

Local-level Politics in Uganda:
Institutional Landscapes at the Margins of the State

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Submitted for the degree of PhD

2005

ABSTRACT

Uganda has been considered one of Africa's few "success stories" over the past decade, an example of how a country can be transformed through a committed state bureaucracy. The thesis questions this view by looking at the experiences of development and change in a sub-parish in eastern Uganda. From this more local-level perspective, the thesis discusses the weakness of the state in the countryside, and incorporates the importance of religious and customary institutions. In place of a narrow view of politics, focused on reforms and policies coming from above, which rarely reach rural areas in a consistent or predictable way, the thesis describes political developments within a rural community.

The thesis rests on two premises. First, that the state in rural Uganda has been too weak to support an effective bureaucratic presence in the countryside. Second, that politics at the local-level is an "open-ended" business, better understood through investigating a range of institutional spaces and activities, rather than a particular set of actions, or a single bureaucracy.

Oledai sub-parish, which provides the empirical material for the thesis, was far removed from the idea of state-sponsored success described in the literature. Villagers had to contend with a history of violence, with recent impoverishment, and with the reality that the rural economy was unimportant in maintaining the structures of the government system. The thesis shows that the marginalisation of the countryside came at a time when central and local government structures had become increasingly reliant on funding from abroad.

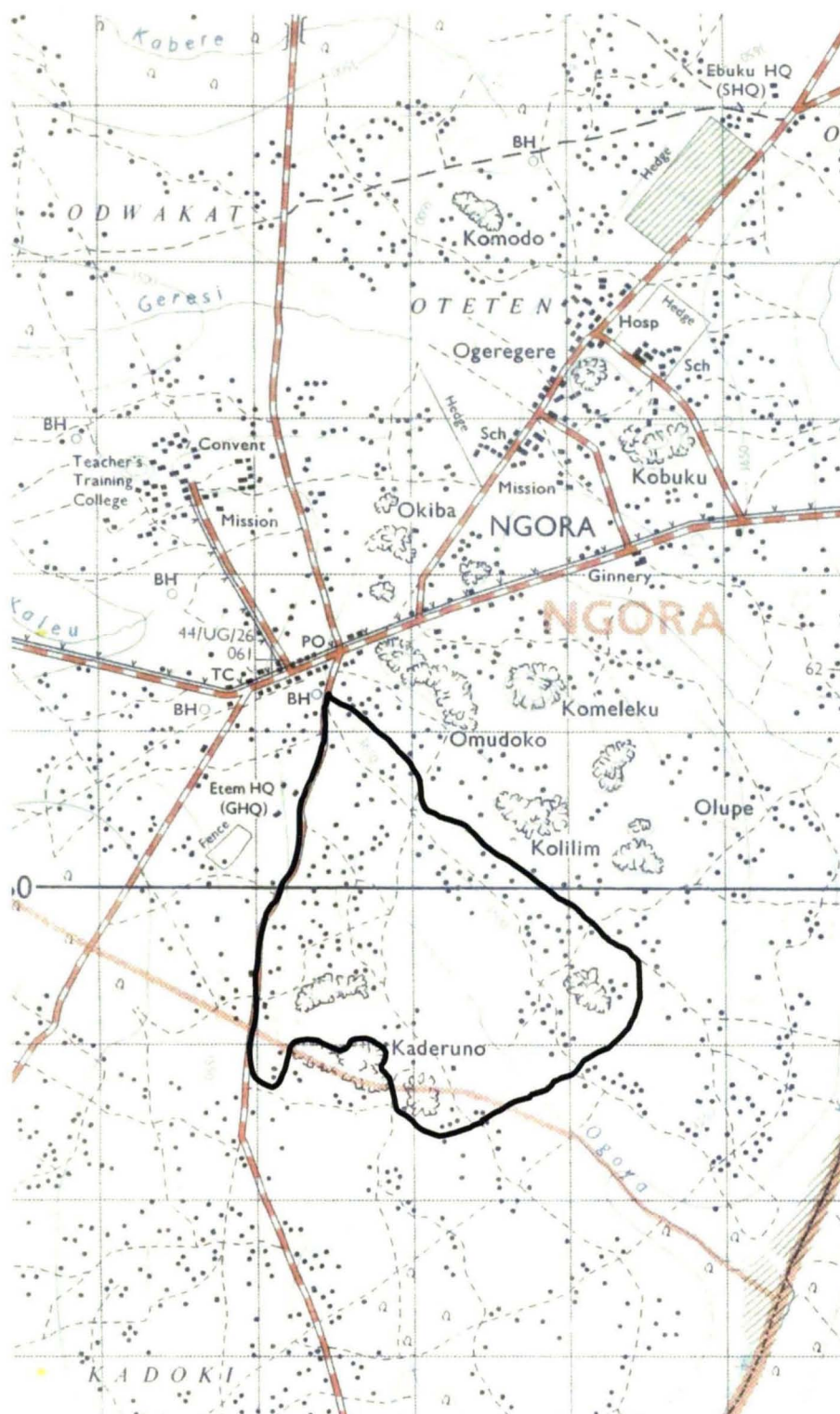
Aside from the analysing the weakness of the state bureaucracy, the thesis goes on to discuss broader changes in the life of the sub-parish, including the impact of a violent insurgency in the late 1980s. The thesis also looks at the role of churches and burial societies, institutions which have been largely ignored by the literature on political developments in Uganda. Religious and customary institutions, as well as the village court, provided spaces where political goals, such as settling disputes, building a career, or acquiring wealth, could be pursued.

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MAPS

Map A: Oledai sub-parish and the environs of Ngora sub-county



Oledai sub-parish is the area within the thick black line. The unpopulated area in the central part of the sub-parish is covered with swampy ground.

Scale: 1 square = 1 km²

Source: Map of Ngora County, Map Collection, School of Oriental and African Studies. Government of Uganda Survey, Lands and Mines Department, no ref.

Map B: Ngora county within the environs of Teso District (from 1956)



The area covered by map A is indicated by the rectangle in the bottom centre of the map.

Source: Map Collection, School of Oriental and African Studies. Government of Uganda Survey. Lands and Mines Department, ref. E.46/224, (dated 1956).

Map C: Teso region within Uganda



Teso, as it was once administratively defined, is the area of the map contained within the thick black line.

Significant populations of Iteso are also found in Pallisa district, and a separate population, the “south Iteso”, found on and around the border with western Kenya.

Source: United Nations Cartographic Section
(<http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/uganda.pdf>)

A map of South Sudan showing its administrative regions and major cities. The map includes a north arrow and a scale bar (0 to 100 km). Neighboring countries are Sudan to the north, Democratic Republic of Congo to the west, Kenya to the east, and Tanzania and Rwanda to the south. Major cities marked include Moyo, Gulu, Lira, Soroti, Mbale, Iganga, Kampala, Masaka, Mubende, and Fort Portal. The map also shows Lake Nuer, Lake Abert, Lake Edward, and Lake Victoria. The administrative regions are labeled: KAKWA, MADI, ACHOLI, LANGI, ITESO, KARAJIE, TEPETH, SOK, SEBEI, BAGWERE, BANYOLE, BAGISU, BAMASAR, ITO, BAGWE, SAMIA, BAKONGJO, BATW, BANYANKOLE (IRU) (HIMA), BAHORORO, BAKIGA, and BAFUMBIRA. The map also shows the international border with the Democratic Republic of Congo and the international border with Kenya.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Some way into the thesis itself I discuss the importance of *bricolage*. Though it sounds complicated, *bricolage* means simply the piecing together of new ways of thinking or doing based on what is already there. The word can also be used to describe the way the thesis has itself been constructed, as it has been built up from the contributions of a number of people, places and institutions, whom I would like to acknowledge and thank.

My thanks are due, first and foremost, to the people from the sub-parishes of Oledai and Agolitom who contributed their time, energy and analysis to the study. My thanks should also be extended to the staff at Vision Terudo, a local charitable organisation that provided me with a room to work in and a place to stay. In particular I would like to thank Churchill Ongole and Florence Among for their support and advice during my long stay in the area, and Ongit John, Isaiah Oonyu, Cuthbert Malinga and Aogon Sam for their friendship and conversation. In Kampala I have to thank Harriet Acham and Nathan Ogwang for their hospitality and friendship, for being my adoptive family. I must also thank my family back in the UK for their support and generosity throughout the thesis. To my parents, and to Nick and Matthew, my deepest thanks.

At the London School of Economics I would like to thank the research and administrative staff for their support throughout the thesis research. My supervisor Liz Francis was immensely supportive of the thesis project. I would also like to thank Dru Daley, Sue Redgrave and Steph Davies for making my stays at the Development Studies Institute both productive and enjoyable. Rachel Wrangham, Thi Minh Ngo and Elliott Green provided help and support at critical moments in the thesis. Their input is reflected throughout the final text.

I would like to thank Father Bernard Phelan of the Mill Hill Fathers for his help and advice throughout the thesis. There was also help and support from Father Declan O'Toole, who was sadly killed in March 2002. The thesis is dedicated to the memory of Father O'Toole, and to the memory of Edotun Jackson, a young man from the sub-parish of Oledai, killed in August 2002.

After the difficult experience of carrying out fieldwork in Teso, I was fortunate to find a haven among the research community at Roskilde University in Denmark. I would like to express my deep thanks to Edwin Rap, Wolf Dressler, Steffen Jensen, David Kibikyo, Birthe Bruun, Amanda Hammar, Inge Jensen, Karen Lauterbach, Holger Bernt Hansen,

Niels Kastfelt and Fiona Wilson. My debt to the intellectual community of Africanists in Denmark is great.

The writing-up part of the thesis also involved a six-month stay in the Philippines, where I was given the warmest welcome by the School of Economics at the University of the Philippines, Diliman (despite my peculiar status as an Africanist with no presentable knowledge of economics or of the Philippines). In particular I must extend my sincerest thanks to Emmanuel Jimenez and Odie Grajo Santos for their support, and to James Putzel for making the necessary introductions. I would also like to thank the SAGA project of Cornell and Clark Atlanta Universities for the research grant that made the research stay with Dr. Chia-Hsin Hu a possibility. I would also like to thank Chia-Hsin, more personally, for her wisdom and support during the long journey towards completing the thesis.

The thesis was written with principal financial support coming from the Economic and Social Research Council, and I would like to offer my sincere gratitude to the ESRC for the tremendous support and freedom the council extends to its research students. Additional support was forthcoming from the LSE Research Studentship fund, the LSE Postgraduate Travel Fund and the International Development Studies department at Roskilde University. I should also like to thank the Uganda National Council of Science and Technology for making my research stay in Teso as straightforward and trouble free as possible.

I must divide my final thanks two ways. First, to the intellectual support of my main thesis supervisors, Christian Lund and Teddy Brett. Second, to the advice and friendship of Akello Suzan, Enou Andrew Ben, Osakan Chris and Aguti Stella, my research colleagues in Teso.

ACRONYMS

Though it is typical for a development studies text to overwhelm the reader with long lists of capital letters, the thesis uses acronyms sparingly. The majority of capital letters appear in Chapter two, where they refer to the various rebel and government factions that came in, in the years after independence.

ACAO	Assistant Central Administrative Officers
DP	Democratic Party
FOBA	Force Obote Back Army
NRM	National Resistance Movement
PAG	Pentecostal Assemblies of God
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RC	Resistance Council / Resistance Council Chairman
UNLA	Uganda National Liberation Army
UPA	Uganda People's Army
UPC	Uganda People's Congress

1750 UGS : 1 USD

Dollar values in the thesis are based on the conversion rate of the Ugandan shilling for January 1, 2002.

GLOSSARY

<i>Ateso</i>		the language spoken in the Teso region
<i>Iteso</i>		the people of the Teso region
<i>atesot</i>	(Ateso)	a woman from the Teso region
<i>itesot</i>	(Ateso)	a man from the Teso region
<i>abazukufu</i>	(Luganda)	"re-awakened" (a born-again Anglicans)
<i>adungu</i>	(Ateso)	a finger harp (pl. <i>adungui</i>)
<i>aibok acok</i>	(Ateso)	"to dig potatoes" (a metaphor for a way of killing)
<i>akogo</i>	(Ateso)	a finger piano (pl. <i>ahogoi</i>)
<i>akonye lohapugan</i>	(Ateso)	"eye" of the government, colloq. for village council chairman
<i>aleya</i>	(Ateso)	a farm labour group
<i>amisir</i>	(Ateso)	a garden (pl. <i>amisirin</i>)
<i>apolon</i>	(Ateso)	a chief
<i>apolon ka ateker</i>	(Ateso)	a clan leader
<i>askari</i>	(Swahili)	a guard; soldier
<i>ateker</i>	(Ateso)	a clan or burial society (pl. <i>atekerin</i>)
<i>atap</i>	(Ateso)	porridge (usually of cassava flour and millet)
<i>bakungulu</i>	(Luganda)	men of Kakungulu
<i>balokole</i>	(Luganda)	"Saved Ones" (born-again Anglicans), sing. <i>mulokole</i>
<i>bamalaki</i>	(Luganda)	follower of Malaki (religious leader)
<i>boda boda</i>	(Ateso)	bicycle taxi man
<i>ebuku</i>	(Ateso)	a county, lit. "shield"
<i>eitela</i>	(Ateso)	a parish, or parish chief
<i>emidir</i>	(Ateso)	a drum (pl. <i>emidirin</i>)
<i>emorimor</i>	(Ateso)	a clan co-ordinator
<i>emuron</i>	(Ateso)	a doctor; witchdoctor
<i>erony</i>	(Ateso)	a sub-parish; <i>mutongole</i> in Luganda
<i>etem</i>	(Ateso)	a sub-county, lit. "hearth"
<i>ikearit</i>	(Ateso)	a soldier (pl. <i>ikearin</i>)
<i>ggombolola</i>	(Luganda)	a sub-county; <i>etem</i> in Ateso
<i>kasanvu</i>	(Luganda)	central government labour taxation
<i>luwalo</i>	(Luganda)	compulsory unpaid labour for local chiefs
<i>mayumba kumi</i>	(Ateso)	lit. "ten houses", a tier of government in the early 1980s (from the Swahili <i>nyumba kumi</i>)
<i>ssaza</i>	(Luganda)	a county; <i>ebuku</i> in Ateso

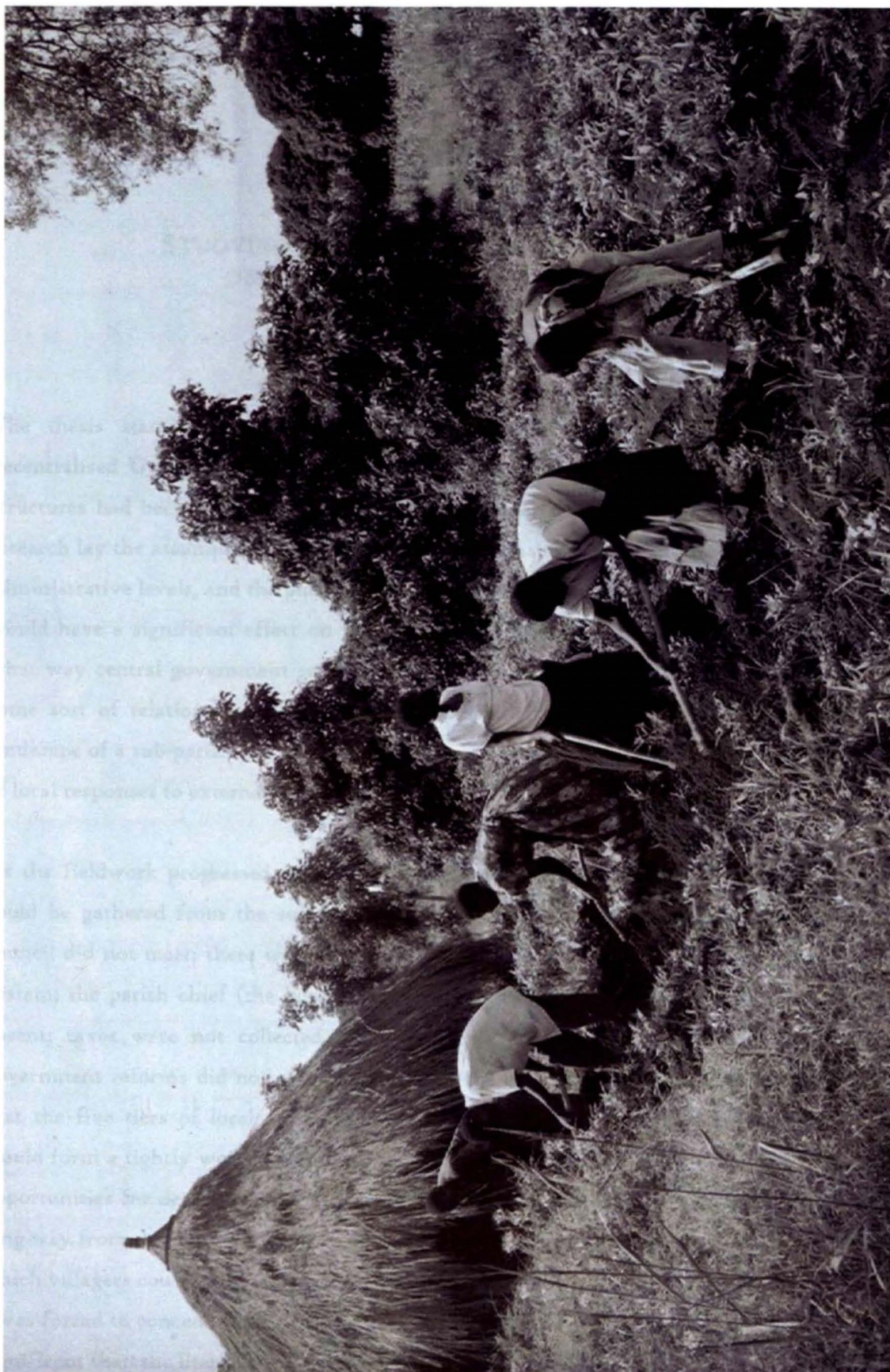


Plate 1: A farm labour group (*aleya*) at work in Oledai sub-parish.

CHAPTER 1

STUDYING LOCAL-LEVEL POLITICS IN UGANDA: OBSERVATIONS, PREMISES, METHODS

The thesis started out as an attempt to chronicle villagers' interactions with the decentralised Ugandan state. The intention was to see to what extent local government structures had been opened up by processes of popular participation. At the heart of the research lay the assumption that the transfer of responsibilities for service delivery to lower administrative levels, and the putting in place of new democratic structures at the local-level, would have a significant effect on village politics. Though I did not want to prejudge in what way central government reforms would affect local politics, I did expect there to be some sort of relationship between local government reforms and the changing political landscape of a sub-parish. In short, the thesis was conceived as an impact study, an account of local responses to externally derived change.

As the fieldwork progressed, however, it became clear that there was little material that could be gathered from the sub-parish to empiricise this research concern. The village council did not meet; there were no public gatherings that related to the local government system; the parish chief (the bureaucratic counterpart to the village council) was entirely absent; taxes were not collected. By and large decentralisation did not matter, and government reforms did not reach much below the district level. Despite my expectation that the five tiers of local government (district, county, sub-county, parish, sub-parish) would form a tightly woven hierarchy, bound together by patron-client networks, if not by opportunities for democratic participation, the district government turned out to be a very long way from the lives of villagers. Though there were, in theory, a range of ways through which villagers could express their dissatisfaction with the status quo these were not utilised. I was forced to concede that the bureaucratic state was a relatively diffuse presence, far less significant than the literature on decentralisation would presuppose.

In this situation the research options were either to retreat to the district capital to study decentralization in a place where it was more likely to matter, or to remain in the sub-parish

and, from there, try to understand what developments were going on. The second option, a study of political development and change in the context of a village, provides the subject for the thesis.¹

INTRODUCTION

The sub-parish of Oledai is located in the Teso region of eastern Uganda.² Oledai numbered 126 households, and had a total population of 862 as of January 2002.³ The majority of these households should be thought of as extremely poor.⁴ People made a living mostly through cultivating foodstuffs—cassava, groundnuts, millet and sorghum, as well as sweet potatoes (pictured at the start of the chapter). Much of this production was used to feed the family, though some of it was sold on at the market in Ngora. 80 of the 126 households listed farming as their main occupation.⁵ Women did the bulk of farmwork and housework. *Atap*, a claggy and somewhat heavy porridge of cassava flour, flavoured with millet, provided the staple food. *Ajon*, a beer brewed from millet or sorghum, provided the staple drink.⁶

Households lived in the middle of the land they farmed, making for a dispersed pattern of settlement. Oledai was not a nucleated village. The home compound would typically comprise a number of grass-thatched huts (*itogoi*) that would provide room for sleeping in and for storing grain and household goods. A number of households offered a place to stay for grandparents, though this was a matter of choice rather than obligation. The land farmed by the household was nominally the property of a contingent lineage group, known as an *ateker*, typically numbering between twenty and thirty households. Land transactions—for rental purposes—involved the *ateker* and were meant to be limited to

¹ Following from Swartz, politics as used in the thesis: “refers to events which are involved in the determination and implementation of public goals and/or the differential distribution and use of power within the group or groups concerned with the goals being considered” (1968: 1). Swartz’s explanation for this definition is explained in more detail in his co-authored (with Victor W. Turner and Arthur Tuden) introduction in *Political Anthropology* (Swartz, 1966: 1-9).

² The names of villagers have been changed.

³ The breakdown of this figure by age and gender is 192 women, 168 men, 256 girls and 246 boys.

⁴ From what we can tell from the national poverty survey, the eastern region, which includes Teso, was ranked third out of four in terms of income poverty (Okidi and Mugambe, 2002: 10). The Uganda Human Development Report of 2001 lists Kumi District as 6th poorest district in Uganda (ahead of only Moroto, Kotido, Kitgum, Arua, and Adjumani) out of 51 districts. In 1998 the district was ranked 12th poorest out of 40 districts.

⁵ Of the 126 household heads in Oledai sub-parish the breakdown for main source of employment goes as follows: 80 listed farming as their main occupation; 12 listed casual employment; 8 said that they ran a market stall in Ngora; 14 said that they were able to draw a regular income; 8 collected state pensions; 2 households had no members able to work (due to age or disability).

⁶ For further studies of the lifestyle of the Iteso, the importance of *atap* and *ajon*, and the pattern of household relationships see Lawrance 1957; Uchendu and Anthony, 1976; Karp, 1980; Heald, 1991; Henriques, 2002.

members of the same lineage (that said land sales outside the *ateker* were not unknown). Inheritance among the Iteso (the dominant group in the region) was patrilineal, and settlement patterns patrilocal, meaning that land and livestock passed from father to son, and that the son, once married, was expected to farm land near to his father.⁷ In theory, all sons were entitled to land and livestock as they graduated into manhood, and land ownership tended towards a pattern of fragmentation, with plots being divided and subdivided as new generations came up.

Poorer homes would have one or two huts for sleeping in, and a more dilapidated hut for cooking food. The huts were made of dried earth, the floors smeared with cow dung and the roof thatched with rushes. One or two of the richer households in the sub-parish had a more permanent structure with a cement floor, brick walls and an aluminium roof. Such homes were usually built by sons living in Jinja or Kampala and were occupied by parents, wives or children, rather than the “big man” who had actually paid for the house to be built. In terms of the topography of the sub-parish, about a third of Oledai was covered with swampy ground. The swamp was used for grazing cattle, as well as providing the main source of water for drinking and cooking (pictured on page 186). Water was drawn from an open well that grew thick and dirty when the swamp dried out in the long dry season, which lasted from December to March.

The lack of clean water, the poor economic prospects for villagers, the unimportance of the local government in the day-to-day life of the village, suggested that Oledai was a political and economic backwater, that benefited little from the “success story” widely celebrated in the literature on Uganda (Mutibwa, 1992; Langseth et al., 1995; Villadsen and Lubanga, 1996; Reinikka and Collier, 2001). A sense of marginalness was the first thing that struck me as I got to know the village. While the literature has described a government doing much to combat AIDS and poverty, and liberating the countryside from the predations of past regimes, very little of this could be seen at work in Oledai.⁸ The role of the government, particularly in its developmental guise, appeared to be of limited importance. Though Uganda has been regarded as one of the few bright spots on the continent in the 1990s, and though Museveni’s government, has been the focus for most of the research on political,

⁷ 98% of the population of Kumi District was categorised as Iteso in the 2002 census (Kumi District Development Report, 2006/2007 (volume 1), 1995: 21). The household survey in Oledai found that of the 126 households in the sub-parish all of the household heads identified themselves as Iteso.

⁸ For example: “Since 1986, when the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government led by President Museveni took over power after five years of guerrilla war, Uganda has undergone dramatic political and economic transformation... Progress in political liberalisation is evident in a major reconstruction of politics and administration. The *most significant current change* in the country’s transformation is the government’s decentralisation program” (*italics added*, Birungi et al., 2000: 31).

social and economic developments over the past few years, the state bureaucracy was notably absent from the lives of villagers.

Despite this absence, it is important to understand that rural Teso has not always belonged to the nether reaches of Uganda's political economy. The longer one stayed in Oledai, the more one saw remnants of a different sort of economy, and a different sort of relationship to the political centre. A disused concrete shell sitting east of the Ngora-Mukongoro road turned out to be the remains of a ginnery, the place where villagers used to sell cotton for export to the international market. A piece of bushy land next to the sub-county headquarters once served as a site for agricultural demonstration. The Iteso have had a long history of cultivating cotton, in the earlier part of the last century their successful adaptation to the crop was seen as instrumental in transforming the fortunes of colonial government in Uganda (Thomas and Scott, 1935: 448-449; Vincent, 1982: 170).

One could also see the remnants of a cattle-keeping society. A bloodied concrete slab surrounded on all sides by bushy ground, was still used as the place where livestock were slaughtered for sale at the market in Ngora. The Iteso, remembered as a pastoralist people, retained an affection for cattle during the years of cotton cultivation, and many growers had channelled the profits from cotton into large stocks of cattle. Cattle were a way of signalling social status, and provided the most important part of the brideprice paid during marriage negotiations (Lawrance, 1957: 202-207; Vincent, 1968: 119-125). Up to the 1970s it was not uncommon for the richest man in the sub-parish to own two or three hundred head of cattle; such a man would also keep a number of men in his employ, often outsiders from the Karamoja or Ankole regions.

From talking to one of the older members of the sub-parish, a man named Okurut Gereson Nairobi, it was also possible to find traces of a history of military service. On inquiring after Okurut's name, it turned out that the "Okurut" was his "clan name", one of a number of Ateso names available to members of a particular *ateker*. "Gereson" was his Christian name an indication of the success of Catholic and Anglican missions in the region (throughout the thesis I follow the local practice of listing the *ateker* name first and the Christian name second). And "Nairobi" was the nickname given to Gereson as a way of remembering his years of service in the King's African Rifles, which included a spell in

Kenya in the late 1940s.⁹ Up to 1986 Itesots had staffed much of Uganda's army and the police force (Omara-Otunnu, 1988: 35-38, 67).¹⁰

But the military connection, like cattle, and cotton, had largely disappeared. The expulsion of the Asian community in the early 1970s helped to bring an early close on the production of cotton, already on its way out in the region in the 1960s (Young, 1971: 141; Vincent, 1976: 94-95). Cattle had vanished from the area after repeated raiding by Karamojong warriors in the late 1980s, and the military connection fell away when the National Resistance Army (*infra* NRA), seized power in January 1986. The landscape of the village could thus be seen to represent a more complex history of state engagement and state withdrawal, incorporating years of expansion as well as contraction. Oledai sat outside the story of Uganda's recent successes, and suggests the need for an approach to the study of local-level politics that treats the role of the state with greater care.

STUDYING LOCAL-LEVEL¹¹ POLITICS IN UGANDA: TWO PREMISES

The thesis rests on two premises. The first is that the state in rural Uganda has been too weak to support an effective bureaucratic presence in the countryside. The second is that politics at the local-level is an "open-ended" business, better understood through investigating a range of institutional spaces and activities, rather than a particular set of actions, or a single bureaucracy.

The first premise reflects a more realistic appraisal of the significance of the state in the countryside in Uganda, and relates back to my first few weeks in Oledai. The lack of village council meetings; the absence of community assemblies, the absenteeism of the parish chief; the unimportance of taxes all pointed to the weakness of the state bureaucracy. For while the majority of studies on political development and change in recent years have suggested that Uganda offers an example of what can be achieved through a radical and committed state bureaucracy, it is important to recognise that the ethnographic literature has spoken of the absence of the state from the lives of many Ugandans. Susan Reynolds Whyte's work among the Nyole to the south of Teso, Karlström's empirical work on rural politics in the Baganda region, Kassimir's work on vernacular religious movements in western Uganda, or

⁹ From an interview with Okurut Gereson Nairobi, August 23, 2002.

¹⁰ The importance of the Iteso to the colonial army could be seen from the fact that the Ateso word for soldier, *ihearit*, was a vernacularisation of 'KAR', shorthand for the King's African Rifles.

¹¹ The allusion is to Swartz (1968), who uses the hyphenation to suggest the importance of non-local relationships as part of the explanation for processes of development and change.

Mark Leopold's work on the refugee economy of the West Nile points to a state bureaucracy that is concentrated in the towns and absent from the lives of those who live in rural areas (Whyte, 1997; Kassimir, 1995; Karlström, 1999; Leopold, 2005).

Despite this weakness in the Uganda government bureaucracy in rural areas, a concern with decentralisation reforms has come to dominate research on political developments in the countryside (Mamdani, 1988; Langseth et al., 1995; Birungi et al., 2001; Wunsch and Ottemoeller, 2004). I would argue that this has promoted a somewhat state-centric view of political change, at odds with the actual impact or influence of the government in people's lives.¹² Though many of these studies are based on narrow sorts of data—interviews with district officials, qualitative survey data, project evaluations, theoretical formulae—and should be circumspect in the claims they make, they consistently argue for a state-led transformation of the countryside. In particular, there is the repeated belief that the setting up of democratically elected village councils, or the transferring responsibilities to lower administrative levels, have brought about profound changes in the way politics is organised at the local-level. Harriet Birungi speaks of decentralisation as the “most significant” change in the countryside; Anthony Regan says that decentralisation has had a “remarkable impact”; while Wunsch and Ottemoeller claim that it was “difficult to overstate the importance of the change” brought about by local government reforms (Birungi et al., 2000: 33; Regan, 1998: 170; Wunsch and Ottemoeller, 2004: 126). In terms of what had actually changed in rural Teso in the 1990s it would be hard to accept a view of decentralisation as either significant or remarkable.

But what was most striking about the sub-parish of Oledai was the way decentralisation had done nothing to bring the state closer to the lives of villagers. Though decentralisation can be thought of as a reform of government where responsibilities are transferred to lower levels, making it easier for ordinary citizens to engage in the business of government, the state bureaucracy in Teso had become *less and less* involved with developments in the countryside. The sorts of interactions which had characterised the work of the state in the colonial and early post-colonial period, and which Mahmood Mamdani has characterised as a system of compulsion—tax collection, enforced public works, cotton cultivation—had fallen into abeyance, and had not been replaced by anything tangible (Mamdani, 1996: 52-54).

¹² The series of volumes edited by Holger Bernt Hansen and Michael Twaddle—*Uganda Now*, *Changing Uganda*, and *Developing Uganda*—suggest, in their increasingly positive titles, suggests an progressive evolution of Uganda's political economy, which places the state bureaucracy at the centre of the analysis. It should, however, be added that despite their celebratory titles, the Hansen and Twaddle series contains a number of fairly sceptical accounts of what has changed in Uganda over the past decade (see, for example, Southall, 1998; Whyte, 1998).

Instead of compulsion, there was absence and withdrawal, a retreat of the state that was commented on by villagers, as much as myself:

Though the parish chief's work is to move from home to home to know what happens in the parish, he does not do that here. A long time can pass without seeing him. He normally stays in the town. We get along without him.¹³

As Amuge Immaculate suggests, the parish chief was a rare visitor to the sub-parish. He was in no sense answerable to villagers, and in no meaningful way was he the "implementing arm" of government projects or programmes. I will argue that one of the main reasons why the parish chief was absent, and why his absence did not matter to the Ugandan government, in part because donor-funding had come to dominate the political economy of the local government system. The parish chief stayed in town because that was where his salary was drawn, while district officials did not ask parish chiefs to spend time in the parishes, because the countryside was of little importance to the local government system. Tax revenues from within the district accounted for less than 2 percent of local government revenues (according to the financial returns for 2002).¹⁴ The political economy of the state bureaucracy was turned upwards and outwards, extraverted towards those international development agencies that had funded Uganda's successes.

Rather than attempting to study local-level politics through the lens of state policies, I have sought to describe changes in the local political field more broadly. This brings me to the second premise, that politics is an "open-ended business". In Oledai, at least, a political career was typically pursued across a range of institutional spaces, as were disputes over property, or attempts at punishing individuals. Churches, burial societies or the village courts were *relatively* important, in the sense of being one among a number of institutions which provided space for political action: what took place in one institutional space could have a significant impact on what happened in another. For example, a case on widow inheritance discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 describes how the land dispute that arose involved not only the clan court, but also the burial society and the church; and the legitimacy of a decision taken in the clan court was likely to be linked back to what had gone on in other institutional spaces. In an echo of Marc Swartz's introduction to the subject, "local-level politics" can be thought of as incomplete, involving different institutional spaces, combining horizontal as well as vertical relationships (1968: 1). It is in studying the incompleteness of politics that the thesis makes its contribution.

¹³ Interview with Amuge Immaculate, October 14, 2002.

¹⁴ Kumi District Development Report 2006/2007 (2002): 21.

As such, alongside a discussion of the history of the state in the region (Chapters 2 and 3) the thesis includes chapters on the importance of *religious* and *customary* institutions (Chapters 4 through 6). In these later chapters I argue that village churches and kinship-based associations provide examples of *significant change* in the local political landscape in rural Teso, changes that have gone unrecorded in the literature on local politics. The growth of Pentecostalism, and the establishment of burial societies in the region, have transformed the ways in which political goals—dispute resolution, building a career, managing wealth—are organised. The thesis adds to those few studies that have discussed the importance of churches and burial societies in rural Uganda.¹⁵ More importantly, perhaps, in discussing religious and customary institutions *alongside* the work of village courts, the thesis shows that there are gains to be made from a broader view of politics, one that expects successful political actions being pieced together across a range of institutional spaces, rather than confined to a particular church, kinship-based arrangement or piece of local government infrastructure.

What comes next is a discussion of a range of approaches to the study of political developments in rural Africa. In many ways the discussion traces my own particular metamorphosis during fieldwork. The discussion moves from that literature concerned with state policies in the countryside, towards a literature that treats politics at the local-level in a more open-ended way. First there is a discussion of Uganda as a “success story”, and this relates us back to the literature on government policies, donor programmes, and their developmental impact on rural populations (Reinikka and Collier, 1998; World Bank, 1996; Tidemand, 1994). In opposition to this view of success, I discuss a second literature that has criticised donor-driven development work. In particular I focus on those studies that have regarded development work as much more of a battleground between rural populations and the bureaucratic machinery of the state (Ferguson, 1992; Escobar, 1995; Fairhead, 2000). But the problem with both the “success story” literature, and its critical antithesis, is that they are each, in their own way, overly state-centric. They take as given the importance of state bureaucracies, and fail to offer a realistic framework for those places where the bureaucratic is no longer important. As a way out of this impasse, I turn to Goran Hyden’s thesis concerning “uncaptured peasantry”. Though I accept many of the criticisms that have been set against Hyden’s rather romantic view of life in rural Tanzania (Bernstein, 1981; Moore, 1986; Williams, 1987), I argue that it is useful to consider Hyden’s broader thesis that the state is an often weakly bureaucratised presence in the countryside. Fourth, and finally, I turn to those studies which nuance Hyden’s thesis by arguing that

¹⁵ See, Whyte 1995; Karlström 1999, 2003; Tripp 2000; Whyte and Higenyi 1997.

governmental spaces offer only one, among a number of spaces, where public goals are pursued (Thiele, 1986; Berry, 1993).

a) The Ugandan state as “success” and failure

The National Resistance Movement (*infra* NRM) of Yoweri Museveni has been viewed, by and large, as the main engine of change in Uganda, and has been studied for its perceived successes in transforming the political economy of the countryside (Kasfir, 2000; Brett, 1998).¹⁶ Based on observed reductions in poverty levels in the 1990s, rural development has been discussed in ways that appear to regard material improvement in the countryside primarily to the work of the NRM government (Okidi and Mugambe, 2002; Langseth, 1996; Lubanga and Villadsen, 1996). In other words, the literature on economic recovery and political development in the 1990s has adopted a fairly state-centric framework in explaining significant change in rural areas (Amis, 2002: 14; Ireland Aid, 2002; United Nations CDF, 2000).

Aili Mari Tripp has discussed the way that Uganda has been hailed, particularly in the political economy literature, as the model for development in Africa. Over the past decade, there has been a celebration among political scientists and economists of the way Uganda has changed. The transformation is attributed to the government’s openness to economic liberalisation, and to the formal commitment to poverty reduction in its development programmes. In other words, Uganda has been regarded as the poster child of liberal approaches to economic reform, and only recently has the image of the Ugandan government been tarnished by suspicions of authoritarianism. Tripp quotes Richard Joseph’s assessment of the transformation of Uganda in the 1990s, which is worth repeating verbatim as it captures something of the spirit of scholarly judgement on the work of President Museveni and the National Resistance Movement:

[Uganda is] the model country in the reconfiguration of power in late twentieth century Africa... [which has] enthusiastically adopted structural adjustment reforms, benefited from large inflows of development aid, introduced partial political liberalization, given early emphasis to human rights and popular participation at the local level, used military force to enhance state cohesion and stability without overt repression (Joseph, 1999: 67, cited in Tripp 2004: 3).

¹⁶ This narrowness is also evidenced from my own initial research intentions, which were largely oriented around the study of decentralization and its effects at the local-level.

But the idea that the state bureaucracy is the most likely agent of development in the lives of poorer Ugandans offers, for the Teso region at least, a skewed view of development, one that is hard to reconcile with the overall absence of the state bureaucracy. The view that Uganda offers an example of “success” assumes, perhaps too easily, that changes in the countryside are, first and foremost, related to the policies legislated from above (Reinikka and Collier, 2001: 22). Though the achievement of macro-political stability in southern and western parts of the country has been of obvious importance in allowing part of the Ugandan economy to recover after the difficulties of the 1970s and 1980s, the claim that there is a demonstrable link between legislation on democratisation or decentralisation, and economic or political change in the countryside, needs to be treated with scepticism (Kappel et al., 2004).

The view of the countryside as something peculiarly responsive or reactive to changes administered through the state or development agencies requires an acceptance that the state bureaucracy is *interested* in administering changes at the local level. It appeared that the state had become ever more absent from the terrain of rural politics. Since the accession of Museveni to power in 1986 the Ugandan government has become increasingly extraverted, turned upwards and outwards towards relationships with the donor community or international aid agency. In Oledai, for example, there was little evidence that the district bureaucracy had grown more accountable to villagers and the state’s earlier role as tax collector, law enforcer, supervisor of public works had dissipated.

b) The failure of the Ugandan state and the metaphor of the machine

There have been only a few attacks, in the literature, on the Ugandan state since 1986 (though recent frustrations with the Museveni government among the donor community may change this). When attacks have been forthcoming they have focused more on the nature of the state regime than on attempting to explain actual developments in the countryside. Himbara and Sultan’s assault on the system of state administration in Uganda, for example, compares government structures in Uganda to those of a South African Bantustan, arguing that Uganda was a peripheral and dependent region, subject to the developmental visions of non-nationals (1995).¹⁷ The reliance on donor assistance, according to the authors, extended beyond questions of donor-funding to the re-colonisation of the

¹⁷ The incendiary nature of the language used in Himbara and Sultan’s broadside has come in for criticism by Martin Doornbos who, though agreeing with the point about the possible problems of donor dependency, points out that Bantustans were constructed around a racial ideology that offers only weak comparisons to the situation in Uganda (Doornbos, 1996: 427, also Bazaara, 1995).

state; the deployment of foreign personnel in key administrative positions had, in many ways, produced an arrangement worse than colonialism, for: 'not even a direct colony was as acutely reliant on external forces' (1995: 85). The authors criticized what they saw as Uganda's dependency and appealed to 'African political activists, younger African visionaries', who were believed to be in line with progressive forces in 'solidarity quarters worldwide' (1995: 92).

Himbara and Sultan's essay, though polemical in intent, can be contextualized within a much more sustained critique of development work in Africa. Those who claim to be progressive social scientists have criticized the development business, training their sights on the particular consequences of donor-funded projects and schemes or the actions of central governments on weak and impoverished populations (Escobar, 1995; Abrahamsen, 2000; Fairhead, 2000). A number of edited volumes have set out the problems involved in local-level encounters with the work of aid agencies (Hobart (ed), 1993; Crush (ed), 1995; Marcussen and Arnfred (eds), 1996). The central concern of these studies has been not so much the broader question of development and change in an African context, but rather the political externalities that flow out of the development business. At their most insistent, these studies claim that the state in Africa (in collusion with foreign development actors) dominates civil society, with the only options for those living in rural areas, other than co-optation, being either resistance or subversion (Escobar, 1995; Scott, 1990, 1998).

James Ferguson famously characterized the workings of a development project in Lesotho as an "anti-politics machine" (1990). The patronage and authority of donor-funded development work allowed the state to extend its interests into the countryside, buying off political opposition. Ferguson's analysis provided the template for a number of similar studies that have focused on the role of development discourse in legitimating the extension of state power (Escobar, 1995; Shore and Wright, 1998; Gupta, 1998). The argument that a dominant discourse of state-led development made possible particular sorts of bureaucratic power was particularly persuasive. Ferguson's view that such a discourse legitimated the interests of the political classes and their overseas supporters, rather than the supposed beneficiaries of projects. His book helped put in place a view of the African countryside as the repository for projects and government-sponsored schemes.¹⁸

¹⁸ Ferguson is at his best in showing the way a "development discourse" need have no relationship to observed reality, so long as it legitimated certain sorts of interventions. For example, what was communicated in the particular "dominant discourse" on Lesotho was a subsistence, agriculture-dependent, economy, the sort of economy that would make good use of a World Bank agrarian reform package, even though Lesotho's economy functioned primarily as a labour reserve for South Africa's mines (Ferguson, 1990: 27, 69-73).

Though Ferguson offers a convincing account of what happens to a fairly comprehensive development scheme and its capacity to entrench certain forms of bureaucratic and technological power in the countryside, the metaphor of the “anti-politics machine” does not apply particularly well in the many places where the machinery of the development business is absent. I would argue that development schemes are not particularly indicative of the way governmental bureaucracies are experienced in rural Africa, and Ferguson’s image of an expansive state bureaucracy, an essential continuity of the colonial state, needs to be treated with caution.¹⁹ Development work represents an occasional, and often exceptional feature of the various political landscapes found in rural Africa.²⁰ In many instances there is no development work to speak of, and the state bureaucracy is often uninterested in what is going on at the local-level. Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan argue that there are many instances where the state bureaucracy is relatively removed from rural developments, more notable for its absences than its presence (1997: 441). Even in a context as seemingly aid-dependent as Museveni’s Uganda, where the central and district governments have become reliant on funding from foreign governments, development schemes and government programmes are a less than overwhelming presence when viewed from the countryside.²¹

Life in Oledai was rarely encumbered by the ministrations of the Ugandan state. There was no evidence that the civil service had implemented policies or projects at the local-level. In the sub-parish, development work was more of a rhetorical presence, to be found on the radio, while the resources and programmes of the “development economy” were more obviously important to the salariat living in the district capital than it was to the livelihoods of villagers. Indeed, an argument that is repeated throughout the thesis, concerns the extraverted nature of the district (and central) government bureaucracies, and how they may offer part of the explanation as to the absence of the state bureaucracy from the local-level. For though decentralisation as a legislative reform involves the transfer of powers to lower levels, the fact that decentralisation was part of a bureaucratic system almost entirely dependent for its income on subventions from foreign governments, meant there was little practical reason for government officials to interact with rural areas. That the region’s

¹⁹ Though published in 1990, the data for Ferguson’s analysis was drawn from a Canadian aid project that started in 1975 and concluded in 1984 (Ferguson, 1990: 74).

²⁰ Fairhead and Leach argue that the potency of development projects may be related to the erratic or uneven nature of development work, and the effects of the rush of resources accompanying a three-month project would be significant. That said, I would suggest that development projects are not equally erratic everywhere, that many developments in rural Africa take place in the meantime between encounters with development work (Fairhead and Leach, 1997: 49-50).

²¹ According to the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, donor assistance as a percentage of government expenditure has consistently run above 50 percent for the past twenty years (*Background to the Budget Report*, 2005).

economy paid for less than two percent of government expenditures in 2002 suggests the scale of extraversion.

c) The metaphor of the “uncaptured” peasantry

An obvious contrast to Ferguson’s metaphor of the machine, is Goran Hyden’s account of an “uncaptured” peasantry. In discussing the limits to *Ujamaa* in Tanzania, Hyden argued that the state in Africa was in fact, a bureaucratic structure *incapable* of dominating the countryside (1980). At a time when modernising state bureaucracies appeared to dominate African politics (the late 1970s), Hyden suggested that the robustness of peasant communities actually prevented African government from successfully penetrating the countryside. In Hyden’s view the “uncaptured peasantry” retarded the sorts of rational bureaucratic systems that would deliver a more equitable society (Hyden was writing from a socialist democratic perspective). To reverse Ferguson’s formulation: the peasant was powerful, and the state weak, for in Hyden’s formulation the “uncaptured” peasantry owed its resilience to the persistence of time-honoured customary practices and harmonious social relations, what he termed the “economy of affection”, *and* also to the overall weakness of the state bureaucracy (1980: 18-19).

Goran Hyden has been criticized for his version of the African countryside. The suggestion that Tanzanians, living in the 1970s, were essentially pre-capitalist farmers, cultivating outside markets and away from government courts has been taken to pieces (Bernstein, 1981), and Hyden’s failure to account for the role of schools, churches, courts, capital, and cash has provoked a number of attacks from historians and sociologists (Barker, 1982: 603; Thiele, 1986: 541; Williams, 1987; Ferguson, 1990: 271). His presentation of African societies as cohesive and harmonious was out of kilter with a literature that had emphasised the centrality of conflict and violence to political struggles. In a coming together of the various criticisms set against him, Sally Falk Moore suggested that it was rather the penetration of capital, and the attempts at codifying “customary law” during colonial rule, that intensified competition and conflict over land (Moore, 1986: 298).

And yet these criticisms were set mainly at the first half of Hyden’s formulation: *an “uncaptured” peasantry that owed its resilience to time-honoured customary practices and harmonious social relations*. The second half of Hyden’s formulation, which pointed to the persistence of *a weak state bureaucracy* has received less attention, though it is, perhaps, the more radical, and more relevant part of his thesis. At the time of publication Hyden was writing against

the conception of an “overdeveloped state” that had been promoted by a number of scholars. Writers such as Leys (1975) and Saul (1976, 1979) argued that post-colonial governments had played too intrusive a role in the countryside, with their perceived control over modes of peasant production, such as the fixing of market prices or the establishment of state monopolies (see also Williams, 1987).²² Against this view of an overdeveloped state, Hyden pointed to the limits and incapacities of government bureaucracies. The salience of this second argument takes on greater significance, perhaps, in making sense of the years of structural adjustment in the 1980s and the years of donor-dependency in the 1990s. A central concern of the thesis is to revive Hyden’s concern with the weakness of state bureaucracies in Africa, and to try to develop a conception of local-level politics that is able to take account of this weakness.

d) The state as one possible site of political competition

In taking Hyden’s analysis further, Graham Thiele builds on the idea of a weakly bureaucratised state system, and suggests that local-level politics can be studied from a fairly broad perspective (1985, 1986). Thiele’s study of a Village Administration shows how an elected council becomes one among a number of possible sites of competition at the local-level. In a particularly useful example, Thiele discusses how the authority of a particular Village Administration (a state-sanctioned space), depended on the broader political field. Thiele writes of an instance where a group of Christians had gained control over the Village Administration, and how their attempt to take control of the local political economy—through monopolising positions on the Village Administration—was challenged, and ultimately defeated by the actions of non-church-going “big men”. These “big men”, who had a greater command of the local political field, simply chose to ignore the council’s directives, circumventing the authority of those who sat on the Village Administration. Thiele goes on to argue that this boycott of the Village Administration showed that these “big men”, were interested in regaining control over the sorts of authority that were otherwise the property of the state at the local-level (1986: 554; see also Thiele, 1984, 1985). Rather than being “uncaptured” by the state, the “big men” of the village sought to “capture” the authority bound up with state sanctioned spaces.

²² For a criticism of this literature, see Azarya and Chazan, 1987: 107-108 or Boone, 2004. The particular typology set out in the first chapter of Catherine Boone’s book suggests the potential marginality of rural areas to political developments at the centre.

In a much more comprehensive development of the arguments put forward by Thiele, Sara Berry suggests that the state in Africa is both a central feature of political competition *and* an uneven institutional presence in the countryside (1993). From a perspective which focuses on the history of agricultural innovation and change, Berry has argued that the state, in its various guises, has been central to negotiations over land and property, and hence a key arena of political competition since the early colonial period. In Berry's vision of rural Africa, government bureaucracies may be less authoritative than is allowed for in either the "success story" literature or the "anti-politics machine", but are more significant than allowed for in Hyden's "economy of affection" (1993: 45-46), and she counts courts, councils, schools, and the other paraphernalia of state authority as some of the possible arenas through which political claims can be substantiated. Alongside these state-sanctioned spaces, Berry also discusses the ways in which clans, family networks and home-town associations offer other arenas for political action. Her concern with the politics of access to land and productive resources, Berry suggests that groups and individuals invest in the sorts of social networks, often traditional in character, which help legitimate claims in courts, councils and churches.²³

In Oledai, for example, despite the many absences of the state bureaucracy, I discuss the continued importance of the village court, essentially a state-sanctioned space. Villagers continued to use the local court, and continued to value the badge of state authority in settling disputes, even though the civil service and political establishment showed little or no interest in the affairs of the sub-parish. A useful metaphor to organise the persistence of certain aspects of the state in Oledai is to think of Philip Abrams' distinction between the state as a "bureaucratic structure" and the state as an "idea" (1988). Throughout the thesis I suggest that this distinction can be applied to the workings of the state at the local-level. In the particular case of the local courts, for example, villagers continued to regard the idea of judicial authority as important in organising politics, even though elements of the state structure, such as the parish chief, were absent from the sub-parish.

While the focus of Berry's work—the study of agrarian change—causes her to embrace the customary as well as the governmental, it is also important to introduce religious institutions into the mix. If the concern of the research is to discuss political developments

²³ Berry's central thesis argued that the capacity to defend one's rights to productive resources (land and labour) was linked to "continued participation in debates over the meaning and application of custom" (Berry, 1993: 16). This meant that political actors had to invest in social relationships, and had to take up positions in "traditional", or kinship-based institutions as these provided the sorts of networks and legitimacy that carried weight in government-sanctioned spaces, such as the courts, schools or local government administration. An essentially similar line of argument is put forward by Pauline Peters (Peters, 1994: 22-28).

from a perspective that goes beyond a concern with the politics of the rural economy, then it is important to look at religious institutions as possible sites of political organisation and practice. In Oledai at least, from the perspective of any villager who wished to settle a land case, it was possible that bureaucratic procedures in the village court, or *ateker*, could be complemented by actions taken in church, and I later argue that churches helped to determine the outcome of significant questions over land, property and status (see pages 125, 129 and 180).²⁴ For as much as churches offered an institutional space for political action, their significance was related to their religious identity; to the ways in which religious beliefs governed the lives of church-goers, shaping behaviours and reputations.

In resting the analysis on the twin premises of a weakly bureaucratised state, and an “open-ended” view of politics, the thesis does more than offer an ethnography of development and change in a sub-parish. It attempts to put forward a position on how to approach politics in rural Africa. The case material from Oledai offers insights into the possible trajectory politics takes when the bureaucratic state has become a withdrawn or marginal presence, and where religious and customary institutions continue to inform the organisation of power. Though this is not a particularly radical formulation for the sorts of institutional landscape found in many parts of rural Africa, it suggests the need for greater scepticism in those studies that explain rural developments through a particular set of action, or a single bureaucracy.

EXPLAINING INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE: BORROWING FROM THE PAST, BORROWING FROM THE PRESENT, AND IMPROVISING

Throughout the thesis I rely on a broad vocabulary to describe how the institutional landscape has been maintained; and how it has developed and changed over time in the sub-parish. The vocabulary draws on historical, institutionally-derived and individually-oriented approaches to institutional development.

²⁴ Indeed, the social science literature can be criticized for its inattention to the significance of organised religious practices in African societies (Ellis and ter Haar 2000: 179). This is particularly the case with regard to Christian organizations and movements, where the majority of studies have been undertaken by historians, rather than social scientists (cf. Maxwell 1999; Ranger 1986, Gifford 1998).

a) History: institutions borrow from the past

In emphasising the historicity of African societies and institutions Jean-François Bayart argues that there is a persistence to certain logics, structures and practices, and that these logics, structures and practices provide part of any explanation of development and change (Bayart, 1993: 15; see also Harsch, 1997). The work of the village council in Oledai, for example, which was mostly to do with handing out judgements, reflected a fairly long history of conciliar justice at the local-level. The history of a village court could be dated back to the setting up of village councils after the 1937 district government reform (see Chapter 3). In establishing itself primarily as a court, the village council took on significant role in the sub-parish, a role that subsequent governments have not been able to legislate away.

The persistence of the court-like role of the village council can be regarded as an example of the ways in which past experiences are institutionalized, or embedded, in the political landscape. The forms of political organisation discussed in the historical account of the early colonial period (Chapter 2) include churches, the village council, and the various customary institutions (farm-labour group, *ateker*, clan court); structures which provided the institutional architecture of the village during fieldwork. In the absence of an intrusive state bureaucracy, institutions can be thought of as having borrowed from past versions of themselves: the logics, structures and practices that have been built up over time help to determine the work of institutions. In this way it becomes clearer why the village council chairman continued to work as a judge, rather than a political representative, despite for tenor of recent government reforms.

Thomas Bierschenk and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan argue that socially embedded institutions, such as the village council, have an essentially sedimentary character. By this they mean that village councils, courts, public offices, and so forth, are better understood as the accumulation, or accretion, of logics, structures and practices, rather than as an institutionalised version of a piece of legislation or policy. The metaphor of sedimentation suggests why there is an often considerable gap between imagined bureaucratic reforms and what actually transpires at the local-level.²⁵ Where legislation is introduced, such as in the village council reforms of the 1980s and 1990s, it is usually laid on top of what is already there,

²⁵ Or as Monique Nuijten comments, in relation to the local political of *ejido* reform in rural Mexico: "[w]hen a legal procedure is initiated with the Ministry of Land Reform, this does not simply mean that the law will be enforced in a straightforward way. It only means that other negotiators and "interpretations" are brought in, and that the dispute is extended into a different arena" (Nuijten, 1992: 196).

at best offering an addition to existing logics, structures and practices. Parker Shipton and Mitzi Goheen express this point particularly well when discussing the complex world of competing norms and rules organising access to and control over land:

the embeddedness of land-holding in ecological, social, cultural and political life means that one tenure regime can seldom be legislated away in favour of another. To try to do this is to add layers of procedures or regulations on to others unlikely to disappear, and to add possibilities of manipulation and confusion between the multiple opportunities, and conflicting constraints, of older and new land-holding regimes (1992: 316).

Even when institutions do change, they change in ways that reflect on past versions of themselves, building not only on new legislation but also on the fund of already existing procedures. In the case of the village council, change could be seen more in the nature of court procedures than in the sorts of reforms that had been legislated for in the 1980s and 1990s. Given the experience of the insurgency, change appeared most obviously in the way in which a case was argued before the court, rather than in terms of changing the essential role of the village council as a judicial space. As argued below, the experience of the insurgency, a time when young men targeted and killed older men, had meant that the restoration of the village court in the 1990s was framed by debates on seniority and propriety. The court cases concerning Akol Stanislas (Chapter 3) and Okelai Samuel (Chapter 5) involved arguments and judgements that purposely punished younger men, because they were associated with the image of the violence of the insurgency.

In mentioning the insurgency, it is important to remember that any description of development and change at the local-level also involves events whose scale and scope is much broader. Though the retreat of the state gives the village a somewhat parochial air, as conveyed in the opening paragraphs of the chapter, political developments in Oledai have been shaped by experiences of much more extensive political economies, where developments at the local-level have been affected by the instabilities of the Ugandan state, or the impact of colonialism. The 1970s, for example, saw the region's economy collapse because of the expulsion of Asian settlers. In other words, government policy brought to an end the association between Teso and cotton (a crop which had itself been part of the region's transformation during the first two decades of colonial rule) (Vincent, 1982).

Of greater significance, in the minds of villagers, was the breakdown in law and order around the time of Yoweri Museveni's accession to power in 1986. That year marked the beginning of a period of extensive cattle-raiding. Museveni's accession to power also resulted in the abolition of the security structures that had maintained peaceable relations in

the east of the country during Obote's second government, and the two events—the cattle raiding, and the dismantling of the police and armed forces were not unrelated. They provided both the cause for a rebellion against Museveni, and the men and materiel for rebellion. In Teso a seven-year insurgency ensued, destroying what remained of the region's economy, and the particular character of the rebel violence changed the nature of politics at the local-level. These broader developments are discussed in Chapter 2.

b) *Institutional bricolage*: institutions borrow from what is around

If we return to the vocabulary used in the thesis to explain institutional developments, then it is possible to turn to the work of political sociologists and anthropologists, notably the work of Mary Douglas (1987), Sally Falk Moore (1986) and Anthony Giddens (1984), to build up a conception of *institutional bricolage*. *Institutional bricolage* emphasises the often *ad hoc*, or approximative processes through which institutions develop and change.²⁶ In this particular formulation the concern with the individual as rational actor is replaced by an attempt to understand the prevailing institutional landscape, and the degree to which institutions, rather than individuals, help to determine the shape and structure of the political field. In a certain sense, it is argued that institutions do much of the organising themselves, as they borrow structures and practices from one another, avoiding conscious “crafting” on the part of individual actors (Cleaver, 2003: 16). This can be exemplified in the work of a new Pentecostal church.

Pentecostalism, which became important in the region only in the late 1980s, stood for a radically different form of Christianity when compared with the theology and practice of the long-established Anglican and Catholic churches in the sub-parish. With its emphasis on personal salvation, and membership organised around a fairly long list of rules and prohibitions, Pentecostalism would seem to be an entirely original development. Becoming a Pentecostal Christian meant a radical departure from the more conservative style of Anglican or Catholic congregations. These “mainline” churches typically regarded membership as signalled through baptism, and enforced rules of association and behaviour only rarely. In the Pentecostal church, by contrast, there were prohibitions on alcohol, polygyny, cigarettes and “marrying out”, and in many ways the church appeared to be on the margins of the sub-parish, a radical and oppositional sort of institutional arrangement.

²⁶ Whereas Lévi-Strauss regarded *bricolage* as the reconstruction of myths from cultural *débris*, it can also be argued that this idea has its uses in a more historically and politically informed framework, where the “*débris*” of past experiences forms part of the changing political and institutional landscape (Werbner, 1986, also Lévi Strauss, 1966: 19-20, 20ff).

And yet, I argue that much of the logic and structure of the church's work borrowed from what was already there. Put simply, much of what could be observed could be explained as an example of *institutional bricolage*, a reflection of what could be found in other local-level institutions (see Chapter 4). The particular structure of the church committee, the schedule of Sunday services or weekly meetings, the collection and handling of funds all borrowed from other local-level institutions (as well as drawing on the theology of Pentecostal Christianity and the instructions of the church hierarchy). Many of the more mundane practices that could be observed in the church borrowed from other churches in the area (Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal), from the workings of village court and from the changing landscape of customary arrangements, particularly the growth of burial societies. Though Pentecostal Christians argued publicly that their church was consciously opposed to the rules that governed the lives of unsaved villagers, the development of the church in the village should also be understood as having borrowed from the institutional landscape of the area.

As such, aside from the importance of the past in explaining the shape and structure of institutional arrangements, it can also be argued that institutions borrow from one another. As Francis Cleaver suggests, do some of the thinking themselves:

... Through a process of bricolage... gather[ing] and apply[ing] analogies and styles of thought already part of existing institutions. Symbolic formulae are used repeatedly in the construction of institutions, thereby economising on cognitive energy by offering easy classification and legitimacy.²⁷

And Cleaver's conception of *institutional bricolage* is used throughout the thesis to suggest the ways in which churches, courts, councils or burial societies are complex, lived-in arrangements, which bear more than a passing resemblance to one another. In an argument that complements our earlier observation on sedimentation, the bric-a-brac of what is already there helps explain what comes to be established, and Claude Levi-Strauss's metaphor of *bricolage*, refers back to the ways in which cultural fragments become stuck together to produce new sorts of arrangements. Even radically new institutional arrangements are partly the result of *institutional bricolage*, in that much of their logic and structures can be regarded as a composite of already existing arrangements.

²⁷ Cleaver 2003: 16; see also Douglas 1987: 46-47.

c) Individuals and institutional change: improvisation

That said, the degree to which institutions “do the thinking”, or the extent to which the past explains the present needs to be qualified by an idea of improvisation or innovation. As Gledhill notes, in his review of Bourdieu’s work, there is a tendency among a number of academics utilising Bourdieu’s analytical framework to emphasise only non-cognitive processes—the pull of the past, *bricolage*, *habitus*—thereby reducing individuals to a level of passivity out of sorts with the degree of political debates and conscious strategising the researcher encounters during fieldwork (Gledhill, 1994: 138). Richard Werbner criticises Levi-Strauss, arguing that his conceptions of *bricolage* carries ‘too structuralist a stamp’, decontextualised and uninterested in historical narratives of change (Werbner, 1986: 151), and as a way of dealing with these criticisms, it is possible to bring in the “actor-oriented” approach of Norman Long.

Long has studied the ways in which individuals and groups mediate and transform externally directed changes, based on perceived interests and prevailing social structures.²⁸ His methodological approach is to study the interface, or encounter, between the different worlds of social actors, and he is interested to explore the politicking, strategising and discussions that go on in and around a particular conflict or development.²⁹ Long’s position argues that social change in the less developed world has typically been studied in terms of factors of external determination—colonial policy, the capitalist system, structural adjustment—and that this is too one-sided. He points up the need to study social change in a way that explains the variance in responses to similar forms of external pressure: ‘all forms of external intervention necessarily enter the existing life-worlds of the individuals and social groups affected, and in this way are mediated and transformed by these same actors and structures’ (Long, 1992: 20; 2000: 13-14).

Though I am somewhat resistant to adopting Long’s ‘actor-oriented approach’, as an *approach* (for reasons set out below), it is useful to retain his vocabulary of innovation, the strategic use of discourse, the encounter, and significance of individual actions in explaining the particular trajectory of political developments in Oledai. In the case studies dotted

²⁸ An “actor” may be an individual, though more typically the term refers to a social group, category or class. From an analysis of the encounter one can examine a number of discontinuities in terms of values, knowledge and power (for example, Long and van der Ploeg, 1989).

²⁹ Norman Long gathered a number of scholars and students around his particular approach to rural sociology at the Agricultural University in Wageningen, who have followed his actor-oriented approach, and Long describes the actor-oriented approach as a “paradigm” (Long, in Long and Long (eds), 1992: 16-20). Long sees actor-oriented studies as opposing the structuralist approach that dominated the social science literature in the 1970s and 1980s, and which tended to treat rural societies in the developing world as peripheral and dependent.

throughout the thesis, there is a discussion of the ways in which individual villagers use their relative power; their capacity to argue for certain outcomes; to privilege certain discourses; and to draw on certain sorts of networks in the pursuit of political ends. The careers of individual villagers; the trajectory of a court case; or the establishment of something new (such as a burial society or church group), rely in part on the skills and competences of individuals.

The difficulty with Long's approach is that he attempt to offer a comprehensive framework for what should be essentially inductive ethnographic analysis. His focus on actors and strategies takes us too far away from an institutional or historical vocabulary in explaining institutional change. There is an over-emphasis on the actor's capacity to structure institutionalised power, and a concomitant under-estimation of the capacity of institutional arrangements to structure change (Wright, 2002: 578).³⁰ Though Long himself is keen to address this problem, which he sees as a misreading of the "actor-oriented" approach, his interest in finding a paradigm consciously opposed to earlier structuralist explanations of social change, turns us back to the rather stale dichotomy between structure and agency. Instead the thesis draws on Long's appreciation of the agency of actors and networks and sets this alongside an emphasis on the way past histories are embedded in institutional structures. I would suggest that this offers the most useful vocabulary for making sense of the persistence of certain institutional forms, alongside the struggles and disputes that emerge in individual case studies.

THEMES THAT CUT ACROSS DIFFERENT INSTITUTIONS: SENIORITY, PROPRIETY, PROSPERITY

As Parker Shipton and Mitzi Goheen remind us, access to and control over authority, meaning and wealth provide the focus for political competition (Shipton and Goheen, 1992: 307). At their simplest authority, meaning and wealth capture the economic, political and cultural domains of life, and the following section discusses recent developments in relation to these domains, by looking at questions of prosperity, seniority and propriety. I look at questions of seniority (the attempt by older men to reclaim their political influence); of propriety (who is able to lead a respectable life); and of prosperity (who managed to do well

³⁰ I would add to this the observation that actor-oriented approaches tend to place differentially situated actors on a semantically level playing-field. The labelling of poorer people as "actors" leaves Long open to accusations of populism, promoting an image of the rural poor as capable and influential, out of all proportion to the actual influence or levels of engagement they can bring to bear on the wider systems of authority and power (Olivier de Sardan 2005: 13).

after the insurgency) to develop a vocabulary that captures changes observed by villagers across a number of institutional at the local level. Seniority, propriety and prosperity provide not only a descriptive vocabulary, but also suggest the fairly broad consensus that cut across a seemingly disparate array of institutions.

a) Seniority

Seniority is hereafter meant to refer to the role of political status based on age. In the particular case of Teso, seniority mattered for those men, in their forties and fifties, who hoped to command respect in the sub-parish, and who expected to dominate the various institutional spaces available at the local-level (Vincent 1968, chapter 12). Those who dominated the local political field were the “big men” (*apolon*) of the area, and the status of “big man” for the Iteso is something that has dominated both the practice of politics in the Teso region, and the way that that local political practices have been discussed in the academic literature. Joan Vincent, writing in the 1960s, observed the ways in which individual men acquired status through gathering together a group of supporters who made it easier to exert influence in important debates, particularly those debates that dealt with the settlement of land disputes (Vincent, 1968: 211-230). Repeated encounters where an aspirant was backed up by his supporters resulted in the claim to the title of “big man” being recognised. What is also important to recognise is the entrepreneurship and contingency in this process, given that the status of being a “big man” was achieved rather than ascribed.³¹

In Vincent’s account of the mechanisms for managing violence (1968, chapter ten), conflicts were resolved by meetings of the “big men” of the parish. Major crises were negotiated, and political authority was demonstrated in the daily operation of the elite: ‘as they moved about the parish tempering violence and mediating disputes’ (1968: 211). On those occasions where a conflict reached boiling point it was typically the case that “loyalty” prevailed over “exit” or “voice” (to use Hirschman’s terminology). The majority of cases showed the weaker party accepted a settlement, preferring not to instigate public criticism of the individual or institution, while avoiding the more radical step of leaving the village. In general, the skills of the gerontocracy could be seen in the ability of “big men” to negotiate settlements, piecing together a consensus rather than imposing a decision.

³¹ For the Iteso “there was no institutionalisation of hierarchical office or ranking of groups—apart from that to be found in all small-scale societies where elders, youth and womenfolk are set apart by the specialisation of their labour and their opportunities for social power” (Vincent, 1977: 143). The absence of fixed and extensive hierarchies also meant that being a “big man” was a precarious status, particularly when compared to the relative stability of lineage hierarchies in the more centralised, Bantu societies to the south and west.

The authority of “big men” began to break down during the insurgency. The insurgency, which began in 1986 and ended in 1993, saw the collapse of established court-like mechanisms for mediating disputes (see also Henriques, 2002: 157-8), and rebels attacked “big men”, transforming their own status in the village, and devaluing the status of those they attacked. Younger men acquired a reputation for combining disrespect with a will to power, and it was difficult for older villagers to reconcile the experience of those years with the essentially gerontocratic politics of the 1960s and 1970s.

The sort of violence that took hold during the insurgency, where younger men targeted and killed older men, has necessarily gave a somewhat different flavour to seniority in the years after 1993.³² Though the restoration of peaceable relations in the early 1990s has seen older villagers trying to revive the “big man” politics of the past, this has been a difficult enterprise.³³ One way of shoring up the authority of “big men”, in spite of their apparent weakness, has been to have a much more explicit discourse concerning seniority.³⁴ Despite their diminished status, older men have sought to re-establish authority through offering careful judgements, in court and in church, which tended to go against individual younger men. A number of younger men were singled out for being stubborn and wilful, and in a sequence of cases in the thesis, I describe how such men were isolated through the work of village courts and churches. Not only did the charge that they were wilful and stubborn brush them with the tar of the insurgency, but it also made it less likely for possible supporters in the village to come to their aid during a court hearing. That said, however, the prevailing public discourse on seniority succeeded only if “big men” were able to craft a workable consensus against individual younger men.

³² As one of the “big men” in the sub-parish commented: “if insecurity should return to the region, then the place will become worse, because those young men who are now quiet will bring trouble. They can bring trouble to the place and spoil the name of the *ateker*”. Interview with Ichodio Stephen, *ateker* leader of Ipagitok (August 30, 2002). Similar comments were made in interviews with Odongo Emmanuel, *ateker* elder in Ipagitok (August 22, 2002).

³³ The restoration of *atekerin* was seen as the main guarantor of peace in the area: “the biggest change in recent years has been peace in the *ateker*. When there is a problem it is easy to handle and settle”. Interview with Okiria Fastine, *ateker* leader of Ichaak (August 29, 2002).

³⁴ The cultural politics of seniority and its reassertion after a period of violence has also been discussed in Mikael Karlström’s essay on moral community in Buganda (Karlström, 2004). The means through which morality and gerontocratic authority have been renegotiated in Ganda society—largely through the institutions of kingship and kinship—can be contrasted with ways in which it has been managed by the Iteso—through the conduct of politics and more contingent forms of social interaction.

b) Propriety

But perhaps the most demonstrable change in the sub-parish has been the rising importance of propriety. Propriety is meant to convey the idea that there was a proper way of doing things that was agreed upon by most villagers. Increasing importance was attached to a certain sort of codified, religiously inflected, understanding of personal behaviour, and this was demonstrated through public displays in formal institutional settings. The value that villagers attached to having a decent burial, to attending church, towards outward signs of religiosity, or to conducting oneself well in court, was a significant change in the village, at least according to villagers. Those interviewed stated repeatedly that “rules were more important now”; that “the dead were buried in a proper way”; and that “only those who went to church got prayed for when they died”. When compared to earlier ethnographies of the region, there was a considerable shift towards attaching meaning and value to proper behaviour (cf. Lawrance, 1957; Vincent, 1968).

The growing concern with propriety can be related, in part, to the growth of Pentecostalism in Africa in the late 1980s. It can also be argued that the less commented upon changes in the ways in burials were organized in the village suggested that the prevailing discourse on propriety cut many ways, involving local initiatives as well as the ministrations of much larger bureaucracies.³⁵ While it could be argued that Pentecostal churches were rule-bound institutions bringing in a strict code of “dos” and “don’ts”, burial societies were established entirely through the efforts of villagers, having no real provenance in the region prior to the 1990s. In either case, the rule-bound culture of the institution introduced spaces where propriety could be demonstrated, and allowed for new mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion leading to the development of more expressly public spaces.

The importance of propriety, exemplified through the work of burial societies and churches, could also be explained as a response, on the part of villagers, to the recent history of the area. Aside from the incursions of born-again Christianity, or the regional shift towards Bantu-style burials, there was the understanding that proper behaviour, communally enforced, offered a tangible opposition to the experience of the insurgency. In paying one’s burial dues or in attending church there was a reaction to the violence and the perceived collapse of moral codes that characterised the worst excesses of rebel violence (Chapters 4 and 6). Compared with the sacrilegious killings of “big men”, it is argued that a decent

³⁵ See Meyer 2003 for an overview of the literature on Pentecostalism and Gifford (1998) for an overview of the changing religious landscape in Africa. The literature on contemporary changes in burial patterns is sparser, though studies by Higenyi and Whyte (1997), and Whyte (2005) both provide a discussion of the role of burial societies among the Banyole of eastern Uganda.

burial, or an orderly church service, collectively organised, and well-funded carried with it connotations of respectability and community participation. Either institution provided places where villagers could, through particular behaviours, draw a line under the recent past.

c) Prosperity

Though the thesis does not claim to offer a comprehensive account of the individual strategies of accumulation found in the sub-parish, it is important to remember that competition in the various institutions in the sub-parish had consequences in terms of who got richer and who got poorer. The significance of becoming a “big man”, as Vincent attests, was measured in terms of livestock and household goods, as much as the shadow one was able to cast over political debates. The degree to which participation in local-level institutions affected access to and control over resources is discussed in later chapters of the thesis.

In stepping back from the present, and reflecting on changes in wealth over time, what was striking about Oledai was the ability of once wealthy households to restore their economic position after the insurgency. This was in spite of the levelling effect of cattle-raiding and the wholesale looting of property and household goods. By my counting, of the ten wealthiest homes prior to the insurgency, six had re-established themselves in the top ten afterwards.³⁶ Ogwapit Joseph, owner of 80 cows, 40 bulls, 25 goats and 40 chickens before the insurgency, was once again the wealthiest man in the sub-parish when I conducted fieldwork. Though rebel violence, Karamojong raiding and government army reprisals saw the loss of cattle and the burning down of his home, Ogwapit had managed to acquire 6 bulls and 6 cows, as well as two bicycles, by 2002. (Although it should also be noted that the modest nature of Ogwapit’s recovery—from 120 cattle before the insurgency, to only 12 in 2002—tells us of the material hardships villagers have endured in the years of Uganda’s success story).³⁷

It follows then that those villagers who were poorer before the insurgency also tended to remain poor afterwards, suggesting that the equality of incomes brought about by the insurgency did not matter much in terms of equality of opportunity after. A large part of this pattern of increasing differentiation can be related to individual capabilities. One can

³⁶ Two homes had dissolved, and two homes had not recovered.

³⁷ It also reflects the reluctance of villagers to store their wealth in something that could again be looted, and Joanna de Berry has similarly observed the efforts of villagers in Nyadar parish (north-east Teso) to diversify their asset base (de Berry, 2000: 139-149; see also, Henriques, 2002: 116).

appreciate that Ogwapit's relative prosperity was related to the sorts of social networks to which he belonged, to the fact that he was a man not a woman, to his relatively high level of education and business acumen, and his ability to hold some of his wealth during the insurgency (he managed to trade some goods in Ngora market). In other words, one can appreciate that Ogwapit had certain sorts of capital—social, cultural, human, economic. He was a man better able to engage in the field (*champ*) of politics (Bourdieu, 1992).

That said, the thesis focuses not so much on individual stocks of capital, but rather looks at the opportunities for acquiring wealth through participation in local-level institutions. I would suggest that the burgeoning institutional landscape at the local-level—the growth of burial societies, and the increasing competition in the religious sphere—was partly an indication of how different levels of wealth had been restored in the 1990s. What appeared to matter to those who had regained their relative position was not so much membership itself, or even active engagement, but rather the acquisition of positions of prominence and status. The renewed interest in becoming a “big man”, for example, can be connected to the opportunities that appear in churches, courts, and clans, their role in collecting funds or deciding disputes. In addition to Ogwapit's other “capitals” one could add the capital that is embedded in the statuses he was able to acquire: committee member of his burial society, and a member of the School Management Committee of St. Aloysius Primary School, and an *ex officio* of the village council.

Within this overall pattern of restoration, there remains the possibility of mobility, and this can be seen in the attempts of individuals (and households) to gain positions of influence within the village. In this respect the growth of burial societies, and, more importantly, the rise to prominence of the Pentecostal church, opened up new arenas through which political careers can be built. While established institutions—clan, village council, the Catholic or Anglican churches—were more obviously disposed towards re-establishing the careers of the “big men” of the past, like Ogwapit, there was greater manoeuvrability in new institutions.

METHODOLOGY

The thesis is based on an analysis of political developments in a particular sub-parish. This is necessarily a narrow basis for research, and I would not claim that my research is typical for Uganda as a whole. What is presented here is only one of the many of the political, social, and cultural configurations to be found. But where similarities are found with the work of other authors they are commented on in the text.

To borrow from J. Clyde Mitchell (1983), the thesis is essentially an extended case study, a heuristic device that attempts to reflect a number of features, which may be construed as manifestations of more general problems. Drawing on the work of van Velsen (1967), Mitchell suggests that the concern of case study analysis is not so much to offer a total view of a 'culture' or 'society', but rather to understand the *social processes* which might be abstracted from a particular course of events or micro-history. In Mitchell's view such an analysis may tell us something of the means through which continuity or change is achieved, linking the local to the conceptual rather than the wider empirical field of study.³⁸ Though I would accept the need to delimit the claims made in any piece of ethnography, it is important to remember that Mitchell offers us a somewhat idealised version of what is typically accomplished in qualitative analysis, and the thesis attempts to broaden out its analysis through the use of historical data, and comparable research from other authors working in the region (see Sally Falk Moore 1987, chapter 1).

The thesis takes as its methodological framework the open-ended approach to local-level politics suggested by the work of Thomas Bierschenk and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan (1997a, 1997b, 2003; see also Olivier de Sardan, 2005). In particular, I draw on their 1997 study of local powers in the context of distant state bureaucracy in the Central African Republic, taking up the observation that, in such a context, one should expect political actions to be conveyed across a number of institutional spaces (see also Moore, 1973). Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan make a methodological, as much as an analytical point, in suggesting that the study of local-level politics is better organised through exploring and comparing the full range of 'public spaces and positions of eminence' in a given area (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan, 1997: 441). In their view the multiplicity of statuses—chief, catechist, treasurer, councillor, teacher—and the variety of titular and institutional arrangements—council, court, school, church, burial society—indicates that significant political actions are likely to take place across a variety of institutional configurations. In effect, a political career is likely to be bound to several institutional spaces, while the settlement of a dispute is likely to be conducted across several court-like proceedings. As such, the main methodological concern of the thesis has been to generate the sorts of information that can help to unpack the open-

³⁸ In defending the value of case study analysis J. Clyde Mitchell criticises statistical analysts for their tendency to conflate statistical result with the production of causal inference. Mitchell reminds us that even the statistician must go beyond observing the correlation to find some theoretical explanation linking the two variables, and any inference must be based upon the plausibility or logicity of the nexus between the two characteristics (Mitchell, 1983: 198). In case study analysis, such as that contained within this thesis, Mitchell points out that any material inference can only be causal, not statistical, and the extent to which generalizations can be made must depend upon the adequacy of the underlying argument.

ended business of local-level politics, accounting for the institutional spaces within the sub-parish and how they are used in relation to each other.

In terms of the architecture of the field methodology, what is written below is written in retrospect; a tidier version of the methods lived on the ground. As indicated on the first page of the thesis, my research shifted from its initial concern, which was to investigate local government structures and democratic decentralization. And, of course, shifting the research concern during the fieldwork to study a broader set of institutional spaces also has consequences for the methodological framework. This can be seen in the move away from the vogueish methodology of Participatory Rural Appraisal (*infra* PRA) towards more conventional ethnographic methods (interviews, surveys, discussions). Before discussing the methods eventually taken up, it is worth saying something about PRA, which is one of the more popular methodologies in development work and has been linked into the sorts of assumptions that have also guided the push for decentralisation (empowerment, ownership, voice, exchange etc.) (Chambers, 1999; World Bank, 2000).

Participatory Rural Appraisal has gained currency in recent years, as it seems to offer a short-cut to the sorts of data gathered through more conventional long-term ethnographic approaches (Olivier de Sardan, 2005: 9). A number of illustrative tools—ranking, maps, classifications—could be used to help draw out the views of the assembled individuals, opening up the possibility of more obviously comparative work than has otherwise been possible in research on issues that have typically been the preserve of ethnographers.³⁹ The particular approach of the PRA-type methodology used during fieldwork was to organise a series of group discussions that would be focused on questions of institutional performance.

My attempts at PRA were frustrating. Though oriented around the fairly broad question of what villagers thought of local-level institutions, the various “exercises” made those interviewed reluctant to share information on issues that I knew were of importance to them. PRA, when implemented in Oledai, managed to shear off the political or ideological arguments that villagers discussed in church, at court, or in more private conversations.⁴⁰

³⁹ A number of applied anthropologists regard PRA more reflexively, as part of an ongoing conversation with a target population, a dialogic device where the facilitator is obliged to listen to the views, logics and discussions of the various groups through which an intervention is being channelled (see, for example, Mosse, 2005).

⁴⁰ This is something that can also be found in the nation-wide Participatory Poverty Assessment funded by the World Bank and the Government of Uganda (Government of Uganda, 2000a; Government of Uganda, 2000b). The Participatory Poverty Assessment material collected in the Kumi District study failed to capture quite basic observations on local-level politics, such as the politicised nature of the violence during the insurgency; the popular hostility towards the Museveni

Questions of religious belief, the politics of the insurgency, the role of the village court became difficult topics. There was no easy answer to the question posed by Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan: 'how can a handful of enquirers, aided only by oversimplified methodological tools and insufficient anthropological competence... possibly unearth relevant political, economic and cultural information?' (2005: 210). Though it is, perhaps, too much to see participation as the "new tyranny" of development practice, as Cooke and Kothari argue (2002), PRA, in my particular encounter with it, resulted in a dialogue that made villagers feel they had to downplay the importance of many of the ideas and beliefs that they otherwise regarded as intrinsic to both the understanding and practice of politics. After my early frustrations, I decided to disregard PRA.

In stepping away from Participatory Rural Appraisal, the research moved towards the sort of analytical and methodological framework set out by the anthropologist Joan Vincent. Vincent's study of a rural parish in western Teso from the late 1960s provides a sustained and detailed descriptive analysis of the business of village politics. Perhaps most famous for bringing the "big man" into the complexities of the capitalist, newly independent Africa, *African Elite* required the sorts of data that explained how political actions were pieced together at the local-level. While the concepts that informed Vincent's analysis—the rise of the "big man" through multiple arenas, the plurality of political identities and spaces at the local-level, and the village as a political field—have been used in the subsequent analysis, her more open-ended methodological framework has also been used in the thesis.

Following from Vincent, the fieldwork methodology was re-oriented towards a number of less imaginative research methods. Though the concern remained that of gathering data on the different institutions, this was reworked through interviews, discussions, observational analysis, survey work and case studies. The data collected aimed at answering four very general questions: *what was the history of the particular institution?; what relevance did the institution have to the lives of villagers?; how and in what way had the institution changed over time?; and in whose interests did the institution work?* As answers to these questions were pieced together it was also possible to consider a further question: *how and in what ways are these institutions related to each other?*

With the help of four research assistants, two surveys were conducted: a household survey and a survey of villagers' memberships in local-level institutions (see appendix B).⁴¹ The household survey established a wealth ranking of households, based on the value of livestock.⁴² The questionnaires included a systematic inquiry on household structure, assets (livestock, property, and material goods) and household expenditures (on milk, cooking oil, kerosene, salt, soap and school costs). The survey borrowed from the National Household Survey 1999/2000 of the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, though changes were made to simplify the questionnaire. The second survey collated data on people's participation in institutions and this drew on an earlier World Bank study of local-level institutions (World Bank, 1998a, 1998b). Both surveys were conducted at the household level, making 252 surveys in all, and took three months to complete. Where the household head was unavailable for interview another adult member of the household was interviewed. Moreover as a point of methodology, the survey method involved introductions and conversations, as well as simple enumeration, and was useful as a way of getting to know the range of households in the sub-parish, rather than relying on the sorts of political introductions offered by the village council chairman. (It should also be noted that two much shorter surveys were conducted, one on church membership and contributions, and a second on committee memberships.)

Alongside survey work, villagers were interviewed in a semi-structured, or conversational fashion on the different institutions in the sub-parish. Interviews were conducted with the leaders of the various clans, churches and the village council, as well as two more ordinary members of that institution. Wherever possible both a woman and man were interviewed on the same institution, and attention was paid in trying to get as many villagers, from as many different economic categories as possible to comment on their experiences (see appendix A for the wealth ranking, education level, age and gender status of the various respondents). Key informants were interviewed repeatedly, and if a particular crisis or point of contention appeared to dominate the workings of a particular institution, more material was gathered, as a way of building up detailed case studies (see, Gaskell 2000; Mitchell 1983). Typically lasting two to three hours, a total of 92 interviews were conducted in Oledai during the fieldwork, a further 74 interviews were undertaken in the neighbouring

⁴¹ Research assistance was provided by Aguti Stella, Akello Suzan, Osakan Christopher and Enou Andrew Benjamin. Stella, Suzan, Christopher and Benjamin were aged in their twenties, lived in the trading centre of Ngora with at least a high school diploma.

⁴² The wealth measure used for ranking households, was livestock assets measured by market prices for January 2002. If we want to use the value of household assets, including durable goods (mattresses, watches, sewing machines etc.) as well as livestock, the welfare ranking would remain similar (Hu and Jones, 2004: 14).

sub-parish of Agolitom, and a further 15 interviews with officials, politicians or observers from outside the sub-parish.⁴³

Despite my earlier characterization of Oledai as a backwater, a number of villagers were accustomed to speaking English. English remained the language of the higher courts, of the education system, and the *lingua franca* of negotiations with traders from outside the region. Half of all households in the sub-parish had at least one family member who spoke English, and interviews with *ateker* leaders, church leaders and the village council chairman were conducted in a mixture of English and Ateso. It is also the language of primary education. In those instances where interviewing was conducted in Ateso, a research assistant did most of the questioning, as my limited Ateso meant I could only offer help and guidance. (The language in which the interview was conducted is also indicated in appendix A.)

Though earlier pieces of research on the region have discussed the difficulty of conducting interviews on the subject of the insurgency, this was not a particularly significant problem during my stay in Oledai. Joanna de Berry, in her work on post-war recovery in an eastern Teso in the late 1990s, explained that she could not investigate the insurgency in any great detail in the parish of Nyadar in the late 1990s (2002, chapter 1), because the politics of the insurgency was too sensitive a subject to ask after. By contrast villagers in Oledai were relatively comfortable discussing what took place during the insurgency.⁴⁴ (This may explain why de Berry pieced together a “social” history of the parish in which she lived, a history that necessarily underplays the political aspects of village life in general, and the politics of the insurgency, in particular.)

The political history offered here, fills in some of the gaps in the history of the region, as it articulates and debates the micro-politics of the insurgency and the effects that the political violence of the period had on later social and economic developments, such as the growth of Pentecostalism or the building up of burial societies. The analysis is based on information gathered from group discussions and interviews. Villagers were willing to discuss the rebellion in some detail; the main reason for their openness coming from the fact that

⁴³ It can also be understood, from looking at appendix A, that extensive interviewing was conducted in a neighbouring sub-parish. For the purposes of the thesis, the research undertaken in Agolitom has helped ensure that what is presented and analysed as local-level politics in Oledai has an echo in neighbouring areas.

⁴⁴ Peter Henriques (drawing on fieldwork from August and October 1994, and from February through to September 1995) makes a similar point to de Berry in his account of social relations in and around the trading centre of Mukura, arguing that it was often difficult to discuss what happened during the insurgency (Henriques, 2002: 33-34). This may explain why Henriques presents the insurgency as if it was a disaster that befell his informants, rather than more deeply embedded in the local political landscape.

enough time had elapsed since the end of the insurgency. Though a number of older men were uncomfortable when it came to discussing the insurgency, the greater number volunteered information. Older women were able to relate their experiences of the insurgency, in part because they were less likely to be thought of as possible rebels. At the same time, younger men, particularly those with some education, were willing to talk about the insurgency as their age meant they could not be directly implicated in rebel activities. A further group of villagers, who spoke with ease about the insurgency, were the born-again Christians. Their readiness could be explained because of their commitment to personal salvation encouraged them to distance themselves from their previous life, and also asked them to speak openly about past transgressions.

After pulling away from the use of Participatory Rural Appraisal, I continued to use discussions with groups, though without the paraphernalia of rankings, listings and structures. These more free-form discussions were particularly useful as a way of corroborating or contradicting other accounts. Groups tended to be self-assembled, and discussants found it easier than did I, when it came to opposing or challenging what others were saying. Of particular value were the bicycle taxi men, who were happy to joke with each other and found it easy to speak openly (they were somewhat competitive).⁴⁵ A total of 40 group discussions were held during the fieldwork, and though the discussion was itself informal, the preparation for any discussion was time-consuming, in terms of working out what possible directions the discussion could take and what facts or observations drawn from other sorts of data could be brought up in discussion.

In terms of gathering written information, data collection was not so easy. The experience of the insurgency had engendered a general antipathy towards handing over written information to anyone who appeared to be part of the government bureaucracy. Outsiders, such as myself, were associated with Museveni's government, which villagers had little reason to trust, and there was a reluctance to hand over written texts concerning land claims, burial lists, tax receipts, records of educational attainment, voting cards. Nonetheless, the village council chairman was prepared to hand over his case books and was available to discuss some of the more contentious cases in the village (many of which were not written down). The three burial society chairmen released documents regarding the rules of the society, and the books into which burial dues were paid. A number of more educated villagers were able to offer up documents they had kept over the years, including pieces of government information, education certificates, photographs. School teachers and church

⁴⁵ They were also interesting informants because they tended to adopt a more critical attitude towards the area. They saw themselves as more urbane and potentially "modern".

leaders were also happy to release what information they had in their archives—though much of this had been destroyed during the insurgency. Photocopies of all of these documents were made in the offices on an NGO in Ngora and the originals returned to the household. Archival material at the sub-parish level was checked against data gathered from the sub-county and district offices.⁴⁶

Cutting across these various approaches to data collection were attempts at piecing together as much information on significant events that occurred during fieldwork. The murder and burial of Edotun Jackson and the tribulations of his mother were documented in as much detail as possible. As were a number of other cases, including the career history of Omadi John Francis, the court cases of Ogwapit Joseph, and the troubles of Okelai Samuel and Akol Stanislas, both younger men. These stories dominated discussions in the village and offered the sorts of extended case studies from which fairly elaborate political activities could be analysed and interpreted. The collection of data for these cases tried to be as exhaustive as possible, and included not only repeated interviewing with participants, but also seeing how the case was broached during group discussion. There was also the gathering of written material and documentary evidence and, where appropriate, a report on the amount of money involved in the case.

CHAPTER ORDER

Chapter 2 provides a critical reading of the history of the region. There is a particular focus on the first two decades of the twentieth century and the years of insurgency in the late 1980s, as these periods point to times of intense political activity, when formal institutional structures were either built up or broken down. Chapter 3 explains the work of the village council at a time of “democratic decentralization” and argues that the council functions mainly as a court. This can be seen as a carry over of an earlier set of responsibilities, mirroring the long history of state-sanctioned judicial spaces at the local-level, rather than an innovation developed in relation to the reforms of the current administration. In discussing the absence of the parish chief from the business of politics at the local-level, the chapter also makes the point that the state is a weak bureaucratic presence in rural Teso.

⁴⁶ Information was also gathered on the political and social infrastructure of Ngora sub-county and Kumi district (which forms the southern half of what was the old Teso region). This entailed going over the somewhat thin archival records at the sub-county headquarters, the tax books for the sub-parish for the published material released by the office of the District Planner. Case material from the sub-county court was also gathered, though the police post refused to share their written archives. Interviews were conducted with sub-county officials and senior district officials, as well as one or two of the longer serving NGO or aid workers in the region.

Chapter 4 discusses the history of Pentecostalism in the sub-parish. The chapter relates the gradual institutionalization of the church since the mid-1980s to the experience of the insurgency, and to the prevalence of concerns over propriety and seniority in the years after. Pentecostalism, with its emphasis on proper behaviour and a codified morality, belongs to a much broader history of renovation and renewal in the sub-parish. Chapter 5 discusses how this history of renovation and renewal has been taken up in “mainline” Catholic and Anglican churches. The establishment of “charismatic” groups, and the tightening up of rules around membership and participation, offers an example of how propriety has become an important part of life in the village.

Chapter 6 offers a detailed account of the development of burial societies in the sub-parish. Essentially new institutional structures, organised around *atekerin*, burial societies offer a collective system of insurance when a member of a household dies. Alongside a discussion of the form and functioning of burial societies, the chapter explains how they developed during the 1990s, offering a useful example of *bricolage*, of building something new out of a number of existing practices and arrangements. The chapter also looks at the ways in which burial societies, like village churches, deal with question of propriety, and how their development can be related back to the experience of the insurgency.

Chapter 7 concludes by returning to the discussion of the way politics is approached in the literature on contemporary Uganda. The conclusion suggests that while state-centric approaches have dominated the literature, this has tended to confer competences on the Ugandan state that are not really there. In place of a state-centric view it is possible to make sense of the role for the state at the local-level by broadening out a conception of politics to include religious and customary spaces. Significant political actions, such as dealing with a murder, negotiating a land dispute or pursuing a political career involve churches, burial societies and courts, suggesting the need for a more open-ended approach to politics.



Plate 2: The disused ginnery on the Ngora-Mukongoro road, Oledai sub-parish. Cotton formed the heart of the colonial project in the Teso region. Chapter 2 details the decline of state involvement in the countryside, which can be related to the declining importance of the rural economy in the government system.

CHAPTER 2

STATE ENGAGEMENT/STATE WITHDRAWAL: TESO SOCIETY THROUGH THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

INTRODUCTION

No portion of the Protectorate has displayed more spectacular progress. At the beginning of the century the district was almost completely unknown, much of it appearing on maps as a blank, inscribed "Natives rich in flocks, herds and food, but reported treacherous".⁴⁷

So commented Thomas and Scott in their 1935 survey of the Uganda Protectorate. The survey came some twenty-eight years after Teso was granted district status and their view suggests the rapid speed with which the colonial project was established in the region. Cotton, the engine of change, was introduced in the late 1900s and transformed not only the social and political geography of Teso, but also the fortunes of the Protectorate. The revenues from cotton exports made colonial government self-financing. Cotton, which comprised only 10 percent of the Protectorate's export in 1906-07, made up 90 percent of total exports by 1926-27 (Vincent, 1982: 170),⁴⁸ and Teso came to serve as a by-word for progress, a sign of how much could be achieved through colonial government. The structures developed during the colonial period—clans, courts, councils, churches, schools—helped to shape the local political landscape discussed in later chapters in the thesis.

But this faith in progress, so central to the view of colonial administrators, can be contrasted with the accounts of more recent visitors to the region. Joanna de Berry speaks of Teso as a place 'all but destroyed' by violence and economic collapse, and I myself have described the sub-parish of Oledai as a backwater (de Berry, 2000: 25; Jones, 2005: 503).⁴⁹ The decline of

⁴⁷ Thomas and Scott (1935): 448.

⁴⁸ This observation is also contained within Ehrlich's paper on "Cotton and the Uganda economy, 1903-1909". By 1913 the value of Uganda's exports had increased twelvefold. The share of cotton as a percentage of exports rose from near to nothing in 1903 to nearly 60 percent in 1913 (Ehrlich, 1957: 162-163)

⁴⁹ Though Joanna de Berry is careful to ground her study in practices which describe the importance of economic and social activities, the view of Teso as a "destroyed" region finds its echo in the NGO literature on Teso, which tends to construct the rural population as passive and politically disengaged (and consequently requiring the active efforts of development agencies on such questions as gender

the cotton economy offers one possible explanation for the sense of collapse. More properly, the collapse of the region can be related to the economic decline and collapse of the state capacity between 1971 and 1986, and the violence and insecurity that came during the years of insurgency from 1986 to 1993. What is striking about the insurgency, when related back to the early colonial period, is that the violence perpetrated by rebels targeted those political-institutional forms: the chiefs, chairmen, clan elders, and preachers, institutionalised during the first decades of the twentieth century.

There are consequently two halves to the chapter. First, I look at the early colonial period, when new kinds of institutional arrangements developed in the sub-parish. Second, I look at the insurgency period, a time when most of these institutions were attacked. The first half of the chapter relies on a number of historical accounts of colonialism in the Teso region, and draws mostly from the archival and ethnographic works of Joan Vincent, as well as the writings of the one-time district commissioner J.C.D. Lawrance (Vincent, 1968, 1976, 1982; Lawrance, 1957, see also Vail, 1974; Uchendu and Anthony, 1975; Karp, 1978). The second half of the chapter attempts to reconstruct the history of the insurgency through a synthesis of newspaper articles, academic analyses, as well as extensive use of oral testimonies collected from villagers, government officials and former missionaries (de Berry, 2000; Henriques, 2002). Before going further, it should be noted that though religious and customary institutions are mentioned in this chapter, their historical development is detailed more fully in chapters four through six.

FROM STATELESS TO SUB-COLONIAL: PRE-COLONIAL AND EARLY COLONIAL TESO

In their myth of origin, the *Arionga*, the Iteso came into being through a history of migration from the east (de Berry, 2000: 381; Emwamu 1967). The *Arionga* speaks of a time when the ancestors of the Iteso migrated from what is presently north-east Uganda into the regions bordering the Lake Kyoga basin to the south-west (see map A).⁵⁰ In moving between these two regions, there was a gradual accumulation of people speaking the various dialects that came to constitute the Ateso language cluster. The age of migrations is dated to

sensitisation, human rights promotion and empowerment) (ISIS-WICCE, 2002; Vision TERUDO, 2002).

⁵⁰ The Iteso are one of the largest "tribes" in Uganda and have been classified as Nilo-Hamitic, after Driberg (Driberg, 1939: 20-21). The Iteso share a linguistic base with the Jie, Dodoth, Toposa, Karamojong, Turkana, Murle and Suk all living to the north or east of the region, indicating the origins of the migratory movement (see Dyson-Hudson, 1966: 260). In more recent work, which rejects the baggage of the "Hamitic hypothesis", the Iteso have been characterised as part of the "phylum" of the Nilo-Saharan group of languages (Bender, 2000).

the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁵¹ The migrations would eventually extend further south into what is currently north-west Kenya, where there remains a population of Iteso, separated from the “northern Iteso” by the Bantu populations of south-east Uganda (Karp, 1978: 9-10; Heald, 1991). The *Arionga* period was followed by the *Asonya*, the time between roughly 1800 and the late 1890s, when the *Bakungulu*, colonial agents of the British, arrived in the area (cf. Webster et al., 1973). In their oral history the Iteso are remembered as pastoralists, a shifting population far removed from the cash-cropping farmers that came to be so admired by colonial administrators.

a) Pre-colonial economy and society

Up to 1900 Teso was intersected by trade networks, notably the Swahili and Arab caravan routes, which traversed their way to Bunyoro to the north-east where traders from the coast could exchange livestock and metal goods for ivory (Tosh, 1978: 85). For the people living in what was later termed the Teso region, the caravan routes involved the trading of a range of goods—ivory from the northern and western parts of Teso, millet from the southern areas—in exchange for cattle and ironware (Vincent, 1982: 71-4). And Vincent describes the rich and diverse nature of the pre-colonial economy: ‘at least three different types of spear, made with iron and wood, as well as bows and arrows... bird and fish traps made of woven basketry. Wicker work and coiled basketry... hay forks and small weeding hoes were made of wood. Shell weeding tools were also used. Hoes, finger knives, and hooks, digging spears, and slaughtering knives were of iron’ (1982: 65-66).⁵² Those living in the region were increasingly integrated in this more extensive regional economy the fragmented nature of Iteso society meant local actors were disadvantaged in their dealings with caravan traders.

The Iteso have been described as an acephalous or stateless society, with the pattern of social organisation small in scale and contingent in form. Political authority was not patterned or ordered in the manner of more hierarchical or centralised societies, nor was it organised, in the southern parts of the region, into well-structured age-sets. Social organisation in the southern portion where Oledai falls was relatively unpredictable or amorphous, lacking the leadership cohorts found among that most archetypal of acephalous society, the Nuer (Tosh,

⁵¹ According to Pirouet, W.A. Crabtree was the first person to use the word “Teso” among the colonisers. The term was found in a 1901 report in the Church Missionary Intelligencer (Pirouet, 1978: 172).

⁵² The Iteso, despite their (self)-representation as pastoralists and cattle-keepers in the period prior to colonialism, depended on cereal production as well as stock-rearing. The idea that colonialism introduced arable cultivation to the Iteso is something of a myth, though it still persists in the contemporary literature (cf. Zistel, 2002: 99).

1978: 35).⁵³ In many instances it appeared that there was no established pattern of pre-ordained leadership, and Vincent suggests that leadership typically implied neither permanence nor inheritance (Vincent, 1982: 89-95).⁵⁴ Who got to lead in a conflict, depended on the crisis at hand and the level of confidence an individual could muster from the people around.⁵⁵ In the eyes of administrators, the Iteso provided an absolute contrast to the more centralised societies of the central and southern parts of the Protectorate. Buganda with its monarchy, military forces, and territorial integrity offered an obvious departure from the blank spot on the map where the people speaking the Ateso dialects had nonetheless established themselves (Reid, 2002; Hanson, 2004). Before the colonial agents arrived, cartographers described the region in and around Teso as “Bukedi” — literally “the land of the naked people” (Vincent 1982, chapter 2).

What is apparent then is the considerable disjuncture between the pattern of pre-colonial society, and the type of society and economy that would develop around cotton production in the early twentieth century. The transformation from a stateless, migratory society, to a sedentary population, managed by administrative hierarchies in the interests of producing a cash-crop indicates the radical and transforming nature of the colonial encounter. Though a number of scholars have sought to tease out the continuities connecting the pre-colonial to the colonial, it is important to recognise that the transformation in Teso was profound (cf. Bayart, 1993). The people living in the region did not have the indigenous forms of chiefly authority that could be co-opted by the colonial state, meaning that entirely new institutions would have to be established. A society where value was attached to cattle would have to learn about paying taxes and cropping cotton. And one should think of the early colonial period as a time of intense activity, a time when bureaucratic structures were built from the

⁵³ The studies of the Nuer of southern Sudan, by Evan-Pritchard, or the Tallensi of northern Ghana, by Fortes, caused anthropologists to conclude that acephalous, or “stateless”, societies were always ordered around segmentary lineage systems. Only with Mair’s work published in 1962, was the view that acephalous societies need not adhere to age-set systems, that societies could exist, and persist through time, without predictable patterns of political organisation. Further work to re-classify the taxonomy of acephalous societies was undertaken by Elizabeth Colson to include the “amorphous” type (Colson, 1969).

⁵⁴ Pirouet, following Lawrance, argued that the Iteso were organised around a “highly complex system of age-sets by which authority was vested in the more senior members of the clans who had slowly work their way up the grade, and who were closely bound together as a group” (Pirouet 1978: 171). This view is discounted by Vincent, who described a variegated Iteso society more closely aligned to Tosh’s (1978) account of the neighbouring Langi (Vincent, 1982: 76-80).

⁵⁵ Age-sets and accompanying initiation ceremonies were more likely to have persisted in the parts of the Teso region bordering Karamoja, notably the Usuk area (see Map C). Lawrance argues that age-set ceremonies were only brought to an end with the arrival of Kakungulu, though he also concedes that “it is a curious fact that no early observers of the Iteso mention even the existence of the age-set system, and there is scant reference to it in official documents and published works” (Lawrance, 1957: 248). C.P. Emudong suggests that many societies in the Teso region had a distinctly different history from the Karamojong and that the Iteso were arable farmers who may never have had an established age-set system (1973: 88).

ground up. Clans as much as courts, were “invented” through, or in response to, the ministrations of colonial government.

b) Bakungulu⁵⁶ – the men of Kakungulu

The 1890s, the decade immediately prior to the colonial encounter, was a decade of crisis. As is often the case in a situation where colonial rule is soon to extend its borders, the impact of colonialism was felt, in terms of the health and security of the population. Apart from declining caravan trade due to the economic disruption caused by colonial expansion to the south and the wars to the west, there were also a number of more immediate crises that affected the Teso region during the 1890s. There was an intensification of competition over land in the region, as neighbouring societies to the south sought to escape the vicissitudes of colonial expansion (Vincent, 1982: 80). At the same time as this, there were outbreaks of rinderpest that killed many cattle, a disaster shared with the rest of east Africa at the turn of the century (Berry, 1993: 78; Lawrance, 1957: 31). There was the “Great Famine”, or *ebeli*, which lasted from 1984 up until 1896 in the Teso region, which damaged the region’s economy, and entrenched fractures and conflicts within the population.

In other words the colonial administration wanted to gain a foothold in a region already weakened by rinderpest, famine, and conflict, and in 1899 Kakungulu, a Ganda chief, was authorised to explore the territory east of Lake Kyoga on behalf of the British (Vincent, 1982: 57-58). This form of sub-colonialism reflected the admiration among British officials for the Baganda, and men such as Kakungulu were regarded as the sorts of entrepreneur and leaders who could aid colonialism’s advance, in a situation where European personnel were thin on the ground. By 1901 Kakungulu’s men, the *bakungulu*, had led a number of assaults on the people living in southern Teso including raids on Mukongoro, Ngora and Kachumbala. Michael Twaddle suggests that the Baganda, like their colonial backers, regarded the Iteso as a backward people, deserving of harsh treatment:

at Mukongoro... Iteso captives as well as their cattle [were] herded into huts, which were then fired. “This was an act of excessive cruelty”, admitted one of the Baganda responsible for the atrocity at a later date; “but it served its purpose in dealing with a primitive community”. (Twaddle, 1992: 142).

The expansion of Ganda influence was also combined with a number of localised conflicts over inheritance and political authority. And the force of arms represented by the *Bakungulu*

⁵⁶ *abakungulu* in Ateso

proved transformative. For example, in 1901 Ijala of Ngora sought out Ganda agents to assist him in a succession dispute with his father, a dispute that involved only a small number of households. After the defeat of the father, Ijala, with the help of some "250 Ganda rifles", was set up as a sub-county, or *ggombolola*, chief (*etem* in Ateso) in the area (Pirouet, 1978: 176).⁵⁷ Despite the relative insignificance of the conflict in the broader economy of the region, Ijala achieved something akin to "chiefly" status soon after the defeat of his father. From Ngora the *bakungulu* extended authority over southern Teso, appointing Itesots as sub-county chief, parish, or *muluka* chiefs (*eitela* in Ateso), introducing the idea of chiefly status in what had been an acephalous society.

As it turned out, even with the appointment of men such as Ijala, the *bakungulu* needed a number of allies in the villages if they were to achieve anything approaching control over the countryside. While Gulliver argues that 'the indigenous clan and community system was heavily overlaid with a Baganda-like political structure', it is also true to say that the hierarchical structures of Ganda authority had difficulty in building on the fragmentary and small-scale societies of the Iteso (Gulliver, 1952: 1). The expansion of Ganda influence in the region was at best piecemeal, and relied not only on men such as Ijala of Ngora but also on allies in the villages, the *elodak* or *erony* chiefs.

Vincent describes the mode of government during the days of the *Bakungulu* as no more than a "paper administration", a weak sort of authority that was not helped by the absence of European mission societies. Missionaries, who had done much to educate the chiefly elites in other parts of the Protectorate, had stayed out of Teso in the years immediately after the arrival of the *bakungulu*.⁵⁸ Their absence contradicted the role missions had played in pushing the British government to open up eastern Uganda to a Christianising influence. This was because the missionary societies working in the Protectorate were already at full stretch in Bunyoro and other regions to the south and west of Teso. The Mill Hill Fathers and the Church Missionary Society only began serious evangelisation work in the 1910s, later than in southern and western parts of the country, and the Ganda agents, military men rather than religious figures, did little to convert the Iteso, in the absence of mission fathers (fn. Vincent, 1982: 122). Christianity would have to play "catch-up" in the Teso region, with

⁵⁷ In Teso the position of sub-county chief gained the ascription *apolon lo etem* (lit. "chief of the hearth"), because it happened to correspond to certain geographical boundaries, such as the divisions produced by swamps, which defined areas such as Ngora, Nyero, Kobwin. The counties, which were run by Ganda agents, rather than Itesots, retained the Luganda title *ssaza*, though they later acquired the ascription *obuku* or *ebuku* (from the Ateso for "shield").

⁵⁸ W.H. Crabtree led the call to colonise the Teso region in a 1901 article in the Church Missionary Intelligencer. In an indication of the religious rivalries that shaped early colonial Uganda, the main enemy was not ignorance, so much as Catholicism (Vincent 1982: 107).

conversion rates lagging behind those of the central parts of the Protectorate. The Catholic and Anglican churches, which Kevin Ward has later described as the “folk churches” of Uganda, were at their weakest, in bureaucratic terms, in the eastern and northern regions (Ward, 1995: 72; Pirouet, 1978, postscript). Pirouet explains this weakness as related to the obvious disjuncture between the missions, with their emphasis on bureaucracy and hierarchy, and the societies of northern and eastern Uganda, with their contingent and small-scale political structures (Pirouet, 1978: 169-172).

c) Early colonial administration

Kakungulu's career went into eclipse around the time of the establishment of the Mbale Collectorate in 1908 (Twaddle, 1993: 233).⁵⁹ The Collectorate, responsible for gathering the people's of eastern Uganda under Protectorate administration so that they could pay taxes, was keen to pacify the Teso region, and set about establishing the northern boundaries of the district through military campaigns and expeditions (Vincent, 1982: 124-134). In the southern half of the region, where Oledai was situated, the Collectorate sought to develop a chiefly bureaucracy that would serve the interests of colonial administration. Cotton, it had long been decided, was to be the cash crop for the region, and the imposition of cotton required more than the skeletal bureaucracy built up by the *bakungulu*. The colonial bureaucracy in Teso had to be forceful when it came to extracting labour from the population for public works, and able when it came to the instruction of the rural population in agricultural techniques (Brett, 1971). Colonial government also had to find a way of paying for itself.

The Poll Tax Ordinance was first introduced to southern Teso in 1909 (Vincent, 1982: 142). The ordinance involved the payment of a head tax by all adult men. This was the first serious indication that the colonial state was to attempt more than a paper administration of the region, of the sort put in place by Kakungulu. The poll tax replaced the more haphazard extraction of labour and goods from what had been an improvised bureaucracy.⁶⁰ From an administrative perspective, the tax system bound the interests of appointed chiefs to the colonial state. Chiefs were to be paid through a cut of ten percent of the taxes they collected, and the colonial authorities at sub-county and district levels were used as a backstop in

⁵⁹ The terms “Collectorate” was meant to imply the collection of taxes, not people, though in the case of the Mbale Collectorate this distinction could be thought of as academic.

⁶⁰ The role of parish chiefs in tax collection is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 (starting on page 91).

difficult cases. The system of appointed chiefs had gone from being essentially entrepreneurial "big men", to something more akin to clients of a colonial bureaucracy.

As Sara Berry has noted, the introduction of taxes was viewed, by colonial authorities throughout British-administered Africa, as the necessary corollary to "progress" (1992: 26), and the concern with making colonial government self-financing was paramount to the thinking of district administrators, and their superiors in Entebbe and London. The tax system, as it developed in Teso, was neither fair in structure, nor easy to administer. As late as 1919, European and Asian populations paid the same head tax as Africans, despite years of famine, rinderpest, smallpox and plague. Those who wished to escape the policies of the chiefly bureaucracy had to migrate to un-administered areas to the north and east, or had to accept the threat of dispossession and violence. As early as 1910 the receipts gathered by the colonial administration totalled 62,949 rupees (six times the cost of the district administration), and by 1918 tax receipts for the region had multiplied eightfold to 531,715 rupees (Vincent, 1982: 153).⁶¹

The expansion of colonial administration in the region was accompanied by the first serious attempts at missionary work. In 1908 the Catholic Mill Hill Fathers and the Anglican Church Missionary Society established sites on the edge of the administrative centre of Ngora. These two organisations were in many respects the most important parts of the colonial enterprise in Teso, particularly when it came to acculturating chiefs in the business of government administration and cotton production. Ngora High School set up by the Anglicans in 1912 provided a setting where chiefs were instructed on technical and administrative matters, and Lawrance suggests that the missions were instrumental in ensuring the successful introduction of the plough, an innovation that set Teso apart from other areas of Uganda (1957: 25). The missions also provided places where economic and political practices were given religious narratives: the seven day week, the Sabbath, Sunday prayers, new modes of dress and conduct, the value of literacy and numeracy.

Cotton cultivation, which would transform the economy of the region as well as the fortunes of the Protectorate, achieved its first successes in the 1910s.⁶² Cotton required close

⁶¹ Indian rupee coinage was introduced to the East African Protectorate in 1898, replacing the Maria Theresa dollar. The first branch of the National Bank of India opened in Entebbe in 1906. The "East Africa and Uganda (Currency) Order in Council, 1905", established the Indian rupee as currency; though the silver rupee of the IBEA Company was still recognized as legal tender. The East African florin replaced the rupee in 1920 (abridged from van Zwanenberg and King, 1975: 275-296).

⁶² As Vincent suggests the speed with which cotton was introduced is difficult to explain, particularly given the slow take up in Bantu regions, which were thought to be more amenable to indirect rule. Vincent is right to argue that there must have been a singularity of purpose in the district

supervision, which meant the availability of a number of punishments forcing small-holders into compliance. There appears to have been considerable resistance to cotton as it was useful only for paying taxes, and was a troublesome crop to grow. As Crawford Young has observed, cotton was not necessarily the most profitable crop for small-holders, and was a much more laborious crop to raise than indigenous foodstuffs, as it required more in the way of clearing the land, digging and weeding (Young, 1971: 143). Vincent herself noted that 'it has long been one of the least rewarding cash crops for the peasant cultivator', and has been associated with slavery (Vincent, 1982: 210). The district administration had to rely on its chiefs.

The first year of colonial administration transformed Teso from a relatively mobile society, reliant on contingent, small-scale social structures, into a society where the spread of mission Christianity, the payment of taxes and the development of the cotton economy forced through the building up of new structures which were more extensive and coercive. Though a few households were privileged by the system, Vincent claims that the early years of colonialism saw an overall decline in living standards in the years up to 1927 (1982: 11).⁶³ Immobility was institutionalised, passivity required, and impoverishment appeared to be the necessary corollary to cotton production: 'the lumbering oxen that draws Uganda's chariot of development' (Young, 1971: 141).

The imposition of chiefs, responsible for forcing through the cultivation of a difficult crop, on a population that was acephalous and semi-pastoralist, made for a very particular form of politics. Teso was not a centralised kingdom. There were none of the deep-rooted indigenous bureaucracies that could be co-opted by the colonial regime. Above the level of the village, local government structures were related to the countryside only through a series of coercive policies. Chiefs were typically appointed away from their home areas, and there was the absence of the sorts of dense political relationships that connected district capitals to the rural populace in other parts of the Protectorate. The chiefly class of civil administrators was largely extraverted even at this early stage; positions of chiefly authority were in the purvey of colonial administrators and keeping chiefly office depended on continuing good relations with one's superiors (and not with the rural population). A "successful" chief was a man able to contribute to the running costs of district

administration as cotton cultivation was a difficult business—with only a small window of opportunity for successful planting, and the requirement that only a long-stapled variety of was cotton to be used (Vincent, 1982: 171-172).

⁶³ Unfortunately the nature of the survey data Joan Vincent is able to draw upon is insufficient to justify claims about the "impoverishment" of the region. Rather she makes the point regarding impoverishment by association, using the work of authors working on rather different instances of the proletarianisation of the peasantry (the writings of E.P. Thompson, E.A. Brett, and Eric Wolf).

administration and the export economy. Cotton production and tax collection served as the markers of state engagement in the countryside (Vincent, 1968: 68).

Many of these arguments have already been incorporated into Mahmood Mamdani's thesis on "decentralised despotism" (1996). Mamdani has argued that chiefs, as agents of the colonial state, subjected rural populations to a form of state authority that made political forms more rigid and conservative. In Mamdani's view, power in the countryside was legitimated through the codification of "customary" laws which favoured—and co-opted—established elites. In place of the plurality of social structures, and a negotiable form of custom or convention, there was an often brutal and organised system of compulsion, and Mamdani sees a clear division in the experience of colonialism in Africa, into a world of citizens (in the towns) and subjects (in the countryside). The rural population in Teso was tied into structures that were more hierarchical and coercive, though it must be added that even at the high watermark of colonial administration, the authority of the state bureaucracy was less than absolute.

d) The "development decade": 1908-1917

Vincent terms the period from 1908 up to 1917 Teso's "development decade". From the perspective of the colonial administration, the changes in Teso through the 1910s were perhaps the most dramatic transformation in the history of Protectorate government: an amorphous, acephalous society was transformed into the engine of capitalist economic growth. A listing of the cumulative developments achieved through colonial administration does much to convey the rapid speed of the transformation. In 1908 the trading centre of Kumi was established as regional headquarters; in 1909 the Kyoga Marine Service came into operation; in 1910 the land on either side of the road from Mbale to Gondo—via Kumi—was opened for cotton cultivation; in 1911 the first ploughs arrived in the district.⁶⁴ The year 1912 saw the rapid expansion of public works in the region; sud-cutting in the swamps, in particular, required a rapid increase in the amount of forced labour, *luwalo*, demanded of the rural population. By 1914, Soroti, in what had once been the hinterlands of the region, was made the district capital (Vincent, 1968: 41-45).

⁶⁴ Mahmood Mamdani dates the introduction of cotton to the 1920s, and the introduction of the plough to the 1930s (Mamdani, 1976: 133). Vincent, uses the term "Gandaphilia" to describe the outlook of the Imperial British East Africa Company. I would argue that accusations of "Gandaphilia" can also be made against much of the historiography on Uganda, where the histories of northern and eastern Uganda has been marginalised and treated carelessly by scholars working on the southern regions (Vincent, 1982: 29).

The sorts of development desired by the colonial government were achieved despite three years of crop failure in 1916, 1917 and 1918, despite the outbreak of rinderpest in 1914, and documented instances of smallpox and the plague (Vincent, 1982: 192). Cotton was adopted as a cash crop despite a famine throughout the region in 1919, which resulted in 2,067 (recorded) deaths (Vincent, 1982: 185). Financial self-sufficiency in terms of the costs of district administration was achieved in the face of immense hardship. Despite famine, plague, and rinderpest, the end of the "development decade" saw a year of bumper poll tax receipts, totalling 351,200 rupees, up sevenfold from the 1910 figure (Vincent, 1982: 153; Vail, 1972: 146). Within these numbers appears Mamdani's idea of a system built on compulsion, where a rural population was subjected to a form of colonial rule without concomitant political or legal rights (Mamdani, 1996: 52-54).⁶⁵

The colonial state had to rely on a degree of coercion and centralised authority which had not been experienced in the region before.⁶⁶ Hut taxes were paid by all adult males, mostly in kind or with labour, while the production of cotton relied on Asian buyers who were important in the running of ginneries and the provision of agricultural tools, seed and inputs. The African population was confined to the roles of producer and chief, a system of agricultural production and self-administration that established cotton in the region (Ehrlich, 1957: 169). As E.A. Brett points out, the exclusion of entrepreneurial Africans from the commercial sector made it difficult for a class to develop that was essentially capitalist and outside the state (Brett 1973: 243-259). The granting of monopoly powers to non-native ginneries and merchants in the early years, and the dominance of co-operative societies in later years, underlined the gap that developed between those who were educated and part of the salariat, and those who remained in the villages.

But, as I have suggested, within this story of what would otherwise appear to be the complete subjugation of one society by another, there were limits to the colonial transformation. In 1911 the numbers of Europeans in the district totalled three. By 1921 their

⁶⁵ My presentation of the early colonial period as a time of economic and institutional change should not be taken as suggesting the years 1899-1927 as a time of stability, but rather that it was a period of significant transformations. Though I appreciate that the analysis contained within this part of the thesis runs the risk of appearing to stabilise the colonial period by conflating greater coercion and bureaucratic penetration with the idea of greater consistency in terms of local experiences of the state, I accept Terence Ranger's basic argument that the colonial was period likely to have been as destabilising as the post-colonial period (Ranger, 1994: 273).

⁶⁶ To give some indication of the reach of the colonial state, the provision of cotton seed in Teso was organised around the Cotton Ordinance of 1908, which was enforced with considerable success. The ordinance was designed to prevent mixed harvests and consequently lower prices on the global market, and Ehrlich records that the ordinance was "ruthlessly pursued in a country which had barely become accustomed to the crop" (Ehrlich, 1957: 171, a point also made by A.R. Morgan, a retired cotton inspector, 1958: 110).

number had reached only 66, compared with an indigenous population of 270,211 (Uganda Census, 1921: 1). In other words, though the use of guns, and the deployment of client chiefs produced a coercive system on one level, it was a system that had to be sustained by the engagement of others lower down. At an intermediary level, for example, those who were willing to engage in the educational and religious structures put in place by the Church of Uganda, or the Roman Catholic Church, were likely to gain favour with the government bureaucracy, while in the villages levels of cooperation and compliance varied, meaning that the colonial transformation could never be absolute, never entirely controlled by church or state bureaucracy. What came to be established at in institutional terms, the local level, was rather a combining of the experience of colonial government refracted through existing social and political patterns. To take the metaphor of sedimentation one step further, the seismic shift that came with the establishment of colonial rule fragmented rather than obliterated what was there before.

Past forms of social organisation, which had been of a more *ad hoc* or temporary nature, were, to some extent, reorganised around the requirements of colonial government. Alongside the establishment of bureaucratic institutions such as the parish chief, and the sub-county chief, there developed a number of more informal positions of authority around familial and kinship networks *within* localities. Kinship structures *became* more obviously formalised, and provided important arenas where conflicts over land and property could be negotiated. The “informal” sector of kinship relations, as much as the more formal sectors of the bureaucratic administration, resulted in a shift towards greater fixity in forms of social interaction. It was not so much a case that the colonial administration “invented” the customary structures of Iteso society—though their attempts at promoting “customary” law worked towards this end—but rather that there was a reorganisation of social relations that responded to the economy and politics of colonial expansion (an argument best outlined by Berry, 1993, chapter 2). At the local-level at least the effect was to produce a number of institutional spaces—clans, courts, public moots—which, though subject to negotiation and change, were of a more bureaucratically formalised character. Authority was parcelled out across more defined institutional spaces.

What Burke would later describe as the “parochialism” of the Iteso, the limited interest in national or district politics, their relative detachment from hierarchical, bureaucratic structures, indicated the resilience of pre-colonial patterns of social organisation (Burke, 1964: 164-168, 229). As Vincent suggests, out of the colonial experience, the political arena that mattered most to most people became the village (Vincent, 1968: 61-64). While the more centralised societies of the Uganda Protectorate related local-level structures to the

more extensive hierarchies of colonial administration, the idea of sub-county, county or district remained on the margins of the lives of those who remained in the rural areas. This meant that the Itesots incorporated into the regional elite, were alienated from many of the political developments at the local-level. As Richard Werbner has suggested more generally, amidst the story of colonial expansion, there was a level of resilience to what had been the contingent social forms of the pre-colonial period (Werbner, 1984: 70). The acephaly of Iteso social relations did not necessarily disappear simply because it did not dovetail well with the interests of the cotton economy, nor did the conditional nature of leadership give way entirely to the bureaucratic hierarchies of colonial administration. Elizabeth Colson's depiction of an "amorphous" society as tending to number no more than five hundred individuals, came to characterise the main field for political action in the region (Colson, 1969: 48, 52).⁶⁷

INDEPENDENCE AND THE POST-COLONIAL PERIOD

a) Independence and the military

Uganda gained independence in October 1962. In many respects the appearance on the national stage of Ugandan politicians, and the withdrawal of colonial administrators, had little obvious impact on rural politics in the Teso region. While Itesot politicians participated in the Constituent Assembly of 1958, the main difficulties facing Uganda as it moved towards independence involved other regions more directly. For example, the Constitutional Agreement, established on the eve of independence, contained within it differing degrees of centralisation and decentralisation; much more a reflection of the desire of colonial administrators and politicians from the various Bantu "kingdoms" to establish greater autonomy for the more "developed" parts of the Protectorate in the south and west. Ugandans living in Bunyoro, Ankole and Toro received greater powers of self-administration than the formerly acephalous or non-monarchical societies of the north and east, which were increasingly characterised as "underdeveloped". The Buganda kingdom, Uganda's most developed territory acquired considerable autonomy from the centre, and these variations in regional integration and disintegration made for a less than coherent governmental structure, later regarded as a basic flaw in the state that emerged at independence (Mutibwa, 1992: 25-26; Doornbos, 1978: 8-11). The newly independent

⁶⁷ Indeed, the persistence of this parochial pattern to politics in the Teso region is born out in Vincent's work on the parish of Bugondo, the site of her 1968 ethnography. Bugondo numbered 819 individuals in 1968, while the parish of Oledai in 2002 numbered 862.

government was left with a number of problems, notably the dispute over land that lingered on between Bunyoro and Buganda (Mutibwa, 1992: 2-3, 24).

Sitting outside the debates on Bunyoro's "lost counties", and less able to forge a strongly factional presence in the Constituent Assembly, politicians from the Teso region came to achieve positions of prominence at the national level on a case-by-case basis, rather than as a collective. The elevation of certain individuals after independence did not mean that the countryside was becoming more heavily intertwined with the workings of the state; rather the reverse appeared to be the case, with rural areas uninvolved in the sorts of patron-client networks that had tied other parts of the countryside to the centre. Instead, the Ugandan state "trickled down" in a rather desultory fashion, in the form of projects and programmes. And though the region showed consistent support for the Uganda People's Congress (UPC) of Milton Obote, the dominant party after independence, this did not appear to carry concomitant benefits for the rural population.

The one area where the region's population was more obviously a part of the national political economy was in terms of the numbers of Itesots who served in the military and police forces, men such as Okurut Gereson Nairobi (mentioned on page 18 of the thesis). The military was, and is, the most important political actor in Uganda, with political authority in the army organised around the ethnicity of the officer corps (Brett, 1995: 149). Up until Museveni's seizure of power in 1986, Itesots were heavily represented in both army and police. In his history of the Ugandan military, Amii Omara-Otunnu identifies Okuni Opolot and David Livingstone Ogwang, both Itesots, as two of the four "big men" of the Ugandan army at the time of Independence (the other two were northerners, Tito Lutwa Okello, an Acholi, and Suleiman Hussein a Nubian) (Omara-Otunnu, 1987: 36). Omara-Otunnu explains the reasons for this in terms of the prejudicial policies of the colonial administration, which required, after 1939, that all soldiers should be at least 5'8''; a way of promoting northerners and easterners who were felt to have a more martial bearing than their Bantu neighbours (Omara-Otunnu, 1987: 35). The Protectorate government of the 1930s and 1940s made a concerted attempt to conscript soldiers from those region to the north and east, as they were felt to be less educated, and consequently with a weaker base from which to stage popular opposition to colonial administration (Leopold, 2005: 73-75). Independence only exaggerated these biases, and by 1966, 137 of the army officer corps came either from the northern or eastern regions, a mere 34 officers from the central or western regions (Omara-Otunnu, 1987: 36).

In 1966, Milton Obote used the army to resolve the dispute between the Bunyoro and Buganda kingdoms, and set about diminishing Buganda's position within Uganda. In what was essentially a *coup d'état*, Obote, as Prime Minister, seized executive powers, deposing the *habaka* of Buganda who had served as President of Uganda since independence (Mutibwa, 1992, chapter 5).⁶⁸ Obote's actions alienated the Baganda, and fostered a powerful site of opposition to his government, as Ganda administrators were prominent in the civil service and in the running of churches. Though the crisis had little direct effect on the Teso region, it resulted in the further ethnicisation of the military. After August 1966 the Iteso formed the second largest ethnic group in the army officer corps, with only the Acholis represented in greater numbers (Omara-Otunnu, 1987: 80). The Iteso, which made up 8.1 percent of the national population in 1966, provided 15.2 percent of the police recruits for that year. And the role of the military in politics took on even greater significance after Major-General Idi Amin deposed Obote in a second *coup d'état* on January 25, 1971 (Mutibwa, 1992: 78).

b) The Amin years: violence and economic collapse

The collapse of Uganda's economy during the 1970s can be attributed to Amin's assault on Uganda's Asians, his economic isolation in the region, and the falling global prices for Uganda's main export crops (Southall, 1980: 631-2).⁶⁹ Cotton, which had been the cash crop in the Teso region since the 1910s, depended on the system of ginneries, wholesalers and agricultural input vendors developed by the colonial administration. Aside from the government co-operatives, most of the infrastructure was Asian-run and Asian-owned, and the "Economic War" against Asians elided with a policy of "Africanisation" in the churches and the state. Amin dismantled the export crop system, and concentrated the cotton industry into the hands of a few supporters. The massive decline in production from 78.1 thousand tonnes of cotton for export in 1971 to just 1.2 thousand tonnes by 1981, indicates the scale of the collapse (Edmonds, 1998: 102).⁷⁰ Beyond the assault on cotton, which was

⁶⁸ The imposition of a one-party state, which meant the end of federalism in Uganda, affected the four kingdoms of Ankole, Buganda, Bunyoro and Toro more directly than the Teso region, which was administered from the centre. That said, the message of the crises of 1966, which was of the ascendancy of the military in domestic politics, and the entrenchment of grievances between different ethnic groups regions, haunted the Teso region, in the late 1980s.

⁶⁹ Despite the overall decline in the terms of trade for Uganda's main exports in the 1970s, the spike in coffee prices in 1976 served as a stay of execution for Amin's government, bringing in much needed foreign exchange (Southall, 1980: 630).

⁷⁰ The monopolisation of marketing boards in the cash-crop sector, and control over the right to trade through licenses and the Departed Asian Custodian Board, led to the creation of what Brett has termed "a statist siege economy" (Brett, 1992: 18). Districts were run by military commissioners

already on its way out as a cash crop, there was the problem of a more generalised economic crisis, leading to the absence of basic commodities such as soap, salt and sugar in the countryside. Teso, unlike Bugisu to the south-east, did not have international borders over which goods could be smuggled, and was unable to circumvent the failings of the state by setting up parallel markets (Bunker, 1987: 22-25). Instead, the rural population relied on their stocks of cattle, and had to wait for the marginal improvements in the national economy that came later in the decade.

What marked out Amin's government most famously, however, was the level of violence the state bureaucracy was prepared to use against the civilian population. As Saul has suggested, Amin's grip on power was sometimes absolute and frequently unsteady (Saul, 1976), and Amin presided over the militarization of all branches of the state. The centralisation of power, which had already begun under the first Obote government, took on a more sinister character during Amin's rule (Brett, 1995: 218-33; Gertzel, 1980: 470). As early as November 1971 Obote's internal security apparatus, the Special Police Force, had been replaced by Amin's Public Safety Unit and the State Research Bureau, little more than paralegal death squads. The Anglican Archbishop Janani Luwum and Cabinet Ministers Charles Oboth-Ifumbi and Erunayo Oryema were among the more prominent figures to be murdered, and the political nature of the violence under Amin can be contrasted with the violence of later regimes, which has tended to affect the poor, rather than the wealthy (Mutibwa, 1992: 112-113; Gifford, 1998: 114-115).⁷¹ In terms of Uganda's civil society, religious institutions came under particular attack with the state recognising only the Anglican, Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches, and Islam. This meant the banning of the numerous Pentecostal churches, and the Bahá'í movement (Southall, 1980: 634). In Soroti and Mbale towns, the Pentecostal Assemblies of God churches were shut down, though in the countryside Pentecostal congregations continued to worship.

And yet for the Teso region, the political violence of the Amin government was not quite the disaster it was for other parts of the country (Brett, 1995: 138-9, Zistel, 2002: 113). Teso has been described as 'one of the areas least involved in specifically political conflict' during that time, and the initial shock of the departure of Asians from the towns, and the disastrous decline in the fortunes of the national economy were offset by the large stocks of cattle that had been accumulated in the boom in cotton production years of the 1950s and 1960s

rather than civil servants, and the rhetoric of local government was increasingly tied to questions of security and loyalty to the ruling regime (Golooba-Mutebi, 1999: 100).

⁷¹ As Adrian Hastings later commented religious figures such as Luwum represented possibly 'the only alternative political figure with national significance to that of the President'. Amin managed to emasculate not only the civil service, but also Uganda's civil society (Hastings, 1979: 263).

(O'Connor, 1988: 90). In the political sphere the subversion of the Ugandan state, which found expression in the growing brutality of the army and security services, was more obviously felt among the Acholi and Lango populations to the north and Buganda to the south (Southall, 1980: 633; Brett, 1995: 138-9). Only the flight of Amin's soldiers in 1979, as they deserted their military stations, affected the Iteso with something like the brutality felt by the Acholi and Lango populations. The power vacuum that followed Amin's fall allowed Karamojong cattlekeepers to arm themselves with munitions from the barracks in Moroto, and there were a series of cattle-raids along the eastern border of the region in 1979 and 1980 (de Berry, 2000: 66, Ingham, 1994: 170-171).⁷²

With most of their cattle stocks unaffected by the raiding, the majority of people living in the Teso region were able to live through the five years of the second Obote government (1980-1985) set apart from the civil wars being waged in the other parts of Uganda. The conflicts that affected Buganda, for example, were not felt in the Teso region, and eastern Uganda, as a whole, must be set apart from the dominant narrative of post-colonial Uganda. While Mikael Karlström speaks of Uganda's 'postcolonial disaster as the twenty years from 1966 to 1986', he does not really speak for people living in the Teso region (Karlström, 2004: 597). Karlström's is the view from Buganda, where the collapse is thought to have started with the constitutional crisis of 1966 and ended with the arrival of the NRM in 1986 (see Mutibwa, 1992, chapter 10, also Hansen and Twaddle, 1988). Teso, like much of northern and eastern Uganda, is some way from this rather one-sided narrative (see also Vincent, 1991; Behrend, 1999; Southall, 1998). Though the phoenix-like rise of the Ugandan state out of the ashes of Obote and Amin may serve as the foundation story for the NRM government, or for the research of historians working on the Buganda region, this forgets that for many Ugandans, the NRM's accession to power marked the beginning of a more profound collapse.

⁷² Interestingly the Iteso, despite their reputation as supporters of Obote made up only a small percentage of the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) that removed Amin from power. Omara-Otunnu claims that only one percent of the recruits to the UNLA belonged to the Nilo-Hamitic language group (Iteso, Kumam, Karamajong), by November 1979 (Omara-Otunnu, 1987: 150-151). Bantu and Luo groups (mainly Banyankole, Bakiga and Acholi) made up 98.5% of the recruits.

c) Museveni, the National Resistance Movement and the insurgency in Teso

Starting in 1986 the cattle stocks, on which the region's economy had come to rely, began to be looted by Karamojong warriors.⁷³ The raiding began in what is presently Katakwi district, and spread through the region, reaching the Ngora in early 1988. After each raid there was newly formed group of cattle-less people prepared to do the same, and by the time cattle were taken from villagers in Oledai the looters were a mixture of Karamojongs and Itesots.⁷⁴ Estimates put the number of cattle taken from the region at 500,000, though it should be said that numbers are less important than the overwhelming nature of the raiding. As soon as cattle-raiders hit a particular area the local economy foundered (Henriques, 2002: 18).⁷⁵ Not only did the raiding involve the stealing of cattle, but also the theft of ploughs and hand hoes, and the looting of stores of grain and flour (Mudoola, 1991: 244).⁷⁶

The cattle raiding was synchronous with the arrival in power of Museveni, a military man who had acceded to power after a long and bloody rebellion against Milton Obote and the short-lived duumvirate of Tito Lutwa Okello and Basilio Okello. And the two events, the cattle raiding, and the accession of Museveni to power, were bound together in the memory of villagers⁷⁷:

The people say that it was Museveni who stole the cattle... If Museveni had wanted to he could have stopped the raids. The Government could have stopped the Karamojongs from reaching Teso. We asked for security, but Museveni refused to bring soldiers in. We believe that Museveni sent the Karamojongs to steal the cattle.⁷⁸

⁷³ Mizeler and Young suggest that the raiding was the result of the militarisation of Karamojong politics and a response to the effects of droughts on Karamojong livestock (Mizeler and Young, 2000: 416-417).

⁷⁴ This makes it difficult to date the raiding precisely. Henriques, working in Mukura dates the Karamojong raiding to early 1986, reflecting on the point at which they entered the Teso region, rather than the time when they reached Mukura. Zistel and de Berry both date the raiding to the end of 1986, and 1986 makes sense for de Berry's work in Nyadar parish, along the Teso-Karamoja border. However, other authors who date the raiding to that year, give the false impression that cattle-raiding was a singular event in the Teso region, rather than an extended series of raids lasting into 1989 (cf. Zistel, 2002: 118; de Berry, 2000: 67). I am grateful to Father Bernard Phelan of the Mill Hill Society for suggesting the graduated nature of the raiding chronology in Teso (written communication, July 13, 2005).

⁷⁵ An article in the *New Vision* dating from 1997, and based on veterinary records, puts the decline in cattle stocks at the figure of 452,000 head of cattle in 1985 down to just 32,000 head of cattle in 1997 ("Teso Commission risks loss of 270M/= " by Anne A. Mugisha, *New Vision*, 30/06/1997).

⁷⁶ The loss of cattle also represented a heavy blow to the social identity of the Iteso. Cattle formed the key element in marriage negotiations, judicial compensation, and the means through which youths became men (Zistel, 2002: 126; Henriques, 2000: 114).

⁷⁷ In a *New Vision* article from February 1995 the Minister of Local Government, Jaberu Bidandi Ssali, accepted that the NRA had been complicit in the cattle raiding ("Iteso to be compensated—Bidandi" by Nathan Etengu, 14/02/1995).

⁷⁸ This point was put forward by Tukei Gerald in a discussion with older men in the sub-parish, December 11, 2002. The other men present at the meeting, though highly critical of rebels, agreed

When the National Resistance Army (*infra* NRA) took power in January 1986, people living in the Teso region found themselves in a difficult position. Many had served in the army or the police force of the defeated government, and were worried for their own safety. At the same time, the return home of many of these former military and security personnel destabilised the region (Henriques, 2002: 212-213).⁷⁹ There had already been a political vacuum after an internal coup that had removed Obote from power six months earlier, and there was increasing lawlessness across the region, a lawlessness that was further aggravated by the actions, and inactions, of the Museveni government (Brett, 1995: 144-146). In July 1986, roughly three-quarters of the national police force were dishonourably discharged, losing their entitlement to severance pay and pension (Omara-Otunnu, 1987: 178; ILO, 1999).⁸⁰ There were persistent rumours that Museveni's government planned to punish those who had worked for the army or police. Men and women fled from the towns, seeking refuge in the rural areas, bringing guns and grievances to the countryside (see also Allen, 1991: 371-372). Local militias in the Teso region, which had been set up to fend off Karamojong raiders, were disbanded by the new government as they were felt to be a possible site of rebellion, adding to the list of potential trouble-makers (Zistel, 2000: 118, Pirouet, 1991: 201).

As early as January 1986 political leaders from the Teso region began visiting trading centres to mobilise support for a rebellion (de Berry, 2000: 67). The experience of cattle-raiding, and the poor reputation of the new government, meant there was little reason to trust in the NRA. Rebel leaders argued that their movement would bring about the restoration of law and order, and, given the cattle-raiding and growing insecurity in the region, the argument of these "big men" found an appreciative audience in the countryside (Ocitti, 2000: 342; Ingham, 1994: 210). Popularly called the Force Obote Back Army (FOBA), this grouping drew on popular opposition to Museveni in the countryside. A rebellion against the rule of the NRA took hold of the region.⁸¹

with Tukei's basic assertion that the NRM failed to protect the Iteso, and that this failure was one of malign intent, rather than benign neglect.

⁷⁹ As the village council chairman noted: "by the time the President came to power there were so many guns in the place, and they are still there today. That is where so many problems have come from". Interview with Akorikin John Vincent (August 21, 2002).

⁸⁰ Major Abadi Ayeko, a one-time rebel leader recalled: "when the issue came of surrounding up those who had been in the army, I was one of the victims and when his cattle (270 head) survived the Karamojong raids only to be taken by government soldiers, he was provoked into rebellion, or so he claimed", ("Former Kumi rebels state their case", by Asuman Nakendo, *New Vision* 24/04/1992).

⁸¹ The analysis contained within this paragraph is particularly indebted to Okiror Ben Isaac of Agolitom sub-parish, who gave an extended interview on the chronology of the insurgency (January 14, 2003).

But popular support for the rebellion began to fall off as soon as it started. At the time of the FOBA the cattle-raiding meant that the region's economy was in free-fall. The continuous cycle of raiding included not just Karamojong warriors, and impoverished Itesots, but also bands of "rebels" who were prepared to use the cover of the insurgency, and the availability of weapons for personal gain, and the ascription "FOBA", which quickly morphed into the Uganda People's Army (UPA) does little to capture the way the rebellion fragmented into a confusing array of groups and alliances in the countryside. According to villagers any veneer of military management from the leader-in-exile of Peter Otai, or the nominal commanders of the rebellion, failed to correspond to the lived experience of the rebellion.⁸² Instead, the actions of rebels served to aggravate already chronic problems of insecurity and impoverishment, and helped promote an environment where long-standing conflicts were mediated through rebel actions. Within a sub-parish of little more than a hundred homes villagers could recall at least four different rebel groups working in the area, and as the rebellion progressed, various local militias turned against elements in the rural population. Agama Pascal, one of the oldest people living in the sub-parish, commented that:

What came at that time was the revenging of conflicts in the place. Over land disputes and women... one man could run to the rebels with a story, and the rebels would come and settle the dispute with a gun. But they would settle it on false information. You asked what the rebels did from this place. They got revenge on their own disputes; that was their undoing. That was our undoing.⁸³

The common theme that cuts across accounts of the insurgency collected during fieldwork, was the way rebels targeted village politicians. This meant that the political dimensions of the rebellion were parochial, rather than regional in orientation, something that is not really taken up in the literature (de Berry, 2000; Henriques, 2002). Those who were targeted were not so much government soldiers, or district officials, but rather those who were associated with positions of authority at the local-level.⁸⁴ Early on in the insurgency, those men suspected of using witchcraft were attacked and killed by rebels. After this came the killing of "big men", such as the village council chairmen, the parish chief, or the leaders of the various *atekerin*. Though the war was meant to be against the central government, it is more

⁸² Whereas the literature in the national press focused on the role of certain "big men" such as Peter Otai, the former defence minister under Obote, at the level of the village, the violence was described as parochial, and was explained as the result of young men from the sub-parish "going to the bush"

⁸³ Agama Pascal made this point in a group discussion, December 12, 2002

⁸⁴ The village council chairman, Akorikin John Vincent observed the following: "some people went to the bush with the aim of killing certain men, claiming they were the ones who had brought trouble to the area. Men joined the rebellion not so much because they wanted to fight the Government but because of conflicts and jealousies. Land was a big issue at the time" (September 30, 2002).

properly understood as a series of micro-political conflicts.⁸⁵ The failure to make any progress against the NRA meant that the wages of violence were paid, first and foremost, by local “big men”:

The rebels were always looking for the “RC”s.⁸⁶ How could those people survive in the villages? The rebels did not want them. If the rebels saw an “RC” he would be dead soon after. They would take him to “dig his potatoes” in the swamp. Within a short time they would cover his eyes and face with his shirt and they would move him to the swamp, while singing:

mam idaete eong ne, koyangarai eong da ore neja ikatunga
(don’t bury me here, take my body home to my people)

That was their song, their song for killing.⁸⁷

As if to underline the political dimensions to the attacks on local “big men” the meaning of the song quoted above referred to the intentionally sacrilegious way in which those killed were buried. “Big men” were typically murdered away from their home compound, taken to the swamps or the bush, so that they could be denied the sort of burial that would have allowed their spirit to rest (see Chapter 6).

Attacks on parish chiefs, *ateker* leaders and Resistance Council chairmen, were full of symbolism, and it is possible to see the rebellion as a conflict that expressed, in fairly desperate ways, the competition between hierarchical and non-hierarchical forms of social organisation that had been institutionalised in the early colonial period. This probably explains why the insurgency was increasingly defined in terms of local political disputes, as the local-level remained the main political arena for politics in Teso. “Big men” were denied a decent burial and were killed in ways that directly attacked their claim to political and social status. Their killing can be seen as part of a desire to overturn the social order, a *revolt* against those institutions that had entrenched authority and hierarchy (Gluckman 1952, cited in Welbourn, 1961: 4). Oberei Fastine, who has since been elevated to the position of chairman of the *ateker* Atekok spoke of his own situation during the insurgency:

I was one of those they tried to kill. It was only God who made me to survive. I was at gunpoint, but I somehow had the courage to run. They burnt all of my

⁸⁵ This micro-political aspect to the conflict is marginalised in the literature on the insurgency, where rebels are usually presented as trained on government targets, rather than concerned with settling scores in the village (cf. Zistel, 2002; de Berry, 2000).

⁸⁶ “RC”, short for Resistance Council, being the nomenclature for the village council chairman at the time of the insurgency.

⁸⁷ From a discussion with Angejet Jennifer Loy, a widow from the sub-parish of Agolitom. Interviewed November 7, 2002.

property and my home, they wanted to shoot my wife also... they said we were collaborating with Government, that were we informers'.⁸⁸

Some of the most famous killings included the murder of the county chief of Ngora, and the sub-county chief. In Oledai the parish chief, Angatia was killed, as was Abwot, the leader of Ogoria *ateker*. The deaths of these men were seen as symptomatic of the political violence of the insurgency. The irony for villagers was that when the rebels took over a particular area, they also came to stand for the sorts of coercion they claimed to attack. The idea of what they sought to overthrow was easier to oppose than it was to replace.

d) 1991: the internment of the rural population

But even at the height of the rebellion, when much of the countryside appeared to be under the control of one or another group, the government was never entirely absent from the lives of villagers. And one of the difficulties of retelling the history of the period is to balance the acts of violence with the continuation of seemingly mundane political activities. Elections for the village councils were held in 1988, and though much of the civil administration was in a state of collapse in the countryside, the village council chairman continued to participate in government-run trainings on the rules of the new Resistance Council system and continued to hear disputes in the villages (de Berry, 2000: 68).⁸⁹ The army had control of the roads, and this meant that those who had the means to travel from one town to another required proof of identity, usually in the form of tax receipts:

... if you did not have graduated tax tickets you were considered to be a rebel. Some people had those tickets but they were few. People were killed by the soldiers because they lacked a ticket. But the sub-counties were not working at that time so you could get neither your tickets nor a photo.⁹⁰

Though the government army controlled the towns and the roads, they had not made much headway in the countryside. And in response to this failure, the NRA set about interning the rural population in late 1989. Internment, the government argued, would force the rebels out into the open, and would cut off civilian support for the rebellion, allowing the army to sweep the countryside. Vincent later termed government actions at the time a "scorched

⁸⁸ Interview with Oberei Fastine (August 30, 2002).

⁸⁹ Elections were competitive, according to Akorikin John Vincent (interviewed August 21, 2002). Attendance at workshops was recalled by Otoi Anthony, former "RC" of Oledai sub-parish (interviewed, December 2, 2002).

⁹⁰ The comment comes from an interview with Ikara Patrick, Roman Catholic catechist, December 4, 2002.

earth policy", a policy that was characterised by extreme and unforgiving violence (Vincent, 1999: 122).⁹¹ This overstates the capabilities of the NRA in dealing with rebel groups. Where the state was more obviously unforgiving was in the treatment of the interned rural population. Those who did not have access to accommodation in the towns were put into hastily assembled camps for nine months starting in February 1990. Estimates put the total interned population at well over one hundred thousand people, roughly half the population of the region (Henriques, 223-4, de Berry, 2000: 72).⁹² The camp at Ngora, to which villagers from Oledai were sent, interned around 35,000 people over a few square miles (Amnesty International, 1999: 21).⁹³ From the start, the government made no attempt to meet the needs of villagers settled in the camps.⁹⁴ The army failed to provide adequate food, shelter, or water. A missionary later recalled that:

The internment camps, which we at the time called concentration camps, which is what they were, concentrating people in certain areas... that was a terrible blow to those who were caught up in it...

... The mortality rate was quite high in most of the camps... there was a big camp in the centre of Ngora next to the county headquarters, at one point there were about 20 people a day dying in that camp. You could not travel past the camp without meeting people carrying bodies. That was quite a severe punishment, that's the way people saw it.⁹⁵

The experience of death and dying in the camps is taken up in detail in Chapter 6, as it provides a large part of the reason why villagers wanted to establish burial societies in the years after the insurgency. Given the desperate situation in the camps, Yoweri Museveni was placed under increasing pressure by the churches, mission organisations and relief agencies, and the government allowed in relief agencies, including the Red Cross and OXFAM two months into the period of internment. After their entry, conditions improved.

⁹¹ Ingham overstates his case when he criticises the "protection afforded to people of Teso by the NRA" as little better than the UNLA tactics in Luwero where the killing was of a different order to that in Teso (Ingham, 1994: 210).

⁹² The population of Kumi District, according to the 1991 census was 236,694, and the population of the Teso region 670,000. Provisional returns for the 2002 census put Kumi District at 393,271 and the Teso region at 1,162,617.

⁹³ The area where the camp was sited can be seen on map A, as the striped area of land near to *ebuku* (the county headquarters).

⁹⁴ Alito Fastine, who was a young man at the time of his internment observed the following: "In the camps life was not easy, people slept outside, under trees at the start. There was not really any pit latrines or clean water, and that gave us problems. We had to share one well, sometimes you would find that people had stepped in faeces on the way to the well and that would get into the water. The maize meal the government brought was not good, that gave people dysentery and so problems added to each other, like that" (December 20, 2002).

⁹⁵ Interview with Father Bernard Phelan, Mill Hill Mission, London, August 20, 2001.

The introduction of basic sanitation measures, better food, cleaner water, and the provision of cooking utensils and medicines made the camps a more tolerable place to live.⁹⁶

Aside from the degrading experience of the internment process, it is useful to note that the camps helped to maintain something of the institutional structures of local government. Within the camps the population was organised along fairly regimented lines, where the sleeping and living arrangements were mapped out according to where people lived. The handing out of food was co-ordinated by resistance council chairmen who used village elders to organise sub-parishes into "cells" (an inheritance of Obote's *mayumba kumi* system of local government).⁹⁷ This sense of divisional organisation was further maintained by the social practices of villagers, as internees from one sub-parish would often avoid socialising with villagers from another. The insurgency had divided up the rural population into "pro-government" and "pro-rebel" areas.⁹⁸

But the main rationale for putting people into camps, was to isolate the rebels from their supporters in the general population. The nine-month internment was meant to clear the rebels from the bush, bringing the insurgency to a swift conclusion, bringing peace to the countryside. Despite a number of military actions during the months of internment, rebels remained in the countryside, and villagers faced increasing violence and hardship on their return home in September 1991. The rebels who remained active in the countryside were distrustful of the civilian population returning from the camps, regarding ordinary villagers as government supporters. As well as this growing hostility between rebels and the rural population, a related problem was the food crisis that greeted villagers on their return home. The nine months of internment had made it impossible for villagers to plant crops, and the spread of mosaic disease among the cassava crop added to their difficulties:⁹⁹

The time when people came back home they found that all the food in the granaries had been eaten or burnt [by the rebels]. And the cassava we had left was not there.

⁹⁶ This point was put forward most forcefully in a group discussion with older women (December 10, and December 18, 2002).

⁹⁷ "In every parish you would be divided into "cells", so that when it came to distributing relief it was done like that. The RC would divide the people and he would appoint the cell leader. When they brought relief you would stand up in your cells. Your leader would be given food as he would be standing at the front and then he would hand out the cooking oil, maize meal and beans." A comment from Adongo Christine from a discussion with older women, November 19, 2002.

⁹⁸ Oledai, located near to the army detachment in Ngora trading centre, was thought of as a government area and was not called upon by rebel groups to pass on some of the food or household goods that were being given to internees in the camps (this observation was made by Ongole Israel in a group discussion with villagers from the neighbouring sub-parish of Agolitom, November 20, 2002).

⁹⁹ Cassava mosaic began to affect the region in early 1991, ("Famine hits Soroti", *New Vision* 18/04/1991; "Soroti famine bites", by Alan Zarembo 08/05/1991). 1991 was also a year where the "wrong" sort of rains fell, in terms of starting up new crops, leading to further hardship in 1992.

The soldiers and the rebels did that. There was no planting, no harvest, and then there was that disease. That is what brought us famine on our return to the village after the camps.¹⁰⁰

It was hard to start life here again. We could not satisfy the few rebels still in the place with what we had.¹⁰¹

By the end of 1993 most of the rebels had formally surrendered or had simply stopped fighting.¹⁰² The Amnesty Statute of 1987, and the Presidential pardons that followed provided guarantees of safety and compensation for those who crossed over to the government side (Zistel, 2002: 174). The Presidential Commission for Teso, which was an important forum for some of the region's "big men" to negotiate their way into the arms of the new government, offered a possible avenue for the move from war to peace. A number of rebel commanders took up positions in the NRM.¹⁰³ At the level of the village, however, ordinary rebels attempted to melt back into village life, chose to serve in the government army, or relied on the relative anonymity of the towns (Henriques, 2002: 22).

Though the end of the insurgency is often presented as a case study in conflict resolution, an example of NGOs, government and civil society working together (cf. Zistel, 2002), in retrospect it would seem that the defeat of rebellion was more obviously achieved by the limited availability of arms and the lack of financial support for the bands of rebels that remained (Brett, 1992). Growing disillusionment with the various rebel groupings led to increased co-operation, on the part of villagers, with an effective government army. And the winding down of hostilities in the early 1990s should be thought of as an outgrowth of the utter exhaustion of the rural population in the face of an increasingly confident military. The early 1990s marked the last time when the state sought to maintain a strong and authoritative presence in the countryside. The rebellion ended, in symbolic terms with an open-air Mass given by Pope John Paul II at the diocesan seat of Soroti, in February 1993.

¹⁰⁰ Comment by an older woman from the sub-parish of Achinga, in a group discussion held in Oledai sub-parish, December 20, 2002.

¹⁰¹ Comment by Obokoya John Peter, from a discussion with a group of older men in the sub-parish of Agolitom, November 20, 2002. Those who had been interned returned with utensils, household items, agricultural equipment, and basic foodstuffs that had been donated to them by the various relief agencies. Many of these items were looted by rebels after villagers returned to the countryside.

¹⁰² As if to underline the hostility that developed between the rural population and the rebels, and the difficulties this presented in making rebel life a viable option, 1991 saw an exodus of rebels to the government, according to the *New Vision* newspaper ("Kumi rebels give up", by Fidel Omunyokol 20/05/1991; "300 UPA rebels give themselves up", by Fidel Omunyokol 24/05/1991; "Okiror gives up", by Henry Epolu 12/06/1991; "UPA splits up", 14/11/92).

¹⁰³ Hajji Omar Okodel, for example, was a one-time rebel leader from Atutur who went on to become chairman of Kumi district council and head of the NRM secretariat for the region.

Though the Ugandan state has done little to secure developments at the local-level in Teso since 1993, the government has made an obvious difference in terms of security dividing the region into secure and non-secure zones. Katakwi district and the eastern parts of Soroti and Kumi districts have continued to be destabilised by continued Karamojong raiding, and more recently by incursions from the Lord's Resistance Army. Many people living in eastern and northern parts of the region have been re-collected into displaced person's camps, and much of what was once agricultural land has returned to bush (de Berry, 2000; ISIS WICCE, 2000).¹⁰⁴ More educated Itesots from these eastern and northern parts have moved to the towns in the west of the region, and speak of their resentment at the way the National Resistance Movement has allowed their homes area to regress into a sort of dependency. Oledai sub-parish, which falls in the western part of the region, has been more secure. Here, at least, the threat of cattle-raiding has subsided and farming has been possible.

Apart from maintaining security, however, the impact of the government has been less than overwhelming. Though there have been attempts to revive the developmental role of the district government, most notably through the twin processes of decentralisation and democratisation (discussed in Chapter 3), the state as a bureaucratic structure can be thought of as fairly uninvolved in developments at the local-level. The return of farming meant that a majority of households were better off in 2002, in terms of livestock and assets, when compared with their situation earlier in the decade (though they were much worse off when compared with their situation pre-1986, see below). Though cotton has not recovered since its collapse in the 1970s, the diversification into other marketable crops has continued. By the time of fieldwork, cassava and millet flour, as well as groundnuts and sweet potatoes were sold in Ngora, or were bought up by market traders from Kampala.

If we turn to the data collected during fieldwork, it is possible to see the slowness of the recovery since the cattle-raiding of the insurgency period. In the survey work those who were household head back in 1985 (at the tail end of the Obote government), were asked to list their assets from that time, from 1991 the year of internment, which marked the nadir of the insurgency, and from the day of the interview in early 2002. Assets included not only livestock but also household items, such as mattresses, bicycles, sewing machines and iron boxes. The following table, which can be taken as a crude indicator of the economic changes

¹⁰⁴ And the problems of internment were not eased by the incursions of insurgents from the Lord's Resistance Army into the northern and eastern parts of the Teso region starting in June 2003 ("LRA displaces 80,000 in Teso", *Monitor* 21/07/2003).

that had affected villagers since the mid-1980s, translated the responses for those 88 household heads who had been household heads for all three reporting years (1985, 1991, 2002) converting their assets into shilling values, based on market prices for 2002. The table shows average household wealth in 2002 was only one fifth of what was reported for 1985.

Table 3.1 Declining livelihoods¹⁰⁵

Year	Combined asset wealth of the 88 households surveyed*	Asset wealth per household
2002	58,390,575/=	663,529/=
	\$33,366	\$379
1991	35,588,900/=	404,419/=
	\$20,337	\$231
1985	287,594,525/=	3,268,120/=
	\$164,340	\$1,867

*Measured by average household assets and livestock for 1985, 1988, and 2002

While there are problems with any survey work, particularly as work that has to rely on the ability of individual villagers to recall wealth levels from several years back, those interviewed had a strong memory of what they had lost. That said, it should be understood that the numbers given in the survey are likely to indicate the best situation of the household prior to the insurgency, and the worst moment during. As such, the table suggests, schematically perhaps, the extent to which wealth levels in the region have collapsed, and the subsequent difficulty in recovering wealth in the 1990s. Though it can be argued that many villagers were wary of converting wealth into livestock (because of the experience of cattle-raiding), and though there was an admitted tendency to exaggerate what had been lost, the numbers suggest the radical nature of the collapse.

For villagers in Oledai, the modest economic recovery of the 1990s focused on the household rather than on kinship networks, or the wider community. The various donor-funded programmes that had sought to promote a more collective, communitarian approach to

¹⁰⁵ The 88 households that responded for all three years were included in the table (88 out of 126). Asset data was collected through the household survey, using questions 5a through 5f as the basis for the wealth estimations (see appendix B). Household assets were given a shilling value based on market prices for January 2002.

farming did not appear to have affected the patterns of economic organisation.¹⁰⁶ The “reporter projects” where ex-rebels were given hoes, ploughs, cattle and seed, to manage a piece of land, as a shared enterprise, were quickly reorganised so that the assets were divided and used by individual “reporters”. In terms of the seemingly expansive NGO sector, interactions with the countryside were occasional and erratic. The Presidential Commission for Teso, for example, which was meant to rebuild the region’s economy, proved no better suited to improving the lives of the rural population than the more conventional government programmes, set in place in the 1990s. The money granted to the Commission in the early 1990s was diverted to officials in Kampala, or was absorbed by the few families involved in the Commission’s work.¹⁰⁷ Where external funding was more obviously useful was in the rehabilitation of physical infrastructure through the Northern Uganda Reconstruction Programme, which financed the rebuilding of schools, hospitals, and roads.

As of 2002, villagers could be categorised according to a hierarchy of income-generating activities. Day-labouring, farming one’s land, and, in the case of women, brewing and selling beer, offered the most regular sources of income for the majority of homes. A much smaller number of households expected money from working in the schools or through casual work in the trading centre of Ngora. Some households received money or support in kind from relatives in the towns, though such mechanisms had never been particularly important in the regional economy of Teso. Incomes could also be augmented by gaining positions of prominence in the sub-parish, with court fees, burial fees and church collections offering funds that could be managed to the benefit of certain homes.

¹⁰⁶ Local NGOs working in the region tend to have a confessional basis and include the Soroti Catholic Diocese Development Organisation (SOCADIDO), Vision Terudo (Church of Uganda), and the PAG Development Secretariat (Pentecostal). International NGOs working in the region include ActionAid (UK), Tear Fund Australia, Christian Engineers for Development (UK), VECO-Vredeseilanden Coopibo (Belgium), Strømmestiftelsen (Norway), Red Barnet (Denmark), Send a Cow International (UK), SNV (Netherlands). Bilateral agencies that have worked in the region over the past decade include Ireland Aid, DfID, JICA, DANIDA, and USAID. Multilateral or inter-governmental agencies include the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the European Union and various arms of the United Nations bureaucracy.

¹⁰⁷ Established in October 1990, the Presidential Commission for Teso was mandated to help with bringing an end to the insurgency, as well as promoting development and reconstruction. In 1996 a committee of the Ugandan parliament was set up to investigate the work of the Commission. It was found that the Ministry of Finance failed to disburse funds to the commission. In one example a 270M/= (\$157,000) grant from the Swiss government was diverted to the Ministry of Agriculture. Source: *New Vision* 30/06/1997; 26/02/1998; 03/09/98.

What does the above tell us about Uganda's "success story"

Without wishing to take issue with the particular authors of the next two paragraphs, what is written below serves as basic shorthand for the way Uganda has been represented in the recent literature:

Uganda, that [so] enchanted Winston Churchill as the Pearl of Africa, got independence in 1962 with a vibrant economy and a strong civil service. The great potential and promise was soon lost when Uganda was engulfed in a constitutional crisis in 1966 that was to last twenty years. This resulted in two decades of destruction of physical and institutional infrastructure. The pearl ceased to shine: Uganda entered the dark age of political, economic and moral degradation.

These were decades for a contestation between forces of autocracy and those bent on establishing democracy. The democratic struggle triumphed in 1986 when Yoweri Museveni led a popular guerrilla rebellion to State House. At that moment began daunting efforts to rebuild Uganda's shattered economy and institutions... It was the recognition that a positive change was going on in Uganda, and that it needed to be systematically observed, recorded and explained that a team of scholars began the study of development efforts in Uganda since 1986.¹⁰⁸

The idea that the lives of Ugandans have, in recent years, been transformed by a committed and developmentally-minded political elite though persistent in the literature (Tidemand, 1994; Saito, 2003; Birungi et al., 2000) is difficult to reconcile with the experience of those living in the Teso region. Though one could claim that the state mattered in terms of providing (or taking away) physical security from certain parts of the country, it was weakly institutionalised, and understandably disinterested in developments in the countryside, given its dependence on external sources of funding. The more important transformations described by villagers involved burial societies and village churches (Chapters 4 through 6). In terms of the state the most obvious development in the village was the persistence of the village court, a structure that owed little to the developmental efforts or reform programmes (see Chapter 3).

For a picture of what had changed in terms of the state's role in the countryside, it is, perhaps, more instructive to look at map A at the start of the thesis. The map, though of recent issue, had not been updated since the mid-1950s (itself an indication of the lengthy disinterest of the state in understanding what developments have been going on in the countryside). The map captures what remained of the state since the 1950s, and what has gone. For while the teacher training college (top left) and hospital (top right) could still be found, the ginnery marked to south of the main road was an empty shell, similar to the one

¹⁰⁸ Langseth et al. (1995): x.

pictured on page 50. Also gone was the fenced off land near to the *etem* and the striped section of land close to the county headquarters; both originally used for agricultural demonstration. The county headquarters, which had earlier been a place for court hearings, and public administration, served only as a prison, and the county chief preferred to reside in the district capital (see page 97). The sub-county headquarters functioned mostly as a court, dealing with cases referred from the village up, rather than administering reforms from the district government down.

What is most obviously striking about my account of developments in rural Teso is the gap between the experience of villagers, and the reports of state-led development found in the academic and policy literatures (Reinikka and Collier, 2000; World Bank, 2001; Mutibwa, 1992). Teso more closely resembled Susan Reynolds Whyte's cautious judgement of the impact of the Ugandan government on the Bunyole region (to the south-east of Teso):

The economic and social consequences of fifteen years of misrule [under Amin and Obote's second government] have not been alleviated in ten years since the NRM took power. The signs of hope—new tarmac roads between the main cities, acronyms of development projects stencilled on new Pajeros in Kampala—have not dispelled the sense of impoverishment and stagnation among most rural people. Everyday life in Bunyole is as much or more concerned with the struggle for prosperity and health in 1995 as it was in 1970.¹⁰⁹

What Whyte alludes to, is the gap that divides the limited number of ethnographies of political change undertaken in Uganda in the 1990s, and the more numerous of accounts of administrative changes.¹¹⁰ The fact that ethnographers express a certain scepticism with the sorts of revolutionary accounts of developments in Uganda, should qualify the account of those who wish to attest to a transformation of the countryside.

Where the gap between the ethnographic and the literature on state-led transformations appears most pronounced is in those instances where authors working on the state wish to validate claims about political change through appealing to the sorts of insights that should be grounded in analysis of a more anthropological variety. Nelson Kasfir, for example, has argued that 'most Ugandans, and especially the rural dwellers, clearly believe that Museveni and the NRM have made fundamental contributions to improving life in Uganda'. His judgement is supported not so much with ethnographic work, but rather through a series of interviews conducted with district politicians, and with reference to the popular vote for

¹⁰⁹ Whyte (1997): 53-54.

¹¹⁰ For other ethnographic accounts of political change at the local-level in Uganda along a more sceptical line, see Southall (1998), Leopold (2005, chapters 1, 2 and 3) de Berry (2000 *passim*) and Karlström (1999).

Museveni in the 1996 presidential elections (Kasfir, 1998: 62). Aside from the fact that Ugandan elections are rarely a straightforward referendum on whether or not the state has improved people's lives, the partiality of interviewing politicians and district officials as a basis for speaking about the views of those living in rural areas has obvious problems.

In place of the approach suggested by Kasfir, which wants to place the state at the centre of developments, it is useful to adopt Whyte's more sceptical orientation. Though Whyte does not wish to argue that nothing had changed since the 1970s—she speaks of major developments in terms of security, and in the experience of ill-health and disease among the Banyole—it is important to appreciate that changes occurred in the context of a marginal and weak state bureaucracy. It is not quite, as Hyden has argued, that the peasantry is uncaptured by the ministrations of the state; indeed, earlier parts of the chapter suggest the centrality of the colonial experience in shaping the landscape of rural Teso. Rather I have argued that the state should be thought of as less than authoritative or engaged with developments in the countryside, less central to rural transformations than the literature would like to presuppose. The belief that the government bureaucracy has been the main developmental actor in places such as Oledai, tends to exaggerate the ability, and the desire, of civil servants and elected politicians to enforce directives or carry through reforms, and would appear to be more a reflection of the desire of social scientists to say something about the state, than a considered reading of likely developments at the local-level.

CONCLUSION

To return to the basic argument of the chapter, I have developed a view of the state bureaucracy as having engaged with village politics in the early colonial period which has become increasingly disorganised. While the first half of the chapter has focused on the early part of the colonial period, when much of the formal institutional infrastructure was laid down, the second half of the chapter focused on the years of insurgency in the late 1980s, a time when much of that infrastructure was under attack, and discussed the gradual retreat of the state from the lives of villagers. In terms of the state bureaucracy it can be understood, fairly crudely, as the shift from a pattern of state engagement to one of state withdrawal.

The early colonial period was a time of remarkable transformations in what had once been an acephalous society. For while it has been popular in the literature to trace the continuities between pre-colonial and colonial society, arguing for a basic persistence in the

structures, logics and practices despite the apparent shock of the colonial endeavour (cf. Bayart, 1993), it is important to recognise the breadth of the colonial transformation for those living in the Teso region. The institutionalisation of clans, courts and village councils made for a significant change in the way politics, economics and social relations were organised at the local level. The success of cotton production meant the region achieved a degree of importance in the Uganda Protectorate, making it the focus for the colonial bureaucracy. Tax collection, cotton cropping, and a concern with public order meant that the state built up a number of coercive structures, while the expansion of missionary work transformed the rural landscape in more subtle ways.

If the early twentieth century represented a high watermark for government in the colonial style, then more recent years have seen moments of political violence, and a more general experience of state withdrawal. The 1970s saw the cotton economy collapse, after the expulsion of Asian settlers. The 1980s saw the breakdown in law and order around the time when Yoweri Museveni and the National Resistance Movement took power. Massive cattle-raiding, and the removal of the last vestiges of government authority in the region, helped politicians and ex-military men carry the region into a long period of rebellion, and the insurgency pointed to the essentially fragmentary character of the local political landscape in the absence of a coercive and extensive state bureaucracy. The rebellion was not really a co-ordinated attack against the central government, nor was it an assault in the region's elite, rather it was a time for local political conflicts to take centre-stage, a moment when rebels from a given area trained their fire on village politicians.

What was striking about Oledai a decade on from the end of the insurgency was the unimportance of the much-touted policies and programmes of the national government in the 1990s. Despite the view of Museveni's Uganda as an example of a society successfully transformed by a reform-minded government, I have argued that the state has withdrawn from the countryside. Local government had become an increasingly marginal in the lives of villagers, a paradox given the belief that decentralisation and democratisation were to transform Uganda from a colony of subjects to a society of citizens. What this says about the bureaucratic state is taken up in the next chapter.



Plate 3: The sub-county headquarters for Ngora.

Chapter 3 discusses the work of the village council in Oledai sub-parish, and focuses on its primary function as a village court. The sub-county headquarters appears later on in the chapter, as a place where court cases were occasionally referred.

CHAPTER 3

VILLAGE COUNCILS¹¹¹ AS VILLAGE COURTS: THE RETREAT OF THE BUREAUCRATIC STATE FROM THE VILLAGE

INTRODUCTION

The democratisation of local government in Uganda in the late 1980s and 1990s has been a central plank of the Ugandan government's reform programme. Since the late 1980s the Ugandan government has produced a raft of reforms aimed at decentralising power, first to the districts, and then to the sub-counties.¹¹² In advance of decentralisation there has been the re-establishment of elected council at all levels of local government; and there are, at present, elected councils at the sub-parish, sub-county and district levels.¹¹³ This conciliar system was meant to connect ordinary Ugandans to the business of government. District councils were set up to be directly responsible for the delivery of public services such as education, water, roads, health and sanitation, and were meant to be held to account by lower councils and democratic elections. In their ideal form councils were supposed to serve as a public forum where elected figures plan and debate development work in consultation with constituents.

¹¹¹ Throughout Chapter 3, I use either "village council" or "sub-parish council". The official name for these councils is local council schedule 1 (LC1), a title that was instituted following the 1993 local government statute. I favour the general terms village council and/or sub-parish council because this is simpler English, and avoids the suggestion, common in the literature, that renaming village councils as "LCs" constitutes meaningful change.

¹¹² In terms of decentralisation and democratisation the first priority of the government was to institutionalise resistance council system developed by National Resistance Army. These councils were established throughout Uganda after the seizure of power in 1986 and were given a basis in law with the statutes of 1987 and 1988 (the Resistance Councils and Committees Statute, 1987, the Resistance Committees (Judicial Powers) Statute, 1988). The Local Government (Resistance Councils) Statute of 1993 ushered in a more clear commitment to the decentralisation of government powers to district bureaucracies, and the decentralisation of political powers to the local council system. The Constitution of Uganda (1995) enshrined the present version of the local council system.

¹¹³ Initially established as a five-tier system of councils (sub-parish, parish, sub-county, county, district) there are currently three tiers of local council (sub-parish, sub-county, district). In earlier versions all of the nine-member village—sub-parish—council, would be elected directly. After this, all of the sub-parish committees within a parish would form an electoral college, which would then vote a nine-member parish committee. After which the parish committees would form an electoral college for the sub-county and elect a sub-county council committee, and so on up until the district council was formed. The current three-council system, has replaced this indirect electoral-college system, with direct ballots. The sub-parish council chairman and the sub-county chairman are elected directly, as are all of the district councillors.

In theory, at least, Uganda has been transformed by decentralisation and democratisation. Regan, writing in 1998, noted that 'NRM decentralisation policy *has had a remarkable impact on the state in Uganda*' and goes on to argue that local government reform has dominated the experience most Ugandans have of politics (Regan 1998: 170). The central government has increased district budgets, while district civil servants have been given greater responsibilities. There are also increased opportunities for ordinary Ugandans to voice their interests and concerns through the local government system. "Rights-based" approaches, anti-corruption agendas, the empowerment of the rural poor have all been part of the rhetoric of reform, and Uganda has the formal architecture of a more democratic and participatory government system, or where governmental activities are meant to be increasingly exposed to public scrutiny. Village councils—nine-member committees—form the basic building block of this architecture, and are meant to provide the first in a series of institutional spaces connecting villagers to the state. As Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan have commented, decentralisation 'is the key that is supposed to open many doors', including the emancipation of developmental forces at the local level, the opening up of political space, and the overthrow of past experiences of authoritarian rule (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan, 2003: 145).

In the early days of the local government reforms there was considerable optimism that there would be a refashioning of the relationship between the government bureaucracy and civil society. Most notable among the supporters of the reforms was Mahmood Mamdani (who was himself a member of the commission concerned with government reform in the late 1980s). Mamdani has written about the abolition of chiefly authority as a significant step forward for Uganda: 'RCs were the first attempt to crack the regime of dictatorship introduced by the colonial power into village society at the turn of the century' (Mamdani, 1988: 1173). Karlström has made similarly positive noises about the local council system in Buganda, going so far as to suggest that village councils have become part, not only of the Ugandan state, but also civil society (Karlström, 1999). E.A. Brett, in an overview of government policy in Uganda dating from the mid-1990s commented that: 'the most important political change since 1986 has been development of a local government system which operates at five levels, from the village to the district, and has been given increasing degrees of authority' (emphasis added, Brett, 1998: 32). One is left with the impression among observers that council system established by the NRM was qualitatively different from what had gone before.

A number of more recent studies have suggested that the reach (and results) of these reforms have been less successful than was earlier hoped. Golooba-Mutebi contends that

reforms failed to take into account the pull of culture, and his analysis of decentralisation in Mukono and Rakai districts argued that the rural population lacked the attributes required for participation in a democratic government system (Golooba-Mutebi, 1999 *passim*). Tarsis Kabwegyere (who later served as Minister of Local Government) explained his disappointment with decentralisation at the local-level, as it relied on the engagement of villagers who were uninterested, he felt, in the possibilities of political participation (Kabwegyere, 2000: 7). Other authors have commented on the weakness of civil society in Uganda, particularly the “grassroots” level. Aili Mari Tripp has suggested that the policies of the National Resistance Movement, notably the ban on political parties, and the increasing censorship of the media have squeezed out what she terms “societal autonomy” making it difficult for ordinary Ugandans to engage with the state (Tripp, 2000: 55-67). In an echo of the more general literature, Geoffrey Tukahebwa argues that the failings come not only from government policies but also from ordinary Ugandans, particularly those who live in the countryside: ‘On the ground, particularly in rural areas, where a majority of the population lives, civil society hardly exists... and meaningful participation is lacking’ (Tukahebwa, 1998: 29-30).¹⁴

It should be pointed out that these studies look at the Ugandan state through the lens (and logic) of decentralization. This means that the study of political development in rural Uganda, already ensconced within the state-centric approach, is further narrowed down to a focus on a particular sort of reform. And though an important area of research, I would argue that decentralization has provided a rather restricted lens through which to view the role of the state in the lives of Ugandans living in rural areas. Beyond questions of service delivery and conciliar politics, there is the possibility that the state in its practical incarnation matters in ways that have little to do with the tenor of government reforms or questions of the delivery of public services. Given that the state remains a weakly bureaucratised structure, then it is reasonable to expect that reforms, however well-crafted, will only have a limited impact on the lives of ordinary Ugandans.

But if we set to one side a concern with democratic decentralisation, it is possible to see that the state mattered more as a juridical entity in the countryside. Aside from the failure of villagers to utilise the opportunities of recent reforms, what was striking in Oledai was the way the Ugandan state retained its authority in the settlement of disputes. Though the state,

¹⁴ Ingvild Burkey's study of the local government system suggests that the dismissive attitude towards sub-parish council chairman, among Uganda politicians, had existed for some time. Writing in 1991, she was able to quote the District Administrator of Nebbi as suggesting that sub-parish councils were “dormant” and that village council chairmen “only rouse themselves when there is a case to hear, a court fee to collect” (Burkey, 1991: 11).

as a bureaucratic apparatus, remained weak, and somewhat withdrawn from the village, the state as an idea of authority persisted. And at its simplest this observation was shown in the way the village council mattered mostly as a court. Despite the weak bureaucratic presence, and the unimportance of decentralisation, villagers continued to value the judgements of the village council chairman, and asked him to write letters, stamp documents and offer opinions. At this point in the thesis, Abrams' distinction between state as an "idea" of authority and the state as a "bureaucratic system" becomes important as it allows us to argue that the Ugandan state, at the local-level, mattered more in its ideational, authoritative form, rather than as an extensive bureaucratic system. While I accept that the state "system"—despite the logic of decentralisation—has not had the capacity to manage local services for some years, I also argue that villagers continued to regard the local court as a state-sanctioned space that helped to settle disputes.¹¹⁵

This puts villagers in Oledai in a slightly different position from the way in which rural populations are often understood in rural Africa. While Mamdani, in *Citizen and Subject*, argued that the despotism of the colonial state persisted, albeit in mutated form, in the workings of post-colonial governments, it is possible to see that for rural Teso Mamdani's emphasis on "compulsion" has given way to a pattern of disengagement (Mamdani, 1996: 294-296). Falling tax revenues, the declining importance of cotton as a cash crop, the development of towns and trading centres, increasing dependence on central government support, and the influence of donor funding, all suggested that rural areas were increasingly marginal to the concerns of district or central governments. In the particular case of Teso, the parish chief—the salaried representative of the civil bureaucracy—was consistently absent from the village, and mechanisms for intervention, what Mamdani has described a system built on compulsion, such as the clearing of by-ways, the management of water resources, or the enforced building of granaries, were no longer enforced.¹¹⁶ Though the argument that the bureaucratic state has retreated from the village may seem paradoxical given the logic of decentralisation, the incentives that shaped the choices of district politicians made them increasingly unaccountable to the local-level.

¹¹⁵ There is a paradox in the prevailing discourse on decentralisation, and this paradox cuts across the academic, as much as the policy, literature. For though the colonial state imagined that decentralisation would serve as a way of using traditional social institutions to transform the workings of the state, recent understandings of decentralisation have seen it as a means through which the state can transform society, making citizens out of what were once subjects. The paradox being that the colonial state appears, in concrete terms, to be the more transformative, inventing as much as co-opting traditional institutions, whereas the post-colonial state has been relatively less authoritative in the countryside, and consequently less likely to engineer a social transformation.

¹¹⁶ The most recent District Development Report, for example, comments that the relatively low percentage of homes within the district with access to pit latrines can be related, to the "reduction in the use of force on the population to enforce compliance" (Kumi District Development Report, 2006/2007 (2005): 8).

Similarly the presumption, after Ferguson, that the modern-day state in Africa continues to be preoccupied with developments in the countryside can be questioned. The declining relevance of the countryside to the maintenance of the state is best illustrated through the accounts for Kumi district. For the year 2003/2004 tax receipts collected within the district (including market dues as well as head tax) provided only 1.5 percent of district revenues. The other 98.5 percent of revenues came in the form of grants in aid from the central government and in the form of direct budget support from foreign governments.¹⁷ Instead, as Catherine Boone has suggested African states are characterised by a more complex series of state-society relationships where particular regions within a given state territory are marginal to the maintenance of the political elite (Boone, 2003: 18-19). In a country where the elite is as dependent upon foreign subventions as it is in Uganda, the sort of marginal region described by Boone would appear to cover a large swathe of the rural economy.

In other words it was not so much a case of villagers attempting to avoid the state, but rather a state bureaucracy having little interest in engaging with the rural population. The state was maintained in the village mostly through the continued use of the village court, rather than on the more extensive developmental, bureaucratic structures that have been the subject of almost all of the recent literature on "local politics" in Uganda. In the main, villagers did not have to fight off the advances of a penetrative state machinery, as was the case in Bunker's analysis of the coffee economy of Bugisu (Bunker, 1987, chapters 7 and 8). Instead what was left of the state was that part most intimately connected with local-level forms of political organisation. And although Bayart has used the metaphor of the "rhizome" to describe state and society in Africa as a tightly woven organism, his earlier observation, that 'it is not necessary [for the political élite] to have control over the minor details of local political life in order to establish an inegalitarian system at the state level' would serve as a more useful formulation for the state in Teso (Bayart, 1993: 219; 167).¹⁸

My contention that the Ugandan state mattered mostly in its ideational form at the local-level, can be substantiated by look at the work of the village council chairman as a judge. While it is true that villagers did not petition the state for better services, it is also true that the state retained its authority as a judicial entity. As Wunsch and Ottemoeller discovered (though they studiously avoided any discussion of why this should be the case), questions of security and justice have driven the local council system in Uganda in recent years (2004:

¹⁷ Taken from the Kumi District Development Report, 2006/2007(2005): 21

¹⁸ Indeed, if one takes the rhizome metaphor, one can think of the local-level in rural Teso as having peeled off from the centre, with villagers somewhat disconnected to the trickle-down of resources that have kept those parts of the government system closer to the centre well-watered with donor funds.

187-192, see also Burkey, 1991).¹⁹ It was through judicial actions, brought into being by villagers that the state was maintained; a state that was more obviously captured from below than above. In looking at the village council in Oledai, for example, the main work of the council chairman was to settle disputes, not to organise development, and the chairman offered his home as a court, and listened to the various cases brought to him by his constituents. He was asked to write letters, authorise documents, attend ceremonies, and offer advice. His work was mostly limited to the sub-parish, and his authority depended both on maintaining good relations with other “big men” in the sub-parish, as it did on his status as a government official.

As such, the state was both present and absent. It was there in the workings of the village court, and not there, in terms of tax collection, democratic participation or meaningful civil administration. While the literature on local government in Uganda has focused, excessively perhaps, on the role of the state in service delivery, it can be argued that the literature has overlooked the importance of the state’s historical role as a judicial and coercive agent (cf. Golooba-Mutebi, 1999). This has produced a rather skewed version of the significance of the state in the countryside, one that is unlikely to capture much of the work of village councils. As Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan have suggested, the study of local politics relies too heavily on the idea of the state being a version of governmental reforms legislated from above, particularly during the rush towards decentralisation in the 1990s. There has also been a tendency to regard decentralisation as an entirely new enterprise, rather than an addition to an uneven history of government engagement with the countryside. And yet Joan Vincent was able to discuss experiments with decentralisation and democratisation in the Teso region dating back to the 1930s.

The intention of the chapter is therefore to describe and analyse the work of the sub-parish council in Oledai from what was observed during fieldwork. Rather than viewing the maintenance of the village court as a marginal activity, the chapter argues that the role played by the council system in negotiating conflicts and in sanctioning claims was one of the ways in which economic and political stability had been re-established in the area. Villagers’ use of the council as a court maintained the state as a judicial entity in the village,

¹⁹ In their survey of sub-parishioners, Wunsch and Ottemoeller found that 35.5% said “peace and security” was the main way in which the village council system has made life better, while 21.6% suggested that “problem solving” (which can be read as case settlement) was the main benefit of the local government system. These functions, I would argue, are related less to the “revolution” in local government instituted under the NRM, than to fairly well-established structures that had been built up, at the local-level, over several decades. Though Wunsch and Ottemoeller see the local government system of the NRM as transformative, it is telling that only 9.3% suggest that “development” was the most beneficial aspect of local government reform (Wunsch and Ottemoeller, 2004: 188).

providing an arena where concerns over propriety and seniority could be debated in public. The continued maintenance of the village court relied on practices that carried over from earlier versions of local government system. In other words, though the return of the court system in the 1990s marked a radical departure from the anomie of the insurgency, it was rooted in conciliar structures which had a long history, a history that has been ignored in the rather short-sighted literature on decentralisation. Democratically elected village councils, in rural Teso, date back to 1937.¹²⁰

Uganda's local government system is complicated, and the chapter limits itself to looking at what takes place in the sub-parish. The simplest way to think about the state at this level is to imagine two individuals: the village council chairman, and the parish chief. The village council chairman is elected by the adults living within the sub-parish, and is styled, rhetorically, at least, as the "policy-making" arm of the local-government system. The parish chief is a civil servant appointed by the state and is meant to be the "implementing arm" of the policies developed by the village council chairman.¹²¹ In contrast to many other parts of rural Africa the chief is the government's man, while the council chairman the man from the village. The work of the two institutions can be divided into their legislated and actual roles:

Table 3.1: Legislated and actual work of the parish chief¹²² and village council chairman

	Legislated role	Actual role
Parish chief (appointed by the district)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ tax assessment and collection ▪ justice ▪ project implementation ▪ local development work 	
Village council chairman (elected by villagers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ justice ▪ designing development schemes ▪ community mobilisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ justice

¹²⁰ David Apter notes that Teso as the first district in eastern province to introduce a conciliar system of local government. In an indication that democratic decentralisation has had a longer history than the memory of most studies of local government, Apter evaluates the "representative principle", and the extent to which it was likely to reform the repercussions of the Ugandan state (Apter, 1961: 217-226).

¹²¹ The government statute of 1993 attempted to clarify the division between civil and political administration.

¹²² In the case of Ngora sub-county each parish chief covered two parishes. The sub-parish of Oledai was paired with the neighbouring sub-parish of Nyamongo (the parish is also called Nyamongo). At the time of writing, the parish level had little administrative or political significance, as parish councils (LC2s) had been abolished.

In other words the parish chief symbolised the absence of the “state bureaucracy”, while the village council chairman embodied the persistence of state authority at the local-level (albeit in a narrow judicial sense). In a crude way one can relate either institution to one half of Abrams’ distinction between bureaucratic systems and ideas: the parish chief served as the agent of the “state bureaucracy”; the village council chairman served much more the embodiment of the “idea” of the state.

THE HISTORY OF THE STATE IN THE VILLAGE

In order to understand the differences that separate the village council chairman from the parish chief, it is important to explain the history of the two institutions in the village. While Chapter 2 discussed in some detail the general experience of colonialism and post-colonial government, the following section outlines the particular history of the two main forms of political-administrative bureaucracy in the sub-parish: the village council and the parish chief. The first of these, in chronological terms, is the parish chief, established in the area in 1909. The second is the local council system, first established in 1937. The system of national representation, which came into being with elections to the Constituent Assembly in 1958, is also discussed.

a) Parish chief – the absent bureaucratic state

In 1971 Joan Vincent was able to offer the following judgement on the office of the parish:

The parish chief, the administration’s representative living within the community and a potential political broker for the parish in its wider political setting, does not perform this role... His office is one of clientship, not of traditional leadership (1968: 50).

This description holds true today. The parish chief has always been an unpopular figure in the area, associated with tax collection and public works; the targeting of parish chiefs by rebels during the insurgency was only one episode in a history of violence and opposition. The alienated status of parish chiefs was achieved not only through his work (tax collection, forced labour, punishment), but also because the colonial state required that parish chiefs be posted away from their home area.¹²³ Parish chiefs were destined to be outsiders, whose

¹²³ Fred G. Burke also observed this tendency: “in 1956 only seven of Teso’s forty three sub-county chiefs were serving in their home counties” (1964: 154).

careers were closely aligned with the interests of the district government. They were the sorts of intercalary middleman common to other forms of government administration in rural Africa. Their work was to enforce government policy on an often resistant population. Since their inception, parish chiefs have been interested in parish politics only to the extent required of them by their superiors.

Parish chiefs were first established by the colonial government in Teso in 1909. Prior to this a more *ad hoc*, but essentially similar structure was introduced through the Ganda agents of Semei Kakungulu (Twaddle, 1993: 137-142; Roberts, 1962: 440-42).¹²⁴ From the outset, each chief, whether Ganda or Itesot, was responsible for maintaining law and order, collecting taxes, extracting compulsory labour and forcing every household with access to land to grow cotton. In return most villagers received little, other than the understanding that they were less likely to be beaten, imprisoned, or dispossessed. Aside from his income derived through the taxes they collected, parish chiefs were entitled to extract labour from men and boys in the parish – a practice that persisted after the formal abolition of *luwalo* in 1934.¹²⁵ During the 1920s and 1930s the British conducted two purges of chiefs in the Teso region, further underlining their dependence on the colonial administration (Vincent, 1982: 251-259).

In other words, parish chiefs were both alienated from their parishioners, and yet a key instrument of colonial government in the countryside. As Vincent suggests there was a clear relationship between the amount of poll tax collected by the parish chief, and the degree to which the colonial administration was consolidated, and this relationship can be thought of as the basic measure of the state's engagement in the countryside (Vincent, 1968: 152). This was an uncomfortable form of engagement as tax collection, the cultivation of cotton, the extraction of compulsory labour, the digging of canals or the construction of roads required parish chiefs to get from their parishioners which they did not want to give (Vincent, 1982: 52; also Mamdani, 1996: 52-61). Beatings were common, and Carol Summers has shown the consternation among colonial officials in Kampala that in Teso the beating of women was a feature of chiefly office in the Teso region:

¹²⁴ Kakungulu's son, Sedulaka Kyesrikidde, reached the settlement of Ngora in 1901 on the invitation of a local man, known as Ijala, who was having a succession dispute with his father (Vincent, 1982: 100-101). Ijala would later become the first Itesot chief of the Ngora area.

¹²⁵ *Kasanvu* was "a form of labour taxation imposed by the central government throughout Uganda, and involved the forced migration to tasks at which the labourer was paid below market rates" (Vincent, 1982: 69). *Kasanvu* was formally abolished in 1923. *Luwalo* was one month of compulsory unpaid labour, and was to be used for public works at the local-level, such as the upkeep of roads. Vincent noted that "although it was intended that *luwalo* corvée labour be used with discretion, most chiefs made use of it as a personal labour force" (ibid.). *Luwalo* was formally abolished in 1934. Burke noted that in the 1960s, 'its legacy still lingers', with chiefs, particularly sub-county chiefs, continuing to extract unpaid labour from the rural population (Burke, 1964: 175).

the Governor indicated that while in Bugwere district [to the south of Teso] only 299 women were whipped over a period of about thirteen months, numbers in other intensive cotton growing districts, such as Busoga and Teso, were higher, with Teso reporting that at least 926 women had been whipped by courts over the previous two years.¹²⁶

Indeed, the level of brutality was such that, even in the 1950s, parishioners could be killed by parish chiefs, a reminder that the arbitrary violence of the state was not an invention of the Obote or Amin governments. As Vincent observed: 'official brutality was unusual neither then [1909] nor in 1966... [when] fatal beatings of parishioners tend to fetch manslaughter rather than murder charges' (Vincent, 1968: 52).¹²⁷

And yet the 1950s saw changes in the state bureaucracy that began to affect the work of parish chiefs. Cotton had begun its long decline, both as a share of agricultural activity in the region, and as a means of income generation for the Ugandan state (Vail 1974: 171). At the same time a not unrelated development was the declining importance of locally generated tax revenues in the financing of district government.¹²⁸ Though the Native Administration Tax Ordinance of 1938 allowed local governments to levy an administrative tax from the population—instead of sending tax revenues to the central government and then waiting for the budget allocation to return—the costs of district administration were increasingly met by central government subventions (Golooba-Mutebi, 1999: 90). Burke notes the fall in the share of local government revenues raised through taxation, with grants-in-aid providing 30% of district revenue in 1962-3 in Teso, up from 7% in 1940 (Burke, 1964: 176).¹²⁹ At the same time there was a time-lag separating the declining fiscal dependence of the district administration on the countryside, and the degree to which the local government bureaucracy was, or was not engaged in managing the 'minor details of local political life' (Bayart 1993: 167). Burke recorded the continuing preoccupation of the district government with questions of public hygiene in the 1960s, and district officials

¹²⁶ Summers (2002): 2. Carol Summers goes on to argue that women in the Teso region were whipped not because they were less important than men (men were whipped also) but rather because of their relative autonomy in Iteso society (which made them a problem for the patriarchal structures of colonial rule).

¹²⁷ Colin Leys, in a review essay on *African Elite* was struck by the degree to which the parish chief in Teso was "not an intermediary figure but a frankly feared and hated representative of higher, outside authority" (Leys, 1973: 288).

¹²⁸ Teso was not exceptional in this regard. Grants-in-aid to the region were lower than those received in neighbouring Bunyoro, where they actually exceeded tax revenues in the 1960s (Burke, 1964: 176).

¹²⁹ This was despite the express commitment, in the Local Administrations Ordinance of 1962, that local governments should collect taxes to cover their expenditures (Golooba-Mutebi, 1999: 93).

expressed concern with the need to enforce by-laws asking that each household should maintain a pit latrine near to the compound (Burke, 1964: 163).¹³⁰

If the logic of local government, under which the parish chiefs laboured, was of an extraverted sort (focused on political relationships beyond the parish), then the centralisation of local government after independence further underlined the reliance of civil administration on the centre. The 1967 Local Administrations Act abolished democratically elected district councils and was part of a more general policy that aimed at extending central government control over the regions. Positions of political influence were appointed through the Ministry of Local Government, and the attention of district leaders was turned away from more localised concerns. One consequence of this expansion of central government authority over local politics, as Sathyamurthy has argued, was the retreat of parish chiefs from the countryside (Sathyamurthy, 1982: 61, see also Heald, 1989: 246). That said, the reputation of parish chiefs for inactivity in the late 1970s was broken by acts of brutality. Parish chiefs were remembered for tying a rope around the waist those who defaulted, before carting them off to the sub-county headquarters (pictured at the start of the chapter). On one of the few occasions where villagers referred to the activities of the district government in the later years of the Amin government, villagers spoke of being rounded up, to work unpaid, on the land of the sub-county chief.¹³¹

Given this history of coercion and violence, it is unsurprising that, in the early day of the insurgency, rebels targeted parish chiefs. In Oledai, the killing of Angatia was seen as a consequence both of his personal reputation, and the price paid for the unpopularity of the office he held. During the insurgency parish chiefs moved into the towns, or returned to their home areas, refusing to serve the parishes to which they had been assigned. It was instead village council chairmen, and not parish chiefs, who were used by the army as a counterpart authority in the countryside. They were resident in the area and able to provide government soldiers with information on rebel movements.

Despite the restoration of peace in the 1990s, parish chiefs had not returned in any substantial way to the local-level. They were infrequent visitors, intervening only on those occasions when a higher-level official was passing through the place. They were not important in court cases and appeared to have little work assigned to them. Their withdrawal was signalled, most obviously, by their non-residence. Government-built

¹³⁰ Written communication from Father Bernard Phelan, July 13, 2005.

¹³¹ This incident was raised in a group discussion with women December 10, 2002. A similar story was also retailed by Akello Joyce Mary, October 7, 2002 which referred to the rounding up of Pentecostal Christians to work, unpaid, on the land of the sub-county chief (see page 120).

homes, which were meant to house parish chiefs, were either gutted during the insurgency or disposed of through questionable land sales under Amin and Obote. And villagers likened the parish chief to the seasonal rains: unpredictable and potentially capricious.¹³² Even the district planner for Kumi spoke of the local-government system thus:

The office of the parish chief is a dead structure. It is only that it is still within the structure of Government and that there is a salary that people occupy those posts... Perhaps if they were residing there, like in the past, they could walk out in the morning and do something... They only go [to the parish] when there is a visitor, to accompany them. They do not go to monitor work. That is the system, all the way down.¹³³

But to return to the question of tax revenues, what was most striking during fieldwork was the unimportance of taxes and tax collection in the business of local government.¹³⁴ As Therkildsen has argued, the amount collected says much about the relationship between the government bureaucracy and the rural population (Therkildsen, 2005: 13).¹³⁵ Graduated Personal Tax, which continued to be collected as a tax on households rather than individuals in Oledai, was remarkable for its unimportance in financing the local government system.¹³⁶ In 2000/2001 a typical household head would be assessed at 4,000/= (\$2.30); with the actual amount eventually paid, averaging at about 3500/= (\$2). The actual revenues from graduated tax in 2000/2001 were 525,000/= (\$300), while the parish chief earned an annual salary of 1,800,000/= (roughly \$1,030), meaning that the parish chief earned more from the state in salary than he collected for it in taxes.¹³⁷ This was the case for all of parish chiefs in Ngora sub-county, and Ngora sub-county was considered one of the better-administered corners of Teso.¹³⁸ Contrast this with the situation in the 1920s when 'an unskilled labourer earned 5 shillings a month and paid an annual tax of 21 shillings' (Iliffe, 1987: 154).¹³⁹ Where the unimportance of taxation in the business of local government was demonstrated most obviously, however, was in the District Development Report for Kumi from 2005, which

¹³² The simile was made during a discussion with bicycle taxi men from the sub-parish of Agolitom, May 8, 2002.

¹³³ Interview with Richard Ojilong, District Planner for Kumi, January 23, 2003.

¹³⁴ The recent literature on taxation in Uganda has dwelt mostly on the regressive nature of the tax system, with the burden of taxation falling too heavily on the poorer sections of society (Therkildsen, 2005, Tidemand, 1995, Livingstone and Charlton, 1998). I would argue that the most striking aspect of Uganda's tax system was the absence of any attempt to base government expenditure on available revenues.

¹³⁵ As of 2001, Therkildsen estimates income taxation, as a share of central government revenue to be 20%, remaining fairly constant since the 1960s (Therkildsen, 2005: 5).

¹³⁶ See also Mamdani 1991.

¹³⁷ Source, Annual Report, 2002-2003, Ngora sub-county.

¹³⁸ The District Co-ordinator for Ireland Aid, for example, spoke of the relative effectiveness of sub-county officials working in Ngora county (when compared to their counterparts in Bukedea and Kumi counties). Interviewed January 21, 2003.

¹³⁹ Labouring in another person's fields, or casual work in the trading centre, though never guaranteed, could expect to earn 1,500/= (\$1) a day, during the months of fieldwork.

showed that taxes for 2001 amounted to no more than 1.5 percent of district revenues (KDDP Report, 2005: 21).

As such, one can contrast Burke's observation that tax collection in Teso in the 1960s absorbed 'a considerable part of the farmer's limited cash income' (Burke, 1964: 53), with the present situation, where graduated taxes failed to pay even for the salary of the tax collector. The contrast also appears when contrasting the different dispensations of colonial as opposed to post-colonial governments. In the early years of the Uganda Protectorate the question of how to make the territory self-financing was paramount in the minds of government officials, as fiscal independence was seen as a sign of the moral and economic health of the colonial enterprise. Cyril Ehrlich cites the following from Harry Johnston, appointed special commissioner of the British Government in 1899, to an inquiry from Bishop Tucker of the Church Missionary Society, as to whether, or not, the CMS could be exempted from hut tax:

... the Imperial Treasury cannot go on many years longer supporting the Protectorate at so vast a cost to the British taxpayer... When we have something like a revenue, the Government might be able to subsidise education... Pending this development you cannot render a greater service to your converts than to teach them English and... useful industries by which they may earn good wages... I cannot tell you how eagerly I look forward to a fair return from native taxation during the current year.¹⁴⁰

In a similar vein, Berry frames the colonial view through the conviction of Earl Grey that 'the surest test for the soundness of measures for the improvement of an uncivilised people is that they should be self-sufficient' (Berry, 1993: 24, citing Pim, 1948: 226).¹⁴¹

In Teso, as in Uganda more generally, there has been a shift away from the sort of bureaucratic presence capable of collecting taxes. The more coercive colonial state, which had helped to foster extractive forms of agricultural production, tax collection, and public works, had given way to a more withdrawn bureaucratic presence. This meant that local government structures in the village were less of a part of the lives of villagers and less interested in the rural economy. Though this shift has not been pursued in any great depth

¹⁴⁰ Quoted in Ehrlich, 1957: 165.

¹⁴¹ The importance of fiscal solvency to the business of colonial government was also laid out in E.A. Brett's *Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa* (1971). Brett argued that in the inter-war years "Britain's central concern [in the area of financial policy] was to ensure colonial self-sufficiency... [with] the first objective of any administration to pay for all its services out of recurrent revenue" (Brett, 1971: 141). By the late 1920s Uganda faced collapsing export prices (the time of the Great Depression) and a declining economy. Even so, the Protectorate administration fought off any attempt to utilise the surplus balance of £1.3 million to ease the burden on the general population (Brett, 1971: 147).

in the literature, one can detect, in other studies, the long history of withdrawal. Suzette Heald observed the collapse in the authority of parish chiefs in 1960s Bugisu (to the south of Teso), where 'the channels of communication between the local people' and the government had been eroded, and where 'in a very real sense the state had withdrawn' (Heald, 1989: 246, 247). In a similar vein Joan Vincent, observed 'the withdrawal of outside attention' from the local political field (Vincent, 1968: 238). Aidan Southall also spoke of the limited number of development episodes among the Alur population to the north-west during the post-colonial period, which he regards as fleeting episodes in a longer story of disengagement (Southall, 1998: 258-260)

In Oledai, at least, this history of withdrawal has not been reversed by the introduction of decentralisation and democratisation in the 1990s. Indeed, one can go as far as to argue that the type of donor dependency that has made possible the financing of the NRM's commitment to decentralisation actually negates the very logic of decentralisation. In having to rely on donor funds to implement the reform and finance the system, the state has been taken further away from the countryside, a system that allows for representation but does not demand taxation. In other words, it is not so much the logic of decentralisation that dominates the local government system, but the logic of extraversion. The relationship between the district authorities and central government to the donor community has reinforced the disinterest of the state bureaucracy in rural areas. This disinterest was shown, most obviously, through the pervasiveness of donor-funded activities in the district capital, the amount of time district officials spent in workshops or in Kampala. Disinterest was also shown in the growth of the district capital, which had achieved a sort of detached self-sufficiency. And, in terms of the disengagement of district officials from the countryside, an interview with the district planner brought up the following account of an attempt to move two of the three Assistant Central Administrative Officers (ACAOs) away from the district capital to the county headquarters at Ngora and Bukedea:

When Mr. Akileng went along to Ngora, he refused to stay in the house in the county grounds. Instead he went and stayed in the shops, but only for a short time. He started to complain, asking for compensation for being assigned there, and after a while simply returned to the district capital... that attempt just collapsed.¹⁴²

It was not so much that society had disengaged from the state bureaucracy, as Azarya and Chazan have argued (Azarya and Chazan, 1987: 109), but rather that the state bureaucracy had disengaged from local society. Though one could imagine decentralisation as a body of

¹⁴² The observation was made by Ojilong Richard, District Planner for Kumi, interviewed on January 23, 2003.

legislation encouraging the transfer of resources and power from the centre to the districts, and from the districts to the localities, it is more useful to ground decentralisation in the sorts of political and economic calculations that govern bureaucratic structures in a place dependent on subventions from above. Legislation, of whatever shade should be related back to the broader political economy of the state.

b) Elected councils – the state present in the form of the village court

From my experience in Oledai, I would suggest that what remained of the state, was that part least intimately connected with the local government bureaucracy; that which was most embedded in the locality, which is to say the village court.¹⁴³ This is where the democratically elected village council mattered most, and it was the village council chairman who judged cases, and who was able to bring some sort of “idea” of the state to bear on disputes and quarrels. Unlike the parish chief, the village council chairman, was an integral part of life in the village. Conflicts that arose in the village were referred to him, making him a significant player in the local political field. The council chairman listened to cases, offered judgements, authorised documents and wrote letters of introduction.

To explain the significance of the village court, one must also accept that the work of village council has less to do with the new structures set in place by the decentralisation reforms, and more to do with the history of governance in the village, dating back to the early colonial period. Despite major shifts in official government policy, particularly in the period since Independence—*centralisation* under Obote’s first government, *militarisation* under Amin, the *mayumba kumi*¹⁴⁴ of Obote’s second government, *decentralisation* under Museveni—one discovers that there had always been a local court, of some description, presided over by someone regarded as representative of the state, at the parish or sub-parish level. And the village council chairman like his forebears continued to be described as the “eye” of the Government (*akonye lokapugan*).

¹⁴³ As Burkey (1991) predicted, the political economy of “district-isation” meant that problems found at the heart of government, particularly in terms of the sorts of extraverted relationships that came from dependence on foreign donors, were simply extended to local government structures (Burkey 1991 *passim*).

¹⁴⁴ *Mayumba kumi* was a new tier of local government, where households were organised into groups of ten. This was meant to inspire co-operation, or *Ujamaa*, as it borrowed from the local government structures of Nyerere’s Tanzania. Tidemand argued that *mayumba kumi* had little tangible impact on the way politics was organised in the countryside (Tidemand, 1994: 23). *Mayumba kumi* is a corruption of the Swahili, *nyumba kumi*, ten houses.

As far back as 1937 a village council was added to the list of judicial spaces available to people living in the region (Vincent 1968: 54). The council system was expressly designed to incorporate existing political structures felt to be the legitimate “traditional” authorities of pre-colonial Iteso society into the bureaucracies of colonial administration. The reform signalled the parcelling out of governmental authority into two sorts of state-sanctioned space, in the hope that this would achieve a more peaceable form of government than had been possible under a system of appointed chiefs. In other words there was a democratic vision behind the 1937 reform introduced by District Commissioner Kennedy, and DC Kennedy hoped that elected councils would serve as ‘the true representative of the peasants, deriving their authority from indigenous forms of social organisation of pre-administration days’.¹⁴⁵ In Kennedy’s view at least, political authority was to be given a popular face, though it should be remembered that Kennedy (unlike more recent reformers) expected village councils to co-opt, rather than subvert, ‘indigenous forms of social organisation’.

As Gattrell suggests: ‘what [Kennedy] thought to be a restoration turned out to be, for many parts of Teso at least, yet another innovation’ (Gattrell, 1983: 9).¹⁴⁶ Put simply, village councils added to an evolving picture of local politics, rather than reviving pre-colonial forms of social organisation. Prior to the 1937 reforms, conciliar structure had developed at the local-level as a reaction to changes in the rural political economy. Colonialism had been part of the region’s history for four decades, and during this time a number of more informal judicial spaces, which included public discussions, clan courts, public moots, had grown up as places to negotiate political problems, away from the gaze of the unpopular parish chief (Vincent, 1968: 211-229). These sorts of kinship- or territorially-based arenas for negotiation developed as a response to the growing importance of the colonial state. The cash-crop economy, for example, increased the frequency of disputes over land and property (a consequence of the introduction of cotton and the sedentarisation of the rural population).

There was, in effect, the growth of more formalised, hierarchical spaces, and though this formalisation may be taken to imply a sort of rationalisation, the building up of a village court did not lead to a reduction in the number of spaces available to the villager seeking to legitimate a claim. The settlement of a land dispute in the late 1930s depended not only on the decision of the new village council vis-à-vis the case, but also on the arguments put

¹⁴⁵ Kennedy’s earlier reform of 1933 revived the District Native Council, which had first been established in 1924 (Vincent, 1968: 44).

¹⁴⁶ Similar presumptions about the possibility of reviving pre-colonial forms of chiefly authority were found in the policies of colonial administrators working in Lango (Tosh, 1978), Bugisu (la Fontaine, 1959), and West Nile (Middleton, 1960). The emphasis on “traditional” authorities, as Beverly Gattrell suggests, tended to entrench the autonomy of chiefly elites—appointed and salaried, as well as traditional (Gattrell, 1983: 10).

across in public moots, in churches, in schools, in drinking groups and in the decisions taken by clan elders, "big men", and government officials (Vincent, 1968, chapter 10; Henriques, 2002, chapter 8). Village councils succeeded in part because they *related to or borrowed from* existing arenas of dispute settlement. Government reforms added to and complicated what was already there, and in this sense, local councils, from their very inception, belonged to a sort of "sedimentation" of village institutions (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan, 2003: 152). Where change was most apparent, was in the way the village council introduced the idea of governmental authority to the settlement of a dispute. This gave the council a certain pre-eminence. The understanding that "government" (*apugan*) was bound into questions of taxation, property, and law was made sense of through the village council, and this explains, perhaps, why the council has remained a judicial and authoritative space.

Neither Obote nor Amin managed to abolish the form of conciliar government developed after the 1937 reform.¹⁴⁷ Village councils were not really the concern of either administration as village politics lay outside the ethnic or regionalist battles that raged at the national level (Vincent, 1968, Chapter 2). While Obote's recentralisation of powers away from the district councils appeared to close up political space, this was more evident in the district capitals. Similarly Amin's militarization of the local government system, which was meant to increase the state's control over political society, should not disguise the fact that the central government was, at this point, relatively haphazard in its administration of rural areas; authoritarian but not particularly authoritative. As such, new layers tended to add to what was already there, with the *mayumba kumi* of Obote's second government (1980-1985) not entirely different from what had gone before and not entirely different from the village council system that came after (Tidemand, 1995: 25).¹⁴⁸ Villagers continued to refer cases to the council chairman at the time of the *mayumba kumi* system, and the "cells" of ten households that had been established during this period continued to be used as a way of organising villagers in the internment camps set up by the NRM in 1991 (even though the NRM had formally abolished the local government system of Obote's second period in office). As such, it is possible to see why villagers continued to argue that earlier versions of local government were somewhat similar to what had been established under the NRM:

¹⁴⁷ As Tidemand observes, the basic work of the local government system, the collection of taxes for the payment of local government salaries was maintained even during the closing years of the Amin administration (Tidemand, 1995: 25).

¹⁴⁸ In an echo of the capacity for new structures to take on old forms, Aidan Southall noted that the *mayumba kumi* system, when first introduced was "assimilated into the old *batongole* system, in which every landowner of local notable was held responsible for his neighbourhood" (Southall, 1980: 647).

Yes, I can accept that the village council system of today is useful because it the chairman is in charge of things. He knows his people and if there is a wrong man in the area, he can deal with the case. When there was the *mayumba kumi* under Obote II it was also something similar to this.¹⁴⁹

Despite the experience of continuity at the local-level, the literature has suggested that the village council system in rural Uganda, under Museveni, has made a profound difference to the way politics is organised. Wunsch and Ottemoeller, for example, claim that 'it is difficult to overstate the importance of the change from a system based on appointed administrators to a system based on elected committees', though they fail to distinguish what exactly the change means at the local-level and how exactly they measure the extent and quality of the change (Wunsch and Ottemoeller, 2004: 193). Along the same lines a study of the local government system in Jinja, led by Harriet Birungi, argued that: 'the most significant current change in the country's transformation is the government's decentralization program', though again little interest is shown in demonstrating what the council system might mean at the local-level (Birungi, et al., 2000: 33).¹⁵⁰ The literature is further confused by the tendency to conflate district or municipal government with local politics, meaning that political developments in rural sub-parishes tend to be collapsed with the changing political landscape of major towns.

c) MPs, party-politics and the Movement system

At the time of fieldwork Oledai was served by two MPs. Francis Epetait, the MP for Ngora County first elected in 2001, and Christine Amongin-Aporu, women's MP for Kumi District, returned to parliament the same year.¹⁵¹ The role of either MP in the day-to-day life of the village was necessarily marginal as both served large constituencies and were expected to spend much of their time in Kampala. In line with the "Movement" philosophy in place up to the referendum of July 2005, Epetait and Amongin had to stand for election as individuals, adjudged by the electorate on their personal merits and programmes for development, rather than any overt political philosophy (Kabwegyere, 2000: 42-43). The Movement system,

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Odongo Emmanuel, a retired primary school teacher, living in Oledai sub-parish, October 10, 2002.

¹⁵⁰ In line with standard narratives, the authors ignore this essential similarity and instead contrast the local council system under Obote II with the NRM's decentralisation programme. Birungi et al. argue that the NRM reforms were more likely to empower local communities; more likely to provide the effective means of local governance; more likely to enhance the capacity for serious resource mobilisation at the local-level (2000: 33). More generally, it can be argued that the logic of the literature on decentralisation is somewhat tautological: the government claims to have implemented, therefore reforms have been implemented.

¹⁵¹ <http://www.parliament.go.ug/mpsdata/mps.hei> (this information was downloaded on February 22, 2005).

since its inception, had offered Ugandans a quasi-democratic one-party system, one that claimed to work against the religious and ethnic cleavages that had undermined economic and social development under previous administrations (Twaddle, 1998: 315-316).

In practice, of course, candidates in elections have always been identified with either the government, or, what has been labelled the opposition: the “multi-partyists” (those who want a return to competitive party politics). The Movement system has, in recent years, been under increasing stress from within and without. By the late 1990s, there was an obvious fragmentation of the military and political coalition that had maintained Museveni in power since 1986. Divisions in the ruling elite surfaced, most obviously with the opposition candidacy of Dr. Kizza Besigye, a former commander in the NRA, who stood against Museveni in the 2001 Presidential elections. From without, the donor community has grown frustrated with the NRM government. The government’s half-hearted attempts at reinstating multi-party politics, have been treated as a smokescreen behind which Museveni has been attempting to organise support for his desire to stand for a third term in office (which goes against the letter of the 1995 constitution). Foreign governments and multi-lateral agencies which had been fairly forgiving of the government’s military activities, in both the north of the country and the Democratic Republic of Congo, have become more critical of Museveni and the NRM (Tripp, 2004). It could be argued that the role of donor agencies in shaping the policies of the NRM government, and, more significantly, in shaping the workings of the state bureaucracy and the interests of the ruling elite, means that they are also not without some blame.

Amidst this national drama, involving donor agencies, the military and the ruling elite, Teso has been on the margins. The region’s political class has always been thought of as part of the opposition to Museveni and few Itesots have risen to the top of civil-political administration or, more importantly, the army. The region as a whole voted against Museveni in the 2001 elections, while Kumi District was one of the few regions that voted against Museveni in 1996 (a bitter pill to swallow as this meant voting for Ssemogerere, a Buganda politician and erstwhile leader of the UPC’s historic rival, the Democratic Party).¹⁵²

¹⁵² That said, the consolidation of support around the UPC was, in part, related to the quirks of the first-past-the-post electoral system developed by the British. Though the UPC won all 5 of Teso constituencies in both the 1961 and 1962 elections, there was more support in the countryside for the Democratic Party than has often been acknowledged. In the 1961 elections the DP won 40% of the vote, while in 1962 the DP secured 43% of the vote (Ocitti, 2000: 114).

Despite the growing political crisis in Kampala, which will eventually impact upon politics of the countryside, MPs, as political figures, were largely absent from the locality during fieldwork (despite 2002 being a parliamentary election year). The Ngora County MP rarely visited his constituency, and there was little substantive connection between the political and economic concerns of the locality and the work of their representatives in the national parliament. Epetait's predecessor Fiona Egenyu-Asemo, was an elusive figure, whose rare appearances and lengthy disappearances made her something of a joke with townspeople.¹⁵³ In contrast to other parts of Uganda, Iteso politicians were not particularly noted for their ability to bring home government projects. The few infrastructure improvements related to donor-funded programmes such as the Northern Uganda Reconstruction Programme and to occasional development schemes, such as the renovation of Ngora hospital, and the conversion of the Bishop Kitching College, formerly a teacher training college, into a centre for vocational education.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM OLEDAI

If we take the intention of decentralisation and democratisation reforms at their word, the village council should have been a democratic, developmental forum, part of a much more extensive system of local government. In the sub-parish the village council is meant to be a ten member committee representing a range of concerns—women, youth, the disabled, education, environment—as well as the managerial positions: chairman, vice-chairman, treasurer, secretary and defence.¹⁵⁴ They were meant to meet regularly as a committee, and to gather villagers together to discuss matters of public concern (Mutibwa, 1992: 181). As the titles of the various office-holders indicate, the committee's work was intended to be both administrative and developmental. In terms of "grassroots democracy" the village council was meant to convene village meetings on a regular basis, so that concerns could be raised, and policies formulated. Village council committee members are also responsible for "sensitising" the local population on changes in government policy. Very little of this was found to be going on in Oledai during the months of fieldwork. Instead the village council mattered much more as a court, with the village council chairman important as a judge, rather than a committee head.

¹⁵³ Despite, or perhaps because of, her absences, Fiona Egenyu-Asemo went on to become Senior Private Secretary on Political Affairs for the President's Office (*Monitor*, 'Museveni Names Kuka Private Secretary, May 9, 2005).

¹⁵⁴ "LC [local council] election report", 14 May, 2005.

Given his judicial role, the chairman appeared, on first impressions, to be a somewhat singular figure. He was the one person able to convey the “idea” of the state in the settlement of cases. Of the nine other committee members, only the vice-chairman and defence secretary were of any importance, and their work was mostly to support the decisions of the village chairman. And yet, the authority of the chairman was scrutinised and qualified by the wider political field. Beyond the confines of the council, the provision of justice at the local-level was shaped by other institutional spaces (see also Tidemand, 1995: 35-37), and the council chairman worked within constraints that extended to the clan courts, the role of churches in the dispensation of justice, and the possible difficulties of cases which involve “big men” in the village. For the chairman to be effective, he had to be able to take into account the decisions of other judicial institutions in the sub-parish.

A number of authors have emphasised the diffuse nature of political spaces when it comes to questions of how to settle, or manage, disputes (Juul and Lund, 2003; Lund 1998; and Berry 1993). Their approach acknowledges the fact that state bureaucracies in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa lack sufficient capacity to orchestrate social change. Instead the local versions of the state bureaucracy are often subjected to the vagaries of the wider political field. Alongside village courts there were not only a number of other judicial spaces, but also a number of sources of legitimacy, including tradition, customs, religious beliefs, and exceptional precedent. These varied sources of legitimacy complicated the deliberations of the council chairman. This meant that the village council chairman’s work was embedded in the political, social and economic landscape of the sub-parish. The village court was often used only as a way of reinforcing judgements already made in clan gatherings, and significant decisions were often made across a range of the available judicial spaces.

A review of the notebooks kept with the sub-parish council chairman for the year 2002 lists a number of cases dealing with a number of issues:

Table 3.2: Breakdown of court cases reported by the sub-parish council chairman, 2002¹⁵⁵

Civil cases		Criminal Cases ¹⁵⁶	
Loan repayment	1	Domestic violence	3
Marital dispute (non-violent)	3	Violence: men against women	3
Verbal abuse	3	Violence: men against men	1
Inheritance disputes	1	Murder accusation	1
Late payment of brideprice	1	Burglary	1
Land dispute (serious)	1	Defilement ¹⁵⁷	2
Land demarcation	3	Desertion of the father	3
Animals destroying crops	1	Theft	6
Late payment of dowry	1	Recovery of stolen items	1

There were 15 civil cases and 21 cases of a criminal nature. These official numbers were far less than the actual caseload of the village council chairman, as the chairman often helped to settle cases through participating in more informal social gatherings, and also tended to write down judgements only where written documentation was required (as in a land settlement, or when a villager promised to pay compensation at a later date).¹⁵⁸ Even when cases were referred to higher government authorities, such as the sub-county court or the police post in Ngora, the details of the case would often rely on the oral testimony of the council chairman, rather than written documentation.

In the following two cases it is important to observe the way the council chairman was respected as the “eye” of the government (*akonye lohapugan*). The first case demonstrates the political importance attached to his authority. The case revolves around the question of whether or not a young man had been properly respectful to the council chairman. The second case concerns a wealthier villager who had brought a considerable degree of conflict to the village. In this second case the village court is shown to be part of a much broader network of judicial spaces, which eventually managed to punish the actions of the wealthy

¹⁵⁵ Where possible, I would sit in on the court judgements of the village council chairman. Whether or not I was able to sit in on the case, I followed up court cases through interviews with villagers, as well as going through the case books with Akorikin John Vincent, to flesh out the details of the more important cases he had been called into to judge.

¹⁵⁶ Though villagers were aware that criminal cases were for the police, and civil cases for the courts, the practical division was much less clear. The police tended to be one of a number of judicial actors involved in criminal cases, and also one of the possible actors involved in civil cases.

¹⁵⁷ “Defilement” is defined as sexual contact outside of marriage involving girls younger than 18, regardless of whether or not the woman had consented to sexual relations, and regardless of the age of the man. This meant that almost every marriage in the sub-parish contravened the law on defilement, as many women villagers had married below the age of 18, as much as one could tell. In practice, defilement was applied to cases where the female party was unmarried and the male party was older than 18.

¹⁵⁸ Even when cases were referred to the higher government authorities, such as the sub-county court or the police post in Ngora, the details of the case were not always logged in the chairman’s books.

man. In the first instance one can see how the village court goes against the economic and political interests of a younger man. In the second case the village can be seen as a much broader landscape of judicial spaces, punishing a difficult older man whose behaviour was regarded as wilful and disrespectful. In either case the arguments and judgements put forward in the village court related back to earlier observations about propriety, seniority and prosperity.

CASE STUDIES

a) Akol Stanislas vs. the village council chairman¹⁵⁹

In the twelve-month period from January 2002 to December 2002, 11 of the 36 cases listed above turned out to be concerned with the question of disciplining younger men in favour of older men. Of the more notable cases that reached the village council chairman there was the case of Aromait, who was considered to be the source of trouble in his home and was accused of thieving from his father (the case was settled in the father's favour on March 21, 2002). There was also the case of Opedun Paul who was accused of being disrespectful to his father-in-law who had been visiting Opedun's home (the village council chairman decided against Opedun on August 24, 2002). A third case involved Otunga Justin who was accused of insulting a village elder during a drinking session (the case was decided against Otunga on April 4, 2002). In some ways these cases were typical of the sorts of conflicts that arise between generations in any community. At the same time, however, it is important to appreciate that these cases were tied into a rather insistent discourse that portrayed younger men as undisciplined and stubborn. In certain instances, cases that had very little to do with the role of younger men in the sub-parish, nonetheless ended up punishing the man for his youth. The case of Akol Stanislas offers an example of how a case, ostensibly about domestic violence, can be turned into a debate on the manners of a younger man.

On December 12, 2002 Akol Stanislas' sister, Atim Betty was taken to hospital for medical treatment. She was bleeding from the stomach, which, according to Akol, was caused by the

¹⁵⁹ Case evidence was pieced together through a lengthy interview with Akol Stanislas (January 14, 2003 and through earlier reports on the problems between Akol and other villagers. Discussion were had with Apio Janet Loy (March 19, 2002) and with the village council chairman (September 25, 2002). Details of the case were also worked through informal discussions with Akol's fellow bicycle taxi-men (May 8, 2002; November 8, 2002; November 15, 2002). The court records of the village council chairman were consulted, though it should be noted that the police post was unwilling to release any documentary evidence related to the case.

beating she received from her husband, Obelan.¹⁶⁰ Akol reported this accusation to the police, and paid them a fee to register the case, after which, the brother-in-law was arrested and charged. Two days after Obelan's arrest, his uncle visited the police post and secured his release and the charges were dropped. Obelan's uncle happened to be the village council chairman, and Akol suggested that Akorikin had bribed the officer-in-charge in order to have his nephew released. The fact that Obelan's uncle was the chairman of the village council shaped all that was to follow.

Two days after Obelan's release, Akol was summoned to appear before the village chairman. Akol was charged on the technicality of not having asked the village chairman for a letter of introduction before going to the police. The chairman adjudged that Akol was to be fined 50,000/= (\$29) and a goat (though the steepness of the fine appears to have had symbolic value, as the fine was later reduced to 12,500/= (\$7)). Akol was unhappy about this and was frustrated that the village chairman had been able to act as judge and jury (while also serving as the plaintiff), and the case breached any idea of due process. One could claim that the village council chairman acted as an authoritarian and corrupt individual, and that the case against Akol was also a diversion from the more important crime, the beating of Atim Betty (which was quietly dropped).

On closer inspection though, one could observe that the case was defined around more general questions of respect and social order. The younger man was punished because he did not show proper consideration for an older man. The crisis cut across a number of more general concerns, such as the question of how to manage disrespectful younger men, and the background to the way the case was understood was tied to the experience of the insurgency. Claims that younger men were wilful or selfish carried a particular set of connotations because of the role such men played in the rebellion. Akol's actions tied into a popular image of younger men as difficult and stubborn. The ability of the village council chairman to enforce decisions was not seen as particularly coercive or unfair by other villagers. And the decision that went against Akol received the support of those who presided over the various other judicial spaces in the sub-parish. Even Akol's friends, mostly made up of his fellow bicycle taxi (*boda boda*) riders, saw his punishment as acceptable. One *boda boda* commented: *they [the leaders] know that he has been foolish and that he needs to learn how to behave.*

¹⁶⁰ The claim that Atim Betty was beaten to the point where she was bleeding was corroborated by all of those interviewed, as well as in a private conversation with one of the midwives at Ngora Freda Carr hospital, March 25, 2002.

The case, initially concerned with something else (domestic violence), was reworked around ideas of proper behaviour and discipline. Villagers were fairly unanimous in agreeing to Akol's punishment, and saw the actions of the village council chairman as sensible and legitimate. Though no-one got rich from Akol's fines, his declining economic position was seen as part of the way in which the potential power of stubborn younger men could be curbed. And it is in the micro-politics of the case that one saw the way governmental spaces in the sub-parish had been reoriented towards questions of seniority and propriety, with the insurgency a greater catalyst for change in determining the work of the village council, than the raft of government legislation on democratic decentralisation. These sorts of arguments, concerning the position of younger men, were common to many other cases involving the village council. The later case of Okelai Samuel, for example, discussed in Chapter 5 also involved debates around respect and appropriate behaviour that shaped the case of Akol Stanislas.

b) Omagor Alfred against the sub-parish of Oledai

In May of 2002, the sub-parish chairman appointed Omagor Alfred as secretary of the village council.¹⁶¹ Omagor had also served on the clan committee of Ogoria, and had recently retired from a position as police assistant in the neighbouring county of Serere. In many respects he was poised to be the ideal sort of "big man" in the sub-parish, with his status and wealth assuring his ascent through the political field of the village. And yet he was a contentious figure, involved in a number of disputes, of which the most heavily politicised was a question of land ownership.

Omagor had tried to claim title to land, totalling four gardens, or *amisirin*, which were also claimed by two younger men. These men had left the area in 1987 after the death of their father. As their mother had died in childbirth, their father's sister, Akia Melissa, had come to the village to collect them and raised them away from the area. More recently Akia and her nephews had returned to the area to claim the land that had once belonged to her brother. But as Omagor had been farming the land in her absence, Akia and her nephews found

¹⁶¹ Much of the information for the story of Omagor Alfred comes from the following sources. First there was a report written up on the case after meeting Tukei Kosiya and Kokoi Magret (March 11, 2002). There was also an interview with Omagor Alfred (March 21, 2002) and Akia Melissa (March 24, 2002). These "key informant" interviews were designed so as to focus on other issues also, so as not to make the interviewee feel as though they were under interrogation. The case was also discussed in interviews with the village council chairman, Akorikin John Vincent (August 21, 2002), *ateker* elder Odongo Emmanuel (October 10, 2002); Okalebo Lawrence (September 12, 2002); Ibuchet Max (January 9, 2003) and Aguti Jennifer (August 27, 2002). The *ateker* leader Ichodio Stephen also discussed the case (August 30, 2002). The records of the village council chairman were also consulted.

themselves in the middle of a conflict. Although it was agreed by many villagers that Omagor was acting as a caretaker for the interests of her nephews, who still had a right to the land. Omagor suggested that in their absence they had given up any claim to the land.

The by-laws of the various clans in the area offer only suggestions as to who was in the right, as it is usually the wife who raised the children with the support of a levirate, a male member of the clan, appointed as a sort of second husband, on the death of the first husband. The widow then has a male member of the clan, typically a brother of the deceased, to help her maintain control over the land until the sons were of an age where they could inherit (land is given to sons when they reach maturity). In the case of Omagor and Akia there was no clear precedent, as she was an aunt, not a mother, and the sons had been living away from the land they hoped to inherit.

Public sentiment went against Omagor and this was expressed in a variety of institutional spaces. Though he was aggrieved that the men had returned to the village, many parishioners felt that the land belonged to the younger men and said so in church, and in the gatherings to be found in the village—farm labour groups, drinking groups, neighbourly conversations. What went against Omagor, was the fact that he was a wealthy man, who did not need the land that much, and his perceived greed went against the fairly strong belief in a form of egalitarianism amongst men.¹⁶² In second place came Omagor's history as a troubled man. He had made himself unpopular, and had a number of conflicts with fellow villagers, some of which involved accusations of witchcraft. Moreover, his career as a policeman did not endear him to villagers, and when the clan committee came to settle the dispute, the chairman found that a number of elders supported the claims of the two younger men. These elders then decided to mark out the territory that belonged to the younger men and suggested that the agreement be stamped by the village council chairman, and taken to the sub-county for the official record. The clan authorities were thus aware that the case needed strengthening through the appropriation of governmental authority.

But Omagor refused the decision of the clan. The case was then referred to the village council chairman who felt compelled to uphold the decision of the clan elders. The chairman heard the case on November 13, 2001. Akorikin decided against Omagor even though he had appointed Omagor to the position of secretary of the village council, an indication of the way decisions made in clan courts were rarely overturned by the village council court. Omagor again refused the decision and asked that his case be sent up to the

¹⁶² Omagor's household was ranked 47th out of 126 in terms of asset wealth.

sub-county. In the sub-county court, where it is felt that money holds greater sway, the judge decided in Omagor's favour.

Omagor was, in this instance, the wealthier man, able to purchase the legal authority of a court that was largely beyond the local political field. But as Christian Lund has argued, achieving settlements in more obviously governmental spaces does not necessarily ensure enforceability at the local-level, and in this instance Omagor's affront to a more general concern with proper behaviour and respect for authority did him a disservice (Lund 1998: 12-14). It remained unclear as to whether Omagor would be able to cultivate the land without offering some concessions to Akia, and his success in the land case cost him elsewhere. Omagor's wilfulness, his attack on what was deemed to be proper behaviour underlined his disrespect for the seniority of the village council chairman and the clan courts. There was little chance of him putting together favourable judgements in other court cases. Even though the sub-county court was *de jure* superior to the various courts in the village, Omagor could not extricate himself from the fact that his retirement was to be lived, *de facto*, in the political landscape of the village.

Later in the year, an accusation of adultery was brought against Omagor, and this was again understood to be a sign of his lack of propriety among many of the more religiously committed members of the sub-parish. In this instance the sub-county refused to hear the case, which meant that Omagor had to turn to the authority of village institutions and in this case a decision made by the council chairman had to be abided by. Omagor was fined 150,000/= (\$86), and in reaction to the defeat, resigned from the village council. One could also appreciate that Omagor had grown marginalised from the work of the burial society, where he had both excluded himself, and been excluded by others, and from the administrative work of the burial committee, to which he had earlier been appointed. In other words, the acquisition of land required maintaining one's position in the social and political life of the village. During the fieldwork it was possible to point to a loss of political influence on Omagor's part.

From these two rather different cases, one can see the village council mattered as an arena not only for dealing with questions over land and property, but also in relation to questions of propriety and seniority. The council's works was as much the image of the local political field as it was a reflection of the particular concerns of individual villagers. For villagers living in Oledai, the village council was not, as the literature has tried to argue, significant for its role as part of a revitalised local government system (Wunsch and Ottemoeller, 2004; Saito, 2003; Birungi et al., 2000), nor was it something to be dismissed as the tail-end of a

government apparatus, undermined by the failings of Uganda's civil society (Tukahebwa, 1996; Kabwegyere, 2000). Rather, the village council was important as part of a local institutional landscape that dealt with the concerns of villagers. The council served as a judicial space that cut across a number of institutional arrangements. Despite the language of reform emanating from above, the village council borrowed from its earlier incarnation as a public space where the idea of the state could be brought to bear on conflict and competition.

CONCLUSION

The chapter has argued that the decentralised state bureaucracy was largely absent from the sub-parish. Observed as far back as the 1960s, the state, in its bureaucratic form, had withdrawn from many areas of village life. The state in its colonial guise as a bureaucratic system that required the clearing of by-ways, the digging of pit latrines, and the collection of taxes, the state was a coercive and invasive presence. In its more recent times, however, the state has claimed to be more developmental, democratic and decentralised, capable of transforming society. I have suggested that the general absence of the bureaucratic state from the lives of villagers points to a growing gap in how the state is understood by policy-makers and academics, when compared with how it is experienced and made use of at the local-level.

Instead of limiting the chapter to the study of a particular reform, I have sought to show how the state may continue to matter even in places where it is largely absent as a bureaucratic presence. In this the chapter makes a significant contribution to re-grounding the study of the state in Africa. Through examining the workings of the village court, it can be argued that the state mattered to villagers, even if villagers did not matter to the state, that a village council was maintained as a sort of judicial space connecting villagers up to other courts, and other sorts of institutional arrangements (the *atekerin*, and the churches). It was in the actions and understandings of villager that the state persisted, and the office of the village council chairman, which had existed under various titles, and under different administrations, managed to provide a certain sort of judicial authority. The village court borrowed from its own history, and within a fairly complex landscape of courts, councils and churches, it could also be shown that the "idea" of the state mattered when putting together judgements.

In contrast to much of the prevailing literature the successes or failures of government politics, I have been more interested to explain the significance of the state in the organisation of day-to-day politics at the local-level. Instead of attempting to adjudge the success or failure of a particular reform, it is more useful to work from the premise that the government is a weak bureaucratic structure, uninterested in rural development. A more appropriate way of looking at changes in the way the state works in villages would be to look at the changing ways in which authority, meaning and wealth are competed over at the local-level. Instead of viewing past versions of local government as a baseline from which to assert the radical-ness of a particular instance of legislation, it would be better to think of the way the past, as the accumulation of experience, informs present-day practices.



Plate 4: A shebeen on the outskirts of Ngora sub-parish. The shebeen was situated next to the Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG) church (on the right-hand side of the picture). Later on in Chapter 4, I discuss how men drinking at the shebeen would laugh at Omadi John Francis, because his church made him sit outside, as penance for adultery.

CHAPTER 4:

PENTECOSTALISM IN THE SUB-PARISH: THE INCORPORATION OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANITY

INTRODUCTION

In her 1968 study of village politics Joan Vincent did not dwell upon the role of churches.¹⁶³ Churches were discussed in terms of shaping up party political loyalties and little else besides. Christianity was viewed as an imported ideology, relevant for those who wanted a career in the civil service, unimportant for those who remained in the village (Vincent, 1968: 34). The people of the region, who have had a history of migration and pastoralism, were seen as ill-suited to the formal hierarchies required by the Catholic and Anglican missions. Louise Pirouet's useful case study of the development of Christianity in early colonial Teso up to 1914, suggests that Christianity was a shallow presence in the area, less successfully acculturated than in other parts of Uganda (1978: 169-189).¹⁶⁴ And at the time of publication, in 1978, Pirouet was confident in the following judgement of the mission churches: that their 'weakness is abundantly clear, and the widespread lack of devotion or even of interest in the church are the despair of the local clergy and the missions alike' (Pirouet, 1978: 188).

By the time of fieldwork, however, churches proved to be an important part of the village, and deserving of more attention than they have hitherto received. Though they have been overlooked in the more recent studies on the region (Henriques, 2002; de Berry, 2000; Zistel, 2002) and have been sidelined in much of the burgeoning literature on Uganda's civil society (Karlström, 1999, 2004; Tripp, 2000), the geography of any Ugandan sub-parish tells a different story.¹⁶⁵ Oledai, like any other village in the Teso region, had a number of church

¹⁶³ It could also be argued that Vincent's study, dating from a time when the regional economy was focused on the production of cotton, and the local political economy was more easily connected to changes in the national political economy, pushed churches to the background of village life.

¹⁶⁴ Louise M. Pirouet's useful case study of the development of Christianity in early colonial Teso (1901-1914) argues that Christianity was a somewhat shallow presence in the area, less successfully acculturated than in other parts of Uganda (Pirouet, 1978: 169-189). Pirouet's arguments are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

¹⁶⁵ One can see the desire to avoid discussing the significance of churches in Mikael Karlström's work on rural politics in Buganda. In his 2004 study, Karlström regards the revivalist movements of the 1930s as less significant than renovations in customary rituals (Karlström 2004: 600-603), while his earlier essay on civil society in Buganda ignores the role of churches completely (1999).

buildings that provide formal public spaces that villagers used on a regular basis by villagers. Villagers congregated in grass-thatched structures, and these churches were set apart from other buildings. Church congregations met regularly, collected money from among themselves and offered an arena for social and political actions.¹⁶⁶ All of the households claimed affiliation to one Christian-denomination or other.

Nowhere was the importance of Christianity more obviously demonstrated than in the expansion of Pentecostal Christianity. By the time of fieldwork eleven percent (11%) of household heads confessed allegiance to the Pentecostal Assemblies of God (*infra* PAG), while the proportion of Sunday worshippers attending the PAG church—as a percentage of active worshippers—was much higher.¹⁶⁷ In the following chapter I explain how the growth of Pentecostalism, a seemingly isolationist and oppositional form of Christianity, which was nonetheless central to broader political developments in the sub-parish. For though part of the significance of Pentecostalism was that it offered a place of retreat and of personal transformation, particularly during the years of insurgency, another part of the church's significance was the way it allowed church members to engage in the politics of the sub-parish in new ways. The particular characteristics of Pentecostal Christianity help explain the careers of individual villagers in other local-level institutions, while the way the church negotiated disputes and conflicts touched on the work of the village court. To a surprising degree the church was part of the institutional landscape of the village. The changing balance between the church as a place of withdrawal, and the church as a place of engagement provides the subject of the chapter.

To explain the significance of the PAG church in the local political field, the chapter discusses the nature of Pentecostalism, and the importance of the recent Pentecostal revival to the political landscape more generally in Africa. The chapter then locates the Pentecostal revival within the particular case of rural Teso, where Pentecostalism, a presence in the region since the 1930s, took on particular significance during the insurgency. The chapter then discusses the extent to which the church has been incorporated into the local political field, illustrating how Pentecostalism has added to, and complicated the way political actions are put together. There follows some examples of how church membership was used in everyday political activities during my stay in the area, with the church helping to

¹⁶⁶ Kevin Ward comments on the remarkable persistence of churches in the region despite the violence of the insurgency and the weakness of clerical structures (Ward, 1995: 102).

¹⁶⁷ The total number of household heads claiming affiliation with the PAG church was 14 out of 126 (11%). The number of Church of Uganda (Anglican) households was 25 (20%), and the number of Catholic households 87 (69%). The actual attendance figures, in terms of numbers of households turning up to Sunday service were Pentecostal 14 (23%); Anglican 20 (31%); Catholic 31 (48%).

advance a political career, or offering an arena for settling a land dispute. While the chapter recognises the ways in which Pentecostalism has retained some of its autonomy, with women using the isolation of the church to bring about changes in the domestic sphere, it also shows how the church has created possibilities that cut across the local political landscape more broadly. The chapter concludes by both acknowledging the incorporation of Pentecostalism into the wider political field, and by accepting the contingent nature of this pattern of incorporation.

THE NATURE OF PENTECOSTALISM

Pentecostal churches have made enormous inroads into African political life over the past two decades, and the changing religious landscape of the continent represents, perhaps, the most significant ideological and political reformation of recent years (Gifford, 1998: 21). Pentecostal congregations 'have mushroomed in a context of state-contraction, neo-liberal economics, poverty and growing political turmoil', and a link can be drawn between the pattern of spiritual revival and the sense of crisis or insecurity in the political sphere (Maxwell, n.d.: 7). In urban areas, Pentecostal congregations have drawn in many of Africa's elite (or those who aspire to join the elite), and a number of born-again churches have promoted a doctrine of unfettered accumulation, a "prosperity Gospel", which has legitimised the growing gap between Africa's urban elite and the rest of the population (Hackett, 1995).¹⁶⁸

At the opposite end of the spectrum to the "prosperity Gospel", there are a number of more conservative Pentecostal churches, often mission-based, and often working in rural areas, with a much greater commitment to dealing with questions of physical security and bodily health 'looking to their leaders for protection against angry spirits and witchcraft and provision of fertility, healing, work and stable marriages' (Maxwell, n.d.: 13). The Pentecostal Assemblies of God in Oledai can be placed within this second strand, as it focuses on spiritual gifts and acts of sociality rather than a sense of imminent wealth or endless material possibilities.¹⁶⁹ As a woman congregant commented:

¹⁶⁸ In Nigeria the success of this "prosperity Gospel" can be related to the experience of massive oil wealth at a time of political liberalisation. In other parts of Africa, the emphasis on sanctifying the accumulation of wealth, has worked as a corollary to the economic inequalities borne out of the parallel economies supported by international development agencies (Ukah, 2003).

¹⁶⁹ According to the World Christian Encyclopaedia, the Pentecostal Assemblies of God were first established in Uganda in 1935, an offshoot of the Pentecostal Assemblies of God in Kenya (Barrett et al. (eds), 2000: 765). The Encyclopaedia also records the membership of the PAG church in Uganda in 2002 as 40% Iteso, a reflection of the strength of the church in the east of the country.

The Church has made people more peaceful. There is no fighting among us when you compare us to those who don't believe. The Bible teaches us that when you are beaten you should turn the other cheek, and that has made us have fewer conflicts, both at home and with out neighbours. When a neighbour falls sick we go to help them, bringing water.¹⁷⁰

What made the PAG church in Oledai identifiably different from other churches in the area is the nature of Pentecostal worship. When compared to the rather formulaic Catholic Mass, or the Ancient and Modern sonorities of the Anglican Eucharist, Pentecostal worship was a more participatory and engaging than the sorts of worship found in mainline churches (see also Gifford, 1998: 169). Though PAG worship lacked the vitality and improvisation of some of Africa's more radical Pentecostal or African Independent churches, villagers regarded Pentecostalism as something quite different from other Christian denominations. The Sunday service lasted longer, while the liturgy and singing were more obviously personalised and directed towards the concerns of church members. Throughout the week one could also see the commitment of Pentecostal Christians. On Tuesdays there were fasting prayers for all church members, the youth met on Wednesdays, the women on Fridays and students on Saturdays; the Sunday service was preceded by a meeting of 'prayer warriors' and followed by choir practice. In addition a number of "cell" meetings were held where a smaller number of Pentecostals who lived close to each other came together for prayers.¹⁷¹ Not only were meetings at church much less likely to be postponed than similar gatherings in the Catholic or Anglican churches, but also the level of commitment expressed within these meetings was different.

What was most obviously striking to the outside observer, were the rules and observances that guided Pentecostal Christians. Church members were forbidden from using condoms or practising birth control. They were only allowed to marry someone who was saved (or on the path to salvation). Women were not allowed to take an "heir" (a second husband from the husband's clan, should the first husband die). The church also demanded that its members refrained from using traditional medicine.¹⁷² The PAG church also demanded that church members should test for HIV prior to marriage, as they argued that those free of the virus should not marry an infected person (this position was somewhat confused by the argument that intensive praying could cure church members of the virus). There were also

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Akello Joyce Mary, a former women's leader of the PAG church, residing in Agolitom sub-parish, October 7, 2002.

¹⁷¹ Indeed, given the levels of participation required of born-again Christians, and their long history in the Teso region, one is surprised to find Suzanne Zistel blithely remarking that: "it is amazing to realize that in the most remote areas [in Teso] people know more about the Pentecostal church than about national politics" (Zistel, 2000: 148).

¹⁷² The use of traditional medicine carried with it the obvious implication of having visited a witchdoctor.

further prohibitions marking out one Pentecostal denomination from another, with neighbouring sub-parishes offering a home to Pentecostal denominations that differed somewhat from the Pentecostal Assemblies of God. The Christ Disciples church, in nearby Agolitom, accepted that only “prophets” of the church had the gift of speaking in tongues, while other churches accepted that all members had the gift of the Holy Spirit.¹⁷³ Rules and observances formed part of a well-regulated internal church culture:

We have rules. For us in the PAG church our rules are well-known. Once you are saved you are not to behave like the non-believers, so you are not to drink *ajon* [locally brewed millet beer], you should not smoke cigarette, and so forth.¹⁷⁴

The most significant restriction Pentecostal Christians placed on themselves, particularly in the context of Iteso society, was the prohibition on drinking alcohol. Pentecostal Christians had no clearer way of separating themselves from the lives of other villagers, as beer-drinking remained a central part of life, with its importance extending across economic, social, and political spheres (Henriques, 2002: 182). For women, the brewing and sale of beer provided some sort of independent household income, however much their husbands tried to get hold of the money (de Berry, 2000: 144; Orone and Pottier, 1993). Across the board beer offered an obvious avenue for socialising and sharing and was proffered as a medium of celebration, commiseration and negotiation (Henriques 2001: 168-172, Karp 1980: 97).¹⁷⁵ On the one hand drunkenness was bound up with acts of violence, on the other, beer-drinking became the means of making peace. Beer was served after the settlement of a court case, and offered as a means of commiseration during burials. For Ivan Karp, at least, ‘[T]he very definition of a neighbour [for the Iteso]... is associated with the sharing of beer’ (Karp, 1980: 89).

Though the above discussion would suggest that Pentecostalism was a more self-consciously radical form of Christianity than found in mainline Anglicanism or Catholicism, I later argue that the PAG church proved to be a less remarkable part of the sub-parish than it had once been. Even though Pentecostal Christians had given up alcohol, did not smoke, typically married within the church, and avoided using traditional medicine, the church was not separated from mainstream society to the extent observed by other ethnographers (Laurent, 2001; van Dijk, 2000). The clearest demonstration of the incorporation of Pentecostalism into village life, in light of what has already been said, was the way fellow

¹⁷³ The gift of “speaking in tongues”, the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, gives Pentecostalism its name.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Akol Jane, PAG church member, 4 September 2002, Oledai sub-parish.

¹⁷⁵ Indeed one of the most useful texts attempting to offer a comprehensive guide to the culture of the Iteso goes by the title *Ajon luk’Iteso* – the beer of the Iteso.

villagers had learnt to offer tea alongside beer at burials and after court sessions. The following section traces the shifting role of the Pentecostal church in the village, and observes the way a once isolated institution had become increasingly incorporated into the local political landscape.

THE HISTORY OF PENTECOSTALISM IN THE TESO REGION

a) a marginal presence in the countryside before the 1980s

Though active in Oledai sub-parish only since the late 1980s, Pentecostalism had been present in eastern Uganda since at least the 1930s, led by missionaries from the Canadian Assemblies of God and the Volksmission of Germany (Barrett et al. (eds), 2000: 765). The Pentecostal Assemblies of God, the first church to evangelise in the area, had a presence in Kumi District as far back as the 1960s. As with many of Africa's Pentecostal churches, the Pentecostal Assemblies of God appeared only to have made serious headway in the region in more recent decades. The Kumi area was only established as a 'seer' early in the 1970s (meaning that only by this date was the church capable of organising its own evangelical work), and the church seemed to have gained relevance and significance in the face of a collapsing political system, and a rapidly declining rural economy.

To understand the special status accorded Pentecostalism in Teso, it is important to appreciate the isolated position of born-again Christians during the years of the Amin government. Under Amin, the Ugandan state made a concerted effort to control public life (Southall, 1980; Ward, 1995: 81-83). However "unsteady" the state was in a bureaucratic sense, it is important to remember that the apparatus of Idi Amin's government sought to dominate and organise society. Nelson Kasfir's description of the politics of the period as being one of "departicipation", where the state placed restrictions on the extent to which individuals could choose to organise outside the structures of the state, can be thought of as particularly useful when applied to the relations between church and state (Kasfir, 1976: 14). It is a concept that can be usefully used in explaining the history of Uganda's churches. Amin prohibited all Christian denominations, except the Church of Uganda (Anglican), Roman Catholic Church, and the small Orthodox congregation in Kampala, with the 1977 order banning such long-established groups as the Pentecostal Assemblies of God, the

Seventh Day Adventists, Salvation Army, and the Bahá'í (Southall, 1980: 634, see also Gifford, 1998: 116).¹⁷⁶

At the local-level the policy pronouncements of the government had some tangible effects. As born-again congregations continued to meet in the villages, those who were not “saved” could exploit the position of practicing Pentecostals. In the Teso region, where the Pentecostal Assemblies of God remained a significant organisation in the countryside, those who worshipped in the born-again style were easily identified and attacked. In an interview with an older woman from the village of Agolitom, an active member of the Pentecostal church in the area in the 1970s, there was a discussion of the persecution church members faced in their day-to-day lives. One particular example of the difficulties church members found themselves in came when Akello Joyce Mary spoke of her congregation being rounded up and taken off to the sub-county headquarters:

We were in the church. Some people were cooking porridge. But at the time when the porridge was ready, we were seized. We did not even finish the kitchen work.

They tied us with ropes. All of us. When we reached the sub-county we were told to pick cotton, as the sub-county chief was not there. When he returned he told his men [security officers] to get sticks. He argued with us, and said that we were against the government. The soldiers beat us with the sticks until the sticks were made useless by the beatings.¹⁷⁷

Villagers spoke of how Pentecostal Christianity was placed on the margins of village life, and was popular only with those who welcomed the isolation of the church. Women and youths made up the bulk of church membership throughout the 1970s.¹⁷⁸ Of the women who joined the church, many saw the prohibition on alcohol as a possible means of dealing with domestic violence, while the Pentecostal opposition to the practice of leviration (the taking of a brother-in-law as a second husband, after the death of a first husband) meant that widows joined the church as a way of escaping customary obligations (see Christiansen 2003, for similar stories among PAG congregants in the Samia region to the south). Among younger people, Pentecostalism was popular with those who saw themselves as educated or more “modern”, those who claimed to be less attached to the traditions and conventions of village life. The sorts of oppositional reasons for joining a Pentecostal church is partly what

¹⁷⁶ Amin's own biases added to this pattern of exclusion, with Islam being elevated to the same status as Christianity, and Friday becoming a day of prayer. Prominent Muslims benefited from certain regime policies—in allocation of expropriated Asian businesses in 1972 (Pirouet 1980).

¹⁷⁷ From an interview with Akello Joyce Mary, October 7, 2002.

¹⁷⁸ The role of women in the early uptake of new Christian movements, and their subsequent demotion to the interests of men, is documented elsewhere in the literature (see, for example, Peel 2002).

Birgit Meyer speaks of when she writes of Pentecostalism's 'break with the past' (Meyer, 1998: 318-319) (see also page 183), and links up to those authors who have emphasised the way born-again Christianity has allowed church members to separate themselves from mainstream society (Laurent, 2001; van Dijk, 2000).¹⁷⁹

b) The growth of Pentecostalism: the insurgency and the 1990s

A significant contribution made within the literature on Pentecostalism concerns the way born-again Christianity challenges accepted notions of community, kinship and tradition. Becoming born-again means joining a new community, one bound by faith. Within the community of the saved there is often a strong opposition to past relationships, as these relationships are often seen as a vehicle for sin or personal misfortune. Brigit Meyer writes of Pentecostal discourse in the context of Ghana as fostering the idea that being born-again means making 'a complete break with the past' (Meyer, 1998: 318-319). Church members are permitted to cut familial and kinship ties in the knowledge that they are leaving behind the worship of ancestors, gods or the use of traditional medicines. This leads to often radical social actions, precipitating a retreat into the community of the saved. This has been described as the Pentecostal commitment to an idea of "rupture", and Meyer suggests that in attacking the past, Pentecostalism also changes the way the past is understood, making it a morally suspect category. The possibility of ill-health, of being susceptible to witchcraft are taken as signs of the past catching up with you; that you have not fully committed yourself to a life in Christ (the broader use of the notion of "rupture" is discussed in Chapter 6). The distinctive identity of Pentecostalism, particularly the emphasis on leaving behind past relationships, achieved a particular significance during the years of insurgency.

From the mid-1980s on PAG membership grew, and, at a time of increasing violence and insecurity, Pentecostalism became a more established presence. The years of growth of the PAG came about for practical, as well as spiritual, reasons. On the spiritual side, the idea of "salvation", with its suggestions of a better life (and afterlife) proved to be a particularly powerful message given the perceived social and moral collapse evidence in the violence of rebel groups. At the same time these spiritual gifts were matched by instrumental

¹⁷⁹ Meyer also makes the point that in promoting a theology of "rupture" Pentecostalism also promotes the past as a much more "real" category than is found in Anglican or Catholic congregations. Pentecostal churches often placed considerable pressure on church members to ensure that they did not "backslide", with ill-health, misfortune or impoverishment taken as signs of an individual having failed to break with the past. As Englund suggests: "the advances made by the Born-Again are often provisional" with adultery, theft or ill-health suggesting that the Devil (and the past) has caught up with a particular church member (Englund, 2004: 302).

advantages. Villagers recalled that those who joined the church were less likely to be conscripted into rebel groups, and less likely to be harassed by government soldiers. The different-ness of Pentecostalism, which can be traced back to the time of Amin and before, placed church members outside the social and political conflicts driving the rebellion. Rebels were in the business of targeting local “big men”, none of whom were Pentecostal, and younger villagers who did not want to be conscripted into the fighting stood a better chance of being left alone if they presented themselves as committed, born-again Christians.

The internment camps offered a particularly useful space within which a number of villagers could come and worship in the Pentecostal style.¹⁸⁰ The concentration of the population in one area, and the reduction of life to a pattern of sitting and waiting, appeared to have helped the evangelical mission of the church. As the church prayed in the same public building as Catholic and Anglican congregations, unsaved villagers had the possibility of comparing Pentecostalism with other forms of worship without the bold step of setting foot in a different church building. An additional explanation for the successful conversion of villagers came from the fact that there was a shortage of foodstuffs in the camps, which made brewing impossible. Though this may seem like a trivial matter, the impossibility of drinking beer helped the up-take of Pentecostalism (and the later return of beer allowed a number of villagers to slide back out of the church).

As well as the absence of beer, and the growing familiarity with Pentecostal forms of worship, the psychosocial dynamics of the camps, made the message of Pentecostal Christianity particularly forceful. Pentecostals were skilled when it came to articulating a vision of the world that explained the devastation of the insurgency. The millennial aspects of Pentecostal teachings, the belief that one should prepare for the life to come, offered a vocabulary that made some sense of the particular situation in which villagers found themselves, and the advance of Pentecostalism in the late 1980s relates back to other examples of religious revivalism in Uganda, at moments of extreme violence or political dislocation (Vincent, 1982: 244-247; Allen, 1991; Behrend, 1999). The PAG church became not so much an attack on the political configuration of state-society relations, but rather a place of sociality that offered a way of understanding what had been, and what was to come.

¹⁸⁰ Kevin Ward notes the “stories of a revival of religious commitment in some of the camps” in the Teso region, he writes of the Church of Uganda, which seems to have experienced less success than the Pentecostal churches (Ward, 1995: 102).

Since the end of the insurgency in 1993, the role of Pentecostal Christianity in the village had changed. The PAG church had become a more ordinary, more mundane part of village life. The church had, in many ways, become incorporated into the local political landscape. Being born-again was less contentious than one would have expected given the church's many prohibitions and this part of the chapter focuses on the extent of incorporation. The ordinariness of Pentecostalism which came across in interviews with villagers, could also be observed in the way church members approached the politics of a court cases or the question of how to piece together a political career. As such, though much of the literature on Pentecostalism in Africa discusses the role of churches in urban areas, taking the exclusionary doctrine of Pentecostal Christianity as indicative of the ways in which "born again" Christians approach politics, the examples presented below show Pentecostalism taking on a different form, where church members continue to engage in a wide range of local-level institutions, including burial societies, the village court, or clan committees.

Despite the different-ness of Pentecostalism, other institutions in the village had made room for the particularities of the PAG church. The fact that Pentecostal Christians did not drink alcohol had been accommodated in court and at burial. Drinking beer was no longer obligatory when signing off on an agreement, and black tea was served (alongside beer) at funerals.

One obvious explanation for the increasing un-remarkableness of the PAG church, was the degree of familiarity non-church members had with the workings of Pentecostalism. By 2002, the grass-thatched church had been part of the village for more than a decade, and the village had had Pentecostal Christians since, at least, the 1970s. Church-goers included some of the more politically prominent members of the village, including the vice chairman of the village council. At the same time, the mainline Catholic and Anglican congregations, which were at one time hostile to the PAG church—not least because the Pentecostal church poached some of their more diligent members—had come to their own accommodation with born-again Christianity. Leaders in the mainline churches appeared to welcome the spiritual revival brought about by the PAG church, as Catholic and Anglican churches had instituted their own charismatic groups appropriating many of the practices found in the PAG church (see Chapter 5).

Perhaps the most straightforward way of illustrating the incorporation of the church into the broader political field, is to look at those villagers who were committee members within the church in 2002, to see if they were also allowed to participate in other political spaces:

Table 4.1: Committee positions of born-again Christians in Oledai¹⁸¹

Church Committee	Position	Committee member	Other committee positions	Wealth ranking
Leaders committee	Treasurer	Oluka Lawrence	elders committee, Ichaak clan	107
Youth committee Evangelist committee Oledai PAG "cell"	Chairman	Omadi John Francis	vice chairman, sub-parish council	73
Youth committee Evangelist committee Oledai PAG "cell"	Secretary	Omureje Charles		40
Youth committee	Member	Oluka Lawrence	see above	107
Choir Oledai PAG "cell"	Chorister	Apolot Helen	treasurer, women's committee Ichaak burial society	73
Choir	Chorister	Among Helen		40
Choir	Chorister	Amulen Jane		107
Choir	Chorister	Akello Joyce	women's secretary, Ikures clan committee, husband was the sub-parish council treasurer, and a member of Ikures clan committee	25
Oledai PAG "cell"	Mobiliser	Auki William	wife was sub-parish council women's secretary	70

The above table shows quite clearly that church members were able to sit on other committees in the village, customary as well as governmental. Auki William could be married to the women's secretary of the village council, while Akello Joyce could be married to a man who was treasurer of the village council and a prominent member of his *ateker*. Being Pentecostal did not mean being precluded from a broad-based political career in the village, and many of the more prominent members of the church occupied a number of positions across a range of institutional spaces. Table 4.1 suggests the degree to which it was possible to be born-again while remaining (or even becoming) an active member of the

¹⁸¹ Based on data gathered through the committee membership survey, the social networks survey and interviews with church members.

wider community.¹⁸² The idea that Pentecostalism tended to offer only a bounded and somewhat introspective religious and political space was not particularly useful in the case of Oledai sub-parish.

The following case studies take up this point and show the ways in which Pentecostalism had grown integral to the local political landscape. The first case discusses the way the church offered a place from which to become a “big man” in the sub-parish. The second case discusses how a father and son used the church as a place to settle a land dispute. In both cases the church offers a political space that was complemented by other spaces in the sub-parish, such as the village court and the *atekerin*. Both cases suggest the value of approaching politics as an open-ended business, rather than simply accepting the view that Pentecostal Christianity is best studied through looking at the lives of Christians in church.

CASE STUDIES

a) Omadi John Francis, a Pentecostal Christians becomes a “big man” in the village¹⁸³

Joan Vincent writes of leadership in the area as a piecing together of political roles across a number of institutions. Following from the work of W. Watson, Vincent has discussed the rise of “big men” in a particular parish, suggesting that this was the result of “spiralist” practices: ‘[P]rogressive ascent through a series of positions in one or more hierarchical structures’ (1968: 283). In Vincent’s analysis the possibilities for advancement depended on personal attributes, connections and the manner in which an individual carried himself in the village. In Oledai sub-parish, churches provided an arena where such an ascent begins.

The following example concerns the way the church served as the starting point for a rise through the village hierarchy. The case involves a husband and wife who were able to draw on their membership in the PAG church as a way of becoming “big men” in other

¹⁸² Englund makes a similar point on the possible avenues of incorporation, albeit on a more spiritual plane, when he argues that Pentecostal Christians, living in Chinsapo township in peri-urban Lilongwe, shared their preoccupation with the Devil with other residents following other religious traditions (Englund, 2004: 301-302).

¹⁸³ The case material for Omadi’s rise as a “big man” was drawn from an extended interview with Omadi himself (January 23, 2003), with his wife Apolot Helen (January 28, 2003). Omadi’s example was also discussed in interview with the village council chairman (August 21, 2002; September 30, 2002), church members and members of his burial society. Similar cases within the church could be found in the rise to prominence of Akello Joyce who became women’s secretary of the burial society of Ikures (interviewed August 24, 2002), and the career of Oluka Lawrence who was both treasurer of the church and a member of the elders committee.

institutional spaces. They occupied a relatively modest position on the wealth ranking chart (88th out of 126) meaning that one should regard Omadi John Francis' rise through the village as one with potential economic as well as political consequences. After working actively in the church the husband was able to become the vice-chairman of the village council. Omadi also joined his clan committee, and his wife became a committee member of the burial society of Ichaak. What was striking was how the PAG church was able to feed into a long-established pattern of spiralism.

The chronology behind Omadi's career is interesting in that the first institution in which the household gained influence was the church, as the husband had become assembly youth leader in late 1997. The church then became a stepping-stone towards the more powerful position of vice chairman of the village council. When compared with other local-level institutions it is worth noting that the PAG church was relatively open to ambitious young men such as Omadi, who sought to move up through the village hierarchy.¹⁸⁴ There were a large number of roles and positions within the church, and the church encouraged the initiative of its members, making it possible for those with ambitions to gain a foothold on the spiralist ladder. And the way the church feeds into a pattern of spiralism can be contrasted with Pierre-Joseph Laurent's account of the Assemblies of God church in rural Burkina Faso. Laurent shows how church can remain significant as a self-sufficient community, with its opposition to existing customary and political practices, requiring parallel institutions for managing familial and agricultural relationships (Laurent, 1994, 2001: 270-1). By contrast, the PAG church in Oledai shows Pentecostalism opening up an alternative scenario, where the church becomes one of a number of hierarchical structures through which personal progress is possible.

In the context of Oledai, it is possible to appreciate how the recent past plays into this pattern of incorporation, as it gives a more general political significance to the position of youth leader. As assembly youth leader Omadi's work was to go out into the sub-parish and talk to young men on subjects such as about personal salvation, respect for one's elders and the need to stand up to those who would be violent. These values were not easy to sell in the village, as many younger men remembered the insurgency—despite its violence—as a time when younger men were able to challenge the status of older men. As such, the assembly youth leader's attempts at mediating between older and younger generations made him politically important, as it tied his work into the prevailing discourses on seniority and

¹⁸⁴ This point is also made by Gifford (1998: 171).

propriety. The fact that he appeared able to earn some respect from younger men, only added to the esteem with which he was held, by older members of the village.

A further reason why the PAG church provided a good starting point from which to enter village politics was that Pentecostal Christians had developed a reputation for honesty over the years. The church relied on a rule-based culture that set church members apart from the norms or conventions that governed the actions of villagers who were not saved.¹⁸⁵ The ban on drinking alcohol, the opposition to polygyny and the stance against witchcraft suggested not only the distinctive nature of Pentecostalism, but also the way that distinctiveness had to be carried into the public sphere. Pentecostalism helped to broaden out the repertoire of political actions available to villagers, and church members were able to develop a different sort of reputation in the village, one that emphasised adherence to rules and externally imposed norms.

An example of the rule-based culture of Pentecostalism, and its wider political ramifications came when Omadi John Francis was accused—by fellow church members—of the sin of adultery. The adulterous act was committed with an “unsaved” woman (church members were unclear as to whether this made his actions more or less sinful). During one of the Sunday services the pastor announced that he wanted to know if it was true that a church member had committed such a sin. Omadi confessed, and as penance was asked to stand outside the church for several Sundays, to demonstrate his isolation from God. This punishment was a public humiliation for the vice-chairman, a humiliation not eased by the fact that the church was situated next to a number of drinking-huts. Several other “big men” who had not joined the church would come and sit outside the shebeens and mock the man who was the vice-chairman of the village council (see plate 4 on page 113). His submission before church authorities was seen as faintly ridiculous, and his story became the subject of many jokes.¹⁸⁶

And yet, this act of submission demonstrated, in a visible way, that Pentecostalism was different, and that church members should be judged differently. The culture of humility within the church marked an obvious departure from the more worldly ways of other politicians. In the particular case of Omadi John Francis, one positive consequence of being

¹⁸⁵ The economics of Pentecostalism in eastern Uganda in no way links the church up to the “prosperity Gospel” that is found in urban congregations in Ghana and Nigeria (Hackett, 1995; Ukah, 2004). While the PAG church collected slightly higher individual financial contributions than its Catholic or Anglican counterparts, the money given was never enough to allow the pastor to consider living off church revenues alone (see table 6.1. on page 169).

¹⁸⁶ Though the problem of adultery was not uncommon in the village, it was rare for the accused to face a public judgement, and unheard of for the accused to be publicly punished in this way.

publicly humiliated was that he developed a different, more honest, reputation when compared to other “big men” in the sub-parish. Omadi was less open to accusations of corruption or self-interest and this had consequences for both his personal standing as well as for the institutions in which he held office. As vice-chairman of the village council, his reputation for personal integrity broadened out the legitimacy of the council. Omadi was seen as more humble and more straightforward than “big men” of the old school, he was a man who embodied the idea of proper behaviour and respect for authority through his membership of a particular religious institution. (A similar concern with proper behaviour could be seen in the appointment of his wife to the politically contentious position of treasurer of the women’s committee on the burial society. Her reputation as a committed Christian meant she was to be trusted when it came to looking after the money that the burial society collected.)

In the particular case of Oledai, Pentecostalism added to, rather than subtracted from the local political field. The rule-based culture of the church legitimated new sorts of public actions, and offered a new space from which to become a leader. The church opened up new ways of trying to make sure that money did not go missing in the management of burials. Prohibitions on alcohol, polygamy and marrying “out” opened up, at a particular moment in the history of the village, a more extensive repertoire of political possibilities. The born-again vice-chairman of the village council had a particular sort of reputation for accountability, and for being courageous enough to speak to young men on issues of respect for authority and proper behaviour. At the same time, his submission before church in the adultery case offered an alternative view of how one could be a “big man” in the sub-parish. In understanding the political career of Omadi John Francis, it is important to recognise that his membership in the PAG church provided for a reputation that extended across the village, and was not simply confined to what was going on in the church.

This meant that the PAG church was more obviously integral to the political landscape in the sub-parish, than it had been in the past. Pentecostalism reflected, and substantiated, more general concerns about propriety and seniority (and more private concerns with prosperity) that were also observed in the work of the village council, and the work of burial societies. The 1990s should be thought of as a time when villagers had to consider the impact of the insurgency. The idea of seniority, as a marker of more general concerns over public order, found significance not only in Omadi’s work as assembly youth leader, but also in the orderliness and rule-bound nature of the church. The rule-based culture of Pentecostalism, with its opposition to adultery and sin, offered a rather absolute

commitment to a notion of propriety provided a purposeful contrast to the violence and degradation of the insurgency.

b) a father and son settling a land dispute in church¹⁸⁷

The PAG church in Oledai also offered a place where land issues could be negotiated. During the course of the fieldwork, it emerged that some members of the PAG church used the church as a sort of staging ground where they could strengthen claims before going to the village court. More surprisingly it became apparent that other “born again” Christians used the church as a court-like setting where land conflicts could be discussed during the Sunday service. The use of the church as a court was a new development in the management of land conflicts in the village, and appeared to go against the interests of the village council and the *ateker* courts, which also exercised authority over questions of access to land, in exchange for a fee. I would like to discuss the reasons why the church was able to offer a court-like environment, and why this did not cause as much consternation among *ateker* elders and the village council than one might have expected. The following case also tells us that the development of a judicial space within the church related to distinctive identity of Pentecostal Christianity—to the idea that conflicts among church members were ungodly.

The case concerned the timing and scale of a son’s inheritance. In Teso it is common for the father to allocate a portion of his assets, notably land and cattle, to his sons. He is meant to do this during his own lifetime, as land and cattle make the son a better candidate for marriage, and signal graduation into manhood (Lawrance, 1957: 143-144).¹⁸⁸ Questions of inheritance were difficult to manage, particularly given the depletion of livestock and scarcity of land. This was certainly the case in Oledai, a sub-parish recovering from the insurgency and contending with its position near to a trading centre. In this particular case

¹⁸⁷ The information for this case emerged out of an interview with Omureje Charles, who was not directly involved in the land dispute (interview August 9, 2002). Though I was not expecting the church to take on this sort of judicial role the role of the church in settling conflicts became clearer after the interview, when I spent time visiting the church and engaging with both the membership and the leadership. The particularities of the case were also discussed in interview with the assembly leader, Anguria George William (August 27, 2002), in interview with Omadi John Francis (January 23, 2003) and in discussion with the village council chairman.

¹⁸⁸ As mentioned on page 16 of the thesis, inheritance in Teso is typically patrilineal and patrilocal, with all of the sons inheriting part of the father’s land within his own lifetime. The land that the father leaves on his death will be inherited by the eldest son who is also expected to take on the father’s debts and obligations. If the sons had not reached adulthood by the time of their father’s death, the widow was expected to take a levirate, or “heir”, normally the brother of the deceased, who was expected to manage the land until the son’s come of age.

the son, Okello John, felt that his father, Omoding Justin was delaying in handing over his inheritance, and Okello raised his grievances with the church pastor and several other prominent Christians. As the dispute involved two born-again Christians, the pastor asked that the case be heard in church, first through prayers of intercession and then through a relatively formal court hearing. In this court-like space the father and son presented their situation and called on supporters to validate their position in a manner that consciously borrowed from the sorts of court hearings presided over by the village council chairman. The pastor and church elders counselled the two parties to reach an amicable settlement, while also suggesting that Okello, as the son, had the more legitimate claim. This favouring of Okello's claim carried weight, in both moral and political terms. The father agreed to the consensus reached in church and signed off on a settlement that allocated land to his son.

This ability of the church to take on the role of a court was enhanced, no doubt, by the whiff of superiority that came off Pentecostal Christians. There was a clear understanding among church members that their faith made them less fractious than other villagers; and Pentecostal Christians understood that they had certain spiritual gifts, such as an aversion to conflict, which had to be demonstrated through the effective management of conflicts. As the incident of adultery-spotting showed, in the earlier example, the PAG church also promoted a culture of vigilance. There was a keen interest in uncovering conflicts and bringing them to the attention of the assembly leader. Though this aspect of the church can be considered a sort of "faith in action" approach to maintaining harmony within the church, it was also popular with those in church who wished to show up fellow church member who lacked the discipline and commitment of Pentecostal Christians.

The fact that the PAG congregation served as a court also draws us into a discussion of the increasing embeddedness of the church within the wider political landscape. I would suggest that the church drew some of its authority from the fact that church members were political actors elsewhere. Those who helped to negotiate the settlement included the vice-chairman of the village council and his wife, discussed above. There were also two Parent-Teachers Association members who were active in the church, one of whom was treasurer of the village council. Another "big man", for want of a better term, was the women's representative of the village council. In other words, the judgment reached in church carried with it the imprimatur of other institutional spaces in the sub-parish, and the ability of the congregation to put together a workable settlement related, not only on the spiritual authority or the organisational capabilities of the church, but also to the incorporation of the church in the village more generally. An example of the way the village mattered in the church, as much as the church mattered to the village.

As a sign of the extent to which the church was incorporated into the wider political landscape, the settlement signed in church was taken by Okello and Omoding to the village council chairman, to be stamped and ratified, after the chairman had received the usual 5000/= fee (\$3). This meant that if the father chose to take his case to the village court he was likely to receive either the same decision as that made in church. That the village council chairman and the *ateker* elders were not troubled by the role of the church in settling the dispute, indicated the degree of autonomy afforded Pentecostalism. Though it was possible that the church would run into trouble if it were seen to encroach too much on the economic or political interests of these other courts, in this instance the church helped settle a land dispute in a way that complemented the work of other local-level institutions.

The development of Pentecostal churches, which started in Oledai in the mid-1970s, came to affect not only the spiritual and economic well-being of individual villagers but also the wider political landscape.¹⁸⁹ In the above cases Pentecostalism did not, in the end, demand an absolute separation of the life of the saved from the ways of the world. In practical terms the division between Pentecostalism and the world was much less clear than often imagined, and church members remained, or had even *become*, significant players in customary institutions, the court system, and the village council.¹⁹⁰ In line with the basic premise of the thesis, churches are usefully studied as one institutional space among a number of institutional spaces, with the significance of Pentecostal churches related as much to an ability to transform the nature of village politics as to the sorts of transformations wrought in terms of personal religious beliefs.

Pentecostalism, which can be presented as an exceptional faith, formed around a bounded community of believers, mattered to the local political field more generally. Given that the PAG church dealt with prosaic, political activities—managing land conflicts, building reputations, becoming a “big man”—activities that cut across other local-level institutions, church members managed to involve other institutional spaces and affiliations in the work of the church. While not wishing to deny the spiritual value of being born-again, it can be shown that in the fairly familiar environment of the village, the lives of church members were not easily confined to the church.

¹⁸⁹ A point developed more extensively in Harri Englund’s work on Pentecostalism in rural and peri-urban Malawi (Englund, 2004, 2002) and David Maxwell’s work on the Pentecostal churches among the Hwesa of north-eastern Zimbabwe (Maxwell, 1999, chapter 7)

¹⁹⁰ In this respect the argument of the chapter refers back to the most important study of religion and politics in rural Uganda, Middleton’s *Lugbara Religion* (1960), Middleton went beyond the conventions of his day, and demonstrated that religion was, for the Lugbara, an arena of political competition, where people vied for access to and control over claims to religious authority (it was more than a system of belief that helped to stabilise the social order).

But the above arguments concerning the incorporation of the PAG church needs to be qualified by a recognition that Pentecostalism remained a distinctive and somewhat difficult faith to follow. Not all church members had the “big man” credentials of Omadi John Francis, nor were all of those who attended the church, men with land disputes to settle. For many women members of the church, the value of being born-again continued to relate back to the way the church provided a separate and distinctive sort of space. In a number of interviews, older women suggested that they had joined the church, not as a means of engaging in the open-ended business of village politics, but rather as a way of effecting more personal economic, political and spiritual transformations, the sorts of transformations that could be had from accepting Jesus Christ as their personal saviour. Older women spoke of the help given by younger members of the church with farm work, or with the re-thatching of roofs during the dry season:

The Church organises for young people to come and help people like me build and maintain my house. Yes, they can come and help you with that... The house I am in, was built by church members. I was suffering a lot before then, because the rain would come through the roof. I cried up to the day my house was built. My fellow Christians have helped me so much.¹⁹¹

At other points in interview, women members of the church pointed to Pentecostalism as a more directly religious basis for political action within the home. For married women, the church offered the possibility of dealing with domestic violence, and did so because of the isolation of the church, not because of its success at being incorporated into the village. Despite a fairly conservative doctrinal position on the role of women, many of the women who joined the church argued that salvation helped them bring about profound changes in their lives at home.¹⁹² In many of the salvation stories, Pentecostalism offered the possibility of dealing with a husband who drank too much, or a husband who was violent at home, and if a wife was able to get her husband to join the church then the prohibition on drinking would bring an end to the cycle of violence. Women argued that peace at home

¹⁹¹ Interview with Akello Joyce Mary, a member of the PAG church in Okwii, in neighbouring Agolitom, October 7, 2002. The same point was made in an interview with Asige Martha (interviewed August 22, 2002), and with Amuge Gabdesia, an older disabled woman, who had benefited from the help of PAG church members, even though she had not yet joined the church (interview August 22, 2002).

¹⁹² An observation also taken up in Maria Cattell's (1991) work among “charismatic” Anglicans and Catholics of the Samia in western Kenya. In her article from 1991, Cattell shows how Samia women refused the practice of widow inheritance (leviration), where: “the ability of older women to bring about change in female roles and power is related to their positions in extended families and support from “saved” Christians” (Cattell, 1991: 307).

was seen as visible proof of the presence of Jesus Christ in their lives. On this particular issue they spoke of the value of the church as something set apart from the village:

... [t]hat “big man” over there, he got saved. We did not expect such a man to get salvation. He was a drinker, who was poorly turned out, with dirty clothes. He would often fight with his wife and would cause trouble. But since his wife prayed for his salvation none of those things are there. He found Jesus on the very day his wife had fled the house after a beating, now he comes to church and has to follow the life of a proper Christian.¹⁹³

If a woman succeeded in getting her husband saved, and in this there was no guarantee, there was the possibility that the beatings would end.¹⁹⁴ This was partly due to the prohibition on drinking alcohol, and also to the mediation services offered (or imposed) by church leaders. As I have already noted, Pentecostalism took a dim view of homes that appeared to be disorderly, and brought violent or argumentative church members to book. There was a push for marital disputes to be settled within the confines of the church, just as there was a push for inheritance disputes or cases of adultery to be dealt with within church.

Given the obvious advantages to becoming born-again, it is perhaps worth saying something as to the reasons why more women did not join the church. The majority of women in Oledai sub-parish remained loyal to the Catholic or Anglican churches, or did not attend church at all, and for many of these women the reason given was that getting saved proved to be a costly business. In terms of giving up alcohol or dealing with domestic violence, an obvious problem came from the fact that the woman would get “saved” before the husband. There was no guarantee that the husband would follow suit, and a number of women who had at one time joined the church, hoping their husband would join them, found that the husband did not follow, meaning that there was greater discord at home. A wife’s refusal to brew beer could be taken as a form of reneging on the marital contract, and the husband could become more violent as a reaction to his wife becoming “saved”. In other words those

¹⁹³ Interview with Aujo Joyce Mary, PAG church, Oledai, October 31, 2002. This sort of Pentecostal transformation in the domestic sphere was also discussed in interviews with church members, even when they were asked to talk about other topics. Asige Martha (interviewed August 22, 2002), spoke of the transformation within her own home as a result of her and her husband becoming saved, even though she was asked to discuss the costs and benefits of belonging to the *ateker* of Ichaak. Amulen Jane offered a similar story (August 23, 2002). In the neighbouring sub-parish of Agolitom, similar stories emerged in interview with Atim Emmimah Loy (November 21, 2002) and Akello Joyce Mary (October 7, 2002).

¹⁹⁴ “Unsaved” villagers usually dealt with domestic violence as part of a case brought by the wife’s *ateker*, rather than the wife herself. As a result, any fine, should the man be found guilty was paid to the in-laws rather than to the wife. If a woman wanted to act independently of the *ateker*, the most common course of action was to walk out of the marital home. This was a costly action, though, as the woman was expected to leave behind her children (unless her own *ateker* agreed to repay the brideprice).

women who joined the PAG church had to deal with the lost income from the prohibition on brewing beer. In short, the benefits of joining the church had to be calibrated against possible costs.

CONCLUSION

Pentecostalism was central to political developments in Oledai. The advent of born-again Christianity should be seen as complicating and developing the local political field, making an addition to the institutional landscape of the village, rather than a subtraction, as the literature sometimes seems to expect. Pentecostalism provided possible sites of engagement, and the importance of the church related to the types of political actions church members were able to pursue, not just in church, but also in the courts, councils and at home. As such, the chapter has focused on the incorporation of the church into the broader political field of the sub-parish, and has demonstrated that even though the church had a doctrinal commitment to pulling away from possible sites of corruption, church members engaged in the wider political field in significant ways. It is perhaps more generally the case that the experience of living in the fairly intimate environment of a poor, rural community meant that the absolute withdrawal imagined by the literature was a practical impossibility.

At the same time, the chapter has tried to avoid slipping into an easy Weberian thesis of capitalist transformation. In its place I have sought to emphasise the degree of contingency in the inculcation of Pentecostal values or the broader incorporation of Pentecostal practices into the life of the village. Religious developments were shaded by events that were often far from the church door, and the persecution of public life during Amin's government of the 1970s produced a persecuted form of Pentecostalism, while the violence of the late 1980s made possible a form of Pentecostalism that emphasised spiritual gifts and social separateness. The incorporated, ordinary sort of Pentecostalism found more than a decade later signalled the way the broader political landscape had changed, yet again. In other words, the degree to which the church was incorporated into the village was something that had changed over time. What was observed during my stay in the area reflected developments at a time of relative peace and stability.

Though it is tempting to prescribe the future direction of the church, this would be unwise. As Hans Seur suggests, with regard to Norman Long's work on the Jehovah's Witnesses among the Lala of Zambia, the expectation that a new religious institution fixes political or economic development in a particular direction, is likely to be confounded by future events

(Seur, 1992: 133-135). Though Long's work placed the Jehovah's Witnesses in a sort of Weberian thesis, where the emphasis on cleanliness, achievement, self-discipline, personal asceticism and the careful use of resources, made Jehovah's Witnesses appear as the likely handmaidens of capitalism, Seur shows that Long's analysis was unable to take into account the adaptability of other groups. As it turned out, by the time Seur returned to the area in the 1980s, it was the more traditionalist "big men" who proved more capable capitalists, faring better in the years after Long had left the field than he had foreseen.¹⁹⁵

As such, any trend towards incorporation in the sub-parish discussed in the chapter should be thought of as contingent. The position of the church in the village was contingent, not just because the values and beliefs of Pentecostal Christianity were likely to change, but also because the broader social and political setting in which church was institutionalised was difficult to predict. Should insecurity have returned to the area during my stay, or should the youth have grown more frustrated with the church leadership, it was possible, even likely, that the Pentecostal church would have changed in ways that emphasised conflict and isolation rather than cooperation and incorporation.¹⁹⁶ What is more important in this instance is to observe the way a particular sort of religious development plays its part in the broader transformation of the political landscape. The chapter reminds us that there are problems with those ethnographies of local politics that have sought, intentionally, or otherwise, to marginalise the way religious spaces serve as arenas for political action.

¹⁹⁵ I would argue that the sort of approach set out by Norman Long is actually a narrowing of Weber's original thesis, as Long wishes to imply that capitalism, once established, was the preserve of a particular religious group. In fact Weber can be shown to argue that the logic of capitalism, once established, was available to all groups in society (Weber, 1985 (1930/1920-1921: 181-182)).

¹⁹⁶ By the end of the research period a new denomination, the Pentecostal Revival Ministries had started evangelising in the neighbouring sub-parish, and the Christ Foundation Ministry and Christ Disciple's church had already set up shop in other parts of Ngora sub-county.

CHAPTER 5:

ANGLICAN AND CATHOLIC CHURCHES: RESPONSES AND REACTIONS

INTRODUCTION

By the time I conducted fieldwork in Oledai there had been a period of renewal and renovation among the Catholic and Anglican congregations. This can be seen as part of a wider renaissance in African Christianity, a period of spiritual change to match earlier moments of religious reformation (see Welbourn, 1961). Uganda had seen waves of revival in the 1910s, 1930s and again in the 1960s, typically regarded as responses to more general economic or political crises, such as the epidemics and disasters that accompanied the expansion of colonial rule in the early part of the century (Vincent, 1982; Karlström, 2004). The significance of religious revival has often been used as a way of pointing to the basic strengths of the lay membership of Uganda's "mainline" Catholic and Anglican churches, which Kevin Ward has described as essentially "folk churches" (Ward, 1995: 72).

In Oledai the recent experience of renewal and renovation can also be understood as part of more parochial developments that have shaped rural politics, notably the successes of Pentecostalism, and the after-effects of violence and rebellion. In the sub-parish many of the more committed Catholics and Anglicans had, at one time or another, crossed over to the PAG church, and as part of this dynamic, "mainline" churches had appropriated some of the values and practices of Pentecostal Christianity into their own way of working.¹⁹⁷ It can be argued that the establishment of charismatic groups, and the move towards a more general tightening up of the rules of religious engagement, reflected a sort of "Pentecostalisation" of mainline Christianity.

¹⁹⁷ In the most pessimistic account of the problems posed by Pentecostalism, Amujal Mary, a member of the Church of Uganda commented thus: "They [the Pentecostals] will soon take over from the Church of Uganda. That is why many Protestants have gone over to get saved, they know that that church is united. If things go on like this soon the Church of Uganda will fall away" (interviewed October 24, 2002).

At the same time, growing charismaticism, and the increasing importance attached to rules in Catholic and Anglican congregations, linked into wider arguments about the importance of propriety and seniority discussed elsewhere in the thesis. In many ways the apparent religification of mainline churches reflected a much broader experience in the sub-parish, one that embraced the history of the insurgency and its legacy in the village. The transformation in the village should be seen as a lay-led response, in a situation where the parish and diocesan clergy were distracted and essentially uninterested.

The chapter is organised as follows. First there is a discussion of the history of Catholic and Anglican churches in the region, with a particular emphasis on the gap that has developed between the clerical bureaucracy and the laity, and a discussion of earlier moments of lay-led religious revival in the region. The chapter then discusses the development of charismatic groups in the village, and the tightening up of rules regarding church membership. These developments can be regarded as a response to the successes of Pentecostal Christianity. They can also be explained as a reaction to the experience of the insurgency. The chapter then illustrates the changes that have occurred in political terms, through an account of the actions of the Anglican lay reader during the burial service of Edotun Jackson, and the way increased competition between churches made possible the career of Okelai Samuel.

THE HISTORY OF MAINLINE CHURCHES IN RURAL TESO

When religion is discussed in Uganda it is normally in relation to the confessional divide between Catholics and Anglicans that emerged at the beginning of the colonial period (Reid, 2002: 5-7). There has been a particular interest in the legacy of this division for the post-colonial political landscape. The wars that shook Buganda towards the end of the nineteenth century have offered an obvious point of departure for those interested in studying the links between religious competition and the development of state politics (Hansen, 1984: 12-13; Low 1971, chapter 1). The factions at the court of the *kabaka* were divided between the *Bangareza* (English) and *Bafaransa* (French) groups, and this division provided the basic template for the way religious adherence was understood in relation to state power. The “English” associated with the Church Missionary Society, were able to overcome the “French”, associated with the Catholic missionaries of the *Société de Notre-Dame d’Afrique* (the triumph of the *Bangareza* was in no small part down to the religious preferences of British colonial agents). Catholicism in Uganda has been identified, ever since, with the politics of opposition. These divisions, Gifford reminds us, were entrenched by the education system (Gifford, 1998: 113).

The literature on churches in Uganda has often focused on this confessional division and how it mattered in the organisation of party politics around the years of independence (for example, Apter, 1961; Low, 1988). Given the fragmented nature of the Ugandan polity in the early 1960s, with very different societies and very different experiences of colonial government, the simple division between Protestant and Catholic helped to shape the party-political loyalties of the elite (Low, 1971: 229-231). The Democratic Party (DP) had a strongly Catholic following, while the Uganda People's Congress (UPC), the party that was to prove more successful in the post-independence period, had an Anglican base (Ward, 1995).¹⁹⁸ The ingrained nature of this divide could be seen in the way that the acronym DP came to stand for *Dini ya Papa* (party of the Pope) while UPC for the "United Protestants of Canterbury" (Mittelman, 1975: 65; Welbourn, 1961: 1).¹⁹⁹

The following section turns away from this preoccupation with national party-politics, and looks more to the history of mainline churches in the Teso region. The first section details the experience of colonialism and missions in the region. It is, in a sense, the history of the attempt by mission societies to build up religious bureaucratic structures in the Teso region, an attempt that was destined to be less than successful. The second section looks at the history of revival movements in Uganda and reminds us of the tradition of lay-led moments of religious renewal. The third section describes the Anglican and Catholic churches in present-day Oledai. Running through the three sections is the story of an often weak and alienated church bureaucracy, alongside the gradual inculturation of Christianity at the local-level.

a) Christianity as an instrumental and bureaucratic exercise: missions and education

The significance of the confessional division between DP and UPC around independence did not matter much in rural Teso, both a reflection of the dominance of the UPC in the countryside, and the growing unimportance of the state bureaucracy (Vincent, 1968: 34-35). Histories of either church in the Teso region have focused much more on the period of colonial rule in the first half of the twentieth century, and the significance of mission Christianity in helping establish the cotton economy (Pirouet, 1978; Vincent, 1982). Unlike

¹⁹⁸ In Buganda, where the UPC lacked a strong following, a third party, the royalist *Kabaka Yekha* (lit. "the *kabaka* [king] above all else), provided a way for Anglicans to avoid supporting the Democratic Party.

¹⁹⁹ Twaddle has criticised the religious-historical literature on Uganda for drawing too easily the link between religious affiliation and political identities, and notes that in the 1980 elections the DP in Buganda was perceived not so much the "religion of the Pope" but as the party of Ganda interests against the northern-dominated UPC (Twaddle, 1978: 261).

Pentecostalism, which was always on the margins of the colonial enterprise, the history of mainline churches is tied up with the expansion of cotton, with missions helping to make the rural population more amenable to the district administration. Joan Vincent, in particular, has looked to the churches in Teso as the handmaiden of capitalism, with missionaries responsible for the introduction of clock-time, Christian names; the seven-day week and new codes of conduct and dress, concluding that: 'Christianity provided the framework for the structuring of a new order which, with imperial rule, was overtaking Africa' (Low, 1973: 139, cited in Vincent, 1982: 136).

The few studies that have looked at the expansion of Catholicism and Anglicanism in the region, suggest the importance of missions in the acculturation of a chiefly class, rather than the changing values and beliefs of the rural population (Vincent, 1982: 134-140; Pirouet, 1978: 184, Summers, 2005 *passim*). Mission churches were able to provide administrators with the sorts of hierarchical structures in the countryside needed for colonial government, for without the churches there would have been considerable difficulty educating a class of Itesots in the sorts of responsibilities that made the cotton economy such a success. Mission schools offered the best hope for those wishing to achieve political and economic advancement in the colonial bureaucracy.²⁰⁰ The entry of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) into the region in 1908, with its focus on the education of chiefs, promoted an idea that Christianity was of utilitarian value with missionaries responsible for introducing the plough, and for the setting up of Ngora High School (mission-founded in 1909) (Lawrance, 1957: 25). The Mill Hill Fathers of the Roman Catholic Church, like their Anglican counterparts, also emphasised education, differing only in the particulars of their educational role, showing a greater commitment to the promotion of the industrial arts of brick-making, bricklaying, carpentry, working in iron, road-making and tailoring among the adult male population than their Anglican contemporaries (Vincent, 1982: 109).

For those who aspired to join the salariat, the missions were the staging ground for entry into colonial administration. The first county chiefs appointed from the Itesot population in 1920, were all old boys from Ngora High School (Pirouet, 1978: 184).²⁰¹ Where differences developed in the work of the missions was around the more marginal question of the balance between academic and religious instruction, with the more numerous Catholic

²⁰⁰ Prior to the mission being established, a catechumenate was established at Ngora by Father Kirk in April 1905. Father Kirk had made little headway in terms of persuading Itesots to train as lay readers and had to be recalled (Gale, 1959: 294).

²⁰¹ That there was some bias towards administrative recruitment from the Anglican, rather than the Catholic, portion of the population, may explain why, in the 1921 census, there were three times as many Anglicans as Catholics in the region (Vincent, 1982: 140).

fathers showing greater concern with the training of catechists and the promotion of religious education in the countryside (alongside their emphasis on technical and vocational training). This emphasis on religious instruction may offer some sort of explanation as to the greater fidelity of ordinary Catholics to their church during the Pentecostal expansion of the 1980s and 1990s. Certainly the importance Catholic missionaries attached to building up a sophisticated clerical bureaucracy helps explain the problems the Catholic laity had with their clerically-minded priesthood in the years after independence (see below). As Pirouet observed: 'the Catholic missions, with their greater discipline and resources, continued to give priority to the training of priests and catechists' (Pirouet 1978: 185).

The writings on Christianity in the Teso have been dominated by institutionalist arguments.²⁰² With an emphasis on lay education, careers and the life of the missions, the approach adopted by Louise Pirouet suggests that Christian expansion was essentially an administrative exercise that had failed. This failure was demonstrated through the slow pace of evangelisation. While the *Bangareza* and *Bafaransa* factions had fought for control over Buganda as early as the 1880s, only six Itesots had converted to Anglicanism by 1908 (ten years after the first encounter with the *Bakungulu*). In the somewhat unreliable Protectorate census of 1921 out of a total population of 259,434, a total of 15,875 (just 6%) claimed adherence to the mission churches, and even this figure has to take into account the tendency to overestimate the successes of evangelisation work (Vincent, 1982: 158-160). The comparable figure for Buganda was 363,028 (57%) out of a total population of 639,417 (Uganda, Census 1921: 13, 45).²⁰³

The failure of the people living in the Teso region to respond to the opportunities opened up by mission activity (particularly when compared to their Bantu neighbours to the south) has promoted a somewhat dismal view of Christianity, particularly in terms of the spiritual meaning of the Christian faith among the Iteso (Pirouet, 1978: 180).²⁰⁴ The available literature shows little curiosity regarding the possible spiritual transformations that occurred as mainline churches expanded their influence in the region. Pirouet the Iteso were 'little interested in what the missions had to offer' other than opportunities for advancement in

²⁰² Carol Summers presents a similarly bleak account of mission work in the Teso region, documenting the beatings, imprisonments and punishments meted out to women by Catholic missionaries and their supporters (Summers, 2005: 3-6).

²⁰³ A modest improvement was recorded in the 1931 census, enumerating the religious affiliation of adult males with the following percentages: "Protestant" 11%; "Roman Catholic" 5%; "Pagan" 84%.

²⁰⁴ The obvious explanation being that the Baganda running the region were not there to evangelise, but were frontiersmen intent on winning the region for Kakungulu (Vincent, 1982: 40; Pirouet, 1978: 175-177).

the colonial bureaucracy (Pirouet, 1978: 188).²⁰⁵ In more trenchant terms, Vincent argued that Christianity was significant only as part of a colonial ideology, the key to the pacification of the peasantry, producing a pliant and suitably demure labour force (Vincent, 1982: 134). As late as the 1960s Vincent regarded Christianity as no more than an imposed, and even alien, ideology at the local-level, with neither the Catholic nor Anglican church featuring in her account of political developments in Bugondo parish (Vincent, 1968: 34-35).

b) examples of religious revival in Uganda

While it is likely that churches were of less importance in rural Teso at the time of Vincent's work, it is important to mention earlier experiences of religious revival. Though the rural population may have been less than well-suited to the hierarchies and formalities the European missions sought to establish, it is important to remember that Christianity is more than a set of structures, that as villagers took on the roles of evangelist, catechist and congregant Christian meanings and practices were incorporated into their lives. Spiritual changes were not necessarily concomitant with bureaucratic success. J.C.D. Lawrance records the gradual increase of those who described themselves as Christian, noting that 70 percent of men could be described as Christian by the 1950s, and as the churches achieved larger followings, there were spaces for a differentiated sort of church membership.²⁰⁶ As David Maxwell suggests, from fieldwork conducted among the similarly marginal Hwesa, Christianity must be understood as taking form from below through processes of "inculturation", as much as acculturation from above (Maxwell, 1999: 3).

Examples of fairly comprehensive religious revival can be seen with the Society of the One Almighty God (*Bamalaki*) of the 1910s, and the Saved Ones (*Balokole*) of the 1930s. These reform movements swept through Uganda in the earlier part of the twentieth century and, in the case of the *Balokole*, continued to inform lay practices several decades after (Welbourn, 1961). Both the *Bamalaki* and *Balokole* established a presence in the Teso region, and though information on the significance of either revival is limited, their presence suggests that religious institutions have, in the past, served as vehicles for political reform and social change.

²⁰⁵ "Like other peoples throughout East Africa, they took advantage of mission schooling, since literacy was essential to progressing under colonial rule" (Pirouet, 1978: 188).

²⁰⁶ In an indication that Christianity was not only an instrumental exercise, very few of the 70 percent estimated by Lawrance practised their faith as a way of getting into the local government bureaucracy.

The *Bamalaki* sought to challenge prevailing orthodoxies of the Church Missionary Society (Twaddle, 1993: 265-272).²⁰⁷ Established in the region as early as 1915, and supported by an ageing Kakungulu, Malakites drew strength from a reading of the Bible which offered a response to the visible catastrophes that had engulfed the region around the years of colonial conquest.²⁰⁸ Colonial expansion coincided with (and in many ways caused) the collapse in the economies of east Africa of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In the Teso region colonial rule brought about competition over land, and when combined with the enforced sedentarisation of the population related to the long famines of 1894-1896, 1900, and 1917-1919, the spread of rinderpest, and incidences of the plague (Vincent, 1982: 114, 246). The *Bamalaki* drew support from those who opposed the ministrations of colonial government, particularly the policies of inoculation and vaccination.

Though official records limited Malakite expansion to the towns, the *Bamalaki* signalled room for the fragmentation of mission theology even in a newly administered population. In an echo of more recent versions of Pentecostal Christianity, Malakites saw their reading of the Bible as situating themselves at the forefront of change, far from the nativistic or authentic strands of "African religion" that colonial officials sought to ascribe to them. They stood in opposition to colonial policies on taxation, forced labour, and the Protectorate administration's attempt to codify laws on land and property. They also saw themselves as the promoters of a new and purer form of Christian teaching. Mugema, the main proponent of Malakite religious beliefs, suggested Europeans were weaker Christians than their African counterparts, because their attitude to medicine and health had returned Europeans 'to the paganism of [their] forefathers' (Welbourn, 1961: 41-42).

The more enduring reform movement in mainline Christianity in Uganda, one that still lingers on into the present, is the *Balokole* (Saved Ones).²⁰⁹ The *Balokole*, which took root in the 1930s, sought to bring about the 'renewal and moral regeneration of the church' (Kassimir 1995: 130), and support for the movement was drawn from the lower clergy and the committed laity (Karlström, 2004: 602; Ward, 1995: 74). Gifford regards the *Balokole* as a foreshadowing of the Pentecostal expansion of the 1980s and 1990s.²¹⁰ In line with

²⁰⁷ The Malakites were named after one of the movement's founders, Musajjakawa Malaki (Welbourn, 1961: 36). Though successful in the early years, with Lipschutz and Rasmussen putting the number of adherents at 90,000, by the 1930s only a few followers were left (1986). Barrett sets the highest membership figure at 110,000 (Barrett, 1968: 29).

²⁰⁸ By 1915 there were at least four congregations in Teso, including one in Ngora (Vincent, 1982: 244).

²⁰⁹ The ascription *balokole* comes from the luganda work *omulokole* meaning "saved" (Ward, 1995: 74).

²¹⁰ The *balokole* movement includes some prominent past supporters notably Archbishops Luwum (1974-1977) and Wani (1977-1983) and the current President Yoweri Museveni. Kevin Ward notes that Museveni later came to "reject the unworldly pietism and apolitical stance of the *balokole*" (Ward, 1995: 83, 86 and 99).

established born-again doctrines, the *Balokole* rejected 'any assimilation between the church and the world, and between Christianity and African custom', seeking to establish a culture of openness and accountability, set apart from the more general corruption of society (Gifford, 1998: 152). The idea of being a *mulokole* (sing.) achieved prominence through the *Abazukufu*, or "re-awakened" movement of the 1960s, which took hold through schools and church congregations. The afterglow of this earlier encounter with revivalism could be seen from discussions with the Anglican lay reader at Kaderun.²¹¹ Ongenge George Washington, who did not drink alcohol, and who saw his work as a committed Christian as a continuation of his earlier conversion to a born-again form of Anglicanism during the 1970s.

Of relevance to arguments put forward later in the chapter, Ronald Kassimir's work on the Catholic Church in the Toro region focuses on more parochial version of religious change than either the *Bamalaki* or *Balokole* which, it should be remembered, were movements that stretched across a large part of Uganda (Kassimir, 1995, 1998b, 1999). Kassimir, in his analysis of the Catholic church in one diocese in the west of the country, juxtaposes admittedly weak bureaucratic structures, with relatively robust forms of religious practice on the ground. In a particularly telling example of the success of rural religious transformation through a mainline church, Kassimir discusses the Holy Quaternary Movement led by Dosteo Bisaaka, a Catholic catechist who dealt with problems of exorcism and witchcraft. Bisaaka became central to the life of village congregations in and around his home, despite (or even because of) a largely desiccated church bureaucracy; even at the point where Bisaaka's work provoked opposition from the clergy, the weakness of clerical structures meant that rank-and-file Catholics who were sympathetic to Bisaaka's work continued to show support for the Movement (Kassimir, 1999 262-265). A similar pattern of parochial innovation, in a place where church bureaucracies were weak, could be found in the Teso region in the 1990s.

Added to Kassimir's discussion of vernacular forms of religious revival, Paul Gifford's has similarly observed that the weakness of the clergy in Uganda's mainline churches did not necessarily mean an absence of innovation from below (Kassimir, 1999: 257; 1998: 73-76). Gifford points to the growth of charismaticism in the Catholic Church in Uganda, charismaticism that also forms part of the changing religious landscape of Oledai sub-parish in the 1990s. Revival and renewal in Uganda have often occurred 'with little support or encouragement from the bishops or local priests' (Gifford, 1998: 150).

²¹¹ The "Trumpeters" being another name for Anglican charismatics. Villagers said that the term "Trumpeter" was taken from the story of the destruction of the walls of Jericho, though Kevin Ward observes that in the Acholi region, the name referred to the improvised megaphones members would use to broadcast their faith to large gatherings (Ward, 1995: 83).

c) the present-day religious landscape: village churches and an absent clerical bureaucracy

But what the religious revival in Oledai was not, was a direct response to reforms promoted by the church hierarchy. As Kassimir has argued, mainline church bureaucracies had not been particularly successful at institutionalising reforms at the local-level (Kassimir, 1999). This can be attributed to the mixture of weak bureaucratic structures, and the absence of commitment on the part of the clergy to maintaining their influence in the countryside. The ineffectual nature of the higher reaches of the clergy in the Catholic Church in Uganda can be found in the still-born nature of the Small Christian Communities scheme (*infra* SCCs) set up in the late 1970s and disbanded soon after. Though modelled on the “base communities” of the church in Latin America, and able to claim the inheritance of liberation theology, SCCs were unable to gain a foothold outside a few target parishes (Kassimir, 1998: 69-70). Alongside the failure of the SCCs, Kassimir also identifies the gradual erosion of support for the Legion of Mary which had seen its membership age and decline. The diminishing importance of the Legion of Mary, or the problems of the SCCs can also be read as an indication of the disinterest of clerical structures in developments at the local-level.

In the particular case of Oledai, the Catholic congregation in the village had little interaction with the parish office or the diocesan headquarters, other than the occasional visit from the parish priest to deliver one of the sacraments. A whole year could pass without the priest leaving his parish seat to tour the countryside, even though Oledai was only a few miles from the church. There was a considerable gap between the clergy-led structures found in the towns, and the essentially lay-led structures rooted in the countryside. An interview with a retired Catholic missionary pointed to this problem, as Father Bernard Phelan acknowledged the ways in which the ordained structures of the Catholic church had become semi-detached from the activities of village congregations:

... the ordained structure tends to be very clerical in mentality, seeing itself as having a status, so the lay people tend to be ignored. The priestly training still goes on because it is linked into the national system... the Iteso get pulled along.²¹²

The most obvious explanation for the “clerical mentality”, spoken of above, was the increasing dependence, on the part of the church salariat, on external sources of funding. As with the Ugandan state, mainline churches in Uganda had followed a pattern of increasing turning to outsiders for financial support. The push from foreign governments towards

²¹² From an interview with Father Bernard Phelan, August 20, 2001.

funding Uganda's civil society had produced a particularly pronounced "NGO-isation" in the 1990s, and, paradoxically perhaps, made it less important for the clergy to maintain an active role in the countryside (Gifford, 1998: 147-148, 314-315). In the Teso region, a number of church-based development projects had, since the early 1990s, built up administrative structures entirely dependent on support from western aid and charitable agencies, and entirely independent of the world of village churches. Alongside SOCADIDO (Roman Catholic)²¹³ and the Kumi Diocese Planning Secretariat (the development arm of the Church of Uganda in the area) there were international religious NGOs, such as TEAR Fund (Australia), World Vision (USA), VECO-Vredeseilanden Coopibo (Belgium), Strømmestiftelsen (Norway), and Christian Engineers in Development (UK), ready to work through the mainline churches. Non-religious NGOs, including OXFAM, ActionAid and the Red Cross also found ways of involving bishops, priests or the lay elite in various projects and programmes.

Rather like the district bureaucracy, mainline churches in Teso have had to live with the paradox of being "Africanised" in the years after independence, and "NGO-ised" after that. Church structures, increasingly dependent on external sources for funding and support, were meant to be closer to the laity. In practice, one could find, in the diocesan headquarters of the Church of Uganda in Kumi, or the home of the Roman Catholic bishop in Soroti, that the houses, vehicles, and salaries of the church leaders depended, to a very large extent, on what funding came in. In exchange for these funds the church leadership in Kumi or Soroti provided umbrella organisations for a number of externally-funded development projects, and offered a form of legitimacy to development agencies keen to reach out to poorer people living in the countryside. The money coming in through the church's NGO work, far-outweighed the sorts of collections that could be expected from rural congregations.²¹⁴

And yet, despite this absence of an engaged church bureaucracy, a sort of religious renewal could be observed in the village. This suggests a rooted-ness to Christian institutions in the village, which has not been picked up in the literature. Rather like the chapter on village

²¹³ Soroti Catholic Diocesan Development Office.

²¹⁴ Gifford, writing in 1998, observes that Roman Catholic dioceses could expect to receive \$35,000 from the Propaganda Fide in Rome (1998: 147-148). Such sums could rarely be relied upon from village congregations. Both the lay reader of the Anglican church and the catechist in the Catholic church in Oledai pointed out that though most of the collection money was supposed to go to the parish or diocese (100% in the case of the Anglican church, of which 25% would be given back to the lay reader), both churches avoided taking the full collection plate to the parish authorities. Instead they preferred to hold money back, or to have "special" collections which would be kept by the church treasurer in the village. These practices were discussed in interviews with Ongenge George Washington (Church of Uganda), October 22, 2002 and Ikara Patrick (Roman Catholic), December 4, 2002.

courts, which described the way local structures were maintained in a situation where the district bureaucracy was disengaged, and it can be argued that village churches were maintained, and even reformed, in the context of a disengaged bureaucracy. Before discussing these more vernacular developments, it is worth describing the mainline churches serving the sub-parish.

By the time I entered the area, the majority of Anglicans attended a village church in a part of the sub-parish known as Kaderun. This church shared its building with the local primary school and was on the outskirts of the sub-parish. The iron and cement structure was paid for by a wealthy local man, Stephen Akabwai, a retired civil servant (formerly Deputy Commissioner at the Uganda Revenue Authority) who continued to live in Kampala. Bible study was twice a week on Tuesday and Fridays; there was a Mother's Union group on Wednesday, and baptism classes after prayers on Sundays and on Saturdays. The collection was in the region of 3,900/= (\$2) and attendance around sixty.²¹⁵ Though a congregation had met on the site since before the insurgency, the church building was a more recent arrival, dating back only to 1997. The church had seen a growing commitment to a more formal sort of religious engagement, and had also seen a small number of church members commit themselves to a charismatic form of worship.

The Catholic congregation was divided between the parish church in Ngora, and a new village congregation that has assembled on the grounds of Nyamongo Primary School. The Nyamongo church, originally a village prayer group, had been in existence for several years, though had only recently received formal recognition by the parish authorities. The church was built out of home-made bricks, second-hand pieces of corrugated iron and a sealed cement floor. The congregation was usually around 50 adults and the collection plate totalled 3,600/= (\$2).²¹⁶ (See figure 6.1 on page 169 for a comparison of the contributions made to churches, burial societies and to the local government system.)

What follows is a discussion of the ways in which Catholic and Anglican congregations had changed over recent years. First, there is a discussion of the development of charismatic groups. These groups borrowed from Pentecostal theology and practice. Second, there is a description of the changing rules and regulations affecting the wider community of Catholics and Anglicans. Again this development reflected the wide-ranging impact of Pentecostalism. But as well as the impact of Pentecostalism, I also argue that mainline

²¹⁵ The lay reader or catechist had to be supported by the contributions of church members, gifts in labour or in kind.

²¹⁶ These figures were derived from the church survey (see footnote 259).

churches were part of a much wider discussion in the village concerning questions of seniority and propriety. Which bring us to the third section, a discussion of the significance of the insurgency in driving the push towards a more rule-bound culture in mainline churches.

RENEWAL FROM BELOW

a) charismatic groups, despite a weak church bureaucracy

The term charismatic, described church members who had re-committed themselves to their faith. The number of charismatics who turned up to worship in the Catholic church in the village numbered around 20 percent of the total congregation (typically eight to ten adults). In the Anglican church the number was smaller, with four or five charismatics in attendance, including the lay reader.²¹⁷ Though not “born-again” in the full Pentecostal sense, those who joined the charismatic group were expected to follow a code of conduct somewhat similar to their Pentecostal counterparts, with prohibitions on alcohol, smoking, and enforced obligations to avoid witchcraft and polygyny.²¹⁸ As testimony to their rule-based life, charismatics could claim to have received spiritual grace through the gifts, or *charisms*, of the Holy Spirit. A young man who had recently become Pentecostal saw charismatics as cut from the same cloth as members of his own church:

... charismatics are the same [as us]; they are “saved” Catholics. They have left behind many of the bad ways of other Catholics, they are like “saved” people. They reject the same things we do. They do not drink, or have polygamous marriages; they do not see witchdoctors. Like us they have left behind those things that bring conflict and trouble to the lives of Christians. They now preach the Gospel in a true way, they say that “Jesus Christ is their saviour”, they say it aloud, not in a half-hearted way.²¹⁹

Like Pentecostal Christians, charismatics stood slightly apart from other villagers. They met separately during the week to renew their faith, and held separate prayer meetings before the Sunday service. Charismatics also emphasised their somewhat distinctive

²¹⁷ Recent data, based on information collected by the Catholic Church in Uganda, puts the number of practising charismatics at 1,095,600 for the year 2000, or about 12 percent of Uganda’s Catholic membership of 9,130,000. Source: <http://www.worldchristiandatabase.org/wcd/> (the information was downloaded on February 22, 2004).

²¹⁸ The ban on drinking common to charismatic group in Teso is not a universal rule for the charismatic movement (charismatic congregations in east Asia, for example, do not ban the drinking of alcohol or the smoking of cigarettes).

²¹⁹ Taken from an interview with Akol James, a church leader in the Church Foundation Ministry church (November 21, 2002).

identity by tending to remain seated together during the church service. In their distinctiveness charismatics gained a similar sort of identity to that achieved by a Pentecostal Christian. They had a similar sort of reputation for propriety, of having a respect for rules and regulations.²²⁰

That said, though charismaticism was an identity based on an idea of difference, becoming charismatic did not necessarily entail obvious processes of inclusion or exclusion. Those who were not charismatic, but who arrived early for Sunday service, were welcome to sit with the charismatic group and share in their prayer group. Charismatics were keen to point out that they were part of a broader church, part of the wider community of the village. The lay reader of the Anglican church at Kaderun, was himself a charismatic, and in interview stressed his responsibility for all of the members of his congregation.²²¹ Like the Pentecostal Christians they resembled, a number of charismatics had achieved prominence outside the church in other institutions in the sub-parish. Amongin Mary, a committee member of the burial society for Ichaak and Agwang Godlive, a member of the PTA committee at Kaderun primary school, demonstrated the active role charismatics could play in the wider setting of the village.²²²

As the names Amongin Mary and Agwang Godlive suggest, the growth of charismatic groups depended more on women than men. In similar fashion to the early years of Pentecostalism, the sorts of committed and codified Christianity required by born-again Anglicans or Catholics, proved more appealing to women, both a reflection of a more general pattern where those on the margins typically serve as religious innovators, and a reflection on the simple fact that the membership of all of the churches in the area was predominantly female.²²³ Though it can be argued that the church leadership tended to be male and not female, and in spite of the fact that both churches preached a somewhat patrician theology, it is important to recognise that in organising prayer groups, rosary sessions, choir practices or charismatic gatherings, women members of the church opened

²²⁰ The growth of charismatic groups suggests why Pentecostalism had been so easily incorporated into the wider political field. The fact that a number of Anglicans and Catholics chose not to drink alcohol, shows Pentecostalism as an increasingly less exceptional phenomenon, and explains why burials and courts had accommodated “tea-drinkers” in the 1990s.

²²¹ Interview with Ongenge George Washington, 22 October, 2002.

²²² Information taken from the social networks survey and the committee membership survey.

²²³ J.D.Y. Peel makes a similar argument in his study on gender and religious change in Yorubaland, where he describes how the new religious forms offered by Christian missions were seized upon by those social categories that were more marginal in the prevailing social order. In Yorubaland this happened to be younger men, and later on women (Peel, 2002). Only after some time, when the missions had achieved political and economic significance in the region did more powerful men attempt to gain a foothold in the church.

up public spaces that were less restrictive than court hearings or *ateker* meetings, where the voices of men tended to dominate.

It should be noted that though charismatic groups found their echo in congregations elsewhere, their institutionalisation had little to do with the work of the official church bureaucracy. The preponderance of women was itself an indicator of the distance that divided developments at the local-level and what remained an essentially patrician structure. As I have already indicated, the bureaucracies in Uganda's mainline churches were uninterested in parochial developments, and were more obviously part of a political economy that depended on external sources of funding. The clergy did not support charismatic worship in any obvious way. Those villagers who prayed in the charismatic style were responding to the growth of Pentecostalism, and reacted to the experience of the insurgency.

b) rules, respectability and Pentecostalism

The Christian has to come and take Holy Communion; but if he has committed a sin like adultery, theft or drinking he cannot come.²²⁴

While the increasing numbers of charismatic Christians in the sub-parish suggested change in a particular corner of the mainline village churches, it is important to appreciate that there had been a more general concern among church members with rules and respectability. As Amulen Immaculate (not a charismatic) suggests, in the above quote, improper behaviour was legislated against within the church. What it took to be considered a "proper" Christian had changed in recent years. There was a shift away from the idea that membership was based on nominal affiliation, towards an idea of membership signalled through active participation. While in the past membership had been ascriptive, based on baptism, it had since become based much more on an idea of *voluntarism*. Put simply, baptism was no longer enough to claim the status of Anglican or Catholic; rather you had to choose to participate in the weekly services if you were to be regarded as a true Christian:

We have rules and they are strong. The Christian is supposed to take Holy Communion. If he has committed a sin like adultery, theft or drinking he cannot take Communion.²²⁵

²²⁴ From an interview with Amulen Immaculate, a member of the Roman Catholic congregation at Nyamongo, October 11, 2002.

²²⁵ Interview with Echai Charles, Kaderun church (Anglican) September 10, 2002.

Pirouet and Vincent, as the only scholars to have looked at Christianity in the Teso region in any detail, have regarded membership in a church nominal, and Christianity itself a superficial faith among the Iteso. This makes the words of Echai Charles particularly striking. By the time I visited Oledai, a villager who was absent from prayers could not claim to be a “proper” Christian. If they wanted to return to the church they would have to put up with a level of criticism that was not there in the past. A qualitative shift had occurred concerning what it meant to be a Christian, with church membership signalled through actively participating in the life of the church. To this end the village congregations at Kaderun (Anglican) and Nyamongo (RC) introduced rules regarding what was to happen to those who showed disloyalty to the church:

We have rules now. For example, when a person crosses over to another church and then wishes to return to us; that is not allowed. If there is some leniency then they will demand that you go to confirmation classes for six months before rejoining. I think it is recently that they made those rules strong.²²⁶

These sorts of rules made it harder for prodigal sons to return to the church, and more obviously targeted those who flirted with becoming Pentecostal. Anglicans, more usually than Catholics, spoke of the losses to Pentecostalism over the previous decade, and argued that it was necessary to make it harder for those thinking of leaving the church, to later return.

There were also rules regarding personal morality. Where church leaders had, in the past, only preached on the subject of sinning, and left punishments in the hands of the clan courts or the village council (Lawrance, 1957: 218-227), by the time of fieldwork a number of penalties had been introduced for a catalogue of sins. In a mirror image of Omadi John Francis’ punishment for adultery in the PAG church (discussed on page 125), the Anglican church at Kaderun instituted a rule where the adulterer was forced to stand outside the church (as proof of his or her isolation from God). A sort of *bricolage* seemed to underlie the changes that had taken place, with Pentecostal practices offering a basic template for reforms. Following this logic, both mainline churches had introduced the rule that those suspected of theft or violent conduct were to be refused communion, a reflection of Pentecostal practice.²²⁷ More generally, there was, in the Pentecostal manner, a more

²²⁶ Interview with Amulen Immaculate, a member of Nyamongo Catholic Church, Oledai, October 11, 2002.

²²⁷ The point about punishing adulterers was discussed in an interview with Echai Charles, a member of Kaderun Anglican Church, Oledai sup-parish, September 10, 2002

expressly moralistic attitude towards the conduct of fellow church members, with congregants scrutinising each other for signs of improper, or unchristian behaviour.²²⁸

c) churches and burials: the significance of the insurgency in explaining change

As I have suggested, many of the changes observed in mainline churches could be seen as self-conscious borrowings from Pentecostalism. The tightening up of rules; the institutionalisation of charismatic groups; the concern with outward signs of religiosity all borrowed from what was found in the PAG church. That membership was signalled through voluntary acts, resting on one's own level of religious commitment drew upon ideas of individual autonomy and personal responsibility that were part and parcel of Pentecostal theology. And yet, it is important to remember that changes in mainline churches reflected a much more general shift towards a concern for rules and respectability, a concern that cut across the full range of institutions in the sub-parish. It is useful, therefore, to ask *why* it was that the changes had come about at this particular time. *Why* were certain rules regarding membership and personal conduct more important in the 1990s (and not the 1960s or 1970s)?

The most obvious reason why changes had taken root in the 1990s (and not the 1970s or 1980s) was the experience of the insurgency. As chapter two argued, the insurgency represented a breakdown in the life of the sub-parish, and the insurgency cut into the spiritual and social domains. Everyday acts of sociality such as family gatherings, drinking groups, passing conversations, became much more difficult and more contentious (Henriques, 2002: 226-229). Church-going was not easy, and the insurgency was understood as a punishment on the population, a sort of breakdown of a moral, or God-given order. Villagers spoke of the rebellion as a time when God had left the region, when the looting of cattle and the violence of rebels were part of time of collapse and abandonment.²²⁹

In particular, the insurgency was remembered for the brutal ways in which villagers died. Rebels killed "big men" in intentionally sacrilegious ways, while the sorts of deaths that

²²⁸ Kassimir finds something similar in Toro, where there had been a redefining of what it meant to be a "true" Catholic. In his taxonomy of faithfulness, the lowest level was baptism, which offered "the broadest criterion for group membership"; the intermediate level was that of "church attendance and receiving (or taking) the sacraments". But the highest level was that form of religious commitment, "which brought together an unambiguous unity of outward practice and internal belief" (Kassimir, 1995: 131).

²²⁹ Indeed, rather like the *Bamalaki*, which were a response to the violent upheavals of the early colonial period, the growing concern with rules and regulations among Catholics and Anglicans in the 1990s related back to the violence of the insurgency in the late 1980s.

happened in the internment camps, made death a lonely and often degrading experience for many villagers. Many of the more significant changes in the local political landscape can be traced back to a desire to recover a sense of propriety and respect surrounding the issue of death and dying. In other words, the growth of Pentecostalism was only part of the story of reformation, and the changing role of burials in the sub-parish helps to explain why it was that mainline churches had taken on greater political significance in the years after the insurgency. Where, in the past, burials had been managed by the individual household they had since become more organised, more religious and more formal.

In concrete terms the significance of burials was most obvious to villagers in the way mainline churches had taken an increasingly important role during the funerary rites. Though burials are discussed in much greater length in the following chapter, it is important to understand that mainline churches achieved much of their growing importance from the part they also played at burials. Being prayed for in the form of last rites, and being offered memorial prayers by the lay reader or catechist at the burial service was an important development in the view of many villagers. Last rites, memorial prayers, the understanding that the manner in which a family member was buried reflected the condition of the household, all added to the idea that churches had a role to play at funerals. Put simply, a decent burial marked out a decent life, and helped villagers to draw a line under the experience of the recent past.

As such, considerable importance was attached to the question of whether or not you were eligible to receive last rites and memorial prayers:

Those who do not comply with the rules of the church are told that the church will not pray for them when they die. So that makes many people attend prayers, even if they do not really care for the church. In fact, many of them go to church only because they want the church to pray for them at the hour of their death.²³⁰

And as the above quote suggests, the possible denial of prayers was enough to make the irreligious attend church. The increasing religiosity of Anglican and Catholic congregants was more than a sort of dialogical reaction to the growth of Pentecostalism. Increasing religiosity was also a response to the experience of the insurgency. In a particular way, churches tied into a much more general concern with what it meant to lead a decent life, a life set apart from the violence of the recent past, where decent burials formed part of the

²³⁰ Interview with Ojilong John Cocas a member of Kaderun Church (Church of Uganda), October 14, 2002

answer to the much broader question of *what it meant to be* at a time when social practices were being radically disorganised.

The way mainline churches had tightened up rules on burial prayers, on church membership or on proper behaviour fed into a more general atmosphere where other parts of life in the village were becoming more regulated and formalised. The increasing religiosity of village churches helped to sanctify burials, and the increasing importance of burials helped to strengthen the particular direction taken by village churches. If we turn to the question of how institutions change, it is possible to see institutional developments took the form of a number of dialogues cutting across the political landscape of the village. The intensification of rules and regulations across a number of different institutional spaces, related to one another, and related to the past.

CASE STUDIES

a) The burial of Edotun, part 1: the Anglican church²³¹

The death and burial of Edotun Jackson, discussed below, offers a particularly compelling example of the way the memory of the insurgency affected village politics. Edotun's killing, which appeared to come at the hands of young men was felt to suggest the continuing threat of violence, also pointed to the ways in which religious institutions offered a sense of moral order. The words of the lay reader of the Anglican church were important at Edotun's burial, and were seen to mark the ways in which the village had moved on from the years of insurgency. The involvement of the Anglican lay reader at burial of Edotun also helped Edotun's mother, Atai Helen, deal with her attempt to hold on to the land she had been

²³¹ Edotun was interviewed as part of the household survey work and the social networks survey work, and was known both to myself, and the research assistants, prior to his death. He had participated in a group discussion on May 31, 2002 with three other bicycle taxi-men, and his services as a bicycle taxi man were called upon on occasion to reach the far side of the sub-parish. The information used to piece together the above case study is drawn from a series of interviews, observations, and written records. The subject of Edotun's death was discussed in detail in major interviews with Oberei Fastine, (August 30, 2002); Ibuchet Max (January 9, 2003), Akol Florence (August 20, 2002); Okaleke Peter (September 11, 2002); Tino Rose (August 23, 2002). Aside from observing the progress of the case, and the burial, the most useful discussions of the chronology and politics behind Edotun's death emerged in a group discussion with younger men (December 12, 2002). Atai Helen, the mother of Edotun was also interviewed on September 2, 2002, though the proximity to the murder meant that she was happiest speaking instead on the history of the village council. A more in depth interview was held on January 27, 2003. The notes taken by the village council chairman concerning the case were also used.

farming. As the death and burial of Edotun informs later discussions in the thesis I also lay out the generalities of the case.

In June 2002 Edotun had gone to the police to lay a charge against two men from a neighbouring sub-parish, concerning the theft of a radio, sponge mattress and 13,000/= (\$7). In the days that followed the theft, Edotun's neighbour told him who he thought the thieves were, and Edotun went to the police with their names. After Edotun had paid a fee of 5000/= (\$3) to the police, the two suspects were summoned. The police, in the company of the village council chairman, recovered the stolen goods from the home of one of the two suspects, and the radio and sponge mattress were returned to Edotun. By way of punishment the thieves were obliged to pay Edotun double the money they had stolen meaning that the 13,000/= Edotun lost was to be repaid as 26,000/= (\$14), but apart from the return of the stolen goods the thieves failed to pay the money. Their refusal to pay the 26,000/= established a debt between Edotun and the two thieves, which made the dispute open and ongoing.

With the benefit of hindsight, a number of *ateker* members suggested that Edotun was unwise to have brought the case against the thieves before the police, as he was otherwise in a fairly weak position in the village.³³² He was the only son of a poor widow, and had no obvious political allies in the village. Indeed the *ateker* leader, who was supposed to ensure that Edotun received his father's land, was trying to gain some of that land for himself. Edotun lived alone, and the grass-thatched hut in which he slept was not protected by the bustle of life that surrounded other homes in the area; he worked long hours as a bicycle taxi man and was known to socialise in the trading centre. Though he and his mother lived on his deceased father's land, his mother, Atai Helen, lived out of sight of Edotun's home.

On August 1, 2002, Jackson Edotun was shot dead.³³³ Villagers claimed that his death had been planned for some time. There was the widely held belief that the young men involved in the theft were the ones responsible for Edotun's death. Those interviewed suggested that the manner of the killing was reminiscent of rebel violence during the insurgency (the killing was understood to be an act of revenge, perpetrated by youths). After the killing the two men from the earlier case were arrested, and held in Kumi prison, in the district capital. But coping with Edotun's death subsequently proved more costly for his family, than for

³³² Interviews with Okiria Fastine (August 29, 2002); Ibuchet Max (January 9, 2003); and Oberei Fastine (August 30, 2002).

³³³ Recorded in the court case notebooks of the village council chairman.

those accused of the murder.²³⁴ As part of the murder inquiry, Atai Helen, Edotun's mother, was forced to pay money to the hospital and to the police in exchange for a death certificate. Official documentation was required in the murder case, and Atai had to find 80,000/= (\$46) to meet the costs of the police and the hospital. After the doctor and the police officer had been paid, the burial took place. The burial was attended by almost all of the sub-parish, and Edotun's burial society (Ogoria/Ipagitok/Ikures, *infra* Ogoria) helped to organise and pay for the ceremony (see Chapter 6).

The church played its part during the burial, and the words of the lay reader proved important in the ongoing land dispute between Atai Helen and the *ateker* chairman. Edotun was baptised an Anglican, and was prayed for by the lay reader of the church at Kaderun, Ongenge George Washington. Ongenge, we may recall, claimed the inheritance of the *balokole* (Saved Ones) and was something of an independent voice in the area (a point also illustrated in his support for Okelai in case b) below).²³⁵ Though Edotun was not a regular church-goer, his mother was a committed Christian, and given the circumstances of his death, burial prayers were offered. But before prayers were said, the lay reader spoke out against those who had done the killing. Ongenge attacked in a general way those younger men whom he blamed for bringing violence or insecurity to the area:

I spoke strongly during the burial. I said so many things against the indiscipline of younger men. After the burial, some of those young men came to my home and said that I had made a mistake; that I should not talk like that at a burial. But I replied that that was my duty as a Christian. I am doing God's work.²³⁶

Ongenge's comments were well-received by older villagers, as he was seen to place the moral authority of the church in spite of peaceable relations. Ongenge's words were further bolstered by the support of the village catechist, and the prayers offered by the assembly leader of the PAG church, all of whom spoke during the burial to the effect that younger men should remain respectful and self-disciplined.

Though the speech was not transformative in any obvious way, Ongenge's words mattered in the subsequent conflict between Atai Helen and the leader of her *ateker*, Okitoi Gabriel. Atai's situation was precarious after the death of her son, as he had been the owner of the land she had been farming (only male members of the *ateker* are supposed to be custodians

²³⁴ As Atai lacked the money to keep the case "open", the suspects were released from Kumi prison without charge, and returned home.

²³⁵ Ongenge drew his independence, in part, from his status as a "saved" Anglican. His autonomy also came from the fact that he originated from the neighbouring sub-parish where he still held land, and later hoped to retire (interview with Ongenge George Washington, 22 October, 2002).

²³⁶ Interview with Ongenge George Washington, 22 October, 2002.

of *ateker* land).²³⁷ But Ongenge's words at Edotun's burial publicised the situation of Atai Helen, and made her plight the subject of some sympathy in the general population. The publicity Atai's case received at the burial established a sort of consensus among the *ateker* membership that favoured her against the *ateker* chairman (see also page 180 in Chapter 6). Atai was able to hold onto the land she had been framing (even though the land more properly belonged to whichever man was appointed by the *ateker*).

Atai's case suggested the shift towards a situation where the church occupied a more obviously political role in the village.²³⁸ Burials had become more formalised since the insurgency, and part of that formalisation involved the increasing role of churches before and during burial ceremonies. Ongenge, as lay reader of the Anglican church, had the opportunity to speak in support of Atai's situation, and he used the platform of the burial ceremony to oppose the image of the insurgency. Ongenge spoke to the idea that young men were a threat to order within the sub-parish, and his prayers helped strengthen Atai's hand in dealing with her *ateker* leader. The extent to which the actions of the lay reader managed to shape discussions around the burial suggested the idea that mainline churches were able to play a more public role in the political life of the village.

The following case takes a slightly different tack, and shows Okelai Samuel, an ambitious young man, using the division that undoubtedly remained between the different religious denominations as a way of achieving a position of prominence in Ongenge's Anglican congregation at Kaderun. His case reminds us that political competition did not stop because there had been a shift in emphasis towards rules and respectability. Though Okelai was in many ways an exceptional young man, his actions helped show more general rivalries that persisted between the different churches.

²³⁷ Ongenge's comments were discussed at length, both in group discussions with younger men (December 12, 2002; December 20, 2002) and in discussions with older men (December 11, 2002; December 13, 2002).

²³⁸ Joan Vincent, in her ethnographic work from the 1960s, does not mention the role of churches, church leaders, or religious practices in the examples of crisis and arbitration that took place in Bugondo parish (Vincent, 1968: 219, 225).

b) Okelai Samuel becomes trainee lay reader, despite losing a court case²³⁹

Even though I have written about renewal and renovation in the various village churches, it is important to hold onto the idea that there had been a degree of fragmentation in the religious landscape of the sub-parish. Many Anglicans and Catholics criticised the growth of Pentecostal Christianity, and there continued to be space for competition and negotiation. Leaders of the mainline churches remained concerned about possible losses to Pentecostalism, and not all of the prominent Anglicans or Catholics in the village welcomed the incorporation of Pentecostalist practices into the way mainline churches worked. In other words, there was a necessary tension between the increasing importance of churches in the wider political field, and Catholic and Anglican congregations could at times feel threatened by the Pentecostal advance. In the following example, it is possible to see how Okelai Samuel used this tension productively, managing to cut through the varied religious landscape of the sub-parish. Moreover, Okelai was able to achieve a position of importance in the Anglican congregation despite a lengthy court case which damaged his reputation elsewhere in the village. In what is written out below, I describe how Okekai was able to achieve the position of trainee lay reader in the Anglican church at Kaderun, despite being castigated as a “stubborn” young man in the village court.

The court case occupies the first half of Okelai’s story. Okelai became embroiled in a lengthy and costly dispute with his step-mother. The dispute arose after Okelai had sent his children to eat at his step-mother’s home, some fifty yards away. During the visit, the children behaved badly and Apulugeresia, Okelai’s step-mother, disciplined the children, to the point where Okelai and his wife came over to complain. An argument ensued, after which Apulugeresia claimed she had been accused of practising witchcraft, by her step-son. She said that Okelai accused her of using a curse against his wife (who had been sick for some months). To punish Okelai for his disreputable actions Apulugeresia brought a case of defamation before the courts.

²³⁹ Okelai Samuel was interviewed on the details of his case and career on December 4, 2002. Apulugeresia was interviewed nine days later on December 13, 2002. As I was not present when the dispute itself was raised, a report was made of the bare bones of the case immediately after the first accusation was made, in early March 2002. The subject of Okelai’s legal troubles was discussed in detail later on and was raised in conversation with the village chairman (December 21, 2002); with the clan chairman, Ichodio Stephen (August 30, 2002); with the lay reader, of the Anglican Church at Kaderun, Ongenge George Washington (October 22, 2002). Okelai’s career was also the subject of gossip and speculation in interviews with Anglican and Pentecostal villagers, and was discussed with particular relish by Aguti Betty (October 4, 2002). The case study was also pieced together through referring to the court records of the village council chairman, and through observing Okelai’s interaction with villagers, in church, in court, and in more informal discussions with Okelai and his fellow bicycle taxi (*boda boda*) men.

A multitude of hearings followed, even though the case was, in and of itself, a somewhat small matter that would normally have remained within the *ateker*. After Okelai refused the judgement of the *ateker* leader, the case was passed on to a more senior clan authority (*emorimor*)²⁴⁰ in the area, who also found Okelai to be in the wrong. Okelai again refused the decision and went to the village council chairman. The pattern of judgement and refusal was repeated, via the sub-county court, before finally reaching the district court. At each stage in the proceedings Okelai and Apulugeresia had to pay court fees. In Kumi District court, the sitting judge, on the basis of earlier decisions, found Okelai guilty of slander and ordered him to pay Apulugeresia 150,000/= (\$86) as compensation (the compensation was later renegotiated to a more manageable sum).

The way Okelai's case was handled (like that of Akol Stanislas discussed on page 106) meant that he was seen as a wilful and stubborn younger man, who had been justifiably humiliated by the local courts. As I intimated earlier in the thesis, such a case can be thought of as part of a more general pattern where younger men were punished for being stubborn. But what was interesting about Okelai's story was that though the court case labelled him wilful, this label did not necessarily result in the end of his political ambitions. For though the court case went against him, and though he was disliked by many of the "big men" in the sub-parish, the fragmented religious landscape threw up other opportunities. In the same year as his defeat in court, Okelai managed to secure the position of trainee lay reader in the Anglican church at Kaderun.

In the course of 2002 Okelai went from the Church of Uganda (Anglican) at Kaderun, to the Pentecostal Assemblies of God in Nyamongo, and from there to the Pentecostal church in a neighbouring sub-parish of Kachinga, and from there, finally, back to Anglican church at Kaderun.²⁴¹ Okelai's rise in the church related to the independence he had shown in dealing with the courts and his family. His initial move away from the church in Kadreun appeared to have been part of his falling out with Apulugeresia, who was a staunch Anglican. But after the court case resolved itself, Okelai returned to his original church in the position of trainee lay reader. Before this final return, Okelai asked the lay reader of the Anglican

²⁴⁰ A number of contingent lineage groups (*atekerin*) could form part of a larger "clan" located in neighbouring communities. These larger clans often shared a common name, with the particular *ateker* distinguished by a suffix, as was the case with Atekok Esasi (Esasi being the suffix of the *ateker* found in Oledai). An *emorimor* had authority over a collection of *atekerin*.

²⁴¹ This is seen as one of the weaknesses of Pentecostalism within the village, that its membership lacks the fixed quality of established churches.

congregation, Ongenge George Washington, if he could be apprenticed, to which Ongenge agreed.²⁴²

In other words, Okelai achieved a position of some prominence in the church, despite his being labelled a “stubborn” man in the courts. This made the rise to prominence of Okelai part of a different sort of career trajectory from that many of other would-be “big men” in the sub-parish. In place of the consensual “spiralism” of Omadi John Francis (page 125), where success in the village came through piecing together leadership roles in a range of institutions, Okelai’s rise to prominence could be thought of as singular and wilful. His success came despite having upset a number of “big men” in the area.

What can be drawn from Okelai’s case is the way the religious landscape opened up new approaches to building a political career in the sub-parish. Though Okelai’s “stubbornness” in court would have typically worked to isolate him from the village, it is possible to see the growth of Pentecostalism as having opened up new possibilities in the sub-parish. Spaces of competition and conflict remained, and within the Anglican church Okelai’s story becomes that of a prodigal son, who had returned to the church. In a certain sense Okelai was a symbol of fortunes restored, and his return to the Anglican fold was understood as a sign that the church was growing stronger.

CONCLUSION

In terms of the changing institutional landscape of the sub-parish, mainline churches were important. Despite the admitted shallowness of clerical engagement at the local-level, I have argued that the idea of religious adherence was rooted enough, such that by the time of fieldwork, Anglican and Catholic churches had taken on a significant presence in the life of the village.²⁴³ Mainline churches, like their born-again counterpart, offered opportunities for actions, they also offered a setting for villagers a place to discuss and develop views on what constituted “proper” behaviour. In terms of village politics, I have shown that the significance of Catholic and Anglican churches in organising an inheritance dispute, or a

²⁴² Part of Okelai’s ability to rise up through the Anglican church had also to do with the way the church leadership was somewhat autonomous from other institutional arrangements. While the village council and the various burial societies and *ateker* committees were organised around “big men”, the lay reader who served the church at Kaderun did not come from the sub-parish of Oledai and did not own land locally.

²⁴³ Vincent and Pirouet each give the reader a detailed explanation as to why they have treated Christianity as marginal to the politics of the Teso region. What is more problematic, is the failure of recent ethnographies to discuss the importance of churches (for example de Berry, 2000; Henriques, 2002, Zistel 2002).

political career, suggests the need for a fairly broad approach to the study of local-level politics in rural Uganda.

By the time of fieldwork, there was a greater emphasis on participation and engagement in the mainline churches. The growth of “charismaticism” and the new rules and regulations that had come to define membership in either church allowed religiously motivated villagers to organise more strictly codified forms of behaviour. These changes I have attributed to the actions of villagers, rather than to push for reform from above on the part of the “NGO-ised” church bureaucracy. At the same time, it is important to recognise that much of this renewal from below related to the growth of Pentecostalism. The emphasis on propriety also related to the experience of the insurgency, a point developed in the following chapter on burial societies.

Though this chapter does not intend to be read as arguing that religious institutions dominated village life, it is important to recognise the qualitative shift that had occurred in the sub-parish. While it is likely that earlier ethnographies (and many of the present-day studies of the region) overlooked, or understated, the significance of mainline Christianity in the Teso region, it was apparent that organised religion had come to play a greater part in the life of the village by the time I started fieldwork. In the context of a declining local government system, mainline churches to had come to the fore in the institutional landscape of the sub-parish.



Plate 6: Okello Constant (centre), instrument maker, and returnee from Busoga. Okello's knowledge of burial practices among the Busoga features later in Chapter 6, as part of the story of how burial societies came to be established in the 1990s.

CHAPTER 6

BURIAL SOCIETIES: INSTITUTIONALISING THE INSURGENCY

INTRODUCTION

The major innovation in kinship-based arrangements in the sub-parish was the introduction of burial societies. By the time of fieldwork burial societies worked as insurance schemes, typically organised around a contingent lineage network (*ateker*), where money was collected on the death of a society member to help the home with the costs of burial. Burial societies provided labour and organisational support during the burial, and had somewhat eclipsed, or taken over the customary arrangements that deal with marriage negotiations or inheritance disputes. So profound has been their impact, that interviews with villagers on the role of kinship networks invariably focused on discussions of burials, and the work of burial societies. The term *ateker*, which is typically used to refer to a contingent lineage group in the historical literature on Iteso society, was more commonly used, by villagers, as the term for a burial society. Joan Vincent, writing in the 1960s, found that *ateker* could embrace a number of meanings, including the lineage groups, an extended kinship network, or the Iteso as a people. That Vincent did not associate the term *ateker* with “burial society” suggests the scale of the transformation.²⁴⁴

Burial societies represent a basic transformation in the local institutional landscape. They have allowed many poorer homes to achieve what has come to be regarded as a respectable burial, something measured in social as well as material terms. A decent burial was marked out by high levels of community participation, and involved the provision of food, burial cloth, coffin and cement for sealing the grave, all of which had to be paid for through the burial society. Paying burial dues, and turning up to funerals were, perhaps, the most important means of demonstrating membership in the community of the village.²⁴⁵ At the

²⁴⁴ For the sake of clarity, I shall use the term *ateker* to refer to the contingent lineage group (and will use “burial society” to refer to a burial society).

²⁴⁵ One finds an echo of this in the literature on burial societies in Victorian England. As F.M.L. Thompson observes: “having the means to avoid [a pauper burial] and to provide for a decent funeral that would preserve the family’s standing in the community was the measure of basic respectability; around this minimum core could be built all the other defences against degradation... Getting the

same time, it is important to observe that burial societies offered an elaborate system of insurance and obligation, and were established without any obvious form of external assistance.

Despite the use of the term “customary” in the description of burial societies, it should be made clear that burial societies were new institutions.²⁴⁶ Prior to the 1990s burials were organised by the household, with support from the community in coming forward a more *ad hoc* fashion (Lawrance, 1957: 99-100). One of the older women in the village recalled the change between past and present, remembering how things were managed when she first arrived:

If a person died no one would do anything, you would just be relaxing in your home. But things have changed. Now we are much more united. The clan has brought unity and it has helped people follow rules and regulations. People now know that when they do something bad they will be punished.²⁴⁷

In interview and conversation, villagers consistently argued that burials had come to be managed through much more institutionally bound structures, with elected committees, codified by-laws, membership dues, and a list of punishments for those who failed to behave properly.²⁴⁸ From the perspective of the outside analyst, burial societies offer a case study of institutional innovation, an example of the ways in which historical experiences, *institutional bricolage*, and improvisation coalesce to produce relatively autonomous structures at the local-level.

Added to a concern with understanding institutional innovation, I should also make the observation that the development of burial societies can only be properly understood against the backdrop of the insurgency. Later on in the chapter, I argue that burial societies acquired *meaning* because they contrasted with the ways in which death was organised during the bush war and in the internment camps. As with Pentecostalism, and charismaticism, decent burials could be connected up to ideas of proper and respectable behaviour, and the establishment of burial societies related back to more a general institutional response to the experience of rebel violence and internment.

means was a matter of resolve, regular habits, and social motivation, rather than any particular level of wages. It meant making a regular contribution, perhaps of no more than a halfpenny or penny a week and perhaps at a sacrifice of food for a hungry family, to an insurance fund that paid out funeral money.” (Thompson, 1988: 200).

²⁴⁶ See Higenyi and Whyte 1997, Whyte 2005, and de Weerd 2001.

²⁴⁷ Interview with Akol Florence, Oledai sub-parish, August 20, 2002.

²⁴⁸ The emphasis on rules came up several interviews. Akol Florence, for example, commented that: “everybody’s name is expected to be in the burial book, and it is the role of the committee to make sure that everything is done according to the rules” (interviewed, August 20, 2002).

The chapter begins by discussing the present-day structure of burial societies, before going back to a discussion of how they became established. In this second section, the discussion focuses on the history of burials during the colonial period, and then on the violence of the insurgency, which turns out to have played a crucial role in the development of burial societies over the past decade. Not only did the violence of the insurgency affect the manner of death and dying, but it can also be shown that the exodus of younger men from the area gave them experience of burial practices in neighbouring societies (a key part of the explanation as to why burial societies were institutionalised with such speed). A third section discusses the borrowings that have gone into burial societies, where much of their form and structure comes from earlier burial rites in the region, and from the prevailing institutional landscape of the sub-parish. I then discuss how an individual burial society affected what was politically possible in the sub-parish, looking at what happened after the death of Edotun Jackson. Before concluding the chapter, there is a discussion of what burial societies *meant*, in terms of how they opposed the imagery of the insurgency; how they connected up to ideas of propriety and respectability.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE WORK OF BURIAL SOCIETIES

In their simplest forms burial societies were insurance schemes that assisted a household when a death occurred. The membership of the group was typically based on one or more *atekerin*, and members were required to pay a joining fee, after which their name would be added to the burial book. When a death occurred all of the registered members of the society would be summoned to a meeting in the home of the deceased, to discuss how the burial was to be organised. Individuals were expected to pay burial dues to the treasurer, either at this meeting or on the burial day itself. The money paid was fixed by the burial society committee, typically 300/= for a man, 200/= for a woman and 50/= for a child, and was recorded in the burial book.²⁴⁹ The treasurer checked off the names of burial society members as and when they paid their burial dues. The burial book was kept in a box in the house of the treasurer. Anyone who failed to attend the pre-burial meeting would be visited

²⁴⁹ The setting of burial dues appeared to depend mostly on the size of the burial society, with larger societies tending to have lower fees because of a larger taxable base. Burial dues, for 2002, were as follows: Atekok Esasi, 300/= for a man, 200/= for a woman or youth, and 50/= for a child; Ichaak, 500/= for a man, 300/= for a woman, and 200/= for a youth; Ipagitok/Ogoria/Ikures, 300/= for a man, 200/= for a woman or a youth and 100/= for a child.

by one or more young men known as *askaris*²⁵⁰ whose job it was to make sure everyone paid their money and attended the burial.

Once the money was collected, the treasurer released specific sums for the purchase of the coffin, cement for the grave and a white cotton sheet for wrapping the corpse. Money was also released to buy in extra food, particularly meat, which was needed to feed the expected guests. A small portion of the money was used to pay an honorarium to the more important, or more hard-working members of the burial society. The burial society of Atekok Esasi expected money to cover the following:

Clan condolence collection shall be expected to meet the expenditure of the following items: coffin; cement; burial sheets; feeding mourners; visitors upkeep; grave diggers allowance; chairman secretary and warden allowances.²⁵¹

As well as the payment of burial dues, households were expected to contribute other things to the burials, women were delegated the task of bringing food, water and firewood to the burial home. In the case of Atekok Esasi the amount required was:

1 tin of cassava flour
1 tin of sweet potato flour
1 tin of sorghum
5 tubers of cassava or sweet potatoes
3 pieces of firewood
1 twenty-litre jerry can of water

Along with the gathering of these items, women were responsible for the bulk of work at the burial home, including fetching water, sweeping the family compound, preparing food and clearing up. These responsibilities were divided in a relatively organised manner, and it was typical for one woman to be in charge of a particular activity on a regular basis. The woman responsible for cooking, perhaps the most laborious task during the burial day, would expect to receive a small sum of money in recognition of her work. Young men, typically *askaris*, would be asked to build a grass-thatched shade at the burial site as well as digging the grave, and these men could expect a meal of roasted chicken as thanks for their work.

²⁵⁰ Across Uganda, the term *askari* refers to soldiers in the government army. *Askari* was also used to refer to those men who used to be in the employ of the local government at the time when taxes were to be collected. *Askaris* were responsible for rounding up tax defaulters.

²⁵¹ In the case of Atekok Esasi these allowances were set at the following levels: 1000/= to the committee members (chairman; vice chairman; treasurer; secretary; auditor; and the warden sergeant; 700/= to the warden corporal and 500/= to the other wardens. Once these expenses were met, the remaining balance was given to the home of the deceased.

The burial itself typically lasted two to three days. The first day was the day of the burial proper, referred to both in the literature and by villagers as the day of *aipud* (Lawrance, 1957: 99). This was the day when the burial society was most active. Many guests would gather, and the burial home would be busy with women working in the kitchens, cooking food, preparing beer, or serving and clearing up. The funeral would take place in the morning or early afternoon: the time of day most auspicious for burial.²⁵² In most cases prayers would be said by the local catechist (Catholic), lay reader (Anglican), or assembly leader (Pentecostal), afterwards the elders of the burial society would speak about the deceased.²⁵³ At the point of burial the coffin would be lowered into place, after which an iron sheet would be laid on top of the coffin (this would be to stop the earth from pressuring the corpse, as well as ensuring that the spirit of the deceased was not oppressed).²⁵⁴ Signs of protest and noise would accompany the actual lowering of the coffin into the grave, as a mark of respect. When the burial was over the treasurer would report the income and expenditures of the burial as well as the remaining balance, which was handed over to the family of the deceased.²⁵⁵

At this point in the proceedings people were given food to eat, and beer would be served: this was regarded as the highpoint of the day. The guests were fed first, after which burial society members were allowed to eat. Men took precedence over children, with women being fed last. In discussion with villagers it was clear that the way in which food was served, and money handled, were the subject of intense scrutiny, as they offered obvious indicators of the overall health of the burial society.²⁵⁶ To be well-organised and respectful of guests, making sure they were fed first, and then being able to offer a proper accounting of the funds, was seen as the best demonstration of competent leadership and a diligent

²⁵² The late afternoon was reserved for the burial of criminals or other undesirable. Later in the chapter (on page 173), I show that part of the politics of the insurgency was the way rebels made sure to bury “big men” at the wrong time of day.

²⁵³ Despite the opposition of many other Pentecostal denominations towards traditional burial rites or funerary customs, Pentecostal Christians in Oledai were active members of burial societies.

²⁵⁴ The use of coffins was a recent innovation according to Amuge Gabdesia, interviewed August 22, 2002.

²⁵⁵ The pattern of burials differs slightly from those recounted by Henriques who refers to the practice of “last rites”, a “big event, which takes place a year from the actual burial” and would have marked the sealing of the grave (Henriques, 2002: 179). Like others before him, Henriques, appears to be referring to the burial of a “big man”.

²⁵⁶ In interview, villagers made comparisons between burial societies. Okaleke Peter noted that: “our friends in the Atekok Esasi clan lost a child and they collected money such that there was some left over after the burial. The balance was announced, but there was some difficulty in handing over the money to the parents of the child. That is why I say that our clan is doing well, because we do not have incidents like that one. All the money will be counted and handed over to you” (September 11, 2002). A similar argument was put forward by Aguti Jennifer (August 22, 2002). Odongo Emmanuel suggested that the burial society of Ipagitok/Ogoria/Ikures, not his own, had the better organised *askaris* (clan soldiers) (August 22, 2002).

membership. Villagers were free to compare one society to another. After the festivities of the first day had passed, the *ateker* would assemble a day or two after the burial, to seal the grave with cement and decide on how to organise the inheritance of the deceased.

What has so far been described is an idealised version of what was observed, and it should be noted that burials varied in form and content. Gender, age, the economic condition of the household, the reputation of the deceased and the religious preferences of the family all played their part in determining the shape of a particular burial. And yet, what was striking about burials, which so often serve to point up inequalities and distinctions of a society, was the general commitment, in both discourse and practice, to achieving something close to equality in how the dead were buried. In this the Iteso differed from the history of burial practices of neighbouring regions, perhaps a reflection of their acephalous inheritance (Beattie, 1961; Whyte and Higenyi, 1997; Whyte, 2005). There was a strong belief that all members of the society should receive a similar burial, and if the wife failed to receive the same sort of burial as her husband then the burial society would come in for criticism. As one woman commented: 'the poor person has to be buried in the same way as a rich person, the woman the same as a man'.²⁵⁷

Moreover, if we think back to the long list of things required from each household—food, firewood, water, labour—burial societies had the capacity to marshal considerable resources. The money collected represented by far the highest form of “taxation” in the sub-parish. Burial societies proved much more capable of raising funds than the parish chief, and they also collected more money than the village churches. The following table illustrates this point.

²⁵⁷ Interview with Aguti Jennifer on the work of the Irarak Ikures clan and burial society, August 22, 2002.

Table 6.1: the “tax rates” of different local-level institutions, 2002

Institutional category	Name of institution	Amount collected per event	Number of collections in 2002	Number of “taxable” households	Approx. total revenues in 2002	Approx. contribution per household
Burial society ²⁵⁸	Atekok Esasi	90,000/= per burial	11	52	990,000/= \$566	19,038/= \$11
	Ogoria	80,000/= per burial	10	43	800,000/= \$457	18,604/= \$11
	Ichaak	75,000/= per burial	8	28	600,000/= \$343	21,429/= \$12
Church ²⁵⁹	Pentecostal	2,800/= per week	52	14*	145,600/= \$83	10,400/= \$6
	Anglican	3,600/= per week	52	20*	187,200/= \$107	9,360/= \$5
	Catholic	3,900/= per week	52	31*	202,800/= \$116	6,542/= \$4
Government ²⁶⁰	Head tax	525,000/= per annum	1	256**	525,000/= \$300	2,051/= \$1

* average number of households *attending* church (rather than the total number of households claiming affiliation)

** number of households listed on the books of the parish chief

The above table shows the relative economic strength of burial societies in the sub-parish. They raised more in taxes than the local government or the churches. The 123 households listed as member of the burial societies (3 households on the outskirts of the sub-parish were government workers and only semi-resident), cumulatively contributed 2,390,000/= (\$1366) in 2002. This was more than four times the amount paid to the local government in head tax, and was drawn from a “tax base” half the size. Even churches, which had a much smaller “tax base” managed to raise more from the sub-parish than the local government. Individual households contributed as much as ten times the amount of money paid to the local government, to their burial society. And if this level of difference was not stark enough, what should be remembered when looking at the table, is that burial societies (and

²⁵⁸ Source: burial books of Atekok Esasi, Ogoria and Ichaak.

²⁵⁹ These figures were derived from the church survey (see page 232). Several homes were interviewed for each church, over the course of eight weeks (the interview was either on the Sunday or the Monday after the Sunday service). From the congregants an estimate of the number of those attending the service, including children, was attained. The collection figure was taken from what was stated announced at the church service, as the catechist, lay reader, or pastor, typically announced the week’s collection at the Sunday service.

²⁶⁰ Source: *Ngora Sub-County Annual Report for 2002/2003*

churches) also required contributions in kind as well as money. Gifts of food, labour and time were an important part of a households contribution to the burial society or church.²⁶¹

If we turn away from questions of money and turn towards questions of membership, what also stands out is the way all but three of the households in the sub-parish (123 out of 126) were members of burial societies. Burial societies were understood to be open institutions, and villagers claimed that they were open to everyone.²⁶² Though there was an obvious bias towards aggregating burial societies around kinship networks, those villagers who belonged to none of the established *atekerin* could choose to join a burial society. In the case of the Ogoria burial society, the burial society a majority of the members actually came from the *atekerin* of Ipagitok and Ikures. And in interviews burial society members not only emphasised the degree to which burial societies were non-exclusive, but also took pride in the belief that this openness made them appear more progressive and modern. The only part of the burial organised by the *ateker*, was that part which dealt with questions of inheritance (and even this has been affected by the establishment of burial society, as we shall see, later on).

The following section explains how burial societies were established in the sub-parish, pulling together past burial practices, the nature of death during the insurgency, and the experiences of a number of young men who had become exiled in neighbouring regions. Burial societies can be said to borrow from the past, as well as being pieced together from the bric-a-brac of individual experience.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BURIAL SOCIETIES

a) The development of burials in the pre-colonial and colonial periods

Even though villagers argued that burial societies were entirely new constructions, our concern with the history of the region reminds us that past practices continued to inform the way the present is organised (see page 31). The basic form of *aipud* (the funerary rite) existed prior to the 1990s, and the particulars of what happened after a villager died,

²⁶¹ Table 6.1 can also be related back to earlier chapters on churches in the sub-parish, with the relative strength of the Pentecostal church showing up in the high financial contributions of born-again Christians, when compared with Catholic or Anglican villagers, suggesting that Pentecostalism continued to require greater commitment.

²⁶² This point was made in interview with Amuge Gabdesia (August 22, 2002); Asige Martha (August 22, 2002); Okaleke Peter (September 11, 2002); Omuron John Simple (September 17, 2002); and Oonyu Joseph (August 27, 2002).

borrowed from the basic architecture of burial ceremonies from earlier decades. As such, though present-day burial societies drew an obvious contrast to the more private and socially differentiated burials of the past, they also continued to borrow something of their structure from the sorts of burial that could be found before the insurgency. J.C.D. Lawrance has suggested that *aipud*, the ceremony of interment, and the memorial rite of *asuban* were long-established traditions, going as far back as the pre-colonial past. Though Lawrance's belief in "tradition" runs the risk of reading history backwards, believing that practices found in the 1950s also existed in the pre-colonial past, it can be argued that the *aipud* or three-day burial ceremony described by Lawrance in the period immediately prior to independence also helped shape the pattern of burials in the years after the insurgency.²⁶³

In trying to understand the genealogy of burial practices in Iteso society, it appears as though *aipud* and *asuban* of the 1950s were more of a hybrid achievement, a combination of the burial practices of earlier periods, and a particular response, on the part of villagers, to colonial legislation that sought to modernise the rural population. Burying the dead appears to have been no more than an occasional practice in the pre-colonial period, with the corpses of all but the "biggest" men left exposed to the elements.²⁶⁴ It would appear that the concern among colonial officials and missionaries with public hygiene and social morality did more to make burials a customary for the rural population. A push, on the part of the colonial bureaucracy, towards certain sorts of moral improvement, bringing the Iteso more closely into line with their Bantu neighbours occupied the work of Christian missionaries, colonial administrators and district politicians, and the admiration for Bantu societies to the south, could be found in legislation that aimed at eliminating the practice of leaving corpses exposed to the elements.²⁶⁵ Framed as a public health issue, and bound up with concerns regarding decency and a more authoritative form of Christian mission, the practice of wrapping the corpse in cotton cloth, or of burying the dead in a cemented grave, at the depth of a standing man was, in some way, a legislated custom.

Whatever their origins, *aipud* and *asuban* were entrenched practices by the 1950s. Lawrance records *aipud* (literally "to trample down") as that part of the burial where mourners threw earth on the corpse before filling the grave, and implies that the practice was widespread.

²⁶³ Lawrance, in arguing that Iteso burial rites were unchanged from the pre-colonial period weighs his arguments too much in favour a timeless sort of tradition and historical continuity (Lawrance, 1957: 99, see also Emudong, 1973: 97).

²⁶⁴ An observation made by Father Bernard Phelan, (written communication, July 15, 2005). Doris Clark also noted the practice of leaving the corpse exposed to the elements, among the Ng'ing'ariama clan on the eastern side of Teso (Clark, 1953: 76).

²⁶⁵ Carol Summers discusses the increasing interventionism of the Catholic mission in the regulation of public life (Summers, 2002: 10).

The grave was then watched over after the burial to 'guard against ghouls or animals' (Lawrance, 1957: 100), and on the second day of the burial, the *ateker* gathered to count the property of the deceased, and to call for debts. On the third day beer was contributed by mourners and shared. Some time after the burial, a second ceremony, *asuban*, was convened where the members of the *ateker* would gather to throw ashes from the fire that had been lit to attend the grave (Lawrance 1957: 101). The most obvious difference in the architecture of burials, between the 1950s and the 1990s, was the declining importance of *asuban*. *Asuban*, the memorial rite, lived on only in those wealthier homes where memorial services were used as a way of bringing together distant relatives to commemorate the death of a "big man", typically on public holidays.

Aside from the practical continuities in the rite of *aipud*, and the persistence of the idea of a three-day burial, what emerges strongly from the available material on the late colonial and early post-colonial periods, is the symbolic and emotional importance of death. A retired missionary recalled the following experience of dealing with burials in the 1970s:

If anyone died in the village, then people would drop everything they were doing and would attend the burial. The fear was that if you did not attend you might be accused of being responsible for the death... Once the person was dead, he or she would be ritually washed, and those doing the washing would speak to the spirit of the dead person saying *sirikiyanga iso erono* (do not take us ill)...

Once the time of burial was ready, all the wailing would cease, and the body tied securely in a sheet... Putting the body in the grave would be accompanied by a lot of shouting to ensure that the body was facing the right way, and usually on its side... all of this was to ensure that there was a good relationship between the dead person and the living.²⁶⁶

In similar fashion, Doris Clark, writing in the *Uganda Journal* in 1953, described the weeping and mourning of a community along the Karamoja-Teso border. In Clark's account of death among the Iteso of the Usuk region, reactions of considerable violence were observed: 'very often women will attempt suicide, and it is a common practice for them to keep a special cord in their grain baskets for the purpose' (Clark, 1953: 75-76; see also Gulliver, 1951). Clark also speaks of the expressive manner of the burial, the sense of loss and the significance of death, and her observations point us to the importance of death as something connected to ideas of crisis and rupture (something not dwelt upon in Vincent's functionalist anthropology, nor Lawrance's more documentary approach).

²⁶⁶ This description was given by Father Bernard Phelan who started his mission work as a Mill Hill Father in 1968, serving Toroma, Serere and Bukedea parishes (written communication received, July 13, 2005).

b) the experience of death and burial during the years of insurgency and internment

That said, a concern with death as part of a world of symbols and beliefs, does not mean that burying the death *had* to be institutionalised in the form of a collectively managed insurance scheme. What appears to have promoted the development of burial societies, as a collective enterprise, was the particular experience of the insurgency. The insurgency saw a breaking up of the social life of the village, as well as the collapse of the economic means through which villagers had been able to manage burials in the past. The depletion of cattle stocks, as well as the looting of granaries, meant that richer homes could no longer afford to pay for the sort of ceremonious burial that there had been in the past. Acts of commensality could no longer be paid for, and villagers spoke of the insurgency as a time when life retreated inwards, first to the level of the household, and then to the individual:

It was impossible for us to keep the burials going in the way we wanted. Everyone was at risk and people were poor. For us, everyone had to keep to themselves and their own family, and there would be no proper burials for the dead. We had problems with food, and burials could not go ahead under such conditions.²⁶⁷

More striking, perhaps, was the way rebels—typically younger men—chose to kill the “big men” of the village. What was earlier described as the “micro-politics of the insurgency” extended into the realm of what the rebellion meant in terms of symbols and beliefs. Rebels went out of their way to attack the idea that a “big man” should be buried respectfully, denying both *aipud* and *asuban* to the family of the deceased. If Susan Reynolds Whyte speaks of burials as bound up with the meaning of “going home” (Whyte, 2005), it is worth thinking about what it meant when rebels intentionally buried in the fields, or laid the corpse out on the road. In certain cases, killings involved dumping the body in the swamp, a particularly sacrilegious act, as swamps were regarded as dangerous places; places for the punishment of transgressions, such as incest (Henriques, 2002: 177).

The most remembered way of killing a “big man” was referred to as “digging potatoes” (*aibok acok*). “To dig potatoes” meant the “big man” would be taken from his home, by a group of rebels, to one of his fields, where he would be forced to dig the hole that would later serve as his grave.²⁶⁸ In many instances “big men” were buried in the late afternoon, the

²⁶⁷ Interview with Odongo Emmanuel, Oledai sub-parish, August 22, 2002.

²⁶⁸ As late as 2003, the phrase could still be used in the national media. An article from the Monitor newspaper was titled: “Has Kony come to tie Teso dogs or dig potatoes” (July 15, 2003). The meaning of this rather cryptic headline concerns the possible dilemmas facing the rural population after the arrival of elements of Joseph Kony’s Lord’s Resistance Army in the northern parts of the region in 2003. The headline speaks of two possible ways in which villagers could react to the LRA’s appearance. If, on the one hand, the LRA was able to “tie Teso dogs” this meant that the LRA had

time of day typically reserved for the burial of thieves or other undesirables. As the local catechist recalled in interview: 'you could get a man killed like a goat, his dead body would be strewn along the road; the rebels could kill a man and tell his people not to mourn'.²⁶⁹ Burials were desecrated during the insurgency, and burial societies achieved much of their legitimacy through restoring propriety to burial practices.

Added to the memory of the killing of "big men" was the experience of the internment camps.²⁷⁰ The internment process, which lasted for nine months in 1990, made death a more immediate concern for those villagers who had escaped the politics of the bush war. Unlike rebel killings, which were targeted and somewhat predictable, death in the camps resulted from poor sanitation, poor food, and lack of medicine (Amnesty International, 1999: 21).²⁷¹ Social rather than political categories were punished, with the old and the young dying in greater numbers. The National Resistance Army's response to the crisis of so many deaths, in such a confined space, was to require that the dead be buried in communal pits.²⁷² Oonyu Joseph, one of the older men in the sub-parish, commented that:

In the camps a person would be buried without respect. The burial would be done in a bad way. You would be thrown into a grave without sheets or prayers.²⁷³

Pit burials, away from one's home, and without the proper rite of *aipud* caused considerable distress to those interned, and villagers tried to avoid pit burials if they could. Some paid money to government officials in order to leave the camp for a day, so that they could take the corpse home for burial was possible in certain cases, though this option carried considerable risks, as rebels were often hostile to those who returned.²⁷⁴ But for those who

secured enough loyalty within the rural population, to stop villagers from "barking" [i.e. releasing information] to the government soldiers. If, on the other hand, the LRA came to "dig potatoes" this meant that the rural population had sided with the government, and would have to face violence at the hands of the LRA.

²⁶⁹ Interview with Ikaia Patrick, catechist serving the Roman Catholic Church, December 4, 2002.

²⁷⁰ An Amnesty International report stated that the numbers of those who died in the camps far outweighed those who died in the bush war, putting the overall figure at 10,000 (Amnesty International, 1992: 7). If these figures are to be believed, then in the space of nine months, one in twelve internees died. See, *Uganda, the Failure to Safeguard Human Rights*, Amnesty International, 1992 (see also Zistel, 2002: 214-215).

²⁷¹ The deaths that occurred in camps were, to all intents and purposes, "planned" by the government. The internment process was not the hastily assembled response to a sudden humanitarian crisis, it is sometimes imagined to be. Despite the opportunity for advance planning, the camps recorded death rates of 15 people per 10,000 per day, and this placed the camps well above the normal CMR (crude mortality rate) for internment camps, of 0.5 per 10,000, and also far ahead of the 2-3 deaths per 10,000 that is used by relief agencies to categorise a "dire situation" (Teso Relief Committee Report, 1990; de Berry, 2000: 110).

²⁷² The memory of pit burials was mentioned in several interviews: Amuge Gabdesia (interviewed August 22, 2002), Okaleke Peter (September 11, 2002).

²⁷³ Oonyu Joseph (August 27, 2002).

²⁷⁴ Interview with Oluka Charles, from the neighbouring sub-parish of Agolitom, September 24, 2002.

could not afford to pay the soldiers, or who felt it too risky to return home, it was common to leave a mark on the corpse as a way of allowing for the retrieval of the corpse once the camps were disbanded.²⁷⁵ Once retrieved the remains could be laid to rest at home.

It is from the time of the bush war and the camps that burial societies achieved a certain sort of popular legitimacy. In their orderliness and proper behaviour the extent to which burial societies served as an institutionalised response to the insurgency becomes clear:

Our people got the idea of the burial society from their experience in the camps. They thought that if we did not unite and come together in burials then life would continue to be difficult. At that time we were struggling under a culture where you would refuse to help your neighbour in his hour of need. No one would help anyone. It is better now that we have formed groups to share problems. When people started to move forward setting up these groups others saw that they were a good thing and copied.²⁷⁶

c) the role of returnees in building up burial societies

As Odongo Emmanuel suggests in the above quote, burial societies in Oledai borrowed from neighbouring areas. What appears to have aided the institutionalisation of burial societies was the exodus (and later return) of a number of young men during the years of insurgency. Ibuchet Max, leader of the Ikures *ateker*, and a member of Ogoria burial society, observed that:

The idea of having a burial society came from Pallisa; that is where we learnt about it. We copied what they did, and put it into action here".²⁷⁷

A number of younger men had moved away from the sub-parish, to the Pallisa and Busoga regions to the south, as the insurgency grew worse (see maps C and D).

From interviews with those who left the area at the time, they explained that their exile involved a good deal of learning regarding the practices and institutions of neighbouring societies. Those men who migrated as the insurgency reached its peak, often lacked the sorts of political connections that had aided earlier refugees.²⁷⁸ These young men, less

²⁷⁵ The point was made in an interview with Amuge Gabdesia, a member of the Atekok Esasi burial society, August 22, 2002.

²⁷⁶ Interview with Odongo Emmanuel, Oledai sub-parish, August 22, 2002.

²⁷⁷ Interview with Ibuchet Max, January 9, 2003.

²⁷⁸ It is impossible to offer a complete accounting of the numbers of younger men who left during the insurgency. That said, alongside Olupot Constant and Ibuchet Max, I was able to identify three

educated and less connected perhaps, had to make a life for themselves in places very different from their own.

A particularly striking example of the practical consequences of being exiled came in an interview with Olupot Constant, a young man who left the sub-parish some time in the late 1980s, and who eventually had himself “adopted” by an older man living near to Jinja in the Busoga region. During his time of exile, Olupot learnt the language of the Basoga and was apprenticed in instrument-making, which continued to offer him a living in Oledai, with the sale of orchestral drums (*emidirin*), lutes (*adungui*) and finger pianos (*akogoi*) (and pictured on page 162).²⁷⁹ Olupot’s acculturation among the Basoga extended to an intimate understanding of witchcraft practices (Soga witchcraft was felt to be a more potent form of magic than the Iteso equivalent). Olupot was also apprenticed in the institutions of Soga society, and during exile became a member of the burial society of his adoptive father.

This type of learning, which was based in practical forms of sociality, helps explain the ease with which certain rules and procedures were institutionalised.²⁸⁰ Examples of this sort of borrowing can be understood as a form of *bricolage*, where burial societies came to look like institutions found in other places. Higenyi and Whyte trace a similar pattern of learning among the Banyole in the south-eastern corner of Uganda, who were found to have conscientiously borrowed from their Bantu neighbours (1997). In a mirror-image of the form and function of burial societies in Oledai, their Nyole counterparts were asked to meet the costs of burials, both in cash and kind. All the members had to adhere to a strict set of rules: ‘the payment of a contribution does not free one from the obligation to be physically present at some point – a society member may not simply pay the secretary’.²⁸¹

That burial societies were themselves already established activities in neighbouring areas, and that those villagers who helped to establish burial societies in the 1990s—including Ibuchet Max and Olupot Constant—had direct experience of neighbouring societies suggests that seemingly radical, and new institutional arrangements nonetheless pick themselves up from the *débris* of other experiences; a point discussed in greater detail in the next section.

other men who fell into a similar sort of exodus story. The three men were Echai Stephen (who later became a committee member of the Ogoria *ateker*); Ochodio Andrew (a member of Ipagitok *ateker*) and Oluka Lawrence (chief *askari* for the Ichaak burial society).

²⁷⁹ Interview with Olupot Constant, December 23, 2002.

²⁸⁰ Unfortunately D.W. Cohen’s work on the Basoga from the 1960s does not discuss changing Basoga burial rites, and the only other account of burial practices in the region was J.H.M. Beattie’s account of Nyoro mortuary rites from the 1950s.

²⁸¹ Whyte and Higenyi, 1997: 12

BURIAL SOCIETIES: AN ASSORTMENT OF BORROWINGS

As Mary Douglas suggests, institutional transformations occur 'within a stock repertoire of furnishings'; they are not crafted out of institutional theories of good governance or effective resource management (Douglas, 1987: 66). I would Burial societies were made from a sort of bric-a-brac pieced together from the history of burials in the area, and from the experiences of young men as they left the village during the insurgency. They drew on the logics, structures and practices which could be found in other institutional arrangements in the sub-parish.

Something as basic as the burial society committee, which had a particular structure and way of dealing with shirkers, drew from the range of committee structures already found in the sub-parish. That the leadership was elected, and that key positions were dominated by men of a certain age with a certain reputation for toughness, was a reflection of the ways in which other committees worked. Similarities could be explained through the simple observation that burial society committee members tended to be committee members elsewhere. The chairman of the Atekok Esasi burial society, for example, was also on the elders committee of the clan (responsible for dealing with land disputes and conflicts between clan members), and was vice chairman of the church committee of the Catholic congregation in Nyamongo, and on the building committee of Nyamongo Primary School.²⁸² In this sort of borrowing there was, perhaps, little need for conscientious crafting, as the work of a committee chairman appeared as a given role in the sub-parish, rather than requiring endless innovation.

There were also more particular borrowings that consciously referred to particular activities found in other local-level institutions. In this respect the *institutional bricolage* needs to be set alongside an acceptance that the individual *bricoleur* plays his or her part as an assembler. For example, the manner in which non-payment of fees was punished, borrowed from earlier versions of the local government system. By the time of fieldwork the *asharis*, or "soldiers" of the burial society, were asked to tie a rope around those who had failed to pay their fees, before bringing them before the burial society committee for punishment (the punishment was usually a fine, though beatings were not unknown), which villagers referred back to a time when tax-defaulters had a rope tied about their waist, being then carted off to the sub-county headquarters. In other words the burial society leadership was

²⁸² Other burial society leaders had similar institutional profiles: Odongo Emmanuel (vice chairman Ogoria/Ipagitok/Ikures) was also the LC committee member for education; Okitoi Gabriel was the senior church elder for Nyamongo's Catholic congregation and a former member of the village council.

borrowing from the coercive practices of an earlier form of governmental authority (and from the knowledge that rope-tying was bound up with a particular image of effective political authority). A similarly specific borrowing could be seen in the way leaders were elected, with villagers lining up behind their preferred candidate.²⁸³ Villagers related this, quite expressly, to the way public elections used to be carried out in the village in the years before the secret ballot was introduced (see also Vincent's description of council elections in the late 1960s, (Vincent, 1968: 55).²⁸⁴

Another furnishing, so to speak, concerned the public reporting of accounts. Here the borrowing was oriented towards what was found in church, and what was picked up from the discourses on accountability that had been promoted by the Ugandan state. Aside from the emphasis on proper accounting in village churches, the concern with publicising the finances of the burial society consciously reflected the idea of becoming more modern and developed, through being more "transparent" and "accountable". In attempting to show this modern-ness villagers borrowed what they felt to be the language spoken in the development sector (which was also, in many ways, the language of Pentecostal Christianity). The discourse of good governance had been particularly pronounced in the official rhetoric of the 1990s, and had trickled down to the village through the radio. (67 out of the 126 households in the sub-parish owned a radio, and those who did not have a radio at home would go around to a neighbour and listen from there.)²⁸⁵

In a display of transparency, the burial book had to be open for society members to see during the burial. At the end of the first day of the burial the treasurer of the committee would then publicly report the accounts to the burial society *en masse*: what money had been collected; how much had been spent; what balance remained.²⁸⁶ The most self-conscious borrowing from the "development" sector came with the establishment of "auditors" who were elected to the burial society committee (the word "auditor" was used in Ateso as well as English). Auditors were typically older men, who were asked to scrutinise the work of the treasurer (responsible for handing out money) and the secretary (responsible for

²⁸³ The point on the public election of leaders was made in several interviews, including with Amuge Gabdesia, a member of Atekok Esasi burial society (August 22, 2002); with Okaleke Peter (September 11, 2002); and with Okalebo Lawrence a member of Ipagitok *ateker* (September 12, 2002).

²⁸⁴ A reflection, perhaps, of the way public votes continued to carry greater popular legitimacy than the idea of the secret ballot (Southall, 1998: 260). The Report of the Uganda Constitutional Commission (1992) found that at the level of the sub-parish 73.3% of those interviewed saw "lining up" as preferable over the secret ballot, which scored 20.4%.

²⁸⁵ This figure is taken from the household survey.

²⁸⁶ "The treasurer will tell you the total collection, the amount of money spent on the burial and the balance that will be given to the family of the deceased. It is all clear and above board." From an interview with Asige Martha (August 22, 2002).

purchasing goods), and the work of this individual was particularly important in “the fight against corruption”, as attested by Asige Martha:

We do not have corruption, because we have an auditor to check the books. The auditor will first announce the name of the bereaved household. He will then tell you the total contributions raised for the burial, the amount of money spent on that burial and then the balance, which he then gives to the bereaved household.²⁸⁷

At a certain level, auditors could be seen as an unintended consequence of development work in Uganda, and a number of studies have similarly focused on examples where development discourse has had “side-effects” in a target population (Pigg, 1997; Bierschenk Chauveau and Olivier de Sardan, 1999). In the particular case of Oledai sub-parish, what was striking was the way the language and practices of the development sector had meaningful effects far away from the project loops of development work, far away from Ferguson’s “anti-politics machine”. “Auditors” and the “fight against corruption” were established in a village where there was no particular benefits to be had from referring to the “development economy”.

In appropriating an idea of “development” into their work, villagers also juxtaposed the success of burial societies with the image of the insurgency, and connected such things as the work of auditors, the absence of corruption, or the egalitarianism of the burial ceremony, to a particular sort of moral vocabulary. Interviews with a number of villagers on the subject of burial societies made the general point that having a decent burial marked out a decent life.²⁸⁸ In being able to put together a burial with a coffin, a certain number of burial sheets, a cement grave, and decent food for the mourners, a burial society made it possible to mark out respectability and propriety for oneself and for one’s family. What was particularly striking was the connection drawn between seemingly modest developments, in terms of numbers of pots and pans, and a much more forceful belief that burial societies signalled significant social change:

In our burial societies we have four saucepans, two hundred plates and cups, a water drum and many jerry cans. Our goal is to have twenty-five jerry cans so that women can fetch water more easily, not having to wait for one of the few jerry cans to become available. As you see our burial society has made great improvements, without it we would be stuck in the past.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁷ Interview with Asige Martha, a member of Ichaak *ateker*, interviewed on August 22, 2002.

²⁸⁸ Aguti Jennifer offered, perhaps, the best formulation for the symbolic rationale of burial societies: “the burial society is there to honour and respect the dead person. If people can see that you were a respected person they will say you did good things in the community” (27 August, 2002).

²⁸⁹ Interview with Omuron John Simple, September 17, 2002.

This emphasis on the organisational aspects of burial societies—the numbers of saucepans, the purchase of jerry cans—tied into the belief that burial societies marked a departure from the violence and immorality that was felt to be part of the insurgency. Burial societies put some distance between the recent past and the present, and made a “break with the past” along similar lines to that described by Birgit Meyer with regard to the growth of Pentecostal churches in Africa (Meyer, 2003). Burials which were orderly, hierarchical, and communitarian, and could be shown to contrast with the disorderly, anarchic and atomised way death was dealt with during the insurgency. This meant that burial societies drew legitimacy and substance from the way they made this contrast; part of the intrinsic value of having a decent burial was the way they opposed the isolated nature of death during the bush war and in the internment camps, a point which I will return to, later on.

Before discussing the importance of “breaking with the past”, I would like to examine how the institutional quality of burial societies—that they opened up a rule-based and public space in the sub-parish—affected the economic and political fallout that came from the death of Atai’s son.

CASE STUDY

The burial of Edotun, part 2: the importance of the burial society

Writing on Bunyole society, Susan Reynolds Whyte observes, simply, that ‘home is where you are buried’, and goes on to discuss the ways in which burials, graves, and rituals of remembrance mark the attachment of a family to a place and the changing political landscape of an area (Whyte, 1997: 87). As with the land conflicts they bring to the fore, burials are a particularly rich terrain for investigating the changing social, economic and political landscapes of east Africa (see also, Cohen and Atieno Odhiambo, 1992; Ojwang and Mugambi, 1989; Whyte 2005). We have already seen how burial societies in Oledai have managed to politicise discourses of propriety and seniority, as well as introducing new mechanisms of insurance and sociality. Burials were also sites of conflict and competition, and the death of Edotun Jackson, allows us to examine the politics that could surround a burial society in Oledai.

We can recall from the earlier account, in Chapter 5, that Edotun’s mother was poor and in a politically vulnerable position after her son’s death. Though Edotun’s death meant that Atai Helen would inherit some of her son’s property, the real concern was over retaining access

to land. In the household survey conducted the year before her son's death, Atai had no livestock to speak of, and was ranked 119th out of 126, and her limited income was drawn from what she could farm.²⁹⁰ The death of Edotun threatened Atai with dispossession and destitution.

Edotun's death proved to be a costly business for his mother. Opening the murder case against the accused, something in which she had little choice, meant that Atai had to pay money to the hospital and to the police. 50,000/= (\$29) was demanded by the hospital staff and 30,000/= (\$17) by the police (the murder of Edotun served as one of the few instances where poorer villagers contended directly with the otherwise latent coercive power of the state bureaucracy). But rather than impoverishing Atai, the 80,000/= (\$46) for the police and the hospital was raised by the burial society. In other words, the burial society helped Atai with the economic and political costs that accompanied her son's death. Without the burial collection, it is likely that Atai would have had to rent out some of the land she had been farming to meet the costs surrounding her son's death.²⁹¹

That said, even with the money from the burial society, Atai was vulnerable to the claim from other members of the *ateker*. There were no male members of the household left to claim the land she was farming. Given this situation, the leader of Atai's *ateker*, Okitoi Gabriel, (who was not the head of her burial society) suggested that Atai should hand over the land to the *ateker* leadership, which meant, in effect, handing over the land for Okitoi to farm. At this critical moment Atai refused, and one could appreciate that it was the finances and the public space made available by the burial society that strengthened her position.²⁹² The publicity of the burial, which included the sermonising of Ongenge George Washington (discussed in Chapter 5), made Atai's situation a point of public discussion in the village. The profile achieved by Atai at the point of her son's death made it difficult for Okitoi Gabriel to push her into destitution. The *ateker* leader found that it was not worth going against public opinion, and for the remaining months of the fieldwork Atai was observed farming the land that had once been held by her husband and later her son.

²⁹⁰ Taken from data collected in the household survey (see appendix B).

²⁹¹ As was also mentioned in the earlier case of Akia Melissa and Omagor Alfred (Chapter 3), land in Oledai properly belonged to an *ateker*, and it was customary that the land should be tended to by a male member of that *ateker*. Atai had, in the past, refused to accept a second "husband" from the *ateker*, arguing that Edotun, as a male member of the *ateker*, was entitled to hold the land. Her son's death re-opened the question of who should hold the clan land.

²⁹² Older women claimed that burials societies had helped their case in terms of access to land. Asige Martha argued that funeral costs were no longer a source of impoverishment for women, and despite the increasing pressures on land, burial societies had made it more difficult for wealthier homes to expropriate others (August 22, 2002).

Despite this favourable outcome, some words of caution are perhaps wise. The conclusion to the case at the time of fieldwork was not necessarily final, and it would be wrong to suggest that Atai's land was hers for the longer term. From the point of view of Okitoi Gabriel, the *ateker* had accepted that Atai should be allowed to farm her son's land, only because she still had a daughter to raise, Atai would again be vulnerable to dispossession at the moment when her daughter married "out" of the *ateker*.²⁹³ Rather what can be emphasised is that Atai's case points to the changing public spaces that surrounded burials, and that these changing spaces opened up new sorts of political possibilities.

In a situation where conflicts over land were among the most important sorts of political confrontation, burial societies made it possible for Atai to shore up her position in the days that followed the death of her son. Burials, it should be remembered, were a more regular part of life in the village, than any other formal gathering:

Table 6.2: Average attendance of different sorts of meetings, 2002²⁹⁴

Type of meeting	Number of times attended in 2002
Burials	15.3*
Village court	1.3
Ateker council meeting	3.3
Church marriage	1.5

* This table includes attendance at burials outside the particular burial society of the respondent. In most cases the respondent was the household head.

DISCUSSION: BURIAL SOCIETIES MAKING A BREAK WITH THE PAST

In thinking about Atai's case, it is useful to reflect on the ways in which burial societies drew a certain moral authority from the way they referred back to the insurgency. As I have suggested, in their commensality and sociality, burial societies produced a strong contrast to the experience of that time, and within this contrast came much of their moral authority and capacity for independence. By the time of fieldwork, burials had become enmeshed with the idea that "proper" burials marked out decent lives, and in this sort of

²⁹³ Interview with Okitoi Gabriel, August 28, 2002.

²⁹⁴ Meeting attendance was based on an averaging the responses given to the question: "How many times over the last year have you attended [said institution]". Social Networks survey, appendix C.

analogy, burial societies offered a way of separating the recent past from the world of the present. The work of burial societies made the death of Edotun an orderly affair in what remained a potentially violent world. In interview after interview, villagers explained how a ceremonious burial, with high levels of community participation, and sizeable contributions from fellow villagers, offered the antithesis of the sorts of dying that took place during the insurgency. Burial societies offered visible proof that life in the village had changed, that villagers had moved away from a time when rebels refused respectful burials to those they killed, and when the internment camps forced many villagers to bury the dead in communal pits.

A useful way of making sense of the sort of contrast between Edotun's orderly burial and the disorderly deaths of the insurgency, is to borrow from Birgit Meyer's notion of "rupture", and release of its Pentecostal trappings. Meyer discusses "rupture" in the context of Pentecostal discourse (discussed on page 121), and argues that born-again Christians draw a line between membership in the church and their past lives, detaching themselves from family and friends (Meyer, 1998; see also, Engelke, 2004; van Dijk, 1998). A notion of "rupture" provides a useful metaphor for making sense of what was happening in burial societies, and the other institutions in the sub-parish, as they worked to separate themselves from the recent past, by emphasising proper behaviour.

As I argued in Chapter 1, villagers attached 'increasing importance to a certain sort of codified, religiously inflected, understanding of personal behaviour' (page 39). This sort of codified behaviour was demonstrated through public displays such as having a decent burial, attending church, or showing due consideration in court. Such behaviour not only worked to strengthen one's standing in the village, but also forged a separation between an orderly present and a disorderly past. Proper behaviour, based on agreed rules and conventions, drew a line between the shocking experience of the insurgency and the present, and re-established an idea of order and predictability to life in the village. In other words, rather like the Pentecostal emphasis on "breaking with the past", there was, in villagers' actions in court, church or at a burial, a desire to mark out a separation from the collapse of moral codes that characterised the rebellion. Compared with the ways in which "big men" were pushed down pit latrines, or old women dumped in pits in the internment camps, it can be argued that a decent funeral, involving burial prayers and the economic and social of the community, carried notions of restoration and development. Institutional developments in Oledai related to the need to draw a line under the recent past.

But in opposing the past, it is important to remember that the memory of the insurgency did not go away. Indeed, as the case of Edotun's death shows, the fact that villagers presumed young men to be responsible for his death reminds us of the general sense that violence could return. As such, it is useful to dig deeper into Meyer's argument concerning "rupture", to draw out her suggestion that a keen focus on a particular reading of the past, institutionalises that version of the past into the politics of the present (Meyer, 2004: 457).²⁹⁵ In the life of the Pentecostal Christian, Meyer argues that becoming ill, getting poorer, being at the receiving end of a piece of misfortune, show the past "catching" up to the individual church member, bringing their political, social and moral position within the church into question.

In similar fashion it can be argued that the notion of "rupture", of attempting to make a complete break with the past, in terms of proper burials, meant a particular reading of the past was incorporated into the life of the village. In behaving properly or showing due respect, villagers both fought with and institutionalised the memory of the insurgency in the local political landscape. In other words, a particular version of the past becomes important in shaping the practices found in present-day institution, where notions of proper behaviour become important not only in the work of burial societies, but also in the work of courts and churches. Earlier chapters in the thesis showed how *all* of the institutions in the sub-parish used, in one way or another, the memory of the insurgency as a point of departure from their work.²⁹⁶ No one institution had a monopoly on a particular view of how things should change, but all of the institutions in the sub-parish could be said to have been transformed by the need to respond to the insurgency. Propriety mattered to the extent it did, because it offered a purposive contrast to the experience of the insurgency in churches, in court and during burials.

CONCLUSION

New institutions refer to old ones. While burial societies should be seen as relatively autonomous structures, unlikely to be co-opted or subsumed into the work of other

²⁹⁵ Meyer suggests that "Pentecostal-charismatic practice ultimately affirms the impossibility for born-again Christians to escape from forces grounded in and emanating from the local" (2004: 457).

²⁹⁶ Meyer's arguments connect up to Mary Douglas' point that institutions need to be founded on analogies: "There needs to be an analogy by which the formal structure of a crucial set of social relations is found in the physical world, or the supernatural world, or eternity, anywhere so long as it is not seen as a socially contrived arrangement" (Douglas, 1987: 48). In being tied into the experience of the insurgency, and relating to the existential question of death and dying, burial societies, had a naturalness and symbolic legitimacy that helped them retain a degree of autonomy in the sub-parish.

institutional arrangements, the scaffolding that surrounded them borrowed from elsewhere. Earlier in the chapter, I argued that the manner in which fees were collected; the structure of the committee; the way the book-keeping was conducted; the sorts of rites that surrounded death could be related to what was found in neighbouring areas, to what was found in the work of churches or clan committees, or to the history of burials in the Teso region. Innovation or improvisation has to be understood against examples of *institutional bricolage* or historical borrowing.

Burial societies were shown to have changed the political landscape of the sub-parish. This was most obviously apparent in the changing fortunes of Atai Helen after the loss of her son. The burial society provided Atai with a basic form of insurance, preventing the death and burial of her son from being a source of impoverishment. Less obviously perhaps, the institutional aspects of the burial society offered a sort of defined and public space where political claims could be pursued. In Atai's case, this meant that the claim to her son's land came to be publicised at the burial, and made it harder for men in the *ateker* chairman to push for her dispossession. In more general terms, burial societies drew significance from the way they offered villagers a means of navigating the experience of violence in the recent past.

But new institutions also refer to old experiences, and towards the end of the chapter, I have argued that the burial societies drew symbolic importance from what it meant to die in relation to the memory of the insurgency. As with all of the institutions discussed in the thesis, burial societies were more than management structures organised around ideas of efficiency or self-interest. Burial societies had become socially embedded, because their orderliness, prosperity and commensality forged an obvious break with the past. Decent burials, which were well-organised, well-attended, and well-funded opposed the experience of the insurgency. Though I have argued that one way of explaining institutional developments is to piece together the borrowings from other institutions, places or histories, it is also important to recognise that institutional developments are understood in ideological terms. Just as the various churches in the sub-parish drew on the spiritual domain of Christian beliefs, or a reification of spiritual matters, burial societies drew upon what it meant to die, and what this says about the life of an individual or the life of a community.



Plate 7: A woman draws water from the village swamp.
The thorns and brambles were to keep livestock away from the open well.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: STUDYING LOCAL-LEVEL POLITICS IN UGANDA

THE ABSENCE OF THE STATE

That Uganda has been considered a development “success story” for the past twenty years would come as a surprise to many of the villagers living in Oledai. In particular, the idea that the few material improvements in their lives would be explained, first and foremost, as relating to the policies or programmes of the national government would be difficult to comprehend. As we have seen, the avenues through which the state bureaucracy was meant to have an impact at the local-level were closed off. Decentralisation and democratisation had not played a particularly important part in shaping the lives of villagers. The more significant developments in the sub-parish—the growth of Pentecostalism, the establishment of burial societies—were related in only the most marginal ways to government reforms, while the state bureaucracy that claimed responsibility for Uganda’s successes was on the margins. The parish chief was a rare visitor; taxes were not collected in any serious sense; earlier attempts at collectively enforced public works, such as the digging of pit latrines, or the clearing of by-ways, had gone. The developmental apparatus of the state was a largely rhetorical enterprise apparently designed for external consumption.

As such, when villagers spoke of state-led development, it was in the remembered past, rather than the lived present. One young man, Alemu James, had the following to say on a cattle-restocking scheme, which had been intended to develop the region in the mid 1990s:

I did not register my name with those government people from the town, because I know that cattle would not be brought back. And I knew that it would make no difference to me, whether I registered or not. The only way I would get cattle back is through my own money, my own efforts. Some people paid 500 to register in that scheme but and that money was just eaten, it achieved nothing.

Since that time people have slowly forgotten about that they have not seen anything for so long. Instead they are trying to find a way of earning a living by themselves. If the Karamojong do not return I think that people will slowly increase what they have.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁷ Interview with Alemu James, November 19, 2002.

As Alemu James suggested, villagers saw little development coming from above, and did not trust what little government there was. For him, the possibility of positive change was measured in terms of acquiring cattle or improving one's situation in the village, and was a more incremental, parochial affair.

Chapter 3 argued that the local government bureaucracy was unimportant, though the chapter also suggested that the village court had retained some significance in the village. While there was little interaction between villagers and the local government bureaucracy, court cases continued to be heard before the council chairman in the sub-parish. A version of the state was maintained from below rather than above. Oledai was not an example of villagers retreating from the state; so much as it was an example of the state retreating from the village. And in a situation with the parish chief was absent, taxes not collected and public works neglected, the personage of the village council chairman nonetheless continued to matter in determining the outcome of disputes. Villagers regarded the elected council chairman as a legitimate and important authority when it came to organising politics at the local-level, and in many respects the work of the village council was a version of the state whose history dated back to the 1930s, and whose continued presence relied more on the actions of villagers rather than the interventions of the local government bureaucracy.

Oledai stands apart from those accounts of rural Africa that view local developments as largely a response or reaction to a coercive or developmental state. Villagers were much further from the workings of the state bureaucracy: cotton, taxation, public works, development schemes, and the connection between the countryside and the army had all fallen away. Oledai was not a place where development projects had transformed village politics, nor was it a place where the state bureaucracy had usurped civil society (cf. Ferguson, 1992; Kasfir, 1976; Escobar, 1995; Fairhead, 2000). Instead, the political and civil bureaucracies that made up the Ugandan state appeared to have become largely uninterested in maintaining a consistent presence in the countryside. The sorts of coercion that had been necessary for the upkeep of the state during the colonial period no longer appeared to matter (Mamdani, 1996).

In explaining the absence of the bureaucratic state, it is important to recognise that Uganda's civil and political bureaucracies have, over many years, been turned outwards towards dependence on subventions from foreign governments. This pattern of extraversion, where the parish chief relies on the district government, and the district government relies on central government, while the central government relies on foreign governments, predated the current administration, though it should be said that the level of

extraversion under Museveni is of a different order to that found under Obote, Amin, or the colonial administration. By 2002 locally raised taxes paid for less than two percent of local government expenditures (according to the financial returns for 2002).²⁹⁸ It is consequently of more use to think of the state as a weak and distracted bureaucratic presence in the countryside, a point Goran Hyden makes in his earlier work on political developments in rural Tanzania (Hyden 1980).

The thesis has revolved around two premises: that the state is a weak bureaucratic presence in rural Uganda, and that local-level politics is an “open-ended” business, better understood through investigating a range of institutional spaces and activities (see also, Thiele, 1986; Berry, 1993). In the concluding chapter, I would like to flesh out these premises by revisiting earlier sections of the thesis, looking at churches and their part in the changing landscape of local politics, as well as burial societies and their significance in the years after the insurgency. There is also a discussion of the vocabulary used to describe and explain institutional development and change at the local-level. What follows restates the central point of the thesis, namely that a more “open-ended” approach to politics, one that treats the role of the state with greater scepticism, offers a more useful framework for studying political development and change at the local-level. What this says about much of the available research on political developments in Uganda is touched upon in the final paragraphs.

CHURCHES AS PART OF THE CHANGING POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Though earlier ethnographies of the Teso region avoided discussing the role of churches, there was no denying their importance in the sub-parish during the months of fieldwork. The growth of Pentecostal Christianity since the mid 1980s represented a remarkable change in the institutional landscape of the village. Pentecostalism, which stood for a more rule-bound and committed form of Christianity than otherwise found in the Catholic or Anglican churches affected not only the lives of church members, but also brought about deep changes in the wider political landscape. Chapters 4 and 5 discussed the participation of born-again Christians, not only in church, but also in the broader political field of the village.

²⁹⁸ Kumi District Development Report 2006/2007 (2002): 21.

In individual case studies, I described how Omadi John Francis (page 125) used the church as a stepping off point into a political career, a way of approaching the much broader question of how to become a “big man”. I also discussed how the Pentecostal church helped to settle the inheritance dispute that had arisen between a father and son, Okello John and Omoding Justin (page 129). In these cases it was possible to see the lives of church members, and the identity of born-again Christians, intersecting with the work of the local courts, and with kinship-based arrangements in the sub-parish. In fairly mundane ways, churches offered a place where help could be found during the planting season, where support could be built up for an impending court case, or where questions of conflict within the household could be negotiated.

A key contention in the thesis has been that Pentecostalism affected not only change in the PAG church but also Catholic and Anglican congregations. Chapter 5 argued that these mainline churches had seen a period of renewal and revival. This could be seen as a response and reaction to the growth of Pentecostalism, and mainline churches had taken on many of the rules and regulations of Pentecostalism. Church members, in what had once been more marginal and conservative congregations, pointed to a growing charismaticism, and to the tightening up of rules regarding membership and proper behaviour. The enforcement of the rules on burial prayers, the requirement of attendance at church, or the punishment of those who strayed reflected both the political and spiritual challenge posed by born-again Christianity, and a concerted attempt to appropriate and institutionalise some of the signs and values of Pentecostalism.

At the same time, it was also argued in the thesis that developments in the Pentecostal or mainline churches affected the sub-parish in other ways. At the individual level born-again Christians achieved prominence in the village council and in the burial society committees, and in so doing changed the quality and character of these institutions. Omadi’s presence on the village council, or the work of the lay reader of the Anglican church at Edotun’s burial, changed, albeit in subtle ways, the reputation of the village court and the popular legitimacy of burials. More generally it would be argued that the prevailing discourse of propriety within Pentecostalism, and the religious codes and values promoted by charismatic Catholics and Anglicans, gave substance to the idea of what constituted a proper burial, or what was considered appropriate and respectable behaviour in the village court. Changes in the religious sphere mattered elsewhere.

In describing and analysing the ways in which mainline churches have *borrowed* from Pentecostalism, or the more general influence of religious institutions across the local

political landscape, I have suggested the usefulness of a more “open-ended” approach to the study of politics. While a number of academics working on Pentecostalism have taken the exclusionary doctrine of born-again Christianity as indicative of the ways in which Pentecostal Christians live their lives, it is useful to approach churches in a more “open-ended” way, placing church membership alongside other affiliations and obligations.²⁹⁹ That Pentecostal Christians engaged in other institutional spaces in the sub-parish and used their born-again identity to good effect suggests the complexity of the local political landscape.

In explaining the increasing importance of proper behaviour, something that has found expression in the success of Pentecostal Christianity, and the increasingly rule-bound nature of the mainline churches, the thesis also reflected on the experience of the insurgency. The memory of violence from this time had had a profound impact on the lives of villagers, and offered an obvious explanation for the particular trajectory of institutional developments in the sub-parish since the early 1990s. In both public and private discourse, ideas of propriety and seniority, of living a respectable life, and of making younger men show due deference to the courts or churches, suggested the desire to make a break with the memory of the insurgency, time when hierarchies were challenged and old certainties overturned. The shock of the insurgency, the knowledge that younger men from within the sub-parish were responsible for much of the violence, forms part of the explanation as to why churches had been able to tighten up rules in the 1990s, why Pentecostalism had achieved greater degree of political legitimacy, and why villagers had sought to transform the ways in which their dead were buried.

BURIALS AND THE CHANGING POLITICS OF THE PAST

Far-removed from questions of decentralisation, or state-led development, the question of what constitute a proper burial preoccupied villagers. Burial societies were the most striking and significant development in the life of the village, and the concern with having a burial which was marked out by the full participation of the village and by the pulling together of an elaborate system of rituals and requirements, signalled a change in the economic and political landscape of the area. More money was paid to burial societies than either village

²⁹⁹ For a discussion of Pentecostal notions of the self see Meyer (1999). There is also a rich tradition of church-based studies in the literature on Pentecostalism (for example, Gifford, 1994). The literature on Pentecostalism, migration and transnationalism has come to dominate the literature, obscuring, perhaps, local transformations (for example, van Dijk, 1997, or Corten and Marshall-Fratani, 2001).

churches or the Ugandan state (see table 6.1 on page 169). They had established a public space at the centre of life in the village, where a range of political concerns could be addressed, often in new ways.

Chapter 6 used the example of the killing of Edotun Jackson, to discuss how this public space changed the situation of Edotun's mother. After Edotun's death, Atai Helen had found herself responsible for meeting the costs of burying her only son, and the costs of dealing with the police and hospital. Her son's death also meant Atai was left without someone to guarantee the land she had been farming (it is customary for land to be held by a male member of the *ateker*). Atai, as a widow without a son was under pressure from the *ateker* chairman to give up her son's land. I argued that in Atai's case the burial society proved itself a worthy insurance scheme, helping Atai with the costs of burial, the police, and the hospital. More than this, though, the burial society also provided Atai with a public arena where her case could be discussed.

At the heart of the development of burial societies was the knowledge that an orderly burial offered a purposive contrast to the way the dead were buried during the insurgency. The insurgency was a time when rebels had refused proper burials to those they had killed during the insurgency, and when the situation in the internment camps forced many villagers to bury family members in communal pits. As such the development of burial societies acquired ideological significance because they offered a visible way of making a break with the past. Alongside the growing importance of decent burials, there was also an emphasis on respect for "big men", and on a more codified and formal sort of Christianity, and it is possible to argue that all of these developments drew legitimacy from their opposition to the violence of the insurgency.

EXPLAINING INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Throughout the thesis I have relied on a vocabulary to describe development and change in the institutional landscape of the sub-parish that brings together historical, institutional and individual explanations for the way institutions both persist and change.

The village council borrowed from judicial practices that had been built up in a number of more informal judicial spaces, such as public discussions, the clan courts, and public moots. This can be thought of as the historicity of the political landscape where there was a persistence to certain logics, structures and practices over time (Bayart 1993). For example,

when the village council was established in 1937, it quickly took on the role of a court. The council's role as a court continued to define the work of later versions of the village council. Thomas Bierschenk and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan argue this point when they suggest that socially embedded institutions have an essentially sedimentary character (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan, 2003). Institutional forms are better thought of as the accumulation, or accretion, of logics, structures and practices over time, rather than as an institutionalised version of a piece of legislation. Though the local government system had been centralised in the 1960s, militarised in the 1970s, and decentralised in the 1980s, the village council continued to serve as a judicial space for the mediation of disputes.

Alongside the sort of argument that emphasises the historical reasons for a certain continuity in the local landscape, it is also important to recognise that *new* developments reflect what is already available in the area. A new church or a burial society bears more than a passing resemblance to the village court, or already established churches. The development of a burial society or a Pentecostal church can be thought of as an act of *bricolage*, where new institutional forms borrow from old ones (Cleaver, 2003; Moore, 1986; Douglas, 1987). For as well as borrowing from the structures and practices already found in their own history, institutions can be thought of as assembled from the bric-a-brac of what is found in other institutional arrangements. The new Pentecostal church, an otherwise radical and oppositional sort of institution, partly resembled the forms and functions of other local-level institutions. The particular structure of the Pentecostal church committee, the schedule of Sunday services or weekly meetings, the collection and handling of funds all borrowed from other churches in the area, the village court and the changing landscape of customary arrangements.

The importance of improvisation or innovation has been emphasised throughout the thesis. Improvisation was particularly apparent in the setting up of burial societies. Those who participated at the start borrowed from their own experiences of participating in the burial societies of neighbouring areas during the insurgency. It could also be seen in the way a number of rules and regulations had been quite consciously borrowed from the workings of other institutions. The ways in which shirkers were disciplined consciously copied earlier forms of punishment in the local government system (with a rope being placed around the waist of the defaulter), while the use of "auditors" and the fight against "corruption" showed villagers using the prevailing discourse of development work and government reforms to bring about changes in the organisation of burials.

In practice, of course, these analytical distinctions bleed into one another. What is borrowed from one institutional form also reflects on the history of another. The committee of a burial society, for example, comes to resemble the committee of an *ateker*, because the work of the *ateker* committee has been built up in the sub-parish over several decades. Thus *bricolage* and sedimentation manage to cut into each other as explanations for institutional developments. It is also possible to think of the way committees, which tend to be somewhat similar, depend not only on subconscious examples of *institutional bricolage*, but also on the way individual villagers conscientiously work to establish new institutional arrangements, borrowing what they understand to be useful and appropriate.

SEEING AROUND THE STATE

If we think back to the first page of the thesis, where I described my frustrations with my original research question, and my puzzlement at the unimportance of government reforms, it is obvious that the research has undergone some sort of metamorphosis. Instead of attempting to explain local-level transformations through the lens of the state, and the policies of decentralisation and democratisation, I have begun to develop an approach to politics that offers similar treatment to a fairly disparate range of institutions. I have argued that churches and burial societies as much as the village council form part of the changing political landscape of the sub-parish, and the thesis has consequently gravitated towards a view of politics as an open-ended business, best explored through a range of activities.

Though this may seem an obvious point of departure, it is surprising how little attention has been paid to institutions other than the state, in recent work on local politics in Uganda (see, for example, Regan, 1998; Saito, 2003; Wunsch and Ottemoeller, 2004). The earlier body of work to which Southall, Middleton and Vincent all made important contributions, and which suggested a more open-ended approach has given way to a more narrow and refined research agenda.³⁰⁰ In the literature which I have often found myself writing against, political developments in the Ugandan countryside have come to be regarded, first and foremost, as a reaction to changing government policies (Golooba-Mutebi, 1999; Langseth et al., 1995; Villadsen and Lubanga (eds), 1996), where an interest in decentralisation or the delivery of public services has obscured other developments.

³⁰⁰ If current research on “development” in Uganda is set against the literature from the 1960s and 1970s, the foreshortening of the academic terrain becomes clear. The breadth of the major texts published in and around the time after independence—Southall (1956), la Fontaine (1959), Middleton (1960, 1965), Vincent (1968, 1982), Brett (1973), Kasfir (1976)—suggests both the poverty of recent work, and the possibility for a more catholic approach to the study of politics in the future.

As such, though the thesis has attempted to step around the logics and frameworks set out by developmental debates, such debates continue to dominate the literature on political development in Uganda. It would appear that the incentives that lie behind much of the academic thinking on Uganda, (rather like the incentives that guide the state bureaucracy in Uganda), have become distracted towards the concerns of the donor community.³⁰¹ Instead of research being framed in a way that investigates actual changes that have occurred in Uganda, such as the religious transformations that have taken hold in the towns and the countryside, research has come to reflect the rather partial logics of a policy-oriented bureaucracy. The narrowness of the terrain is seen not only in the cursory treatment of religious institutions; but also in the view that government policies must have significance in the countryside. Though it would appear that the agenda for research has shifted in recent months, away from a favourable view of the Museveni government, towards a more critical view of the one-party state, such a turn around has not yet opened up research on developments in Uganda to reflect the range of developments and changes that have affected rural areas in recent years.

Though it is not the intention of the thesis to argue that bureaucracies are without importance, or that donor interventions do not matter (in many ways my arguments on extraversion would suggest the reverse), it is instructive to set to one side the logics that have guided so many of the studies of political change in Uganda over the past decade. Where change does occur, it need not be related, first and foremost, to the work of government officials, district politicians or development workers, and it may well be the case that it is in its *absences* that the state matters most. In Oledai the weakness of the state bureaucracy has denied villagers access to the sorts of services that might have brought improvements to their lives. And yet this absence has also meant that villagers have escaped the coercive bureaucratic relationships that marked out earlier experiences of state administration.

A more workable proposition would be to suggest that the state bureaucracy in Uganda is mostly uninterested in developments at the local-level; that rather like the academics who study it, the state in Uganda has been turned outwards, towards the logics and incentives

³⁰¹ Indeed, if we think about the ways in which researchers enter Uganda, which is to say through NGO-sponsored work, development projects, World Bank background reports, collaborative research efforts, or as private consultants, then the first encounter with "Uganda" comes through the state bureaucracy. From this biased entry point, it becomes clear why there has been a tendency to overstate the importance of the state. On a very mundane level dealing with the Uganda National Council of Science and Technology, with immigration office, or with the line ministries and university departments, makes the state appear much more a part of life in Uganda, than it actually is.

that pervade a donor-funded economy. Instead it can be argued that many of the developments that have significance at the local-level can be found in logics, structures and practices that are unrelated to the government and its work in the countryside. In Oledai the declining influence of the state, has meant that customary and religious institutions have increasingly defined the parameters for political action. Villagers operated in a constrained environment, one of limited opportunities where there was little overlap between what has been written about development in Uganda and the actual experience of what it is to live in the countryside. In such a place politics is better viewed across a more disparate set of institutional spaces—churches, courts, burial societies—spaces that nonetheless continue to provide the landscape wherein public goals are pursued.



Plate 8: A villager from Oledai sub-parish sells millet grain. The venue is the fortnightly market outside Ngora. Farmers from attended the market across the sub-county.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEWS

a) Interviews: sub-parish of Oledai

Name	Position	Institution / Subject	Date	Age	Gender	Ateker	Wealth ranking*	Interview language
Akorikin John Vincent	Village council chairman	Oledai sub-parish council	21.08.02	46	Male	Ogoria	9	English
Akorikin John Vincent	Village council chairman	Oledai sub-parish council	30.09.02	46	Male	Ogoria	9	English
Akorikin John Vincent	Village council chairman	Oledai sub-parish council	25.09.02	46	Male	Ogoria	9	English
Esukau Pius	Head Catechist	St. Aloysius, Catholic	20.08.02	n/a	Male	n/a	n/a	English
Ongenge George W.	Lay reader	Kaderun, Anglican	22.10.02	n/a	Male	n/a	n/a	English
Anguria George William	Pastor	Nyamongo, Pentecostal	27.08.02	45	Male	n/a	n/a	English
Otoi Anthony	Ex-council chairman	Oledai sub-parish council	02.12.02	70	Male	Atekok	1	English
Ikara Patrick	Catechist	Nyamongo, Roman Catholic	04.12.02	58	Male	n/a	n/a	English
Ichodio Stephen	Ateker chairman	Ipagitok	30.08.02	70	Male	Ipagitok	n/a	English
Okiria Fastine	Ateker chairman	Ichaak	29.08.02	45	Male	Ichaak	n/a	Ateso
Okitoi Gabriel	Ateker chairman	Ogoria	28.08.02	65	Male	Ogoria	24	English
Oberei Fastine	Ateker chairman	Atekok	30.08.02	55	Male	Atekok	94	Ateso

Name	Position	Institution / Subject	Date	Age	Gender	Ateker	Wealth ranking*	Interview language
Akol Florence	Ateker member	Atekok	20.08.02	35	Female	Atekok	85	Ateso
Amuge Gabdesia	Ateker member	Atekok	22.08.02	60	Female	Atekok	68	Ateso
Olaro Merabu	Ateker member	Atekok	28.08.02	70	Female	Atekok	11	Ateso
Omong Cyprian	Ateker member	Atekok	20.08.02	75	Male	Atekok	98	Ateso
Asige Martha	Ateker member	Ichaak	22.08.02	55	Female	Ichaak	51	English
Tino Rose	Ateker member	Ichaak	23.08.02	60	Female	Ichaak	100	Ateso
Okaleke Peter	Ateker member	Ichaak	11.09.02	31	Male	Ichaak	n/a	Ateso
Amulen Jane	Ateker member	Ichaak	23.08.02	23	Female	Ichaak	57	Ateso
Aguti Jennifer	Ateker member	Ikures	27.08.02	50	Female	Ikures	40	Ateso
Omuron John Simple	Ateker member	Ikures	17.09.02	35	Male	Ikures	48	Ateso
Akello Joyce	Ateker member	Ikures	24.08.02	24	Female	Ipagitok	29	Ateso
Auma Agripa	Ateker member	Inyila	21.08.02	50	Female	Inyila	27	English
Odongo Emmanuel	Ateker member	Ipagitok	22.08.02	59	Male	Ipagitok	46	English
Okalebo Lawrence	Ateker member	Ipagitok	12.09.02	40	Male	Ipagitok	76	English
Papa Ogwapit	Ateker member	Ogoria	21.08.02	75	Male	Ogoria	6	Ateso
Okurut Gereson Nairobi	Ateker member	Ogoria	23.08.02	85	Male	Ogoria	3	Ateso
Oonyu Joseph	Ateker member	Ogoria	27.08.02	62	Male	Ogoria	12	Ateso

Name	Position	Institution / Subject	Date	Age	Gender	Ateker	Wealth ranking*	Interview language
Echai Charles	Congregant	Kaderun, Anglican	06.09.02	28	Male	Irarak	41	Ateso
Kokoi Magret	Congregant	Kaderun, Anglican	10.09.02	56	Female	Atekok	55	Ateso
Amujal Joyce	Congregant	Kaderun, Anglican	24.10.02	60	Female	Ogoria	22	Ateso
Ojilong John Cocas	Congregant	Kaderun, Anglican	14.10.02	48	Male	Ogoria	21	English
Atai Helen	Congregant	Kaderun, Anglican	02.09.02	57	Female	Ogoria	119	Ateso
Apolot Helen	Congregant	Nyamongo, Pentecostal	28.01.03	24	Female	Ichaak	88	Ateso
Akol Jane	Congregant	Nyamongo, Pentecostal	04.02.02	25	Female	n/a	n/a	Ateso
Aguti Betty	Congregant	Nyamongo, Pentecostal	04.10.02	62	Female	n/a	n/a	Ateso
Omureje Charles	Congregant	Nyamongo, Pentecostal	09.08.02	28	Male	Atekok	84	Ateso
Ejobi Felix	Congregant	Nyamongo, Pentecostal	04.08.02	26	Male	Ichaak	101	Ateso
Omadi John Francis	Congregant	Nyamongo, Pentecostal	23.01.03	30	Male	Ichaak	88	English
Aujo Joyce Mary	Congregant	Nyamongo, Pentecostal	31.10.02	n/a	Female	n/a	n/a	Ateso
Adelo Vincent	Congregant	Nyamongo, RC	05.09.02	31	Male	Ikures	28	Ateso
Ejobi Ben	Congregant	Nyamongo, Roman Catholic	10.09.02	43	Male	n/a	82	Ateso
Akello Joyce	Congregant	Nyamongo, Roman Catholic	11.09.02	38	Female	Ikures	29	Ateso
Amulen Immaculate	Congregant	Nyamongo, Roman Catholic	11.10.02	55	Female	n/a	n/a	Ateso

Name	Position	Institution / Subject	Date	Age	Gender	Ateker	Wealth ranking*	Interview language
Opolot William	Parent	Nyamongo PS	18.09.02	71	Male	Ichaak	66	Ateso
Otai Gerefansio	Parent	Nyamongo PS	19.09.02	56	Male	n/a	n/a	Ateso
Agelun Gilbert	Parent	Onyede PS	19.09.02	40	Male	Irarak	35	Ateso
Atikiro Silver	Parent	Township PS	16.09.02	46	Male	Atekok	63	English
Amongin Rose	Parent	Township PS	17.09.02	30	Female	n/a	n/a	Ateso
Odongo Emmanuel	Constituent	Sub-parish system	10.10.02	59	Male	Ipagitok	46	English
Amuge Immaculate	Constituent	Sub-parish system	14.10.02	50	Female	Ogoria	16	Ateso
Malinga John	Constituent	Sub-county system	12.10.02	25	Male	Atekok	80	Ateso
Emukwajo Gilbert	Constituent	Sub-county system	18.10.02	40	Male	Ogoria	4	English
Apinyi Bena Lucy	Constituent	Sub-county system	10.10.02	n/a	Female	n/a	n/a	Ateso
Alemu James	Constituent	Sub-county system	19.11.02	n/a	Male	n/a	n/a	English
Apio Janet Loy	Constituent	Sub-county system	25.09.02	28	Female	Ikures	98	Ateso
Atai Helen	Mother of Edotun	Oledai sub-parish	27.01.03	57	Female	Ogoria	119	Ateso
Ibuchet Max	Ateker elder	Oledai sub-parish	09.01.03	45	Male	Ikures	25	English
Omogor Alfred	land case (ch. 3)	Oledai sub-parish	03.21.02	61	Female	Ogoria	23	English

Name	Position	Institution / Subject	Date	Age	Gender	Ateker	Wealth ranking*	Interview language
Akia Melissa	land case (ch. 3)	Oledai sub-parish	03.24.02	n/a	Female	n/a	n/a	Ateso
Akol Stanislas	court case (ch. 3)	Oledai sub-parish	14.01.03	28	Male	Ikures	92	English
Okelai Samuel	career case (ch. 5)	Oledai sub-parish	04.12.02	28	Male	Ipagitok	101	English
Apulugeresia	career case (ch. 5)	Oledai sub-parish	13.12.02	61	Female	Ipagitok	66	Ateso

* ranking is out of 126 households

b) Interviews: sub-parish of Agolitom

Name	Position	Institution / Subject	Date	Age	Gender	Ateker
Edoket James	village council chairman	Agolitom village council	25.09.02	45	Male	Igolitoma
Opolot Jorem Onoria Orata	ateker leader	Ikuruka	26.09.02	61	Male	Ikuruka
Ogwang Yapesi	ateker leader	Isaalin	29.09.02	66	Male	Isaalin
Opio John Peter	ateker leader	Ikuruka	04.09.02	56	Male	Ikuruka
Oturukeyi Joseph	ateker leader	Igolitoma	12.11.02	62	Male	Igolitoma
Okitor Ben Isaac	ateker member	Igolitoma	02.09.02	45	Male	Igolitoma

Name	Position	Institution / Subject	Date	Age	Gender	Ateker
Erigu William	ateker member	Igolitoma	03.09.02	40	Male	Igolitoma
Amuchu Magret	ateker member	Iarak	05.09.02	40	Female	Iarak
Obokoya James Peter	ateker member	Isaalin	06.09.02	25	Male	Isaalin
Apii Joyce Mary	ateker member	Ikuruka	23.09.02	40	Female	Ikuruka
Opolot Joseph	ateker member	Imosingo	24.09.02	60	Male	Imosingo
Oluka Charles	ateker member	Ikuruka	24.09.02	22	Male	Ikuruka
Akiteng Magret	ateker member	Isaalin	27.09.02	50	Female	Isaalin
Iriere Benfiers	ateker member	Imaatok	27.09.02	71	Male	Imaatok
Okedi Justin	ateker member	Igolitoma	30.09.02	71	Male	Igolitoma
Egune Emmanuel	ateker member	Imukura	15.10.02	37	Male	Imukura
Okello Naphali	ateker member	Imukura	09.09.02	54	Male	Imukura
Awayo Helen	ateker member	Imaatok	01.11.02	82	Female	Imaatok
Ogwang Sidon	parent	Agolitom PS	30.09.02	82	Male	Imukura
Opila Gideon	parent	Agolitom PS	02.10.02	72	Male	Imaatok
Agwang Janet Mary	parent	Agolitom PS	04.10.02	56	Female	Igolitoma
Anyago Helen	parent	Agolitom PS	07.10.02	25	Female	Igolitoma
Okiror Peter and Akora James	parents	Agolitom PS	30.10.02	n/a	Male	n/a

Name	Position	Institution / Subject	Date	Age	Gender	Ateker
Oonyu Tom	lay reader	Kalengo, Anglican	04.12.02	58	Male	Imukura
Emiku James	assembly Leader	Okwii PAG	02.10.02	56	Male	Isaalin
Okedi George William	assembly Leader	Christ Disciples	17.10.02	46	Male	Igolitoma
Akol James	assembly Leader	Christ Foundation Ministry	21.11.02	22	Female	Imukura
Akello Joyce Mary	member	Okwii PAG	07.10.02	53	Female	Isaalin
Odongo John Robert	member	St. Peters, RC	10.10.02	62	Male	Ikaribwok
Aguti Betty	member	Christ Foundation Ministry	04.10.02	35	Female	Imosingo
Aujo Joyce Mary	member	Christ Foundation Ministry	31.10.02	28	Female	Igolitoma
Ojilong John Cocas	member	Kalengo, Anglican	14.10.02	65	Male	Igolitoma
Abeikes Suzan	member	St. Peters, RC	14.10.02	18	Female	Isaalin
Ochola William	member	Kalengo, Anglican	18.10.02	70	Male	Imukura
Atim Emmimah Loy	member	Christ Disciples	21.10.02	62	Female	Igolitoma
Amujal Mary	member	Kalengo, Anglican	24.10.02	63	Female	Igolitoma
Amulen Immaculate	member	St. Peters, RC	11.10.02	24	Female	Imosingo
Etiang Ben	member	Kalengo, Anglican	23.10.02	25	Male	Imukura
Abeso Angela	constituent	Sub-county system	25.10.02	45	Female	Isaalin

Name	Position	Institution / Subject	Date	Age	Gender	Areker
Okello Naphthali	constituent	Sub-county system	25.10.02	55	Male	Isaalin
Amulen Veronica	constituent	Sub-county system	28.10.02	26	Female	Imosingo
Chipa Deborah Rose	constituent	Sub-county system	28.10.02	60	Female	Imukura

c) Interviews: others

Name	Position	Institution	Date
Orot Ishmael	district council chairman	Kumi District Government	28.01.03
Richard Ojilong	district planner	Kumi District Government	23.01.03
Ilak Benjamin	district education officer	Kumi District Government	22.01.03
Auruku Peter	district schools inspector	Kumi District Government	21.01.03
Ilak Benjamin	district education officer	Kumi District Government	22.01.03
Agellan-Akwap Daniel	sub-county council chairman	Ngora Sub-County	21.01.03
Ojala Lambert	sub-county chief	Ngora Sub-County	22.01.03
Aogon Sam	water engineer	Vision Terudo (NGO)	25.01.03
Okello Omoding Godfrey	co-ordinator	Ireland Aid (Kumi District)	29.01.03
Father Bernard Phelan	former missionary	Mill Hill Fathers	20.08.01
Father Bernard Phelan	former missionary	Mill Hill Fathers	18.06.02

d) Participants in group discussions in Oledai (conducted in Ateso)

Topic	Social category	Date	Name of participant
bush war	young men	12.12.02	Alito Fastine Ekadait Francis Ekongo John Charles Oluka Lawrence Etonu Simon Adelei George Patrick Adelo George Michael
	old women	10.12.02	Akia Kevina Atai Helen Akol Florence Amuge Gabdesia

	old men	11.12.02	Odongo Emmanuel Ogii Adolf Okiror Pascal Omong Cyprian Okaleke William Agama Pascal Ichodio Stephen Okiror Agustino
period of internment	young men	20.12.02	Alito Fastine Ekongo Charles Ekedait Francis Adelo George Achinga Woman
	old women	18.12.02	Atim Claudia Atai Helen Akia Kevina Agonyo Jesca Norah Akol Florence Amuge Gabdesia
	old men	13.12.02	Odongo Emmanuel Ichodio Stephen Okiror Agustino Agama Pascal Opedun Paulo Oonyu Joseph Angiro Silver Tukei Gerald Omong Cyprian
present-day institutions	bicycle taxi men	31.05.02	Amuja John Max Ipuu Omuwen Joseph Edotun Jackson
	young women	23.05.02	Alupo Suzan Agwang Jane Florence Akadet Christine Elizabeth Akol Helen Magret Amongin Florence Akola Salome Rose Angida Godlive Akol Florence Apiede Jesca Mary Asio Emmimah Loyce Amulen Jane Ikiring Betty Apolot Hellen Betty

	old women (mainly widows)	17.05.02	Aturo Magret Atim Claudia Asige Martha Imalingat Gabdesia Olinga Justine Amuge Gabdesia Akello Gorety Akol Engarai Agonyo Jesca Norah Isukau Norah Acham Angela Rose
	old men	16.05.02	Ogii Adolf Omong Cyprian Okiror Pascal Okaleke William Opolot William Okiror Samuel Opolot Joseph Okiror Agustino Alito Jacob
unstructured	old women	04.06.02	Isukau Norah Imalingat Gabdesia Asige Martha Kia Kevina Akol Florence (Otai)

e) Participants in group discussions in Agolitom (conducted in Ateso)

Topic	Social category	Date	Name of participant
present-day institutions	old women	06.05.02	Adongo Helen Asio Ketty Loyce Akol Christine Musenero Emmimah Loy Anyago Helen Magret Aluka Maureen Adongo Angela Atim Debra Kokole Esther Catherine
	old men	07.05.02	Ogwang Yapesi Okedi John Olupot Eugenio Akol John Opolot Joseph Pistler Malinga Pius Iriere Benifers

	bicycle taxi (<i>boda boda</i>) men	08.05.02	Mau Mau Ojakol Otim Osingada Okuda John
bush war	old men	06.11.02	Okedi Justin Olupot Eugenio Akol John Malinga Pius Ongole Israel Obokoya Joseph Opetor John Michael Okolimong Agustino Okedi John
	bicycle taxi (<i>boda boda</i>) men	08.11.02	Ojakol Samuel Otim Edward Osingada Mau Mau Okuda John
	old women	10.11.02	Angejet Jennifer Loy Agwang Jane Akiteng Rose Debra Akurut Domitila Akello Joyce Mary Katoko Lemeteria Amuchu Magret Agwang Janet Mary Akokole Esther Apii Joyce Mary
period of internment	bicycle taxi (<i>boda boda</i>) men	15.11.02	Ojakol Samuel Otim Edward Osingada Mau Mau Okuda John
	old women	19.11.02	Katoko Lemeteria Angejet Jennifer Loy Agwang Janet Adongo Christine Apii Joyce Mary Atim Hellen

old men

20.11.02

Ongole Israel
Erigu William
Apetor John Michael
Olupot Eugenio
Okedi Justin
Okolimong Agustino
Erimu John
Obokoya John Peter
Akol John
Egune Emmanuel

APPENDIX B: SURVEYS

a) household survey

HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

1. INTRODUCTION

*I am working on behalf of a research study and we are talking to people in this area to learn about their daily lives and their communities.. The answers you give us will be kept confidential, and will be used to paint a general picture of life in your community. This survey **does not** involve the Government in Kampala or the Local Government in Kumi or Ngora. The survey is for research purposes only. We are students and are not linked with any development programmes or projects. This study has nothing to do with restocking projects in your area, so you can be open with us on the livestock you have.*

1a. Enumerator's Name.....

1b. Respondent's Name.....

1c. DATE.....(dd/mm/yy)

1d. TIME..... (hh/mm)

1e. AGE OF RESPONDENT.....

1f. SEX OF RESPONDENT.....

1g. ERE NAME (use name of primary responsible person).....

1h. ATEKER
NAME.....

1i. if polygynous include ETOGO NAME (name of the primary responsible person in the etogo)

1j. If polygynous, **how many ITOGOI?**

1k. How long has respondent lived in this area/community (**excluding the insurgency period, when people were moved to camps?**)

1l. Is the respondent the head of household (**please circle appropriate answer**)?

Yes

No

If no: 1m. Name of head of Household.....

1n. Sex of head of Household?.....

1o. Age of head of Household?.....

1o. Please name two heads of households nearby:

household head 1.....

household head 2.....

1p. Please name five other neighbours (**more than one adult per household can be listed**):

neighbour 1.....

neighbour 2.....

neighbour 3..... neighbour 4.....

neighbour 5.....

1q. Are there any child headed households near you? (please circle correct answer)

Yes

No

If yes, please name the eldest child, if known.....

2. INCOME AND WELFARE

We are now going to ask you a series of questions concerning the food you eat, and the general state of you and your household. We will ask about the food you eat, and as these questions are difficult to be exact please think carefully about your answer.

2a. At the **end of the dry season**, how many meals would you expect to eat in a day?

2b. Over the last **week**, how many of your meals have included meat?

2c. Now in terms of other items, please indicate which of the following goods your **household** used over the past **month** and estimate how many shillings were spent on them:

Fuel / Kerosene.....USh

Cooking Oil.....USh

Salt.....USh

Sugar.....USh

Soap.....USh

Milk.....USh

2d. Do you think these expenses were more or less the same as your normal monthly expenses (please circle correct response)?

Less than normal monthly expenses.....

Typical normal monthly expenses.....

More than normal monthly expenses.....

2e. If your household spends money on education, please indicate (in shillings) how much your household has had to spend for the **present school term** on the following:

School fees, incl. PTA.....USh

Boarding and lodging.....USh

School uniforms.....USh

Books and supplies.....USh

Other educational expenses [SPECIFY: _____]

2f. What type of lighting is normally used in your household (please circle correct answer(s))?

Firewood

Atadoma candle

Paraffin / Kerosene lamp

Candles (wax)

Other [SPECIFY: _____]

2g. What type of cooking fuel is normally used in your household **(please circle correct answer(s))**?

Firewood

Charcoal

Other [SPECIFY: _____]

3. PROPERTY/HOUSE

Now we are going to ask a series of questions about the house you live in and any other property you may own?

3a. Do you **own** the house you live in **(please circle correct answer)**?

Yes

No

If no, where do you live?

in a house owned by someone else (if so, please describe that person and relationship to individual)

move from place to place.....

do not have anywhere to live.....

3b. Please indicate **how many** of the following your house has?

Communal room.....

Sleeping room.....

Pit toilet.....

Kitchen.....

3c. What is your main source of water **(circle correct answer)**?

Source of water within the home

Borehole Tap

Protected natural source

Unprotected natural source

3d. Please indicate what materials your house is made of? Please list all **(this can be done by the person writing down the answers without having to ask the respondent, unless necessary)**.

Roof (circle which apply)

Tiles

Thatch / Reed roof

Tin / Iron roof

Cement

Other [SPECIFY: _____]

Walls (circle which apply)

Thatched

Mud and Poles

Un-burnt bricks

Burnt bricks with mud

Burnt bricks with cement

Other [SPECIFY: _____]

Floor (circle which apply)

Earth

Earth and cow dung

Cement

Other [SPECIFY: _____]

3e. Do you own any other **buildings / homes** other than the one you are living in now (**circle correct answer**)?

Yes

No

(If **yes**, please describe the number of buildings and the number of rooms?)

Number of buildings.....

Total number of rooms.....

4. ACCESS TO ROADS

4a. Is your household easily accessible by roads all year long, only during certain seasons, or not at all (**please circle correct answer**)?

Yes, through the year

Yes, only during certain seasons

No, not easily accessible

4b How would you rate the general condition of roads in your area (**please circle correct number**)?

Very bad 1

Bad 2

About average 3

Good 4

Very good 5

5. ASSETS

5a. Now we are going to ask some questions about what your household owns. Does your household own any of the following items?

A bicycle.....

A television.....

A telephone / mobile phone.....

A radio.....

A sewing machine.....

A watch or clock.....

Sponge Mattress (incl. number)

Cotton Mattress (incl. number)

Grass Mattress (incl. number)

Mat (incl. number)

Iron box.....

5b. Now we are going to ask you about any **animals** that you may own. We would like you to tell us whether you or your household own any of the following livestock and if so, how many?

Cows (incl. number).....

Bulls – **household owned** (incl. number).....

Bulls – **shared with other households** (incl. number).....

Oxen (incl. number).....

Sheep (incl. number).....

Goats (incl. number).....

Pigs (incl. number).....

Chickens (incl. number).....

Turkeys (incl. number).....

Pigeons (incl. number).....

Other [SPECIFY: _____]

We are now going to ask about things that **your household owned in 1991**, at the end of the insurgency period (when the camps were disbanded)

5c. Did your household own any of the following, when the internment camps were disbanded (1991)?

A bicycle.....

A television.....

A telephone / mobile phone.....

A radio.....

A sewing machine.....

A watch or clock.....

Sponge Mattress (incl. number)

Cotton Mattress (incl. number)

Grass Mattress (incl. number)

Mat (incl. number)

Iron box.....

If no answer to 5c, please explain why (e.g. household did not exist) _____

5d. Now we are going to ask you about any animals that **your household owned in 1991**, at the end of the insurgency period. We would like you to tell us whether your household owned any of the following and if so, how many?

Cows (incl. number).....
Bulls – **household owned** (incl. number).....
Bulls – **shared with other households** (incl. number).....
Oxen (incl. number).....
Sheep (incl. number).....
Goats (incl. number).....
Pigs (incl. number).....
Chickens (incl. number).....
Turkeys (incl. number).....
Pigeons (incl. number).....
Other [SPECIFY: _____]

If no answer to 5d, please explain why _____

We are now going to ask about things that **your household owned in 1985**, just before the beginning of the major Karamojong raids/insurgency period.

5e. Did your household own any of the following just before the beginning of the Karamojong raids/insurgency period (**1985**)?

A bicycle.....
A television.....
A telephone / mobile phone.....
A radio.....
A sewing machine.....
A watch or clock.....
Sponge Mattress (incl. number)
Cotton Mattress (incl. number)
Grass Mattress (incl. number)
Mat (incl. number)
Iron box.....

If no answer to 5e, please explain why _____

5f. Now we are going to ask you about any animals that your household owned **in 1985**, just before the Karamojong raids/insurgency period started in 1985. We would like you to tell us whether your household owned any of the following and if so, how many?

217

..... (sacks / basins / baskets) delete as appropriate

*We are now going to ask questions about other land you may own but **do not work on yourself**.*

6e. Do you own any land which you **DO NOT** cultivate on a regular basis (please circle correct answer)?

Yes

No

6f. If **yes**, what do you use this land for?

Paying others to farm the land for you.....

Renting to others (if so what is the yearly rent in Ush).....USh

Lending to other family members

Lending to other people outside the family group [if so, specify who and relation to individual].....

Other [Please explain]

7. DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE HOUSEHOLD HEAD

7a. What is the literacy status of the **HOUSEHOLD HEAD** (please circle correct answer)?

Neither able to read nor write

Able to read only

Able to write only

Able to read and write

7b. How much formal schooling has the **HOUSEHOLD HEAD** had (please circle correct answer)?

None

Primary

Lower Secondary

Higher Secondary

University/college or more

Vocational/technical

7c. How many people live in the household?

ADULT MEN.....
(18 and over)

ADULT WOMEN.....
(18 and over)

BOYS.....
(17 and under)

GIRLS.....
(17 and under)

TOTAL HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS.....

7d. Of these [____] household members, how many of them are currently in school?

7e. Was the current **HOUSEHOLD HEAD** a **HOUSEHOLD HEAD** in 1991, the time when the camps were disbanded? (please circle correct answer)

Yes

No

If yes, how many people lived in the household?

ADULT MEN.....
(18 and over)

ADULT WOMEN.....
(18 and over)

BOYS.....
(17 and under)

GIRLS.....
(17 and under)

TOTAL HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS.....

7f. Was the current **HOUSEHOLD HEAD** a **HOUSEHOLD HEAD** in 1985, before the insurgency began and before the major Karamojong raids? (please circle correct answer)

Yes

No

If yes, how many people lived in the household?

ADULT MEN.....
(18 and over)

ADULT WOMEN.....
(18 and over)

BOYS.....
(17 and under)

GIRLS.....
(17 and under)

TOTAL HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS.....

7g. Is the **HOUSEHOLD HEAD** currently married, LIVING AS married, widowed, divorced, separated, or never been married (please circle correct answer)?

Single/Never married

Married Monogamous

Married Polygamous

Living as married

Widowed

Divorced/Separated

6h. What is the religion of the **HOUSEHOLD HEAD** (please circle appropriate answer)?

Christian, Catholic

Christian, Church of Uganda

Christian, PAG

Christian, other Protestant [please specify]

Moslem

Traditional African

Other [Please Specify_____]

7i. What is the most important job of the **HOUSEHOLD HEAD**?

Agriculture / Farmer.....

Housewife/Homemaker.....

Business (what business).....

Unemployed.....

Student or Apprentice (where / in what field).....

Retired/Pensioner/Inactive.....

Regular Employee (of who?).....

Casual Employee / Day Labourer (of who?).....

Employer (what business / work).....

Contributing family worker.....

Other [please specify_____]

7j. People also work in other areas besides the ones listed above, for example a woman will not just work at home, but will also go out gardening in the morning. From the following list, please indicate all the other areas in which the **HOUSEHOLD HEAD** works, please **rank** them in terms of importance, where 1 is the most important activity?

Agriculture / Farmer.....

Housewife/Homemaker.....

Business (what business).....

Student or Apprentice (where / in what field).....

Retired/Pensioner/Inactive.....

Regular Employee (of who?).....

Casual Employee / Day Labourer (of who?).....

Employer (what business / work).....

Contributing family worker.....

Other [please specify_____]

7k. Which ethnic group(s) does the **HOUSEHOLD HEAD** belong to (please circle appropriate answer(s))?

Baganda

Basoga

Gisu

Iteso

Langi

Other(s) [Please Specify_____]

7l. What language(s) does the **HOUSEHOLD HEAD** speak (please circle all languages spoken)?

Ateso

English

Luganda

Lusoga

Swahili

Other(s) [please specify_____]

7m. What is the religion of the **HOUSEHOLD HEAD** (please circle appropriate answer)?

Christian, Catholic

Christian, Church of Uganda

Christian, PAG

Christian, other Protestant [please specify]

Moslem

Traditional African

Other [Please Specify_____]

7n. Was the **HOUSEHOLD HEAD** the **HOUSEHOLD HEAD** during the disbandment of the camps in 1991 (please circle correct answer)?

Yes

No

If **yes**, where did the **HOUSEHOLD HEAD** live for most of the insurgency period?

(district) (community / village / town)

7o. Was the **HOUSEHOLD HEAD** the **HOUSEHOLD HEAD** in 1985, just before the Karamojong raids? (please circle correct answer)?

Yes

No

If **yes**, where did the **HOUSEHOLD HEAD** live in 1985, just before the Karamojong raids?

(district) (community / village / town)

7p. What is your households main sources of income (please rank them in terms of importance, where 1 is the most important source of income/support)?

selling farm produce.....

remittances / money sent from relatives (in money only).....

support in kind (e.g. giving of food, soap and salt by relatives).....

sale of assets, e.g. cows.....

salary.....

pension.....
day labouring / garden work for cash.....
business [please specify].....
selling ajon / ewaragi.....
Other [Please Specify_____]

Many thanks for helping us complete this questionnaire. We very much appreciate your time. If you have any questions please let us know and we will try to answer them as best we can. Please also know that over the coming year we will be interviewing villagers to find out more information, so you will have more chances to discuss things that are important to you.

Questions / Comments

SOCIAL NETWORKS SURVEY

1. INTRODUCTION

*I am working on behalf of a research study and we are talking to people in this area to learn about their daily lives and their communities.. The answers you give us will be kept confidential, and will be used to paint a general picture of life in your community. This survey **does not** involve the Government in Kampala or the Local Government in Kumi or Ngora. The survey is for research purposes only. We are students and are not linked with any development programmes or projects. This study has nothing to do with restocking projects in your area, so you can be open with us on the livestock you have.*

1a. Enumerator's Name.....

1b. Respondent's Name.....

1c. DATE.....(dd/mm/yy)

1d. TIME..... (hh/mm)

1e. AGE OF RESPONDENT.....

1f. SEX OF RESPONDENT.....

1g. ERE NAME (use name of primary responsible person).....

1h. ATEKER
NAME.....

1i. if polygynous include ETOGO NAME (name of the primary responsible person in the etogo)

1j. If polygynous, how many ITOGOI?

1k. How long has respondent lived in this area/community (excluding the insurgency period, when people were moved to camps)?

.....

1l. Is the respondent the head of household (please circle appropriate answer)?

Yes

No

If no: 1m. Name of head of Household.....

1n. Sex of head of Household?.....

1o. Age of head of Household?.....

1o. Please name two heads of households nearby:

household head 1.....

household head 2.....

1p. Please name five other neighbours (more than one adult per household can be listed):

neighbour 1.....

neighbour 2.....

neighbour 3.....

neighbour 4.....

neighbour 5.....

1q. Are there any child headed households near you? (please circle correct answer)

Yes

No

If yes, please name the eldest child, if known.....

2. SOCIAL RELATIONS / GROUPS

2a. How many such groups do you belong to?

SOCIAL / CULTURAL GROUPS

NUMBER OF

Religious or spiritual group

[such as a bible reading group, Sunday school teacher, church choir, church committee]

A

Clan based groups

[clan/*ateker*, clan committee/elders]

..... B

Burial society

..... C

Recreational groups

[such as football, music group, e.g. *akogo* group, games group, e.g. *omweso* group]

D

PRODUCTION / FARMING / TRADING

Production group

[such as cooperatives, farmers groups organising for cash crops and sell in bulk]

E

Farm labour groups (*aleya*)

[shared labour that is often sold to third parties for money or like payment]

F

Business groups

[e.g. groups who put money together to start a shop; trading groups at market]

G

SERVICES AND PROFESSIONAL

Education

[e.g. PTA / SMC committee, Governors, church literacy groups]

H

Other basic services groups

[e.g. health groups, borehole maintenance groups, water collecting groups]

I

Professional association

[such as doctors, teachers, nurses, war veterans associations etc.]

J

CREDIT / SAVINGS GROUPS

Externally organised micro-credit initiatives

[e.g. Women's Finance Trust WFT, Uganda Women's Effort to Save Orphans UWESO]

K

Farmers savings groups

[groups which are relatively organised and have a collective bank account, e.g. with UCB]

L

locally organised credit / savings groups

[e.g. burial society books, Christmas clubs, monthly clubs (*abukonikin* groups)]

M

POLITICAL

Political discussion group or party

[e.g. UPC or NRM]

N

COMMUNITY AND YOUTH

Community organizations

[e.g. LC committees, local security organisations]

O

Youth groups
[e.g. scouts, Red Cross, and *including group leaders*]

..... P

OTHER

Any other groups? [SPECIFY: _____]

..... Q

2b. There are a number of reasons why these kinds of groups **ARE ACTIVE** in some areas and not in others. What do you think is the MOST important reason these groups are active in your area . . . What do you think are the **FIRST, SECOND and THIRD** biggest reasons (**number 1, 2 and 3**)?

Strong community leaders.....

A strong sense of community, community unity.....

Politics/politicians.....

Facilitators/field workers/community organizers/sensitizers.....

External NGOs.....

Government support/connections.....

Lack of government services.....

Need to protect ourselves/be safe.....

Desire to get ahead economically.....

People are educated and want to develop / locally led development.....

Other [SPECIFY: _____]

2c. What do you think is the MOST important reason groups/associations **ARE NOT** as active in your area...What do you think are the **FIRST SECOND and THIRD** biggest reasons (**number 1, 2 and 3**)?

No strong leaders / leaders are lazy.....

No sense of community/unity.....

People are too busy.....

Conflict between different groups in village/community.....

People care only about themselves and their households/selfish.....

There is no government support for groups/no government connections.....

There are no NGOs or people helping out.....

Politics/politicians not doing anything.....

Lack of resources

Corruption.....

Other [SPECIFY: _____]

3. SOCIABILITY, EVERDAY SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

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4. RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY

4a. Do you attend a church or religious meeting place? **(please circle appropriate answer)**

Yes

No

If **yes**, how often in a month?

.....[times a month]

4b. Which institution do you attend **(please circle appropriate answer)**

Christian, Catholic

Christian, Church of Uganda

Christian, PAG

Christian, other Protestant [please specify]

Moslem

Traditional African

Other [please specify]

4c. In terms of your relationship with your Church / mosque how active/committed would you describe yourself, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means inactive, and 5 means very active **(please circle appropriate answer)?**

inactive	1
somewhat inactive	2
average	3
somewhat active	4
very active	5

4d. In terms of your daily life how important would you say your relationship with your Church / mosque is, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means of no importance, and 5 means very important?

no importance	1
little importance	2
some importance	3
important	4
very important	5

4e. Do you think your church/mosque makes an important contribution to your community, please indicate on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means no important contribution, and 5 means a very important contribution?

no contribution	1
little contribution	2
some contribution	3
an important contribution	4
a very important contribution	5

5. COMMUNICATIONS

5a. On average, how many times per month, if at all, do you read a daily newspaper or have one read to you?

every day
most days
about once a week
about once a month
occasionally
never

5b. In most cases, which paper is it? **(please circle ONLY ONE answer)**

Etop (weekly)

Monitor (daily)

New Vision (daily)

5c Do you have access to a radio in your household or have access to one somewhere else?
(please circle appropriate answer)

Yes

No

5d. How often, if at all, do you listen to the radio? **(please circle appropriate answer)**

every day
most days
about once a week
about once a month
occasionally
never

5e. If you listen to the radio which radio station is it? **(please circle appropriate answer ONLY ONE)**

BBC World Service

Capital FM

Open Gates Mbale

Veritas

Voice of Teso

Other [please specify _____]

5f. What type of radio programming do you mainly listen to? **(please circle appropriate answers)**

music

religious programming

news

political discussion

educative / community sensitisation

Other [please specify _____]

6. MEETING ATTENDANCE

6a. Did you attend the last AGM of your **local primary school**?

Yes

No

6b. Have you attended a secondary school AGM in the last 12 months?

Yes

No

6c. Did you vote in the last LC1 elections?

Yes

No

6d. How many time **over the last 12 months** have you **attended** the **local courts**?

..... in the last 12 months

6e. How many times have you been to an **LC1 meeting** in the **last 12 months**?

..... in the last 12 months

6f. How many **clan meetings** have you attended in the **last 12 months**?

..... in the last 12 months

6g. How many **Church marriages** have you attended in the **last 12 months**?

..... in the last 12 months

6h. How many **traditional marriages** have you attended in the **last 12 months**?

..... in the last 12 months

6i. How many **burials** have you attended in the **last 12 months**?

..... in the last 12 months

7. DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE RESPONDENT

7a. Which ethnic group(s) do you belong to (**please circle appropriate answer(s)**)?

Baganda

Basoga

Gisu

Iteso

Langi

Other [Please Specify _____]

7b. What language(s) do you speak (**please circle all languages spoken**)?

Ateso

English

Luganda

Lusoga

Swahili

Other [Please Specify _____]

7c. How much formal schooling have you had (**please circle correct answer**)?

None

Primary

Lower Secondary

Higher Secondary

University/college or more

Vocational/technical

7d. What is your literacy status (**please circle correct answer**)?

Neither able to read nor write

Able to read only

Able to write only

Able to read and write

7e. Are you currently married, LIVING AS married, widowed, divorced, separated, or never been married (**please circle correct answer**)?

Single/Never married

Married Monogamous

Married Polygamous

Living as married

Widowed

Divorced/Separated

7f. What is your most important job?

Agriculture / Farmer.....
Housewife/Homemaker.....
Business (**what business**).....
Unemployed.....
Student or Apprentice (**where / in what field**).....
Retired/Pensioner/Inactive.....
Regular Employee (**of who?**).....
Casual Employee / Day Labourer (**of who?**).....
Employer (**what business / work**).....
Contributing family worker.....
Other [please specify_____]

7g. People also work in other areas besides the ones listed above, for example a housewife will not just work at home, but will also go out gardening in the morning. From the following list, please indicate all the other areas in which the household head works, please **rank** them in terms of importance, where 1 is the most important activity?

Agriculture / Farmer.....
Housewife/Homemaker.....
Business (**what business**).....
Student or Apprentice (**where / in what field**).....
Retired/Pensioner/Inactive.....
Regular Employee (**of who?**).....
Casual Employee / Day Labourer (**of who?**).....
Employer (**what business / work**).....
Contributing family worker.....
Other [please specify_____]

Many thanks for helping us complete this questionnaire. We very much appreciate your time. If you have any questions please let us know and we will try to answer them as best we can. Please also know that over the coming year we will be interviewing villagers to find out more information, so you will have more chances to discuss things that are important to you.

CHURCH REPORT

Please note that in reporting, where numbers are asked for, please try to give numbers, e.g. in congregation size.

1a. Reporter's Name.....

1b. Church Name.....

1c. Sub-county Name.....

1d. DATE OF SERVICE..... (DAY/MONTH/YEAR)

1e. TIME OF START OF SERVICE..... (HOUR/MINUTE)

1f. TIME OF END OF SERVICE..... (HOUR/MINUTE)

1g. NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN THE
CONGREGATION

1h. NAME OF MAIN
PREACHER.....

Was there a visiting/guest preacher?

Yes

No

If yes, explain.....

1i. How many collections were there?

1j. Was there a special collection? (please circle the correct answer)

Yes

No

If yes, what was the reason?.....

1k. What was the collection money used for?

a).....

b).....

c).....

d).....

1l. Did any other important events take place before, during or after the service?

Yes

No

If yes, explain in as much detail what this event was, and who was involved

e.g. a major discussion, a dispute, or people organising for charity or to help each other

Event 1

.....

Event 2

Event 3



Plate 9: A farmer moves sacks of charcoal to market.

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