data (157). This three-part placement maps onto my basic research questions: first, asking *who makes memorials?* accesses the logics in terms of motivation. Second, inquiring into *what are their intentions?* illuminates how memorials produce meaning. Last, investigating *do they equal symbolic reparations?* allows insights into the consequences or impact of memorialisation. I interpret these logics through the lens of "communities of memory", a community that includes development actors, paying particular attention to how they produce symbolic frameworks through their solidarity and representations.[10]

Any methodological approach that analyses past trauma must recognise the legacies of representing bodies in pain (Scarry 1985) or defining what is grievable (Butler 2004), especially in contexts lacking representational strategies to adequately narrate past violence within memorials. From my continued curatorial practice I was able to better

10. For discussion on "communities of memory" see Booth (2006).

understand the parameters of representation and grievability. Such insights were revealed in curating exhibitions that often coincided with my research, such as *Weights and Measures: Portraits of Justice* (2017) and the cartoon-based installation called *Sketching Violence* (2018), both in South Africa where I gained insights into how global actors within transitional justice and genocide museums approach memorialisation. In Uganda, key exhibitions arose from the Politics of Return research, such as the photography installation of portraits of South Sudanese Women in Uganda, entitled *Enduring Exile* (2017), and the arts residency show for the KLA ART 18 public festival entitled *The Grammar of Images* (2018). These exhibitions included conferences with debate sessions centred on issues of representation: asking how war-affected peoples wanted to be seen in the aftermath of violent conflict. These two shows were held at the Uganda Museum, with the final exhibition, *When We Return: Art, Exile and the Remaking of Home*, in Gulu (2019). Each exhibition process includes extensive contextual research as well as ongoing discussions with visitors during the time the shows are open. I can gain valuable insights from discussions with visitors, subjects in the artworks and artists. Thus, the exhibitions become both a provocation and a site of inquiry.

As noted above, during this research period I continued to work alongside colleagues in Uganda to curate exhibitions, secure the repatriation of material culture and archives, and document testimonies at memorial sites for future interpretation. While I am trained in fieldwork practices, I do not consider these collaborations in knowledge production "fieldwork" because Uganda has been my home and these people my colleagues, disrupting the conventional notions of research sites or informants. This collaborative approach is based on an ethical stance of reciprocity: I view each interview, site visit, archival agreement and other such encounter as a commitment to co-investigate Uganda's

past. Value was added by documenting, digitising and sharing the processes and products. Copies of digitised materials were shared with the ers through memory cards, USB drives and email, creating a feedback loop of giving and taking data. This giving-back was designed to be a participatory act as well as a mitigation strategy against research fatigue, a phenomenon expressed in areas where competing NGOs, transitional justice actors and academic researchers go to the same informants and ask them to externalise their memories repeatedly.

This research project only engaged with willing respondents, who consented to sharing their experiences. Consent was verbal, written, or when people would hear about my research (mostly at commemorative events) and invite me to document their story or look at their archives and collections. All participants received options for nondisclosure and in many instance pseudonyms have been used to reference interviews. My aim was never to re-traumatize people through collecting testimonies, but rather to understand their intentions behind efforts in which they were already (and still remain) active. As Kindersley (2015) and (Verma 2012) observed, participant observation and collaborative research has the potential to document preconceived outcomes by leading questions or misinterpreting data. To avoid these outcomes, my research questions were designed to ask *who, why* and *what next*, rather than to place value judgments on “good” or “bad” memorialisation. In addition, I paid close attention to what is hidden in these narratives through silences, suspended memories, or trace evidence.

### Types of Evidence

This hybrid approach to researching memorialisation in Uganda elucidates different types of evidence. I incorporate them based on the specific arguments and contexts investigated. As I discussed above, the terminology and conceptual work around evidence can vary

widely across disciplines. Bickford (2014) has described the products of memory to function as "memoryworks," referring to the foundations of memorial research such as sites of conscience and memory museums. Such tangible places of trauma or historical interpretation are aimed at recognising harm done and creating symbolic repair through experiential learning around past violence. Here, I outline the types of evidence encountered and analysed throughout this thesis, and give a brief grounding in how they are utilised in the essays below.

Writ large, I regard memorials as both tangible and intangible vessels for memory that are activated through commemorative events, or transmitted through narration. Museums, monuments, sites, public observances, archives, objects, photographs, media sources, oral histories and visual art are all different sources of evidence for this research. It is important to note that memorials are also affective (non-discursive and sensorial), meant to elicit emotion when manifested in public spaces. Granted, affect and emotion are not necessarily types of evidence themselves, rather they are threads that connect types of evidence and that serve as tools or means for analysis. Similarly, I regard authority and power as embedded in memorialisation, but not necessarily types of evidence themselves either. Here, I briefly introduce the components of my evidence base.

*Museums*

National and memorial museums are perhaps the most frequently analysed sites of investigation for understanding the politics of representation around past conflicts. Visual and political analysis of the development of these spaces provides evidence for seeing different modes of representation. I focus primarily on the images (mostly photographic), texts and objects in the curated displays. I refer specifically to the National Museum of Uganda that has hosted

some of my exhibitions as well as other work on conflicts in the country, namely *The Road to Reconciliation* exhibition in 2011.[11] The other primary museum-like space I consider is the National Memory and Peace Documentation Centre (NMPDC) in Kitgum, Uganda,where I was involved in establishing the first exhibitions and collections between 2013-2014. Within the building of the NMPDC collection was the *Travelling Testimonies* exhibition that I curated. Data here comes from the catalogue developed in this process as well as from the experiences from curating *Travelling Testimonies* in Kasese, Arua, Luwero and Kampala.

*Monuments*

Alongside museums, monuments are a key part of the evidence base for work on memorialisation. Public monuments are meant to evoke acknowledgment of past events, eliciting emotional responses such as shame, pride, anger or sadness (Bickford 2014). The monuments I consider were designed and commissioned by national and urban projects that employed artists and architects, but contemporary monument-building has become a much more industry-led activity. What is different about the monuments that I reference in Luwero, Northern Uganda and the Rwenzori Mountain region, is that many of the monuments to the dead were erected by construction firms, singling a particular style of legitimate monumentalising of war memories.

Essays One and Three each explore issues of monuments in different ways. In Luwero and Northern Uganda, the monuments are often plaques, pavilions, or obelisks associated with mass graves, sometimes employed as symbolic markers where there are no bodies. Using a basic global template of concrete in their design, the physical

11. I have curated four exhibitions at the Uganda Museum: *Murchison Memories (2011), Enduring Exile (2017), Grammar of Images (2018), Infected or Affected (2018)*.

nature of the monument seeks a kind of universalising character. Monuments, and their absence, are evidentiary tools that I argue illustrates power over public narration of the past on behalf of the citizens. In Uganda, the monument carries a status as a legitimate physical marker, often leading to calls by different actors for increased construction without a critical reflection into whether they are the most appropriate form of remembrance for the survivors. Conversely, in the context of the Rwenzori Mountain region, the aspiration of monuments or the signification of taboo burial by a particular monument is a way to show how social unrest has endured.

*Archives*

The desire to look beyond physical memorials has led me to seek out additional forms of evidence, in order to gain a more rounded perspective on memory and its manifestations. Determining what constitutes "official" narratives is crucial, therefore I have consulted the National Archives, the Uganda Society, Government Printers and the Mountains of the Moon University archives in Fort Portal. Materials in these official archives, as well as colonial texts, give the perspective from the narrative standpoint of elites. I also refer to newspaper archives,such as the out of print *Argus*, or the contemporary government-ed *New Vision*, and its rival the *Daily Monitor*, which I accessed through the Uganda Society, the Refugee Law Project and The AIDS Support Organisations bound files dating back to 1972.

But official narratives are only one part of the story. My interviews with informants over the years have also revealed personal archival collections, including political manifestos of the LRA and NALU, ration cards for accessing humanitarian assistance, Amnesty certificates, photographs taken in times of war and personal chronicles of the experiences of abduction, displacement and battle. Diaries of events,

photographs from times of war and documents of aid assistance all demonstrate a way in which people are keeping personal memorials to their lived experiences. Keeping these archives "safe" is a subtle resistance to historical erasure.

But archives only play a supporting role, not as the star, in memory analysis, for two reasons. First, as Aleida Assmann has argued, archives are passive references to cultural memory that at times are activated in efforts to project power (2008, 103). Second, my being refused access to official and organisational archives as primary sources—beyond the publications of reports, working papers and policy briefs—was itself revealing, an issue  most evident in Essays Two and Five below. I responded to this refusal to access records or the destruction of primary source material as evidence of absence, brought forth in my arguments related to forgetting and erasure. The passive nature of Ugandan archives discussed in Essay Two arose in two main ways: first, through the inability to activate them due to prohibitive charges or complex bureaucratic structures requiring extensive time and skill to navigate successfully. Second, archives are also rendered passive by the seemingly irreverent attitudes towards the value of historical documents in people's everyday lives.

*Bodies*

A key part of the evidence base for memorial work is bodies: many monuments in Uganda, and indeed across the world, are tied to the burial of human remains. However, dead bodies are also marked in social ways through burial in homesteads or remembrances of ancestors. As briefly noted above, in memorial discussions, human remains have become a source for narrative production: the displacement of bodies and other cultural symbols during violent upheaval creates a crisis of representation, whereby the usual materials of identity are not available

for everyday forms of expression. Grave sites, or the absence thereof, become not just key places, but become aspects of material culture in which to root narratives of trauma and social repair.

Bodies are also absent in terms of missing persons. The notion of improper burial or spiritual disquiet from bodies arose frequently in my research. As an outsider ethnographer, however, no matter how deep my local connections, I do not feel qualified to decipher spiritual unrest. Therefore I have not sought to interpret or critique the cosmological worlds of the various cultures engaged in this research, such as Bakonzo or Acholi. Rather, I have tried to ask similar questions as research respondents in specific regional contexts, such as whether or not the dead are "resting." In cases where the dead were said not to be at peace, I tried to inquire into the potential consequences of improper burial or how a proper burial might move towards a reparative type of memorialisation. I have, however, used evidence that references bodies in images in Essays Two and Six, and bodies in terms of performance and refusal at commemorations in multiple essays below. Lastly, bodies are further implicated in interviews in which body-language becomes a way to read silences or interpret affect.

*Commemorative Events*

Commemorative events can signal a whole range of harms committed during war. I recorded specific events in Northern Uganda, mostly through field notes, audio recordings and photography. I gainedadditional insights on two occasions in Lukodi and during the ICRC International Day of the Disappeared, by assisting curators and organisers in mounting or advising on exhibition displays. Decoding this evidence hasrequired a reading of the performative ways in which memory, heritageand transitional justice intersect. Essays Four and Six draw on my participant observation during commemorations

and documenting oral histories and interviews to look specifically at commemorative events in Northern Uganda and the Rwenzori Mountain region, seeking to investigate the power relations evident in such spaces.

*Sites of Memory*

In many cases, these events activate sites of memory where bodies are buried. In four of the seven essays I expand the conventional reading of "sites" to include more than just loci of bodily trauma. Essay One describes ruined commercial sites that are memory triggers for survivors of unfulfilled reconstruction in Luwero. Essay Two shows how the unclaimed dead or the material remains of war mark former displacement camps, expanding the boundaries of memorial needs within survivor communities. In addition, Essay Three offers a conceptual reframing of the evidence to outline a tangible and intangible "memorial complex". Essay Four identifies cultural sites related to rebellion, such as those used for healing combatants or those relevant for kingdom formation not included in any other scholarly work in the region. Marking this range of symbolic and geographic anchors for memory work in Uganda helps to show the context specificity necessary to explain memorial processes.

*Objects*

Following the material turn in anthropology, everyday objects, collections and artefacts have become participants in the dialogue on memorialisation. Crooke (2016) reflects on the Irish context to advocate for the analysis of objects as both intimate tellers of history and active tools for seeking out political transformation. Developing a "memory collection" for the NMPDC (2013-2014), I participated in collecting and cataloguing objects from survivors, NGOs, cultural leaders and artists, such as personal effects of missing persons and material remains of

the IDP camps. Essay Two explicitly discusses the material remains from displacement to illuminate narratives of war not present in the budding interpretation of the conflict between the LRA and GoU. Showing how everyday objects have been transformed can, moreover, reveal social change, such as the approximately twenty cooking pots donated to the NMPDC. These pots served both as a gesture of domestic life turned violent (through rebel cannibal behaviours, cooking and eating human limbs) and as a symbol of the end of aid-dependent food consumption, thus a return to "normality." Rather than engaging in a debate over whether objects have agency, I have deferred to the people I work with and how they describe their affective relationships with artefacts of war.

*Oral Testimony and History*

I relied significantly on oral history and testimony to access the narrative of survivors, and to better understand the cultures of memory in the post-war context. Throughout this research I conducted 78 interviews with individuals, often with translators and co-authors, sometimes returning two to three times for continued discussion. I also engaged informal focus groups at commemorative events and targeted focus groups with memorial committees or groups of elders. Essay Three, for instance, details the recorded speeches given at commemorations to mark narrative patterns between events. Oral histories also feature significantly in Essay Four, where we took a life history approach. Our interviews with former Rwenzururu combatants, cultural leaders and contemporary musicians illustrate how oral literature (songs, poems and proverbs) was utilised in that context. Across all the essays are the voices of memorial producers I spoke with, both individually and in groups. The use of oral history and testimony as evidence for understanding how memorialisation works to reveal peoples' intentions and experiences, rather than to concretise a particular truth around the events of war.

*Artworks*

Finally, in Essays Five and Six, artworks become a significant type of evidence, showing unrecognised forms of memorial representation. As a curator it is intuitive to use artwork as evidence and exhibition-making as process. However, artists and curators are largely absent from memorial work in Uganda, as a result of the tendency towards formulaic,generalised monuments in memorialisation practice. I am informed by the historical yet seemingly ignored fact that artists have been fundamental to museum and monument building, even the 1930s exhibits in the Uganda Museum were designed and curated by artists from the Margaret Trowell School of Fine Art. Thus I wanted to reinsert artistic processes into dialogues on memorialisation. I employ artworks as evidence in two ways: first, by highlighting artwork alongside photorealist and historical depictions in Essay Six, and second, by including it as part of broader datasets in Essays Two, Four and Five. Most significantly, Essay Six is co-authored with a contemporary artist, positioning artwork as evidence for a kind of future facing and potential shift that reimagines repair.

Limitations and Ways Forward

These types of evidence: museums, monuments, archives, bodies, commemorative events, sites of memory, objects, oral testimony and history and artworks both reflect the Euro-American forms of rational remembrance with defined narratives and logics as well as the counter-narratives that are embodied, affective and non-linear. My engagement with these forms of evidence recognises their role in meaning-making for those people who produce and endorse memorials. In addition, my analysis of evidence, say within displacement camps and the remaking of aid rations, enhances a decolonial reading of memory in which affect and aesthetics are central (Mignolo and Walsh 2018; Azoulay 2020;

Stoller 2016). At points I create collisions between forms of evidence such as humanitarian photography and contemporary artwork or oral history and sites of memory. In this way, the types of evidence speak in conversation with each other, as companions in showing the myriad ways of representing past conflicts in Uganda.

The above is a selective overview, as cultural memory studies often recruits other registers of knowledge that I do not specifically engage. Many scholars, for example, pinpoint literature and film as key cultural indicators of what is remembered and how traumatic memory is represented. Theatre and music also appear as sources for studies of cultural memory. While these forms are briefly addressed in these essays, they serve as additional evidence to the core material I consider. To contrast this Euro-American demarcation of memory "cultures" as they pertain to art forms, there is a tendency to look at cultural memory within "local" contexts across Africa with an essentialist, sometimes tribalising lens. I am acutely conscious to avoid such "modern versus traditional" dichotomies. Rather, I seek to understand how "transition" as a fundamentally changing position impacts the forms and functions of memorials.

Furthermore, the majority of scholarship on public memory is concerned with urban spaces. The decision here to focus on rural or semi-urban contexts stems from the contextual realities of Uganda's war histories as being specifically rural, and often described as "bush warfare." I have deliberately not looked at Kampala or Entebbe for several reasons. First, the urban landscape engenders a different relationship between the survivor and the memorial process than is found in Luwero, Northern Uganda and the Rwenzori region. For example, the government has undertaken to commission national monuments in heroic gestures to the past. As well, Kampala and Entebbe are regions

historically inhabited by the Buganda Kingdom, requiring different contextual analysis. Furthermore, Kampala has so many layers of conflict history - including a tourist attraction at one of Idi Amin's torture chambers – that understanding them could constitute an entire doctoral project. Lastly, engaging urban spaces directly would require a deeper discussion of the colonial administrations of memory through different forms, such as architecture and urban planning, which lies outside the current scope of this doctoral project. By restricting my scope to issues that pertain to transitional justice in the modern era, I can keep a greater focus on evidence relating to post-colonial civil conflicts, informed by negotiations around aid and social repair.

Three regional case studies were selected based on my previous engagements in each region in Uganda, during my six years working as a curator there (2010-2016). While the cases draw directly on my curatorial experience, this research has nevertheless been a disentanglement from that time as well as an analytical refashioning of my approach to memorial practices. In the section that follows I focus on how the Ugandan case studies function to elucidate the politics of memory. The selection of three distinct regions within the country—the Luwero Triangle, Northern Uganda and the Rwenzori Mountain region—gives a comparative perspective, taking into account mass displacement and violence across social, cultural and political terrains. In doing so, I highlight these regions through historical documentation, through "trace sources" (Bloch 2012), and from interviews conducted from 2013-2019. Each site also foregrounds the tensions around what happened during these conflicts and how people are coming to terms with it, showcasing both historical figures and contemporary memory processes.

To conclude this discussion on methodology and methods, I must remind the reader that my perspective stems from a decade of

curating exhibitions in Uganda, and working with the primary keepers of knowledge around violent pasts to produce publicly accessible interpretations of those pasts. It is this background that has allowed me to develop relationships with the various actors involved in memorial production. The evidence used across the essays below comes together in a way that I would curate an exhibition with intensive background research and meaningful framing. While I have sought to take some distance and reflect on my practice through this academic project, I continue to see value in my work that uses archives, artworks, artefacts and testimonials to develop different strains of understanding. Herein I work to argue critically about issues, rather than developing a didactic or dilemma within an exhibition. The curatorial approach implies a strategy of selection, organisation and care, often associated with museums. For me, the curatorial underpins the anthropological research methods, involving a certain companionship between knowledge systems and an ethical approach to caring for traumatic pasts. The curatorial is also an active way in which I can create archives, exhibitions and artworks with people to gain insights into the processes of making, something that is often omitted from the many reflections on memorial products. As a result, I developed a mutually reinforcing relationship between the theoretical rigor undertaken in academic research and the practical implementation of negotiating conflict pasts in the present.

**The Politics of Memory in Uganda**

There are valuable insights to be gained from a series of case studies within Uganda. Three different contexts reveal a lived memory politics that is negotiated on a daily basis in distinct ways. This thesis highlights regional and temporal memoryscapes relating to conflicts that happened in the Luwero Triangle (1981-86), Northern Uganda (1986-2007), and the Rwenzori Mountain Region (1919-present). Interlinking

conflicts manifest in these contexts spanning from the central to the north to the west of Uganda. There are varying strategies for representing conflict, remembering the events of the past, for seeking justice in the present and for truth-telling. This section gives an historical overview of the contexts of civil unrest as well as providing insights into the myriad of actors involved in memorialisation across Uganda. When developed further in the essays, these cases present evidence around a disjointed national strategy for remembering that lacks specific institutional programming, at the same time illustrating how elite narratives of what happened in the past endure in the present.

Set apart from the Euro-American case studies on memorialisation, Uganda (like many other countries in the Global South) has a legacy of humanitarian assistance and development programmes, meaning that aid agencies influencing memorial practices. Scholar Laura Edmonson has observed that "In Uganda, South Africa and Rwanda dominate theories and conventions of memorialisation; cultural workers in Northern Uganda both react against and draw from these traditions and offer startling interventions into the politics and performance of memory" (2018, 243). However, when my colleagues at the Uganda Museum returned from a sponsored trip to Rwanda in 2011 to learn about the memorialisation there, one colleague remarked, "We can't do something like that here."[12] On further discussions and curatorial work, I came to understand that this refusal recognises that dealing with difficult pasts in nations like Uganda requires a vastly different approach to that of Rwanda or South Africa.

Uganda's civil wars, have received attention from a multiplicity researchers. Most notable for my own research is the work done on post-conflict reconstruction and social repair. Scholars have invested in

12. Uganda Museum curator, in conversation with the author, May 2012.

deep understandings of the war between the Lord's Resistance Army and the Government of Uganda. However, there are only a handful of publications that relate to memorialisation in the region of Northern Uganda where this war took place from 1986 to 2007(Ocen 2017, Abitti 2019). Much less has been written about memorialisation of the Luwero Bush War from 1981-1986 that brought the current president Yoweri Museveni to power (Vokes 2019, Giblin 2014). Moreover, there are but a few dozen publications relating to over 100 years of unrest in the Rwenzori region and none of them are specifically about memorial processes (Titeca and Syahuka Muhindo 2016). This section discusses the historical realities of the case studies to give a clearer picture of the contexts that surround my discussions on suffering, silence and symbolic repair.

Historically within Uganda, memory of conflict was negotiated in private and cultural spheres. Ethnographers have written about the ethno-specific ways in which groups mourn their dead (P'bitek 1986; Middleton 1982; Mier 2012). Other scholars have focused on the form and function of burial in after war (Jones 2008; Meinert and Whyte 2016; Muhindo 2018). Some important contributions to the literature have observed how war is endured by women as a collective form of suffering (Marijke and Richters 2009; Porter 2016). As is understood of traditional justice--specifically in the Acholi context of Northern Uganda--mourning, memorialisation and reparations are negotiated by clans (Latigo 2008). Such ethno-specific scholarship shows is that there is no form of mourning or memorialisation that is shared across the country. Social rupture from war disrupts ideas that memorialisation is a fixed or culturally bound set of practices.

The administration of memory in the contemporary era seems also not to follow the colonial strategies of memorialisation. For example

there are cemeteries within Uganda dedicated to soldiers who fought on behalf of the British Empire. The site in Jinja is a manicured lawn with each body buried with a headstone that individualises them and marks their service. Comparatively the "martyr" graves in Luwero (that are discussed in Essay One) have no individual identifiers and are for the most part abandon. There was also a Protectorate War Graves Commission set up to oversee sites in the colonial era. While the legislation for monuments and sites of today echoes the colonial mandate there is no provision specifically for war graves. Furthermore, The Protectorate Commission administered payments for veterans under the Uganda War Memorial Fund, specifically to pay for medical needs and school fees of the military children.[13] It appears that, today, the Veteran Affairs docket has still not passed in government and, as my research and media reports suggest, many of the 15,000 fighters who demobilised when the rebels took power in 1986 have not been compensated.[14] More collective reparative gestures have been made through the construction of "memorial" named vocational schools. According to Ocen these development projects are merely a way to "emphasise the NRM's policy of equal distribution of national resources" (2019, 77). Uganda demonstrates, unlike some other post colonial nations, that the current dispensation of government is not systematic in its memorial strategies and associated systems of compensation.

Grounding the discussion of memory politics within TJ for this thesis shows where interveners come in to support new efforts for memorialisation. This strategy of understanding the role of outsiders explains how testimonies are utilised to build memory and then employed as agents to interpret memorials. It also reveals the consequences of representations produced during the moments of

13. MMU Archives. Box 1073 (290) folder 3

14. Veterans to be Paid Soonest. UPDF website news. 20 December 2019. https://www.updf.go.ug/Veterans_to_be_Paid_Soonest.php

conflict for memorial work in their aftermaths. Presenting TJ as a way to do memorial work both highlights the new forms of violence that are present in Uganda's civil wars and illuminates the difficulties of designing or implementing a new strategy of national memorialisation outlined in the 2019 TJ Policy.

The following section briefly explains the context of the three regional case studies presented in the essays. It provides a sense for the dynamics of conflict in each area. An additional section on migration explains some areas of historical amnesia that have shaped the nation but that are absent from national memory discourse. Such absence explains, in part, why internal displacement rarely features in memorial work. From there I discuss the importance of transitional justice as a binding agent to trace the presence and absence of memorial work.

## Context

### *Luwero Triangle*

The "Luwero Triangle" or "Luwero Bush War" was a decentralised conflict against the Obote II regime, led by the now-president Yoweri Kaguta Museveni. As the narrative goes, following Obote's election in 1980 (after the downfall of Idi Amin), twenty-seven fighters joined Museveni's cause, and from the time the fighting began in 1981 to the successful coup in 1986, approximately 16,000 fighters had joined up— one-third being of Rwandan origin, including the now-president of Rwanda, Paul Kagame (Mamdani 1988). Every time a map of the Luwero Triangle is drawn it looks slightly different, with attempts usually placing one corner on Kampala, one at the boundary with Lake Kyoga and one at the western edge between Hoima and Masindi (Schubert 2006; Mutibwa 1992).

The Luwero Bush War created great symbolic trauma, particularly

when Museveni's troops cleaned the skulls of the dead soldiers and civilians, and lined the main roads with their collections. The skull displays were temporary, with the skeletons being buried in thirty-six ambiguous mass grave sites scattered across the landscape with unidentified bodies marked as "martyrs" (Uganda Commission for Museums and Monuments 2018). Museveni has claimed that the graves contain approximately 70,000 skulls (Adyanga 2015), however the disparity between elite voices and local experiences was marred early on by confusion and contestation over the extent of the atrocities (Bracken and Giller 1992), and remains unresolved. Today Museveni still invokes the legacy of Luwero, sometimes showing the images of the skulls on national television (Abrahamsen and Bareebe 2016). Such symbolic acts perpetuate the overarching narrative described by scholars that he brought peace and freedom to the country, liberating it from the shackles of oppression by Obote, Amin and the colonialists (Buckley-Zistel 2008).

Despite its geographic nomenclature, rather than a set of battlefields or grave sites the "Luwero Triangle" is more accurately what Wertsch and Billingsley (2011) describe as a kind of mnemonic assemblage of historical events. Annual holidays have been created to call upon citizens to remember the war, such as Heroes Day to honour the veterans (9 June), and Liberation Day to mark the coup that brought the National Resistance Army/Movement (NRA/NRM) to power (26 January). Social participation through holidays and commemorations reproduce these narratives, keeping the past in the present. In this way, they draw Ugandans back to the symbolic landscape and the conflict of Luwero, but not to other national conflicts.

*Northern Uganda*

The conflict between the Government of Uganda (GoU) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) began in the late 1980s and persists

today, although the LRA no longer operates on Ugandan soil. The LRA claims its heritage in the Holy Spirit Mobile Forces faction led by Alice Auma "Lakwena" upon the rise of the National Resistance Army. Government efforts to combat this rebel group came first under the uniform of the National Resistance Army and, after the 1995 constitution, the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF). Ideological, structural and cultural violence against both combatants and civilians characterised the conflict. GoU tactics to counter the LRA included both military offensives and social control. After a series of failed military operations and increased rebel attacks in the mid-to-late 1990s, the GoU pushed for more migration into "protected villages." Reports show that government soldiers conducted routine searches of households to oust rebels, incite fear and create local defence units (Hollander 2014). In 1996 the government gave the civilian population a 24-hour ultimatum to leave their villages and report to designated camps. At one point during the war, 251 camps and more than 300 transit sites would house anestimated two million people (UNHCR 2011).

The justice components of this conflict have been codified in a variety of instruments: by the Juba Peace Agreement that aimed to reconcile the LRA and GoU (non-signed), the International Criminal Court indictment of five LRA combatants and support for Acholi *mato oput* traditional justice efforts, a local mechanism that is employed to complement formal courts. Some of these efforts have borne fruit: as of this writing in September 2020, child abductee-turned-combatant Dominic Ongwen is currently awaiting judgement from his trial at the ICC in The Hague, though Joseph Kony, the current leader of the LRA, remains at-large and active. Key to this research, however, is the inclusion of reparations in the Juba Peace Agreement: Agenda 3, Section 9.1 notes that "Reparation may include a range of measures

such as rehabilitation; restitution; compensation; guarantees of non-recurrence and other symbolic measures such as apologies, memorials and commemorations."

The LRA-GoU war is characteristically defined by the amount of humanitarian support the displacement response received, and how international media coverage of the mysterious rebel faction. Throughout the twenty-five-year conflict, media outlets, humanitarian agencies and government officials assumed an elite voice for depictingthe situation on the ground. In addition, domestic news outlets were either owned by the government or regulated through routine harassment (Dolan 2009). The result was a familiar, repetitive discourse ofthe victim and perpetrator, set in pre-existing notions to reinforce ideas of urgency, helplessness and barbarism, all lacking any meaningful contextualisation. In 2003, UN relief coordinator Jan Egeland remarked that "The conflict in northern Uganda is the biggest forgotten, neglectedhumanitarian emergency in the world today."[15] Yet increased attendance at annual commemorative events in the aftermath of the war at massacre sites (Atiak, Muchwini, Lukodi and Barlonyo) shows that Acholi war-affected populations are in fact choosing to remember.

Indeed, international focus on the region has prioritised "Northern Uganda" revealing vastly different reconstruction efforts compared to other conflict zones within the country. This disparity is evident in Muhumza's (2019) discussion of national reconstruction funds in Luwero and the Rwenzori Mountain region.

*The Rwenzori Mountains*

Political violence in the Rwenzori region in western Uganda, on

15. Accessed through Refugee Law Project's archives. Accessible online via Justice and Reconciliation Project 2012. Reported by news outlets like *Aljazeera, The Guardian,* Reliefweb and quoted indozens of humanitarian reports.

the DRC border, can be traced back to 1830 when the Bakonzo people were evicted from their land by the Batoro. The two core groups, Rwenzururu (1909 to date) and the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (1989-93), sought to assert independent rule for the Bakonzo people (Stacey 2003). This hardened the conflict into violence over identity and territory, posing what came to be known as "the Rwenzururu Question" (Syahuka-Muhindo 1994). In the early twentieth century, colonial support for the Batoro by subsuming the Bakonzo into the larger Kingdom caused a backlash from 1919-1926. There is a regional Heroes Day on 14 April when the Bakonzo celebrate the martyrdom of "three great heroes—Tibamwenda the chieftain, Nyamutswa the medicine man and Kapooli the trumpeter—who were hanged and buried in this spot [Kagando] on April 1921."[16] To silence the rebellion, the Batoro soldiers, on orders by the colonial government, made an example of the three men.

In the 1950s, the Bakonzo continued their push for recognition through a series of political, cultural and military tactics, such as initiating a Bakonzo Life History Research Society to illustrate their cultural uniqueness. During the Obote II government (1980-1986), Amon Bazira, Minister for Lands, Minerals, & Water Resources, advocated for peace through administrative inclusion and increased education for all. He was key to convincing Omusinga (or King) Charles Mumbere, Irema-Ngoma to lead the disarmament. On the fall of Obote's regime in 1986, Bazira had hoped this progress would continue, but seeing the Museveni-led National Resistance Army's disregard for his efforts, he took up arms and mobilised other chiefs fired from civil society to create the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU). During the 1990s, splinter groups of fighters that did not surrender during the dismantling of NALU found

16. Tombstone text, at the memorial site of Kagando, in Kisinga sub-county, Kasese District.

refuge in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where they formed the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). These fighters were initially led by Tabliqs, a so-called Islamist "radical nationalist group" (Behrend 2007). Between 1996 and 2000, more than 1,000 people were murdered and 150,000 displaced by the ADF (Stacey 2003).

Lasting features of the ADF era include returnees that were forcibly abducted, land mine survivors and families with members still missing. Titeca and Vlassenroot's (2012) study of the ongoing ADF activity in DRC leads them to conclude that "the movement should be understood as a transnational phenomenon" (155). DANIDA land mine and cluster munition monitor reported in 2010 a total of 2,744 ordinances that killed 524 and left 2,220 injured, and the Rwenzori Land Mines Survivors Association had in 2013 located twenty-seven undetonated mines within the mountains, reporting that the GoU was refusing to safely dispose of the hazards.[17] Other groups, like the returnees of St. John's Seminary, are working to create personal archives that document their experiences and provide psychosocial support to other ex-combatants.[18] Eventually, over several years, eighty percent of ADF abductees returned home under the Amnesty Law. Meanwhile, ethnic violence between the Bakonzo, Ugandan Government and the Baamba persists. Rumour, mistrust and identity politics are ever-present in this region, in part due to moral and physical insecurity. Conflict in the Rwenzori Mountain region remains unresolved. As a result there are continually ways in which past grievances are revealed in the present.

*Migration Histories*

Uganda's conflicts are also tied to deep migration histories that

17. Wilson Bwambale (former director of the Anti-mines Network for the Rwenzori region) in communication with the Author, March 2013.
18. Father Landis (Parish Priest for the Archdiocese of Kasese) in communication with the Author, April 2014.

embedded themselves in the stories of unrest in these regions. Conflicts stemming from, or leading to migration are omitted from memorial work and public discourse. The traces of their presence are sometimes found in the naming of places. Micro-level conflicts are liked to rights and land that stem back to the well known Luo migration or to the rise and fall of Ababito and Abachwezi kingdoms. These kingdom borders were often defined by battles for territory before the explores of empire mapped its terrain and the British defined Uganda as a protectorate in 1896. Features in the landscape guided migratory flows and symbolised battles, leaving dual memory markers of space and time (Syahuka-Muhindo & Titeca 2016). While these histories are firmly rooted in oral culture and written about by a few scholars, other migratory flows are less well known.

Marginal foreigners lived in a variety of conditions, like a Polish refugee camp in the west of Uganda near the border with the DR Congo. Mining migrants set up settlements from the Belgian Congo that opened up in the early 1900s, forced to flee the brutality of mining overlords.[19] In the post-independence era groups such as Palestinians were settled in Kiryandongo, an area that has now become a long-standing southern/South Sudanese settlement that spawned a town. Conversely wars and political unrest have expelled populations, notably the 'Asians'. In 1973, the Guardian reported 21,500 Ugandan Asian occupying or leaving refugee camps in the UK (Linscott).

Civil wars have also driven Brundians, Somalis, Congolese and Rwandans in and out of Uganda. However their impact on the national discourse is minimal. Perhaps most significant are the Rwandans who continued to shape Uganda's history. In the 1970s Rwandans were known to settle in cities and refugee camps in rural Uganda. Particular individuals made their way up the ranks of the National Resistance Army

19. MMU Archives. Box 1073 (290) folder 5

(NRA) of Uganda who took power in 1986. Rwandan president Paul Kagame is part of the network of the '59ers who became highly trained soldiers. In 1990 the Banyarwanda fighters were disinherited of Ugandan citizenship as they waged an offensive into Rwanda to launch the war preceding the 1994 genocide (Heming 2007). Despite this disenheritance there are memorials to the Rwandan Genocide against the Tutsis in Uganda that house victims who came to shore on Lake Victoria. Plans were even developed to create a genocide museum in Uganda to commemorate the Rwandan genocide (Muramira 2016).

Internal displacement is also a feature in the contextual story of the nation. The colonial making of national parks, removed people from thousands of kilometres in the name of conservation and to prevent sleeping sickness (Ofcansky 1981). During the Luwero Bush War, residents were in camps administered by the NRA to protect the estimated 200-500 thousand displaced by the fighting with the Ugandan National Liberation Army (Kasfir 2005). In the Rwenzori Region of the west, the Allied Democratic Forces Insurgency of the 1990s and early 2000s, displaced between 105,000 and 30,000, many living in camps (UNOCHA 1999). Further north west in the country cycles of violence created both internal and cross-border displacement. A government report claimed that one-third of the Ugandan population had been displaced from conflict between 1979-2004 (GoU 2011). Except for a small community memorial and a few collections of objects from IDP camps in Northern Uganda, there is no memorial recognition to displacement within Uganda.

Despite this dynamic history of the region and ongoing migration reality, there is a tendency to fixate on a national story. In this regard, memory work since 1986 also tries to piece together conflict histories for a national aim. As the essays in this collection make clear, Museveni's

NRM government has been intentional about what narratives it highlights and which ones are suppressed. While this relates to a national discourse it is not necessarily part of an explicit project for memorialisation. It is the process of transitional justice that further centralises memory in an effort towards nation building. However, as the evidence in these essays shows, Uganda is an example of colliding and definitively "unfinished narratives" (Werbner 1995, 102).

Memorialisation, liberation and compensation across Uganda are interlinked. As the essays in this PhD describe, such connections complicate memory work around recall of events. In this way I follow Norman, Nikro and Hegasy's call to understand memorial process not just as descriptive scholarship in context but as a way to draw in political processes that inform memory and, focus on points of rupture to reveal contestation (2017). Across Uganda, new actors are increasingly involved in negotiating the past in the present, thus a linear form of recall - that would be aimed at merely resisting historical oblivion - is tied up in international cooperation and development (Abiti 2018). Cultural institutions aligned to ethnic groups, religious leaders, survivor communities, NGOs and the central government's Uganda Museum all benefit from donor resources and expert inputs in their memorial projects. The politics of memory playing out between these authorities is increasingly tied to the overarching project of transitional justice and social transformation that accompanies such work.

### Transitional Justice and the Unfinished Business of the Past

I have seen over the last decade how the efforts for transitional justice in Northern Uganda are being transferred into older conflicts in Luwero or more ongoing issues in the Rwenzori region. One interesting example of this interconnectedness is seen in the 2020 petition to the ICC in the Rwenzori region to prosecute president Museveni and his army for

killings at the Royal Palace of the Kingdom of Rwenzururu in 2016. Using the ICC as a tool for seeking justice goes back to the 2004 arrest warrants for four members of the Lord's Resistance Army and coincided with the trial of one of those rebel leaders, Dominic Ongwen. Doing memory work within TJ provides two key advantages. First it uses a shared language and set of mechanisms for social transformation. Second, it has a shared set of donor agendas in which the soft power of diplomatic cooperation and cultural exchange are both expressed.

On a national level the Transitional Justice Policy includes victims across the country. Attempting to address the needs of millions of victims is an ambitious yet challenging goal (REDRESS 2020). The work with victims in TJ programmes has been admirable, leading to the development of numerous non-governmental and community based organisations across the country. With a concentration of work being done in Northern Uganda, TJ over the last two decades has also produced a cadre of niche professionals who are literate in the approaches and who work to advise on other contexts within the country and internationally.

Scholars have, however been critical of the success of TJ within Uganda. Arnould (2017) has described how the country is not explicitly democratic, even if it holds elections and therefore the whole notion of transition to democracy is compromised. Some argue that the legal mechanism set up by the ICC do not adequately cater to the scope of harms done (Clark 2015). Others point out that the spiritual harm and social forms of reconciling are outside the scope of the TJ toolkit (Baines 2010). Moreover, Macdonald writes of how the issues of TJ in Uganda are mostly related to systems and implementaiton (2019). Overall these academic readings of the TJ work present a less than ideal condition for implementing reform and supporting social cohesion.

Regardless of these critiques, local and international NGOs continue to utilise the transnational umbrella of TJ to conduct work that aims for social repair in the aftermath of conflict. While most of these are grounded in work on the LRA versus GoU conflict, they move into other areas to access survivors or invite groups to dialogue at events. Such examples include the work of the Justice and Reconciliation Project in West Nile region, the 2013 National War Victim's Conference spear headed by the African Youth Initiative Network that included representatives from across Uganda and the Refugee Law Project's national transitional justice audit that resulted in a publication entitled 'The Compendium of Conflicts in Uganda'. The Uganda Human Rights commission has been documenting violations with a mandate to comprehensively report on all national issues from 1986-2007. These examples illustrate the ways in which work done in Northern Uganda has spread into other contexts by organsiations set up to support TJ relating to the LRA versus GoU war.

Memorialisation is folded into this TJ work. On a basic level the documentation of violence and human rights violations constitutes an archiving of memory around conflicts in the country. However the extension of this is public acts of mourning, national collaborations in memory projects and NGOs working to develop memory work. As described in detail in Essay Two, TJ-based organisations in Northern Uganda are supporting the development of memorials at sites of mass graves as well as collecting materials from survivors for regional collections. The Uganda Commission for Museums and Monuments, which is the national cultural arm, has collections from residents who lived in displacement camps and has participated in listing sites of conflict onto national registers. They do this work with the language of and donor support from TJ actors. In this way the regional and national

memorial work has gained traction for making visible the LRA versus GoU war.

The challenge to TJ actors developing memorial work as symbolic repair can be understood through a reading of symbolic sites and forms of representation. In particular my analysis of mass graves—that only came about as a result of a new type of warfare in the 1980, 1990s and 2000s—highlights different commemorative approaches. According to Hollander (2016) the disappearances and forced abductions that resulted from war have caused a kind of ambiguous loss that communities struggle to make sense of, resulting in the needs for new measures for repair that are often outside the Acholi cultural systems. Massacres and forced displacement caused religious and cultural leaders across Northern Uganda to stylistically adjust practices of mourning in response to the perceived spiritual harm caused by the unclaimed bodies in mass graves. Annual commemorations, that are now included in ongoing memorialisation within TJ work, had originated to ensure populations living in displacement camps that the dead were settled and that it was therefore safe to return home. This intimate form of praying over the deceased had little to do with the project of post-war nation building that it is now aligned to. Given the aim of TJ to shape a rebirth the of the nation, Uganda has formed a hybrid system of symbolic approaches that sometimes align with the toolkit approach, sometimes operate outside it and in the case of Northern Uganda, do both simultaneously.

## Coming Together

Geopolitics, identity and violence are all entangled in different assemblages within and beyond Uganda’s borders, refusing an easy analytical categorisation of national, ethnonational, political, or even purely ideological conflicts. As a result, bringing these cases together

requires a depiction of Uganda's memorial landscape within a context of national and trans-national post-conflict reconstruction. To date, most analysis focuses on these conflicts in isolation, classifying them according to their perpetrators. More recently, however, transitional justice NGOs are conducting new research into historical injustices. Focusing on memory and memorialisation within these three sites works to broaden the conversation between the citizen and the state. Furthermore, this approach supports a shift away from "victim essentialism" that aggregates communities of witness based on their bodily trauma. For example, some of the social solidarity that has been built up between Northern Uganda and the Rwenzori Mountain region is through women's cooperatives—in particular, those who communicate through drama and performance. Understanding these communities within memoryscapes allows for more insightful discussions of movement and migration that are central to conflict scenarios. This expanded focus, moreover, unbinds the narratives from "spatial incarceration" that locks an individual or group to a place of cultural heritage and binds them to that identity (Appadurai 1988, 37). By contrast, joining multiple cases within one national context for the purpose of comparative analysis respects the ongoing movement and migration of post-conflict settings, and removes the assumptions that those who were present at the time of armed conflict are either dead or remain in the place of violence.

Memory positivists working in Uganda rarely evaluate the potential triggers, such as those presented in Essay Two that are identified as "humanitarian remains". Instead, national museum officials and regional NGOs within Uganda advocate for more public displays of past violence. Such work disregards the warnings brought forth by practitioners regarding the impact of "hot interpretation" that elicits uncomfortable and evocative reactions by visitors (Uzzell 1989). From a development

viewpoint, the so-called “dark heritage” industry has created a tourism product valued at billions globally (Roberts and Stone 2014). Indeed, in 2019 the Uganda Tourism Board tabled “dark tourism” as a new product to be packaged and marketed. Some management plans of sites supported by the CMM also include tourism products in part of their sustainability plan.

Different forms of intervention, misrepresentation and silencing continue to unsettle the past. Essays One and Three highlight how transitional justice work excavates war histories in a way that disturbs the official discourse of the state as well as complicates it’s own mandate for remembrance as recall. Essay Two describes how legacies of humanitarian assistance are revealed through memorial efforts as well as physical remains from the era of internal displacement. Essay’s Four and Five reveal a context whereby resistance continues and pasts are negotiated with the aid of TJ actors and beyond their mandate through intimate codes of communication. Lastly, Essay six reveals forms of media representation that shape the imaginative terrains for memorial work and how contemporary art unsettles those ways of seeing. Together the collection traces a series of social, historical and material threads that when read as companions to each other can show how fractured memorialisation is within Uganda. And yet this fractured reality does not negate agency or potential for repair. As a set of insights, this PhD seeks to challenge the normative aims of symbolic reparations whose linear aims fall deep into contextual crevasses across the country.

# PART II

## GLOBAL AND NATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS OF MEMORY IN MUSEUMS, MONUMENTS AND DISPLACEMENT CAMPS

### Essay One
Uganda's Challenge to Forget: A Return to Memory in Luwero
Under review in the *journal of Memory Studies*

### Essay Two
Humanitarian Remains: Erasure and the Everyday of Camp life in Northern Uganda
Published in the *Journal of Refugee Studies,* 2020

## ABSTRACT

These two essays showcase the range of memorial concerns addressed in the thesis. Essay One looks into how Ugandan elites employ sites of memory to legitimise their power and reinforce their status as war heroes. However, it argues that new efforts for transitional justice have excavated truths that contradict the mainstream narratives of the Luwero bush war. Through betrayal and broken promises, citizens suffer a new form of symbolic trauma —which, compounded with the legacy of violence, creates ruptures in the boundaries of nationhood. Citizenship and political affiliation are thus limited by how they engage with the memory of a struggle or the association of a place.

Essay Two chronicles the moment in time when the Ugandan state and humanitarian agencies aligned during the war between the Lord's Resistance Army and the Government of Uganda, creating internally displaced persons camps that housed two million people. This essay argues that these sites are significant memory features in survivors' recall of the war, yet official histories often deny them the potency that former camp residents afford them. Here, material culture, landscapes and unmarked graves alike serve as material evidence, evidence that sheds light on the need for more nuanced memorial projects that reflect this defining moment in Uganda's war histories. Together, these two essays show the scope of global and local aftermaths of war, ranging from normative exhibitions to leftover aid rations, and express a need to further investigate the representational and material implications of war histories and historical interpretation.

## ESSAY ONE

## UGANDA'S CHALLENGE TO FORGET: A RETURN TO MEMORY IN LUWERO

### Introduction

In recent years, scholars have increasingly recognised that purposeful forgetting, suppression of memory and intentional concealment are all integral to memorial processes (Connerton, 2009; Buckley-Zistel, 2006; Rieff, 2016; Zur, 2017). It is now generally understood that societies that have experienced trauma must create strategies to move on from the past, and that in the name of moving on, societies reclassify or eliminate painful memories. However, such silence can be dangerous, breeding resentment (Fassin 2013). Both the foundations of heritage research and the recent spatial turn in peacebuilding studies show that landscapes, material culture, and even architecture can inhabit past and present in overlapping ways, mediating between remembering and forgetting. Within transitional justice, however, the primary aim of memorialisation by transitional actors is thought to be reconciliatory, to bring differing communities together through the acknowledgment of past trauma and by the attribution of accountability upon those responsible for the violence. A lack of evidence around how effective memorials are in their ability to transform society has led to a series of assumptions by practitioners and scholars that still requires more investigation (Hamber, Ševčenko and Naidu 2010; Bickford and Sodaro 2010).

What happens when memories of conflict are reactivated decades after the events? Answering this question is particularly pertinent in African contexts where political elites that rose to power from conflict are still in power and operate on a firm historical narrative. Such is

the case of the Luwero Triangle in Uganda, a site of violent conflict from 1980-1985 that has become both a narrative marker of historical events (Wertsch and Billingsley 2011) and a physical region, although scholars differ on the exact contours of the map (Schubert 2006; Mutibwa 1992). Populating this region are thirty-six mass graves proclaimed as distinct memorial sites, together containing at least 70,000 skulls (Adyanga 2015).[20] The meaning of such sites is influenced by discourse around the past, excavated though transitional justice initiatives rooted in documenting violence during the civil war. While some relegate the events of Luwero firmly to the past, such as Ugandan President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni since his National Resistance Army/Movement (NRA/M) took power in 1986, there remains a need to investigate new attempts to document memories even thirty-five years after the end of the war and the transition of power. Among survivors of that conflict and generations since, how do counter-narratives emerge? Have they always been present, but kept silent?

This contribution engages the literature on remembrance by demonstrating that memory, understood as a set of mediated acts regarding past conflicts, can refashion national narratives about sites of violence beyond the physical space in which the violence first occurred, into larger geographic as well as social memoryscapes. The case study of Uganda is the primary context for investigation, and transitional justice (here called TJ) as the mechanism through which ordinary citizens can make traumatic memories public. By examining the conflict within the Luwero Triangle, this article highlights how, over time, memory both destabilises existing histories and creates new social alliances. In this way, citizens of post-traumatic landscapes can employ their recollections to

20. Adyanga 2015, and Giblin 2014 referenced thirty-three grave sites. The Uganda National Commission for Museums and Monuments register had listed thirty-six in 2018 when I looked at the records.

gain agency though direct ownership of their experiences (Brown 2012).

Three concepts are used to develop this analysis: amnesia, aphasia and agonism. Together they illustrate positions of individual, spatial, material and collected memories. Principally, amnesia is the condition of forgetting, the loss or erasure or absence of memory, which can occur both as an individual experience (via personal events) and a collective one (via historical events). Aphasia is the condition whereby speech is impossible, even though an individual or a community may have clear knowledge of what they want to articulate. Agonism is the concept of productive disagreement, associated with social and political unrest. After outlining these three frameworks, this article critically examines the attempts by Ugandan elites to narrate what happened in Luwero, subordinating alternative perspectives to collective aphasia in the name of post-war statebuilding. Examples from Luwero offer a resistance to the normative frame, opening up places to break silence and remedy aphasia. Lastly, discussions on political disagreement provides a basis for a more nuanced understanding of agonistic citizen deliberation.

This article uses memory theory to explore lived realities in a country where negotiations over the past are constantly at play. It asks, what constitutes national and regional memory boundaries, what are the narrative frames for memory, and what role does memory play in the present-day state? I argue that the phenomenon is not one of forgetting or amnesia per se but a space for agonistic disagreement in the long-term aftermath of the war. At the same time, evidence presented below poses a challenge to agonistic scholars, who frame their arguments in the context of liberal democracies. Thus the work seeks to contribute to a small but growing body of scholarship, concerned with  African post-civil war nation-building through memory negotiations.

The primary source material for this analysis comes from a database of qualitative data collected from 2013-2018 in Luwero, paired with historical and media archives to examine the role of TJ within ruling party memorial contexts. The data has also been collected from doctoral research in the region from 2016-2018, following the curation in 2013-2014 of an exhibition entitled Travelling Testimonies: this exhibition was a mobile museum-like display of war, peace and reconciliation histories that travelled across Uganda. The year-long travelling exhibition went from Kitgum to Kasese, Arua, Luwero and Kampala to simultaneously document and exhibit war and peace related memories to consolidate a national history based on everyday memories, artworks, archives and objects. Interviews with multiple constituencies—residents of Luwero and its surrounding districts, key politicians and policymakers, artists, young people and exhibition visitors—all inform this research.

**Making the Triangle**

Typically, scholars who describe Uganda as a state either reduce it to a chronological political analysis (Hansen and Twaddle et al, 1998; Mamdani 2002; Mutibwa 1992), or focus on specific groups related to particular eras. These include pre-colonial ethnicity (Southall 1958; Atkinson 1994; see also works by colonial administrators), rebel causes (Kasfir 2005; Finnström 2008; Allen 1991; Allen and Vlassenroot et al. 2010; Stacey 2003; Ngoga 1998; Behrend 1999), and most recently, developmental reconstruction. As a counterpoint to historical treatments of conflict that focused on warring elites, scholars are now working to understand the lived experiences of civilians and those conscripted to serve in non-combat roles during the war between the Lord's Resistance Army and the Uganda People's Defence Force (Finnström 2008; Porter 2012; Dolan 2009; Baines 2010). In most of these studies, scholars include but rarely analyse the role of memory in creating and articulating a

national identity for Uganda. This is particularly true for traumatised regions like the Rwenzori Mountains, Acholiland, or the Luwero Triangle. These kinds of places, some scholars claim, create memoryscapes that (like nations themselves) are rooted in mythologies collated from direct experiences or transmitted through memories across space and time (Bell 2003). More than battlefields or mass graves, memoryscapes are composed of the tangible and intangible representations of a particular era (Basu 2007). In such places one can therefore gain insight from the ways in which representations of the past are yoked into the present.

In modern studies of Uganda, the Luwero Triangle is largely an underrepresented landscape. Although it is the birthplace of the current ruling NRA/M, very little is actually known about this region, and how memory and history have etched it into national consciousness (Schubert 2006). The "Luwero Triangle" or "Luwero Bush War" primarily signals a site of opposition to the Obote II regime; the now-president Yoweri Museveni's victory in that region enabled the success of his coup d'état in 1986. The term pays homage both to the town and district of Luwero, as well as the "bush warfare" that spread from its hub across the country. As noted in Part I, most maps of the Luwero Triangle differ slightly (Figure 1.1), with geometric attempts usually placing one corner

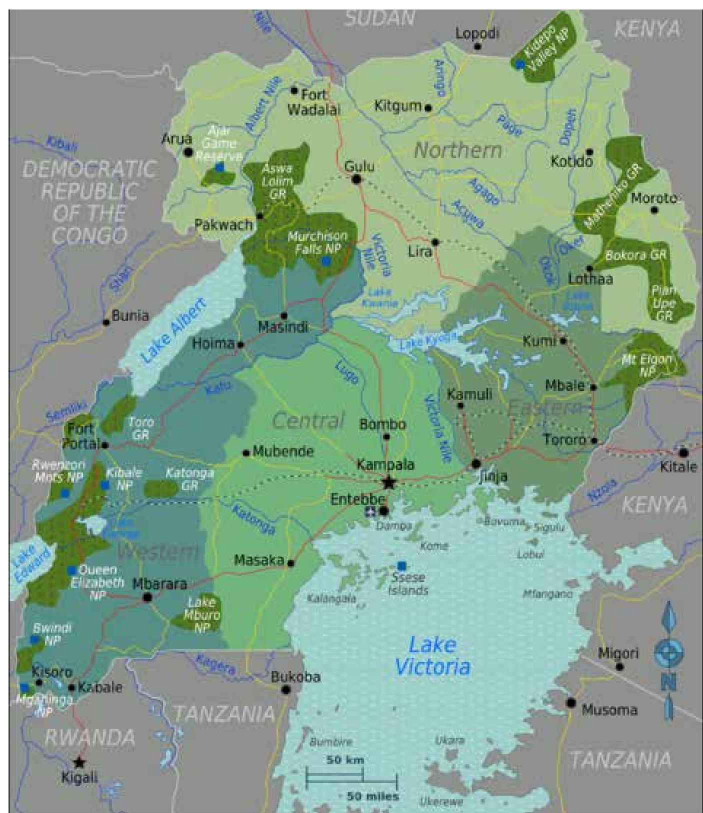



Figure 1.1
Map of Luwero Triangle

on Kampala, one at the boundary with Lake Kyoga and one at the western edge between Hoima and Masindi (Schubert 2006; Mutibwa 1992).[21] This approximation stems partly from the nature of combat that did not have front lines or established territorial targets.

Through publications and popular discussions about what happened there, the notion of Luwero has become entangled in memory without critical reflection around its making. As the mainstream narrative goes, following the 1980 election of Milton Obote, twenty-seven fighters joined an opposition movement under Museveni as their leader. From the time the fighting began in 1981 to the coup in January 1986, somewhere between 8,000 and 16,000 fighters had joined the cause, some involuntarily. Since then, the memorial meanings attached to this place have proved politically useful during the thirty-three years that Museveni and the NRA/M have been in power; even today there is a position of the Minister of State for the Luwero Triangle.[22]

The Luwero Bush War created a series of bodily and symbolic traumas during the fighting, with estimates as high as 300,000 dead in the fighting (Larkin 1987). One of most notable symbolic memories among residents of the region (as well as those traveling on the Kampala-Gulu Highway) arose when Museveni's troops cleaned the skulls of the unknown deceased and lined the main roads with their collections. One former NRA combatant explained that, "We didn't know who the people were, they [commanders] just ordered us to do it decapitate the bodies and remove the flesh from the heads."[23] The skulls and other remains found their way into 36 ambiguous mass grave sites scattered across the

21. "Bush war" and "bush warfare" are popular terms when referring to conflict in rural landscapes across Africa. "The Bush" refers to the experiences of combatants, abductees, and civilians who lived in conflict zones. Bush warfare is often characterized by guerrilla war tactics.

22. The National Resistance Army (NRA) was the army that fought in Luwero. The political party that grew out of the NRA, took power, and remains in power at the time of this writing is the National Resistance Movement (NRM).

23. Anonymous (NRA ex-combatant) in discussion with the author, November 2017

landscape with unidentified deceased marked as "martyrs." However, the disparity between elite voices and local experiences was marred by confusion and contestation over both the extent of the atrocities and who was responsible (Bracken and Giller 1992). More than three decades since the events, Museveni continues to invoke the legacy of Luwero, sometimes showing the images of the skulls, to remind Ugandans of his sacrifice to bring peace and freedom to the country, liberated from the shackles of oppression by Obote, Amin, and the colonialists (Buckley-Zistel 2008).[24]

More than just a set of battlefields or gravesites, the "Luwero Triangle" is thus a mnemonic community of experiences that signal historical events (Wertsch and Billingsley 2011). Annual holidays have been created to rally citizens to the memory, such as Heroes Day on June 9 to honour the veterans, and Liberation Day on January 26 to mark the coup that brought the NRA/M to power. Social participation through holidays and remembrances habituate the memories even further (Booth 2006). Specific historical and archival materials portray Luwero from the perspective that the past has been settled. Memoirs from elites—among them Museveni's own Sowing the Mustard Seed, Odonga Ori Amaza's Museveni's Long March from Guerrilla to Statesman, and Pescos Kutesa's Uganda's Revolution 1979-1986: How I Saw It—valorise past struggles to legitimate their present positions. In this way, these works draw Ugandans back to the bodily and symbolic conflicts of Luwero, but not, critically, to other national conflicts.

Historic and new transitional justice mechanisms have shaped the ways in which the events in Luwero are represented. The 1985 Nairobi Peace Talks, a Commission of Inquiry into the Violation of Human Rights (1962-1986), and the 1995 Constitution of Uganda all mark efforts for

24. Broadcast archival images as part of the 2016 Election Campaign Adverts on NTV Uganda.

truth and institutional reform. These also formed part of the legitimation of Museveni government in the aftermath the of Luwero Bush War. However, new efforts driven by civil society actors and funded by foreign donors are systematically uncovering violations committed during the civil war. These include the Refugee Law Project's Transitional Justice Audit and the Uganda Human Rights Commission's survey of violations. The rise of social media also makes space for contradictory narratives to emerge, notably on YouTube and blogs, as citizens debate a past that many had once called settled.[25]

Over time, through its symbols and rhetoric, Luwero has transcended from the space of the territorial to the space of the imaginary. As Titeca and Reuss (2016) have argued, this citizen-agreement is not difficult for the NRM to create because the majority of Ugandan citizens were born after Museveni and the NRM took power. Therefore the very concept of Ugandan identity is dominated by a liberation icon. Within a particular memoryscape, memorial sites, narratives and identities all form around the nucleus of the liberation myths that have created it. Returning to memory in Luwero is like a feedback loop mutually informed by liberation discourse and material remains in the landscape (Winter 2007). According to Park (2011), aspects of memory embedded in landscapes perform a symbolic role in "the quintessential nature of a nation, which helps to ensure its cultural integrity and continuity" (524). Thus examples of memory exchange in Luwero highlight a dialectic between citizen and state that is mediated through the memories of, and monuments to, the past.

### Mythology and Amnesia

Frequently, the memorialisation of collective suffering is a project

25. Examples include: ugandansatheart.org, the Acholi Times, and YouTube channels like the NRM.

of transitional state elites. Top-down efforts such as the production of museums, monuments, days of remembrance and archives are among the ways by which nations define themselves. Scholarship on post-independence Africa illustrates the mechanisms of memorial and heroisation used by rebel victors in places like Zimbabwe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems 2009; Becker 2011). Yet as has been discussed by Ezeigbo (2000) and Soyinka (1998) in the context of Nigeria-Biafra memory, defining a sense of belonging as a citizen of a state recovering from civil unrest implies an uneasy union, as contemporary conflicts tend towards unsatisfactory settlements, or when recurring symbolic and structural violence opens pathways for new political communities even after physical violence has ceased. Case studies in Sierra Leone and Kenya demonstrate that efforts at truth-seeking, accountability and institutional reform are rarely comprehensive, leaving a gap for agreeing upon narratives when conducting memory work  (Shaw, 2007; Zetterstrom-Sharp 2015; Karega-Munene, 2011).

As has long been understood, heritage sites, memorial performances and public commemoration make visible the dissonance between actual events and imagined realities (Ashworth and Tunbridge 1996; Lowenthal 1997). Dissonance is an indicator of the space between truth, "authorised" facts, factual occurrences and the multiple ways people remember them (Hirsch 2011). Or as Sharon Macdonald (2009) has observed, memories of war and memorial manifestations together create a "difficult heritage" that becomes less about venerating heroes and more about understanding (even rehearsing) the pain-as Turnbridge and Ashworth call it, "heritage that hurts." This pain can reside in the idea of places as affective agents, meaning that a given place or its difficult heritage can trigger non-discursive, sensorial reactions. However, scholars have discussed in depth how, in places like Rwanda, victors

of civil-war continue to manage and dictate memorial work, framing historical events to venerate rebel leaders and president Kagame with unquestioning heroism (Longman 2017).

This section describes the ways in which historical amnesia was introduced by political elites who have sought to ensure the codification of their version of Luwero's history. By choosing a linear rendition of the past as dictated by liberators and heroes, the discourse eliminates alternative experiences. Over three decades, Museveni and his NRA/M have sought to encase what happened in Luwero during the 1980s into a set frame. This method of glorification of war histories is found in repetition of narratives by Museveni and the NRA veterans, the absence of alternative historical information available to citizens and in memorial initiatives across the landscape.

In the case of the Luwero Triangle, the idea of Museveni as a sovereign hero dominates the discourse. He brands himself an "intellectual" who supported a popular movement amongst peasants. "We here in Uganda started a war for a good cause. We started a war for democracy; for non-sectarianism; for decency and for redress because Obote closed all avenues of peaceful protest" (1986 Inauguration Speech). Low (1988) has described Museveni as a skilful, laborious and "leftist leader" (51). The NRA/M 10-point program called for unity under Museveni's leadership: compressed and rehearsed, the code posits Museveni as a supreme leader who is responsible for securing the country through "thoughtful military rule."[26] During the 1980s

26. Ten Points: 1. Democracy, 2. Security, 3. Consolidation of national security and elimination of all forms of sectarianism, 4. Defending and consolidating national independence, 5. Building an independent, integrated and self-sustaining national economy, 6. Restoration and improvement of social services and the rehabilitation of the war-ravaged areas, 7. Elimination of corruption and misuse of power, 8. Redressing errors that have resulted in the dislocation of sections of the population and improvement of others, 9. Co-operation with other African countries in defending human and democratic rights of our brothers in other parts of Africa, 10. Following an economic strategy of mixed economy.

popular support from civilians, by both forced and voluntary recruitment, gave credence to the idea that a revolutionary uprising was necessary. Some even rallied around Museveni's claim that the movement's "basic weapon is the support of the people and their political consciousness" (Kasfir 2005, 278, quoting Museveni 1981).

The era of transition was largely positive, celebrating Museveni's ascent to power. Why was this so, in the wake of many failed leaders before him? According to Mamdani (2002), "The NRA succeeded in forging such a unity precisely because it moved away from ancestry and towards residence as the basis for defining the individual's rights" (496). With the Luwero Triangle as the heartland for this movement, anyone who was willing to rally around the NRM's mythology would be welcomed into this new unified national imaginary.

As part of this effort, the rise of the NRA/M and their links to the trauma in the Luwero Triangle created references for a "state vernacular" (Anderson 1991, 86), as if to say that "what happened there is now part of us all." As mentioned above, new annual holidays such as Heroes Day and Liberation Day rally citizens back to the memory of Luwero, with Liberation Day invoked as a kind of Independence Day mirroring the commemorations of independence from colonial Britain on October 9, 1962. Schubert (2006) insists that "according to this myth, the NRA was the logical product of the previous regime's repression" (97). The political elite have continued these imaginings to routinely draw citizens back to the symbolic landscape of Luwero and the Bush War, even initiating a 2019 march to retrace the footsteps of Museveni and his forces when they took power.

As the direct memory of the conflict gave way to post-memory of later generations, the exact events would fade into legend, mythologize into historical texts. Yet election times for the party or the presidency

became signifiers to return to the memoryscape of the Luwero Bush War: flashes of the cleaned skulls that once lined the roads as impromptu memorials in the 1980s were included as recently as 2016 in presidential campaign advertisements. Every few years, new plaques are placed on mass graves with Luwero residents' participation. They typically read something to the effect of: "we celebrate the martyrs who gave their lives for the liberation of Uganda," and are often "inaugurated by His Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni".[27] These markers reinforce the official memory of the Luwero Triangle, and often expand its boundaries with newly-honoured deaths that project the narrative of the war further and further out from the originally-imagined battle grounds. In this way, the burial grounds are directly linked to the statebuilding project of the NRA/M. Calling upon the dead for political legitimacy as martyrs, particularly through mass graves, involves a transference from tangible remains into intangible notions of citizenship. The corporealities of violence thus occupy an in-between space wherein one cannot be sure what exactly is being recalled from the grave (Major and Fontein 2015). The haunting occupies a domain where amnesia lingers: plaques and prayers are meant not to make the dead present but to silence them, and memorial sites lack regular visitors, only becoming activated through political recall during opportune times.

Quarantining the past, forgetting and supposedly "moving on" are all popular lines of thinking. Aligned with the state, the church is another elite institution that supports a drive to forgive and forget, seeing remembrance as a potential domain for harbouring unrest. The Uganda Joint Christian Council invests in reconciliation through the opening and subsequent suppression of dialogue around past atrocities. Catholic Bishop Ssemwogerere of Luwero remarked in an interview

27. The Gaddafi Memorial on the Masaka Highway even shows the support from the former Libyan leader as a further mechanism to legitimize the struggle.

that “Africa’s commitment is: forget the past, stand up and move forward”.[28] Confirming the Bishop’s claim, Shaw’s (2005) work in Sierra Leone describes local strategies for forgetting. Buckley-Zistel’s (2006) memorial research in Rwanda asserts a need for “chosen amnesia” so that societies can coexist in the aftermath of extreme violence. However, Ssemwogerere, Shaw and Buckley-Zistel all agree that forgetting, amnesia and total erasure are impossibilities.

The result is a kind of “prescriptive forgetting” from elites where only the adult, masculine liberation narrative prevails (Connerton 2008). Omitted from this version of Luwero’s Bush War are the roles of the kadogos (child soldiers), women, the Ugandan Army, the Buganda Kingdom, the Banyarwanda Battalions and others (Figure 1.2). Museveni does not regard the plural voices outside his core alliance as valid, for these individuals were not those who struggled most, who liberated best.

Figure 1.2
Archive image of Kadogos circulated in revisionist media.

28. Interview with the author, May 2013.

Resistance Committees that were part of the military structure during the war are regularly put forward as an appropriate outlet to express discord between the rebel NRA and the Luwero residents. The Resistance Committees validate the NRM narrative, because (as the assertion goes) through open debate they could garner popular participation and adjudicate injustices committed by the rebel forces (Kasfir 2005).

In addition, the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights (CIVHR) offered Museveni a suitable place to archive the past. In total, 608 witnesses gave testimony around incidents from 1962-1986. These volumes of testimonies are not publicly available, nor is the report accessible in any library save for the National Archives. In spite of its guarded condition—or more likely because of it—participants to the Travelling Testimonies exhibition repeatedly asked for its contents. Quinn's (2004) research on the Commission found that the process has been strategically committed to amnesia, leaving "no indelible mark on Ugandan society" (411). Quinn aligns the CIVHR with a "failed memory," precisely because it did not adequately unveil atrocities committed by the NRA, nor has it been used to activate recall to that time.

As I have shown, the decisions around what is remembered and what is forgotten are embedded in mythologies of revolutionary heroes. Regimes like the NRM create and call upon rhetoric to thicken memory and align citizens to their central themes, protagonists, and associated material artefacts of elite memories (Booth 2006). The authorisation of nationhood by particular sets of elites has a unique impact on the kinds of details that are shared and the traces left behind after conflict (Bartlett 1995,118). In essence, elites work to build a horizon line for enshrining their version of national identity. Resistance to these authorised accounts of the past often results in an othering and disinheritance of these oppositional voices, as seen with ally-turned-

opposition leader Kizza Besigye who contented against Museveni in the 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016 elections. In addition the election of opposition Woman MP Brenda Nabukenya in Luwero District was on the grounds that her generation had not lived the war and did not subscribe to the veneration of Museveni as a supreme leader.

**Aphasia**

In the case of Uganda, the visibility of post-conflict reconstruction and transitional justice efforts in the north of the country makes it difficult for those impacted by the events in Luwero to resign their memories to elite dictation. Unlike the Peace and Recovery Development Plans rolled out in northern Uganda since 2010, Luwero residents still feel the impacts of incomplete reconstruction. Interviews and focus group discussions with ex-combatants and low-to-middle income residents in the Luwero Triangle region revealed the way in which the past pervades their everyday efforts for reconstruction and notions of the citizen-self. By their own account, residents of Luwero are unable to relinquish the past, and sometimes act against it. Museveni remains in power, entrenched by the removal of age and term limits initially set out in the 1995 constitution. Yet in the last decade, spaces in Uganda have begun to engage political debates, opening pathways for memory to rework public authority. Transitional justice work, particularly around memorialisation and documentation of violence, creates avenues for citizens to adopt new political communities through research, meetings, conferences, commemorations and exhibitions. As I show below, survivors of the conflict cannot actively ignore their memories because new mechanisms are working to unearth events the past.

Even so, the potency, repetition and spatial reach of Museveni's hero myth still relegates many citizens to a condition of aphasia—understood in this context not as the absence of memory, but the

inability to speak about that memory. Based on recent investigations in the area, I contend that those affected by the events of Luwero have not forgotten the past, but rather lack the tools or spaces to articulate what happened where it contradicts the revolutionary hero narrative. Aphasic dissonance between experience and expression is based on what and how the disruption happens (Stoler 2011). Thus, sites of memory, archives, commemorations and even social inequalities can be vectors to alternately articulate or silence the past. Probing this concept, and its consequent silences, both allows us to better see the spaces of buried pasts and sets up the subsequent section showing how transitional justice is trying to access submerged narratives.

Domestic and international organisations (namely, the Refugee Law Project, the International Centre for Transitional Justice, the Justice and Reconciliation Project, the African Youth Initiative Network and the Uganda Human Rights Commission) honed in on the north of the country and its post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Documentation initiatives around atrocities in the "greater north," just beyond the Luwero Triangle, showed a need to reference the sources of fighting and the experiences of displacement; subsequent attempts to disentangle narratives of the war in the north began to implicate the Museveni regime. The NRA-orchestrated Mukura Massacre of 1989 became one iconic example that illustrated state impunity (Justice and Reconciliation Project 2015). The recognition achieved for the atrocities committed at Mukura triggered a domino effect for victims in other regions of Uganda to safely document their testimonies, within TJ networks.

Participants in the Travelling Testimonies (TT) exhibition in Luwero from March 31-June 2, 2014, highlighted the NRA's role in atrocities against civilians during the era of the Luwero Bush War. One anonymous participant offered to show the Refugee Law Project team the hills where

executions allegedly took place, noting that Obote and Museveni often used the same sites in order to obscure their own culpability. Other visitors donated personal photographs and video footage from the conflict as evidence to implicate the NRA in committing atrocities. In short, a kind of informal public debate ensued within the exhibition space whereby the assumed past began to be dismantled. Save for a few sitting politicians, most of the fifteen hours of survivor testimonials referred to unfulfilled promises of reconstruction following the war, such as Museveni's clear commitment in a 1995 speech to support justice and compensation in Luwero:

> *An undisciplined army cannot create peace in the country. I am going to follow up all these incidents, unearth the culprits if they are still alive, so as to hold them accountable and compensate the victims or their descendants… I will personally organise a blood settlement with the concerned families and communities.*
>
> - June 21, 1995 address to the NRM Caucus

In the view of these survivors, not only had Museveni betrayed their support, but he had failed to compensate them for physical, psychological, and economic injuries, including the destroyed agricultural infrastructure of the region (Figure 1.3). Yet until TJ work intervened, these survivors had little to no opportunity to say so.

At the exhibition, during human rights-related research, and at the national victims' conference, individuals and groups all worked to break the aphasia for developmental outcomes. Participants of TJ efforts commonly ally themselves with global movements in order to gain power and legitimacy from their testimony through "memory entrepreneurship" (Hamber and Wilson 2002), invoking the discourse of reparations that privileges victim experiences. When asked about what should be remembered from the war, older residents wanted the TT exhibition team to display images of destroyed granaries, cotton gins,

and fallow land. Such images referenced a time before the war when Luwero was considered the breadbasket of Uganda, with booming farmers' cooperatives. The ruins of agricultural space in Luwero, evoking nostalgia for the past, illustrate a phenomena of "spatial melancholia" whereby derelict buildings or untilled land are present in form and absent in function, reminding communities of the violence inflicted upon them (Navaro-Yashin 2009).

Figure 1.3
Bombed co-operative store house. The roofing raided by NRA to make shelters.

Referring to the state of post-war development in Luwero, one exhibition docent, a schoolteacher named Fred, questioned the idea that Luwero could even be a "Mecca" as it is mentioned in the elite discourse. Fred described the contradiction in the symbol of Mecca as rich and filled with great beauty and luxury, while Luwero is barren of even basic necessities. "He [Museveni] has been referring to these [memorial] sites for different donors that, 'people died in Luwero, people died in Luwero.' But what is done in Luwero?"[29] Fred continued to

29. Interview with the author and RLP team, March 2014.

express his dissatisfaction by ranking health facilities and explaining their inadequacies, trying to show the paradox of liberation as development.

Sitting at a mass grave and memorial site, in Nakaseke, with a local area resident named Nelson, the team learned of the 26-year-old's concern for the well-being of the dead. "If actually these people died to liberate this country," Nelson asked, "are their souls resting in eternal peace?"[30] He has a right to be concerned, as rumours have long circulated about exhumations of the graves. Reports of looting mass graves are prevalent in Luwero (Semakula and Musoke 2014). Police suspect that people are retrieving the bones for nganga traditional healer ceremonies, with some going so far as to investigate links to smuggling human remains into Tanzania (Kiwanuka, Namubiru and Kato 2008). Yet respondents in Luwero suspect instead that the government fears independent forensic investigations into the events of 1981-1986, and are therefore systematically removing the remains.

Nelson's question around those interred in the thirty-six mass graves of Luwero points directly to the intangible force of rumours and myths that, if proven real, would have spiritual consequences for the unsettled dead (Figure 1.4). In this realm of uncertainty, individuals experience affect from forces that are beyond body, object or landscape. Some scholars argue that affect lies outside narrative

Figure 1.4
Memorial site at Nakatete.

30.Interview with the author, May 2013.

production, rather is something felt within one's own sense of self (Guattari 1996). Navaro-Yashin (2009) describes affect as "the non-discursive sensation which a space or environment generates" (13). The affective relationships residents have to sites of trauma as well as to their own memories of the war are inroads to understanding the phenomenon of aphasia in this region, opening up spaces for feeling rather than speaking, and appreciating that the past is not dead.

During the TT exhibition, twelve artists from Luwero performed and made works on-site to intentionally create an alternative register of logic for affect. In doing so they revealed the chronic pain of historical violence. Leading painter Joseph Baliks featured characters crying: one image in the untitled series closely depicts individuals sobbing, as if to say the trauma has not ended (Figure 1.5). Another of his pieces depicted a woman carrying the load of her family, bearing the burden of everyone's well-being, with tears running down her cheeks. These pieces further show the emasculation of the elder man on her back, who cannot carry the children who accompany them and whom she must carry as well. Such images are not the typical representation of women who have been subjected to gender based violence, rather the artworks show the durability of war in women's responsibilities. This is something that Kesselring also observed in her work on women's issues in post-

Figure 1.5
Joseph Baliks painting made in Luwero, untitiled (2014).

apartheid South Africa, describing the ways in which violence and the weight of responsibility manifests in women's bodies causing mental and physical ailments (2015). In this regard, women do not necessarily speak about the issues they carry with them.

People who might know facts that dispute the official narrative about Luwero are scared of what their voice might mean, and unsurprisingly, are unwelcome to participate in memorial efforts. The Uganda Commission for Museums and Monuments is willing to document the stories that surround the graves that are now under their protection (as of 2018), but it is unlikely that counter-narratives arising from a documentation project would be transferred into action—whether through forensic investigations, reparations or listings of ruined granaries in the memorial registers. The condition of aphasia as shown by these examples explains the disempowerment of Luwero's survivors and the dead, as they must surrender the past to linear, didactic versions of history. Furthermore, unfulfilled promises and artworks show that development and responsibility are sentiments that relate to historical violence, beyond memory recall of actual events.

According to Latour, the performance of specific actors identifies cleavages between those who have enrolled in the power-base and those who are working against it (1984). Exploring social aphasia in the case of Luwero demonstrates that the binary of being for or against the dominant historical discourse is not clear. There is, however, a tension between the building-up of hegemonic power through memory discourse, resulting in aphasic paralysis that transfers agency for articulating past wrongs from a victim-centred perspective into narratives produced by the elite power-base. Following this argument, collective action in the form of speaking-out can keep the past in the present, informing the transitional justice movement's

ongoing documentation of historical violence. In concrete terms, the last three decades of this renegotiation of the past have resulted in the establishment of a Transitional Justice Policy in 2019, a proposed National Victims Day, and public exhibitions of historical injuries. These efforts provide a shift whereby "counter-memories" are transferred from private to public domains (Misztal 2003; Ricoeur 2004). In the same way that official discourse is created, so too can unofficial memory be publicly performed in order to gain credibility and awareness, and to create solidarity between survivor and citizen.

**Agonism**

> "You should have my story, but it cannot be shared until after I have passed."
>
> - NRM party member, NRA ex-combatant 67 (anonymous), Luwero

The above quote illustrates a moment when this informant recognised both a need to externalise his story and the danger that his memory held for him in the present. If amnesia and aphasia are understood as states of suffering, this disharmony and individual disquiet are part of what proponents of agonism argue is a key political avenue for democratic societies to emerge from conflict (Hirsch 2011). Agonism recognises an ongoing challenge towards authorised discourses of the past as a necessary component for transitional societies. As argued above, memory—both public and private—remains contested in the process of forming a cohesive identity for Luwero specifically and Uganda more broadly. Boundaries of disagreement within agonistic frameworks deliberately foreground the points of rupture within a place of coexistence, rather than blinding residents to power struggles inherent in negotiating the past in the present.

As should be clear, the stakeholders from Luwero described

above have provided testimonies, archives, artworks and debates that showcase a profound lack of closure regarding physical, cultural and structural violence. Bitterness and resentment still inhabit the tone of many respondents. Recalling the Bishop's earlier claim, central to the condition of present-day Luwero is a fundamental inability to agree on whether to remember or forget. Yet rather than retreating from the question, the agonistic perspective views this absence of closure or agreement as inevitable for viable political ecosystems.

Transitional justice efforts to understand the past refuse to be resigned to selective amnesia, instead seeking reconciliation through the memorialisation of testimonies in archives, video, artworks and commemorations. Through civil society organisations, efforts to remember the past provide a fulcrum for necessary disagreement. Focus on the cultural outlets that support identity, as seen in the Traveling Testimonies exhibition, fits the model for agonism that seeks to uncover "the transformative power vested in aesthetic, affective and cultural modalities" (Hirsch 2011, 189). Artworks in particular occupy the affective, imaginary and symbolic domain of agonism (Mouffe 2013). Luwero residents are therefore encouraged by TJ actors to follow these threads of friction in order to recognise lingering imbalances of power as well as to build resilience for inevitable future disagreements.

Negotiating the usefulness of the past for the present (and into the future) relies on a form of "public deliberation" (Habermas 1992 and 1998), in which peaceable democratic communities require healthy, open debates to discuss issues of importance. In an ideal public domain, a multiplicity of narratives around the past can exist. Agonists and transitional justice practitioners alike seek out reconciled nations, wherein under democratic means enemies make the critical shift into adversaries (Mouffe 2000). In Luwero, asymmetrical realities tend to collide,

whereby residents can both be members of a state with an authorised narrative, and yet harbour their own memories that question that state's veneration of heroes. It is permissible and even inevitable for agonists to dwell in societies that continually maintain divisions of us/them even after physical violence has ceased. When anger manifests in testimony from victims, it can destabilise the transition into peaceable political communities.

To be fair, agonism as a paragon for radical liberal democracy receives ample critique. This utopian ideal imagines safe social arenas where recall of past violence is equally valued across narrators, regardless of their power, sometimes prioritising the victim or survivor perspective. In transitional states, profound structural change almost always accommodates an inherent imbalance in power (Kapoor 2002). For example, the testimony of victims can easily be essentialised as both open-ended and impervious to elite manipulation because of the power in lived experience (Chakravarti 2009). This critique is an imperative not incorporated by TJ processes that support the externalisation of the past. Instead there is often an optimistic, forward-looking frame, assuming that "more memory = more truth = more justice = more reconciliation" (Theidon 2009, 3). Challenges to agonism do not, however, discredit it as a useful conceptual tool when looking into sites of ongoing memory disagreement in places such as Uganda.

Indeed, Uganda offers a welcome opportunity to expand the concept of agonism, and to think more critically about how transitional justice and heritage participate in political disagreement. To do so, scholars can draw on a myriad of evidence within and beyond memorial sites. Citizens who disagree with state elites are still able to navigate their daily lives in the NRM stronghold of Luwero. On the one hand, elites encourage forgetting in the name of moving on, but on the other hand

TJ and human rights work invokes remembering in the name of healing and reconciliation, directly setting up the agonistic paradigm. The presence of forgetting and remembrance is a murky zone to navigate, but when this phenomenon is investigated through memorialisation across the landscape, it illuminates the challenges of reparation for destruction during war and recognition of harms done.

**Conclusions**

The Ugandan state is a fractured constellation of traumas, with mass suffering, elite efforts at silencing and amnesia, and transitional justice actors providing spaces for victims to externalise their testimonies. As of this writing, a complex matrix of actors are currently entangled in peacebuilding and the larger state-building project. Core assumptions around state-sponsored healing, reconciliation, and identity for Uganda are blurred largely due to the absence of a guided political transition out of conflict, unlike the other cases of Rwanda, Sierra Leone, or South Africa.

Previous attempts to trace the roots of the NRA's rise from the bush in Luwero to the State House, lack an interrogation of the structural components for memory and, in turn, the foundation of national identity on which the current state is built. Furthermore, official memory discourse often assumes a space that includes the battlegrounds of the Luwero Triangle, without recognising that this was as much an imagined space as a physical place for fighting. Today's "truths" and tropes were initially contested at the time of the war. First-hand accounts were reportedly marred with confusion about who committed the atrocities (Bracken and Giller 1992). Yet over time, elites built up an authorised heritage around national pillars of memory. Memories that counter official discourse have recently emerged to challenge hegemonic narratives about Luwero, creating a new landscape for the building of political alliances.

Transitional justice efforts seek to build peaceable democratic communities wherein all voices can be heard. While these efforts have made some progress, more work remains to be done: some residents of Luwero are willing to speak in certain conditions, but importantly, vocalisation is not necessary for acts of forgiveness "in the heart." In a 2015 study across Uganda during the time of the TT exhibition, researchers found that "victims made a willed decision to forgive but did not or could not express it to the perpetrator in words" (Refugee Law Project, 23). Here the condition of aphasia persists, whereby the inability to speak re-encounters the perpetrator themselves.

Manufactured agreement around the past in Luwero has become the raw material on which the architecture of the contemporary nation is built. Moreover, the transmission of select aspects of events illustrates how past trauma has become part of how events become politically leveraged (Edkins 2003). During elections, during the annual liberation day, and in moments of everyday life, ordinary citizens are reminded of the social suffering of the past. Bodily violence might now be mediated at a distance by gravesites and political rhetoric, but the inequalities of economic harm and reparative uncertainties persist. Mass graves, commemorative days and elections are staging grounds to stabilise national memory discourse and set up the terms for "instructive forgetting" (Connerton, 2008) that purposefully omits details from authorised histories. The product of these transmissions is an assemblage of sites and symbols that comprise no less than the boundaries of state identity and citizenship.

Further insight into the memory work of transitional justice in societies that lived through the Luwero bush war is critical. First, the strategies of silence and amnesia through dominant hero narratives propagated by Museveni have carried into the national arena. Second,

the practice of unearthing the past through exhibition spaces has produced contradictory evidence surrounding historical traumas. Third, local concerns around development, impunity, reparations, and the fate and well-being of the dead reveal questions unanswered and wounds unhealed. What remains is an ongoing social-political negotiation wherein disagreement is central. Even so, observations of contemporary frictions in Luwero based on this research reveal the potential both for productive disharmony and for the building of new alliances. At the moment, civil society does not appear to be experiencing a point of rupture, rather a simmering of concerns have permeated across the region. Scholars and actors alike can be guardedly hopeful, then, that even as most contemporary respondents in the region seem resigned to unfulfilled promises or deferred quests for truth, they remain optimistic that transitional justice outlets might still trigger reparations or improvements in social welfare in days to come.

## ESSAY TWO

## HUMANITARIAN REMAINS: ERASURE AND THE EVERYDAY CAMP LIFE IN NORTHERN UGANDA

### Introduction

To date, scholarship on the realities of trauma, return and conflict realities in Northern Uganda, following the war between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Government of Uganda (GoU), has not considered the afterlives of large-scale humanitarian assistance programs. Most research has focused on issues of accountability, the lives of former abductees and transitional justice, while ethnographic studies have sought to examine how social, spatial and moral systems of belonging are navigated upon return, primarily by those whom the LRA abducted (Baines 2011; Porter 2016; Mergelsberg 2012; Titeca 2019). Gaps in our understanding still remain, however: specifically how to regard the heritage of war in forced displacement-camp settings, and how aid assistance impacts remembrance projects in the aftermath of war. These gaps exists both in the context of the war in Northern Uganda and in broader work on forced migration. "Northern Uganda" is a term colloquially referring to a multi-ethnic region north and east of the river Nile as it bends through the country. Scholars most commonly use it to describe "Acholiland," which was the epicentre of the war between the LRA and GoU.

Through an examination of what was left behind after internally displaced persons (IDPs) returned home, this article aims to do two things. First, it provides a conceptual framework for approaching material remains of displacement as part of a "memorial complex." Second, it suggests a way of interpreting the remains of aid assistance that is not currently undertaken in memorial or scholarly work regarding

Northern Uganda. The paper illuminates and exposes the conditions for remembering and forgetting, ranging from political decision-making and humanitarian archiving to evidence of camp life in music, markets and dirty soil.

It is hard to overstate how defining camp life was for this region's recent history, and how central it remains to memory projects concerned with this war. During my time as curator for the *Images of War and Peace Making* (2013) and *Travelling Testimonies* (2013-2014) exhibitions, the IDP camp experience was referenced in nearly every interview when we asked people "what should be remembered about the war in the north?" This is not surprising, considering that nearly ninety percent of the Acholi population lived in IDP camps where entire generations were born or died (Figure 2.1). Life was refashioned to include new living, eating and socialising arrangements as well as new forms of death and burial. This article explores these phenomena of everyday memory and experience, as opposed to event-based memorial work typically developed through remembrance around massacres.

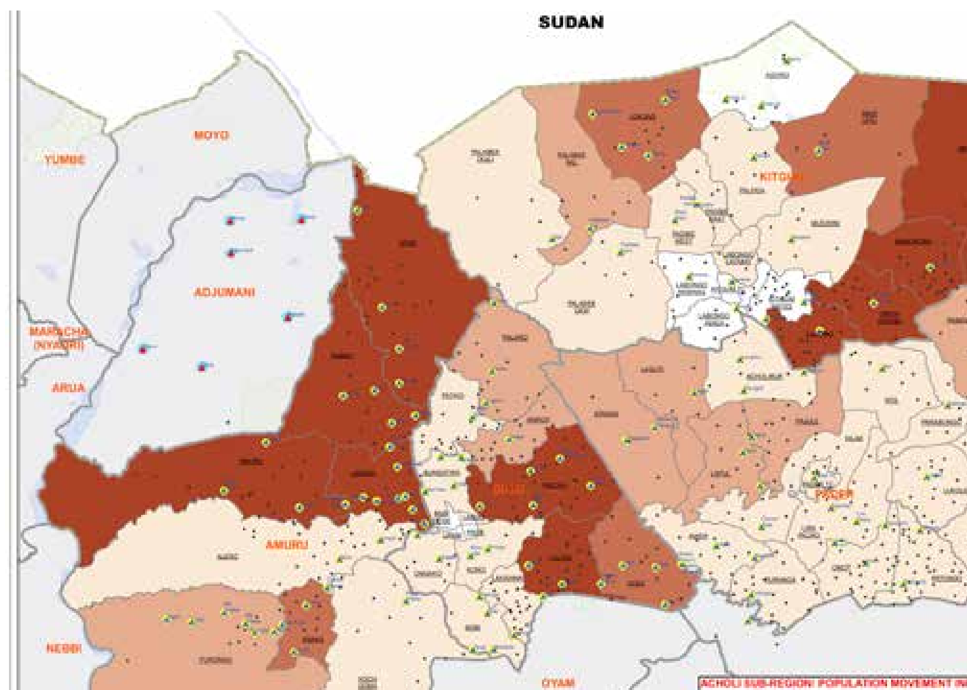


Figure 2.1
OCHA map of IDP camps and return sites in Northern Uganda (2009).

In presenting material evidence from camp life—objects, bodies and archives—this article argues that tangible remains are important narrative agents overlooked by remembrance projects. Insights gained from tangible leftover objects and artefacts (including human remains) are valuable because they offer a sense of everyday remembrance, often revealing a history of forced encampment and prolonged suffering. The material culture presented in this article advocates for a more nuanced interpretation of these remains because while useful aid rations might be assimilated into everyday life activities, scholars have shown that negotiations around the reburial of the dead who were left in former camps becomes a larger obstacle to moving on from the war (Meinart and Whyte 2016; Jhan and Whillem Solomon 2015). A few national and private memorial collections include items of aid assistance, but the interpretation of such objects remains thin, often adhering to what Laurajane Smith (2006) calls an "authorised heritage discourse."

After positioning the research, the article opens with a contextual tracing of memorialisation in Uganda that reveals an authorised discourse around the LRA versus GoU war. Recognising the role key actors play in creating a memorial complex that contains such discourse recasts these remains as tools for humanitarians to consider their "duty to memory"—which, according to Ricoeur (2004), is critical for achieving justice in acts of healing-focused mourning. Understanding where and how IDP camps fit into the preservation and presentation of the war era leads into the second section of the article, that addresses how conventional ways of accessing the past within humanitarian histories are not viable. Examples of specific archives of aid assistance are examined through the lens of silencing and erasure, revealing the absence of files and the broader concerns around whose voice is being

represented.

The core evidence of this article is divided into three sections related to private (home), transactional (market) and landscape memories. The material culture addressed in these social and geographic clusters reveal the everyday relationships IDPs have developed over time to aid rations such as food tins. Reflecting on camp remains *in situ*, such as waste and unmarked graves, prompts a broader discussion around the characteristics of sites that inhabit traumatic memory. Following an understanding of how these new material cultures fit into the memorial complex, the article concludes with a turn towards accountability for lack of action and recognition.

Overall, this contribution offers insights into aspects of protracted displacement and the challenges of memorialising lived experiences after return. The findings presented below are important because they are largely unexamined both in Ugandan and wider global contexts. This discussion is also timely considering the recent emergence of commemorative activities and war-related collections in Uganda, as well as the reuse of former camp sites to house South Sudanese refugees.

The absence of durable solutions for returning IDPs, the lack of a national strategy for post-war memorialisation and ongoing instability in the region all mean that objects, bodies and archives exist in what scholars working on migration have described as unstable conditions (Squire 2014; DeSilvey 2006). Basu and Coleman (2008) elaborate on this instability by suggesting material cultures of migration create "floating signifiers" (317) that can be open to many sets of categories and interpretations. This article thus seeks to stabilise the material cultures of Uganda's IDPs through positioning the things and dead-bodies of displacement within a larger memorial complex of interpretation. In doing so, this notion of the memorial complex becomes a further

contribution to the literature as well as a tool for critically exploring memorial developments related to displacement histories.

Finally, in what follows I investigate the types of meaning elicited from objects, bodies and archives in the lives of former IDPs by engaging the scholarship on affect—as a non-discursive set of sensations between things, places and events. Objects have corporeal relationships that evoke affective sensations in owners, viewers and traders, triggering memories of intangible feelings like taste, belonging and loss (Ahmed 2004; Povrzanović and Frykman 2016). In addition, commodities of exchange indicate networks of trade, systems of power and cultural influences (Appadurai 1986). The examination of affective relationships, demonstrated through aid assistance rations, archiving of data and failure to stop mass death, insists that IDP camps are a meaningful site of inquiry for national and transnational debates around whose heritage and what memory is preserved in the aftermath of war.

**Methodological Approaches: Positioning the Research**

Aware that conflict produces plural, often contradictory versions of events, this research engages multiple points of view from a wide range of informants. The perspective presented in this article is shaped by my prior role as a curator and heritage consultant working to restore and document difficult pasts in Uganda from 2010-2016. Working as a curator shifts the focus from *speaking to* to *working with* formerly displaced persons: in this way, participant observation, in which my research into events and artefacts of war was integral to developing memorial exhibitions and collections, has been a unique form of ethnography. Archiving, producing exhibitions, attending cultural and commemorative events are all ways in which I have been able to gain observational evidence into social practices of memorialisation. In particular, these insights are informed by my curatorial work in collecting objects,

archives, artworks and interpretative testimonies to display them in public exhibitions. Curating war stories requires a unique form of practice, one that makes space for debates, ambiguities and continuing dialogue (Simon 2011). Key insights are gained from participating in these debates and negotiations around what should and shouldn't be represented to tell the stories of past wars.

My follow-up research from 2015-2019 formed part of a doctoral project on memorialisation that investigated the linkages between memory, development, state-building and aid assistance. Here I collaborated with memory workers to digitise personal collections, create pop-up exhibitions and examine the politics of representing difficult pasts. The data provided below is the result of "memory work" exploring personal histories, memorial GIS mapping across the landscape, focus group discussions and individual interviews. Visual theorist Kuhn describes memory work as "a conscious and purposeful staging of memory" (2000, 186). This staging is done by memory workers who make difficult pasts public for a variety of desired outcomes, such as reflection, recognition or reconciliation. The institutions and people involved in preserving memories and artefacts of the war era, including myself as a researcher/ curator, can all be categorised as memory workers for our role in unearthing the past and staging it in the present.

Documentation of traumatic memories in post-war settings is always susceptible to the retelling of prescribed answers. The Acholi people of Northern Uganda have been so thoroughly researched and have told their stories so many times that they have formed scripted narratives (Verma 2012; Edmondson 2018; Allen and Schomerus et al. 2006). As I signalled in Part I of this thesis, there is a need for alternative approaches considering the problematics around what people say to white outsiders like myself, in light of aid assistance programs being

dominated by foreign money and administered by "experts." As discussed below, in my decade of working with people in heritage projects across Uganda, utilising sites, objects, archives, photographs, artwork, or intangible culture as a point of discussion and focus, many stories dislodged from rehearsed canons.

This article reflects research with residents in six former IDP camp sites: Purongo, Lukodi, Kitgum Matidi, Acholi Bur, Atiak and Pabbo. The location choice is based on previous curatorial engagements and relationships with residents in those areas. There were 251 registered camps in Northern Uganda, with many more satellite and return settlements. A host of more than 100 INGOs and NGOs worked to alleviate the suffering of this crisis.[31] Among the agencies who provided assistance and who are referenced here are World Vision, Oxfam, War Child, United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the World Food Programme, the ICRC, the Uganda Red Cross, the World Health Organization, Caritas and UNICEF. Following discussions with aid workers leaving Uganda, the "draw-down" phase of organisational departure prompted these insights into erasures and destruction of records, erasures that create barriers to reconstructing the past through the study of historical documents. Given the sensitive nature of such accounts, anonymity of respondents was granted where requested.

The discussion below is not intended as a comprehensive survey of camp life or return. As Kaiser (2006) has reflected, it would be inappropriate to generalise how all displaced people ascribe meaning to the things that surround them, but the potential for understanding experiences through material culture remains. Drawing on a heritage perspective, the article links three temporal domains: the past time of encampment, the immediate past or present moment of research

31. Archives accessed at the NGO Forum Offices, and discussion with former Forum members, Gulu Town; March 2018.

and return, and a future-facing proposal for more nuanced memorial interpretation. Heritage research done in this way examines the tangible and intangible remains of conflict rather than assembles a collation of narratives to build a conclusive story (Harrison 2011). The work extends from contributions by Carr and Mytum (2013), who have argued that "the artefacts used and produced by those interned in camps can provide important counterpoints to the inevitably biased views of both the captors and the imprisoned" (4). In this way, the article expands Giblin's 2015 proposal to apply a "modern conflict archaeology approach" by interrogating the social, spatial and political dimensions of camp heritage in a way that scholars working in Northern Uganda have not yet undertaken.

**The Memorial Complex: Recognising What Is and Isn't Publicly Remembered**

Every war-affected region faces challenges in reconstructing or remembering the events of the past for public exhibitions or institutional collections. To nationalise this process, some countries like Rwanda have specific legislation that governs remembrance. In Uganda, however, fragmentation has arisen from an ambiguous Transitional Justice Policy (passed in 2019) that advocates for memorialisation and reburial, as well as from multiple actors and narratives that have tried to shape the past both during the war and its aftermath. The disconnect between violent events of the past and how they are interpreted through memory work in this region is complicated further by the fact that the LRA are still active in neighbouring countries; at the time of this writing, a trial is underway at the International Criminal Court for the former LRA commander Dominic Ongwen.

To effectively undertake an analysis of memory in the context of Northern Uganda I argue that we must go beyond the "sites of

memory" (Nora 1989) or memoryscapes (Phillips and Reys 2011) offered by previous scholars. Rather, we must advance the notion of a memory complex as a dataset of physical memorials and remains, including political and social decisions around preservation and affective triggers experienced by the IDP population. According to Phillips and Reys' definition, the memoryscapes is a particular landscape that is inhabited by a set of memory features that interact with globalised forms of participation and interpretation. This means that data comes from more than just the physical distribution and meaning-making around sites of memory as Nora, Phillips and Reys suggest. Rather, the "memory complex" as it is discussed here is a set of actions undertaken by religious, state and NGO initiatives, actions that interface with museum collections, sites of violence and everyday life.

During the immediate phase of return from encampment, memorialisation through monuments was part of the resettlement process, ushering in a new heritage of demarcated burials in mass graves. These efforts were inspired by visits to Rwanda and South Africa made by the Caritas team of the Archdiocese of Gulu. The Catholic NGO initiated burials, rituals and prayers "to show the people that the souls who had perished were safe."[32] Despite these early efforts, today there is no systematic approach, meaning that the support for exhumations, burials and memorial prayers are often improvised responses to the discovery of bodies. Ironically, the massacre site memorials do not match how Acholi culture, practiced in Northern Uganda, would bury those who died in other circumstances (Ocen 2018). Such marked sites are most often mass burials associated with attacks by the LRA, rather than deaths in camps. Even though many massacres happened near or within the camp boundaries and many of

32. John Boscoe Komakech Aludi (Director of Caritas Gulu Archdiocese), in discussion with the author, August 2018.

the memorial funding agencies were active at the time of the war, the commemorative events observed during my research made little to no reference to camp life.

Instead, these tangible memorials are often tied to overarching "truths" around what happened, reinforcing the extant narrative of the LRA as singular antagonist. According to Keen (2012), the framing of the enemy and efforts for accountability are central to forming an overall perception of what happened. Preserving massacre sites also contributes to the portrayal of the ideal enemy by creating a visible marker of violent pasts. The growing commemoration of massacre sites positions these monuments as anchor points for war narratives reinforced by the accountability paradigm. As many scholars have already explored, the work on traditional justice, the International Criminal Court, and other accountability mechanisms within Uganda all implicate LRA combatants as the primary perpetrators (Finnström 2010; Schomerus 2010). There have been no trials for atrocities committed by government soldiers, no comprehensive reparations packages paid out to victims and very few officials recognise the IDP camps as a form of "genocide"—with the notable exception of former UN Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict, Olara Otunnu (2006).

The history of camp life is necessary for a meaningful conceptualization of the memorial complex as more than a set of demarcated sites or collections, but rather a continual social and political renegotiation around what happened in the past. People living in these camps, after all, did not voluntarily flee their homes, but were rather forced into "protected villages" as part of the government counter-insurgency campaign. The International Crisis Group noted that "In March 1987 the NRA [National Resistance Army] forced 100,000 people into camps in Gulu" (2004, 29). By 1996 it was official policy that

if you weren't in a camp you were considered a rebel, and by the early 2000s aid agencies had become heavily involved in supplying rations and managing the camps. With the initiation of Operation Iron Fist (2002-2003) the camps swelled to between 1,600,000 and 1,800,000. Conditions were so dire that more people died in the camps than from combat or from LRA attacks, marking about 1,000 deaths per week at their height (UNHCR 2005). Freedom of movement came about after more than 10 years of humanitarian assistance and pressure from the Norwegian Refugee Council under the National Protection Cluster. Alongside the reported brutality committed by LRA combatants, the realities of encampment yield a history of civilian depravity and suffering that challenges memorial traditions in other areas of Uganda like Luwero or Kampala, where war heroes are celebrated with statues and battlefields are marked by graves of "martyrs."

The camps in Northern Uganda were a hybrid mixture of UNHCR refugee settlements and pre-war village settlements, situated in areas accessible for military personnel to dispatch protection. According to Stephanie Perham, the UNCHR coordinator of camps in northern Uganda from 2006-2012, "Northern Uganda marked a turning point in humanitarian response to IDP situations. IDP response was a new concept."[33] As a result, the camps did not receive the support afforded to refugee settlements, meaning that their inhabitants had to improvise, using mud, brick and thatch to build their homes. By the early 2000s they had sprawled in size and scale, at one point totalling 251 camps with numbers as high as 60,000-70,000 residents (Pabbo Site Management Plan 2011). Agencies struggled to provide even basic food, bedding, clothes, education and medical care due to constrained resources, raids by the rebel LRA, frequent fires and growing numbers of yet more IDPs.

33. Interviewed by the author in January 2016.

The Uganda National Museum has collected several camp objects, including from Pabbo, the largest wartime settlement. During their exhibition *The Road to Reconciliation* in 2013, the Museum reconstructed a hut to show aspects of camp life (Figure 2.2). In the same year, the Refugee Law Project (where I was a curator at the time) collected pieces of demolished camps for an exhibit at the NMPDC in Kitgum. Intertwined with the humanitarian forgetting in the developmental present, the Pabbo Memorial Committee's efforts to preserve part of the camp and collect objects is emblematic of the tension around memory that is illustrated throughout this article. Pabbo has become a destination for researchers as well as memory workers within the GoU and abroad, such as the British Museum. Yet as discussed below, a survivor-centred articulation of memory through a memorial space such as Pabbo remains challenged by processes of silence and erasure.

Figure 2.2
IDP hut reconstruction at *The Road to Reconciliaiton* exhibition 2013.

The reinterpretation of IDP camps within the memorial complex requires the inclusion of everydayness in which the sites, artefacts and memories of encampment are affectively present. The sites and collections introduced above are part of a memorial effort that signifies a moment in time when life radically changed. Yet in each of the above cases, these materials are rarely interpreted with the violence described

by scholars such as Dolan (2009), Branch (2009) or local organisations such as the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative. What, then, accounts for this void between experience and interpretation?

**Silence and Erasure: Governing People and Narratives**

Investigating camp records and files is not straightforward, as like the massacre sites, the archives are spread out and difficult to access. Nor does the simple addition of survivor-based camp interpretation counterbalance the official discourse found in post-war reconstruction: as Branch (2012) argues, camp residents, at the time of the war, were expected to be mute. Finnström (2008) has characterized the sentiment for dealing with grievances from Ugandan aid workers toward their foreign bosses as "Better, then, to remain silent," (150) explaining how the ICRC forbade him from recording or photographing during his research.

This section outlines the forms of silence and erasure present in the camps, highlighting the implications for memorial projects in the aftermath of the war. Specific mechanisms of power contributed to a technocratic elevation of the camp and the simultaneous disregarding of the everyday. The first mechanism was the creation of people as datasets, after which came the second: the use of this data and testimonies of suffering to communicate crisis in journalistic and humanitarian reports. The third and final mechanism was the documentation of a largely illiterate population, creating a technocracy of camp leaders and aid administrators who would speak "on behalf of" the beneficiaries. Camp administration, done in this way, evinces three of memory theorist Paul Connerton's seven types of forgetting, namely "repressive erasure," "forgetting as annulment" and "forgetting as humiliated silence" (2008). Specifically these three types of forgetting are evinced below by showing how datasets can overpower people's voices, how the erasure or lack of access to data can dissolve the

archives of an era and how misrepresentation through humanitarian reporting and media can depict a population without agency or dignity. Erasure, annulment and silence create cleavages in society's ability to recall the past, sometimes forming contradictory realities between those who administer aid and those who receive it.

This data-gathering was undertaken by organisations trying to assess and respond to the "needs" of displaced populations. Aid workers first used lists and files to identify beneficiaries and distribution routes. Humanitarian documentation also gave credibility to the scale of the encampment and the conditions of camp life.[34] Individuals were classified according to their potential to become aggregated data along markers of age, gender, camp area of residence, home residence, nutritional or medical needs and education levels. Aggregation of identity in this way allowed management of the populations in accordance with humanitarian morals that aligned people with specific identities and rights, a practice that is central to techniques of control (Read, Taithe and Mac Ginty 2016). Over time the data gathering and management gave rise to a cadre of medical, educational and logistical experts who were called upon to tell the story of mass displacement that was happening in Northern Uganda.

Working on behalf of a consortium of these groups, Civil Society Organisations for Peace in Northern Uganda (CSOPNU) used data to pose hard-hitting rhetorical questions that would spark action. In 2006, they wrote: "Where else in the world have there been 20,000 kidnapped children? Where else in the world have 90 per cent of the population in large districts been displaced? Where else in the world do children make up 80 per cent of the terrorist insurgency movement?" The pattern of kidnapping, displacement and rebellion worked to both reinforce

34. Moses Okello (former Conflict Analyst for Intergovernmental Authority on Development) in discussion with the author, June 2017.

the LRA as the singular enemy and to characterise the population as helpless children, using statistics to do so. Moreover, in one of its press highlights, the UN recorded that “Despite the gravity of the humanitarian situation, less than 10% of the $130 million requested by the humanitarian community for 2004 has been received. In some areas, malnutrition rates as high as 30% have been recorded among children” (UNDPA 2004). These numbers were void of personal biographies, social concerns, or insight into how survivors were experiencing their displacement. Instead, it was expressed as a “humanitarian situation” with the “humanitarian community” presented as the one in need as much as actual camp residents.

To be clear, the documentation was not always for numeric datasets. Displacement was also personalised through inserting individual voices into humanitarian reports and campaigns (Kindersley 2015). Glossy pamphlets adorned with high-resolution portraits of named informants and testimonies sought to elicit compassion from the reader. Yet as Kindersley points out, there is a certain amount of editorial licence that dilutes the legitimacy of using such material as valid truths in protracted displacement, where people are solely dependent on aid. She illustrates a form of co-dependent testimonial reality in southern Sudan, whereby the humanitarians and scholars are dependent on the story and the narrators are dependent on the aid assistance. This echoes what Finnström (2010) has described in Northern Uganda as a way to reinforce colonial imaginations of suffering. Humiliation is compounded in these contexts because people are susceptible to unethical framing of their stories that could be paired with fantastical headlines.

Mnemonic gestures towards silence, forgetting and erasure reinforced the trope of the suffering other frequently appearing in headlines, accompanied by statistics and testimonial extracts described

above. Most notably, in 2003 the UN Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, Jan Egeland, remarked that "The conflict in Northern Uganda is the biggest forgotten, neglected humanitarian emergency in the world today." Humanitarian and journalistic reports used Egeland's statement and UN standing to keep the pictures of vulnerable others on the international radar. Humanitarian agencies and media outlets codified the situation as a "forgotten war" or the plight of victims as "silence." One UNICEF (2005) document on rape in Pabbo camp was titled "Suffering in Silence"; and the US-based National Public Radio ran a special called "Child Soldiers Fight Forgotten War in Uganda" (McGuffin 2005). The Institute for Security Studies followed this rhetoric in turn with their extensive report entitled: "From Forgotten War to an Unforgivable Crisis" (Ruadel and Timpson 2005), setting the stage for selective erasure, and nearly calling on their outside audience to remember-to-forget.

These two mechanisms, compressing lived experiences while elevating humanitarian concerns and speaking on behalf of people in the camps, demonstrate a blending of "repressive erasure" and "forgetting as humiliated silence." The dynamics of lived realities in the camps, as depicted in works by Finnström (2008) or Dolan (2009), are erased by the amalgamation of data, editorial selection and transformation of everyday issues into humanitarian issues. By showcasing vulnerable beneficiaries as helpless rape victims and child soldiers, these beneficiaries are humiliated into silence. Connerton offers the wounded as a clear case of humiliated silence, arguing that there is voice for the dead in memorialisation but there is no space for loss experienced by disfigured veterans. Is there a parallel between the returnees from the camps in Northern Uganda in the 2000s, and the 10 million mutilated men in 1923 of Connerton's claim? Not exactly, but such examples do illuminate the third type of forgetting, in which history is not remembered

publicly but bodily, and in which experiences are discursively annulled.

Forgetting as annulment is most clearly seen in the neglect towards archives, or in some cases the intentional destruction of the data collected during the era of encampment. According to Connerton's (2008) framing of data in the archive of war, the files are "in principle always retrievable, [thus…] we can afford to forget it" (65). However, here the destruction was so widespread it created a matter-of-fact response by colleagues during my search for records. "They were about to burn them," said Francis Nono, showing me some of the 84 laminated panels of the Norwegian Refugee Council's sensitisation campaigns from the camp era. "It was just there, rusting," remarked Deo Komakech after negotiating with the Local Councillor of Acholi Bur trading centre to acquire a land-mine sign created by AVSI. "They were just being eaten by rats," a colleague confided about the archives of returnees who had come from "the bush" with the LRA. Allen, et al. (2020) refers to 11,000 Save the Children returnee files that were found in a dumpster in Gulu town. And on and on.

In some instances it was simply more convenient for aid organisations to destroy boxes of files rather than move them from Gulu or Kitgum to head offices in Kampala, 200-300 kilometres away. In principle, but not in practice, all NGOs and INGOs were required to give copies of their files to the District Records Office. Over the course of two years, I rarely obtained a concrete answer as to why and how the loss of records had happened. Yet, when two agencies anonymously admitted they had destroyed their files, they cited confidentiality and convenience as the rationale. While confidentiality is a valid response, it was clear that the decisions came not from the beneficiaries themselves but from the senior managers who were, again, speaking "on behalf of" the formerly encamped people. In many instances the directives

came from staff in head offices based in Europe or the USA. This problem was not limited to the beneficiaries in rural areas: an interview with a colleague in Kampala revealed that he had tried to get access to his own records through OCHA and was denied.[35] Interviews with senior managers, two sitting and four former, and a review of information management policies of leading agencies, revealed that the usefulness of the material following the war was never considered beyond their institutional needs for internal reviews and audits.

If forced encampment was primarily narrated by the data of those who managed the camps, then to reconstruct that past, as an addition to the memorial complex, would require access to those files. One NGO worker explained that the camp registration records would be useful for tracing missing persons, but that many had been destroyed—so she was '"lucky when former camp leaders made copies of their ledgers".[36] In the cases of Nazi-controlled camps or Japanese internment camps in the USA, memorial interpretation regularly utilize archives for historical references, as display objects and in museum texts. So too are these archives in Uganda used as evidence to show the atrocities that were committed and the reparations owed to those who suffered. However, as Ibreck (2018) has pointed out, humanitarians rely on silence and forgetting to erase their failures to save the suffering, allowing a clean break from the crisis and the ability to move on.

**The Past Is All Around Us: Interpreting Remains**

Relying on archives to reconstruct the past is, then, a fraught endeavour. If the archives are unreliable for sharing lived experiences, then one must turn to other sources for interpretation. Recently, Ocen (2018) has written about how oral culture and dramatic performance

35. Okello (Human Rights Lawyer), in discussion with the author, June 2017.
36. Anonymous (ICRC employee), in discussion with the author around issues of missing persons, August 2017.

recalls camp life. His published descriptions and detailed research on memorialisation in Uganda are useful for conceptualising a more malleable form of remembrance juxtaposed against fixed memorial sites. Ocen's oral framework, moreover, can be used to further investigations into material culture. Across Northern Uganda, material indicators of the camps remain in seemingly public, decidedly private and deeply intimate spaces. These tangible remains trigger affects for those who encounter them, sometimes in disturbing ways. In discussions with formerly encamped people, food tins, shoes and jerry cans feature prominently in former IDP household collections, with some interviews focusing on donated clothing and food sacks. In this sense, materials and their moment of waste or reuse can be key indicators of how cultural heritage changes and adapts to encampment (Newhouse 2015). An object's presence indicates an intervention, but it can also signal the absence of that which was left behind or the loss of abundance (Bushara 2015). Through exploring objects and camp biographies, a set of enduring memory-triggers reveal the stories of camp life and loss.

Some scholars differentiate between ordinary and abnormal affects regarding the materiality of camp life (Haisan 2014; Bshara 2014; Petti 2017). For Stewart (2015) the ordinary affects are those sensations triggered by materials in everyday life: although not always difficult or traumatic, they have a relationship to the past. Abnormal affects, then, are in this context are sometimes seen as the hauntings of spirits that result from polluted or dirty conditions (Victor and Porter 2017). To be sure, there are extraordinary events that invoke the ordinariness of the materials discussed, and it is possible to see the whole ordeal of encampment as extraordinary. But it is the everydayness of the objects and encounters with the past that makes the relationships discussed

henceforth ordinary.

*Private Memory - food tins, ration cards and sustaining life*

The home is an intimate space that during the camp era was disrupted by a compression of "too many people in the space", said Gladys of the transformation of Purongo.[37] The food and non-food rations distributed by aid organisations made up the majority of materials in a household. Rations were also distributed during the return phase (2007-2010) to give material incentives for people to go home. As a result, returned IDPs have households that today include many of the durable rationed items that were issued.

Adorning many huts is one obvious signifier of aid assistance: the brand-marked food tin. Hundreds of USAID and World Food Program food tins remain amongst former beneficiaries, still used to store things like oil and millet beer. Occasionally those who were still living in camp areas or transition sites would make doors from hammered and flattened out tins, which require between 15-21 tins for their construction. The doors are hung on the round mud and thatch huts that were characteristic of the camp era, and are still in use today.

One such hut in the Pabbo Memorial Site remains empty after its owner died in 2016 (Figure 2.4). In early 2019, neighbours repaired the hut and had preserved it as a memorial to the woman who was one of the earliest residents: a matron who would count the children before they departed for their nightly commutes to Gulu Town nearly 40 kilometres away. She conducted this count to

Figure 2.4
Hut with a door made of WFP tins, Pabbo Memorial site.

37. Gladys (Purongo resident), interview with the author, May 2018.

attempt to keep them safe from abduction by the LRA, a lived reality for thousands of youngsters who fled to urban spaces for protection. For the memorial committee trying to preserve a portion of the former camp, her hut, story and door are a symbolic marker of both innovation and harsh experiences.[38] One focus group discussion with the Committee revealed that she was symbolic of a broader failure of the GoU to successfully protect children living in the camps, with people commenting on the absurdity of a designation as "protected village."

The experiences indicated through these tins are multiple. On a medical level, they can express a disruption in diet and sources of nutrition. On a structural level, they can represent the gendered way in which distributions were given primarily to women as heads of household, thus destabilising masculine hierarchies. These readings of the materials are part of an external, macro-level observation of camp life, whereas in my interviews people were much more personal in sharing their experiences of doing without enough food or redistributing rations amongst their ever-expanding family. One woman even remembered a moment of resistance wherein she and several other women refused rations because of the poor-quality grain that was being distributed.

Ration cards were both links in the aid assistance network and signifiers of power. While the cards were not initially used, over time they replaced lists and indiscriminate distribution, becoming valuable documents to access assistance. During this research more than 40 ration cards were shown by beneficiaries who kept them with other important family records and land titles. In many cases, when asked why they kept the now-obsolete cards, former camp residents responded that they might be useful should war ever resume. Two young men explained independently that they wanted to keep these documents

38. Focus group (Pabbo Memorial Committee), in discussion with the author, July 2018.

because they had relatives still in "the bush" with the LRA, and could be implicated by the relation. If they were to ever encounter military questioning, these young men might need to prove that they were in the camps with unarmed civilians and were, therefore, not rebels.

Grace, of Pabbo, remembered paying for a replacement card after the camp caught fire and everything in her hut was burned (Figure 2.3).[39] She was required to pay the administrator for each of the six women registered in her household. Indeed, mechanical and physical fires participated in the regular destruction of documents. Former camp zone-leaders, aid workers and interviewees all explained to me that the destruction of ration cards was not uncommon, inferring that the negotiation around ration cards was a behavioural mechanism of control: if people did not follow the rules prescribed by camp leadership or aid agencies, then their cards would be confiscated or they would be refused issuance of new cards. This process of denial or removal was yet another way in which people were erased from the transactional realities of aid-to-beneficiary encounters. An Overseas Development Institute (2008) report describes the erasure of peoples through computerised mechanisms whereby one individual remarked, "computer owango nyinga," literally translated as "the computer burned my name" (Bailey, 11). Camp administrators in both Uganda and Sudan would use technical malfunctions to deny aid as well as insert ghost beneficiaries to increase personal gains (Young and Maxwell 2013; Jok 1996).

Camp life is most often remembered for food insecurity and aid assistance. Both aid reports and personal interviews reveal a constant anxiety around food shortages, access, security of delivery and the ways in which people were governed by this basic need. The food tin and the ration card, key markers of this time, still serve as important tools for

39. Grace (Pabbo resident), interview with the author, November 2018.

remembrance, durable markers of the often-ignored reality of camp life. Yet young people who never lived in the camp do not know these markers in the same way, demarcating an intimacy of knowledge only for those who directly experienced the war. According to Hirsch (2008), this direct or indirect relationship with the past is how one can make sense of representation from the past in the present. She makes a distinction between those who are able to identify images and objects, thus validating and authenticating the past, versus those who rely on first-hand knowledge to narrate meaning. Thus, to meaningfully interpret the remains of camp life, memorials must work closely with those who can recognise and explain the multiple relationships between objects and experiences.

Figure 2.3
Pabbo IDP collections with ration card

*Transactional Memory - music, markets and new generations*

Materials, of course, move beyond the home, and must be examined both in private and public settings to be fully understood. As this section details, the residue of the war is still present in daily, commercial and cultural lives: the movement of these objects into

public spaces implies a wider exchange of memory as well as the transformation of passive objects into active agents.

Interviews in Gulu Market were prompted by a tracing of the materials presented in the homes, and a curiosity about whether they were used as commodities. Some items had just become standard market goods, such as watering jerry cans. However, the flower-painted metal trays that were issued "one per household" are today used to cover pots of *kalo* (millet bread), *malakwang* (dark green stew made with peanut paste) or stewing meat. Sylvia, who was cooking on one of my visits, told me that these foods were never available in her camp unless people ventured out to their gardens to harvest them illegally.[40] In debates with other women discussing their cookware, Sylvia referred to a particular style of plate as "camp-original" from the first era of rations transported from the IDP camp in Palenga to Gulu Town 25 kilometres away. Sylvia lived in the camp that housed between 11,500 and 26,000 residents, for "many, many, many years." She explained that to her generation—those who had been cooking for households before, during and after encampment—the plates are a symbolic reminder of that time they went without.

During school holidays, Sylvia's youngest daughter would serve food during the lunch rush time in the market. The ration trays both covered and served the food in Gulu Market, and during our interview, this young woman was learning the biography both of the plates and of her mother, having been too young to remember camp life**.** As I conducted this memory work with Sylvia the plates of Palenga became a voicing agent, activated not just by the cooking process but also by my research, showing my own entanglement in the process of remembrance. Such activation echoes other times when visitors come to

40. Sylvia (Gulu Market vendor), in discussion with the author, July and November 2018.

the Pabbo memorial site, and the food ration card is passed around.

Like the plates, ration tins signify a relationship between displacement and cultural expression. Musician Opira Morise Kato remembers making musical instruments out of the USAID-branded food tins and the plastic jerry cans.[41] Drums and *adungu* stringed-instruments were most common. Different objects produced different sounds for his lamenting tunes that described the squalor of camp life. Many musical groups who perform using these adapted instruments don't always play music about the war, but they do use the same instruments to play songs of "traditional Acholi culture" as part of diverse sets in public performances. During the war, the use of tins as instruments was a practical response to limited resources, but today they are now a marker of resilience. After one cultural event, I interviewed another musician using a USAID tin-based instrument, Patrick, who explained that he is showing not just his musical talent, but also his ability to make instruments in conditions of depravity.[42] Like the tins in the house, one had to live through the war to get these supplies: they were not something you could just buy in the market.

More subtly, memory is also transacted through the oil lanterns now sold in markets across small trading centres and big towns. They represent a mode of camp life of improvisation and ingenuity like the doors and instruments, but also mark the past as a time of insecurity. Unlike the larger oil and grain tins that could be hammered out into doors or cut into instruments, these smaller, flimsier tins were cut and reshaped into lanterns, using discarded clothes or fibre ropes as the wick. Discussions with former camp inhabitants and market sellers in Gulu and Anaka revealed that unlike their counterparts discussed above,

41. Opira Morise Kato (musician), shared with Evert Allen at Scandal Studios. Information relayed to the author in April 2014.
42. Patrick (Purongo resident), in discussion with the author, July 2018.

however, these were not objects of nostalgia linked to Acholi traditions of architecture, music or food.

Conversations around the lanterns offered glimpses into the securitisation of camp life: namely, curfews. In the Anaka Subcounty camp of Purongo, that bordered the nearly 4,000 square kilometre national park, particular insecurities were expressed. James remarked, “When you hear[d] the gumboots coming, you would know to blow out your lantern.”[43] James was a young man at the time of writing, but referred to his memories as a boy when his family moved into Purongo camp, linking noisy military patrols to the lanterns. Another resident of Purongo, Betty, recalled that when her husband would come home drunk, she would wish for a light to sober him up, because his demands in the dark were often too much for her to deal with: she felt embarrassed by his calls for intimacy while sharing one hut with two children and three other young dependents.[44]

The use, remaking and playing of rationed objects are ways in which camp life was transacted, through affects and ways of knowing. The objects may be ubiquitous, yet the memories are individual, creating a network of shared but unique avenues for interpretation. Locating these objects in markets and performances illustrates how memory can inhabit materials and reach different audiences outside public memorial collections. Conversely, the memorial collections that rarely capture these insights can interpret camp life and gain perspectives through these objects, from the point of view of those people who lived through the war. Reading the material landscape from the survivor-centred use and interpretations of humanitarian rations allows for new narratives to be introduced into the memorial complex.

43. James (Purongo resident), in discussion with the author, July 2018.
44. Betty (Purongo resident), in discussion with the author, November 2018.

*Landscape Memory - dirty soil and leftover markers*

"*Since the camp, my land is impossible*."

This statement was offered by David, an elder landowner in Kitgum Matidi, whose father had allocated a portion of their ancestral land to the government for the IDP camp.[45] David's sentiments are in reference to the disposal of waste, the leftover unusable rations and the burial grounds. David and other landowners who loaned land to IDPs lament the unexpected amounts of trash that they dug through when trying to cultivate their land. For David and others, human bones have also arisen as part of the soil complex, making the barrier to negotiating return even more formidable (Jahn and Wilhelm-Solomon 2015). Indeed, the return phase of resettlement was defined as a return to agricultural life in which the soil would provide in traditional ways, set apart from the food rationing and unemployment that characterised camp life. However, there was little to no planning for the environmental pollution and uncertainty that occurred from the camp era. The waste and human remains in the landscape constitute a third layer of camp life that persists into the present. Highlighting their significance shows the thinness of the boundary between camp life and camp death, making a potent claim for the need to reinterpret the experiences of the past.

Former camp sites have a unique monumental marker: the towering white metal portable toilets. These objects in the landscape are usually found at the fringes of former camps, and are also zones where bodies were buried. I identified 102 of these toilets in my attempt to map memorial sites across the war-affected landscape. In one stop I

45. David (Kitgum Matidi resident), in discussion with the author, June 2017.

met a woman named Immaculate gardening in Acholi Bur: pointing to the toilets then drawing in the air, Immaculate described the geography of the camp as having the army in the middle, the residents as their shields and the ancestors to keep them contained. For her, the bodies, the security and the surveillance created a borderland that she dared not cross.[46] That zone, especially for a woman, was a place of violation both of body and spirit. In this way, the aftereffects of war in the physical space are "recursively implicated in the ordering of a whole sequence of events" (Hetherington 2004, 160). Unremoved, the toilets are metaphorical pollution zones that signal a time of insecurity and death.

After the camps were dismantled in Northern Uganda, why did bodies remain in the soil? According to the EU Humanitarian Action and Coordination Plan (2014), the closure of a camp "is often the least planned and managed phase of the camp lifecycle; potentially resulting in unsustainable solutions for displaced populations" (3). In Meinert and Whyte's (2016) discussions around Awach camp, "no camp burial ground was demarcated" to begin with; they referenced the District Planner as explaining that "There were no regulations for cemeteries to be inside the camp, however travel restrictions and security made it difficult to practice the last funeral rites" (199). Haphazard burial indicates that camp residents and managers assumed the crisis would be short-term, and there were limited provisions for Acholi rites and rituals for the dead. Moreover, lingering insecurity meant that people were unsure if they could return with their dead or if they would be back in the camps again. Nor did these "solutions" include the spiritual impact on post-displacement environs. In a multi-stage departure, IDPs were sent to their home areas without a systematic plan for their dead or missing.

In this region of Uganda, reburial does not have a fixed formula,

46. Immaculate (Acholi Bur resident), in discussion with the author, June 2017.

and is contingent on many factors depending on faith, clan, proximity, condition of death and resources of the family (Meier 2013). In the development agendas for resettlement as productive citizens, many bodies have been left in the camp environs. These spirits are held to be disruptive to the landowners as well as to the families that left them behind. Often, people only opt for reburial when development dictates it (e.g. road expansion projects), resulting in a reactive, not proactive, response to returning society to spiritual harmony. This *ad hoc* reality is exacerbated by poverty, whereby people look to external sources to pay for exhumations, rituals and reburial, such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency funding the reburial of over 200 people in Pabbo to promote urban expansion (Jahn and Wilhelm-Solomon 2015). Furthermore, Acholi Ker Kal Kwaro, the authoritative cultural institution, does not initiate reburials that could mitigate adverse effects from the unsettled dead—despite being key actors in building up the memory complex by presiding over historical reburials and contemporary commemorations. As a result, many residents living in former camp zones rely on a disjointed group of elders to respond to found remains.

Still looming is a larger question as to who is actually responsible for reversing the abnormal affects caused by toilets and bodies. It is now a decade since the last camp closed. The toilets, rubbish and bodies now represent the failure of aid and serve as markers of forced encampment. In spite of scoping visits by outsider forensic anthropologists, no comprehensive effort to identify or resettle the dead has taken place. There is, however, a need to perform rites or removals for residents who experience the abnormal affects induced by the unsettled dead. Some people even relate the phenomenon of Nodding Syndrome to this condition of spiritual unrest (van Bemmel 2016). Exclusive to this war-affected region, Nodding Syndrome is an unknown condition

that has impacted populations in the post-war region, resulting in loss of appetite, disillusionment, aimless wandering and other associated ailments, primarily defined amongst youth. In discussions with former camp residents, Nodding Syndrome was given as one of many afflictions caused by the unsettled past, marked by bodies, missing persons and an overall lack of repair for violations committed during the war.

Officials pass on the responsibility, saying that it requires a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Lands, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Finance. It is unlikely that the Ministry for Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, which has been involved in defining the memory complex through the Commission for Museums and Monuments, has the capacity for such an undertaking despite their recognition of community requests to engage the issue. This declared need for coordination—without its manifestation—is a convenient way to redirect responsibility and to deny the historical record of the scale and impact of mass death and suffering that resulted from the camp era.

**Conclusions**

The lens of heritage adopted throughout this article expands the memorial complex beyond authorised discourse to include lived realities within material and spatial dimensions, all in order to advance a reinterpretation of the past. In this reframing of legacies of displacement in the present, the camp can be understood as a site of disharmony, even if the material afterlives are not overtly traumatic. The accounts provided show that objects are not merely everyday materials that have been transformed by war: they are objects that have come into the everyday through the war, and in some ways, despite it. Humanitarian leftovers create a temporal and physical proximity to the memory of encampment, occasionally re-lived through food, enshrined in music or rendered into architecture. In contrast to administrative datasets

# PART III

## ACTIVISM AND RESISTANCE THROUGH TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE MEMORIALISATION

Essay Three
Advocacy Memorials: Linking Symbolic and Material Reparations in Uganda
Intended for the *International Journal on Transitional Justice*

Essay Four
Resisting the Record: Memorial Landscapes and Oral Histories of the Rwenzururu
Intended for the *Journal of East African Studies*
Co-Authored by Wilson Bwambale

**ABSTRACT**

This section comprises in-depth studies of two distant regions in Uganda, Northern Uganda and the Rwenzori Mountains, which both experienced wars in the 1980s and 1990s. Yet both regions have seen radically different approaches to post-war memorialisation. Essay Three describes how in Northern Uganda, aid and development stakeholders are heavily involved in shaping memorial projects, with symbolic memorial work centralised around sites of violence. This essay argues that such symbolic spaces have become means for organisers of commemorative events to employ victim narratives to advocate for alternative agendas. Yet evidence shows that survivors understand these sites, and their participation in public activations at commemorations, differently: as ways to keep the reparations agenda visible to parties in development and justice sectors such as the International Criminal Court.

In contrast, there is no formally-supported memorial work in the Rwenzori Mountain region, which is the subject of Essay Four. In fact, recent (2016) violent clashes between the Kingdom of Rwenzururu and the Government of Uganda has led to ongoing unrest and uncertainty. Socially, much of this region aligns with the 100-year-old Rwenzururu project of self-determination and cultural autonomy. In such a context, survivors of these decades of conflict use oral literature to symbolically mark the past, imbue great meaning to sites of resistance, and consecrate burial grounds to martyrs and heroes—all forms of heritage that the current Government contests, and in some cases, represses and destroys. These two essays are indicators of the boundaries for memorialisation in Uganda, wherein aid and development projects shape representational models while the absence of external inputs perpetuates locally-relevant forms of remembrance.

and archives, personal histories of humanitarian remains reveal great ruptures in life during the camp era: an era dominated by feelings of confinement, surveillance and deep insecurity.

Prolonged compliance and silence during the war can hinder the ability both to participate in memorial projects and to articulate narratives that do not fit the official discourse, resulting in forms of forgetting and erasure. The power of humanitarian agencies to silence beneficiaries is a phenomenon documented not just within northern Uganda but in other contexts as well (Harrell-Bond, Voutira and Leopold 1992; Malkki 1996). However, the inability of beneficiaries to speak is rarely linked to the aftermath of the camp era, or to recalling the past for memorial efforts. Humanitarian failures do not feature in the exhibitions or sites that reference the camps: public narratives remain trapped in aid legacies of power and control that vilify the LRA.

There is a danger, however, in a critical type of documentation, in its potential to reframe the past. "If we just name and shame every organisation who wronged us in the war then who will support our fight for government pay-outs?" one former camp leader asked.[47] Returning to Ibreck (2018), it is important to recall that humanitarian memory is tied to institutional amnesia, thereby remembering successes and forgetting failures. If humanitarian memory did engage its failures in the context of northern Uganda, then it would also have to recognise that agencies have a role in remembrance projects, specifically related to their archives and the reburial of those who died during their administration. This would constitute a moral duty to memory that would extend beyond the moment of crisis.

As should be clear, objects, bodies and archives are key evidence to counter dominant discourses regarding the infliction of violence—

47. Anonymous (participant at Lukodi commemoration), May 2018.

violence that occurred, in this case, during the war between the Lord's Resistance Army and the Government of Uganda. Bodies and objects link the landscape to the lived experience. They also indicate violence done to the land and highlight the consequences lingering from the unsettled dead. While mortality might be constant in human life cycles, the un-knowing of who is buried where and whether their remains are resting peacefully is a new phenomenon in Northern Uganda. In these cases, sites of harm require additional cleansing to make the land tenable for returnees. So too are bodies in the landscape a constant reminder of the failure to protect and the impunity that still remains. The investigations around these bodies are useful for creating more durable solutions for return.

In summary, this article has argued for a more nuanced interpretation of what is left behind after people return from internal displacement, and has advocated for accountability from humanitarian agencies who supported both the encampment of people and the erasure of the past. Erasure and silence have manifested through data accumulation (in the moment of crisis), repression of popular political voices (for the duration of emergency) and lack of accountability (after the fact). Remembering the narrative, detail-driven dimensions of the encampment experience would not only disrupt that erasure, but recognising the material landscape of war would create a shift towards survivor-centred perspectives as a necessary counterpoint to the existing memorial complex.

## ESSAY THREE

## ADVOCACY MEMORIALS:
## LINKING SYMBOLIC AND MATERIAL REPARATIONS IN UGANDA

### Introduction

This article examines the issue of symbolic reparations in the aftermath of the war between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Government of Uganda (GoU), in which civilians bore the brunt of the violence. During and after the war Uganda became a site for global debates around justice and accountability, making it a unique example for the so-called "transitional justice from below."[48] As transitional justice (TJ) stalls within the country, however, the mechanism of symbolic reparations has been realised through public commemorations rather than state-driven programming. New evidence suggests that the lack of heritage development and recognition of the harm done during the war has resulted in TJ actors promoting public commemorations that are codified as symbolic reparations. An examination of the international, national and local efforts to commemorate massacres reveals a set of ignored realities: in understanding symbolic repair attempted through sites of memory, it is increasingly clear that little has been done to actually examine the symbolic damage in need of mending.

To propose a more nuanced, less normative framing of commemorative practices that constitute symbolic reparations in northern Uganda, I bring together several bodies of literature that only occasionally intersect: principally, transitional justice, memory studies and critical heritage research. As Viejo-Rose (2015) has pointed out, memory and heritage are often conflated but occupy distinct conceptual spaces based on how the past is employed in the present,

48. For a discussion on this see contributions in McEvoy, Kieran and Lorna McGregor, et al. *Transitional justice from below: Grassroots activism and the struggle for change, 2008.*

and what forms that invocation takes. The first of these three, TJ seeks to integrate the symbolic aspects of difficult pasts, yet often fails to meaningfully engage the findings of memory and heritage scholars either in implementation or theorisation, leaving a thin literature on memorials, commemorations, sites of memory and symbolic reparations in African contexts outside Rwanda and South Africa, (and as Essay One argued, often falling short there too). TJ thus sets itself apart not because scholars agree on its boundaries or tenets as a specific paradigm, but for the way it is understood as a practical tool rolled out in transitional contexts. Second, research in memory studies is necessary for a thicker understanding of how and why conflict pasts come into the present, investigating the function of recalling traumatic events. Third and finally, heritage research grounds the argument through key findings from the author's own experience as a heritage practitioner as well as from scholars working in post-war contexts who have charted the politicisation of contested sites. In linking these fields, I aim to contribute to the discussion on how to meaningfully understand symbolic reparations in Northern Uganda in useful new ways.

The below argument unfolds in three sections. First, I open the discussion by outlining reparations and how they have historically come to separate the symbolic from the material. Second, I unpack the literature on transitional justice and its expectations for what memorials (as *sites* of memory) and commemorations (as *activations* of memory) are meant to do in the frame of symbolic reparations, taking care as well to explore the limitations of this approach. This macro analysis offers the context for the third section of the argument: here, I offer empirical evidence from Uganda to explain how public commemorations, exhibitions and non-recognition have become entangled in the legacy of development assistance to perform a task far from the reparative

aims of commemorative recall. The contribution aims to fill a gap in the TJ literature on symbolic reparations in contexts like Uganda, where mechanisms are often fragmented and lack nationally-centred planning.

As noted in Part I, findings in this essay stem from ten years of living and working in Uganda as a curator, and being employed to curate issues related to difficult pasts and war memories. These practitioner observations are supported by four years of doctoral research adding critical reflection and deeper investigation into memorial practices. Most of the interviews and embedded research are from memory positivists—those who believe in the power of remembering traumatic pasts to heal society. I have also worked to interview war survivors who reject the public commemorations and who advocate instead for forgetting. In both cases, however, what I observed is that memory, expressed in sites and through public activations, is not necessarily valued for restorative or reconciliatory aims as much as it is for its capacity to table a broader scope of post-war reconstruction needs. To explore this valuation, it is necessary to examine how people remember in ways that are public and performative, as well as to critique the material culture of commemoration in public spaces.

**What are Reparations and How Can They Be Symbolic?**

The idea of reparations stems from post-conflict legal settlements between perpetrator and victim, in which sums are paid out for the harm done. In post-war states it is often victors who compensate the citizens for harms done by the previous regime; since World War I, alliances of states have negotiated settlements to pay out for material damages or loss of life during the conflict. The compensations paid out after World War II marked the biggest sums ever distributed in history (Colonomos and Armstrong 2008, 408). Alongside other mechanisms

that have come to dominate transitional contexts such as lustration, this practice has set a precedent for how to respond to crimes committed in times of war.

As the casualties of conflict during WWII included cities and infrastructure, a new development discourse arose after the war to address collective reparations. In the reconstruction of Europe in the late 1940s and 50s, investments in infrastructure and industry boosted employment and made former war zones more hospitable. Expanding social programs and access to public goods was often seen as a form of collective reparations, in which many nations participated in reparations because of implied guilt, shame or even regret for inadequate intervention (Olick 2007; Barkan 2001).

With the rise of human rights legislation and discourse that accompanied the post-WWII era, so, too, arose a boom in efforts towards symbolic repair through the process of memorialisation. According to Huyssen (2011), human rights and memorialisation are mutually constitutive given the symbolic way in which memorials invite citizens and nations to align in the project of human rights. Jay Winter (2008) describes the shift to memorialisation as marking a move towards universalising the functions of memory, resulting in the creation of an aesthetic system to align the world under the potential for memorials to create social transformation. Solidarity in support of this transformational capacity characterises what I above referred to as "memory positivists": those individuals or groups who generally believe that memory, when articulated in public spaces through commemorations or memorials, can symbolically repair the harms of a traumatic past.

Embedded within the human rights discourse that underpins memorialisation is the notion of the Right to Truth (Naidu and Torpey 2012). The assumption is that sites of memory—be they battlefields,

concentration camps or even the human body—are terrains of truth that narrative and interpretation can reflect. This faith in perceived truth is the symbolic terrain upon which reparations, like acknowledgement and apologies, are based. Indeed, truth commissions often include in their recommendations for symbolic reparations that certain findings be transformed into public sites of memory: in other words, memorials. However, heritage scholars make clear that the process of interpreting traumatic pasts is flawed at best and inaccurate at worst, questioning whether the Right to Truth indicates a Right to Remember (Viejo-Rose 2011; Meskell and Scheermeyer 2008).

The above historical overview is used to show how a normative idea of memorialisation is tied into reparations as a set of overarching curative solutions intended to unveil the past, pay off the damage and ensure truth is "out in the open." Memorialisation thus becomes part of a liberal peacebuilding sequencing, whereby material agreements for individual and collective payments have given rise to symbolic treatments to addressing past violations, within the process of transitional justice and associated human rights discourse (Barsalou and Baxter 2007). Moreover, this context sets the stage for a deeper investigation into transitional justice that resulted from a union between those post-war efforts for repair and important contributions to social transformation after authoritarian rule in places like Chile and Argentina. Investigating how the right to truth is manifested in memorials, the question thus becomes: who benefits from the process of codifying the past? How do truth, human rights and reparations become entangled? This question is particularly relevant for nations that have not had a defined end to their conflicts (especially nations emerging from civil conflict), or which still struggle to ensure their citizens are protected from state-based violations of human rights in conditions of illiberal peace (Brown 2013).

As the next section shows, the process of codification through public commemoration, exhibitions and silencing are all influenced by a transitional justice approach in societies emerging from mass violence and authoritarian rule.

**Transitional Justice and Reparations**

Transitional justice is a key companion to this investigation into symbolic reparations and memorialisation, whose marriage is founded on the externalisation of witness for remembrance through truth-telling and accountability. In recent years, scholars have pointed out that an inability to recognise social realities embedded in memorial practices could impede the success of other TJ mechanisms or even create conflict rather than reconciliation (Hamber, Ševčenko and Naidu 2006; Barsalou 2014; Moon 2012). Memory positivists and transitional justice advocates assume that the externalisations of memories of past violence result in individual and collective healing, healing that will in turn foster democratic transitions. Such mechanisms of TJ include lustration, judicial initiatives, truth-telling, institutional reform, traditional justice, reparations and memorialisation. Within the practice of memorialisation, the most prevalent outcomes are tangible memorials, including grave sites, sites of violence and newly-built museums. TJ and memorialisation are thus fused through efforts to employ memorial conventions to heal through apologies, sites of conscience, the renaming of public spaces and memory museums.

Supported by both the World Bank and the UN, TJ has become a universalising approach to developing nations in the aftermath of war. The 2011 World Development Report, for example, looked to TJ as a mechanism that could "define a healthy new form of nationhood," and referred explicitly to how Germany has warned of "the dangers of totalitarianism" in part through "the establishment of sites of

remembrance and education throughout the country, including former concentration camps" (166). The health of the nation is imagined partly through the citizen-building project of memorials, whereby visitors can bear witness to difficult histories and learn how to be peaceful and productive members of society. The TJ toolkit uses the phrases "symbolic reparations" or "memorialisation" as an aim or output, and often folds them into recommendations from courts and truth commissions. Holocaust remembrance and exchange visits to heritage sites are a regular part of TJ capacity-building, demonstrating the tool-kit transfer approach to learning about and curating difficult or traumatic pasts.

TJ interventions and court-based recommendations follow a sequencing of "money-then-memory," meaning that material reparations are paid out first, followed by symbolic measures. Rulings typically seek to quantify the harm done and put value to the specific violations. In July 2016, for example, the Extraordinary African Chambers ruled that former Chadian President Hissien Habre was to pay "civil party victims of rape and sexual violence in the case each USD $33,880, victims of arbitrary detention, torture, prisoners of war and survivors in the case each $25,410 and the indirect victims each $16,935" (Amnesty International 2017). Comparatively the British Government was ordered to pay 5,288 Kenyans a total of £19.9 million for their suffering during the Mau Mau uprising (BBC News report 2013). Such monetisation is also based on loss of income and the political status of the event: in the United States, survivors of 9/11 victims were compensated for their losses based on the income brackets of their loved ones, while the survivors of the Oklahoma City Bombing were told that they did not deserve compensation of the same level (Issacharoff 2008). In all these cases, payments were made first and the memory work followed—including a Mau Mau monument in Nairobi, and a 9/11 museum designed by the

same architect as the Jewish Museum in Berlin.

Scholars, too, have fallen into the binary trap of "money-then-memory" when addressing reparations. Torpey's (2006) work makes clear that symbolic and material reparations are distinct. Maier (2003) argues that "Bargaining for a material settlement has the virtue of bringing immeasurable damage and hurt back into the sphere of finite demands and satisfaction; it puts a price on the priceless loss" (297). In post-war contexts, material reparations are typically classed as political settlements, while symbolic measures are the responsibility of the newly-formed transitional state's nation-building project (Barkan 2001). Moon (2012) contends that the focus on financial compensation and collective reparations in the forms of public goods thus minimises the symbolic interconnectedness of all social repair.  Researchers who seek to go beyond the monetary and symbolic binary focus on the creation of cultural heritage that recognises conflict-based pasts, most often in the analysis of sites of memory and performances of commemoration (Logan and Reeves et al. 2009).

Practically, the International Criminal Court is emblematic of TJ work on international justice, but is unique in that it houses a Trust Fund for Victims (TFV) that pays out court-based reparations, including for symbolic outcomes.[49] The TFV does not require a guilty verdict for their support mandate, unlike other reparations that determine compensation based on the outcome of the court cases. To date the TFV has compensated victims in the Thomas Lubanga case (found guilty 2012), the Dominic Ongwen case (ongoing), Ruto and Kenyatta (charges withdrawn), and Germain Katanga (found guilty in 2014). Most of this support goes to multinational NGOs working on issues such as sexual

49. The ICC Trial Chamber approved payments for symbolic reparations in Oct 2016. These measures have been initiated in the Thomas Lubanga case and Dominic Ongwen case.

violence and physical harm from attacks, as well as some collective reparations like the building of schools. According to TFV director Pieter de Baan, "all reparations are symbolic."[50] In other words, no amount of money is sufficient for the scale of loss: the gesture of payment or giving of social goods is a symbolic act, something that humanity should support alongside efforts for judicial accountability. For example, the ICC paid out to 297 of Germain Katanga's victims "a symbolic compensation of USD 250 per victim."[51]

Some reparations projects do try to monetise bodily harm when it comes to torture (Chile), disappearance (Argentina) and imprisonment (South Africa). These, however, are all extensions of how bodily harm is perceived politically and what it might do both to the physical and the mental productivity of the citizen. The reparations literature shows that victims are rarely satisfied with the efforts made by the state. As Cano and Ferreira (2008) discuss in the case of Brazil, victims can find relevance in the way in which the judicial process results in "rescuing historical truth and collective memory" (133). Memory-recall through truth-seeking and addressing harms done, for the purpose of reparations in Brazil, worked towards symbolic repair because it was seen as a significant step towards public acknowledgement. Aside from the public gestures that truth commissions and courts make in accessing historical wrongs, symbolic measures can include official apologies or calendar days of remembrance.

In the most comprehensive work by scholars and practitioners to date, *The Handbook of Reparations*, authors give clear instances where states have made rulings or lawsuits have instigated reparations, rooting the decisions in judicial frameworks. Legislated reparations pose a significant challenge to symbolic measures that, if initiated by the state,

50. Pieter de Baan, interview with the author, November 2016.
51. International Criminal Court, 24 March 2017.

are usually followed by further legislation and separate funding streams for museums, memorials and monuments. In many African states, tourism ministries now view memorials as a place for outsiders to come and learn about past wars or genocides, rather than educational spaces for their own citizens (Zetterstrom-Sharp 2015; Barsalou 2014).

The judicial grounding of reparations makes it even more difficult to implement symbolic measures that are recommended by truth commissions or outlined in peace agreements, in part because the symbolic measures are often introduced by external actors and predicated on universalising aims of transitional justice. One example of the disconnect between internationally-supported recommendations and the lived realities of memory and difficult heritage is found in Sierra Leone. The 2004 recommendations from the Special Court for Sierra Leone clearly outlined that “symbolic reparations provide continued public acknowledgment of the past and address the need on the part of victims for remembrance” (499). The proposed vision sought out inclusive memorials that would be “catalysts for interaction” and “create a public space for lasting dialogue” (500-502). Furthermore, in Sierra Leone the externally-driven funding and implementation of the Special Court meant that after its closure in 2013, its archives and associated heritage, as well as the national agendas for dealings of the past, were all abandoned (Zetterstrom-Sharp 2015). At the time of this writing in 2019, neither the heritage sites nor the plans for symbolic reparations have been implemented. This is possibly because as both Shaw (2007) and Basu (2007) have pointed out, Sierra Leonean cultures value concealment, secrecy and layering of amnesia; thus “public spaces” and “catalysts for interaction” that are predicated on liberal democracy and touristic norms of visitation have little salience for much of the war-affected population.

Scholars in South Africa have further critiqued the issue of symbolic reparations as tangible memorial sites, given the nature of the violence committed during Apartheid. Gobodo-Madikizela (2015) and Hamber's (2000) work has shown how the psychological impacts of violence beyond bodily harm calls for individual as well as collective redress to ongoing trauma. Their dissatisfaction with TJ in South Africa has been that it does not adequately address the symbolic harm done, nor does it insist in an ongoing, transgenerational approach to repair. Wilson (2001) argues that this shortfall is due to the way in which "an overemphasis on visible, quantifiable acts of violence, failed to take into account levels of symbolic violence embedded in everyday life" (207). According to Kesterling's (2016) work in the same context, harm done resonates in the bodies of women not merely because they are the site of the initial violation, but because the aftermath of poverty and the daily burden of family needs inflicts ailments onto the body as well. Together, these scholars challenge the theoretical and practical positioning of symbolic reparations, encouraging those invested in symbolic repair to grapple with the everyday modes of violence that persist beyond that which is addressed in judicial or truth-seeking exercises.

Understanding how TJ and memorialisation intersect is thus key to glimpse a larger range of violations that could be addressed through symbolic domains. Cases like Sierra Leone and South Africa are important for Uganda because they both show a clear disconnect between the recommendations made by courts and tribunals, and how citizens experience symbolic harm that needs mending. These cases also demonstrate that memory work might be rushed or imposed, resulting in a false peace and harmony jeopardised by ongoing poverty or insecurity. As I argue regarding Uganda, the memorial efforts there do not fully realise the healing aims of symbolic repair because they are

separated from the material needs of war survivors. The emotive and dialogical possibility of memorials has led previous scholars addressing TJ in Uganda to conduct interviews in, around and about these sites (Anna Macdonald 2017; Arnould 2015; Moffett 2015). My contribution here is to bring commemorative processes to the centre of the argument rather than leave it relegated to the periphery.

**Uganda's Transitional Justice Paradox**

Uganda poses a particular challenge to transitional justice and the implementation of symbolic reparations efforts. On the one hand, it embraces the toolkit in the sense that it has undertaken almost all the mechanisms of TJ, even passing its first Transitional Justice Bill in mid-2019. It also holds democratic elections, in spite of the current president having taken power by force in 1986 and having changed the federal constitution to extend age and term limits, plus it has an Amnesty Law, supports the ICC, and holds a court of complementarity. Historically, following its civil wars Uganda held various truth commissions, and has gained recent financial and technical support to build up its judicial institutions such as the Justice, Law, and Order Society and the High Crimes Division. On the other hand, however, Uganda is still known for its violent treatment of political oppositions and its aggressive counterinsurgency tactics (Romaniuk and Durner 2018). The state has expanded political capital through decentralisation and mass corruption, and in some cases political and cultural leaders have been implicated in embezzling money allocated for refugees or post-war reconstruction (Batanda 2012; Okiror 2018).

Transitional justice in Uganda is most active through the work of civil society, aided by cultural and religious leaders. Together these actors have been able to raise the profile of TJ work from the context of the LRA versus GoU war to a national stage, including other conflicts

in the transitional framework. At present, nearly all of the TJ work being undertaken, especially for memorialisation, is funded by European and North American donors. Implementation of donor money for memorial work adopts systems of humanitarian assistance and aid-based reconstruction. This point is relevant because it demonstrates the way in which organisations working on TJ and memorialisation cannot disentangle themselves from what Gready and Robins (2014) described as "the repertoire of options imagined" for transformation in the post-war condition (6). Uganda is, furthermore, a stage on which actors use the umbrella of transitional justice to conduct memorial work: while (as noted above) the TJ scholarship is quite thin on symbolic reparations, the ways in which practitioners understand its normative tenets is clear, manifesting in tangible heritage production around bodily violence at mass grave monuments and annual public commemorations at these sites. It is here that the larger industry of "dark tourism" meets transitional justice, creating exchanges for stakeholders from Uganda to visit iconic sites in countries like Rwanda, Germany and Cambodia.[52]

Importantly, few scholars or practitioners working within TJ have been able to interrogate memorials in contexts like Uganda, where the same political structures that were in power during the multiple wars (of the last thirty-four years) are still in place today. As a result, any recommendations predicated on state buy-in, or implemented through state institutions, would require a shift in national power. In the absence of a power shift or a successful political settlement it has been difficult to agree on any coherent narratives around what happened between the LRA and GoU—thus the transitional framework of victors and losers is disrupted, and actors struggle to navigate beyond dichotomies of hegemonic state-memory and counter-memorials. Another challenge

52. The term "dark heritage" or "dark tourism" are commonly used in heritage research. However, I prefer to use the terms like "difficult", "conflict" or "traumatic" because of the characterisation of Africa as the "dark continent" that has been problematised.

is that there are scarcely a handful of writings on memorialisation in the context of the LRA versus GoU war, in spite of the vast scholarship addressing justice (traditional, international and formal), reintegration, emerging only in the last few years in relation to memory, heritage and transnational advocacy (Ocen 2017; Giblin 2014; Edmondson 2018).

I contend that scholars have not ventured to look at symbolic reparations in Northern Uganda for three main reasons. First, scholars and practitioners have primarily focused on the core TJ debates such as peace versus justice, or top-down versus bottom-up approaches. In terms of justice, much has already been written about the role of the International Criminal Court with its first cases taking place within Uganda (Allen 2013; Branch 2007; Armstrong 2014, to name a few). Other justice-based contributions on complementarity courts (Moffett 2016) or concerning traditional justice mechanisms (Afako 2002; Latigo 2008) seek to reveal the domestic and cultural forms of lustration (Tshimba 2015). Within many of these justice debates there is an underlying tension between the global and the local, recently making inroads for understanding "the everyday" or "lived realities" of war-affected people. The "local" or "everyday" turn derives from two TJ strands that, on the one hand stems from critiques of liberal peacebuilding (MacGinty 2014) and on the other seeks to observe experiences of violence and the aftermath from an ethnographic and gendered perspective (Das 2007). Anna Macdonald (2017) explains that within the well-developed cottage industry of Ugandan TJ professionals this global/local division is blurred, resulting in a hybrid form of TJ.

The second reason that memorialisation is not a central feature in TJ scholarship related to  a rather small and unpublicised phenomenon, in spite of the many reports on issues related to massacres and the unsettled dead across the region (Jahn and Wilhelm-Solomon 2015;

Meinert and Whyte 2016). In my research, numbers of attendance to commemorative events ranged between 15 and 300 people, with survivors living around known and marked mass graves seldom regularly visiting them to mourn their dead. As a result, the outsider scholars who come into Uganda for short periods might see the situations as insignificant to the larger transitional project. Furthermore, temporality matters: given that the war ended only recently, the slow momentum around building of monuments and holding commemorations could only be observed within the last decade.

Third and last, practitioners, scholars and donors subscribe to the normative frame that memory is good and that public commemorations are an essential part of "moving on" from difficult pasts. As I argue below, not only are survivors rejecting NGO-styled memorial sites associated with the TJ project, but my research and experience as a curator has shown that some people are even utilising the commemorative space to articulate a pervasive need for material reparations.

### Context for the Preservation of LRA War Memories

The present research focuses specifically on the conflict between the Lord's Resistance Army and the Government of Uganda as manifested by the National Resistance Army (NRA 1981-1995), which became the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) after the 1995 constitution. Following the rebranding of the UPDF, conflict continued well into the 2000s. Both the NRA and the UPDF have been led by President Yoweri Museveni who took power by force in 1986, after a successful coup against the Milton Obote regime. The majority of memorials discussed below lie within the conflict zone spanning what is commonly referred to as Acholiland and its associated cultural neighbours in West Nile, Teso and Karamoja. A majority of the memorials are physical sites defined by mass attacks associated with the LRA: these

attacks, and much of the counterinsurgency, were intimate forms of violence whereby Acholi people attacked, abducted or defended each other. Such intimacy is key to the discussion, because it makes publicly recognising what your own people (clansmen, kin, or neighbour) did to you more difficult than the simple vilification of an enemy as the other.

The focus on Acholiland, or "Northern Uganda" as it is often called, stems from the region's humanitarian legacies and lived realities during the war that shaped subsequent memorial practices. As noted in Essay Three, it is estimated that ninety percent of the Acholi population was put into internally displaced persons (IDP) camps during the conflict, creating an inroad for humanitarian action that has subsequently been supported by development actors (UN OCHA 2005). From 2004 to date, the International Criminal Court has also been working in this region, making its first four cases about LRA commanders. The region's long experience with humanitarian intervention, international justice and aid literacy is key to this argument.

Support for public commemorations of the LRA versus GoU conflict has been slow but increasing. Through media and aid campaigns, the image of Joseph Kony as a deranged, brutal leader defined the war: under his leadership the LRA abducted children, symbolically mutilated people who tried to escape or inform on them, and even forced people into cannibalism (Judah 2004). This media imprint has created a kind of digital memory that occasionally resurges in aid campaigns and creates a narrative tension for remembrance projects.[53] Commemorative activities in northern Uganda are often linked to NGOs working to excavate the truths around violations that occurred during the war. Massacre sites, where it is alleged the LRA killed scores of people in targeted attacks (Deo Komakech 2018), are a particular fixity of these

53. See *Kony 2012,* Invisible Children's (2012) viral video campaign; and *In Kony's Shadow,* Christian Aid, Oxo Tower London, (5 March 2014 - 16 March 2014).

investigations, as well as their associated memorial activities. These events were often followed by mass burial from members of the families who lived in the surrounding areas, often in adjacent IDP camps.

No clear governance structure for the memorialisation of massacre sites or war memories exists in Uganda, unlike neighbouring Rwanda, which has a specific set of memory laws. The 2008 Juba Peace Agreement and the later National Transitional Justice Policy, however, both address the need for symbolic reparations, explicitly mentioning memorials. Agenda 3, Section 9.1 of the Juba Peace Agreement states that "Reparation may include a range of measures such as rehabilitation; restitution; compensation; guarantees of non-recurrence and other symbolic measures such as apologies, memorials and commemorations." This document is specific to the LRA-UPDF conflict, and was drafted at a moment when peace talks were a burgeoning hive for the birth of transitional justice in Uganda. A decade later, the TJ policy defined reparations as:

> *redress given to victims of gross or serious human rights violations/abuses. Reparations reflect an acknowledgement of responsibility and accountability. Reparations can take material and symbolic form as well as individual or collective form these include; restitution, compensation-monetary form for damages; rehabilitation – medical, legal and psychosocial, satisfaction-acknowledgement of guilt, apology, burials, construction of memorials, and guarantees of non-repetition - reformation of laws and civil and political structures.*

The Ugandan National Transitional Justice Policy openly borrows from the 2005 UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to Remedy and Reparation, thus much of its normative language and

projected strategies for implementation. Importantly, within these recommendations and policies, the public engagement of memorials is not prescribed in terms of who should be addressed or what the memorial should seek to do for society.

Within this policy framework, it is unclear who is to govern newly-constructed memorials. The Government of Uganda has primarily undertaken this type of work within the Commission for Museums and Monuments (CMM) as part of the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities. However, until 2018 the mass graves in Luwero were overseen by a State Ministry. The CMM's usual remit is for sites such as the World Heritage of Kasubi Tombs, Nyero Rock Art, and other cultural and historic sites such as community museums or colonial forts. The team at CMM is small, and the department is far less funded than its neighbouring Wildlife Authority which is tied into tourism activities such as gorilla trekking.[54] Until recently, the CMM used legislation left over from the colonial era to protect sites and manage antiquities. As a result, the memorial work initiated around the LRA-GoU conflict was consigned to religious, survivor and NGO groups.

In 2011 the Uganda Museum, along with the Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage, initiated a project that would require the Ministry for Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities (the parent ministry of the CMM) to get involved in the listing, preservation and management of specific sites tied to the war histories. They identified four key sites as pilot projects for memorial commemoration: the Barlonyo massacre site, the Lukodi massacre site, St Mary's School in Aboke and the Pabbo Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp. These sites were emblematic of the attacks (Barlonyo and Lukodi), the abductions (Aboke) and the displacement (Pabbo) that characterised the justification for

54. The Uganda Tourism Board reported 1.4 billion USD in revenue from tourism in 2017, equalling 10 percent of the country's GDP.

humanitarian support to the GoU and the counterinsurgency against the LRA. Leading this work was the then-director of the Norwegian agency, who had worked as a humanitarian aid worker in Aboke during the time that its schoolgirls were abducted and who subsequently photographed the site, as well as the nun who helped to find and return the girls. One outcome of this pilot project was an exhibition entitled *The Road to Reconciliation* featuring photographs and plastic banners, alongside performances from survivor groups and (as discussed in Essay Two) the installation of a replica IDP hut. The government of Uganda was also encouraged to list the memorial sites on a national register and use funds from the grant to support the development of memorial committees and site plans. The pilot project did raise the profile of historical injustices and their impacted communities, but at some sites there remains an overall sense by residents as well as memorial committee members of being left behind.

Another overarching way in which memory work is tied to government is through the International Criminal Court. Uganda is a signatory to the Rome Statute that created the ICC, thus victims of crimes adjudicated there in The Hague are eligible for reparations—even symbolic ones. As a result of the reparations work and the court-based investigations, the ICC has become intricately connected to memory work in the region. In particular it sends representatives to commemorative events pertaining to the trial of Dominic Ongwen, whose case addresses atrocities at Pajule (October 2003), Odek (April 2004), Lukodi (May 2004) and Abok IDP camp (June 2004). Like the ICC (its parent court), the Trust Fund for Victims has focused primarily on bodily harms done, such as sexual crimes newly added to the list of charges. While the Trust Fund for Victims is working in Uganda and their remit includes symbolic reparations, to date its support is mostly based on

physical rehabilitation such as the fund for prosthetic limbs for land-mine survivors administrated though the Italian Associazione Volontari per il Servizio Internazionale (AVSI). In this context, social and spiritual harm from violations like mass displacement or spiritual control by the LRA have been largely unaddressed.

Within the sphere of the sacred, the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) and Caritas (Uganda) were responsible for spiritually repairing communities in the aftermath of the decades-long civil conflict. Indeed, some of the first memorials were held as vigils by ARLPI, trying to usher the dead into a heavenly domain. Similarly, Caritas began rehabilitating and marking mass graves in an effort to encourage people to move from the displacement camps back to their homes: the crosses and logos that now adorn the gravesites were intended to signify spiritual safety within the Roman Catholic traditions followed by ARLPI leaders and Caritas under the Archdiocese of Gulu (Figure 3.1)[55.]

Figure 3.1
Lagweni Lim NRA massacre monument

Partly because of the alliances made between the ICC, ARLPI, and other organizations such as AVSI and Caritas, northern Uganda has

55. JB (Director Caritas), in discussion with the Author, June 2017. ARLPI, focus group discussion, July 2019.

seen an "NGO-ification" of reparations activity. Yet historical irregularities, lack of legislation, inconsistent approaches, irregular funding and divergent interests all contribute to what Anna Macdonald (2019) refers to as the "implementation gap" for transitional justice including symbolic reparations. Almost no material reparations program exists save for a few tokenistic gestures that usually accompany election campaigns, marking another temporal feature to the sequencing of reparations. As a result, people are often compelled to align to normative agendas and institutionalise their needs by using the space of commemoration to articulate those needs. Outside these institutions are "the community" who are supposed to be the beneficiaries of memorial healing, yet who are often incorporated into a larger framing of victims by institutions. Increasingly, as commemorations and memorials are intended for these communities, their need for material reparations becomes masked by the symbolic veil.

**Public Commemorations**

In the shadow of the above history, I now turn to the places in which memorials are activated: public commemorations. Observations and interviews at commemorative events over the course of five years, alongside curatorial work with conflict pasts in Uganda since 2010, has revealed a patterning of social indicators that demonstrate the advocacy potential of contested histories. Advocacy in this regard is more than memory for reconciliation, memory for nation-building or memory "for memory's sake." The argument is based on analysis of how people negotiate ownership over the past and how sites of memory are curated. Evidence is derived from the ways in which aid agendas are revealed through aesthetic layouts, as well as the choices of specific narratives related to past atrocities such as mass killing, encampment, abduction and rape. I compare sites at the centre of the memorial

discussions such as Atiak with those on the periphery such as Pabbo to better understand what constitutes post-war heritage in this context. As in all heritage research, what is not said or what is silenced is as revealing as what is said: commemorative events that do not happen or which are not on certain agendas show the gaps in both normative and localised transitional agendas.

Public commemorations take place in an irregular fashion across six to nine massacre sites impacted by the LRA. The Justice and Reconciliation Project has created a calendar of seventeen different days linked to massacres, as well as to the World Day for International Justice (17 July annually). Notable sites include Lukodi, Atiak, Barlonyo, Muchwini, Burcoro, Parabongo and Odek.  Beyond these lie sporadic events for transnational calendar days such as the ICRC's annual commemoration on the International Day of the Disappeared (30 August) These commemorations form a civic calendar that acts in conversation with national and multinational forms of recognition. As Fridman (2015) has pointed out, this is a strategy used by survivor communities to insist on something that the nation-state has denied them.

Most of the memorial sites that host commemorations have mass graves with headstones paid for by aid organisations and often branded accordingly. Commemorative events are also sponsored by donors with occasional support from local government as well as religious and cultural leaders. The ICC has also been known to provide financial support .[56] Different activities occur on the days, partly depending on the funding sources; except for a few variations in activities, such as tree planting or HIV testing, the layout and format of the commemorations have crystallised into a standard format of gathering, speeches by elites,

56. ICC Victims Lawyer in conversation with the author, May 2017.

survivor testimonials, cultural performances and lunch.

The few scholars who have examined these events have recognised that stakeholders are advocating for something beyond the symbolic realm (Moffett 2017; Ocen 2017; Edmondson 2018). To look more deeply into the forms and functions of commemoration, the next section analyses instances where people come together on annual days of remembrance, as well as explores the ways in which sites have struggled to gain recognition or funding to hold commemorative events. My research estimates that these events are attended by an average of 500-1000 attendees at larger events, and less than 100 at smaller ones.

*Victims and Narrative Strategies*

Victimhood and reconciliation expressed through testimony are the main anchor points for applications to fund commemorative and memorial events. According to the 2019 Ugandan TJ policy:

> *Victim(s): means a person(s) who individually or collectively suffered harm, including physical or mental injury, emotional suffering, economic loss or impairment of their fundamental rights, through acts or omissions that constitute gross violations/abuses of human rights and may include – a member of the immediate family or dependant of the victim or other person(s) (9).*

Organisers design the programming at public commemorations so that victims have time to share how their human rights have been abused. As the below examples show, however, not only do survivors at times work against this remembering, but they also refashion the expectation of donors to perpetuate their victimhood. Such victim-centred work shows that to be considered for development

benefits, victims must articulate their experiences within a frame of memorialisation—yet if support is scarce or not forthcoming, advocates for memory work lose faith in the power of symbolic avenues to material reparations. Despite the well-documented dissatisfaction of victims in Uganda and elsewhere, there is still a way in which rehearsed victim narratives can be tied to transitional justice work (Madlingozi 2010). According to Edmondson (2018), "Memorials are often perceived as a gateway to economic development and reparations rather than a means of giving closure to victimhood, but impoverishment and loss throughout the region are undeniable. The emphasis on redress marks not only an appropriation of memorial discourse but also a rebranding of northern Uganda… Remembrance and compensation are fused" (248).

*Atiak*

Atiak is one of the oldest and recognised massacre sites in Northern Uganda. In 1995, an attack led by LRA commander Vincent Otti killed over 300 people, an event considered one of the most emblematic turning points in the conflict. Following the attack, religious leaders went to the site and offered prayers for the dead whom the survivors buried in a mass grave covered by materials collected from family members. As Ocen (2017) points out, the fact that the site of massacre and the site of burial are different (separated by six kilometres) creates a spatial dissonance for commemorative practices. Due to insecurity and mass displacement, ritual prayers at the mass gravesite followed only sporadically in the subsequent years. A formal monument, sponsored by the government, reflects the aesthetic of those in other areas in the country, with fences, locks and iron sheet coverings. Creating the style of say, Luwero—where, as Essay One detailed, the current ruling party rose to power though its own bush war—imprints an aesthetic of officially-demarcated space.

The commemoration at which outsiders were invited to come and mourn occurred after the establishment of the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative in 1998. Together with Caritas, the commemoration gained traction each year, reaching a pinnacle when President Museveni attended in 2012. At this pivotal moment, the Survivors Association choreographed a song bearing a demand: the chorus line went "We are waiting for our compensation," after which they were each given, on the spot, an envelope containing 400,000 Uganda Shillings (approximately $100) and promised even larger sums that were never paid. Atiak is particularly useful to understand the commemorative tensions in this region, given the long-term, well-documented experiences both at the time of the event and since (Owor Ogora and Baines 2007).

My own engagement with Atiak and the larger regional memorial landscape is extensive, but I want to focus briefly on the 2018 commemoration because it offers a glaring example of the transformation over time from a site of small, sombre prayers of the past to a large, elite space of contestation. That year, the commemoration was not held at the usual mass gravesite because of disputes over who was the rightful clan leader to host the event. On the day, at a local primary school, nine religious, NGO, government and cultural leaders gave speeches lasting nearly five hours. One of those included a request for funds to add an annex to the primary school hosting the commemoration. Some people got up and demonstrated their support by putting their cash into the basket, like donating at a church collection, before another speaker quickly grabbed the microphone and reminded the audience that the event was not about fundraising, but about remembrance. There was not much discomfort over this dispute as the day progressed; later, cultural leaders took to advocating

against drinking and deforestation, the local district police representative discussed crime and justice, and the representatives from ARLPI proclaimed peace and advocated for reconciliation.

Atiak is not a site of harmony or agreement. A few years earlier, Ocen had noted contestation in Atiak over the memorial prayers (2017). His research shows that the issue arose from the lack of recognition over the two locations in which the actual site of the massacre was not addressed, as well as the fact that those who had survived the event were not receiving adequate support. As a result, survivors started to boycott the commemorative event because it did not provide them with adequate support for their pressing needs. Similarly, JRP (2007) documented the need for small gestures of reparation—"like a bar of soap," one survivor requested (Owor Ogora and Baines 2007). Anna Macdonald also recorded a survivor association boycott in 2011 (2017, 297).

Further discomfort in 2018 came when the young performers arrived and their troupe leader was not sure which way the group should face (Figure 3.2). Initially, they lined up facing the survivor families, but then noticed that their backs were to the cultural leaders which was disrespectful. They then turned towards the cultural leaders, but were quickly informed that the local political and NGO leadership should be the main audience. Was this because they were the main donors for the event? The repertoire of "traditional" Acholi dancing was coupled

Figure 3.2
Performers arriving to the commemoration, 2018.

with a series of dramas about disarmament, reintegration and traditional justice, all mirroring the TJ toolkit—and, notably, often performed in English.

The 2018 rejection of the commemorative event as memory in action came into full view when the Chairwoman from the Massacre Survivors Association was called forward. She refused to share her trauma, inviting the audience to come to their offices if they wanted to know more. In follow-up discussions with attendees to this event, it became clear that the memorial site—as opposed to the grave site—has become less and less legitimate, especially for women, who, echoing the concerns in Essay One, have served as the ideal victims in the narrative of suffering. Both the Chairwoman's refusal, and the refusal by other widows or women who lost loved ones in the attack, show a tension between the "hegemonic masculinity" (Dolan 2009) and the performance of inclusion—a performance in which women are paraded out in a show of gender sensitivity or as ideal victims.

Choreographed and refined over the years into a specific program format, this format shows that these women at Atiak and other commemorative events are inevitably given space by a male MC, and normally proceeded and followed by male speeches. The Atiak Survivors Committee members and three other women's survivor-based groups explained that their attendance is a necessary part of the post-war social restructuring; those who do not attend the events or have representatives present cannot benefit from the visibility and aid that accompanies such advocacy work.[57] Remarkably, one male NGO head who supports the commemorations observed that "over time they [the women] come to love their stories… they become less emotional and

57. Discussions with the author in Atiak, April 218. Discussions with the author in Pai-bona, May 2018. Discussions with the author in Gulu town, May 2017.

feel pride in their pain."[58] Yet his stereotypical codification of women's experiences is directly contradicted by the charwoman's refusal, indicating two things: first, that there is no homogenous way to read the victim/survivor narrative, and second, that women are not satisfied by being co-opted into overarching victim essentialism.

Key to this example is the fact that the silencing of victims and survivors in commemorative spaces is not unique. Far from the iconic victims that speak in state-supported commemorations in places like Rwanda or South Africa, in northern Uganda the voice of the victim has grown quieter and quieter over time. In Atiak, it is not only that the victims have little to no space in national narratives, but more importantly that the state failure to develop the region in the aftermath of the war has created—or rather, re-created—commemorations as a staging ground for elites primarily to address their constituencies and set agendas.

*Lukodi*

The development of Lukodi, an exhibition site and mass grave, shows a unique union between the ICC, a leading NGO, the memorial committee and other donors. Since the Commission for Museums and Monuments finished its work in Lukodi (2015), the Justice and Reconciliation Project (2015) and now the Foundation for Justice and Development Initiatives (FJDI) have taken up the role of intermediary between the donors and the memorial committee. With mostly German support, FJDI has in recent years helped to ensure an annual commemoration and to develop a small exhibition within the primary school adjacent to the mass grave. There is an effort to be victim-centred and for the memorial committee to drive the work—however, the aid literacy of committee members and the chosen aesthetics of

58. Anonymous (NGO Director) in discussion with the author, May 2017.

advocacy show an alliance to overarching international aims reinforced by TJ language.

Inside the exhibition, the narrative banners tell some stories of survivor experiences in Lukodi and the massacre that took place there in 2004 (Figure 3.3). These texts are an interpretive progression from other spaces that only have plaques upon mass graves, sharing more than just the event and including a wider conflict timeline, as well as sections on *Night Commuters* and *Displacement and Disillusionment*. The language, however, is almost exclusively in English and mirrors the NGO aesthetic of mission and vision statements that are brought to workshops and conferences. The text is reminiscent of the original wall text at Lukodi before the mini museum was installed. The historical epigraph reads: "Like many war affected communities in northern Uganda, community members have been faced with challenges—they pick up the pieces of their lives in the wake of the conflict, specifically the difficulty incoming with trauma and finding solutions for justice and reconciliation, specifically accountability reparations."

Figure 3.3
Lukodi Museum Exhibition 2018

The aesthetic and linguistic linkages are intended for outsiders, leaving little resonance in the "educational mission" of the site for healing amongst survivors. When the first exhibition launched in 2016 at a commemoration event, survivors were largely uninterested in these lengthy narratives, instead spending a majority of their time with the

twelve photographs of the people who had died—discussing their lives, lineages and even joking about a couple of individuals whose names are on the grave markers and were said to be killed, but who were in fact still alive. Granted, personalising the exhibition in a victim-centred way is difficult considering the Acholi taboo of showcasing remains of the dead or their personal effects; as a result, a disconnect arises between learning the outcomes of larger war narratives and the more intimate, personal stories of the deceased.

The general language of the Lukodi narratives fits squarely into the TJ and ICC witness work that has accompanied the Dominic Ongwen trial. This means that residents of Lukodi often use the language of international justice to explain their experiences and select ideal victims—out of the thousands registered by the court for the case—to help illustrate the massacre in a way that the prosecution has used to make their case. Indeed, iconic stories of extreme violence are the foundation of advocacy and judicial work, as illustrated in the Lukodi exhibition heading *The Gruesome Memories of Northern Uganda*. The showcasing of atrocities leaves out any memory work that does not fit such a neat formula, encouraging an assimilation of narratives rather than seeking an understanding of context-specific forms of remembrance. As a result, one paradox of the ICC investigations becomes visible: the effort not just to uncover what happened, but also to shut down debate or non-linear testimony in public space.

Part of the approach in reducing the exhibition to a format recognised by NGOs is to cope with the fact that outsiders view Lukodi as an iconic site *because* of the ICC: witnesses, survivors and community members are asked again and again to recount the day of the massacre. Some members of the memorial committee explained that their desire for displays in English is to permanently showcase events

they don't have to revisit through narration, and so that those who have become proficient in English are not always the targets for interviews. Yet other members of this committee see Ongwen's trial and the memorial narratives as a place to insist that government, researchers, lawyers and NGOs make good on the promise of material reparations for them and their families.[59]

*Burcoro*

The site of Burcoro illustrates both a lack of visibility and an attempt at bringing a past into the present that has been cast aside. It is one of the many massacre sites across the region that do not feature in the public eye, and which are not supported in commemorative activities. In the case of Burcoro/Buchoro or Namokora, the atrocities involved were committed by the government's National Resistance Army (NRA). In spite of the efforts by memory activists from 2012-2015 to create an archive of reports, videos and memorials to mark what happened, little habitual remembrance has taken place.

The most comprehensive set of investigations was prepared as a response to a presidential promise for reparations during the 2011 campaigns (Otwill, Jimenez and Esquivel-Korsiak 2013). This example highlights two issues with the commemorative phenomena in this region: first and most obvious is that the violations were committed by government soldiers, and therefore not part of the official frame of the LRA as the enemy and the GoU as the protectors. Second, the survivors interviewed narrated more than just the loss of their relatives from murder, including as well days of torture, rape, subsequent abduction and imprisonment. These experiences make the narrative potential for memorialisation more opaque than massacre sites bearing a clear event. Furthermore, many citizens have pointed out the paradox of

59. In discussion with the author, June 2017.

the ICC's one-sided push for accountability, allowing impunity from the NRA/UPDF atrocities. Importantly, the primary vocal support or commemorations at Burcoro comes from the Forum for Democratic Change, the popular opposition party to the NRA, as opposed to the ruling government which as of this writing has been in power for thirty-three years.

Aesthetically, Burcoro is marked by a memorial that symbolically references one particular execution: a sculpted tree on a high concrete stand represents the killing of suspected LRA collaborator Kapere. Each branch tries to signal the viewer with words like "killing," "rape," "sodomy," and the trunk reads "Human Rights Violations." This particular commemorative space was inaugurated during the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence in 2015. The Refugee Law Project even made an advocacy film entitled *Buchoro Memories* that opens with a quote from Ban Ki Moon, and is scripted with a language that is familiar to transitional justices actors. One woman's testimony carries throughout the film, highlighting the worst cases of gang-rape, HIV infection and sterilisation from the trauma.

These appeals to transnational advocacy should make Burcoro a key place for commemoration and support, yet survivors are reluctant to continually narrate their experiences for two key reasons. First, survivors see little political will to recognise the harms done because recognition would require some kind of change in their social and economic status. In fact, the moments when they have been most active are when they have experienced threats or been targeted to the point of social

Figure 4.4
Pabbo zone map from the camp era. In the collection of the memorial archives.

exclusion.[60] Second, discussing sexual violations is still taboo: while

60. In discussion with the author, April 2018.

the dead bodies of the slain might be acceptable because they are commonly employed for advocacy work, the violated bodies of the living are far less welcome in the public discourse.

Each year, Burcoro struggles to gain support for its commemorations, and often abstains from holding any events that call attention to this difficult history—this despite the fact that the unveiling of the Burcoro monument coincided with the sponsoring NGO's report launch, as well as a petition to President Museveni for reparations to which he had verbally committed in 2011.[61] Burcoro remains a site on the periphery of recognition and reparation. Despite the fact that the 20th Battalion of the National Resistance Army has been identified as the perpetrators of the violence, no accountability mechanism has engaged TJ programming. In recent years, there have only been small and sombre gatherings of faith and family members who come to the site, and occasional surges of NGO support depending on how well-funded sexual and gender-based violence is on the agenda.

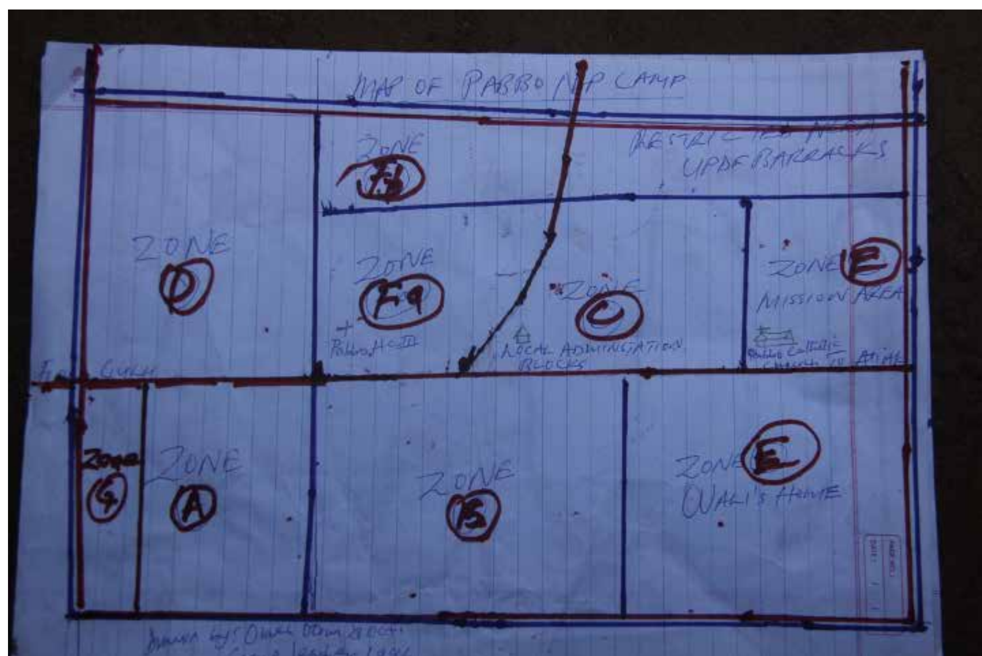
*Pabbo*

Another site that is not equitably recognised is Pabbo (detailed in Essay Two), the largest IDP camp during the war, housing some 75,000 people during its most populated time (Figure 4.4). Some residents still live within the remaining huts on the land, which is adjacent to a now-bustling trading centre and soon-to-be recognized town. Pabbo was included in the multi-sited pilot of the CMM and the NDCH mentioned above; the conclusion of the pilot was that the grant helped to initiate a memorial committee, to purchase some land, and to commission a

61. Nyeko reported in 2015, "Following a blessing of the monument by religious leaders in Burcoro, Resident District Commissioner (RDC) for Gulu, Okot Lapolo, received a memorandum from the Burcoro 1991 Military Operation Survivors Association addressed to Ugandan president, Yoweri Museveni, and calling for support. The RDC promised to deliver it to the president and to remind him about pledges he made in 2011 to provide compensation."

five-year plan including an architectural drawing for a house of peace. When the funds dried out in 2011, however, the memorial committee was left waiting for the next intervention.

Many individuals and institutions have approached Pabbo, including academic researchers and a short engagement with the British Museum. Ultimately, each attempt at collaboration falls into the aid dependency trap wherein people struggle to activate meaningful memorial support, and are instead left wondering why so many interactions have led to so few outcomes. Unfortunately, displacement for the IDPs is neither as fundable nor as fashionable as the massacres and sites the ICC mandate addresses. In response to this frustration that their lived realties were not enough to be preserved, the committee proposed in 2019 to hold a commemorative event on the date when the camp was attacked. The memorial committee have also responded to the rapid development in the associated municipality, and are currently in discussions about allocating a gravesite to inter the deceased whose remains are found during building excavations.




Discussions with survivors and curatorial collaborators in Pabbo

show the deep wounds of memories that relate to things other than mass death.[62] In a way, for the people of Pabbo, mass death became the norm: for them, alcoholism, defilement, lack of food and social upheaval defines this era of war instead. It is these memories that the committee chairman Otim Orach has chronicled over hundreds of pages of memoir and poetry. Conversely, the changes in Pabbo as a municipality have been understood as part of a discourse in which residents view the rate of development as stemming from the war, recognising that their lives today and access to goods with business networks was set up during the camp era. Development and pride in the bustling space of Pabbo is articulated in interviews as a form of endurance or resilience that should also be a part of the war-memory heritage. This progress does not mean that all people are doing well across the board, but that most people are better off compared to other, smaller camp-turned-urban areas. Memorial efforts to rebuild Pabbo in the image of camp-times signifies that life has perseverance in spite of targeted government social torture.[63]

Pabbo is symbolic of almost all Acholi experiences during the war, in that most people—even if they were abducted and forced to serve in the LRA—would have lived in IDP camps at some point. A key finding from my research is that camp life is the single most prevalent memory shared when people discuss the past: it is the event of being displaced and the intergenerational struggle to return after such disruption that shapes the majority of interviewees' personal histories. Yet there is little desire by TJ actors to recognise or respond to displacement histories within memorial work—partly because the government forced people into these conditions, and insufficient assistance humanitarian agencies ensured the prolonged nature of the displacement. Such reluctance

62. Pabbo Memorial Committee, focus group discussions with the author, September 2018.

63. Chris Dolan (2009) referred to the mass encampment of the majority of the Acholi population as "Social Torture".

is due as well to the fact that to recognise this harm, and to try to symbolically repair it within the TJ framework, requires an accountability mechanism that overcomplicates the trifecta of international justice, complementarity and traditional justice.

*International Day of the Missing*

Commemorative events not connected to sites of violence or that address non-massacre-related conflict realties are still tied to the NGO-ification of memory. For example in August of 2017 (Figure 4.5), the ICRC asked a man named Muhammad to come to the stage and share his testimony across the PA system at the annual ceremony for the International Day of the Disappeared. He and nearly 120 others had been bussed into the grassy open-field to participate in the commemoration. Muhammad took the microphone, refused to take the stage and turned directly to the ICRC representatives. He asked publicly why they had spent so much money on trying to trace his missing relatives, and suggested that instead they spend those resources on compensation for the losses that came with absent productive members of the family. In his statement, he argued that continual efforts at tracing the missing tended to ignore or neglect the everyday struggles of poverty that impacted his (and others') daily life. What Muhammad highlighted is that the ICRC's efforts to find the missing unintentionally excludes survivors from the reparations discourse: in cases of missing persons, there is no calculation for harm done. According to Muhammad, monetary payouts could, at the very least, be costed out based on the loss of labour. Moreover, if any missing persons were found, then these resources could be used for other packages of reconciliation, reintegration that would include things like amnesties, *mato oput*, psychosocial support or treatment of physical wounds. Lastly, the efforts to trace the missing, through mechanisms such as oral accounts during

or after war, are often extremely lengthy, and can become barriers to forgetting or moving on.

As Muhammad points out in his desire to move on, it is also possible that there is a type of forgetting at work in the ways that the dead are amalgamated into narratives but the missing are not. As I have shown in my previous essays, many memory projects insist on individualising or humanising the lives of those lost, often through showcasing personal effects or telling stories about their biographies or personalities. The formats of memorialisation in Northern Uganda, however, work to combine experiences of death and survival.

Figure 4.5 ICRC international day of the Disappeared commemoration.

Part of this tension stems from two practices: naming and religious branding. Naming, in this region, is not necessarily an individualising identifier, because many people share the same Christian first name and Acholi name. In the absence of naming as a memorial trend, each inscribed instance of naming takes on a different form. Unlike the alphabetical listings seen elsewhere, Atiak, Lukodi and Burcoro all have lists that do not run alphabetically. Furthermore, some sites list the

Acholi name first, and others the Christian name. JRP's project on missing persons approached this issue by creating the list based on the date of disappearance, then adding the age of the person and the district of their residence when they disappeared.

The crosses and religious branding of mass graves, moreover, ensures that the dead are incorporated into a faith or developmental context. While this might offer some dignity in recognition, it does little to remember individuals who lost their lives. Furthermore, on the evenings before formal days of commemoration, some sites hold candlelight vigils and lay wreaths of imported flowers wrapped in plastic, A religious leader offers a prayer, and people return to their homes. For those sites near trading centres, the majority of residents go on with their evening shopping, drinking and socializing, with occasional dancing at nightclubs blaring their music loudly over the prayers (Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6
Lukodi mass grave site during the nightime prayers before commemoration day.

Such behaviour might seem inappropriate for venerating the dead. Yet the seeming lack of solidarity was explained to me by several informants as a simple "matter of fact" for two reasons: first, because many people don't want to remember, and second, because they

don't see the benefit thereof. Several people in trading centres who did not attend commemorative events explained that there was no inherent gain from remembering and no material outcomes for participating because they were not entitled to the benefits like the survivors are. For some individuals I interviewed, survivors have committees, village savings and loans associations, and other social groups tied to massacres and NGOs—thus without a direct link to the dead, one is not eligible to be a part of such organisations.

Outside of the memory-positive spaces of commemoration, Acholi residents perceive memory work as an intensely intimate process, with a cosmological dimension to the ways in which people, living and dead, have been violated in this region against all cultural norms. These examples show that performing the realities of what happened is not primarily aimed at rites for the dead, but useful instead for keeping the visibility and material needs of the living on the agenda of transitional justice. Public commemorations do not perform spiritual reintegration, nor do they dialogue about the truths of the past in a dynamic way. In fact, they are now one of the few places where political, spiritual, cultural and NGO leaders can amass large constituencies to adopt their most pressing causes—few of which are related to memory or memorial work. Ultimately, traumas such as the sexual violations (in Burcoro), forced displacement (in Pabbo) and chronic poverty (across the region) signal the need for repair in ways that are not an accepted part of mainstream memory projects.

**Between Victim and Entrepreneur**

This glimpse into memorial work in Northern Uganda has multiple insights for transitional justice scholars and practitioners. Atiak disrupts the core assumption of memorials as spaces of memory to be articulated by "ideal" victims and learned from by citizens. Lukodi is emblematic of

an alliance between TJ actors and memory positivists who seek solidarity and reparations under court-based identifications of harm. Burcoro showcases how memorialisation is challenged when lived experiences cannot be framed in neat narratives with archetypal perpetrators. Lastly, Pabbo occupies perhaps the most iconic space in local lived realities, but is sidelined for how it implicates impunity, to the point that its committee is now resigned to waiting for memorial intervention. Edmonson's (2018) insight on performing trauma in this region is useful for seeing how, in the above examples, "Specific silences reveal not only the domestication of empire but also the looming presence of the African state" (19). In this way, donors determine what can be remembered and the state constricts what cannot.

The evidence of memorial efforts shows that a needs-assessment or set of systematic indicators for development (that could otherwise inform avenues for post-war reconstruction) are not observed when it comes to symbolic harm. While a small survey in 2007 of a couple hundred people showed that 97 percent of the population in northern Uganda wanted memorials, the goal of those efforts was never outlined (Hopwood 2011). My interviews with leading TJ actors and donors supporting memorialisation shows that the recommendations made by Hamber, Ševčenko and Naidu (2010) to evaluate the short- and long-term goals of memorials are equally not recognised. Rather, the memorial work at these sites receives little to no evaluation, defaulting to the normative assumption of memory's capacity to heal and reconcile. From the examples provided above and over a dozen other site engagements, it is clear that TJ actors—who comprise lawyers, faith leaders, government officials and professional aid workers—participate in memory entrepreneurship as a way of remaining globally relevant with the assumption that the end result will be social transformation.

Within the normative concept of memorials or commemorations as equivalent to symbolic reparation, the fear remains that the absence of public memory induces forgetting, and lacking recognition, the truth will be lost. According to Clark, civil society work on memorialisation showcases the "danger of government and international actors dominating discussions about the conflict, amnesia about state perpetration of atrocities and the potential loss of memory in highly mobile and fragmented post-conflict communities" (Clark 2015, 12). Reiff (2016), moreover, concludes that forgetting is inevitable, and that societies are encouraged to recollect social trauma when it could be forgotten with the other host of experiences within a lifetime. Many of the people I worked with advocate for forgetting, but not due to a lack of truth: rather, this counter-advocacy is either a refusal to publicly articulate wrongs within the frame of NGOs and INGOs, or a recognition that annual commemorations are not the most appropriate mechanism for settling the harm done. Indeed, JRP's 2011 policy brief includes a clear statement of "pay us so we can forget" (McClain and Ngari 2011). In their document on reparations, JRP references consultations with war-affected Ugandans who cited the need for compensation, livelihoods support, mental care, education and acknowledgement. Put another way, as I have argued, remembering at massacre sites is about keeping the reparations agenda alive.

The imperative to remember in Northern Uganda through names etched in concrete and days written on calendars is only a faint glimpse of its proposed symbolic repair. Rather, this imperative should be read as a space for observing what Brown (2013) calls "vernacularised agendas" (282): a process of social and political "hijacking" of memory through commemorations disguised as symbolic reparations. As many scholars have argued, Acholi systems of symbolism and repair remain distant

from the normative systems of transitional justice (Allen and Macdonald 2013; Paine 2015); thus to assume symbolic reparations could take place through an externally-fashioned process should be further examined. That does not mean that memorial efforts are not welcomed, nor that people reject the social project of commemorations. But by considering the aesthetics, the alliances and the outcomes it becomes clear that advocacy memorials are a hybrid form of remembrance that invert the paradigm of "money-then-memory." Certain key experiences defy the representational realm of commemorations or memorials: experiences such as mass displacement, the loss of land, social and moral disruption, the trauma of missing persons, the unknown dead in the landscape, and more generally, the violations of cultural norms.

Contemporary advocates for TJ agree that victim-centred approaches are key to a healthy transition. So, too, have memorial practitioners come to support victim-centric curatorial approaches. Today, scholars debate how victimology has become a core part of historical narration at commemorative events, often defining a binary between official memory and counter-memory (Foucault 1980; Young 2003). In most commemorations scholars are now concerned with the notion of "ideal" victims, and how groups like los Madres di Plaza de Mayo or the Mothers of Srebrenica are easy anchor points for narrative generation around the particular violations that happened. Yet the commemorations in northern Uganda still struggle with the elevation and externalisation that is now expected in handling difficult pasts. The above examples reveal a confused notion of solidarity and victim orientation, illustrating appeals to international ideals while performing new modes of aid-based memorialisation. The commemorations (and lack thereof) at Atiak, Lukodi, Burcoro and Pabbo are ways to see emergent strategies for recognition well as the limits of NGO affirmations coded as symbolic

reparations.

**Solidarity and Assimilation**

For transitional justice to meaningfully engage the mechanism of symbolic reparations, it must recognise the inadequacy of tangible sites of memory, especially in contexts where the memories of violence refer to lived experiences beyond human rights violations as well as in contexts where people cope with harm in deeply intimate and spiritual ways. TJ actors, even if they are of the same cultural background as their survivor communities, seem to ignore well-documented Acholi cultural nuances (p'Bitek 1986; Finnström 2008; Anyeko et al. 2012). In returning annually to sites where the dead are settled, the commemorative spaces engage neither the spirits of the lingering dead nor the missing (Jhan and Wilhelm-Solomon 2015; Odoki 1997). The political, often generic speeches tend to constrain narratives rather than expand the space for survivor-based testimonials expressed in poetry and drama (Ocen 2017).

Currently, only a handful of civil society organisations drive the memory agenda in Northern Uganda, but their donor support is increasing. The global framework of TJ and the post-WWII memory boom provides a language and format for narrating past atrocities that is increasingly being adapted in Uganda. As one diplomatic donor put it to me, "We support this [memorials] because no one else is. And because we can't repair all the other problems… At least with these events [commemorations] people feel recognised."[64] Yet the question remains: is this recognition for survivors, or for the official desire for solidarity within international norms?

While civil society and academia alike have been working to systematically document human rights violations, it is the public

64. Anonymous (Democratic Governance Facility representative) in discussion with the author, July 2015.

demonstration of trauma, codified into these international norms, that creates a snowball effect for visibility. The impacts of memorial efforts are found not just in terms of "who gets what" but also in who contributes to a national discourse on reparations. Memorial sites like Ombachi in West Nile, for example, have gained traction and visibility in their patterning of commemoration after the events in Acholiland. Similarly, my research in Luwero has also highlighted a comparative dissatisfaction with reparations, citing development efforts in Gulu and its surroundings as a point of contention. What some residents in Luwero explained—residents who lived near the mass graves—is that though their war ended more than thirty years ago and supported the current ruling power, they have still not been compensated or given inputs into development seen in Gulu. This means that other regions see the advocacy memorials working both to bring development and to keep the imprint of atrocity on the minds of donors. The danger is thus that the survivors of war are reduced to no more than participatory agents in the empire of trauma, namely, the exercise in solidarity outlined by the universalising tenets of human rights and big-donor principles. These principles are clearly described by the UN General Assembly, which proclaimed that representatives are "Convinced that, in adopting a victim-oriented perspective, the international community affirms its human solidarity with victims" (2015).

**Conclusions**

At the bare minimum, symbolic reparations work requires an engagement with both the aesthetic and the forgetting part of the memory equation. To blindly borrow and reinvent museums or memorial sites without consultation results in a kind of peacebuilding co-optation and assimilation. However, the thousands of citizens who participate in commemorations are not naive to the negotiations at play, often participating based on their level of connection to the atrocity event or

their literacy in the dynamics of aid. This is not to say that recognition is not symbolically important, but the fatigue that accompanies annual prayers and the frustration of non-recognition continue to illuminate the underlying issue of material reparations. Despite this illumination, the transitional justice alliance still remains optimistic that the underlying issue to memorial apathy is merely a matter of funding—holding that the problem is not the *type* of sites or events but the *number*, that they are too few or too infrequent.

Using transitional justice as the inroad for this analysis has shown how the people initiating and participating in commemorations are part of a transnational network that does not adequately understand the symbolic needs of social repair. Only if we listen deeply to the responses coming from those who attend commemorations, those involved in memorial activities, and those who have survived atrocities, will we truly begin to assess the harm done, much less recognise the negative impacts of a homogenizing narrative of development in post-war efforts. Granted, advocating for a redistribution of wealth and a recognition of the economic and spiritual harm done during war results in a complex entanglement of material and symbolic reparations—a complexity that cannot be neatly unravelled into a single maxim or approach (Waldroff 2012). Advocacy undertaken through symbolic spaces is subtle, and often performative in nature, but should nonetheless be seen as a meaningful way to think through how scholars and practitioners alike should conceptualise symbolic repair.

In public commemorations, in order to be seen, survivors are expected to be adaptable enough to speak to local, national and international conceptions of victimhood. Audiences listen while cultural and spiritual leaders give credence to the experience of survival by acknowledging the struggles of victims. Local government officials

express sympathy for the plight of pain that traumatic pasts carry. When time permits, testimonies of the massacre and the struggles for survival in its aftermath are recounted. Survivor committees wear branded t-shirts that mark the days of commemoration with slogans written in English. Survivors wait their turn to share in the meal, after the elites and aid organisation representatives.

Beyond the public performances at commemorations are other issues. Survivor groups sometimes address these through *bol cup* (a type of village savings and loans) to support each other. Concerns over disappearance, dispossession of culture and issues of land and displacement are just as relevant as the resilience celebrated in places like Pabbo. At present, the contemporary forms of commemoration in the LRA-UPDF context are styled primarily to suit the donor gaze on victimhood, as well as for elites to employ these arenas as political stages. Ironically, the choreographed performances do seem to keep survivors on the aid agenda, and thus demonstrate a unique kind of "transitional justice from below." Survivors and committees at memorial sites call for remembrance in part because they do not want the agenda of material reparations to go away—indeed, payment for suffering, especially suffering caused by the NRA or UPDF, would be a symbolic moment of recognition few Ugandans can currently imagine in their lifetime.

## ESSAY FOUR

## RESISTING THE RECORD: MEMORIAL LANDSCAPES AND ORAL HISTORIES OF RWENZURURU

***CO-AUTHORED BY WILSON BWAMBALE***

### Introduction

In June 2020, the Ugandan police arrested musician Jolly Kahyanda and charged him with defamation relating to a song he sung as part of an election campaign. This is the most recent in a set of warnings, and in some cases acts of violence, against culture in the Rwenzori region. The people of the Rwenzori region are seen as a threat to the ruling National Resistance Movement's power, with a long historical component to this cultural and political rift. As this paper demonstrates, the use of oral culture by the residents of the Rwenzori region to articulate dissatisfaction has been rooted in the struggles for self-determination since 1919. Significantly, this manifested in a violent clash between the Obusinga bwa Rwenzururu/Kingdom of Rwenzururu (ObR) and the Government of Uganda (GoU) in 2016 that resulted in the deaths of hundreds and a submission by Rwenzori allies to the International Criminal Court for investigations into crimes against humanity (Nuwahereza 2020).[65] As this essay shows, works of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, as they relate to conflict memories, have been vital to establishing a heritage for the Bakonzo people, a heritage that has been characterised by its ongoing Rwenzururu struggles.

There are two aspects of Rwenzururu heritage that are necessary to analyse in our efforts to clarify Rwenzururu as more than a weaponisation of culture. The first component of heritage is through the transmission of histories of conflict and resistance through oral

65. Tom Stacey (Journalist) in discussion with the author, September 2017.

culture, and the second is the places of memory across the mountain range. Music, drama and poetry have been central to the transmission of struggle sentiments amongst the Rwenzururu people and their liberation movement, constituting a kind of oral literature. In our reading of the region's heritage, oral literature indicates a series of guides to understanding cultural memory, unpacking how resistance has been mobilised, demobilised, held sway, dissolved and gained recent resurgence. As we demonstrate below, the post-2016 violence between Obusinga bwa Rwenzururu and the Government of Uganda that resulted in the estimated deaths of more than 200 people has triggered oral literature harking back to the roots of violence when colonialists hung three resistance leaders in 1921. Taboos around mass graves, desecration of key leadership and the spirit to maintain resistance are all themes that encircle such messaging. However, these materials have only been documented by a handful of scholars, and nothing more recent than the 1960s (Alnaes 1969, 1995; Cooke and Doornbos 1982; Facci 2009). Furthermore, no scholars working in the region have analysed how sites of memory and landscapes of remembrance create a mutually-informing relationship between the intangible heritage (oral literature) and the spatial resonance of conflict pasts.

Through ethnographic research, this paper discusses the symbols, themes and mechanisms of transmission around one of Uganda's oldest conflicts. We break down the eras of oral traditions with a chronology of storytelling while analysing the symbolic and political references that thread throughout time and space. Our work in documenting and synthesising more than fifty pieces of resistance history is part of an attempt to understand the logics for maintaining resistance as well as the sentiments of contentment as they have manifested in times of peace. Linking the tangible sites of conflict and intangible heritage of oral history

informs how memory is kept as well as transmitted. These are vital pieces to what Pennacini (2008) called the "ethnic puzzle" that has been pervasive in the region.

This paper highlights six key eras when conflict marked the making of Rwenzururu heritage. Within each era are a series of events that come to define both the sites of memory in the landscape and the oral traditions that enshrine the events into collective memory. Together, we analyse the meaning of oral phrases, their durability over time, and their linkages to sites of memory to reveal a distinct conflict heritage. The key eras of history that are discussed are not meant to be comprehensive, rather we have isolated particular events that have been shared in personal life histories chronicled by oral historians of the region. These events are often repeated in oral literature and are anchored by memorial sites. As a result, we aim to tell a story of a place and a collective memory as it is expressed through the spatial and oral discourses of the region, reflecting both the elite and everyday manifestations of culture. The descriptions are informed by our own work in literature and curation that give us particular methodological tools that make this contribution unique.

In tracing the history of the Rwenzururu, this case study shows how, in the last century, historical struggles for self-determination can be folded into cultural identity. It does so by analysing both the spacial resonance of memorials across the Rwenzori Mountain region and the mode of oral transmission embedded in remembrance. The paper argues furthermore for a reframing of the "Rwenzururu Struggle" as a making of Bakonzo heritage. This heritage has formed around the instigation and responses to struggles rather than an ongoing and sporadic set of violent battles. Both have informed the political economy approaches to understandings of Rwenzururu. We posit that underneath

the varied conflict moments there is a localised and everyday form of remembrance that can only be understood with a dual reading of the landscape and the oral literature. For example, in 2002, Chance Kahindo used the historical proverb "*olhumbi situsasi nganakya*" in his songs, meaning: "there is thick mist from the heavy rain and we don't know whether there will be daybreak."[66] In this way, the memorial landscapes and the oral traditions maintain the transmission of memory that has supported the building, changing and transformation of Bakonzo heritage. However, sites also become battlegrounds for state actors to prohibit cultural practices and remembrance. As a result there is an intergenerational tension between remembering and forgetting fused to historical violence and expressed in contemporary remixing of memorial heritage.

Further analysis of the social, cultural and political dynamics of conflict in the borderland that makes up the Rwenzori region is important for multiple reasons. First, the unrest that has characterised this borderland has impacts on the populations within both Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, creating a destabilised zone. Second, the social ruptures that manifest as violence have been attributed to colonial and post-colonial resistance movements, but the connections to ethnonationalism are under-theorised, leaving a murky realm of causal inferences that do not take into account the range of cultural and historical factors influencing moments of social upheaval (Syahuka-Muhindo and Titeca 2016; Reuss and Titeca 2017b). Lastly, there is a continual reinvention of tribal identities to suit particular social and political conditions (Sseremba 2019).

The backdrop of our investigation recognises that scholars have deconstructed categories of ethnicity, yet the colonial identification

66. In discussion with the authors, April 2018.

of peoples into governable tribal categories retains deep legacies. As a result, there are gaps in understandings around the social realities which underlie but interact with the making of post-independence heterogeneous nations. In the context of Uganda, the colonial legacy is often reflected in the ways scholars focus on cultural issues, such as the social complexities of power in Buganda and the warring characteristics of the Acholi, thus following the governance (Buganda) and military (Acholi) divisions developed by the British. It is then unsurprising that peoples such as the Bakonzo and Bamba who have fought for self-determination outside of colonial classification under the Batoro are less represented in the literature, even if their struggle histories predate and surpass other cases. This article adds to the debates around cultural exceptionalism through a historical and cultural approach to understanding tensions in the Rwenzori region of western Uganda, and specifically with the self-identified Bakonzo peoples.

**Background to the Case Study**

This section will introduce the context of the case study and some of the issues we set out to investigate. A fuller historical background appears in later sections, accompanying the evidence from our research. The Rwenzururu Struggle refers to a movement by the self-identified Bakonzo and their kinsmen Banande who live in the borderlands of the Rwenzori Mountains between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Figure 4.1). In the early part of the Struggle, the Bamba were also included in this effort for self-determination and representation. It is at this time that the term Yiira also became popularised as a collective term to embrace the different, but connected, ethnic communities under the same opposition to the British and Batoro rule.[67] The leaders of this struggle trace their political lineage

67. The agreement between the Batoro leadership, first with the British East African Company of 1891 and later the British Protectorate and the Toro kingdom, was signed

back to a historical subjugation by the colonial British Empire, which sought to include them as subjects to the Batoro in the strategy of divide-and-rule. Different formations and fractures have also produced a range of terminologies to describe the social, cultural and political groups, such as the Yiira State, the Rwenzururu Struggle, The Struggle, the Yiira Rebellion, Obusinga bwa Rwenzururu, Obusinga bwa Bamba, the Bakonzo, the Bamba and the Banande, including new attempts to trace social and state formations stemming from pre-colonial configurations (Tshima 2020).

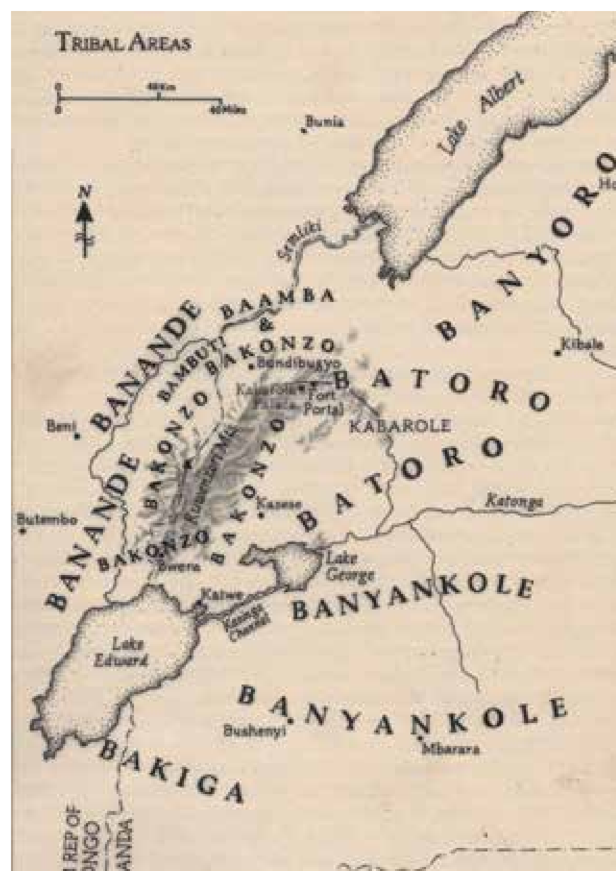



Figure 4.1
“Tribal” area map from Tom Stacey’s book “Tribe”.

Over 100 years, different moments of violence have erupted and different political settlements have been attempted. Within this history there has been a strong effort to define the Bakonzo as a distinct “tribe” (Stacey 2003). Scholars have also looked into the political dimensions

in the same year as the 1900 Buganda Agreement, but is much less referenced or written about.

of cultural power whereby inhabitants of the Rwenzori region clearly articulate alliances as well as ethnically-associated targets (Syahuka-Muhindo and Titeca 2016; Rubongoya 1995; Pennacini 2008). Sseremba (2019) describes the ideal "three tribe solution" of Batooro, Bakonzo and Bamba that includes the Ugandan state's recognition of ethnic communities as well as a desire to divorce the cultural from the political.

From 1919 to date, different forms of Rwenzururu have existed, with their defining moment coming when Isaya Mukirane led the movement as the cultural king and political president (1952-1964). Isaya and his comrades sought to document Bakonzo culture as distinct from Toro through the Bakonzo Life History Society (Stacey 2003). Cultural knowledge and histories were consolidated into church and educational structures, as well as performed during weddings, funerals, rituals and rites of passage. People relied on the oral mode of transmission to inform young people of their culture and to instil an ideology of self-determination.[68] Oral transmission was also practical for three primary reasons: the low literacy amongst the population, the continued displacement and the lack of publication outlets for their documentation efforts. As one chronicler said, "the record was kept in the heart so that no ruthless operatives would destroy it".[69]

Scholars have been able to document some of the oral culture in their efforts to understand the Rwenzori region. Alnaes (1995) and Cooke and Doornboss (1982) have documented the "rebel" and "protest" elements of the struggle during the 1960s. Facci (2009) has worked specifically on songs and their relationship to the natural landscape. These scholarly contributions inspire our work and allow us to build a contemporary commentary. Furthermore, our research advances these

68. School Banda (Rwenzururu teacher and oral historian) in discussion with the authors, April 2018.

69. Anonymous (Rwenzururu ex-combatant) in discussion with the authors, March 2017.

efforts at documentation by looking at the memory and memorial functions of the oral cultures over time, rather than just their role in rebel or identity formation. Importantly, our contribution is novel because it links the oral literature to the spatial sites of memory, an undertaking which no scholars to date have attempted.

The 2009 recognition of the ObR supported a significant revival or reinvention of culture overseen by the ridge leaders. In total, 104 sites were identified across the mountains of Uganda, with the intention of additional sites to be identified in DRC.[70] Many of these sites are valued within the traditional knowledge systems of healing and refuge during battles of the first and second wave of Rwenzururu struggles. They were also managed by kingdom governance structures that were defined by the first leadership of Isaya Mukirane.[71]

These cultural affirmations created a decentralised approach to recognition. However, a continued support for sub-county cultural leadership showcased a cultural modernity that further fostered the "rebel" characterisation of ridge leaders. Our research shows that many of the ridge leaders are former Rwenzururu combatants or patrilineal dependents of high-level fighters within the historical rebellion. It is possible that this division of modernity and tradition is in partly hinged on the biography of Isaya's son, King Mumbere, who himself is a diaspora-informed and town-based leader, unlike his father Isaya who insisted on leadership from within the mountains and relied on ridge leaders as the confidants. Divisions of modern leadership and "traditional" would come back to haunt the ObR when, following the 2016 attack on the palace, the cultural sites supported by the ridge leaders came under surveillance and occasional attack. Fractured reconstruction is not unique to Rwenzururu as it was also experienced by Ker Kwaro Acholi who went so

70. Anonymous (Ridge Leader) in discussion with the authors, January 2018.
71. See Kasifr 2018, for a discussion on rebel governance in Uganda.

far as to fashion the cultural revival in the form of an NGO (Paine 2015).

The instability of the Rwenzori region has resulted from more than just the persistence of Rwenzururu, further impacted by the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU) that emerged in the 1980s, and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) that developed in the 1990s and are still reportedly active in the DRC at the time of this writing (Aljazeera August 2020). Interethnic conflicts over land have also continued, with what is commonly called the "Basongora land wrangles" (Basiime, Ninsiima and Kahungu 2012), as well as from the division between Bakonzo and Bamba and the further marginalisation of the Batwa who also inhabit the Rwenzori region. This is all in the context of the development of Rwenzori Mountains National Park (gazetted in 1991) and World Heritage Site (listed in 1994) that demarcated much of the borderland mountain range for natural conservation. These issues are all operating in an ambiguous border zone that makes up the two-state frontier.

Our contribution brings together oral literature of the region to develop an analysis of memory amidst violence. Several scholars have tried to make sense of the Rwenzururu struggle, marking a return to this analysis after the 2014 and 2016 clashes with the Government of Uganda that, in 2016, resulted in more than 150 people killed and 139 imprisoned (Human Rights Watch 2018). However, much of the work depicts an elite bargaining process, first between Isaya Mukirane and President Obote, then his son Charles Wesley Mumbere and President Museveni (Syahuka-Muhindo and Titeca 2016). Our analysis compliments this scholarship by recognising the role of memory in defining historical struggles. Our evidence is derived from the keepers of oral and landscape knowledge, such as poets, musicians, elders, ridge leaders, lower-level local councillors, religious leaders and residents who live near memorial

sites. This approach is useful for looking at the everydayness of conflict histories, found in oral literature and sites of memory.

**Methodology**

Our approach is informed by evidence found in the tangible heritage of memorial sites and the intangible heritage of oral history. We have been working together since 2013 when we collaborated on an exhibition about war, peace and reconciliation. In 2017 we reconvened in a research capacity to make sense of the recurring violence that erupted in November of 2016. Between 2017-2019 we conducted life history and semi-structured interviews with ex-combatants, cultural producers and wildlife authorities, as well as held casual and observational conversations with friends, family members and colleagues working in and around the region. The growing research archive includes the documentation of fifty-three songs, proverbs and stories and twelve key memory sites.

The research was conducted in Lukonzo, English and Kiswahili across three districts of Kasese, Fort Portal and Bundibugyo. Most of the respondents have been men in part because they are typically tasked to be the chroniclers of history. That said, we acknowledge the role of women as ex-combatants and singers of memory at intimate burials, and have included female perspectives as much as possible. Archival records were used to compliment the data from respondents. These archives are held in personal archives of respondents and historical archives from the district records held at Mountains of the Moon University. Our interview process took the approach of *embitha*—understood as a sense of unity and privacy for which culture, politics and history circulates.

Researching the memory of conflict in a region with such recent unrest has been challenging. It is for this reason that we took a slow

approach, rotating in and out of research with irregularity. We also tried to meet most people for interviews within their home or village setting, rather than operating in Kasese or Bundibugyo towns. This approach was devised to protect the anonymity of our contributors, especially given that the authors of this piece are known to work on conflict-related issues and one of them is a white foreigner who could draw attention in already heavily-monitored region. As Tshimba (2020) reflects, being a Ugandan researching these topics can also get you detained for "spying." Surveillance was not always covert, in fact, during the research, military tanks regularly patrolled the town of Kasese, holding permanent guard at some of the key cultural sites.

Our attempts to do more landscape-based biographies were not fully realised, primarily due to the securitisation of the region that made certain sites inaccessible.[72] For example the site of Bulemba where the former Rwenzururu king is buried had been barred from access from 2016-2018. Similarly, the burial site at Kagando was guarded by Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) troops for the majority of the time we were conducting research. Given our previous research and embedded relationships, we still have data regarding these sites predating 2016, and have been able to do auxiliary interviews that reference memory in the landscape—for example, at Kiwa Heritage Site, Kilembe Mines, and surrounding Kagando and Bulemba. However, the landscape investigations were constrained by the security situation at the time of research, in which *eriririmbo* (symbolic graves) became occupied by military guards.

Working with oral literature, archives and place-based investigations helps to develop a biographical narrative of the region.

72. Heritage scholars have advocated for a "biography of place" approach to examining the histories of war. This methodology investigates sites related to war can have meaning that transforms over time and is interpreted by different people who know that past (Sørensen and Viejo Rose eds. 2015).

Using these forms of evidence, a spatial and temporal story can be loosely tied together in "eras of memory." While the political and historical readings of Rwenzururu often hinge on dates and events, we try to develop the biography in the way our respondents have expressed it, contextualising those expressions based on scholarly, archival and media sources. As we elaborate below, there is an enmeshed relationship whereby the oral literature informs the site of memory and the site of memory informs the oral literature. The result is a contemporary reflection on more than 100 years of heritage in the making.

**The First Era - Violence and Oppression**

The oral literature in this first era is characterised by lyrical pieces that call on people never to forget the Abayora rebellion from 1919-1921. During this time Tibamwenda, Nyamutswa and Kapoli—all Konzo leaders—led a protest against the selective levy of poll and hut tax only on Bakonzo and Bamba. Batooro, who administered the area on behalf of the British Empire, were exempted from the tax. For their protest, the trio was sentenced to death by hanging by the colonial government of the time. After their execution, they were also buried in one grave at Kagando in today's Kasese district. To hang and bury leaders in a mass grave was the greatest abomination done to a community. This is reflected in the song known as *twalirire* (we wept). Its chorus says:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Twalirire, twalirire, twalirire* | *We wept, we wept, we wept* |
| *Bayiira twalirire,* | *We have wept Bayiira,* |
| *Bayiira twalirire* | *We have wept Bayiira.* |
| *Kwenene twalirire.* | *We wept together.* |

Within this chorus is the proverb "*Eki kyasabulha mukulu ibulya*", that has recurred throughout this research. The direct translation is "This will fail to get elder[s] to ask", but in context it means the sentiment is beyond narrative, or unspeakable. In this context the unspeakable reality is that the land and the culture had been desecrated through the taboo of burial in a mass grave, and as a result needed cultural cleansing.

In tangible form, at the site of Kagando where the three are buried, a shrine was set up, marking the oldest site of conflict-memory known to Rwenzururu resistance heritage. It is recognised both by the Kingdom of Rwenzururu and the Government of Uganda. The original marker that signified the hanging was a tree, and today there is a concrete tombstone with an obelisk and an epigraph (Figure 4.2). It was laid on 8 October 1997 by the Kasese District Council. The placard reads:

*Herein lies the remains of three great heroes. Tibamwenda the chieftain, Nyamutswa the medicine man and Kapooli the trumpeter, who were hanged and buried in this spot on April 1921.*

Figure 4.2
Memorial site of Kagando.

The significance of the site marks both the importance of the sub-region and the beginning, in 1919, of the Rwenzururu movement for liberation from the colonially-designed and Toro-imposed taxation without representation. According to the Speaker of the Rwenzururu Kingdom

(2013), "To bury three people in one grave is to show that they didn't give any regard to the people's culture. So it was another way of telling you, 'you are defeated'".[73]

Figure 4.3
Part of Kiwa Heritage Site

The people refused defeat, however, and followed the advice of Nyamutswa—the medicine man—to resist through procreation. He had been known to lay hands on women to produce twins and proliferate the population. Oral histories say that he concocted a fecundity potion on a particular stone that now bears his name, *aribwe lay Nyamutswa* (Nyamutswa stone). People still seek out fertility rituals at this site in Nyamusule, in today's Mahango sub-county. The contemporary site of Kiwa Heritage and hot springs, discussed in more detail later, is in the same vicinity of *aribwe lay Nyamutswa* (Figure 4.3).

Later, in 1947, another protest formed when ridge leaders rose up against salt and food caravans and the selective collection of food items to feed Toro chiefs. The movement was also initiated by three ridge leaders, Walina, Musangabu and Muyikara, who demanded that schools and hospitals be built within Konzo areas that were producing the wealth. Just like the 1921 response, the rebellion was met with executions: eleven protestors were killed and buried in a mass grave at Kituti in present-day Karambi sub-county.

73. Enock Muhindo (former Speaker of the Kingdom of Rwenzururu) in discussion with Blackmore, April 2013.

There is a lamenting song that recalls this tragic time. The chorus of a song repeats:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Ithwe bayiira thukalira x 2* | *We the bayiira people* |
| *Abasathu;* | *shall always mourn the* |
| *Walina, Musangabu na* | *three;* |
| *Muyikara* | *Walina, Musangabu and* |
| *Syo syanga bere nduhi* | *Muyikara.* |
| *Syabyiira….iyo* | *Pillars of Yiira heritage* |
| *Thwabere thuthi ithwe* | *What has become of us* |
| *bayira* | *Yiira?* |
| *Thwabiri'kwa* | *We are doomed* |

Still bearing living memory of the 1921 hanging and fear of widespread persecution, the widows and children of the slain 1947 leaders saw this impending doom and all fled. They went to Ibathama in the Belgian Congo, now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. With the family relocated, and the prohibition of a memorial or culturally-relevant burial because the killings had happened on Toro territory, there was a fear from survivors that the memory would be lost.[74] To resist oblivion, then, the children born out of these times are given specific names, like Makisimu that signifies the iconic Maxim gun of British power and colonial-era death. It was thought that children would inquire about the meaning of their names, and be reminded of the struggle that had birthed them. Naming in this way is a form of encoding information as a cultural ritual related to identity and time.

**The Second Era - Resistance and Formation**

In the 1950s and 1960s the resistance took on a new form and new leadership. Again, three leaders emerged, Kawamara, Isaya and

74. Anonymous (Rwenzururu ex-combatant) in discussion with Bwambale, March 2017.

Mupalya. The leaders used orality as a tool for expanding the movement and entrenching an ideology of liberation. As pointed out by Alnaes (1969) and Doornbos (1982), protest songs became central to this era of struggle. This oral literature is more gallant in form, calling upon men and women to take courage. The songs encourage young men to make spears, and for women to collect stones for the men to throw at the enemy as they ascend the mountain territory they sought to protect. The oral literature also gives praise to the cosmos and the mountain that is their God—and thus their right to the mountain. The iconic "*omokobo*" (war dance) is also thought to have emerged in this time. In one song the chroniclers define their cause.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Isaya Na Kawamaara<br>Mubalwa Balwira<br>Ekihugho kya Bakonzo na Bamba ee<br>Kyakihugho babya bathuhere* | *Isaya and Kawamara<br>fought and fought.<br>They were fighting for a land, a region, a country<br>The country for Bakonzo and Bamba<br>It was the country that was given to us* |

In the minds of the leaders the fighting was justified because Bakonzo and Bamba were the owners of the land, and held distinct cultural traits that defined them outside the Toro administration. As noted above, to increase their recognition they created the Bakonzo Life History Research Society (BLHRS). As part of rallying collaborators around past memories, Isaya held a meeting at the significant site of Nyamutswa. He also worked, in his self-appointed position as president, to create new sites of significance that would unify people across the national divides between Uganda and Zaire.

It is at this time that we are told the Rwenzururu anthem[75] was born. It recites:

*Rwenzururu wethu*
*Rwenzururu wethu*
*Rwenzururu wethu omulirirwa*
*(Wayirehi?)*
*Thukabya thwama*
*kusamalira*
*(ngoko wabya)*
*Emisoni iya tsububuka*

*Our Rwenzururu our*
*Rwenzururu*
*Our Rwenzururu (where did*
*you go?)*
*When we look at you how*
*you used to be*
*Tears roll down*

*Omubughe wethu*
*omubughe wethu*
*Omubughe wethu w'olukeri*
*(wayirehe)*
*Hatya aburihindu*
*(m'olhuhyana)*
*Omwatsi abere Makuru*

*Our language our language*
*Our polite language (where*
*did you go?)*
*Now you have turned into*
*luhyana (Toro)*
*What used to be omwatsi*
*(Lukonzo) is now amakulhu*
*(Lutooro)*

The first version of the anthem shows a lamentation for cultural destruction through the assimilation of language. As we discuss below, the anthem has transformed over time to reflect the political mood of the time.

As the cultural documentation and transmission gained momentum, Rwenzururu leaders sought to increase their cultural influence and their place in mainstream Ugandan politics. The BLHRS selected and proposed candidates for local council representation and Parliamentary elections. As reflected in the anthem, one of the main platforms was the insistence on education in Lukonzo and Luamba (Stacey 2003; Rubongoya 1995). So too was the site of Bulemba

75. School Banda (Rwenzururu teacher and oral historian) in discussion with the authors, April 2018.

designated as an anchor point for the movement.

According to Sseremba (2019), these forms of signification modelled the new incarnation of cultural alliances in the form of a recognisable kingdom that would mimic the colonial expectations of tribal representation. This logic follows that in fashioning the culture as a distinct tribe, then, the Bakonzo would have grounds to not only divide from Toro rule but create an ethnonationalist movement. However, our work on oral literature shows that while an anthem might be a way to centralise power, the everyday sentiments and remembrance amongst elders of these songs is less of an invention of tradition than an endurance of memory. Similarly, the site of Bulemba offered a political meeting ground as well as a safe space for cultural learning and, later, memorial pilgrimage.

The rising support for the Rwenzururu resistance was met with harsh reprisal from both the colonial military (King's African Rifles) and the Toro. After their walk-out and declaration of independence in July 1962, Isaya Mukirane, Yeremiya Kawamara and Peter Mupalya, the leaders of the movement, were arrested. They were remanded to Katoojo prison and latter Lubiri prison in Kampala. Experiences of this era of tension and sites of refuge are critical to this defining moment for the memory of the struggle.

In 1965, on the day of the third anniversary of the declaration of independence, the Rwenzururu tactical headquarters and capital was officially designated in Bulemba. Isaya also established the parliament (house of representatives) *ekyaghanda*, and the army and police force commanded by Atanasi Masereka (as CDF) and John Muhimba, respectively. The site of Bulemba, founded as a base and royal home for the Rwenzururu, was suitable for three strategic reasons. First, it had misty hideouts and caves that would be difficult for the Ugandan troops

to access, thus allowing time for the young state to take shape. Second, the land was owned by the *bahiira* clan (guinea fowl totem) landlords who would not only allocate land to the kingdom but would keep Isaya, a fellow *muhiira*, safe from attack being bound by one *hiira* blood. The shared *bahiira* clanship would go on to be an anchoring point for the movement with geographical significance rooted in their ancestral territories. Last, Bulemba easily connected to Bundibugyo (Isaya's home) and second bases in Zaire without having to come into danger with the Uganda forces. It was a strategic junction.

On 31 August 1966, Isaya delivered a kingdom address in their parliament and intoned that he was feeling out of character in his health and that he would go for a lengthy journey. He called upon the appointed leaders, including School Banda, the teacher and caretaker of the Mumbere, to be firm because he was not going to be with them for some time. He died two days later on 2 September 1966. After Isaya's death, bomb attacks from Ugandan government soldiers intensified. According to oral histories, the local people who were familiar with mountain terrain guided GoU forces to Rwenzururu hideouts. Most notorious was the Uganda army guide, Bigasaki Gulyerimo, who led the Ugandan troops to Bulemba and ransacked the second most prominent Rwenzururu palace, laying the place to ruins. At that time, GoU troops encamped in Bubotyo, a hill overlooking Bulemba, making it impossible for the young kingdom to operate.

The surveillance and suspicious death of Isaya entrenched a sentiment of distrust. Under these circumstances, Mumbere, Isaya's first son, was coronated on 19 October 1966, and the palace shifted to Ngwekwe. This newly designated site in Kitholhu sub-county on the next ridge, was higher up west and closer to the DRC border. On 22 May 1968, at Nkwekwe, the young nation made an attempt to petition the

Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to recognise the kingdom/state. The recognition team was led by Yoweri Nziabake, the kingdom's Minister of Justice. The attempt turned unsuccessful, as the trio delegates were arrested at Kanombe airport in Rwanda, en route to Addis Ababa.[76]

On 30 May 1969, another severe assault on the Nkwekwe camp claimed the life of the then-Prime Minister (and regent of the young kingdom) Yohana Mwambalha Chiusi. With a thirteen-year-old heir, the kingdom became too vulnerable to stay in the area anymore. Thus in 1970 the kingdom shifted to Kahindangoma, deeper in the misty heights fifty miles away in present Kisinga sub-county, further east into the mountains where there would be less betrayal from locals and more support from allies on the Zaire side of the border.

The continued displacement and combat sentiments were chronicled by a woman fighter named Biira, now 80 years old, who sang[77]:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Enyuma bithwe iyiri bindi* | *Behind mountains are other mountains* |
| *Rwenzururu yini muhesa amathumu* | *Rwenzururu is making spears* |
| *Rwenzururu Wayire hayi?* | *Rwenzururu Where did you go?* |
| *Enyuma bitwe iyiri bindi* | *Behind mountains are other mountains.* |

This moment in time is central to the landscape histories of the region, anchored by Bulemba. The significance for Bulemba goes beyond the fact that it is a royal ground where the first king is buried (Figure 4.4), and where the current king was crowned and installed in his

76. Yoweri Nziabake (former ObR Minister of Justice) in discussion with Bwambale, March 2018.

77. Biira (Second era Rwenzururu combatant) life history with the authors, April 2018.

father's royal seat: rather, it is because of the movement and migration of ideas and key people that defined this era of struggle. In this way, Bulemba is the home where the Rwenzururu nation took shape as an institution with all its state structures. One oral historian described it as " the symbol of resilience, tribal secrecy and a cultural sacred grove" still holds significance.[78]

Figure4.4
Isaya's grave at the site of Bulemba.

**The Third Era - Political Recognition and Transition**

After the Rwenzururu heritage began take shape, and its cultural aspects had been fused with its political ideology, its oral literature became more formal. Significant memories found in the oral literature started to reflect more overtly political references to history. Songs increasingly celebrated moments of recognition and progress, while expanding the notion of the enemy from Toro/British rule to presidential rule after Uganda's independence in 1962. Our research has shown that memory from this era changes from having mostly Rwenzururu leaders as key figures, to national leaders as newly-introduced characters.

One significant figure in this era is Idi Amin (often referred as Dada). He is featured because after overthrowing Milton Obote's regime in 1971, he sought out strategies to gain legitimacy across the country. One aspect of this was to create two distinct districts in 1974, Kasese for the Bakonzo and Bundibugyo for the Bamba, a significant victory in

78. Rwenzururu chronicler In discussion with the authors, July 2017.

the struggle for self-determination. A praise song was written to thank Dawudi Muhindo Isebiira, who negotiated for the new district status.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Ekihugho kyabiri asa eee* | *The nation has come* |
| *Kyalethirwe omwami Dawudi eee* | *It has been brought by Dawudi* |
| *President abiribugha eeee* | *The president has said* |
| *Athi abakonzo thughende embere eee* | *That Bakonzo, we should go ahead* |

Another praise poem emerged when Amin supported Lukonzo language, something that had been a tool of colonial oppression (Rubongoya 2009). In this poem, women chant and call on Amin to be their saviour after such long suffering:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Asa wundekeraye asa wundekraye Dada* | *Come save me Dada* |
| *Asa wundekeraye asa wundekeraye Dada* | *Come save me Dada* |
| *Ekiro Dada ee amalya obukama Dada* | *The day Dada reigns, the day Dada reigns* |
| *omukonzo amabughira oko kinimba Dada* | *Omukonzo spoke on radio* |
| *Amin da wulye obukama Dada* | *Reign, reign Dada* |
| | *Reign, reign Dada* |
| *Mukama Dada* | *Forever Dada you are king.* |

This important excerpt from the poem shows that Idi Amin is considered somewhat of a hero (a king) to the Bakonzo because he recognised the uniqueness of Bakonzo culture in its language. In a small but significant gesture, Amin included a Lukonzo segment on national

radio: the excerpt refers to 1975 when Bwana (Bukyanakasi) Kighoma was given radio airtime, and the victory of news in the Lukonjo language was read to the masses.

As time progressed and Idi Amin's troops were forced to flee from the incoming Tanzanians (1978-79), the Bakonzo returned to their posts of guard. By 1980 the dormant but present ridge leaders had acquired guns from Amin's soldiers who were fleeing into Zaire through the Rwenzori Mountains. At that time the new Obote II government did not see Rwenzururu as a priority and granted a degree of freedom to the self-determined rural state. It was at that time that Charles Mumbere commanded a Rwenzururu force to attack and annex one county from Toro, Bunyangabu—which today is still considered Rwenzururu land that was never included in the Kasese district that Amin had demarcated in 1974.

As the song goes:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Bunyangabu muyahambwa Rwenzururu* | *Bunyangabu was conquered by Rwenzururu* |
| *Omukama mwahulikya obuthoki* | *The king unleased force* |
| *Erilwa kera basangawa isibali'owa* | *From long ago they were disobedient* |
| *Obutsemee Iremangoma oyee* | *So much gladness Iremangoma hurray* |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Solo; omutooro abya iniabiri thulyathako* | *Solo; a mutooro had stepped on us* |
| *Lero hathya nethu lino thuli bandu* | *This time now we are also people* |
| *Lilhwa kera thwasangawa ithuli nyumu* | *From long ago we were ants* |
| *Obutseme Iremangoma oyee* | *Gladness our King hurray!* |

With the coming of Obote's second term in 1980, the Rwenzururu were still armed, but were encouraged to surrender. Oral histories tell of chroniclers using songs and proverbs to encourage peace and prosperity. Political leadership of men from the region also brought promise that the Rwenzururu issues would extend from regional disputes into national debates.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Aba member be parliament* | *You members of parliament,* |
| *na DC we Kasese* | *District Commissioner, King* |
| *Iremangoma Rwenzururu* | *of Rwenzururu* |
| *thuwathinaye…* | *Work together* |
| *Ithwe thuli ne bitsange* | *We are very happy* |
| *Abanya Kasese boosi* | *All Kasese people* |
| *kandi Twamatsanga* | *And we are so overjoyed* |
| *okokiro kyamunabwire* | *On this day* |

"On this day" marks the arrival of peace for the first time, but continues into other occasions when Bakonzo are calling on togetherness and celebration of culture and progress. The language shifts as well to "all Kasese people" with the key political demarcation that had been established under Amin. This meant that both the original district and the annexed land could be legitimate spaces in which Rwenzururu heritage

could be rooted.

The date invoked in this song is significant as well, because it marks when Mumbere surrendered to Obote on 15 August 1982, exactly 20 years after the declaration of the Rwenzururu state in 1962. The agreement of disarmament included assurance that Obote's government would meet the demands for education, representation and liberation. They even offered the young King a scholarship to the USA to study, as a symbolic gesture for what he had lost as a child, never allowed to access good schooling or government support.

Similarly, the ridge leaders, chiefs and educated Bakonzo were given Local Government jobs, including the position of District Commissioner held by Blasio Maate, the first Mukonzo DC. For the first time in history, the Bakonzo people felt they had a government that could listen. However that did not mean that the memories of the rebellions would dissipate. According to one ex-Rwenzururu fighter, "You cannot say 'the struggle is over' because it is taboo."[79]

There were, however, people who neither supported the surrender nor trusted the promises of development and inclusion. For example, Siira Muhindo, aide to Kinyamusithu, Rwenzururu commander of the Defence forces, proclaimed in 1982 that "Uganda people cannot be trusted."[80] This statement was in reference to this past moment and the present, meaning that Bakonzo memory was being regulated by an imperative to remember the struggle. Furthermore, when Siira and his wife had a baby boy in November 1980, they named him "Silhuhwere," meaning "It is not over." Like Maximu from the first era of struggle, Silhuhwere would bring both the memory and the bitterness into new generations.

79. Biira (Second era Rwenzururu combatant) life history with the authors, April 2018.
80. Paraphrased by Yolam Mulima (first Rwenzururu ambassador to DRC) in discussion with Bwambale, April 2017.

### The Fourth Era - New Rebellions and the NRA

Between the mid-1980s and the early 2000s new rebel factions emerged within the region. Importantly, during this time the NRA staged a guerrilla war against the Obote II regime. Led by Yoweri Museveni, the NRA took power after a broad sweeping rebellion that stretched from their base in the region of Luwero (in Buganda) to Katebwa (in Rwenzururu). In 1987, the new government undertook a government restructuring process, and all local government civil servants with Rwenzururu background were retrenched. King Mumbere's American scholarship was also cancelled during that time.

Our research revealed few references to the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda, the National Resistance Army and the Allied Democratic Forces in both the oral literature and the sites of conflict. This does not mean that people do not have lived memories of these movements and their consequences. Rather, the absence is due partly to the fact that these later rebellions did not emerge from the cultural work of Bakonzo recognition and self-determination, even if they were sometimes comprised of Bakonzo fighters. Ex-Rwenzururu, NALU and ADF combatants explained that the warfare of NALU and ADF was different to previous conflicts, and thus the songs associated with those movements might mimic a characterisation of the enemy in similar ways. Most importantly, the tactics of NALU and the ADF did not mobilise comrades "from the heart" in the same way that Rwenzururu.[81] In fact, the ADF often conscripted its members by force, including children. Key to understanding this fourth era of culture and memory work, then, is showing how a disassociation with oral and landscape memorial processes has worked to disown this type of fighting as characteristic of Rwenzururu heritage.

81. Focus group discussion in Kilembe, February 2018.

The leader of the NALU rebellion was Amon Bazira, who used his familiarity with the victims of the 1987 retrenchment during Rwenzururu surrender to mobilise them to fight against the NRA's new government. Mathungu, the so-called third palace of the Obusinga bwa Rwenzururu, located in DRC, was a prime recruitment ground for NALU. The movement gained legitimacy by spreading its rebellion into the known areas with cultural significance to Rwenzururu heritage. NALU's combat tactics, however, claimed the lives of fellow Bakonzo, Bamba and Banande, skewing the mission in a way that Rwenzururu supporters struggled to identify with.[82]

The series of massacres, from the late 1980s to the mid 1990s, that killed farmers and ridge leaders are marked in the oral literature as a moment of continued and abnormal violence. These sentiments recorded show that peace would not be viable with Bazira. Rwenzururu chroniclers lamented the devastation from events such as the massacre of twenty-nine farmers at Nyaruzigati or the killing of eighteen ridge leaders at Kitholu and Isule.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Omuhanya Bazira*<br>*Eeeee akendithubugha*<br>*Enya ruzigati*<br>*Mwakanithira ya bandu bethu banene* | *This accursed Bazira*<br>*Eeeee will annihilate us all*<br>*At Nyaruzigati*<br>*He killed so many innocent people.* |
| *Banithu abakoonzo twabiri hambula*<br>*omuhanya bazira abiri kolha olhuhi eeee*<br>*Olhukendi thughunza.* | *Brethren Bakonzo we are a doomed tribe. From war to war. The accursed Bazira has created another war that is going to finish all of us all over again* |

82. Yonasani Kamabu (Rwenzururu Chronicler) in discussion with Bwambale, March 2018.

Remembering the ADF era, what has become clear is the way that the eariler narratives of agency fade into a sense of victimhood. This was characterised by the fact that the warfare between the ADF and Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF was rebranded from the NRA in 1995) escalated into a more modern form of bush warfare.

An incident at Kyondo that killed 24 people in 1997, for example, is shrouded in mystery. Residents questioned how people in the middle of the Nyahuka IDP camp, both guarded by the army and sheltered in a house, could be successfully attacked and no trace of the killers ever found. Even today, nobody is allowed to visit the Kyondo massacre site or even talk about them in public places. In spite of the secrecy, the Kyondo War Victims Association has created a song of remembrance. They lament:

| *Ithwe bandu bokwa bithwe* | |
|---|---|
| *kwenu* | *We people of the mountain* |
| *Thulihanu thwamatwa* | *We have suffered flogging* |
| *migho* | *with clubs for long* |
| *Thwamalhusya hanu imwa* | *If we strip you would fear us* |
| *thusagha* | |
| *Emighongo nimakangalhu* | *Our backs are just born* |
| | *You old woman have you* |
| | *ever been beaten? Aya ya* |
| *Iwe mukekulhu banabatha* | *ya ya(pain)* |
| *kuswirya aya ya* | *And you old man have you* |
| *Naghu musyakulu bane* | *ever been beaten aya ya* |
| *batha kuswirya yayay* | *ya* |
| *Iwandusya kwamabuya* | *Do not joke with me if you* |
| *ghuli oko ndeke* | *are happy* |
| *Iyoo obulighe* | *Iyooo(pain) me am in sorrow* |
| *kabwambalhuma* | |

As rebel groups raged, the cultural work for recognition became more encoded but did not disappear. Rwenzururu peoples saw that in 1993 the NRM government reinstated the Buganda, Toro and Ankole kingdoms that had been outlawed in 1967 by Obote in his first presidency. With the rise of NALU and ADF, who were branded as identity- and Rwenzururu-based rebellions, no such cultural recognition manifested for the Rwenzururu. Thus an era of renewed suspicion between the Rwenzururu movement and its cultural institutions on the one hand, and the central government and the NRM party on the other, seemed to fester. From 1998-2009 Rwenzururu music and poetry became more metaphorical and figurative, composed to hide ordinary comprehension, to be understood only by those who mastered the language.

Sites of remembrance faded in prominence during the time the ADF were operational. This shift was partly due to significance being linked to the ability to transmit value in oral culture, as well as to the inability to speak publicly for fear of government reprisal or rebel conscription. Crucially, sites of culture also experienced a distinct new threat: landmines. The planting of landmines across the Rwenzori Mountains made ritual pilgrimages to cultural sites of significance impossible. King Isaya Mukirane’s burial at Bulemba was a specific target where mines were placed—laying landmines around his grave ensured that his followers and descendants could not pay homage to their deceased leader, and thereby boost their morale or increase their credibility. The significance of this site as a battleground between remembering and forgetting will return in 2016, as we discuss below.

While the conflicts described above were taking place, a significant form of spatial governance was also unfolding. Rwenzori Mountain National Park (RMNP), gazetted in 1991, established nearly

1,000 square kilometres of protected land under the new administration of the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA). This new governance of sacred land has impacted the relationship between sites of Rwenzururu memory and oral culture by legislating access and using the militarised Uganda Wildlife Authority to protect the natural environment. Furthermore, by 1994, RMNP was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site, inscribed on the list of natural heritage sites, with its glacial peak and afro-alpine vegetation noted as unique and worth preservation. These protection mechanisms, however, did not extend to the cultural values of the people. This was made clear in a statement on UNESCO's website where they wrote: "While little agricultural encroachment has occurred due to the Park's clearly marked boundary,  insecurity caused by rebel insurgence in recent years has affected park management and encouraged illegal activities, the reason for which the property was inscribed in the List of World Heritage in Danger from 1999-2004."[83] Our interviews describe how the development of the park and its valuation outside the cultural systems of Rwenzururu deepened the rift between the Bakonzo and the GoU.[84]

**The Fifth Era - Kingdom Victories in 2009-2016**

One reprieve came when, in 2009, the Kingdom of Rwenzururu was granted formal recognition. In this moment a cultural revival ensued with the remaking of the Rwenzururu anthem. The Kingdom also reinstated its hierarchy of leadership. The formalisation of the Kingdom included the relocation of the royal palace to Kasese town and an office established for the Obusinga bwa Rwenzururu. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this post-2009 anthem is longer and more celebratory than the "struggle" version.

83. "Rwenzori Mountains National Park: Outstanding Universal Value" UNESCO. Accessed at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/684/

84. Augustine Syayipuma (Founder, Ibanda Cultural Centre) in discussion with Blackmore, November 2017.

*Rwenzururu wethu*
*Rwenzururu wethu*
*Rwenzururu wethu mulirirwa (wowenenga)*
*Thukabya thwamakusamalira*
*Ngoko wuli*
*Ebitsange ibyathubughana*

*Our Rwenzururu worthy of crying for (gorgeous)*
*When we look at you (the way you are)*
*We are filled with happiness*

*Rwenzururu wethu wuwuthe amalhambo*
*Neribanda lyethu erihwerere wowenenga*
*E' misithu yaghu yikathuha embulha eyitholere*
*No'mukene inia thutsoghera*

*Our Rwenzururu You have ridges and our sparse plains (gorgeous)*
*Your forests give us adequate rain*
*And bountiful productiveness*

*Rwenzururu wethu wuwithe esyongetse*
*Nesyonyama syethu esyomwibanda*
*Thukabya thwamalya oko munyu namahere*
*Ithwabya nengebe nyibuya*

*Our Rwenzururu you have lakes and our wild animals in the plains*
*When we eat salt (and fish)*
*We have good health*

*Nyamuhanga wethu Singika obusinga*
*No'Musinga wethu wa Rwenzururu*
*Iremangoma*
*Thwamayihira omobyalha byaghu iwowene*
*Ghubye nethu emighulhu yoosi*

*Our God uphold the kingdom*
*And the king of Rwenzururu (owner of the drum)*
*We place ourselves in your hands*
*(you alone)*
*Be with us all times*

Centralising and formalising the Kingdom meant that it was able both to negotiate on behalf of and represent a constituency of the Bakonzo people and their heritage. One example came in the 2011 agreement with the UWA regarding access to and use of cultural sites within the national park. Amongst these permissions was the annual pilgrimage to Bulemba in September for a language and culture celebration day. Bulemba had been recognised as a royal heritage site, and a museum had been built there with support from UWA. In addition, the agreement between the ObR and UWA came in the same year as the Cultural Leaders Bill that included a prohibition on cultural leaders getting involved in party-politics.

That said, the oral literature and particularly the music of this time showed a tension between ridge leadership and sub-county leadership addressed above. The rift was rooted in a negotiation over authenticity, marking a clear division between semi-urban "modern" fashioning of culture, and a deeply rural "traditional" insistence on returning to past lifeways. In the Resident District Commissioner's 2010 rally in Kisinga sub-county, Captain J. Mwesige remarked: "People are dying with poverty (*obworro*), and you are bothering us with history and lamentation of 'war war war… we died, we died…' Did you die? Go and work and put food on your table." However, as one son of a Rwenzururu ex-combatant described, "The bitterness can be forgotten but the events are remembered. You cannot forget what is in your mind."[85] In this way, the political leaders were focusing on development agendas within the modern "new kingdom" and did not recognise the role of memory and resistance were playing in the hearts of their constituency.

An incident arose in 2012 that revealed this growing internal division. The Uganda central government approved the son of the

85. Son of Biira (Second era Rwenzururu combatant) interjection during life history with the authors, April 2018.

co-founder of Rwenzururu, Martin Kamya Kawamara, to be the King (Omudingiya) of the Bamba and Babwisi people, who mainly lived in Bundibugyo District. The Bakonzo people of Obusinga bwa Rwenzururu felt that this was done so that Mumbere would lose popularity in Bundibugyo, whilst Bamba/Babwisi felt that it was a gesture from the government that King Mumbere's kingdom be set in Kasese and King Kamya's in Bundibugyo. This division exacerbated the historical tension that historically had culturally joined the Bakonzo, Bamba and Babwisi as Rwenzururu against the colonialists and the Batooro, on the political grounds of access to services, land, cocoa markets and representation in politics. Like the historical disquiet between tribes, this resulted in physical attacks on each other.

Intangible heritage (oral culture) spoke directly to this tension. The musician Bonex, in his studio-recorded song *Omukagho wa Kawamara na Isaya*, warned against desecrating the age-old blood relationship that existed between Isaya (Bakonzo) and Kawamara (Bamba). The two feuding tribes, Bonex cautioned, risked the wrath of the two dead leaders who started a movement together. Oral chroniclers worried that the successors were killing each other, rather than uniting like their ancestors had wanted.

**Current Era - Criminalisation and Demonisation 2016-Present**

The sixth and final section of this article examines the most recent moment of conflict. In so doing, it continues the threaded descriptions between oral literature and sites of memory. Most importantly, it illustrates how continued distrust between the ObR and the NRM government was more than a mere eruption of sporadic clashes, but rather a revival of the sentiments from the past that have been seeped in 100 years of heritage in the making.

A pivotal moment in the contemporary history of the Rwenzururu is the 2016 elections. Given the above-mentioned background of divisions between Omusinga of the Rwenzururu and Omudhingia of Bamba/ Babwisi, the ethnic and political divide had deepened by this point. In spite of the 2011 Cultural Leader's Bill that does not allow cultural leaders to run for political office, they can still be party affiliates. In this regard, the Omudhingia of Bwamba/Babwisi is a member of the NRM party and a retired UPDF officer; his royal crown is yellow, the colour of the NRM party. This allegiance and symbolic affiliation has characterised the Omudhingia bwa Bwamba/Babwisi as an NRM cultural institution. Conversely, the Omusinga of Rwenzururu is an affiliate with the opposition party Forum for Democratic Change (FDC). The results of the 2016 mirrored this split, and civilian clashes ensued. We point this out because it highlights how political divisions filter into, and are informed by, these cultural alliances.

A height of this cultural and political rivalry came when the FDC presidential candidate, Kizza Besigye, came to campaign in Kasese district, and was welcomed by Omusinga Charles Mumbere. After this February 2016 meeting, President Museveni warned Mumbere that his welcoming Besigye was not basic hospitality but an illegal political act that could leverage votes. Although Museveni won that election, marking his fifth term in office, the ObR's apparent support for opposition launched new investigations into ObR, with suspicions stemming from the historical resonance of the Rwenzururu Struggle. Their main concern was that, like in 1964, the Rwenzururu would seek succession from Uganda to form a new Yiira Republic.

In April 2016, Museveni toured the Rwenzori region and was reported by *New Vision* as saying: "You failed to handle your people's interests and politicized them and continued with identity of tribes but

this can't generate lasting solutions for your people. This is because different tribes have lived together in this region for centuries but the crisis today is because of the new socio-economic demands which are here and are unanswered."[86] Meanwhile, musicians and Rwenzururu chroniclers were continuing to advocate for self-determination.

On 19 October 2016, a grand celebration marked the fifty-year anniversary of the coronation and installation of King Charles Mumbere. The celebration took place at the Kasese town palace with cultural festivities and mass support. During this time the Kingdom was spoken about as triumphant. The Bugema University Choir sang the Rwenzururu anthem, and musician Jolly Kahyana sang praise songs to the Obusinga. Singer and politician Chance Kahindo wrote *Ebihanda bya bayiira*, a popular tune with a music video that outlines the fourteen mountain clans and their symbolic totems. The song challenges whoever does not have a clan and a totem to declare where they came from. Jolly outlines the beauty of the Rwenzori Mountains, and the rightful claims to it both in Uganda and the DRC.

Poetry by the Mitandi secondary school choir echoed these praises. These poems chronicled the founding of the Kingdom that was now turning fifty, but held onto the memories of times when Rwenzururu was persecuted and relegated to the forests. The students lauded the King for keeping their people from enemies and pledging to protect him even as young people. "We are behind you as ever," the poem concludes.[87] Through these commitments from youth and regional musical stars, the ObR gained increased credence; as a result, the ObR again became a target to be watched.

By November of that year, the NRM had mobilised state support,

86. Reported in "Museveni to Kasese: Forget Yiira Republic." the New Vision Newspaper. 11 April 201

87 . Composed for the annual language day, September 2016.

and police and army forces were deployed in the Kasese and Bundibugyo regions, including a new UPDF detachment. Simultaneously, the ObR turned the youth department of the cultural institution into a paramilitary scout-like squad (*Esyo Mango*) to guarantee the safety of the king, just as the Obudingia created a cadre of royal guards (*Esyombagi*) as well. Musician Chance Kahindo archives this moment in his tune *Ekayithula, sinanga kwira omo park*, singing of the looming tension between Rwenzururu and government forces.

When in November 2016 some youth attacked police, as had happened sporadically since 2012, it inflamed the central government, which launched Operation Usalama Rwenzori ("Peace in Rwenzori"). On 26 November the Rwenzururu Kingdom offices were invaded and raided, on the suspicion that the attacks on police were coming from with the kingdom, enacted by royal guards (Figure 4.5). After his offices were targeted, King Mumbere was called to surrender or face the consequences. He refused. On the morning of 27 November, Brigadier (now-Major General) Peter Elwelu (ODSR) led a raid on the palace, a violent assault that resulted in more than 150 people killed and 169 arrested. The dead were buried in mass graves, with fifty-two buried in the barracks and countless more dumped in the surrounding waterways. "And that is what we did," Elwelu confessed.[88]

In this assault on the ObR cultural institution, the UPDF specifically targeted the artefacts and sites of Bakonzo heritage. Within the Buhikira Royal Palace in Kasese, all the royal regalia used in cultural events was destroyed, including musical instruments, traditional clothing and archival documents. Targeting cultural heritage is illegal under international criminal law.[89] However, there was no reporting on this

88 . Anonymous (Retired Army Veteran), in discussion with Bwambale, August 2017.

89 . There are five UNESCO conventions that protect cultural heritage distruciton. Uganda has signed up and ratified them all. For a discussion see, Craig Forest (2010) International Law and the Protection of Cultural Heritage.

aspect of destruction. Furthermore, there was no condemnation of it as part of the crimes committed by the UPDF.

Figure 4.5
Omusinga bwa Rwenzururu office headquarters, showing bullet holes from the clashes with

Without reprisal, this attack on the royal palace had a ripple effect, moreover, resulting in further attacks on all sites across the region that were tied to Rwenzururu culture and history. The UPDF set Bulemba ablaze on 28 November, and afterwards, guarded Kagando—where the three leaders of the first rebellion were buried—with the instalment of a military post. Many other heritage sites that were developed after the 2009 recognition of the ObR came under systematic attack in 2016. Anonymous respondents recalled UPDF soldiers surrounding and burning their cultural sites.[90] During this time, linguistic and geographic knowledge from the 1950s and 1960s was utilised to communicate the danger and usher the ridge leaders into sites of historical safety.

Kiwa Heritage Site, developed after 2009, was not impacted. Our respondents claim that this is because of the 'touristic' way in which the site had been characterised. Visitors did not always know the significant stone of Nyamutuswa nearby, or the ways in which Rwenzururu fighters of earlier generations would seek out *kiBenge* (medical care), there,

90 . In discussion with the authors, May 2018.

applying the natural salt in the water to sterilise the wounds. Rather, the site had a reputation as a somewhat neutral and natural gathering place. However this did not mean that it was free for cultural activities: with Bulemba still occupied by the military, people could not hold the annual language day there, so they wanted to shift it to Kiwa. Their first attempt, in September 2017, was blocked by police; similarly, in 2018 when the Bakonzo and the Bagisu of eastern Uganda wanted to hold a joint circumcision ceremony at Kiwa it was shut down on the morning of the event without explanation.

The forgetting or silence of cultural significance has meant that Kiwa Heritage site continues to be a place of cultural sharing. However, in some instances it has become even more abstract. We recorded lamentations from a flute player who recalled hope and resilience in the aftermath of the 2016 killings at the king's palace.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Rwenzururu ni bayiira nomu wanga swirya* | *Rwenzururu is yiira even if you beat* |
| *Rwenzururu ni bayiira nomu wanga lhasa* | *Rwenzururu is yiira even if you shoot* |
| *Rwenzururu siyendisya hwaho* | *Rwenzururu will never end* |
| *Rwenzururu hi bayiira nomu wanga bulya* | *Rwenzururu is yiira even if you ask* |
| *Rwenzururu siyendisya hwaho* | *Rwenzururu will never end* |

The music after this time also speaks of betrayal. Ruheka Alia Biira wrote a song entitled *Abanyarwenzururu bobolo, Abana be'ngoma, Mwabaniikire endaghangali*. The title and chorus translate to "Sorry people of Rwenzururu, there is a traitor amongst our royal children." She was talking about the parliamentarian Kibazanga who had defected from the FDC to the NRM. His political shift was seen as a betrayal to

the Bakonzo, and a direct line to share Rwenzururu secrets with central government. For this song, Biira was arrested in August 2019.

Two other popular musicians, Chance Kahindo and Jolly Kahyana, both mentioned above, have been remixing this story and past stories of conflict into their contemporary styles. Their studio recordings weave figurative language, proverbs and poetry together, only understood by people with mastery of the Lukonzo language. Kahindo is also a politician who was overwhelmingly elected for the Local Council III of Kisinga town council in 2011. At the time of this writing in mid-2020, he had already been nominated to run for the mayoral seat of Kasese municipality. On 3 August 2020 he passed the FDC primaries to stand as candidate for mayor of Kasese municipality. Jolly Kahyana, also an oral historian but whose music is more direct both in language and approach, was arrested in June 2020. Authorities charged him with defamation for singing about Chrispus Kiyonga calling him “a fake that doesn’t’ act like an example” and speaking about him as old man who refuses to give up his Defence Minister seat for young leaders. He was released on bail. Juxtaposing the two forms of contemporary music shows how the conflicts and oral traditions of the past can be tools of political resistance of the present—but tactics deemed too overt are often met with harsh reprisal by state officials.

What is clear from this account is that the 2016 violence catalysed a resurgence of the memories of the Abayora Rebellion and the first era of resistance from 1919-1921. Today, however, it is dominated by popular music. This music is produced outside the formalised kingdom, creating a signifier of the widespread resonance of conflict histories. The musical space has, in a way, intensified the memorial transmission in part because of the restriction of freedoms of speech and the need to abstract sympathetic sentiments. This reflects both the current threats

to culture producers today, and the historical moment of the 1980s and 1990s when Rwenzururu oral literature transformed into more abstract and metaphorical.

As police continue to prohibit cultural activities, guard cultural sites and censor politicians using cultural modes of transmission, the resistance becomes more entrenched. Antagonism persists, and reconciliation remains elusive in the absence of a successful peace agreement or political settlement. In late 2019, three years after the palace raid, the *Independent* newspaper reported on the ongoing state of affairs. They quoted Kasese district LC-V Chairperson Geoffrey Sibendire Bigogo who remarked that keeping the Buhikira palace and Rwenzururu Kingdom offices as "crime scenes" was unnecessary and humiliating to the people, especially those who had lost loved ones in the fighting.[91] The destruction of cultural sites, prohibition of cultural events and continued surveillance in the area revealed a systematic way in which the GoU wanted to demonstrate their power over the Bakonzo. According to one area resident, "The rebuilding would be a memorial to the 2016 attack."[92]

We found these sentiments of remembrance echoed in our interviews, whereby the veterans' children have not been satisfied with the current conditions of oppression and poverty, so they have an imperative to continue. Allia Ruheka Biira documented this transgenerational attitude in a 2020 song, released on the annual language and Bulemba pilgrimage day, 2 September. She mourns for the next generation: "*Kiungula, kiungula oluyi* (open, open the door) *Abana bamakwa n'mbeho* (children are dying from the cold)."[93] The NGOs Isis-WICCE and the Centre for Conflict Resolution (CECORE)

91 . Quoted in "EU asks for expeditious trial of Rwenzururu Royal Guards." The Independent Newspaper, 27 November 2019. https://www.independent.co.ug/eu-asks-for-expeditious-trial-of-rwenzururu-royal-guards/

92 . Anonymous (Kilembe resident) in discussion with the authors, August 2019.

93 . Pre-release recording, documented by Bwambale, August 2020.

have both demanded that remembrance translate into action for the estimated 1,700 orphans who were left after the attack by UPDF on the palace: orphans not just from killings but also from the nearly 200 people incarcerated (Kiggundu 2017).

This most recent moment showcases how historical conflicts are yoked into the present, and how lasting concerns shape an identity of a people. Such identities are built off of the sites of heritage and intangible oral modes of transmitting memory. Oral literature has transformed from a centralised culturally defined set of songs, proverbs and praise poetry into a politically intertwined genre of popular music. Rwenzururu heritage was solidified in this era, reflected by cultural sites and songs that speak of the continued lack of successful post-war reconstruction, ongoing violence and persistent absence of meaningful recognition—or worse, the direct destruction of people and their culture.

**Conclusions Looking to 2021**

As we formalise these findings (writing in September 2020), the struggle between culture and politics is far from resolved. President Museveni, having extended term and age limits, is contending for his sixth term in office, seeking votes from regions where the opposition is gaining support. On 4 January 2020, Mumbere, still King of Rwenzururu, petitioned both for his own case and for the arrested royal guards to have their hearings in the High Crimes Division of Uganda and the International Criminal Court. As these elites negotiate power, everyday citizens continue to be barred from accessing cultural sites. However, the heritage of resistance continues to be shared at newly-fashioned cultural sites like Kiwa, as the sentiments of the past are remixed in popular music.

Our contribution has shown how oral literature is informed and signified through sites of memory across the Rwenzori landscape.

Throughout these six eras, different spatial signifiers of memory have emerged. First, the site of Kagando where the three leaders were hung, then the site of Bulemba in the current national park, and most recently, the hot springs of Kiwa Heritage Site. Most recently, new memorial sites have been marked, such as the Kingdom offices or palace that were the battlegrounds of the 2016 clashes between Obusinga bwa Rwenzururu and the Government of Uganda. Together these sites become symbolic of the 100 years of unrest and healing that has defined this part of Uganda. Importantly, most of the other sites are not officially recognised outside networks of the knowing, such as ridge leaders, families and combatants who moved throughout the mountains.

Rwenzururu historians and chroniclers have all observed these eras of conflict and peace. Our reading of Bakonzo sentiments, that contributes to the making of Rwenzururu heritage, is that their culture has been characterised as inherently violent, and therefore misjudged when they were using their cultural tools to advocate for education, access to land, representation and recognition. The various attempts of Rwenzururu struggle for inclusion in the governments of this region have only been marginally successful. However, there is merit to understanding how chroniclers transmit a sense of identity and heritage through the eras of resistance. As other scholars have pointed out, kingdom recognition remains part of the current central government's system of "divide and rule" (Doornboss 2017, Ssermba 2019). Our attempt at reframing the experiences of people who have built and maintained a Rwenzururu heritage might help to build more solidarity, considering that nearly all kingdoms in the country have endured episodes of violence—the Buganda, for example, experienced a violent storming of their palace by Idi Amin in 1966. Similar to the discussion around the Yiira Republic separatists and the ADF, parallels can be drawn from the

long war between the Lord's Resistance Army and the GoU (1989-2010) and the subsequent push for a creation of a breakaway Nile Republic: a movement that did not result in reprisal on the cultural institutions of Acholi.

Reframing the discussion around cultural heritage also helps to see how post-conflict reparative structures can be informed by a deeper recognition of the harm done to heritage (Moffett, Viejo Rose and Hickey 2019). To preserve the heritage of the Rwenzururu struggle opens a pathway for recognition and a stake in Uganda's historical memory. Such forms of memory are songs, drama and poetry that have been central to the transmission of struggle sentiments amongst the Bakonzo people and their liberation movement. These realms of memory are vital to unpacking how resistance movements endure over time. Recent resurgence of oral histories and the reinforced meaning of cultural sites is a way in which heritage is mobilised. The post-2016 violence between ObR and the GoU, for example, hearkens back to the roots of violence beginning with the colonial executions in 1921. Taboos around mass graves, desecration of key leadership and the spirit to maintain resistance are all themes that encircle such messaging. Yet these materials have only recently been documented.

Our contribution has been twofold: first, to undertake research into the heritage of the past, and second, to investigate new forms of popular culture, all in order to provide rich evidence from the Rwenzururu context. In doing so, we have shown that culture and memorial forms of conflict can be part of understanding the durability of resistance, and indeed, perhaps necessary for maintaining peace in fragile areas. We advocate for a more culturally-rooted understanding of movement and struggle alongside a contemporary investigation into the sentiments of survivors as well as ex-combatants. We assert that both places and oral

histories constitute mutually-reinforcing realms of memory that make up Rwenzururu heritage over time and space. As we have shown, authority bearers have tried to deal with this ideology by force or assimilation, but have misjudged it through a framing of rebellion rather than a deep understanding of cultural transmission. Rwenzururu heritage thus allows for an analysis of connectivity and a less hostile framework, detached from rebellion or struggle, to explore new empirical findings.

# PART IV

## SYMBOLIC TRANSITIONS IN EXHIBITIONS AND CONTEMPORARY ART

Essay Five

Exhibition Making as Aesthetic Justice: The Case of Memorial Production in Uganda

Published in *Africa Heritage Challenges: Communities and Sustainable Development,* Palgrave, 2020

Essay Six

Repairing Representational Wounds: Artistic and Curatorial Approaches to Transitional Moments

Submitted to *Critical Arts*
Co-Authored by Bathsheba Okwenje

**ABSTRACT**

This section turns towards a practical understanding of implementation, investigating what memorial exhibitions can mean in areas lacking dialogical approaches to representing conflict histories. In so doing, it again brings the Rwenzori Mountain region and Northern Uganda together into focus. Essay Six engages scholarship on liberal peacebuilding and transitional justice, analysing how exhibitions can counteract the normative approaches to didactic displays of war histories. This essay derives evidence from an exhibition in Kasese, Uganda, gaining insights on memorialisation from war-survivors and peacebuilding stakeholders. Negotiating the development of a memorial exhibition reveals the ways in which war-affected people can build their own narrative histories, negotiated in subtle and temporary ways. I argue that this is an avenue to examine local understandings of justice in a region that has been largely ignored by the mainstream transitional justice work in Uganda.

Essay Seven makes two key contributions. First it explains how misrepresentation during wartime reporting can create symbolic wounds that blur the possibilities for creating victim-centred memorials in the aftermath of war. Second it provides artwork and exhibition-making as potential avenues to recognise the harms done. We argue that recognizing the symbolic harm committed through skewed representation can open up new forms of accessing survivors' everyday lived experiences in IDP camps and intimate realities that are negotiated upon return, such as courtship and love.

Together, these two essays reveal how Uganda's war histories have received a multiplicity of histories that can be visualised through novel forms of curation, including series of interactive displays. The work contributes to the ongoing desire to reframe transitional justice as victim-centred and survivor-driven. Each context discusses how populations that have suffered violence find their own ways of remembering, often in subtle ways or through refusal to participate in public events. Memories thus become part of the archives of moral

knowledge, played out in daily practices that make mutuality possible. In this regard, both these essays advocate for an ongoing ethical and aesthetic approach to memorialisation, one that is grounded in justice as well as repair. These contributions shed new light on how to conceptualise justice within the frames of representation and contexts of silence.

## ESSAY FIVE

# EXHIBITION MAKING AS AESTHETIC JUSTICE:
# THE CASE OF MEMORIAL PRODUCTION IN UGANDA

### Introduction: Between Peace, Development and Heritage

Peacebuilding and development actors working across Africa have come to recognise the role memory can play both in shaping productive and "reconciled" societies in post-war contexts, and in entrenching divisive identities that can (re)ignite cycles of violence. This impact is partly due to the functional role that memory plays in transitional justice efforts that promote its externalisation in three key ways: as evidence within judicial witnessing, as collective memory in truth commissions and as heritage enshrined through memorials. In this chapter, the politics of memory, the processes of memorialisation and the dynamics of localised justice are explored in the case study of Uganda, with specific attention given to the *Travelling Testimonies* exhibition (2013–2014), curated by the author. Examples of archiving, performing and curating temporary memorial spaces in Uganda both offer unique opportunities for considering memorial production and provide potential avenues for realising justice beyond the courtroom.

Uganda is a valuable case study for unpacking the relationship between peaceable development and heritage. As a nation, its development has been deeply disrupted by widespread violence, coupled with a growing tension between state-sponsored selective amnesia and localised efforts to remember traumatic events. The Refugee Law Project's Transitional Justice Audit (2011–2014) referenced 125 different armed conflicts that have impacted Uganda since its independence from colonial Britain in 1962 (2015, 3). In addition, there has been no transition of presidential power for three decades.

Furthermore, the Red Cross estimated that in 2013 12,000 people were still missing due to the war in the north that pitted government forces against the Lord's Resistance Army (ICRC 2013). Ongoing fighting by rebel groups in neighbouring nations remains problematic for families of the missing.

For survivor communities, questions still loom over how to commemorate atrocities that involved more than just killings, such as enforced displacement, abductions and sexual violence. Sites set up to remember and repair historical injuries—spanning as far back as the era of the colonial regiment of British East Africa, known as the King's African Rifles—are diffuse in terms of their references to space and time. Cultural exhibitions, photography initiatives, the creation of archives and mass grave excavations relating to post-colonial conflicts have all received support from international development actors such as World Vision, Caritas, the Norwegian Refugee Council, USAID, Associazione Volontari per il Servizio Internazionale (AVSI) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). These actors have sponsored museum collections, commemoration ceremonies, the preservation of an Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps as a heritage site and the removal of bodies from former displacement camps.

Within this context, it is important to ask how memorialisation can contribute to or disrupt efforts for peace, justice and reconciliation. To date, relatively little is known about what the memorialisation of past violence actually does for communities who remember the event first-hand, and who continue to be afflicted by its legacy in their daily lives (Brown 2012; Buckley-Zistel and Schaifer 2014; McDowell and Braniff 2014). Despite this lack of evidence on the effects of memorials, there has been a global increase in their production as an essential component of post-war nation building. After the end of the Cold War, Europe and the USA participated in what has been described as

a “memory boom” (Jay Winter 2001) and a “rush to commemorate” (Williams 2007) that has been transformed into a global “fever of atonement’” (Soyinka 1998, 90) or a “tyranny of total recall” (Theidon 2009, 297). As described in Essays One and Five, entire disciplines of research and frameworks for international law were formed after the Second World War, in part because the documentation of atrocities during and after the Holocaust revealed unprecedented levels of identity-based extermination (Levy and Snyder 2011). Wars and events of war (like the use of the atomic bomb) have been ranked at the top of global collective memory indicators (Anheier et al. 2011). The question arises: Does this global industry of “dark heritage,” now a fully-formed research field in its own right, actually contribute to a more peaceful world, a more just society? Are we as researchers and practitioners looking in the right places to monitor, evaluate and participate in achieving justice?

Concepts of development, heritage and memorialisation can help to address these questions. There is a widely accepted peacebuilding paradigm employed in post-conflict societies, that assumes transitional processes will usher emerging democratic societies into competitive economic liberalisation—thereby enabling “development” (Jarstad and Sisk 2008; Newman et al. 2009). However, disagreement about the past can delay or deter peace, as different actors may seek to make heritage that entrenches conflicting narratives. In some cases, societies cannot engage Jürgen Habermas’ deliberative democratic option of utopian negotiation, whereby disagreement can be faced without violence, thus enabling them to embrace public resistance (2004). Instead, disagreement can fester, silencing dissent to such an extent that violence becomes the preferred outlet of expression. As many scholars have shown, the negotiations of memory that surround memorials are

meaningful domains for unpacking disagreement and discontent in post-conflict societies, even when it seems the narratives have been set (Ibreck 2012).

In this chapter, peacebuilding efforts within Uganda, specifically the Rwenzori Mountain region of Kasese District, serve as the arena for understanding the transition from a situation regarded as a humanitarian emergency and security threat, to a process of unifying people in times of unstable peace. I here argue that focusing merely on the absence versus the presence of memorials, or analysing the product of the memorial rather than the process of its making, both miss out on the potential for self-determination in the process of making memorial spaces. Examining the case study of the *Travelling Testimonies* exhibition shows that even if a political transition has not taken place, efforts to establish an ethics of justice—whereby war-affected peoples enter into a set of agreements about what constitutes justice—can illuminate the status of the disagreement and thus inform democratic preconditions for development and change.

**Memory in the Liberal Peacebuilding Paradigm**

Memory work and memorialisation are relatively new additions to the liberal peacebuilding portfolio. They have already found a place in the sub-field of transitional justice, and are now gaining support in the social project of post-conflict transformation. This adoption is part of a shift toward focusing on victims as both central to societal healing and necessary for fostering peace—conditions regarded as prerequisites for sustainable development. Contributions increasingly focus on micro-histories of violence, exploring the politics of identity and everyday experiences during conflict. Huyssen (2012) regards the relationship between memory and peacebuilding as a set of shared aspirations about right and wrong, giving way to a mutually-reinforcing human

rights discourse and juridical practice. It is through this discourse that the traumas of past conflicts are understood within a framework of justice, most specifically their presumed ability to achieve symbolic reparation. Within developing nations, these efforts become ever more entangled in transnational politics of aid, humanitarian intervention and international security.

The lens of transitional justice (TJ) offers an opportunity both to analyse broad, sweeping claims of peacebuilding and reconciliation and to examine the relationship between memorialisation and notions of justice. The core pillars of TJ—institutional reform, prosecutions, truth commissions, reparations and memorialisation—are being employed across the globe as a go-to framework for nearly 30 nations currently emerging from armed conflict or authoritarian rule (International Center for Transitional Justice 2007). As discussed in Essay Three, a toolkit approach to TJ has come to include memorialisation as a kind of "symbolic reparation" whereby victims can rebalance the symbolic harm they have endured and in turn move forward to be productive members of a tolerant and democratic society.

TJ is one avenue of peacebuilding that encompasses liberal ideas of creating an accountable society. Courts and formal justice systems are the backbone of TJ, using the legislative framework as a foundation for institutions, accountability and trust on which democratic processes rely (Sharp 2012). TJ's focus on building legislative institutions is thought to have a spill-over effect into judicial frameworks for trade, political codes of conduct and sensibilities of social responsibility (Lopez 2014). Specifically, international justice has been established as a mainstay of TJ's role in the peacebuilding domain. For example, the Nuremberg Trials set the precedent for international collaboration to try perpetrators for state-sponsored violence (Karstedt 2013). The Nuremberg Principles

continue to define human rights violations and set a frame for how legislative action should be performed. In doing so, these tribunals created a mythology around impunity and state responsibility (Andrieu 2010; Bell 2006) that casts a shadow on post-war nations outside of the Second World War context. In this way, TJ represents a type of cosmopolitanism hinged on a set of transnational shared values that are central to the liberal paradigm and post-conflict efforts for justice (Nagy 2008).

Scholars and beneficiaries have warned against the blanket interventions embedded within the TJ toolkit, specifically truth-seeking and the use of courts (Andrieu 2010; Baines 2010; Lekha Sriram 2007). In most cases these critiques reference the ineffectiveness of truth commissions to access comprehensive truth, or the lengthy and costly reality of judicial proceedings (McEvoy 2007). Critics show that the TJ's toolkit approach is impractical for fostering "local ownership" of international justice norms, often disregarding context-specific justice frameworks used to negotiate social unrest (Nagy 2008; Tietel 2003; Lekha Sriram 2007). This was perhaps most poignantly captured by the fiery critiques around the development of the International Criminal Court (ICC), established in 2002 (Allen 2006; Niang 2017; Mbeki and Mamdani 2014)

Uganda highlights the tensions addressed in TJ and peacebuilding literature. Idi Amin's controversial commission of inquiry into the Disappearances of People in Uganda (1974) is often referenced as one of the first official truth commissions to have been initiated. Uganda was also the first nation to receive arrest warrants issued by the ICC (2005) against four leaders of the Lord's Resistance Army, who waged a war in the north of Uganda (1996–2007), with spill-over effects into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic and

what is today South Sudan. It took 13 years before Dominic Ongwen, one of the accused commanders, stood trial at the ICC. In addition to the ICC's LRA vs. Government of Uganda (GoU) case, amnesties have been extended to ex-combatants and returnees from a multitude of conflicts across the country. Importantly, the Uganda Crimes Division has set up a complimentary domestic trial to try defendants, such as Thomas Koywelo who had been denied amnesty. To complete an accountability package, donor support has gone to performing and crystallising traditional justice mechanisms. When justice in this sense is ritually performed in the contemporary moment, it becomes a form of heritage—a vision of the past, performed in the present, for an aspirational future.

Following critiques of its formal mechanisms, scholars and practitioners advocate for traditional justice as a means to recognise localise forms of accountability. Traditional justice mechanisms can employ culturally-relevant attempts to seek accountability, yet they are at risk of becoming commodified and institutionalised through development practices—thus diluting their symbolic legitimacy and their ability to act in an educative/advocative role (Allen and Anna MacDonald 2013; Branch 2014; Shaw 2007). Allen and Anna MacDonald (2013) have demonstrated that *gacaca* courts used in post-genocide Rwanda and other traditional mechanisms such as the Acholi *mato oput* might lack the essentialist "local" qualities that international agencies seek to counterbalance their top-down approaches, in part because the tradition becomes standardised to fit the necessity of state-wide liberal transfer. This creates a kind of "memory entrepreneurship" hinging on a reparations discourse that both seeks to value victim experiences, and encourages a transactional approach to witnessing and trauma (Hamber and Wilson 2002). Branch (2014) has warned of the

"ethnojustice" agenda's ability to prioritise one system over another and universalise its application, thus creating further divisions in multivalent societies that might be prone to identity-based violence.

The above tensions around formalised justice and traditional justice requires academics and practitioners to work beyond the legalistic frames for understanding justice, creating a gap in efficacious approaches. As a contribution to this gap, this essay adopts the idea of "aesthetic justice," an attempt by some scholars to insert new aspects into an arena otherwise dominated by factual and forensic understandings of law and justice (Gielen and Tomme 2015). Proponents of aesthetic justice offer artistic interventions as a means to illuminate injustice, to recalibrate justice norms and to present new approaches to law-making. In the analysis that follows, these concepts are expanded into heritage-making and memorial production. In so doing, the propositions offered by those who advocate for aesthetic justice are teased out through archives, artworks and the coming together of an exhibition platform to make a heritage that is often otherwise sidelined in the national psyche of Uganda. What emerges is an uncovering of an ethics of justice whereby accountability, acknowledgment, performance and memorial production serve to create agreements about wrongs in both abstract and collective ways, divorced from both the individualising nature of court proceedings and formal justice mechanisms.

**The Exhibition Process**

When the Refugee Law Project—a community outreach organisation of the Makerere University School of Law—started inviting public and cultural institutions to help write Uganda's history, they were not sure what would come out of it. Through their outreach work and radio shows, the employees of their National Memory and Peace Documentation Centre (NMPDC) called upon war-affected peoples

to enrich the history of war and peace through their own testimonies. Almost immediately, stories began to arrive in the form of objects, providing new materials through which the NMPDC could structure their efforts to document the past. As the collections grew, so did the idea of creating a museum as an active discursive space to support the long-term goals of accessing truth and stimulating reconciliation. The products of these ever-growing collections have been displayed during conferences, shared in publications and called upon for research. The 2013 exhibition *Images of War and Peacemaking* was a project born out of a response to community members in Kitgum (where the NMPDC is located) who began offering materials to illustrate their war histories around the LRA vs. GoU conflict. While other research could be done analysing the objects and archives, the discussion below is concerned with what can be gleaned from the process of curating the exhibition. For example, it is not just the blanket of a missing person—but the intentions behind its donation, and the kinds of productive outputs that arise from its transition from a personal item of endearment to an item on public display—that are of importance. How does the value and power of each object transfer, diffuse or become magnified by its recontextualisation in a museum collection or exhibition?

The open-ended exhibition concept was rooted in research conducted among war-affected communities in Uganda in 2007 that revealed that at least 95% of the respondents wanted the establishment of memorials as a way to remember what happened (ICTJ 2007, 32). This population stated that they believed that future generations should know the truth about their experiences (ICTJ 2011). This was codified in the Juba Peace Agreement between the LRA and GoU, which called for the establishment of memorials and commemorations as part of the reparations package (Juba Peace Agreement 2007 section 9.1).

Despite this desire, there have been very few concrete efforts toward a comprehensive "heritageisation" centred on Uganda's conflicts. The projects that do exist have been confined to addressing the LRA vs. GoU war. Support from the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development and the Democratic Governance Facility enabled the Refugee Law Project to move beyond this well-known conflict and tour the country from December 2013 to May 2014, seeking to conceptualise and build a national heritage centred on the themes of war and peace, whilst continuously collecting, documenting and creating spaces for justice to emerge. This process, which is still ongoing, is called *Travelling Testimonies*. What began as an exhibition has transformed into a methodology.

Civil society organisations, cultural institutions, individuals and artists were invited to propose collecting self-created histories at four sites in the semi-urban towns of Kasese, Luwero, Arua and Kitgum (Figure 5.1). These four sites represent key locations in different conflicts: Kitgum represents the LRA vs. GoU conflict discussed above (1986–2007), and Luwero represents the War of Liberation commonly called the Luwero Triangle or Luwero Bush War (1981–1986) that gave rise to the current National Resistance Movement ruling party. Arua represents the legacy of Idi Amin's rule (1971–1979) manifested in the operations carried out by the Uganda Army, as well as the actions carried out by rebel

Figure 5.1
The *Travelling Testimonies*, exhibition sites (Developed by Shaffic Opinyi, Refugee Law Project)

groups like the West Nile Bank Front (1995–1997), Uganda National Liberation Army (I and II) (1979–1986) and Uganda National Rescue Front (1980–2002). Finally, as discussed in Essay Four, Kasese represents the legacy of the Rwenzururu rebellion (1919–present), which is connected to the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (1980s) and the Allied Democratic Forces (1990s–present).

Of course, the timelines and geographies offered here were regularly blurred on the ground due to the realities of Ugandan conflicts through time and space. Respondents often confused the names of rebel groups or conflated them, based on the types of violence they employed. Visitors to the exhibition also urged that any timelines offered must depict these conflicts as continuing because they spill over and transform into ongoing conflicts. In touring these areas, curators thought that significant inputs from visitors would extend the collection and build up a set of narratives that could address smaller conflicts or splinter rebellions in other regions. Community organisations aligned with a mission based on the pillars of TJ were thus the key voices in defining narratives for the exhibition(s), and took the lead in identifying participants with "iconic" testimonies.

Many of these survivors and organisations had previously engaged in conversations on historical traumas though the RLP's Transitional Justice Audit. Others were identified through snowballing samples. In sum, they represented a range of war-affected citizens, including those who might be classified as victims, survivors, ex-combatants, artists, representatives of cultural institutions, community ambassadors and government officials. These individuals were invited to pre-site meetings and consultation sessions that provided the foundation for the collection and documentation processes. Qualified psychosocial professionals were present in each respective location. Preliminary meetings showed

different reactions in different locales: the majority of residents of Kasese were generally excited to break a perceived silence, those in Arua were somewhat apathetic about engaging the past, and in Luwero participants were somewhat disgruntled due to the prior rejection of their role in the liberation struggle by the ruling elite. Each location revealed a different kind of relationship between residents and the state, different localised forms of healing and different ideas about the usefulness of memorial processes. To have created a national strategy for permanent remembrance would have disregarded this dynamic diversity.

The building-block style exhibition began with the materials from the first exhibition *Images of War and Peacemaking* (2013) that focused on Kitgum. Each iteration was built by participants at each venue whose contributions extended and reformulated the narratives, recognising their role as primary owners and producers of history. At the same time, visitors reflected on the contributions from the other venues. It was at this juncture that any narrative authority the curatorial team might have claimed was diffused, as the team surrendered any linear, didactic conventions of truth-telling. Participation in the process positioned me as the curator to become part-activist, part-researcher, part-creator. Using a reflexive ethnographic lens, the exhibitions sought to provide a space to explore what Sachs (2002) refers to as "dialogical truth", the point when "the debate between many contentions and points of view goes backward and forward and a new synthesis emerges, holds sway for awhile, is challenged, controverted and a fresh debate ensues. The process is never ending; there is no finalised truth […] It thrives on the notion of a community of many voices and multiple perspectives" (53). This approach transferred the theoretical debates about memory, the roles of the citizen and state, memorial heritage, identity and power into a performative space. Although the "performative turn" in memorial

heritage research explores how people interact with spaces and things, it rarely offers an ethnography of production (Haldrup and Bærenholdt 2015).

A temporary space was secured at each site. Uganda's lack of exhibition infrastructure provided an opportunity to seek out existing social spaces that were familiar. Stakeholder meetings helped to identify accessible, politically neutral and welcoming venues, such as primary schools or sports fields. We once used a church; although secular or separatist critics might protest that this created division, we actually found the opposite—that memory and memorial were viewed as sacred concepts and were therefore well-suited for display within a religious space. On one occasion, we used a social services centre in a former displaced persons camp compound. This symbolic setting was unanimously agreed by participating local partners to be a symbolically potent space in which to revisit past experiences. Due to budget and personnel constraints, each exhibition was hosted for three to five days at its respective venue; however, after observing the charged nature of the spaces through the production process, it was deemed essential to maintain an ephemeral quality to the exhibition. Although there is currently little empirical evidence on retraumatisation and memorials, the team decided that enduring forms of the exhibition might have created retraumatisation or disharmony because the crystallisation or co-optation of narrative disrupts the dialogical format that this type of exhibition sought to implement.

During each exhibition, selected individuals that had been identified by partner organisations as having "iconic" stories, as well as interested audience members invited through public advertising, were offered an opportunity to articulate a part of their "truth" about what happened in the past and how they perceived a peaceable future. The

equipment used to document such inputs usually included scanners, video recorders, audio recording devices, stationery for writing labels and artistic participation spaces. During the open days, it was not possible to predict what any particular participant might add, rather the team simply had to be prepared for unexpected contributions. Community ambassadors were on call to provide psychosocial support to those offering personal testimonials that might retraumatise them.

The result of this initial endeavour is a growing collection of 204 photographs, 112 objects, 120 artworks, 365 pages of archives, 47 hours of testimonials and 3 DVDs of archival footage. The ongoing process of creating such a collection is as much a key to understanding the surrounding tensions and contestation as the products themselves: as Anguelova (2012) puts it, the "collection also becomes a way to access the present and to think of learning and knowledge as 'eventualities', which take shape in situations that are not necessarily prescribed but are part of the process" (9). Each iteration of *Travelling Testimonies* provides a unique set of collected memories, illuminating strategies for everyday reconciliation and the potentiality for the making of heritage to be seen as a form of justice.

Focusing on one of the five locations of the *Travelling Testimonies* exhibition will illustrate the process of producing heritage around past violence. In 2014, we presented the first comparative displays of the LRA vs. GoU war in Kasese, a town nested in a region of Uganda that has suffered more than 100 years of conflict in the border zone of the Rwenzori Mountains. Straddling the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), these dense mountains are home to several contested tribal groups and kingdoms that have been the site of conflict since the colonial era. As Essay Four detailed, ongoing episodes of violence include: the Rwenzururu rebellion that fed into the establishment in

the 1980s of the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU); regular clashes over land; and the development in the 1990s of the Islamic fundamentalist group the Allied Democratic Forces, who remain operational in DRC. The government of Uganda's responses to the violence have included armed combat, the planting of land mines, the deployment of special intelligence forces and the banning of cultural rituals at shrines. Conversely, the Kingdom of Rwenzururu has maintained its kingdom-appointed royal guards to protect King Charles Mumbere and the kingdom's cultural shrines. As recently as 2016, clashes between the Kingdom of Rwenzururu and the GoU resulted an estimated 100 men, women and children killed by government soldiers. This attack was a retaliation against the kingdom's royal guards who refused to surrender at their town offices, after allegedly attacking two Kasese police posts. The clashes culminated in the storming of the palace and the arrest of King Mumbere (Human Rights Watch 2016).

During the 2014 exhibition, survivors, educators, ex-combatants and members of the general public joined in a three-day program of simultaneous exhibition display and documentation held over the weekend of Palm Sunday. The narratives, materials on display and performances were co-designed by the curator, the Refugee Law Project team and members of social justice, cultural or educational organisations in the region. During the three days of display, hundreds of visitors came to view the exhibition and more than twenty-five individuals contributed their memories, artefacts, artworks and archives. The analysis below focuses on this process and argues that ideas of law, justice and reconciliation are being reframed through the relational making of place, history and collective memory that occurred during the exhibition. Examples of archiving, artistic production and dramatic performance can aid in making sense of the ever-changing nature of such exhibition

production.

**Tracing and Making the Archive**

For contemporary residents of the Rwenzori region, the official archive is a mysterious and amorphous entity. Yet the memories of events inscribed in colonial and post-colonial government documents, as well as KoR documents that were created during the height of the Rwenzururu Rebellion in the 1950s and 1960s, all ascribe value to the archive both as a site of memory recall and a legitimate space to narrate heritage. Furthermore, the processes of transition and cycles of "peace-to-violence-to-peace" are surrounded by humanitarian archives from refugee settlements, anti-mining initiatives and the Amnesty Commission. In an effort to see "the archive"—as a collection of official and personal documents—this next section will illuminate the negotiation of heritage in the public space of the exhibition.

It is first important to explain what the official archive is and the difficulty of engaging with it. The national archive resides in Kampala, which is four to seven hours by vehicle from any given town in the Rwenzori region. A portion of the national archive is housed at the Mountains of the Moon University, in the largest regional town of Fort Portal. Items of interest to the heritage of conflict and peace are the files containing district and national reports; correspondence dating to times of conflict; census data; and maps detailing tribal lands, conservation areas, roads and population density. Also noteworthy is the six-year ($150,000) project that reports to have digitised 410,000 documents in the Mountains of the Moon University archive.[94] Both repositories require users to obtain clearance from the Uganda National Council of Science and Technology (UNCST). One can only apply for access online, and

94. See Derek Peterson's description from the University of Michigan at https://derekrpeterson.com/archive-work/.

then only if one has an institutional affiliation approved by UNCST. The processes of clearance involve the completion of several forms, the provision of letters of approval from educational institutions and lengthy descriptions of what the user of the archive intends to do with the material. Note that the desire to know one's own history as a citizen does not garner either UNCST clearance or access to the archives. Despite these barriers, there were regular requests by exhibition visitors and collaborators to access and display documents contained in the official archives. The residents of Kasese expressed an interest in the official archive as part of a perceived need to validate their narratives of oppression by the ruling elite.

Specific documents arose repeatedly in pre-exhibition planning discussions, such as the 1932 Toro Land Act in which the people of the Bakonzo language and cultural community were subsumed into the Toro Kingdom. This is said to be the foundation of the conflict that led to the August 15, 1962, Declaration of Independence in which Konzo language speakers asserted their own identity separate from the Toro majority, who had been aligned with the British colonial administration. The archives of this movement are part of the legacy left by the Bakonzo Life History Association that conducted research in the 1950s and 1960s to emphasise their culture's uniqueness, and to mark the cultural attributes of the Bakonzo as those of a legitimate Kingdom of Rwenzori. Another document commonly referenced was the limited-edition pamphlet "20 Years of Bitterness," written by the former Rwenzururu rebellion leader Amon Bazira (1982). The Land Act, Declaration of Independence and the Bazira "manifesto" were viewed as critical anchor points onto which the lineage and legacy of resistance and oppression could be linked. Therefore, as the curator I was tasked with finding these and related documents to put on public display during the exhibition. Only the Toro

Land Act was available in a national repository; it was retrieved by sifting through abandoned boxes covered in dust and detritus, mixed in with other important colonial-era and post-independence documents in the back of a commercial warehouse that was formerly owned by the Government Printers in the colonial seat of Entebbe.[95]

The Rwenzururu Declaration of Independence and the manifesto by NALU leader Amon Bazira were retrieved from private archives belonging to individuals who participated in the exhibition's production. This spurred an investigation on behalf of our team members to uncover other personal documents that might inform the archival heritage of the region and the struggle of the Bakonzo. These personal archives included clippings from 1960s newspapers that recounted the numbers of people who died in the fighting between the Batoro and the Bakonzo. Materials sometimes mimicked the displays, like a 1951 Rwenzururu United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, Army Certificate of Qualification that was presented by an ex-combatant, matching the one on display that was scanned from the influential text *Tribe*. "Madam Thembo" as she wanted to be called, even brought her copy of *Tribe*, written by journalist Tom Stacey who was instrumental in the Bakonzo Life History project and who partly negotiated the Rwenzururu peace between King Isaya and then-president Milton Obote. At the time of the exhibition, *Tribe* was seen as ethnographic evidence for self-determination whereby an oral history had been turned into a written one—and was so powerful that people rumoured it had been banned after the 2016 clashes.

As materials came to the team during the 2014 exhibition, we worked to digitise them. After scanning, materials were reprinted and placed on a dialogue table that encouraged a process of

95 . For a more detailed description of the UPPC read, http://www.monitor.co.ug/artsculture/Reviews/Government--printer-lies--ruins---street--publishers/691232-2646306-oae8bbz/index.html .

transformation from archival documents to heritage objects with negotiated labels. In this way, the authoritative position of an archive as official history was interpreted through object labels, with donors and visitors deciding which sections of archives were relevant for public display. For example, the selection, scanning and reprinting of the following extract from Bazira's (1982) "20 Years of Bitterness" (13).

> *The secret weapon of tribal interest groups as we saw during Amin's rule, has been the ability to galvanise their positions for specific political objectives by counting on ancestral homes. Tribal politics carried as they have been in our political evolution, to excess have proven harmful to the national interest. They have generated both unnecessary animosities and illusions of common interest where little or none exists. Specific policies favoured by organised tribal groups can generate fractious controversy and bitter recrimination.*

Throughout the text, Bazira highlights casualties on both sides of the Batoro-Bakonzo conflict, and works both to stabilise Bakonzo identity and to defuse the tribalistic divisions at the root of such tensions. One can see from the extract above that he also draws in the legacy of Idi Amin. Visitors to the exhibition who highlighted this archival extract insisted on two contextual points: first, that the conflict was part of a "political evolution" as stated by Bazira, and second, that to illustrate this history one must see it within a deep legacy of nation-building and failed attempts at leadership.

Beyond the Rwenzururu rebellion, other archives described the emergence, impact and displacement of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a rebel group that occupied the region in the 1990s and early

2000s. The materials donated to the exhibition showed a personal relationship with the project of building the archive, through the inclusion of personal narratives and photographs. One of the most comprehensive donations was a compilation of images and testimonies from Father Landas Bwambale, Priest of the Kasese Diocese and Director of St. John's Seminary in Kitambula, Kasese. His archive relates to the August 16, 1996, ADF attack on the seminary that resulted in the abduction of 19 male students. Father Bwambale brought together 11 of the 19 abducted students who returned after being forcibly conscripted into the ADF, and encouraged them to write their stories as a way of making sense of the past and fostering solidarity among returnees. A brother of one of the deceased boys, who was abducted in 1996 and later killed in the mountains, also visited the exhibition. He worked on-site to edit his brother's story and added images of his brother to bolster the memorial capacity of the archive. These contributions worked to create a heritage that reached beyond the newspaper coverage of events, amnesty commission reports (of 2200 ADF fighters) or army correspondence contained in the national archives. In so doing, the collection of narratives becomes less about accruing raw data and more about capturing lived experiences of abduction, displacement and return. As a result of this display, members of the returnee group spent time narrating firsthand what they had written, to give potency and orality to their stories. One member noted that he wanted to show that they (forcibly conscripted rebels) are now trying to work toward building a peaceful community for their families, and should not be regarded solely as fighters to be feared and rejected.[96]

NGO employees and those impacted by land mines in the region also participated in producing personal and institutional archives that illustrated the everyday experience of conflict in the Rwenzori region.

96 . Joram (ADF returnee) in discussion with Blackmore, March 2013.

Wilson Bwambale donated photographs from the Anti-Mines Network Rwenzori (AMNetR), which had worked with the Danish Demining Group conducted in 2011, exactly twenty years since the first-known mine was planted. These materials illustrated community events of "sensitisation" to help identify and safely detonate land mines. One photograph of a young boy in a school uniform ignited the story of his experience as the school timekeeper, whereby he had rung a "bell" every day not knowing that it was actually an undetonated cluster-bomb. Only after the anti-mining work did he realise that for almost a year he had been saved from the potential explosion of the four bombs inside the shell he had been banging to call his fellow students to class. During the three days of the exhibition, the experiences of landmine survivors were vocalised again and again. People even offered to donate old prosthetics to the collection as proof of their physical harm.

All the archives brought into the *Travelling Testimonies* exhibition in Kasese formed a body of evidence of past injustices that are marginalised in official discourses (Figure 5.2). Ranging from capturing the ideologies behind rebellions to recording the exact dates of events on a timeline, visitors placed overwhelming pressure on the exhibition team to become agents of knowledge accumulation. The demand to make a heritage in this way was also about making a space for justice in spite of, or in parallel to, formal justice mechanisms. Because the visitors often saw their struggle as a long history of self-determination, the mere process of recognition through knowledge and display served

Figure5.2
Artists from Kasese National Women's Exchange drama group performance. Kasese, Uganda

as an arena to articulate injustice as well as a forward-facing glimpse into being equitable citizens.

These kinds of harvesting of archives, and subsequent presentations that ripple into communities, offer a starkly different reading of the past than those which rely on the use of the official record as primary "agents of heritage" (Peterson 2012). The entanglements of conflict histories between the Rwenzururu Rebellion and the ADF, for example, disrupt Peterson's reading of the region's past that relied on the official archive. In the exhibition space, historical figures on whom Peterson focused as key players did not even feature, census documents that show the evolution of Konzo identity seemed irrelevant, and the linear depiction of the mounting tensions portrayed in official documents was publicly debated. What we witnessed is that the official archive can in fact work to incite violence, as it relies on uncontextualised, state-based or colonially-selected information.

By contrast, the exhibition attempted to seek out justice through providing evidence of collective historical injuries to be publicly negotiated. Negotiating the archives and producing heritage in the ethnographic present queried the very evidence base upon which many "conventional" heritage projects are rooted, exposing the potential biases in heritage production. When the archives are employed to seek justice, or if they become agents of conflict, then they need to be read within the context of present-day social dynamics to be understood as heritage. Rather than beginning with the archive as truth and comparing it against contemporary commentary, the methodological approach employed by *Travelling Testimonies* inverts conventional narrative approaches by beginning with the concerns of those directly impacted by the conflict and then building an archive alongside dialogical truth-seeking.

What became apparent from each donation (and the interviews that articulated archival provenance) was that action, justice and developmental outcomes became necessary responses. Not one single donor of material to the collection articulated contentment with their social, political or economic position. The common discontent expressed through their collected memories was directed toward current government structures as opposed to the colonial administration or the Toro Kingdom. Rather than merely acknowledging the past, this heritage-making called for change in the present, using archives and associated testimony as the evidence.

**Artistic Palimpsests**

I now turn to artistic production as a counterpoint to the textual narratives addressed in the previous section on archives, to illustrate how temporary socially-engaged art practices can be layered into the heritage-making process during the exhibition open days. Ezeigbo's (2000) discussion of literature as a means to access justice draws on Soyinka's (1998) arguments around artworks as valid registers both to make and to understand social realities. According to Stauffer (2015), trauma experiences often isolate the survivor and derail access to justice, especially in instances when acquiring justice is not central to state identity formation. Bringing together Ezeigbo, Soyinka and Stauffer, I argue that art breaks the doubling cycle of loss: that of the violent event itself as well as that of the loss that has occurred through national silencing of experiences (such as in Kasese). Specific examples

Figure 5.3a Young Kasese resident participates in making a collaborative artwork after viewing the exhibition

illustrate a range of intangible as well as embodied process and suggest an alternative way of interpreting justice not as a verdict but as a social contract or aspirational social change.

In the outside courtyard of the Kasese Social Services Centre that housed the exhibition, the inclusion of contemporary art was intended to abstract the codified narratives within the exhibition space. Drawings served to illustrate audience experiences as well as offer opportunities to digest the often-complex material presented within the displays (Figure 5.3a/b), while dramatic performances both distilled narratives of trauma and worked to reproduce traditional Bakonzo identity. Each of the three guiding visual artists began their "residency" with a tour of the exhibition, and then undertook their preferred medium of painting, sculpture, or drawing to begin making reflections in dialogue with audience members. In some cases, the artists worked to develop artworks in anticipation of the exhibition.

Figure 5.3b Collaborative artwork created by the attendees of the exhibition

In Kasese, I witnessed one encounter on a Friday afternoon wherein land mine survivors awaiting their turn to give videotaped testimony gravitated toward the three artists. Jackson Bwambale, one of the commissioned artists, was deep in thought preparing to continue his sketch proposal for a monument to "mark the past in this forgotten district." Godwin Muhindo, another artists working on site during the

exhibition, meanwhile decided to start talking to the waiting women about their stories. As they narrated, he drew, an interaction that became a spontaneous preparation phase for their video testimonials. Muhindo's charcoal figures gradually illustrated how land mines maim and kill, how survivors remember and how memories can be preserved. Almost like a comic book with divided sections, one could read the testimony from left to right, top to bottom, with squared off punctuation in events, silences and ruptures. When Muhindo went on to start a second testimonial illustration, a visiting woman—who chose to leave her work anonymous—copied the technique in a parallel process. Throughout that afternoon, Moses, whose personal archive regarding the ADF abduction at St. John's Seminary was on display, sat and watched Muhindo illustrate. Bookending Muhindo for those moments was an experiential arc disrupting notions of victim and perpetrator—one individual classified as victim narrated to the artist, whilst the perpetrator who was also a victim sat in silence, and artistic narratives carried forensic truth into abstraction.

These untitled artworks, sketched during the moments when the survivor narrated and ex-combatant listened, produced not just tangible artworks but intangible interactions. Charcoal was here seen as an unthreatening tool with which to share a story without writing down dates, names, or places. Absent of forensic metadata, and despite its factual resonance within the narrator's body, the art became the negotiating space for truth-telling far from a courtroom. This kind of action challenges the idea that memory must be encapsulated in a material form to be transmitted within a community. Rather, the form becomes the medium of transmission, not merely a receptacle for testimony (Buikema 2012). These organic interactions made possible through open, unscripted discussions should be seen as an ideal

accompaniment to war histories as told by survivors. According to theater theorist Bharucha (2002), this kind of interaction enables the "modulation of energies" that creates a spaces of mediation for truth to become "a collective responsibility in caring for the future of the victims" (374). Such a space was fostered by simply engaging a collective collision between war-affected people, more precisely, those labelled victims and those seen as perpetrators.

Figure 5.4
Public artwork I AM U-Gandan made in collaboration with exhibition visitors. Kasese, Uganda

For the painting *I'm a U-Gandan*, artist David Tugume called on young people to take turns in groups to paint sketches onto a common canvas (Figure 5.4). He then allowed the piece to dry in the sun near where visitors entered and exited the exhibition. With the addition of each layer, the piece became more abstract, words and colours blurring with successive impressions. The final piece shows strong blocks of mixed colours with illegible words, saved for a nationalistic reference that shows a clear interpretation of the juxtaposed conflicts. The artwork is a clear example of what Yilmaz (2010) calls the "visiting sequence" (270) of artistic layers, with six levels of interaction between artists, war-affected

people and a generation which (as many participants claimed) was "learning their history for the first time." This piece is full of empathetic sentiments, making visible the core of the exhibition narrative: that in some way, all Ugandans have been impacted by war, and that the struggle for peace is part of an ongoing national healing process.

Exhibition displays were purposely void of images that represented the human body suffering. In this way, donors to the collection and exhibition advisors refused to create "abject artefacts" (Hughes 2003) out of their experiences. As Hughes (2003) has argued, and as I argued in Essay One, images of trauma divorced from their context and consumed by spectators do not advance justice. Creating an exhibition that showcases images of passive bodies in pain would, according to Staffuer (2015), only increase loneliness by demobilising the collective experience of being affected by war. The performances of drama, dance and music by the Kasese National Women's Exchange sometimes re-enacted bodily trauma by making space to move through the narrative, constantly reformulating the aesthetic outlet of heritage transmission. The members of this Exchange have created an alliance bounded both by the shared loss of family members to the ADF conflict and by a commitment to expressing communal resilience. Many onlookers were drawn in by their dramatic cries that recalled moments of mourning. Yet their ability to arrest the audiences was transformed into a kind of rejoicing in the finality of each dramatic rendition, so much so that many audience members sought out the opportunity to change their own position from static onlooker to a participating dancer.

Within the courtyard—demonstrative drama presided over the three-acre plot that once served as an IDP camp—visitors and creators worked to make real-time palimpsests. In this way, drama, testimony and visual art built a simultaneous dialogue. Bajec (2018) claims that

this type of collective performance of solidarity is a counter-monument, working as a marker of heritage, while rejecting the desire to be claimed by an official discourse. Critiquing how people should perform traumatic experiences shows a refusal to be merely a spectator or performer. These expressions could be read as a way of being rooted in aesthetic togetherness and projecting into aspirations of justice as agreement. According to Papastergiadis and Lynn (2014), "the ubiquity of images and the enhanced public participation has not only disrupted the conventional categories for defining the agency of the artist and opened up the meaning of collective authorship, it also underscores the necessity to rethink the function of the imagination as a world-making process" (226). Returning to the theoretical framework of aesthetic justice, it is plausible that the kind of world being made through these interactions is one that aspires to be just, whether or not the perpetrators are present to witness the testimonial performances. Caught among the making processes, it is almost impossible to deny the optimism of those who feel that they are working against injustice, however politically or developmentally motivated.

**Conclusions: Temporary Transitions**

The contemporary making of the Rwenzururu heritage in the region of Kasese, as described in Essay Four, is permeated with everyday legacies of the post-war context. The exhibition *Travelling Testimonies*, as a transitional justice intervention by the Refugee Law Project, acted as a kind of micro-intervention into this heritage through the use of objects, personal archives, negotiated official archives, performances and artworks. The interactions that transpired during the multiple exhibition days at different locations extended into new collections, conversations and other exhibition iterations. This emergent heritage captured by this process is not isolated within the Rwenzori memoryscapes; rather,

through the National Memory and Peace Documentation Centre and the programming of the RLP's Conflict, Governance and Transitional Justice initiative, the narrative forms that arose in Kasese have reached other war-affected regions as well. Through archive and artwork, both literal and abstracted narratives of past conflicts came to the fore. By their participation, the collection donors, performers, artists and audiences collaborated with the curatorial and documentary team to produce a heritage in the making. The aspirational nature of such heritage production works against normative notions of law-making and justice that prevail in development discourse, and works instead to suggest alternative moral agreements rooted in participation, listening and individual contributions.

One cannot divorce this kind of heritage-making from the ideological tenets of liberal peacebuilding efforts predicated on the externalisation of memory as a tool for shaping democratic and reconciled societies, efforts which are currently held to be essential pre-requisites for (sustainable) development. What this case study does offer is a glimpse into the kinds of social contracts negotiated through exhibition processes. Whether it be the individual responsibility for archival production, access and interpretation, or the performative collaboration in artistic propositions, there is a shift to move away from state-centric, top-down efforts for nation-building. Justice in this sense is not found solely in the jurisprudence of courts, tribunals, institutional reform, or even state acknowledgment of historical injuries. With a struggle ongoing, with a king on trial for treason (who, if convicted, may face execution) and with only glimpses of peace within living memory, Kasese residents presented a dedicated, if only temporary, commitment to transformation.

Important to note is that while this project was funded by an

international aid organisation (the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development and the Democratic Governance Facility), and all the NGOs involved received support from European or American donors, the performance of symbolic repair in Kasese was distinctly for a local audience. Perhaps one lingering hope is for Kasese's burgeoning sense of justice to interface with the state, once it has received an internal reckoning. Indeed, here there is a recognition (particularly within the context of the ADF) that ones' own people committed atrocities, and that the Rwenzururu movement for independence failed. There is no lasting monument, no commodification of trauma into tourist attractions—only the collaborative process of making, and the materials that now are part of the RLP collection. Yet as contributors to the volume *Reclaiming Heritage* (De Jong and Rowlands 2007) recently assert, understanding the intangible realms of heritage is essential if we are to break the frames that have been bound by external understandings of conservation, monuments and symbolic space.

This chapter has sought to present both methodological (exhibition-making) and theoretical (aesthetic justice) contributions to the relationship between heritage and development. The case of Kasese presents a context unlike those addressed in much of the heritage literature: it is characterised by an ongoing conflict, the absence of formal justice processes, the presence of perpetrators at the highest levels of government, a near-complete lack of state support for memory work, donor-driven peacebuilding efforts in spite of state-selective amnesia, a memoryscape almost void of tangible markers to past violence and finally, a largely grassroots set of efforts to preserve its conflict heritage. Yet the situation of Uganda as a multi-ethnic and conflict-affected nation, dominated by the public commemoration of liberation narratives and the simultaneous silencing of the disquiet

caused by civil unrest, is not unique to the region. Kenya, the DRC, Ethiopia and South Sudan all experience similar dynamics. It is in these contexts that an approach to exhibition-making as temporary spaces to create moments of justice can be meaningful.

That said, it remains our task as exhibition makers to work over time for a better understanding of the long-term impact of our interventions. If, as I have sought to do here, one advocates for temporary or semi-tangible processes of memorialisation, then critical heritage research will have to begin to make sense of what happens in the production of memorials as much as it has already done in detailing their final products.

## ESSAY SIX

## REPAIRING REPRESENTATIONAL WOUNDS: ARTISTIC AND CURATORIAL APPROACHES TO TRANSITIONAL MOMENTS

***CO-AUTHORED BY BATHSHEBA OKWENJE***

### Introduction

No history is exempt from experiences of violence. Yet, how pasts are represented within periods of violent conflict influences the imaginative terrain for memorial work in the aftermath of war. According to Breslin (2017), artistic practices in the aftermath of war or authoritarianism offer a way to expand imagination and prolong the duration of transition beyond judicial timelines. Like other memorial work, arts need not act simply as a form of recognition of historical violence; rather, art can offer new insights into social processes. As Levine (2007) so aptly put it "We [scholars] have perhaps paid less attention to ways that visual media shifts consciousness and behavioural practices, and how these mechanisms can be used to stem the tide of discrimination and stigma" (75). In fact, creative practices can open up new avenues for repair after harm through emotive engagement with sensorial works, offering a form of "cultural justice" (Mani 2011, 547).

According to Mani, the cultural approach to justice is necessary because it allows for solidarity and understanding as a reparative mechanism to address the divisive realities of violent conflict. For our work in Uganda, this approach is useful for understanding the ways in which misrepresentation, especially of women as "ideal victims," can exist even in the context of care. In this way care is understood twofold: first, within the duties of humanitarians, and second, within the ethical responsibilities of socially-engaged artists. These strands converge in the visual representations of the conflict between the Lord's Resistance

Army (LRA) and the Government of Uganda (GoU) from 1989 to the present (although the LRA no longer operate on Ugandan soil). Our contribution responds to Mani's call to care by arguing that there are representational wounds that require symbolic treatments.

In this study, we explore the lack of care in humanitarian and media representations of people during the war in Northern Uganda, resulting in a kind of symbolic harm done through oversimplified representations. Beyond this critique, we offer new avenues to reflect on violent pasts through Okwenje's own artwork and Blackmore's own curatorial practice, taking as well a detailed look at the exhibition *When We Return: Art, Exile and the Remaking of Home* (2019). In this contribution we aim to open up imaginative space in a way that grassroots- and victim-centred transitional justice has, by employing the everydayness of experiences in an effort to represent dignity and agency (Shefik 2018). An opening of this new representational space is useful for rethinking memorial possibilities that move beyond conventional ways of seeing.

Humanitarian agencies, news media and NGOs depicted the war in Northern Uganda between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Government of Uganda (GoU) as a gruesome moment in time. These types of communication outlets mimic colonial forms of visual capture that, according to Azoulay (2019), enact symbolic violence on those who are represented, by virtue of making, collecting and proliferating archives of suffering. In contrast to external representations, the twenty-year ordeal had many everyday, seemingly ordinary moments that were not captured in media coverage, humanitarian response and NGO activities (Titeca 2019). For those living in internally displaced persons camps, these moments included the existence of confined forced displacement and aid assistance. For women who were abducted and

forced into marriage with commanders, these moments included both their youth and coming of age. And while these experiences are multi-layered and full of traumatic events, the realities do not need to be reduced to a narrative of vulnerable others.

Driving this inquiry into women's lives and the biographies of objects are the legacies of misrepresentation. This study contrasts the artistic work and public exhibition that were mounted in the aftermath of the war, with the media and humanitarian documentation from the time of the war. While news reports used framings of suffering Ugandans to call for an end to the war or for better support for humanitarian action, the artwork reflectively asks questions about the duty of care, more than a decade after the war has ended. Together the two collections of old archives and new artworks-as-archive produce a kind of temporal tension that invites the past into the present. Through artwork and exhibition-making, we turn the act of remembrance into a process for symbolic repair.

Our scholarly reflection on this artistic and curatorial work offers two key insights. First, it posits that misrepresentation during conflict has lasting impacts on representational work in memorialisation. This recognition highlights that the practice of depicting "vulnerable others" did not dissipate with the 1980s critiques of humanitarian communication. Second, our contribution insists that artwork can be an important register of knowledge for exploring difficult histories and potential futures. Such approaches can also be useful for gendered work on transition. Although gendered discussions are not our focus, we do seek to ask new questions that move beyond "a descriptive category of the victims" (Buckley-Zistel and Zolkos 2012, 2). Such enquiry contributes to the ways in which women become not just subjects for representing violence but agents in revising histories as well (Holmes 2013).

**Methods and Positionality**

We employ the reflexive turn and visual anthropology as an inroad for our scholarly contribution. Such an intersection involves the ethnographic insights gained through and around social-practice art. Rutten, Dienderen and Soetaert (2013) explain that a sensorial analysis of how artwork impacts a social situation can be done "by anthropologists who are collaborating with artists, by artists who are creating projects generating anthropological insights, and by art projects that are produced as outcomes of ethnographic research" (461). The outcome could be classified as a "visual intervention" (Pink 2009) synthesised through an academic reflection. Together both visual and ethnographic methods advance work on transition and truth, from a post-colonial lens (Enwezor 2002; Hartman). Our interest in truth and representation stems not from a judicial or rational utilizations of fact but from and emotive need to further interrogate what Hall described as a crisis of cultural representation (2000) and its attendant subjects (Mbembe and Roitman 1995).

As curator and artist, we have built our practices around memorialising parts of Uganda's history. We position our memory work as a contribution to unveiling hidden histories and making historical silences audible. Our collaboration is rooted in a three-year research project called The Politics of Return (2016-2019), in which our task was to conduct research from an aesthetic point of view and to synthesise other academic insights into creative ways of interpreting difficult pasts. Okwenje based her investigation on cycles of displacement experienced by women in South Sudan and Uganda, employing journalistic and investigative methods to interrogate political, social and cultural contexts. She transforms the materials of her investigation—research papers, interview transcripts, annotations, photography, news articles and archives—into artistic outputs. The result is a series of interconnected

mixed-media artworks that explore the aftermath of the war in Northern Uganda. Two of these works are discussed in this essay: *Gang Kikome and Other things We Left Behind*, a set of object portraits from internal displacement camps, and *Kanyo, Love*, a multimedia set of works in collaboration with thirty-six women (The Women).[97] Okwenje met and engaged with The Women to discuss and process their experiences of courtship in the aftermath of war.

Blackmore curated the artist residency that worked with three artists and sixteen academic researchers to develop a series of four exhibition iterations. These exhibitions constitute a negotiation of representation of issues such as: the everyday experiences of South Sudanese women in exile in Uganda, understanding how to represent war in dignified ways, presenting research through art for academic audiences, and displaying war histories in regions where the wars occurred. This methodology yields its insights through the dialogical process of deciding what to show and whose voice is present.[98] Lehrer, Milton and Patterson (2011) aptly state that "Thinking about curation not only as selection, design, and interpretation, but as care-taking—as a kind of intimate, intersubjective, interrelational obligation—raises key ethical questions relevant in an age of "truth-telling'" (4).

A concern for care is critical because in one sense we are both outsiders, relying on translators and informants to navigate the social and political structures that allow access to the material presented below. With this in mind, we have tried to keep an open dialogue both with the

97 . The Women currently live in Gulu town or its surrounding areas. Following is a list of their names. We chose to use their English names to maintain relative anonymity: Agnes, Agnes, Alice, Beatrice, Beatrice, Beatrice, Christine, Doreen, Evelyn, Florence, Florence, Florence, Florence, Grace, Grace, Irene, Jackie, Jennifer, Ketty, Kevin, Kevin, Laker, Lily, Lucy, Margaret, Maurine, Milly, Nighty, Olimpia, Oliver, Sarah, Scovia, Susan, Susan, Teddy and Vicky.

98 . For this type of work see, "The Yoni's Call and Response" by Nontobeko Ntombela. In The Yoni Book, edited by The Two Talking Yonis, Reshma Chhiba & Nontobeko Ntombela, 2019.

organisations that house the objects of displacement—the Uganda Museum, the National Memory and Peace Documentation Centre, and the Pabbo Memorial—and with the thirty six women (The Women) who were featured in *Kanyo, Love*. Key participants in the artwork and research were invited to preview the exhibition before it opened in Gulu in July 2019 (Figure 6.1). We used this time to explain our creative process and give the opportunity for refusal if people did not want their images shown. In the context of Uganda's war histories, social art practice and exhibitions of contemporary art are rare, requiring constant ethical and methodological re-evaluation. It is perhaps for this reason that these artworks can still have many more iterations and audiences, to explore issues of representation and repair.

Figure 6.1
The Women previewing the exhibiton with Okwenje.

**Context of the War**

As discussed in other essays, from the late 1980s, a group of rebels called the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) were active in Northern Uganda, later spreading to southern Sudan and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo; at the time of this writing in July 2020, they are now based in the Central African Republic. The LRA have been characterised by their treatment of civilians as targets, although initially their motivation was to destabilise the GoU as retaliation for tribally-motivated

marginalisation and extrajudicial killings. In addition, they demanded participation in political structures dominated by the current National Resistance Movement party, which took power during a coup in 1986 and have maintained a singular hold on power. The GoU used a series of military and structural violence tactics to combat the killings, abductions, rapes and mutilations committed by the LRA: the result of the conflict was a war that spanned more than two decades, displaced millions and incurred the loss of tens of thousands of lives. This brief description of the conflict offers a sense of the scale; while we acknowledge this glossing of the situation oversimplifies more complex conditions, it is important to outline the context of the war before our analysis can progress.

Gendered aspects pervade both how the violence was committed and how the war was depicted. For example, during the war the LRA abducted thousands of people, mostly children and women. Some estimates say that between 1996 and 2006 the LRA abducted anywhere from 54,000-75,000 people, with 25,000 to 38,000 of them children (Phuong, Vinck and Stove 2008). Women who were taken, moreover, sometimes as girls, were often gifted to combatants as wives. Many LRA commanders had multiple wives, and were known to practice closed-polygamy. GUSCO reported that over 10,000 young women and girls returned from the war, many pregnant or bearing young children (Allen and Atingo et al. 2020). In addition, sexual violence has so characterised the experiences of abducted and displaced women that “forced marriage” has been included on the list of charges for Dominic Ongwen at the International Criminal Court.

Internal displacement, however, impacted nearly everyone in the population. As detailed in Essay Two, life in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps was one of the most defining experiences of the war between the LRA and GoU. After a series of failed military campaigns

seeking to oust the LRA and rebel units across Northern Uganda, the GoU mandated in 1996 that people be shifted into "protected villages." Thousands of people were given little notice and even less support as they were forced into semi-urban trading centres. These locations were determined based on their access to roads where army patrols could reach them. Large international aid assistance programs entered the conflict zone several years after the camps were initially set up, because the numbers of internally displaced persons (IDP) camps increased with ongoing violence and threats of abduction. At one point it is estimated that nearly 90% of the region was displaced, and being supported by international humanitarian agencies.

As a result, the conflict in Northern Uganda during the 1990s and early 2000s saw a kind of mutual dependency between the government, media and international aid. In one sense, the government relied on aid for perpetuation of containment of civilian populations away from the battlegrounds against the counterinsurgency. However, the camps became a form of structural violence through forced displacement, while aid agencies allowed governing bodies to determine beneficiaries (Branch, 2008). Within this alliance, domestic and international media depended on government and aid workers both to allow access and to narrate the dynamics of the violence (Dolan 2009).

**Representational Wounds**

International media and humanitarian agencies dominated the public depiction of the conflict between the LRA and GoU. Throughout the late 1990s and 2000s, presentations seemed only to appear in media outlets once the numbers of lives lost, the mythical nature of the brutality and the scale of displacement constituted a crisis large enough to create newsworthy hooks. Appeals for, and representation of, vulnerable beneficiaries were at the core of a series of campaigns led by

humanitarian actors and media outlets. Work done in this way creates a bio-political discourse of "bare life" that classifies humans in an ahistorical category of those dependent on external maintenance of basic needs for survival (Agamben 1998). In terms of humanitarian communication, Kennedy argues that "when victims are stripped of context and reduced to the most basic of rights, to pure animal emotions, they become personless—they lose their human dignity" (2009, 3). An analysis of visual representation and the accompanying text within humanitarian narrations of the war shows how this "bare life" spectacle of suffering was created.

Shocking headlines, images of maimed faces and inhumane, even violent treatment of children all worked to portray an unimaginable reality. One *Independent* article read: "Child soldiers, sex slaves, and cannibalism at gunpoint: the horrors of Uganda's north" (Judah 2004). ReliefWeb wrote that, "'refugees [are] packed into squalid camps where often only drink and sex can blot out hunger and despair', aid workers say" (Wallis 2004). These references—of which there are hundreds—and their associated visuals become speech acts that created a distorted truth. Speech acts, according to Bredekamp (2017) can conjure images and direct how people think, feel or act through the emotive power of speech. These images thus have a performative function, sometimes asking the viewer to reflect or react.

This mode of narrating war frames both victims and perpetrators within colonial depictions of the suffering African (Werbner 1998, Finnström 2010). A review of Ugandan and Western media outlets showed scores of unidentified youth holding AK47 rifles, noted only for their status as abductees or child soldiers.[99] Girls were represented

99. Newspapers and online sources with reports from 1989-2004 such as *New Vision, Monitor, Red Pepper* (Uganda and mostly within the Refugee Law Project Archive collection) and *New York Times, CNN, Newsweek, BBC News, Telegraph, Guardian, US National Public Radio, Smithsonian Magazine.*

primarily by their classification as rape victims or as "bush-wives" to rebel forces. The other dominant set of imagery presented was of people whom rebels had disfigured. Hundreds of photographs circulated in newspapers, magazines, blogs and film of men and women who had their lips, noses or limbs dismembered.[100]

Each reproduction begged the question: who could be capable of such atrocities? These examples demonstrate that agencies and journalists are regularly used children as the preferred victim while speaking for the victims through statistics and social vulnerabilities (Von Engelhardt and Jansz 2014). All together, it is these speech acts, images, and the subsequent silencing of complex histories through stabilised narratives that we call "representational wounds." Such wounds are created in the time of war but can fester for many years thereafter.

Representational issues are also present in the portrayal of Joseph Kony as the iconic villain on whom to pin blame for all crimes committed. Kony was characterised as a prophet-like leader who was principally responsible for all orders given and actions taken by the LRA. Yet the repeated references to Kony have been almost exclusively based on hearsay (Schomerus 2010). Fewer than half a dozen photographers have ever captured images of Kony, and even fewer journalists been granted interviews. He is, therefore, somewhat of a fiction who can be adapted to the needs of each communication strategy. The viral video *Kony2012* only reinforced this mythology, even as it called on the American public to "make him famous." Not only did this sensational piece reduce the war narrative to a puerile level, but it obviated the agency of Ugandans to change their situation, elevating the power of foreigners instead.

These strategies of representation, however, have been

100. Google searches of "Lord's Resistance Army", "LRA War" and " in 10 pages across general searches and in sub-categories of news and images between 15-30 November 2015 and between 6-13 November 2019.

challenged by empirical data that suggests a more complex and nuanced era of violence. This is not to discredit the actuality of the events, but to show how easily they lend themselves to symbolic violence through incomplete representation (Giroux 2000). The 2010 volume *The Lord's Resistance Army: Myths and Reality*, for example, provides a sound counter-narrative into whose "truths" have been told and why they are relevant (Vlassenroot and Allen et al. 2010). Schomerus' (2010) interview with Kony gives meaningful perspectives that reject the oversimplifications in other publications where he is silenced. Finnström's work on media shows the editorial decisions at outlets such as Reuters to produce information that "mirrors years of repeated (media) truths on Kony and his rebels" (2010, 74). Importantly, the backlash against *Kony2012* both from within Uganda and the diaspora spurred a recognition of voices and alternative perspectives. However, these critiques rarely engaged the visual representation issues at hand.

The creation of an alternative media outlet in the post-war environment illustrates a new space for representation unhindered by government or external filters. A recent op-ed piece in the *Acholi Times* put it clearly: "The current narrative continues to breed anger and frustration from victims who cannot make meaning from their experience nor find justice" (Aliker 2015). Authors in the *Acholi Times*, seek to counterbalance problematic narratives trough journalistic sections designed to celebrate cultural heroes and traditions. Moreover, they are working to reframe the narrative of war as an Acholi genocide committed by the government through encampment and targeted killings. These visual transitions are what Judith Butler (2009) has referred to as breaking out of the framings of war: she explains that new approaches to representing of war can create "a certain release, a loosening of the mechanism of control, and with it, a new trajectory of affect. The frame, in this sense, permits—even requires—this breaking

out" (11).

The mediatisation of war reinforces problematic narratives, here rooted in stereotyped representations of African others (Wainaina 2005). These images and narratives support an ongoing culture of stigmatising returnees that further drives a wedge between those who experienced the war through camps and those who experienced the war in "the bush" (MacDonald and Kerali 2019). The incompleteness or inaccuracy that comes from this process cannot therefore be used as indexical images recruited when constituting memories. As the artworks below show, lived experiences themselves challenge faulty narratives advanced by state and humanitarian actors. Yet the pain from harm inflicted by representational violence is unable to heal because of the lasting impacts it has on imaginative potential for remembrance.

There are several reasons why these forms of representation have endured. First, the LRA is still active, rendering the discourse around Kony and LRA atrocities still valuable for military and humanitarian campaigns in neighbouring DRC and Central African Republic. Second, the post-war reconstruction efforts in Northern Uganda continue to be led by externally-funded aid organisations. These organisations rely on certain formulas of representation, inherited from humanitarian communications, to access the funding for their work. Such formulas reproduce the language of vulnerable others by positioning the vantage point from the "outsider looking in", a positioning that Cole has summarised as part of the "the white-saviour industrial complex" (2012). Third and last, the amount of visibility around LRA violence that would justify the humanitarian emergency (Nibbe 2011) created certain gaps and silences regarding the quotidian aspects of IDP life. As a result, particular boundaries for representation have emerged, especially in the shadows of humanitarianism, that constrain memorial reflections.

### Artistic Interventions

Artists and documentary photographers have long responded to the aftermath of the war between the LRA and GoU, at different times and in a variety of media. In the immediate aftermath, as people returned from combat, art therapy became a popular tool. There have also been several documentary photography efforts that have sought to nuance and individualise the war story through portrait photography. Theatre, too, has featured in the growing support for massacre commemorations as well as through a small number of national and international productions. A brief description of these works and how they relate to the social milieu of transition, helps to position Okwenje and Blackmore's 2019 work.

Many "artistic" interpretations of this war follow the pattern of the humanitarian and media reports above. In 2014, Christian Aid and *The Guardian* newspaper teamed up to produce a series of images by photojournalists entitled *In Kony's Shadow*. The first image is of a partially blind and disfigured man with the caption "Oryem Kenneth, 42. Oryem was abducted by the LRA for two days in 2003. They cut off his lips and ears with a knife and his fingers with an axe." A dozen portraits of disfigured victims were displayed in London's Oxo Tower with short captions and little context into the political background of the conflict. The aim of the work was to raise money for the charity whilst showing the enduring suffering of beneficiaries. Similarly, other foreign photographers have created aestheticized portraits that perpetuate this reductionist gaze onto bodies: for example, photographer Heather McClintock's series *The Innocent: Casualties of the Civil War in Northern Uganda* appears in a glossy coffee-table style book (2010) featuring dozens of prints of mutilated

women and scarred babies. This book, and others, are widely available via global outlets as well as in bookshops across Kampala and Uganda. Alternative forms of representation must contend with this commercialisation of images and proliferation as accepted content.

2015 saw the emergence of a new genre, the graphic novel or extended comic book-style narration, that perpetuated the victim vs. perpetrator binary in often inaccurate story lines. The publisher's description of *Unknown Soldier* by DC Comics reads: "Welcome to Northern Uganda. In 2002, it's a place where tourists are hacked to death with machetes, 12-year-olds with AK-47s wage war, and celebrities futilely try to get people to care."[101] Similarly, the synopsis for David Axe's and Tim Hamilton's *Army of God* states: "It started with a visit from spirits. In 1991, Kony claimed that spiritual beings had come to him with instructions: he was to lead his group of rebels, the Lord's Resistance Army, in a series of brutal raids against ordinary Ugandan civilians."[102] These examples serve both to perpetuate the imaginaries that surround the conflict and reinforce the gaze upon people who lived through it.

Within Uganda, professional artists have created a few socially-engaged reflections on the war. For example, painter and woodcut print-maker Fred Mutebi utilised a workshop and dialogue format to create a "talking mural" in 2010. The youth art project with war-affected and artwork were called *The Road to Reconciliation*. The nine-panel mural depicts a prolonged state of dependent uncertainty with a symbolic World Food Program truck driving down a road made with the colours of the national flag (Kiwere, 2009). In 2009, David Kigozi was commissioned by the Dutch Embassy to make the *Pillar of Peace* showing the developmental aspiration of children surrendering weapons

101 . https://www.amazon.com/Soldier-1-Joshua-Dysart/dp/B001IPPHHM/
102 . https://www.amazon.com/Army-God-Joseph-Central-Africa/dp/161039299X

and taking up books (Figure 6.2). Not only have the sculpted guns that once laid at the feet of Kigozi's sculpted children disappeared, but during the 2018-2019 Gulu Town developments, the sculpture was moved to the new Municipal Headquarters to make space for the new road. The relocation repositioned the sculpture from being a public installation to being a governmental ornament. Playwright Deborah Asiimwe Kawe, too, has been acclaimed for her play *Forgotten World* that re-enacts scenes from the war. This visceral and sometimes shocking script has been shared and performed globally (Edmonson 2018).[103]

Figure 6.2
Sculpture of *Pillar of Peace* at Gulu Municipality Headquarters.

Documentary photographers have also attempted to reframe the past and depict the everyday experiences of war. German photographer Anne Ackerman has been making portraits of people in Northern Uganda that attempt a "more dignified" narration of post-war life. Scholar and former journalist Kristof Titeca undertook a multi-year project to depict "rebel lives" from the images that rebels had taken themselves during the war (2019). Both of these modes of representation work towards a better representational domain, but still rely on a realist interpretation.

Small-scale artworks such as community theatre, graffiti arts, poetry and painting are also present and work beyond these formal modes

103. See: http://asiimwedeborahkawe.org/category/press/forgotten-world/

of representation. They are often shared at commemoration events, or included in NGO work on post-war recovery and reconstruction. In the sections that follow, we describe the artistic and curatorial decisions to break out of and reframe the misrepresentation of people's experiences during the war. In so doing we aim to participate in a form of "aesthetic justice" that does not use didactic interpretation to dictate counter-narratives, but offers intimate glimpses into incomplete histories (Gielen et al. 2015). As such, it is not an all-encompassing answer; rather, the work opens a file in the problematic historical archive.

**Investigating the Aftermath**

In this section we discuss Okwenje's artworks that were installed in Gulu, Uganda in 2019. Set at the TAKS centre, *When We Return: Art Exile and the Remaking of Home* was a group show including eight artists covering narratives from across the region. Within the show, the specific artworks *Gang Kikome and Other Things We Left Behind* and *Kanyo, Love* created an interactive proposition whereby the viewer could navigate between Okwenje's different series. They are a coupling of aesthetics and temporal remixing of the past, creating a visual shift away from the misrepresentations described above. The multi-sensory components of the work (sound, photography, interactive installation) as well as the reflective way of implicating oneself created an artistic rejection of representational wounds. Furthermore, displaying the artwork in the epicentre of the war invited audiences to engage with content they already intimately knew.

*Gang Kikome and Other Things We Left Behind* is a growing photographic-collection of material remains from the humanitarian-assisted era of encampment. The title derives from the phrase *gang kikome*, which is the Acholi term for ancestral home: *gang* meaning home, and *kikome* meaning the soil and lineage. The artwork takes

as its subject a series of material artefacts that came from the rations of displacement camps but that were left behind when the camps were disbanded. Seemingly innocuous and quotidian, the objects were deeply personal artefacts with biographies and provenance not captured in the public collections, but instead known by the owners who had kept them in their personal possession. As a collection, the artwork uses remains as a provocateur to ask about what is remembered, what is forgotten and what is included in the historical record.

Okwenje made portraits of the objects, removing the background that could reference a context or the provenance. This decision circumnavigated the aesthetic codes of documentary and images of suffering that were used to speak about this war and that have been traditionally used to represent tragedy.[104] Removing a contextual environment from the images creates the possibility of seeing something different than what is presented in the photographs (Cramerotti 2009)—removing the landscape and backdrops, for example, that have come to characterise "bush wars."

Employing codes of studio portraiture introduces aesthetic pleasure for contemplation. Can we view the remains of war as beautiful? This question creates a tension between the ways in which consuming representations of tragedy and their aftermath becomes normalised. The assumption is that aestheticization numbs the audience to the realities being documented, because documentary and beauty are often considered separately. In other geographies, photographer Sebastião Salgado, whose work on enduring difficult social realities is highly aestheticized, has received this same critique (Sischy 1991). Yet when we account for the representational wounds proposed in the

104. The aesthetic codes refer to the visual formats that convey an authentic recording of reality in order to evoke a sense of factual and objective evidence being presented.

realist documentary images of the LRA versus GoU war, we find limited nuance in the ways in which this conflict has been portrayed. Repetitive classification develops stereotypes that depict "the other" in such a way that constitutes an "exercise of symbolic violence" (Hall 197, 259). The result is a directional gaze that obstructs the potential for one to see themselves or their own history.

*Gang Kikome and Other Things We Left Behind* is a testament to nuance in representation. For example, the work can be seen as characterisation of poverty at the same time as a revelation of the relationships between an object's owners and humanitarian assistance. The USAID-branded oil can and the World Food Program-stamped grain sack are globally recognized, even iconic materials associated with humanitarian aid. However, for the recipients of this aid, the products themselves can come to signify a cultural object and a temporal experience. Furthermore, each image in *Gang Kikome and Other Things We Left Behind* includes the hand or fingers of the person that physically supported the backdrop during the production of the photograph. The decision to leave the hand in the frame is a technique of reflexive documentary that Okwenje employs in an effort to break the "fourth wall."[105] Showing the production of the image (the fourth wall) creates an awareness in the audience that implicates them in the spectacle of the image.

Additionally, the size of the objects in each photograph are amplified, creating a fictionalised element that belies the documentary value of photography. The increased size augments the details on the object, making the image readable. Ironically, the fictionalisation of the work and the elimination of a visual background for context reveals a

105. The '"Fourth Wall" is a theatrical term that describes the process of removing the imaginary or conceptual wall between the actors/drama on stage and the audience. Examples of breaking the fourth wall is when an actor on stage addresses the audience directly.

factual biography of the object. These details are easily visible when installed, because each photograph is over a meter in height and is stretched over metal frames with end points that go into the ground—turning the work ultimately into sculptural objects. The sculptures are installed in a staggered formation, reminiscent of a cemetery, whose markers rise up from the ground (Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3
Installation view of *Gang Kikome and Other things We Left Behind* at TAKS Centre, Gulu (2019).

We now turn to a series of the images to see how these biographies are realised. Several of these objects echo the discussion in Essay Two of material objects as memorial markers, but are here reframed in a new light.

*Soil.*

Figure 6.4
Soil

The most pertinent to the title *Gang Kikome* is the small mound of soil in one image, which represents those who were buried in the camps and the cultural mode of burial within the homestead. The camps were operational for over twenty years, where many people experienced the full spectrum of life, from birth to death. In most camps, burial sites were not designated, and the inhabitants had to improvise within the already cramped space. When the camps were disbanded, many of the dead were left behind. Being born in a camp and leaving the dead behind implicates the camp as *gang* and *gang kikome*. (Figure 6.4)

*USAID Oil Can.*

Figure 6.5
USAID Can

Signifiying the materiality of humanitarian aid and its disposable aesthetic, over time these objects of aid were reused and became cultural artefacts. In some cases, they were repurposed (hammered into metal doors, made into instruments or reused for food storage). Although the shape and function of the object changes, the logos of the development agency remain visible, lending another layer of meaning to the reading of the material remains of camp life. (Figure 6.5)

*Blue Jerrican.*

Figure 6.6
Jerrican

The assumption on considering the blue jerrican is that it started off as a receptacle for liquids, possibly as a storage container or transport vessel from one place to another. However, the intervention of a large hole adds to the biography of the container, altering its trajectory and utility—as does the fact that that it is tied with string, possibly recognizable as a child's toy that would be dragged in the dirt transporting objects inside it. However, its true provenance is not known, lending a multiplicity of meanings. One possible meaning is that in Acholi, this type of plastic object is called *jereken labade peke*, which means a jerrican (watering container) without a handle. However, a jerrican without a handle is also an idiom used to describe a child born to a rebel fighter and a "bush wife." Unlike the jerrican with the handle, it is much harder to carry; without a handle, the jerrican is somewhat incomplete. (Figure 6.6)

The speech act of saying *jereken labade peke* does not exist without the aesthetic object and the human body. As such, the Blue Jerrican creates an "image act" that provides a visual terrain to relate to the children born of war (Bakewell 1998). The mutuality of the word and the object are imbued with meaning that is both colloquial and everyday (to collect water), yet extraordinary and tied to the war (to carry the child from the bush). For those who speak Acholi and understand the aftermath of the war, this is an intimate way of knowing represented by the artist. Conversely, as an outsider, one is offered an

insight into lived realities of war and return through the objects and their linguistic associations.

**Intimacies of Return**

The objects and presentation in *Gang Kikome and Other Things We Left Behind* imply an open and public discourse, and form an investigation into histories silenced in plain sight, revealed through objects. However, *Kanyo, Love* is a much more intimate series of artwork. The series investigates the interior lives of return, seeking understandings of the ways former rebel-wives find love and experience courtship after war. This ongoing work is about post-conflict reintegration examined through individual portraits, an archive of courtship gifts, and testimonies of post-war love relationships of The Women, incorporated with media clippings reporting on the war. As a collection, the work is distinctly different from the portrait-based photojournalistic photography seen in other engagements with war-affected Acholi peoples.

The title takes inspiration from the term *kanyo*, which in Acholi means "to endure, to be resilient." Women developed a capacity for being resilient during their marriages in the bush and during their return. Interviews with The Women and other sources have identified the difficult conditions of forced marriage, but also how the experience impacted post-war intimacies (Kiconco and Nthakomwa 2018; Porter 2018). It is important to note that many of the forced marriages ended with the war for a variety of reasons: because the men did not survive the war, because they were imprisoned and are awaiting trial, or in some instances, because the couples mutually decided to go their separate ways. Still, some couples did decide to remain together in civilian life. Most of the women who participated in the project returned from the bush with the children that they bore during their forced marriage, with the responsibility for parenting and providing being left to them.

Generally, the Anglophone concept of "love" involves, to the Acholi, respect, partnership and planning for a shared life. It is understood as a phenomenon that unites families and clans and ensures the perpetuation of lineages (Potter 2019). Yet, there are deep social ruptures that happen when love is not achieved and social fabric is broken (p'Bitek 1964). That said, love circumvents a romantic connection between a man and woman, which is often perceived as dangerous and undesirable (Porter 2020). By including *Love* in the title of the work, Okwenje acknowledges the complicated interpretations of the meaning of love both in the Acholi context but also in the subjective reading of the word by the audience. Placing "Love" after *Kanyo*, Okwenje implies a hardship that is to be endured in the experience of love and in attaining new forms of post-war love.

In rebuilding Acholi society after the war, there was an expectation that traditional courtships and relationships and their attendant rituals and practices would resume. In Acholi custom, partnerships uniting a man and a woman and their families and clans are generally preceded by a period of courtship. During the courtship, gifts that symbolise a promise of commitment are exchanged between the man and the woman. Porter (2020) describes how *nyom* (the public culmination of courtship and marriage) works to define a sense of home, often emplacing marriage as a signification of home (4). Understanding home through marriage is logical considering Acholi custom is for women to move to their husbands *gang* and are only able to inherit land from men.

The majority of the courtship gifts offered to The Women were utilitarian. They included objects such as a piece of cloth, a coin purse, a handbag, or a mobile phone, to name a few. The functional nature of these gifts implies the nature of the partnership promised. The

intention of the gift of a mobile phone is to facilitate everyday ease of life, communication and movement which reflects the expectation of the partnership. The courtship gifts are also indications of a return to normalcy after the dislocation of war. Even in its practicality, there is affect in the gesture of the gift and attached to the object itself, as evidenced in the interviews conducted with The Women. When Doreen was asked what the object meant to her, she replied:

> *Well, when I hold the phone I always think about the days of our courtship. And of course, when I cover myself like this [wraps the textile around her shoulders] I feel like I am getting affection from my husband and it gives me happiness. That is the best. To remember who he is.*[106]

When capturing the courtship gifts, it was important to Okwenje that the objects were photographed without any environmental markers to indicate their context. Using a backdrop referenced the notion of normalcy and created visual uniformity, while simultaneously levelling the objects' hierarchy of value. Visually, the mobile phone was afforded the same value as a single fork or *kitenge* (wax print fabric). This was a deliberate effort to encourage the audience to bring their assumptions to the reading of the objects, asking what does a mobile phone, a fork, a *kitenge* mean to you? Furthermore, styling of the images as Polaroid pictures, a medium globally renowned for its casual, impromptu affect, sought to communicate the informality and sense of urgency and immediacy (Figure 6.7).

The annotation on each Polaroid-style image is the name of the recipient of the object, invoking a nomenclature that suggests a

106 . Personal Interview with Okwenje, May 2019.

cataloguing or archiving of the object. In this way, the photograph is designed as an object to be inserted into a speculative archive. Okwenje elevates and makes visible that which is intangible by presenting these courtship gifts in the form of an archive (Foster 2004). However, the supposition of an archive is that for something to be included, there is something else that must have been excluded (Derrida 1996). Presenting the courtship gifts as an archive alongside media clippings and interviews, then, expands the archive's power from an agent of wounding to a complicated treatment that is both tangible and intangible.

Figure 6.7
Display of courtship objects photographed as Polaroids, TAKS Centre, Gulu (2019).

The archive of the gifts, along with the testimonies, reveals the varied realities of the women's experiences of love and commitment in extraordinary circumstances. Jennifer explained: I started knowing love when I was a bit young. I was only thirteen years old, but I knew that I would marry him. When I left the bush I heard that he was still alive and so I went back to him.[107] In some instances, the courtship gifts represented a return to normalcy, a promise or expectation of a shared life and hope for the perpetuation of their lineage—aspirations that are intangible contributions to social repair and cohesion in the aftermath of war. For others, the courtship led to fulfilling relationships defined by commitment,

107. In discussion with Okwenje, May 2019.

love and support, while many others experienced courtship shaped by continuing vulnerabilities from the war—leaving them exposed to a host of social issues such as wife inheritance, land grabbing, HIV infection and witchcraft, to name a few. And yet a few remained nostalgic for the relationships that they had in the bush, and have preserved the gifts that they received from their combat-husbands during their forced marriages. For example Lilly recalled her relationship with Kony:

> [Interviewer] *Tell me about your husband from the bush, did he give you anything?*
>
> [Lilly] *I wanted to bring a soap that my husband Joseph Kony gave me. I have kept it up until now because it has a sweet smell. But unfortunately it is not with me where I am staying, I gave it to my mother to keep for me.*[108]

But the archive of courtship gifts does not exist in isolation, thus the series *Kanyo, Love* is not just about the objects. As discussed above, the series includes portraits of The Women and their testimonies, an audio soundscape, text-based works and media reports on the war (Figure 7.8). Metal cases keep the Polaroids of the courtship objects alongside the testimonies and reproduced news clippings. In this way, The Women's stories are media depictions of the war and symbolic images of return (the courtship objects) paired as an intentional juxtaposition. The symbolic displays of metal travelling cases signals movement and safe-keeping. Moreover, the legacies of misrepresentation are coupled with portraits, testimonies and the notion of love that is absent in the characterisation of formerly-abducted women as rape victims or bush wives. We realise that with millions of people impacted by the reality of the war, there is no total or didactic way to tell the story. Thus a series of fragments constitutes a symbolic gesture, eliciting a moment of inquiry for the visitor.

108. In discussion with Okwenje, May 2019.

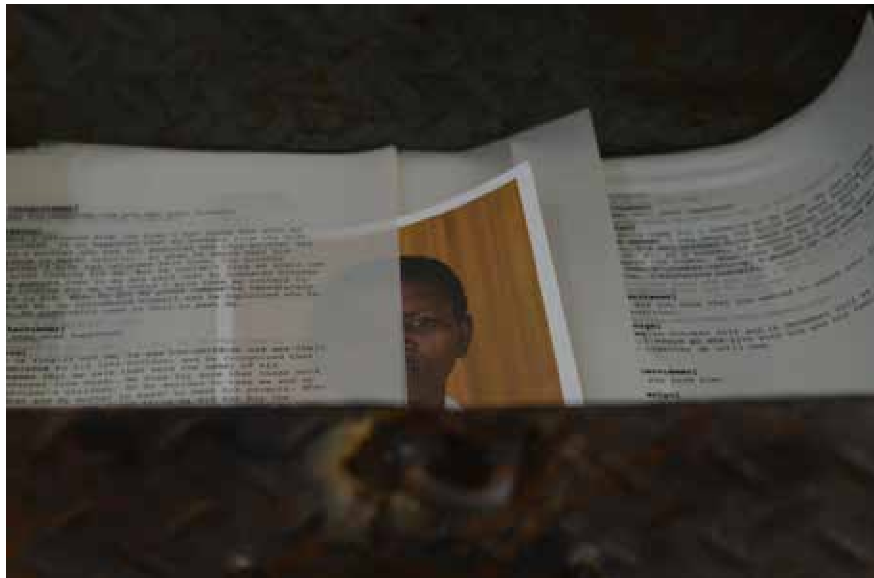


Figure 7.8
Display of portraits and testimonial extracts, TAKS Centre, Gulu (2019).

### Curatorial Interventions

We displayed *Gang Kikome and Other Things We Left Behind* and *Kanyo, Love* in conversation with other artworks by Okwenje and seven further artists in a group show. The location for the show was a community centre gallery in Gulu, the region's largest town and the epicentre of aid during the war. The space was vast, providing multiple rooms to showcase the artwork, as well as a garden where *Gang Kikome and Other Things We Left Behind* was installed. Our team of docents, who were also researchers from the region working on issues of returned women and children, were able to be in constant dialogue with the organisers, researchers and artists to ensure a meaningful interpretation of the artwork.

Blackmore took inspiration from curators who aim to create dialogical spaces (Lehrer et al 2011). Rooted in this way of thinking about difficult knowledge in public space, as well as the academic foundation for the project, the exhibition opened with a two-day conference that brought together sixty-eight scholars and practitioners from around the region, South Sudan and DRC. The academic and public dialogue took

into account the transitional realities at play in this post-war context, whereby most adults retain first-hand memories of what happened to them. We observed that many visitors recognised the objects of displacement and sought interest in the stories of The Women.

The exhibition *Gang Kikome and Other Things We Left Behind* enabled an illustrative dynamic between two generations of Acholi, those who knew life before the war and those who grew up in the IDP camps. Two men in particular sparked our attention as they debated the usefulness of displaying the objects as artworks. An elderly man, who was nostalgic for pre-war life and had experienced the contrast in the squalor of camp life, was disturbed that the objects were reified and presented as artworks. He expressed that they represented a disturbing part of Acholi history that shouldn't be memorialised in this way.[109] The younger man, however, was born in the camps and grew up in them, and did not have a lived knowledge of pre-war Acholi life. He articulated a nostalgia towards childhood memories of play in the camps, refashioning the objects into toys. He spent some time with the artworks, recounting memories that the objects evoked.

This example not only illustrates the convergence of humanitarian aid and cultural artefacts described above, but also the tension inherent in artistic work on memory. Imagery offering alternatives to media and aid portraiture can elicit mixed reactions based on survivor experiences. We grant that the example of these two men shows that this approach is not an absolute treatment of representational wounds. Images may always be triggering for some people. However, that we were able to engage this debate marked this exhibition as impactful on those grounds alone. Furthermore, the affect that objects elucidate speaks to the everyday experiences of war, rather than the sensationalised versions

109 . In discussion with the authors, 26 July 2019.

shown in media and humanitarian communication.

Other considerations emerged as well. Showing the artwork in the regions where the subjects of the representational wounds reside creates a kind of "relational vulnerability" (Finnström 2020, 45) that we accepted as artist and curator. Taking on Finnström's concept, we are situated as knowledge brokers, making this scholarly contribution a reflexive analysis. Recognition of this positioning is rarely seen in work that seeks to distance scholarship from social phenomena, however, we offer new presentations for understanding transition in "public space" (Ramírez-Barat 2014) through our attempt to develop alternative representational strategies. That level of care rarely arises when artwork is made elsewhere or when portraits of suffering are extracted from contexts in the global south to be shown in institutions in Europe and North America. By directly engaging the people represented in these artworks, and mounting its first installation in their home region, we were able to assuage the discomfort and problematics associated with displaying oversimplified experiences and with presenting them to outsider audiences. To our surprise, but we believe partly because of our method, our status as outsiders rarely met with refusal.

Many of The Women involved in *Kanyo, Love* requested more engagement from the artist, even asking for their husbands to come to the exhibition or for the work to be made into new forms such as books or radio talk shows. The TAKS centre, moreover, asked for the show to become permanent. Now *Gang Kikome and Other Things We Left Behind* has been donated to them. So too have other artworks become permanent fixtures across the region, encouraging a continued dialogue in spaces unmediated by the curatorial. This positive feedback does not mean that the process is complete or that its inclusion was total, yet it created a starting point to better approach conceptually-driven and

socially-engaged art exhibitions in Uganda.

**Conclusions**

Curatorial work marking moments of transition is a meaningful companion to the aesthetic journalist. Together, we ask questions that seek a more just way of understanding without fixity or didactic intentions. At present, in Uganda, there is no national space or funding for this type of artistic social practice or remembrance-focused work. Instead, the Uganda Museum houses similar objects to those photographed in *Gang Kikome and Other Things We Left Behind*, but keeps them locked away in collections, only bringing them out occasionally. Similarly, the Pabbo Memorial Site, which has tried to preserve some of IDP camp life, does not receive the recognition afforded to massacre sites that fit the stereotyped narratives described above.

This essay has outlined a challenging context for artistic and curatorial work in the aftermath of war. Given the legacies of media and humanitarian assistance, reframing the past requires ongoing engagements. We conclude that there is something unique found in this moment of collaboration: without overstating our reach or impact, it is possible that we have made inroads in two ways. First, we have advanced the work on this war and efforts by adding artistic and curatorial knowledge to existing academic research and humanitarian archives. Second, we have provided a potential means to introduce artwork into the gaps and voids that make up Uganda's historical reflections on its conflict past.

Unlike certain mediatised versions of history, Okwenje's artwork does not engage the biopolitical tenets of "bare life". The aesthetic of portraiture given to discarded objects does not take the camps as an

assumed reality, but instead points to the materiality of life as evidence of its history. *Kanyo, Love* does not reduce its participants into headlines or categories of beneficiaries, as has been the legacy of representing displaced persons in a way that dehistoricises or universalises them (Rajaram 2002; Malkki 1996). Rather the artwork provides archival layers for The Women to express themselves, their struggles and their ideas of love. Here lies no self-identification as a "bush wife" or abductee. Instead there is a past, a present and a future that disrupt the frozen time of the media war archive. Finally, the artwork makes no reference to Joseph Kony or his ideologies that so preoccupied the outsider gazes.

As a work of collaboration, we are conscious to avoid reproducing representational wounds. As such, we refused to join the continued violence that archives inflict by virtue of their circulation (Maćias 2016). Our contribution to the memorial and archival space of Northern Uganda may not be as linear as others' has been—however, this is the trick of aesthetic justice, whereby Van Tomme asserts that "…aesthetics can, and perhaps should, one might argue, be messy and decidedly un-aesthetic when concerned with the representation of ongoing struggles for justice" (2015, 116). Indeed, the unfinished business found in this seeking of justice is exactly what keeps us inquiring.

## CONCLUSIONS

### Productive Pairings

This thesis has sought to think globally and locally about the forms and functions of memorials in Uganda and beyond. I have examined the politics of memory in a variety of ways: by collaborative exhibition making, by interviews with war-affected people and peacebuilding stakeholders, by participating in commemorations, by advising on memorial production and by documenting untold oral histories. This multifaceted methodology of participating, inquiring and observing uniquely positioned me to contribute to different dialogues within the vast scholarship on memorials and their role in post-war contexts. Issues of representation, symbolic reparations and transnational politics have been particularly relevant; alongside those broad concerns lie more specific themes of humanitarianism, national identity and advocacy pertinent to the three regional case studies within Uganda.

In examining memorial processes, I have asked three key questions, among others: Whose memories do these memorials represent? Who is responsible for the memorial processes? and What are the consequences of such memorial outcomes? Through close study of each context, I contend that narratives cannot be privileged over insights gained from analysing images, objects, places, oral histories or artworks. As a result, I have been able to map the limits of representational and memorial strategies.

Key to my approach has been the productive pairings of my essays: pairings that reveal related issues across contexts, geographies, peoples and memories. As an entry point into scholarly debates on atrocity representation, Essay One reflected on a vast literature and set of practices around Holocaust remembrance that has been imported

into African contexts such as Rwanda and South Africa. Beginning with larger cases outside of Uganda foregrounded the representational issues and the social aims within remembrance projects. Essay Six brought these themes full-circle, and showed a practitioner-based implementation of new representational strategies. Put together, the "genocide imaginary" contributes to an understanding of "representational wounds" by interrogating the use of narratives and images related to suffering others. Tracing the historical link between representation and financing, moreover, revealed a durability in how atrocities are employed in memorial work.

These essays have repeatedly shown that mainstream memorial practices, both within and beyond Uganda, represent the dead and the sufferer. This framing falls within the recent trend of victim-centred representation, where bodies become the primary site of negotiating the past: bodies in photographs, bodies in graves and bodies in acts of memory transmission. The dialogue between Essay One and Essay Four shows how authoritative exhibitions can employ victim representation for moral imperatives to remember, while sites of memory (where local heroes or martyrs are buried) and oral histories can be distinctly related to the identity politics of self-determination. This creates two distinct references to bodies: on the one hand, the need to create human rights-based cultures, and on the other, the drive to resist cultural assimilation.

One of the dangers of memory work is the instrumentalisation of bodies in museum exhibitions, national monuments and mass-grave commemorations, creating an interpretive standpoint that is symbolically fixed. In these instances, the symbolic order only marks the present and looks into the past, facing to recognise that reparative aims require some kind of future-oriented vision. Assmann (2014) explains that to "endow texts, persons, artefacts and monuments with a sanctified status is to set

them off from the rest [of culture] as charged with the highest meaning and value" (100). Essay One argued that museum exhibitions unduly value suffering bodies (or their surrogates, blood-soaked clothes and skulls) to build human rights cultures. Yet the exhibitions in Rwanda and South Africa do little if any work to create alternative futures outside of violent pasts. The misuse of bodies continues: Essay One explained how bodies are silenced to reinforce elite narratives around the past in Luwero, and conversely, Essay Three analysed how in Northern Uganda bodies are reluctantly activated as cursory symbols in commemorations to keep reparations on the agenda of post-war reconstruction. Essays Six and Seven have sought to inscribe new forms of value into temporary exhibitions and artworks, each with the dialogic aim of creating potential histories, potential futures. These future-facing forms of memory work can be useful for transitional justice practitioners and scholars to evaluate harms done in the past, newly based on how survivor communities envision their futures.

Another potential way forward is to recognise that scholars and practitioners often approach the memorial relationship to the dead in a way that is limited, secular and transnational. The Chief of Paibona paraphrased Okot P'Bitek in saying that "the dead are not in the past, but in the future."[110] Indeed, Feeley-Harnik has aptly noted that "Ancestors are made from remembering them. Remembering creates a difference between the deadliness of corpses and the fruitfulness of ancestors" (Feeley-Harnik 1990, quoted in Verdery 1999, 42)." If we advance the notion that ancestors are both made from remembering and that their role is a future-facing one, then it brings different sets of responsibilities to the duty to remember. Furthermore, as Moon (2013) has argued, these responsibilities do not pertain just to cultural specificity. She insists that there is a way to understand both the rites and the rights of

110. In discussion with the author, July 2017.

the dead, developing a framework for forensic human rights.

Examining survivor aims to ‘move on’, I have presented aspects of cultural memory that both work against existing canons of memorialisation and act in spite of them. Specifically, in Essay One I critiqued the canons of national memory as espoused by Ugandan elites in Luwero. I presented two other regional cases as well, revealing how, in the context of Northern Uganda, mass media and humanitarian canons can be read against the grain of material culture and contemporary art. In the Rwenzori Mountain region, I examined how heritage can develop and persist outside the national discourse, and still be negotiated within practices of exhibition-making. Most significantly I have been able to show how conflict memories manifest in everyday recall of affected peoples, underscoring the critique of the reliance on tangible sites and monuments. Departing from an analysis of received, classical memorial forms opens up an exploration of the intangible avenues of oral history and the processes of making.

The productive pairings continue in other forms as well. The essays in Part III presented two vastly different memorial formats; descriptive evidence from Northern Uganda and the Rwenzori Mountain region showed the two extremes of tangible and intangible memory work being done by survivor communities. Together, these essays illustrate how divergent memorial practices can emerge in one nation. Such practices are shaped by two key factors: first, the absence of national cohesion to bring war histories together. In the case of Rwenzururu, warring parties (the ObR and the GoU) that had previously been peaceful have now reignited conflict. The second factor is the presence of humanitarian and aid actors influencing the parameters for memorial work: this influence, seen most clearly in the case of Northern Uganda (Essay Three), creates a phenomenon whereby symbolic spaces are employed to advocate

for material needs. Conversely, a self-determined heritage of resistance blends sites and oral histories to make meaning around past conflicts that have little to no memorial support from either the central government or aid organisations.

Tensions between representation and erasure have been central to this thesis. In Essay One, concepts of amnesia, aphasia and agonism were used to examine how national narratives, reinforced by interpretations of memorial sites, are dismantled by efforts to expand histories through transitional justice based investigations. Not only does seeking alternative truths destabilise overarching elite discourses, but reading memorials in this way reveals underlying social and political disharmony as well. In Essays Three and Six I analysed how the lack of access to archives, such as IDP camp records or government documents, contributes to the erasure of history. Furthermore, all of the essays indicate how representation of selective histories inhibit the ability to have inclusive memorial processes. Such selective renderings of history segregate war experiences that are rooted in the past but that have consequences in the present. For instance, prioritising mass graves and sexual violence ignores the harms done to families with members who are still missing or to landowners who have unsettled dead buried in their plots.

To unveil hidden histories, essays Three and Seven explored the difficulties of placing material culture within memorial interpretations in Northern Uganda. The objects from IDP camps tell of lived realities not present in victim-centred discourse, falling outside the prescribed symbolic order. They signify an array of experiences, ranging from resilience and innovation to deep insecurity and violence. As tokens of humanitarian assistance—and, importantly, its failures—they are difficult objects to interpret within museum spaces. However, as described in

Essay Six, they can also be imbued with new meaning, rendered afresh in artistic practice.

As Essays Six and Seven articulate, collaborative making can support survivor-centred shifts in memorial narratives. From the outset of this thesis, I have argued that co-production and continued engagement is essential for creating more dialogic and aesthetically just ways of memorialising. This approach is markedly different from the issues addressed in Essay Four, whereby NGOs, donors and CBOs collaborate to perform memory at commemorations and at mass grave sites. Indeed, in Essay Four I have shown that there are clear consequences to undue, improper or misguided donor influence: consequences that illustrate the failure to heed the entanglement of remembrance and reparation.

Based on the alliances and solidarities of what actors are involved, sharply divergent memorial outcomes can arise. Essay One showed the linkages between global networks of Holocaust and genocide museums that collaborate based on templates of representation. Essay One described the duality between national elites in Uganda and transitional justice actors, both attempting to recruit citizens to align with their historical narratives in Luwero. Essay Six described in detail how exhibitions and TJ stakeholders can build such alliances for reinterpreting the past. Finally, Essays Three and Four explained that humanitarian agencies and the GoU held an unlikely alliance during the war—an alliance that has resulted in memorial projects taking place only within agreed-upon interpretive frameworks.

**Contributions to the fields of Memory Studies, Heritage Research and Transitional Justice**

This research contributes to multiple disciplines, enhanced by the essay-based approach. First, it responds to the call within cultural memory studies for more robust scholarship in and about Africa. Indeed, these essays build off of existing scholarship around genocide and ways of remembering to create a breadth of evidence, from the ground up. Furthermore, the case studies in Essays Four and Five are in-depth enquiries that can be utilised in comparative work on memorial processes. As a collection, the essays directly resist national attempts to homogenise communities of memory, instead pursuing more nuanced ways of understanding.

Laying out the range of symbolic issues forms a unique contribution to transitional justice scholarship. In particular, this work has critiqued the normative framing in TJ around reparations, memorial sites and exhibition-making. As both a scholar and practitioner, I am able to seek out new avenues of inquiry and practice, and contend that combining evidence derived from oral histories and tangible sites of memory disrupts the classification systems of meaning-making around past conflicts in productive and instructive ways. Moreover, working with a range of war-affected peoples supports scholarship that does not rely on the human rights-based categories of victims, perpetrators, bystanders and rescuers. Instead, contributors to this research have been stakeholders in the knowledge production.

This thesis began from the call to employ more heritage research in work on transitional justice and memory scholarship. Acting on this call, I have been able to cast a new lens on humanitarian assistance in displacement camps through the afterlives of material culture. Similarly, the heritage perspective is illustrated in my integration of oral histories

and sites of memory in Rwenzururu. The inclusion of contemporary art, however, remains a kind of evidence that heritage scholars sometimes resist, falling back on their disciplinary lineages in archaeology and architecture. My inclusion of artworks as data and my co-authoring works with an artist and a literature scholar are perhaps the most useful reminder to critical heritage research that there is value in interrogating artistic practices, especially in the absence of monumental cultures of remembrance.

Each of these three fields can benefit from my insistence on the simultaneous investigation of symbols of suffering and silence. Refusal, resistance and aphasia all present a kind of counterfactual to memory work: asking what is not there and what goes unrepresented. To be clear, I am not, to quote Rieff (2016), "in praise of forgetting": rather, my research has placed a critical spotlight onto memorialisation in Uganda and beyond.

Each essay has taken a slightly different tone, background literature and analytical framework in order to target different interdisciplinary debates. In this regard, some of the material is published, submitted to journals or has been framed for particular scholarly outlets. Among these are the Journal of Genocide Research, Memory Studies, or *the International Journal of Transitional Justice*. Isolating the case studies and literatures in separate essays addresses particular debates in a direct and succinct manner.

**Aftermaths**

All the essays in this thesis grapple with past or ongoing conflicts. My insights are thus marked as taking place in an "ethnographic present" from 2010-2020.[111] Understanding this research as a "present"

111 . The term "ethnographic present" describes a particular moment in research that is historically informed but does not seek to make timeless claims.

or fixed moment in time means that concepts and practices are subject to later change. As such, future scholars should be cautious about overprescribing the everyday experiences of survivor communities involved in memorial work. This temporal moment does, however, provide enough of a timespan to reflect on some of the aftermaths of the work presented in the above essays. Three distinct aftermaths emerge: IDP camps, exhibitions and memory-positive scholarship.

For those who experienced humanitarian-administered life in northern Uganda's camps, there is a residue effect. The camps have, over time, both eroded cultural linkages and encouraged new identity formations. The work of Acholi cultural revival, for instance, runs against the grain of humanitarian erasure. Through Ker Kwaro Acholi and the visible performances of memory, culture is reified as a new beginning in the post-war era. Food, traditional justice and performance feature highly in people's desires to reclaim their past from the westernising effects of encampment. The National Memory and Peace Documentation Centre's growing collection is evidence of this reclamation, whereby seeds, gourd bowls, drinking cups and clay pots have both been donated and collected as evidence of pre-camp traditions. Importantly, this organic materiality supports the ephemera of intangible heritage, in sharp contrast to the mostly Chinese-manufactured plastic and metal remains that can still be found across the post-camp landscape.

With the passage of time, the potential for peacebuilding proposed from *Travelling Testimonies* in Essay Six has lost some of its dialogical essence. The newly-launched (September 2020) National Memory and Peace Documentation Centre exhibition is a series of banners designed similarly to the "books-on-walls" described in Essay One as well as at Lukodi (Essay Three). This is a clear illustration of the

manifest outcomes of mainstream representation, discussed in Essays One, Three and Seven. Curators in Uganda are conscious not to replicate the legacies of colonial, mass media or humanitarian imagery, however the didactic, industry-driven trends in museology are clearly having an impact on the imaginative scope of memorial projects. Understanding these consequences is critical considering recent calls to commodify conflict heritage in Uganda and create tourism products out of traumatic experiences.[112] Even the Pabbo Memorial Committee is aiming to commodify their war histories, yet, their desires stem more from research fatigue than from the desire to reframe their traumatic pasts as a resource.[113]

Other dangers await. The adverse effects of commodifying and concretising histories can foster resentment, as shown in Essay One, from those who are not represented (rendered aphasic) or those who want to forget in a form of "chosen amnesia". Furthermore, fixing memorial narratives and displays limits the potential for dialogical memorial processes that can lead to usefully agonistic forms of democratic negotiations over difficult pasts. As I argued in Essay One, practitioners would benefit from more thematic investigations into amnesia and aphasia to avoid these outcomes. It is possible that other countries with spill-over effects from Uganda's wars will look to the diffuse memorial practices, unaware of the disagreement around them. Such instances are relevant considering the visits of delegations interested to learn more about Uganda's rebel groups that have destabilised their nations: namely, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in the Central African Republic (CAR) or the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in the DRC. Furthermore,

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112. Nono, Francis, "Let Uganda embrace 'Dark tourism' to attract more visitors", *New Vision*. 25 October 2018.

113. Email communication, September 2020. After having engagements with UN and local NGOs that came to do research on sexual and gender based violence and memorialisation respectively but did not contribute to the building of the memorial work or the livelihoods of its committee members.

the land on which IDP camps were sent - that caused so much concern for people in Northern Uganda - are now home to thousands of South Sudanese refugees who are now seeking safety in Uganda.

Finally, increasing the push for more memory projects in Uganda means that more scholars are also researching conflict pasts, most often in Northern Uganda.[114] Large collaborative research programs originating in Canada and the UK are now focusing on some of the same sites where I have undertaken my research. Namely, the Transformative Memory Partnership (based at the University of British Columbia) and the Education Justice and Memory Network (based at the University of Bristol) both show that Northern Uganda remains a place for memory positivists and scholars to confer, collaborate and seek more restorative forms of justice.[115]

**Continuities**

As Museveni contends for another presidential term in 2021, political transition still eludes Uganda. The impact of his tenure and the ruling NRM party has been central in moulding national history over the last thirty-four years, even if his grip on power is loosening with growing popular support for opposition candidate Robert Kyagulanyi. Essays Two and Five illustrate the authority that Museveni and his government wield; as a result, the ability to move on from the past remains constrained. Even so, transitional justice actors and citizens continue to resist against the hegemonic discourses. In this larger political context, the Rwenzururu region and Northern Uganda have served as useful case studies to highlight how resistance and resilience can be understood through

114. Other examples include the forensic work driven by the University of Tennessee, occasional inputs from scholars in the UK working on archives.

115. The projects are housed at the University of British Columbia https://blogs.ubc.ca/transformativememory/2019/02/27/welcome/ and University of Bristol https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=AH%2FT007842%2F1 respectively. Each one advocates for the usefulness of traumatic memory for social transformation and education.

analysis of memorialisation. In these contexts, resistance and resilience become qualities that endure beyond the eras of war, displacement and oppression. Rwenzururu demonstrates the ability of a people to negotiate their pasts through oral signification or secrecy; in Northern Uganda, though the conditions of displacement and war may have changed, people continue to use their aid literacy to navigate new memorial systems.

Until its next trajectories become clear, this research has sought to understand memorial processes in relation to past conflicts, and to gain insight into how memorialisation works to achieve social and political ends. I have offered an empirical grounding to the tensions around remembrance and forgetting that are embedded in projects of peacebuilding and nation-building, and that remain on the periphery of mainstream development. More than just compiling ethnographic data within one specific case, however, my research employs a theoretical robustness from multiple fields. I have shown a range of evidence that illustrates an entanglement between international and domestic affairs that is representative of today's transnational memory politics. Such an inductive approach is not just useful for the case studies presented, but is transferable to other contexts as well—in particular to those locales experiencing transitional justice without state-centred transition, to war-affected communities who are trying to use memorials as a form of symbolic reparation, or to countries neighbouring Uganda that are dealing with the residue from any of its recent conflicts. This thesis concludes with an aim towards more critical practice and scholarship related to memorialisation in Uganda. Such criticality will open up avenues to meaningfully process traumatic war memories and interpret sites of conflict in a way that seeks out lasting repair, not only for Ugandans but for war-affected people more generally.

## EPILOGUE: ON FALLISM AND UNLEARNING

In finalising the essays and reflecting on the PhD project, I have come to a series of after thoughts. These lingering sentiments are becoming more and more relevant as protesters in the United States and elsewhere take to the streets and demand that Black Lives Matter; at the same time, governments are using imperial tools of control to lock down movement and constrain everyday freedoms in the name of protection. Thus, I want to articulate two potential avenues to progress the findings of this research.

First, is the recognition that monumental histories have reached a critical moment of unmaking. The Fallism movement (removing public images and statues that mark past victors), present in many historical reconfigurations, has reached new transnational resonance through social media and the forced removals of statues. In dismantling longstanding symbols of power, activists no longer accept the notion that we can just have new symbolic add-ons. It is vital that memorial scholars and makers of new memorial projects pay attention to this long-term trajectory of contestation. We must ask whether we are going to study or build something that will just be torn down, or if we are creating methods to continually reshape histories in public spaces.

Second, tied to this unmaking, is the notion of "unlearning." In Azoulay's (2019) text Potential History, she calls for a radical approach to dismantling imperialism. In her words,

> *Unlearning becomes a process of disengaging from the unquestioning use of political concepts—institutions such as citizen, archive, art, sovereignty, and human rights, as well as categories like the new and the neutral, all of which fuel intrinsic imperial drive to 'progress', which conditions the way world history is organised, archived, articulated, and*

*represented (11)*.

I have come to realise that undertaking a PhD in International Development at the LSE, and being a part of the development of the new Firoz Lalji Centre for Africa within British academia, has been about learning a new imperialism. This learning process has created innumerable encounters whereby I have had to justify my knowledge as a curator, to insist on more equitable ways of working, and to resist codes of practice that seek to subjugate the people I work with into neocolonial categories of understanding. Yet this was an intended challenge that I had set up for myself.

I wanted to know why and how the financial and programmatic decisions were made that impacted my curatorial work (predating the PhD). I wanted the time to dig deep into processes of thinking to see how far the critical voice could echo outside of radical intellectual chambers, where one is proverbially preaching to the converted. And what I found was that even though critical scholarship exists and change is inevitable, symbolic inquiry is still seen as an optional addition to peacebuilding work.

So perhaps these global movements—for monuments to fall, for reparations and for more diverse inclusion—will help this work to be less of a peripheral add-on to social transformation. Part of the reason we say George Floyd's name is not just due to social media, it is because we can also see his face, enshrined in the numerous portraits that recognise his life. Part of the reason for the public backlash against the newly-installed statue in Bristol is because it lacked the process, consultation and insight needed to seek out symbolic healing. And let us not forget how economic and social inequalities are embedded in these public contestations of hegemonic memory.

The challenge that now remains is how to continue a career as a scholar and curator in a way that can be liberating. I still need to learn how to argue for a more attuned symbolic analysis, unshackled from the legacies of categorising people or reproducing the violence of images, archives and language. I still need to work towards better methods of making exhibitions—that are steeped in colonial technologies of "civilising"—both to recognise the harm done and to make symbolic space for repair. At the very least, journeying through this theory-and-practice has created a method of call and response that has tuned my thinking to attend to the vast range of symbolic needs articulated by people in transitional contexts.

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**END**